

Old National Trail, Historical Route 40

By Elma Cass

A burning question of 150 years ago in this part of the country was----how can farmers get their surplus crops to market?

It was over 100 miles overland to any port on the Ohio River, and to the eastern cities many more than that. So in 1805, two years after Ohio became a state, some leaders in Congress, namely Calhoun, Clay, Worthington and Jefferson, fearful that the Westerners might set up their own government if not given an outlet, saw that the only solution was a great road running from east to west. A long period of debate in Congress followed as to whether the National Government had the authority to spend money for such a purpose. Finally a board was chosen to study a route for such a road. They decided the starting place should be Cumberland, Maryland on the Potomac River. It should then follow Braddocks Road , an old Indian trail across Pennsylvania , west to Pittsburgh , passing through Uniontown and Wheeling across the Ohio River ; and there instead of following another Indian trail to Chillicothe , (our first capitol), the route was to follow Zane's Trace to Zanesville , then due west to Columbus .

Construction finally began in 1811 and by 1818 had reached Wheeling, but the old political question was raised once more and work was halted until July 4, 1825 when a celebration at St. Clairsville marked the beginning of the construction in Ohio.

This was the first national road government project built by the United States War Department. Brigadier General Gratiot was in charge and the little village of Gratiot, east of Jacksontown, was named for the General.

It was a busy scene, the building of the National Road! First came the surveyors followed close by the ax men who cut a swath 80 feet wide through the timber. Others cut the trees into logs and grubbed the huge stumps, so they could be pried up and teams of horses moved them away. Next came ploughs and scrapers for grading the new road.

The road bed,66 feet wide, was all covered with 7 to 11 inches of broken stone and all bridges and culverts were made of cut stone also. One of these can be seen near Zanesville near Route 40, the old road having been straightened and made into a four lane highway now.

Some of this stone for the road bed through Hebron came from the quarry on the Jesse Geiger farm, one and one half miles west of Hebron. Stone markers every mile along this historic route marked the distance to Cumberland, Zanesville, and Columbus.

Hundreds of men found employment here and, because of their labor, by 1833 the great road had reached Columbus and by 1840 it had crossed the entire state.

Morris Schaff in his book "A Schetch of Etna and Kirkersville" (1905) says, "Often when boys could get our mother into a reminiscent mood, she would tell us how the camp fires of the workman lighted up the night all along the line: about the bustle, the teams coming and going, and on Sundays the drunken carousals and rioting: and finally, the awful death of so many of them by the scourge of cholera which swept the entire country."

When the road was finished, a mighty tide of people came over it to find new homesteads in the west. In this stream of new settlers, with their white canvassed covered wagons, could be seen the heads of the families or one of the grown up boys driving the teams, the women and children walking

sometimes ahead and sometimes behind the wagons, often driving a few cows or small herds of sheep: pens of chickens swung from the hind axle. Whole families would sing light heartedly as they walked along and when camped by the road side or in the woods at night.

Fast coaches drawn by as many as eight horses carried mail and passengers over the road. At one time there were 32 brightly painted coaches running every day. Charles Dickens, the English novelist, while visiting America, rode in one of these and later wrote about the rough roads and uncomfortable coaches. These vehicles for short distances could travel at the astonishing speed of 10 miles per hour. Following is a time table for 1835-6

MAIL PILOT LINE leaves Columbus for Wheeling daily at 6a.m. reaching Zanesville at 1 p.m. and Wheeling 6 a.m. next morning.

GOOD INTENT LINE leaves Columbus for Wheeling at 6 a.m. through to Wheeling (127 miles) in 20 hours, in time for stages to Baltimore and Philadelphia .

If one had been standing on the broad porch of an old Kirkersville tavern 100 years ago and hear the rumble of the stage coming through the covered bridge at the east end of town and the horn blowing, he could never have forgotten the experience. The driver usually a middle aged, imposing, silent red-faced man, wore a cap, yellow buck skin gloves, and had a buffalo robe around his knees in the winter.

A fresh team of big roans waited in the old white-washed tavern barn to replace the tired bays which the stable boys hurried to unhitch. The team in place, lines was tossed to the driver who gathers them up and calls out, "let Them Go" and off they dash.

Crowds of idlers, stable boys and some townspeople of Kernersville stand around, all interested in the great event.

Had one been on that porch late one afternoon in August, 1848, he might have seen a tall sad-faced passenger, a member of the House of Representatives, going home from the 30th Congress, get out of the coach and go into the tavern to eat supper---it was Abraham Lincoln.

Two other taverns near here were Clark's Hotel at Jacksontown, which burned a few years ago and one at Luray, the brick of which were used to build Smoke's house and also Marian Martin's.

A daily "Pony Express Line" also passed over the National Road increased the excitement and interest in the villages along the road and varied the monotony of village life. The express ponies were ridden by boys and put through a fast gallop or "half run", the relays being five miles apart. The small saddle bags containing express matter were fastened to the saddle. At the end of each run, saddle and bags were instantly transferred from the exhausted foaming pony to a fresh one, the rider mounted upon him and rode away at full speed, with a delay of not more than one minuet. The stations in Licking County were Brownsville, Linnville, Etniers (a little village west of Jacksontown now extinct), Luray and Etna.

Brownsville and Linnville were laid out soon after the construction of the road by Adam Brown who named it after himself and Adam Linn, who was then about to establish himself there as its first merchant. Amsterdam was brought into existence after the location and during the construction of the National Road by Abraham Boring and George Barnes.

Another scene along the road never to be forgotten was the great droves of cattle, hogs, sheep, horses and mules that were driven over the road on their way to Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Philadelphia markets. The following chart shows how far each could travel in a day:

Cattle	14 miles per day
Horses	20 miles per day
Mules	20 miles per day
Sheep	10 - 15 miles per day
Hogs	7 miles per day

A man walked along in front of hogs scattering shelled corn, now and then. Mules ran loose, following an old mare usually ridden by a boy.

To help in the repair of the road, toll gates were set up, at first at intervals of 20 miles but later this distance was shortened up to about 10 miles. One such toll gate was just west of Luray.

Tolls were collected from all types of passengers according to the amount of damage each might be expected to do. Here is the toll rates:

1845

Hogs by the score	5 and 10 cents
Sheep by the score	5 and 10 cents
Cattle	20 cents
Horses led or driven	3 cents
Mules led or driven	3 cents
Horse and rider	5 cents
Every sled	5 cents
Every sleigh-one horse	5 cents
More than 4 wheels	4 cents

No toll was charged for the following:

People going to and from church: Muster (to Army drill); regular business on a farm; to a Woodland, Mill, Funeral, place of Election, market, in their own country, School children, Preachers, U.S. Mail stage, Wagon carrying U.S. troops or Ammunition, Cavalry, U.S. or state Militia.

Several new words or nicknames which we hear yet today came into being about this time; One of them was "stogies". It came about in this way: the most common vehicle on the road was the canvass-covered Conestoga wagon which carried supplies into the interior country and farm produce out to the east. The wagons were so named because they were first made in Conestoga, Pennsylvania.

Soon the drivers of these wagons were nick-named "stogies" They would get a smoke for themselves by rolling a cigar from the load of tobacco which they were hauling. They made their cigars very long, to last from one tavern to another, since the taverns was the only place they could get a "light". Soon a manufacturer made long cigars and called them "stogies". Another word "pike" which referred to the National Road came into use. At each toll gate was located a turn-pike to control the passage of traffic. Some times it was a heavy wooden post with arms of wooden pikes or sometimes simply a bar to be raised and lowered. When the toll was paid the attendant

turned the pike or raised and lowered the bar to allow the passenger to go through. In time the word "pike" came to be used synonymously for national Road.

The pike continued to be of great importance in the settling of western Ohio, Indiana and lands farther west. The freight over it was lessened for a time with the advent of the Central Ohio Railroad and the Ohio Canal.

However, by the year 1916, the old road bed was so full of ruts and holes that it was necessary to improve it. At that time it was widened and made into a hard surface road to accommodate the automobile, then in its infancy.

In the decade 1920- 1930, motor trucks and buses operating on the paved National Road developed into formidable rivals of the railroad. This necessitated even more improvement and again it was widened and made into a 3 lane highway. But the increase in travel made this dangerous and inadequate and in 1954, the government started surveying for a 4 lane highway project through our own immediate vicinity, which resulted in the relocation of Route 40. This was opened for travel in the fall of 1959.

It extends from one mile east of Brownsville and is to be a part of Interstate U.S. 70 which later will go from coast to coast.

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