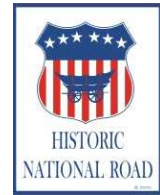




Open a wide door ... make a smooth way

Historic National Road

An All American Road



Document and
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by Lorna Hainesworth

Introduction

The United States was poised on the brink of splitting right down the center of the Appalachian Mountains. This rift was not being caused by any shift in tectonic plates, but rather by a shift in politics and economics. Via the Treaty of Paris in 1783, our country had achieved its independence, but difficulties were still very much in evidence. The newly acquired Northwest Territory was likely to be torn away from the original states. In 1784 George Washington said the “western settlers stand...upon a pivot; the touch of a feather, would turn them any way.” Transportation, communication and trade between Americans living east of the mountains and those living west of the mountains were virtually non-existent. What could be done to mend this tear? How could the country be tied together?

The answer came in the form of a road that would bridge the Allegheny Mountains, thus tying the eastern and western portions of the country together. That road was built in the early 19th Century and was called the National Road. It is a road of such significance that in 2002, the entire Historic National Road—through Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois—was named an **All American Road** for its historical and cultural significance. It became the longest byway traversing the greatest number of states to receive this designation. This is the highest honor the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) can bestow on a road. Such designation means the road is one of the most scenic in the country, the road’s features do not exist elsewhere and the road is a destination unto itself.

All American Roads are part of the National Scenic Byways Program under the auspices of the FHWA, which is part of the United States Department of Transportation. Within the program are one hundred and fifty roads (150) that have been designated as National Scenic Byways. Of that number, thirty-one (31) have been given the honor of being called an “All American Road.”

The All American Road status of the Historic National Road determined that the road begins at the Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Maryland and ends at the Eads Bridge crossing the Mississippi River from East St. Louis, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri. The Inner Harbor, an historic seaport, tourist attraction and landmark of the City of Baltimore, has been described as “the model for post-industrial waterfront redevelopment around the World.”

The Eads Bridge was built in 1874 and at the time of its construction was the longest arch bridge in the world, with an overall length of 6442 feet. The Eads Bridge pneumatic caissons, still among the deepest ever sunk, were responsible for one of the first major outbreaks of "caisson disease." This is also known as the "bends" or decompression sickness. Fifteen workers died, two were permanently disabled and 77 were severely afflicted. The bridge ends near the Gateway Arch in St Louis. During the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, at the last signature event in September 2006, a statue of Lewis, Clark and Seaman was installed and dedicated at the base of the bridge. Since that time, the statue has several times been only partially visible due to the flooding of the Mississippi River.

The Historic National Road is famous for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it was the first Federally funded road and is America's first interstate highway. The Historic National Road gained the reputation of being the "Road that Built the Nation." Each of the six states through which the road traverses have adopted a version of a shield sign to represent their state. Maryland's sign shows a shield with a watermark of the state's shape, Pennsylvania's is a plain red, white and blue shield, West Virginia shows a silhouette of the suspension bridge on the shield, Ohio's shield shows a silhouette of the state with a white line representing the road drawn across, Indiana also has a plain shield similar to Pennsylvania's except the shield is outlined, and finally, Illinois shows a silhouette of a Conestoga wagon on its shield. The total length of the Historic National Road is 824 miles. Of these, 170 are in Maryland, 90 are in Pennsylvania and 16 are in West Virginia. The balance is distributed between Ohio, Indiana and Illinois with each having 228, 156 and 165 miles respectively.

To truly understand the history of the Historic National Road, one must go back to a time of pre-history, in fact of pre-human. This takes us to a time when only animals lived where the Historic National Road is now located. Bison, incorrectly called buffalo and so frequently only associated with the plains states west of the Mississippi, occupied vast areas east of the Mississippi prior to the coming of man. Initially, bison could be found at the forest edge on the Atlantic Coast and all the way west from there. Bison have an innate, uncanny ability to locate passageways and portages as they migrate from one grazing area to another. Indians living in the same areas as the bison took advantage of bison traces and other game animal trails to travel from one hunting area to another.

In our discussion of the history of the Historic National Road, we will look at a number of persons who had a hand in the creation and construction of the Historic National Road.

The following individuals are players in the drama of the origins of the road:

Nemacolin	George Washington
Thomas Cresap	Edward Braddock
Christopher Gist	James Burd
Tanaghrisson or Half King	

The construction of the road was dependent upon the involvement of the following individuals:

George Washington
Ebenezer Zane
Albert Gallatin

Thomas Jefferson
Commissioners & Contractors
Henry Clay

We will look at each of these people to see how he contributed to making the Historic National Road a reality. First let us consider...

Nemacolin

Nemacolin was a member of the tribe referred to by Anglo-Europeans as Delaware. He evidently lived in the area of what is today southwestern Pennsylvania. He used a trace originally created by bison to travel across the Allegheny Mountains. This allowed him to portage from the Potomac River to the Monongahela River and from the Monongahela River to the Ohio River. Nemacolin's Path was critical to the explorers, land speculators and settlers who arrived during the 1700s. Following his route, they were able to find their way over the mountains. Eventually, Nemacolin's Path was used to link the western portion of what became the United States to the eastern portion.

Thomas Cresap

Thomas Cresap was born around 1694 at Yorkshire in England and came to America around 1720. He was an early explorer of western Maryland and a frontier trader. In the early 1740s, Cresap established a stockade fortification on the former site of a Shawnee Indian village previously called King Opessa's town. At this site, a branch of the Great Warrior's Path forded the Potomac River and in 1711 an Indian village of some size existed here. The Shawnee had abandoned their village prior to Cresap's arrival. He established what is called Oldtown, MD located some ten to fifteen miles southeast of Cumberland, MD then known as Wills Creek where the Ohio Company of Virginia had built a storehouse in 1749-1750.

In 1748 a group of land speculators formed the Ohio Company of Virginia (not to be confused with the Ohio Company of Associates discussed later in this paper) having been granted two hundred thousand acres by the English crown. The land grant was located in today's western Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and eastern Indiana. Cresap was to be given a large land grant by the Ohio Company in exchange for widening Nemacolin's Path into a road that would allow for the passage of freight wagons.

Cresap's expedition took place during the period 1748-1750. Nemacolin accompanied him and together they traveled over the pass of the Allegheny Mountains, across the eastern continental divide and down the bluffs to a location on the Monongahela where pre-Columbian mounds are located at a place known as Redstone Old Fort. Europeans often thought these ancient Indian mounds were fortifications and frequently gave them the name of fort, such as Fort Ancient in southwestern Ohio. The road developed by Cresap and Nemacolin was later the

basis for a road developed by George Washington and General Edward Braddock and even later, the basis for the Historic National Road.

At the same time Cresap was on his expedition, two other significant events were taking place. First of all, as members of the Loyal Company of Virginia, which was a rival land speculation group to the Ohio Company of Virginia, Peter Jefferson and Joshua Fry were extending the 1728 survey line of William Byrd between Virginia and North Carolina. In 1749, they extended the line another 88 miles from Peters Creek to Steep Rock Creek along the 36-30 parallel. In 1751, using their knowledge of surveying, Fry and Jefferson collaborated to create a "Map of the most Inhabited part of Virginia." Their map, published in 1755, shows "Col Cresaps" at the location of current day Oldtown, Maryland. Cresap's place is also shown on the 1747 Fairfax map where a drawing of a house appears along with the word, "Cresaps."

Second, another member of the Loyal Company, Dr. Thomas Walker, was leading an expedition during 1749-1750 into what is today east Kentucky. He is credited with discovering the Cumberland Gap on this trip and in establishing the first non-Indian residence west of the Appalachian Mountains.

Christopher Gist

Christopher Gist, born in Baltimore in 1706, was an explorer and surveyor for the Ohio Company of Virginia. By all reports he was intelligent and, as evidenced by his plats, journals and maps, well educated by his father although he had little formal education. During the period 1750 to 1752, Gist made two expeditions into the Ohio Country. In 1750 and 1751 he traveled into the Ohio Country as far as the Falls of the Ohio to the location of present day Louisville, Kentucky. He set out from Cresap's place on Wednesday (no day) October 1750. In 1751 and 1752 he traveled across the Monongahela River and along the east side of the Ohio River. During all of his travels, Gist kept a journal with meticulous entries regarding the events of each day plus courses and distances. His job, as given to him by Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia, was to travel "Westward of the Great Mountains," i.e. the Allegheny and Appalachian, to find "a large quantity of good, level Land" and survey these. He was to set "Beginning & Bounds" that could be easily found again by others.

In 1753, at the conclusion of his two journeys, Gist was living near Wills Creek. George Washington traveled past Gist's place in November 1753 on a diplomatic mission for Governor Dinwiddie. He was able to engage the veteran woodsman to accompany him and together they traveled to Fort Venango and then on to Fort Le Boeuf. On the return trip, Washington and Gist encountered the Allegheny River. They had expected to find the river frozen solid, but only about 50 feet from shore was frozen. The center of the river was a wild, churning mass of freezing water. After fashioning a raft from logs, Gist and Washington attempted to cross, but capsized instead. Gist had to rescue Washington. As a matter of fact, Gist is

credited with saving Washington's life on another occasion as well. But for him, George Washington would not have been the "Father of Our Country."

Washington returned to southwestern Pennsylvania in the spring of 1754. He was again on a mission, this time to build a fort on the Monongahela River. Washington got as far as Great Meadows when on May 27, 1754 he was informed by Gist, who had taken up residence in southwestern Pennsylvania, that the French had made threats against Gist's cow and household items. Gist owned property near present day Uniontown, Pennsylvania that he called Gist's Plantation. Gist was present at the Battle of Fort Necessity on July 3, 1754 and again served as a member of the Braddock expedition in 1755.

Tanaghrisson

Tanaghrisson was given the name of Half King by the English. They believed he spoke for the entire Iroquois Confederation when in reality he was probably no more than a Mingo village leader. He had been born into the Catawba tribe around 1700, but was adopted into the Seneca tribe, which was part of the Iroquois Confederation. Iroquois who moved into the Ohio Country were known as Mingos. Tanaghrisson was with George Washington and Christopher Gist in 1753 when they traveled to Fort Le Boeuf. As the time came to depart, the French would not allow him to leave, but attempted to win him over with promises of liquor and guns. Tanaghrisson proved his loyalty to the English by turning down the French offers.

The next year when Washington was on his way to build the fort on the Monongahela River, Tanaghrisson was again present. He sent a message to Washington saying he had found the French camp. Believing they were spies, Washington and Tanaghrisson decided to attack the French encampment. They killed ten, wounded one and captured 21 soldiers. During this event, Tanaghrisson allegedly wielded a hatchet that killed the French commander Joseph Coulon de Villiers, Sieur de Jumonville, who might otherwise have been taken prisoner.

George Washington

George Washington first saw the Ohio Country in 1748 when he was sixteen years old. Lord Thomas Fairfax was the possessor, some say, of over five million acres that he wanted to have surveyed and to determine whether settlers were squatting on his land. Washington, who was distantly related to Lord Fairfax, had impressed his lordship with his intelligence and surveying skills. This was the first of many trips Washington would make up from the Piedmont to the western lands beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Scarcely five years later, at age twenty-one, George Washington was selected by Governor Dinwiddie to go on a diplomatic mission in the direction of Lake Erie along the Allegheny River to meet with the French at Fort Venango. The British were becoming fairly alarmed about the presence of the French in this area, which they believed belong to them. Initially the British thought the French were there merely to trade with the Indians and to secure pelts, however, since the French were

establishing forts here and along the Mississippi River, the belief that French settlements would soon follow became apparent to the English. The English were especially concerned that the French would try establishing settlements in the Ohio Country that they were convinced belonged to them and that they knew was rich in natural resources. French occupation and their efforts to attach the Indians to them against the English meant the French had to go.

Washington left the Virginia capital of Williamsburg on October 3, 1753. By November 14 he was at Wills Creek (Cumberland) where he met up with Christopher Gist. He, Gist and Tanaghrisson traveled to Fort Venango where Washington tried to deliver his message. The commandant, Lieutenant Francis Gordon, stated he could not receive the message; that it would have to go to his superior at Fort Le Boeuf. Washington and his party traveled an additional one hundred miles north where they met with the commander of the fort, Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre. The commandant politely listened to what Washington had to say about the French vacating the area and then just a politely refused to accept the ultimatum. Although the diplomatic mission was a failure, Washington was treated with respect and courtesy. He returned to Williamsburg on January 16, 1754 making a report to Governor Dinwiddie that was very soon published so everyone knew what position the French had taken.

In the spring of 1754, George Washington was sent by Governor Dinwiddie to build a fort on the Monongahela River. In the course of doing so, he was to widen Nemacolin's Path into an actual road. Washington was under the command of Joshua Fry who stayed at Fort Cumberland while Washington traveled on toward southwest Pennsylvania. He got no farther than Great Meadows, which is about ten miles southeast of today's Uniontown, PA, when on May 27 he was informed about the French by Christopher Gist. Washington wrote to Governor Dinwiddie that he believed the French had been sent as spies.

Following the incident on May 28 during which Jumonville was killed; Washington retreated to Great Meadows and threw up a fortification that became known as Fort Necessity. On May 29 Washington wrote about the Jumonville affair to his commander Joshua Fry only to subsequently learn of Fry's death as a result of a fall from his horse on May 31. While anticipating a retaliatory attack from the French, Washington continued to work on the road-widening project from Great Meadows to the Monongahela River. Many years later, this road would serve as the basis for part of the Historic National Road in Pennsylvania. The French attack finally came on July 3, 1754 during which the Virginians were soundly defeated in the Battle of Fort Necessity.

Edward Braddock

Edward Braddock was appointed to command against the French in America. He landed in Virginia from England on February 20, 1755 with two regiments of British regulars. By various accounts, Braddock was most disrespectful of his host, British merchant John Carlyle, allowing his men to put their feet on the furniture at the

Carlyle house. Additionally, he was very contemptuous of the American militia. He believed American soldiers were afraid of the Indians, whom he believed were nothing to fear. Braddock was a strict subscriber to the regimented European style of conducting battles where soldiers form up into lines and stand their ground.

After meeting with several colonial governors in Alexandria, VA, Braddock began his campaign to remove the French from British claimed territory. On April 21 he headed for Frederick, MD and then made his way to Fort Cumberland. His equipment included the following:

- 2100 carpenters, sawyers, sailors & soldiers
- 300 wagons each weighing 1400 pounds
- 3000 horses
- 2000 head of cattle
- 200,000 pounds of flour
- 10,000 sand bags
- 400 spades
- 4 eight-inch Howitzers each behind a nine-horse team

Attempting to move all this equipment along a road that had been widened somewhat by Nemaquin, Thomas Cresap, Christopher Gist and George Washington proved to be arduous and extremely difficult. Braddock insisted the road be twelve feet wide to accommodate wagons. Progress was slow and at the maximum rate of about three miles per day. The road that Braddock built, parts of which still bear his name, starts in Alexandria and goes to Pittsburgh, PA. The part that became the National Road is the section from Cumberland, MD on the Potomac River to Brownsville, PA on the Monongahela River.

Shortly after crossing the Monongahela River, on July 9, 1755 Braddock encountered the French who had rushed south toward him from Fort Duquesne. Braddock's enemy did not fight in the traditional European style, but shot at a specific target using trees and ravines for protection. Dressed in brightly colored uniforms, wearing gleaming gorgets while riding on horseback, Braddock's officers were the perfect targets for the French soldiers and Indian warriors. Out of 82 officers, 63 were killed or wounded. Braddock had five horses shot from under him before he was mortally wounded.

After a chaotic battle in which the British soldiers indiscriminately shot in every direction, orders were given to retreat. As the army prepared to leave for Fort Cumberland, on July 13 Braddock died and was buried in the middle of the road he had constructed and had passed over not ten days before. Allegedly, Braddock's last words were, "Who would have thought?" After internment, the army rode over the grave, obliterating all trace, to protect the site from discovery and possible desecration.

James Burd

James Burd was responsible for building a road from Shippensburg to Raystown, which is today's Bedford, PA. The construction of this road was in aid of General

Braddock; however, the road was not completed in time to help with that campaign. Later, in 1758 Burd served with General John Forbes. Forbes had constructed a road from Carlisle, PA to Fort Duquesne where he was successful in defeating the French. Following the defeat of the French, Fort Duquesne became an English fort called Fort Pitt. On his way to encounter the French, Forbes had built a series of forts along his road. Burd contributed to the construction of Fort Ligonier.

In 1759 Burd was sent to build a fort at Redstone Old Fort on the site of an earthwork left behind by prehistoric, indigenous people known to Anglos as "Mound Builders." The site was where Nemacolin's Path forded the Monongahela River at a mound overlooking the river's eastern shore. Today the city of Brownsville, PA is located here along the Historic National Road. Burd developed a road northward along the Monongahela River toward Fort Pitt known as the James Burd extension and also the road westward along Nemacolin's Path toward Wheeling.

The names and events described above were players in the creation of the National Road, however inadvertently. We will now look at several individuals who were directly involved with the construction of the National Road. The first of these is...

George Washington

George Washington was a successful plantation owner as well as a successful soldier. When the French and Indian War was well into his past and the Revolutionary War was behind him, Washington had planned on retiring to Mount Vernon. By this time he owned a considerable amount of land in the Ohio Country. Communication by road or canal to that area from the eastern seaboard was virtually non-existent; a great concern to Washington. That concern prompted him to write to the Governor of Virginia, Benjamin Harrison, in the fall of 1784. As well as being Governor of Virginia from 1781-1784, Harrison had been one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Washington had just returned from a five week, 680-mile trip into the Ohio Country during the period September 1 to October 4, 1784. While there he had met with several of the residents in the area, particularly those in southwest Pennsylvania. Among these were Albert Gallatin who assured him that a road could be built across the Allegheny Mountains, which would link the eastern and western sections of the United States. In his 15-page letter to Harrison dated October 20, 1784 (although the Library of Congress lists the letter as October 10, 1784) Washington stated, "The Western settlers, (I speak from my own observation) stand as it were upon a pivot; the touch of a feather, would turn them any way."

Clearly what Washington saw on his trip to the Ohio Country were settlers who found shipping products such as grain, liquor, wood, pelts and livestock down the Ohio River and then down the Mississippi River to the port of New Orleans and out through the Gulf of Mexico preferable to shipping products over the mountains to the

eastern cities of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Richmond. The Ohio Country products might eventually come to these eastern cities, but only after a long sea voyage around Spanish Florida and up the Atlantic Coast. Everything along the western bank of the Mississippi and the port of New Orleans belonged to Spain. Washington feared the western settlers might feel more allied with the Spanish than with their fellow Americans.

Washington told Harrison that “because they could glide gently down the stream,” they may not consider “the fatigues of the voyage back again,” and the time necessary to do that. He said the Western settlers do this because they have no way of going east except by “a long Land transportation and unimproved roads.” Washington was convinced that if the road was smoothed and the way made easy for them, the products from the area west of the Allegheny Mountains would yield “an influx of articles...poured upon us.” Washington also used considerable ink in this letter to describe the canal system he advocated, not the least of which was one along the Potomac that when built during the first few decades of the 19th Century became known as the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

Washington is also quoted as having said, “Open a wide door and make a smooth way for the produce of that Country (Ohio) to pass to our Markets (East Coast) before the trade may get into another channel (Spanish).” He said that, “A people...who are possessed of a spirit of commerce...may achieve almost anything.” However altruistic Washington’s motives may have been, he also had a personal need to have easier access to his western land holdings. Since, until recently, Washington had been occupied with winning a war, he had not been able to directly oversee his property. In the 1784 trip to the Ohio Country, Washington learned that squatters were sitting some of his richest land and that unscrupulous land speculators were selling off some of his lands in places like New York. He needed both a canal and a road to get him from Mount Vernon up the Potomac, across to the Monongahela and over to the Ohio. Washington’s letter to Harrison may be viewed as the basis for constructing the National Road.

Northwest Territory and the Ohio Company of Associates

From a catalytic point of view, acquisition of the Northwest Territory and its related Ohio Company of Associates influenced the creation of the National Road. In 1784 Thomas Jefferson proposed surveying the public lands of the west in geographic units called “hundreds.” These are areas of ten miles square based on the decimal system, later replaced by townships of six miles square. In 1785 the Land Ordinance regarding the Northwest Territory was passed. Primarily this legislation established the rectangular system of surveying officially known as the Public Land Survey System (PLSS) and prepared the western lands for sale.

In 1786, Rufus Putnam and his colleague Benjamin Tupper advertised for prospective investors to establish the Ohio Company of Associates. They then applied to the Congress of the Confederation of the United States for a private land purchase in the Ohio Country. Putnam and Company requested 1.5 million acres,

which would be surveyed and sold to settlers. The Ohio Company of Associates signed its first contract on October 27, 1787 and set up a land office in an area on the Ohio River they called Campus Matrius, known today as Marietta, OH.

Another important piece of legislation was the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which among its several attributes provided for statehood of the western lands as well as prohibiting slavery in that area. Through the activities of the Ohio Company of Associates, more and more settlers were being attracted to the Ohio Country making the need for a viable means of transportation from the eastern cities to the lands beyond the Allegheny Mountains just that much more important. Not only was there a desire to transport products from the Ohio Country to the east, but also manufactured goods needed to be transported to the settlers in the west.

Ebenezer Zane

Ebenezer Zane was an American pioneer, road builder and land speculator. In 1769 he established rights to an area called “wih link” (place of the head) by the Indians for a scalped and decapitated white man. At Wheeling he erected Fort Henry, named in honor of Virginia’s Governor Patrick Henry. In 1796, Zane petitioned the Congress of the United States for permission to build a trail across part of the Northwest Territory from Wheeling to Maysville (formerly Limestone), KY. Congress granted Zane tracts of land in the areas where the road intersected with the Muskingum, Hocking and Scioto Rivers. Zane was granted the right to sell land at the river crossings. Later the cities of Zanesville, Lancaster and Chillicothe, OH would develop to occupy these intersections.

Zane’s Trace, as the road was known, would accommodate foot or horseback traffic, but no wagons. The road was not surveyed, but followed Indian paths or trails used by former military expeditions. Congress agreed to Zane’s petition because of the belief that the trace would encourage trade and settlement in Ohio Country thereby further strengthening the federal government’s influence on the territory. That portion of the Trace, which began in Wheeling and went to Zanesville, would eventually be incorporated into the National Road.

Albert Gallatin

Albert Gallatin was a Swiss-born American who served as the Secretary of the Treasury longer than any other Secretary of the Treasury has done. From 1801 to 1814, he served for thirteen years during the administrations of presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. In a land speculation plan designed to create a new community based on American freedoms and Republican principles, Gallatin worked from 1783 to 1789 as an agent and interpreter in the frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania. It is during this time, in 1784, that he met George Washington while Washington was inspecting western lands near present day Morgantown, WV. As stated earlier, Gallatin assured Washington that a road could be built across the Allegheny Mountains.

In 1785, Gallatin purchased a 370 acre tract he called Friendship Hill, which is today a National Historic Site on Pennsylvania's Route 166 about 3.5 miles northwest of Point Marion, PA. Living where he did, albeit for limited periods of time, Gallatin was abundantly aware of the need to have a means of getting across the Allegheny Mountains. He is quoted as having said, *"Good roads and canals will shorten the distances, facilitate commercial and personal intercourse, and unite, by a still more intimate community of interests, the most remote quarters of the United States. No other single operation within the power of the Government can more effectually tend to strengthen and perpetuate the Union."*

In 1802, he penned a most important letter that served as the financial basis for the National Road. Representative William B. Giles of Virginia was head of the House committee for statehood legislation dealing with the admission of new states into the Union. On February 13, 1802 Gallatin wrote to Giles suggesting ten percent of the proceeds from land sale in Ohio be used to fund road building to Ohio and through the state. At that time, the Enabling Act of 1802 for Ohio statehood was being considered. This act passed on April 30, 1802 guaranteeing the new state would be equal in status to the existing states and provided that proceeds from the sale of Federal lands would fund the creation of roads to and through Ohio. Gallatin's suggested 10% was reduced to 5% with 3% funding for roads wholly within the state and 2% funding for roads to and through the state. At some later point, across his copy of the letter to Giles, Gallatin wrote, "Origin of the National Road." Gallatin's support for the creation of a national road earned him the title of "Father of the National Road."

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was deeply concerned about the possible east-west rift that was building in the not so "united" United States. As stated earlier, settlers in the Ohio Country did not feel much kinship toward the folks living east of the mountains. Many of them had come west because they couldn't make a decent living in the east. Frontier culture and life styles were very different from the way people lived in the east. Because of the ease of travel on the downstream of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, many felt closer to Spanish countrymen than they did to their own.

Jefferson was well aware of Washington's desire to have roads and canals that would transport people and goods back and forth across the country. His Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin, urged him to encourage legislation that would allow for the creation of a national road. The Constitution of the United State was still a relatively new document and would be tested in many ways not the least of which was whether Congress had the authority to take on the responsibility for building roads. The constitutionality of road building and road maintenance will be dealt with a bit later in this paper. In the meantime, suffice it to say that, Jefferson agreed to sign into law legislation that was an *"Act to regulate the laying out and making a road from Cumberland, in the state of Maryland, to the state of Ohio."* The Act was signed on March 29, 1806 and contained seven sections.

1. The president was authorized to appoint three commissioners who were discreet and disinterested citizens of the United States. This section also contains a description of where the road was to be located.
2. The road was to be four rods (sixty-six feet) wide and be marked at each quarter mile and at every angle.
3. The commissioners were to write reports and estimate costs. They were charged with laying out the best possible route that would be the shortest and straightest.
4. Stumps were to be cleared from the entire roadway. The middle was to be raised using stone, earth, or gravel and sand...leaving a ditch...on either side. The elevation was not to be greater than five degrees or grades of 8.75% in today's language.
5. Each commissioner would receive four dollars per day and they were to employ one surveyor at three dollars per day, plus two chainmen and one marker each at one dollar per day.
6. Thirty thousand dollars was appropriated, but this was to come from the 2% described in section seven of the Enabling Act that had been signed on April 30, 1802.
7. The President was to give a report to Congress at the start of each session regarding the proceedings under the Act.

Commissioners & Contractors

As per the legislation, three commissioners were appointed in the summer of 1806. They were Elie Williams of Maryland who was the president of the commissioners, Thomas Moore also of Maryland and Joseph Kerr from Ohio. The actual survey work began on September 3 and by September 22 they had reached the Youghiogheny River. As required by the legislation, the commissioners gave their first report in December 1806. Their comments indicated that the surveying work was much more difficult than they had anticipated.

Although required to locate the road along the shortest, straightest route, persons who wanted the road to go past their property frequently approached the commissioners. The commercial potential was tremendous and the residents along the road knew this. The villages of Uniontown and Washington, PA made a particularly strong appeal to have the National Road go through their towns. Wagon/harness makers, inn/tavern keepers, framers, trappers/traders would all benefit from having the National Road go through their area. Had the road gone straight, both of these towns would have been bypassed. Going through Uniontown and Washington added only a couple of miles to the overall distance and besides, as Gallatin pointed out to Jefferson, lots of political support could be lost if these towns were not included. In April 1807, Pennsylvania agreed to approve the road with the proviso that Uniontown and Washington were on the route. In February 1808 the route was changed to include Uniontown and likewise in July 1808 to include Washington, PA.

By the end of 1808, the surveying was complete to Wheeling and contracts were let for the clearing of the right-of-way. Contracts for constructing the first ten miles were let in the spring of 1811. The initial contractors were Henry McKinley, Randle (nfn) and James Cochran. Twenty feet of the road's surface was covered with stones ranging from twelve inches in depth to eighteen inches. A superintendent of construction, David Shriver, was appointed in April 1811 to oversee the building of the road including posting advertisements to attract construction crewmembers. By September 1811, the first ten miles had been completed and by the end of 1813, the next eleven miles were complete along with the Casselman Bridge. The completed road reached Wheeling in 1818 a full twelve years after the authorizing legislation had been signed.

National Road Construction

The National Road's construction started in Cumberland, MD not only because this is what the legislation called for, but also because it was the logical starting point. It was from here that Nemaquin, Cresap, Gist, Washington and Braddock had started. Also, plans were being made to construct a canal along the Potomac River that could connect Washington D. C. to Cumberland. Southern legislators were upset that the new road would not connect to Richmond, VA and Pennsylvanians were equally disturbed that the new road would not connect to Philadelphia. They thought the starting point should be Pittsburgh using Forbes Road to connect with the "City of Brotherly Love," but this was not to be. Quite frankly, both Forbes's Road and Braddock's Road had seen only limited use since the French and Indian War. In some areas, Mother Nature was rapidly reclaiming these roads.

During the construction of the Cumberland Road, as the National Road was sometimes called, another road connecting Baltimore to Cumberland was in various stages of completion. Known by a variety of names such as the Baltimore Pike, the National Pike and the Frederick to Baltimore Turnpike, this road was being privately funded through the use of turnpike companies and through a consortium of banks that were funding the road as a means of having their charters renewed by the Maryland State Assembly. For this reason, it was sometimes called "Bank Road."

The most difficult stretch of the road to be completed from Baltimore to Cumberland was the section from Boonsboro to Hagerstown. Plagued by ruts, mud and dust, a separate turnpike company, the Boonsboro to Hagerstown Turnpike Company, was chartered on January 30, 1822. This ten-mile section became the first use of the Macadam method of road building in the United States and was completed in 1823.

John Loudon McAdam was a Scottish engineer who invented a road construction process called macadamisation or simply macadam around 1820. According to his method, roads were made of crushed stone bound with gravel on a firm base of larger stones. A camber, making the road slightly convex, ensured that rainwater rapidly drained off the road rather than penetrate and damage the road's foundations. Pounding stones with a hammer broke them up so they would pass through a small ring. The stones were layered onto the road, larger stones covered

by crushed smaller stones and then a layer of fine gravel stones to a depth of fifteen inches in the middle and tapering off to twelve inches on the edge. A cast-iron roller packed down each stratum and ditches ran along the sides of the roadway.

The Macadam method of road building was the greatest advance in road construction since Roman times, but it was not used on the road from Cumberland to Wheeling, as it had not yet been invented. As the National Road progressed west beyond Wheeling, the Macadam method was used to a large extent particularly in urban areas. Since the stones on the original road were not layered, they tended to spin off to the side when heavy wagons and coaches traveled along the road. By the time the road had been completed to Wheeling, the road leaving Cumberland was already in serious need of repair.

Henry Clay

Henry Clay never became president as he most sincerely wanted to do, but in 1957, a Senate committee named him the greatest Senator in this country's history. As a Senator from Kentucky, Clay was a staunch supporter of internal improvements, which meant building roads, constructing canals, dredging harbors and things of that nature or what we might think of as Public Works Projects. This ran him afoul of Andrew Jackson who, like some of his predecessors, questioned the constitutionality of the Federal government funding internal improvements. For a host of reasons, Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson did not get along, but when Jackson vetoed the bill for the Maysville Road, rumor had it that he did so to thwart Henry Clay.

Henry Clay was a good friend of Moses Shepherd who built Shepherd Hall in 1798 on the grounds of his plantation near Wheeling Creek. Shepherd lived there with his wife Lydia in what is today known as Monument Place in Wheeling, WV. In 1817, Moses Shepherd constructed a stone, three-arch bridge over Wheeling Creek. Because his friend Henry Clay was instrumental in getting the National Road to go through Wheeling rather than some other place along the Ohio River such as Steubenville or Wellsburg, Shepherd erected a monument to Clay on his plantation from which the name Monument Place stems. The monument no longer exists, but the bridge and the Shepherd's mansion do. Rumor mongers say that Henry Clay got the National Road to go past the Shepherd's home because Lydia batted her eyes at him, but however it happened, Clay gained the title of "Father of the National Pike." He was a strong advocate for extending the National Road through Ohio and beyond to the Mississippi River.

National Road and the Constitution

The controversy between the National Road and the Constitution of the United State is extremely interesting. Article 1, Section 8 of the United States Constitution grants specific powers to the United States Congress. Among these are to *"provide for the...general welfare; to regulate Commerce ...among the...States, and to establish Post...Roads."* Nowhere is the issue of internal improvements directly addressed in the Constitution. General welfare has been interpreted as meaning for the good of all Americans, not just those living in a specific geographic area.

Questions arose such as, "Since the Federal government is authorized to establish post roads, can this give license to building roads that will not only be used for the post, but also for other purposes as well?" "Can the Federal government fund roads that are wholly within one state? Or only those roads that are interstate?" "Should the Federal government fund roads that allow for the improved regulation of commerce?" "Is road building a means for Congress to fulfill its obligation to provide for the common defense?"

Regarding the Constitution, Jefferson was known as a strict constructionist. He believed actions must be authorized by the Constitution before such could be taken. This is in contrast to his arch nemesis, Alexander Hamilton, who believed if an action was not prohibited by the Constitution, it could be taken. Since the Constitution did not specifically authorize the president to acquire territory and Congress had not appropriated money for the purchase, Jefferson was probably in violation of the Constitution when he authorized the purchase of Louisiana. This was rationalized as a great real estate bargain since our country really needed the port of New Orleans for commerce. Additionally, it provided a buffer zone between the United States and Spain that could come under the clause "*provide for the common Defense.*" Likewise with the National Road legislation, Jefferson was again probably in violation of the Constitution. However, with Gallatin having come up with a way to pay for the road, Jefferson signed off on the legislation as a means of binding the nation together and rationalized that it was intended to "*provide for the common Defense and regulate commerce.*"

James Madison, known as the "Father of the Constitution" since he was the primary author of this document, vetoed a federal public works bill on March 3, 1817. The bill would have provided for the construction of roads and canals. Madison stated that he was aware of the importance these constructions had in improving transportation; but he did not believe the general welfare clause gave congress the power to do so. Alternatively, state or private entities could take on the responsibility of building roads and canals. Presidents James Monroe and Andrew Jackson tended to think along the same lines. They all appreciated the importance of internal improvements, but did not believe the Constitution allowed for the Federal government to fund such projects.

On May 4, 1822, Monroe vetoed the Cumberland Road Bill, which was an act for the preservation and repair of the Cumberland Road (aka the National Road). Monroe wrote in his veto message that " A power to establish turnpikes with gates and tolls, and to enforce the collection of tolls by penalties, implies a power to adopt and execute a complete system of internal improvement," which he believed was unconstitutional. John Quincy Adams believed the Federal government could engineer and be responsible for internal improvements. Under his administration the Army Corps of Engineers was authorized to get involved with Federal internal improvement projects. Also authorization to extend the National Road across the Mississippi River on to Jefferson City, MO occurred under Adam's administration.

The original funding for the National Road was sort of retroactively rationalized because the money came from the sale of land in Ohio, not directly out of the Federal treasury. Additionally the National Road was an interstate highway that benefited a multitude of states and Americans. This was not the case with the Maysville Road. This road was proposed to go from Maysville to Lexington, KY. Advocates maintained that the Maysville Road was an extension of the Cumberland Road project as it was intended to eventually go from Zanesville, OH to Florence, AL. Jackson vetoed this bill because the road was wholly within one state, Kentucky. He was not swayed by arguments that illustrated canal projects, wholly within one state, that had been authorized by Congress.

National Road Chronology

The National Road reached Wheeling in 1818 at a cost of \$13,000 per mile for an estimated 112 miles. Travel was now possible from Baltimore all the way to the Ohio River. In May 1820, Congress appropriated funds to continue the National Road through the states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. The Enabling Act for Ohio of 1802 provided for roads to and through Ohio. The original authorizing legislation for National Road in 1806 caused it to go through three states, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, which could be defined as “for the...general Welfare.” With those precedents, the 1820 legislation was considered as an extension of previous bills, not wholly new legislation for wholly new projects.

On July 4, 1825 ground was broken with much fanfare and celebration for the National Road in St. Clairsville, OH. In 1827, Jonathan Knight surveyed east and west from Indianapolis in an absolutely straight line. In 1828 Joseph Shriver began surveying in Illinois from the Indiana state line to the Mississippi River. The National Road got to Zanesville in 1830 having been build over Zane’s Trace from Wheeling; by 1833 it had reached Columbus and finally got to Springfield, OH in 1838. In Indiana, the National Road extended across the state by 1834 albeit in various stages of completion. Indiana’s section was finally completed in 1850 with the last federal expenditure having been in 1841. In November of 1834, the traffic in Cumberland was redirected through The Narrows between Wills and Haystack Mountains rather than over Haystack Mountain as originally constructed.

By 1839 a right-of-way had been opened to Vandalia, IL. With the exception of the occasional crushed rock or timber-laden “corduroy” sections, the Illinois National Road was a dirt path dotted with tree stumps cut low enough that a wagon could easily navigate over them. Around 1842, Federal involvement in the road ended after an expenditure of more than \$6.8 million dollars. 1847 was the last time National Road completion came up in Congress, but since the states of Illinois and Missouri could not agree on the terminus, be it Alton, IL or St. Louis, MO, the bill went no farther.

Andrew Jackson’s administration was interested in getting out of the road building business altogether allowing states and private enterprise to handle the job. Starting in the early 1830s, the National Road began reverting to the states. This happened

with the Ohio Act of February 4, 1831 where the state was authorized to preserve and repair the road as well as erect tollgates. An act for Maryland and Pennsylvania to take over their portions of the road was passed on July 3, 1832, but these states did not actually take possession until 1835 after the Federal government had made repairs to the road east of Wheeling. Virginia (now West Virginia) assumed its portion of the road on March 2, 1833 followed by Indiana on August 11, 1848 and Illinois on May 9, 1856.

When the road basically ended at Springfield, OH for a period of time, the local business people took it into their hands to create a turnpike company for the construction of a road from Springfield to Dayton. Officially, the road was supposed to go straight from Springfield to Richmond, IN, but the people of Dayton and Eaton knew what an economic boon it would be to have the road go through their towns. No amount of convincing could get the Federal government to sway from its original course even though going from Springfield through Dayton and Eaton and on to Richmond would add a mere four miles to the route. The Dayton and Springfield Turnpike Company was chartered in 1838 and later a Western Turnpike Company was created to connect Dayton and Eaton with Richmond.

The Dayton Cutoff, as the faux National Road came to be known, was intended to attract traffic. The mile markers were designed in a manner similar to those used on the official National Road and of a similar material. If travelers were fooled into thinking the Dayton Cutoff was the official National Road, they were not disappointed. The road itself was of a superior construction and travelers probably wanted to go on a road that passed through a few towns rather than take the official road that passed through no towns. President Andrew Jackson gave consideration to the route through Dayton and Eaton, but on August 27, 1835 he agreed with the surveyor that the line should run directly from Springfield to Richmond.

National Road Heyday

Now we come to the period commonly known as the heyday of the National Road. This is a period from roughly 1818 when the road got to Wheeling to 1853 when the railroad got to Wheeling. During this period, the road carried a tremendous amount of traffic. According to Thomas B. Searight, author of a 1894 book on the history of the National Road, "For thirty-four years, the Cumberland Road was the great national highway, the principal avenue from the Atlantic slope to the Valley of the Mississippi. [It was] one great highway, over which passed the bulk of trade and travel, and mails between East and West."

Traffic

Descriptions of traffic on the National Road are so vivid as to be nearly breath taking what with the huge, lumbering Conestoga wagons pulled by as many as eight oxen, horses or mules; the regular freight wagons; the drovers herding hundreds of sheep, pigs, cattle or even geese along the road; the colorful, fleet and multitudinous stagecoaches; riders on horseback; travelers on foot; the fast mail service that carried only government correspondence and was the precursor to the Pony

Express; the emigrants walking beside their carts and wagons loaded with all their household goods and other worldly possessions.

Conestoga wagons were the forerunner to the modern semi-truck bringing valuable goods to the settlers and towns that began popping up along the road. A typical Conestoga was 26 feet long, twelve feet high, and weighed more than a ton. It could carry up to eight tons (16,000 pounds) of freight. The back wheel of a Conestoga was five feet tall. Not wanting to surrender valuable space, the Conestoga had no seat forcing the teamster driving the wagon to sit on an exterior lazy board or a member of the team. In some instances he would walk along beside the wagon. Rather than run the risk of not finding sufficient feed for the animals, fodder, especially grain, was frequently carried on board the Conestoga wagon.

Travelers and freight went in both directions. Going east were the mail, tobacco, lumber, livestock, grain, whiskey, coal and pelts. Going west were the people such as travelers, emigrants, pioneers or settlers; the mail, nails, gunpowder, flour and manufactured goods such as furniture and cloth. Many stagecoaches and freight wagons ran 'round the clock as companies vied with each other to cut the time from pick up to delivery.

Tolls

As states took over the responsibility for the road, they were expected to keep it in good repair. To acquire revenue for road maintenance, many tollgates were set up. Toll keepers were stationed at each gate, which could be as frequent as every ten miles. A tollhouse was provided for the toll keeper to live in. Some toll house were designed so that the toll keeper could sit up in his bed on the second floor and look all around the octagon-shaped story. Most tollhouses are now gone, but certain ones of significance remain, namely the ones at LaVale and Hancock, MD and at Addison and Uniontown, PA. The amounts of the tolls were posted on the outside of the tollhouse and varied with the item of traffic wishing to pass. Should a wagon come equipped with wheel rims of eight or more inches, generally no toll was required as such wheels actually helped to groom the road.

Bridges

During the heyday of the National Road, some exquisite bridges were built. Certain bridges on the National Road are called S-bridges. When the road came to a river or stream it frequently arrived at an oblique angle. A stronger bridge could be built by going straight across a river at a perpendicular angle. The bridge would be built at a right angle to the waterway and the roadway would be angled to accommodate the bridge resulting in a bridge having an "S" shape. Four of these remain in Ohio and they are Blaine Hill, Salt Fork, Peters Creek and Fox Run. The Salt Fork S-bridge built in 1828 is still drivable.

The country's only drivable Y-bridge is in Zanesville, OH. Moses Dillon built the first in 1814. After five years it collapsed and a second one was built. Thirteen years later, this bridge was condemned and another was built on what was by then the

official National Road. This was a toll bridge until 1868 when the state purchased it and made it free. In 1902, a fourth bridge of reinforced concrete was built and it stands to this day. When giving directions to the weary traveler, locals like to say, "Go to the middle of the bridge and turn left." Could that be right?!

In addition to the stone arch bridge over Wheeling Creek mentioned earlier, there are other arch bridges of particular note. One is the Casselman Bridge near Grantsville, MD built by David Shriver, who was the superintendent for National Road construction. This bridge no longer carries traffic, but it is still in great shape for having been built in 1813. Another arch bridge that is likewise in wonderful condition, but also does not carry traffic except for an annual wagon train re-enactment, is the five-arch Wilson Bridge that crosses the Conococheague Creek, a tributary of the Potomac.

Two incredible stone bridges are viewable in Marshall, IL. These bridges were constructed during the mid-1830s and the one at the west end of town still carries traffic. The amazing thing about these bridges is that they are made of carved stone, where each piece fits precisely and no mortar was used to hold the bridge together. The second bridge is at the east end of town and much more difficult to find, but is well worth the effort.

Finally we come to the most amazing bridge of all on the National Road. It is the suspension bridge at Wheeling that spans the main channel of the Ohio River over to Wheeling Island. This was the longest suspension bridge in the world at the time of its construction in 1849. Contrary to some beliefs, it was not designed by Roebling who designed the Brooklyn Bridge, but was designed by Charles Ellet, Jr. who also worked on the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge.

Taverns and Inns

During the heyday of the National Road, at fairly frequent intervals along the National Road were rest areas. These came in the form of taverns or inns where travelers could eat and possibly sleep or in the form of yards where drovers and wagon drivers could feed and rest their animals. Several of the inns/taverns survive to this day doing the same kind of business they have done for decades. One example is the Century Inn at Scenery Hill, PA. This inn has been engaged in the business of feeding and caring for its guests since 1794. Elsewhere in Pennsylvania is the Mount Washington Inn that is now a museum in conjunction with the Fort Necessity National Battlefield. The Casselman Inn at Grantsville, MD still provides food and lodging as it has since 1824 and the Red Brick Tavern in Lafayette, OH has been in operation since 1837.

Towns

As the National Road brought more and more people west to settle in the states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, towns began to crop up along the road. Initially many of these towns were no more than one street with perhaps a few cross streets. Sometimes these were known as "Pike" towns and the National Road was their main

street. For that reason, the National Road acquired the sobriquet of “America’s Main Street.” Two towns that maintain much of their original flavor are Morristown, OH and Greenup, IL. Eventually, people began to establish businesses along the National Road that were needed by the folks who had moved west such as wagon and harness makers, tanning shops and clothiers.

Accidents

Unfortunately, with all the traffic and congestion on the National Road, the inevitable was bound to happen. Henry Clay’s stagecoach was toppled over in the vicinity of Uniontown, PA. Clay jauntily commented that this was where Pennsylvania limestone met Kentucky clay, but others said it was “where Congress fell on its arse.” A more serious accident happened near Norwich, OH in 1833. A man named Christopher C. Baldwin was traveling from Cumberland to Zanesville on a mission for the American Antiquarian Society of Wooster, MA. Mr. Baldwin was intending to travel all the way to southern Ohio to view pre-historic Indian mounds, but his coach’s horses got tangled up with a herd of pigs and Mr. Baldwin was thrown from the seat he had taken next to the driver. This is believed to be the first fatal traffic accident to happen in Ohio. An Ohio historical marker was dedicated to Mr. Baldwin outside the Masonic Temple in Norwich on May 6, 2007.

National Road in Decline

A serious decline began to plague the National Road when the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad reached Wheeling in 1853. Railroad construction had begun with a groundbreaking ceremony in Baltimore, MD on July 4, 1828. The railroad progressed westward until it reached Cumberland in 1842. Eleven years later, the B&O had eclipsed the original National Road from Cumberland to Wheeling. Trains were faster and could carry more freight and passengers than wagons and coaches were able to do. Many believed the railroad would make regular roads obsolete and no longer of any practical use for long-distance travel. The coming of the railroad tolled the death knell for the National Road.

Not only did the B&O make the National Road obsolete, it did the same thing to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal (C&O). On the same day ground was broken for the B&O, a groundbreaking ceremony for the C&O was held in Georgetown near Washington D.C. The man turning the first spade of dirt was the President of the United States, John Quincy Adams. The C&O reached Cumberland in 1850, eight years after the arrival of the B&O. Originally intended to go all the way to the Ohio River, the C&O canal stopped in Cumberland because the railroad had rendered it unnecessary.

After spending \$6.8 million dollars to build the National Road, the Federal government ceased appropriating funds for the completion or maintenance of the road. Tolls were to be collected to pay for the maintenance of the road, but these were often insufficient or the money was redirected to other uses. Keeping the road in good repair had been a problem from the very beginning. Wheels, especially narrow carriage wheels, gouged ruts in the road and caused the stones comprising

the surface to spin off to the side. Since the macadam method had not been used on every section of the road, parts of the road tended to be extremely dusty during dry seasons and muddy to the point of impassible during wet seasons.

States were notorious for their failure to keep the roads in good repair. At no time during the heyday of the road was it in perfect condition from one end to the other. Gradually the road passed into the hands of the counties. The maintenance of the road then fell to the local governments. Sometimes as part of their tax payment, residents along the road were required to give of their time repairing and refurbishing the road.

In the state of Ohio, the National Road faced additional competition from the state's canal system. The Ohio-Erie Canal was completed by the early 1830s and the Miami-Erie Canal was finished by 1845. Built in a north-south direction, these canals were used to connect the interior of the state with the Great Lakes and the Ohio River allowing for an unlimited amount of trade and travel on an international scale.

National Road Resurgence

The impetus for the National Road's resurgence came from bicycle riders. A bicycle called the *Rover* came on the market in 1885. It was categorized as a safety bicycle because it had two wheels of equal size and a chain driven rear wheel. Unlike earlier bicycles, this one was easier to mount and easier to keep balanced. Americans went crazy for the safety bicycle. Known as the Bicycle Craze during the 1890s, thousands of bicycles were sold, but owners soon discovered a major problem. Bicycles were fine in town where the streets were paved, but what about out in the country where mainly dirt roads existed? Riding a bicycle on a rutted, dusty dirt road or a road that became awash in mud was no fun for a cyclist.

The Good Roads Movement was officially founded in May 1880, when bicycle enthusiasts, riding clubs and manufacturers met in Newport, Rhode Island to form the League of American Wheelmen to support the burgeoning use of bicycles and to protect cyclists interests from legislative discrimination. The league quickly went national and in 1892 began publishing *Good Roads Magazine*. In three years the circulation reached one million. Early good roads advocates enlisted the help of journalists, farmers, politicians and engineers in the project of improving the nation's roadways, but the movement took off when it was adopted by bicyclists.

Improved roads received another big boost when Americans fell in love with the automobile. Henry Ford put his Model A automobile on the market in 1903 and the Model T was put on the market just five years later. Intended for the masses, huge numbers of Model T vehicles were sold, only to have the owners run into the same difficulties as the bicyclists—bad roads. In addition to cyclist and car drivers, farmers had a vested interest in improved roads so they could get their products to market. The introduction of Rural Free Delivery by the Postal Service also contributed to the need for better roads. Fortunately a Supreme Court case, *Wilson*

v. Shaw, in 1907 paved the way for Congress to use the Commerce Clause in the Constitution to justify appropriating funds in aid of roads.

On July 11, 1916 the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 was signed into law. This was the first federal highway funding legislation in the United States. The legislation for the National Road was not aid to roads as it was intended to create a specific road. To obtain funds under the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, a state had to submit project plans, surveys, specifications and estimates for the project. Subsequently, beginning with the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1921, additional highway aid acts were put into law.

Certain enhancements were made to the National Road in the early 1900s. Due to the demands of World War I, parts of the National Road were paved in brick. This was done mainly as a means of transporting heavy military equipment from the point of manufacture in the mid-west to the Atlantic Coast. Between 1928 and 1929, the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution placed twelve monuments as a tribute to pioneer mothers who traveled west. Five of these majestic statues are on the National Road: Beallsville, PA; Wheeling, WV; Springfield, OH; Richmond, IN; and Vandalia, IL. Additionally, mile markers along the road were refurbished or replaced.

Because of improved road building technology, the number of roads in the United States grew exponentially. One of the most famous of roads to evolve in the early 20th Century was the Lincoln Highway, which has the distinction of being America's first transcontinental highway from Times Square in New York City to Lincoln Park in San Francisco. It marks its beginnings from 1913. However, a system of named roads throughout the United States was confusing to the traveler, as the name did not tell where the road went or whether it denoted a north-south road or an east-west road.

National Road 2nd Decline

A second death knell was tolled for the National Road with the approval of the United States Highway System in November 1926, which gave numbers to US Highways. The numbering system for US Highways was done on a simple grid. Highways traveling in an east-west direction were given even numbers and those going in a north-south direction were given odd numbers. Smaller numbers are in the north and east whereas larger numbers are in the south and west. Today we have US Route 1 going north and south on the east coast and US Route 101 doing likewise on the west coast. US Route 2 goes east and west along the northern continental United States and US Route 90 goes along the southern limits of the United States in the general vicinity of the Gulf of Mexico.

Many named roads were incorporated into the US Highway System. Frequently, number highways were placed on top of old named roads so that the Lincoln Highway became known as US-30 and the National Road took on the new name of US-40. Improved road building technology also allowed for the straightening of old

roads and for a technique called “cut and fill,” whereby hills were reduced and the resulting earth was used to fill in valleys. No longer did a road give the appearance of a ribbon lying lightly on the land.

Rather than going through a town, as was the case with named roads, many US Highways bypassed towns. This was both a blessing and a curse. It was a blessing as traffic increased and vehicles became larger, because small towns did not have to be altered to accommodate these. On the other hand, with traffic bypassing the town, many businesses were left with no customers, especially those that depended on the tourist trade. Sections of the road that were not incorporated into the US Highway System or used as local streets were simply abandoned, eventually becoming over grown by weeds and trees. Bridges that had been state-of-the-art at the time of construction, could no longer withstand the pressure from heavy trucks and rapid transit. Many of these were abandoned and left to crumble into rubble.

National Road Today

Americans are a mobile people. As part of our national character, we love to travel and we especially love to travel by automobile. Following World War II, travel increased at a great rate on American highways. Tourist accommodations such as motels, gas stations and eateries started to abound everywhere along with attractions designed specifically for the tourist. This was not, however, the reason given for the legislation to create the Interstate Highway System signed into law by President Dwight Eisenhower on June 29, 1956. The rationale for this legislation is in its name, the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act of 1956.

Shortly after graduating from the United States Military Academy at West Point, Eisenhower had participated in the 1919 Army convoy that traversed the United States on a mission to determine whether America’s roads were sufficient to transport heavy military equipment across country. They were not. Going across country, the equipment was frequently bogged down in mud or crashed through bridges unable to sustain the weight of the trucks and tanks. From Illinois through Nevada, practically all roads were unpaved. Recommendations resulting from the convoy included “encourage construction of a through-route and transcontinental highways.”

Eisenhower was serving in the European theatre during World War II when he saw first the Autobahn and fell in love. After his earlier experience with Army equipment on American roads, he knew that a high speed, transcontinental highway system where roads offer limited access was the answer to transporting military equipment across the United States. Obviously other benefits have resulted from America’s Interstate System. The transport of goods and services across the entire length and breadth of the country is one along with the opportunity to travel by automobile to many of the wonders our country has to offer. We are a nation of travelers. Thousands of people do not live anywhere near to their places of birth, yet the Interstate System allows for friends and relatives to visit each other readily and regularly.

The identification method for the Interstate Highways was very similar to the one used for the US Highways. Again odd numbers mean north-south roads and even numbers mean east-west roads. High numbers are in the east and north whereas low numbers are in the south and west. We have I-5 on the Pacific Coast and I-95 on the eastern seaboard. I-94 goes across the northern part of the country and I-10 goes across the south. For the National Road, however, there was a down side to this scheme.

Now the National Road's successor, US-40, suffered the same indignity of obliteration to which the original road had been subjected. The interstate highways, in the form of I-70 and I-68, were placed on top of US-40 or entirely new highways were created leaving the National Road that much more abandoned. Still more towns were bypassed and still more people lost their livelihoods. Additionally, one can say that a certain sameness is evident on the Interstate Highways that was not prevalent on the US Highways or the named roads. One interchange looks a lot like every other interchange—same gas stations, same fast food restaurants, same motels. A favorite quote comes from author William Least Heat Moon, "Life doesn't happen on the Interstate. It's against the law."

Over time, especially in the last several decades, an interest in historic preservation had taken hold in America. The National Road represents a national treasure worthy of preservation. As seen in this paper, so much of our nation's history is connected to the National Road. We have not lost all of it and organizations in all six of the National Road states are working hard to preserve and monument what is left. A quick search on the Internet will result in guides to the National Road in each state, interpretive centers that can be visited, annual wagon train re-enactments, yard sales, festivals and interpretive panels. Finding the road and its unique features is like an outdoor treasure hunt. It's a great ride. Take it and make your own history.

See you on the Road that Built the Nation!

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