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Highway to History: The National Road (Rt. 40)

CAMBRIDGE, OHIO (March 17, 2022) – The National Road offers adventure seekers today a great road trip just as it did two centuries ago when the United States Congress commissioned its start. More than 25 key attractions, points of interests and interpretive signs, specific to the history of the road, are located throughout Guernsey County, Ohio. From the famous "S" bridges to stagecoach stops and tollgates, the route is lined with picture perfect sites.

THE ROAD THAT BUILT A NATION

Often billed as "the road that built a nation," the National Road (Route 40) stretches nearly 700 miles across six states—from Maryland's seashore to Illinois' farmland. Thirty-two miles of the road pass through Guernsey County, Ohio, traveling down the heart of Cambridge along Wheeling Avenue.

Before becoming the iconic road, it is today, the National Road began as a simple wilderness footpath connecting Kentucky and Ohio and was used primarily by Native Americans and frontiersmen.

The trail soon became referred to as Zane's Trace after Ebenezer Zane, who was commissioned by the U.S. Congress in 1796 to begin construction of a connecting wagon route from Zanesville, Ohio, to Wheeling, West Virginia.

The trace quickly grew in size and importance to the expansion of the country westward. In 1806, President Thomas Jefferson signed legislation enabling the construction of the first federally funded national road. The road took nearly 30 years to construct from east to west, reaching completion in Guernsey County in 1828. It wasn't long before inns, taverns and other amenities sprung up along the road, catering to the needs of businessmen, politicians, farmers and everyday citizens as they traversed the road at increasing rates.

From the 1820s to the 1840s the road served as the main artery for the country's commerce east to west until the railroad emerged in the 1850s as the prime mode of transportation for goods and people. It was not until the early 1900s, at the onset of World War I, that the National Road began to regain national attention as the government made it a priority to maintain it and other major highways.

ROAD TRIP

The dawn of the automobile brought new reasons for Americans to travel. As they visited friends and relatives, or took scenic trips, they brought with them the need for new restaurants, service shops, theaters, hotels and more. In the 1960s, the road was eclipsed by the creation of Interstate 70, but has since been designated as an All-American, National Scenic Byway and is gaining the attention of travelers once more for those seeking a less hectic driving route.

Guernsey County's rich cultural heritage is reflected in the historic architecture and agricultural scenery. Antique shops, locally operated restaurants, attractions and inns along Route 40 enhance the experience of traveling this historic highway.

MUSTSEE SITES

- **Downtown Cambridge** - The National Road carries you through the center of the Cambridge Historic District where you can still find examples of 19th century architecture. The Guernsey County Courthouse is in the center of town with a marble Civil War Soldiers' Monument standing in front. The Soldiers' Monument commemorates the patriotism, hardships and sacrifices of those from Guernsey County, who answered the country's call in time of peril. Visitors today will find downtown busy with activity, locally owned boutique shops, restaurants and more.

- **Peters Creek "S" Bridge** - (Circa 1828) - Peter's Creek "S" Bridge was built with well-cut sandstone and good mortar in the shape of an "S." Floods of traffic used this bridge on the Old National Road heading for the western frontier and the eastern seaboard markets. Today the bridge is a picturesque place to picnic.

- **National Museum of Cambridge Glass** - Experience what it was like to work at The Cambridge Glass Company (1902–1958). Watch a vintage film showing the Cambridge artisans as they demonstrate the handmade glassmaking process inside the famous glasshouse. You can then dress as glassworkers and hold the original tools that were used to manufacture each piece. Stroll through colorful displays featuring over 10,000 pieces of handmade Cambridge Glass. Make a pencil rubbing from an authentic etching plate once used by the company known worldwide for quality. Visit the Museum Gift Shop with genuine Cambridge Glass for unique gifts.

- **National Road & Zane Grey Museum** - This unique facility tells the story of the building of the National Road and the settlement of America's Midwest. Also featured is an exhibit on author Zane Grey, the "Father of Western Fiction" and a spectacular collection of locally-made Art Pottery. Guided tours.

- **The Pennyroyal Opera House** - Built in 1830 as a Presbyterian Church, the structure is now home to bluegrass concerts.

- **Old Washington** - On July 24, 1863 General John Hunt Morgan and his Confederate Cavalry arrived in Old Washington and fought the only Civil War skirmish (Battle of Hyde's Hill) on the National Road in Ohio. Also nearby, visitors will find an interpretive marker for Stony Manor Inn, which originally served as the National Road Tavern (circa 1829).

- **Motorcycling** - For the motorcycle enthusiast the National Road offers a dynamic ride of curvy, two-lane roads. Hop on your bike and enjoy one of five tours through Guernsey County and surrounding areas. Download a free motorcycle tour brochure at VisitGuernseyCounty.com. After a ride through the countryside, stop by Theo's Restaurant in downtown Cambridge for some "mile-high" pie and a delicious meal.

Pick up a free Historic National Road driving tour brochure at the Cambridge/Guernsey County Tourist Information Center in downtown Cambridge.

For more information on area attractions, events and overnight packages, contact the Cambridge/Guernsey County Visitors & Convention Bureau office at 627 Wheeling Avenue, Suite 200 in downtown Cambridge, call 800-933-5480, email info@VisitGuernseyCounty.com, or log onto VisitGuernseyCounty.com.

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