

The National Road

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In 1808, as stated by a report to Congress issued by Jefferson's Secretary of Treasury Albert Gallatin, the best way to ship goods from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia was by water. Goods were shipped down the Monogahela River to Ohio, down the Mississippi to New Orleans, and then through the Gulf Of Mexico, around Florida and up the Atlantic Coast to Philadelphia. This plan obviously was not feasible since this route made the journey close to 3000 miles. The distance from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh by land is only 280 miles. Gallatin made this point and showed clearly that the United States needed a road between the two cities, a National Road.

The National Road was the first federally funded and planned national highway in America. The purpose of the National Road was to forge a critical transportation link between East Coast cities and the wild western frontier of the Appalachian Mountains. The building of the National Road was begun in 1808 in Cumberland, Maryland, and the first section of the road reached Wheeling, West Virginia, in 1818. By 1850 the Road had been extended to its farthest western point, Vandalia, the Illinois state capital. There were two routes departing from Vandalia towards the Mississippi, one to St. Louis and the other to Alton.

The National Road, according to [A Guide To The National Road](#), was both obsolete and premature from the time that it was built--obsolete because the emerging technology of the railroad would soon offer a far more efficient means of overland transportation, and premature because the technology that could make use of an improved road network, the automobile, was nearly a century away.

The National Road never reached the Mississippi River. The National Road did, however, show the federal government's power to open the gateway to the West. Travelers on the National Road today owe something to the pioneering efforts of their ancestors.



Travel was difficult on the Old National Road, as stated by 90 year-old Branson Harris of Green Fork. Harris's recollections are possibly the earliest record of travel in Indiana on the National Road, recorded in his book, "[Some Recollections of My Boyhood](#)." Harris remembers a visit made to an uncle living in Indianapolis that took all of two days. Harris recalls that the National Road had recently been "chopped and grubbed out," meaning that his journey took place after the fall of 1829 since the government had issued contracts in October of that year for cutting and grubbing. Cutting and grubbing contracts were made to clear brush and timber from a roadbed 80 feet in width to allow future expanding. All stumps within the center 30 feet were to be grubbed out and rolled to the outer edge of the road.

The National Road has many names: The Cumberland Road, Ohio's Road, Uncle Sam's Road, U.S. 40, The Great Western Road, and simply The Road. Travel and westward expansion along the National Road was greatly encouraged and therefore was regulated by the government so that high prices would not discourage settlers. A person wishing to open a tavern was required to

obtain a license, have good behavior, and observe all the ordinances relating to the innkeepers within the state. The court fixed rates on most products. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner were all 25 cents. Horse stabling was 50 cents per night, lodging was 12.5 cents per night, one-half pint of whiskey was 12.5 cents and one-half pint of rum was 25 cents.

Throughout Illinois and along the entire National Road stage coach stations often developed into villages and towns overnight. As the railroads expanded westward, Illinois maintained a steady growth while others along the National Road dissolved into ghost towns. Marshall is in its present location as a result of the intersection of Illinois Route 1 and the National Road or Route 40. The original stagecoach stop was located on the west edge of town next to the present property of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Fitzjarrald and was torn down during the 1960's. Another stagecoach stop is located two miles east of Martinsville. Currently the home of Jesse Shaffner, it has been moved across the present Route 40 and is said to still contain some of the wooden-pegged timber, part of the original structure. Just outside of Martinsville to the west, a small shingle-sided dwelling is said to have been another stagecoach stop. It is located on the south of the old pavement about one-half mile past Turkey Run Hill.



West of Marshall, Old U.S. 40 crosses a stone arch bridge, in an area known at one time as Calvert Hollow. The Stone Arch Bridge was built by army engineers over a century ago as part of the original National Road. Each stone was shaped to exact size by hand and no mortar or concrete was used. The stones were clamped together with keys to prevent slipping. One other bridge is remaining in Clark County. It is located one and one-half miles east of Auburn on the land of Odie Starkey. This is also the only known area where three different positions of the road can be seen in Clark County.

There are many historic places along the National Road encompassing Marshall. The Archer House is a single spectacular example of buildings and architecture of the time along with the lodgings that travelers would be accustomed to. Famous people such as Abraham Lincoln stayed in the Archer House while passing through or conducting business at the Clark County Courthouse. The Main Street of Marshall shows numerous excellent representations of the past. Some buildings date back to the late 1800's and have been or are currently being restored to their original beauty. Marshall has other renowned historic buildings such as the Dulaney house, the Lewis home, and the Doll house.



The National Road changed the way that the people of the United States traveled. The Road also opened up a passage way to the west and was a key player in westward expansion. The Road is a reminder of the pioneers who came west with nothing but high hopes, searching for a better life with more freedom, trying to fulfill all their expectations, and striving to achieve their goals and dreams.