

# The National Road

In 1806, Congress decided to proceed with the laying out of a road through the mountains from Cumberland, Md. to the Ohio River. This was to become the National Road, also called the Cumberland Road.

Progress on the road was slow. It was five years before contracts were even let to begin actual construction of the first ten miles west from Cumberland, and the road did not reach the Ohio River until 1818. In 1825 it was decided to continue the road across Ohio and by 1828 the road had finally reached Guernsey County.

It is difficult to over-emphasize the importance of the National Road to this area. It was the super-highway of its day. Travelers would go far out of their way to reach it if, once on it, their journey was then made easier. That this is so is graphically shown by the suggested routing in Jame's Route Book for 1853 for traveling from Cleveland to Wheeling. Rather than going direct by stagecoach over existing roads, they suggested going by lake steamer to Sandusky (!), railroad to Newark, another railroad to Zanesville, and then stagecoach over the National Road to Wheeling, passing, of course, through Guernsey County enroute. Evidently it was better to go that round-about way to Wheeling by comfortable means of travel as far as Zanesville, and then over the National Road, than by stagecoach the entire more direct way over poor quality roads.

Why was the National Road such a good road? Because of the construction methods used when compared with other roads, and because of the standards adopted as to road width, gradient, etc. The following chart compares the National Road with earlier roads.

Earlier roads	National Road
No uniformity as to width of cleared road	66 feet cleared
No uniformity as to grade	1 in 30 was to be maximum except where could not be helped, and 1 in 150 to be minimum, for better drainage.
No uniformity as to curvature of road in cross-section	slight curve, "more convex in center than at sides".
No uniform width of paved portion	20 feet width paved
No uniformity of stone base, stone top or type of stone used	Uniformity as to these matters-stone had to be crushed limestone, flint or granite
Poor drainage	Excellent drainage
Very little cutting or filling	Some cutting and filling, leading to straighter, less hilly roads

In summary, the National Road was, far and away, the best road of its day.

As railroads became more numerous, the importance of the National Road diminished until, by the latter 1800's, it had fallen into great dis-repair, was not used by long-distance travelers, had become little more than a local road, and its care and maintenance had been given to the states, and even to the counties.

The coming of the automobile revived interest in road travel and the Federal government then took it over again and established the Federal highway system. Once again, it became an important highway.



This page courtesy of Retail Systems Division NCR Cambridge, Ohio

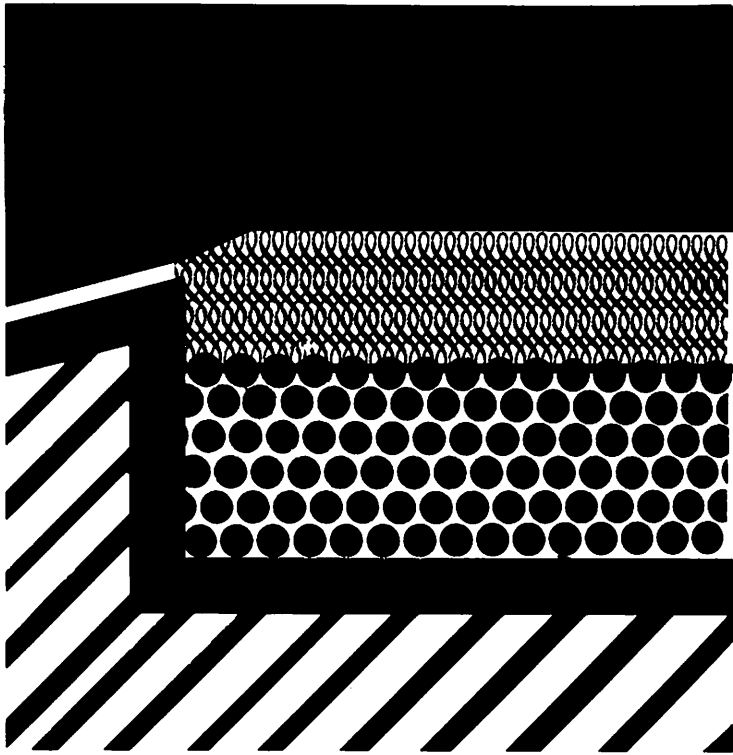
"A nation passed here"

## Diagram of the National Roads

### FIRST NATIONAL ROAD IN OHIO 1825-1834

Base stones of a size to pass through a 7 inch ring, piled 12 inches deep. Top stones to pass through a 3 inch ring, piled 6 inches deep.

Proved unsatisfactory, for the small stones often were washed away leaving the large stones exposed on the surface. The road became very rocky.



### SECOND NATIONAL ROAD IN OHIO 1834 and after

The old road was torn up and the roadbed leveled, with a slight rise in the center of not more than 3 inches. The Macadam process was then used for the surface of the road.

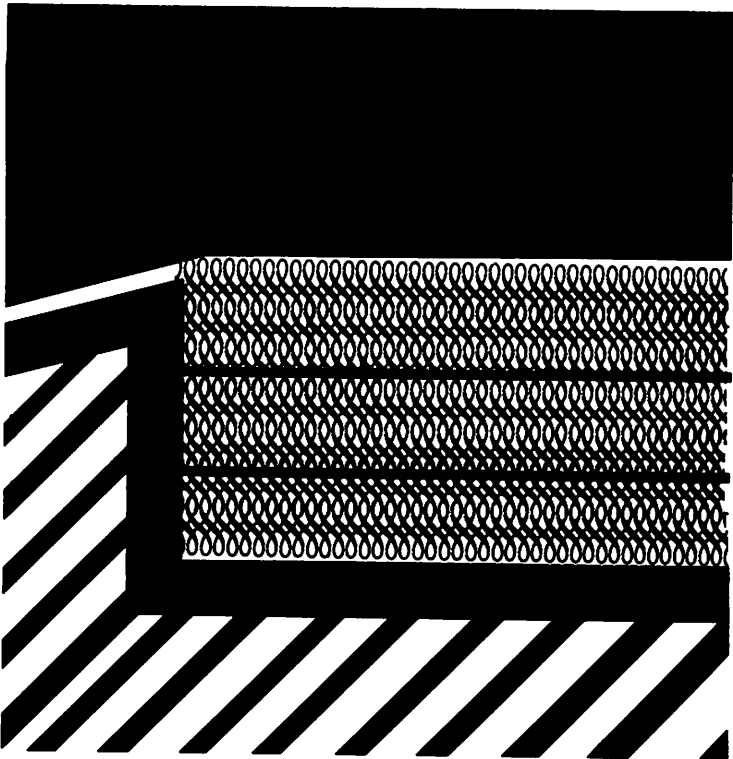
Crushed limestone, flint or granite was laid 3 inches deep. Travel was then permitted to help pack it down.

Another layer 3 inches deep was laid and more travel was permitted.

A third layer 3 inches deep was laid.

No binding material was used between the stones. They were supposed to seek their own level and eventually form a hard, solid, and level surface.

It was an improvement over the earlier road, but required constant maintenance. Hence the need for tolls.



# Tolls On The National Road

Tolls on the National Road were necessary to raise money for its upkeep, and the tolls were based upon the degree of damage to the road caused by the particular vehicle or type of user; narrow wagon wheels cost more than wider wheels, cattle cost more than sheep, a man riding a horse cost more than a man walking beside that same horse. The following chart shows the tolls used on the National Road in Ohio between 1831 and 1900.

TOLLS ON THE NATIONAL ROAD IN OHIO (1831-1900.)						
	1831	1832	1836	1837	1845 <sup>60</sup>	1900
Score sheep or hogs .....	.10	.05	.06¼	.06¼	.05	.12
Score cattle .....	.20	.10	.12½	.12½	.20	.25
Every horse, mule or ass, led or driven .....	.03	.01½	.02	.03	.03	.05
Every horse and rider ....	.06¼	.04	.06¼	.06¼	.05	.06
Every sled or sleigh drawn by one horse or ox .....	.12½	.06¼	.08	.06	.05	.12
Every horse in addition ....	.06¼	.04	.04	.04	.05	.06
Every dearborn, sulky, chair or chaise, 1 horse .....	.12½	.08	.12½	.12½	.10	.12
Every horse in addition ....	.06¼	.04	.06¼	.04	.05	.06
Every chariot, coach, coachee, horses .....	.18¾	.12½	.18¾	.18¾	—	.30
Every horse in addition ....	.06¼	.03	.06¼	.06¼	—	.12
Every vehicle wheels under 2½ in. in breadth .....	.12½	—	.12½	.10	—	—
Every vehicle wheels under 4 in. in breadth .....	.06¼	.06¼	.08	.08	—	—
Every horse drawing same ..	.03	.02	.04	.05	—	—
Every vehicle wheels exceeding four and not exceeding five inches .....	.04	—	—	—	—	—
Every vehicle wheels exceeding four and not exceeding six inches .....	—	.02	.04	.06¼	—	—
Every horse or ox drawing same .....	.02	.02	.02	.05	—	—
Every vehicle wheels exceeding six inches .....	—	—	—	.04	—	—
Every person occupying seat in mail stage .....	.04	.03	—	—	—	—

There were certain exemptions from these tolls. These included persons going to church and to funerals, going to places of election, to mill, to market, and to their ordinary place of business. Clergymen were exempt altogether, and so were children going to school. Mail coaches were also exempt.

Many persons tried to evade the payment of tolls by either by-passing the toll gate, if they were familiar with the territory, or by trying to claim one of the above reasons for being exempt from the tolls. It was said that often the churchgoers exceeded in number the persons who actually made it to church, and funerals became epidemic.

Human nature was apparently the same then as now.

This page courtesy of First National Bank of Cambridge



Mile Post along National Road near Middlebourne in its original place



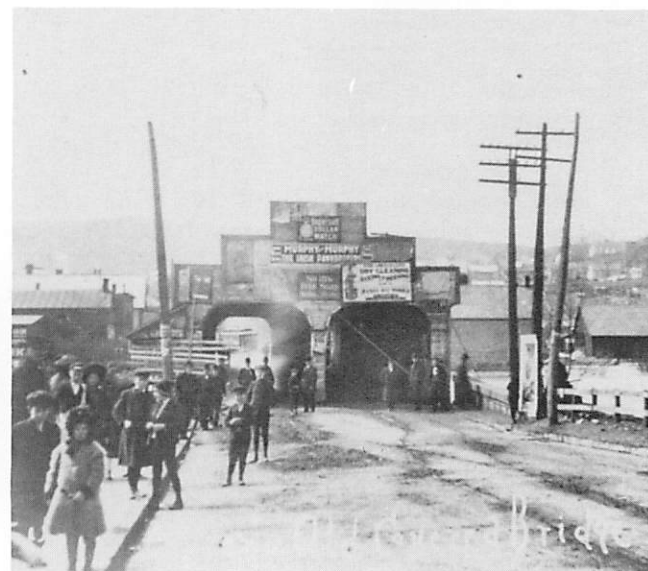
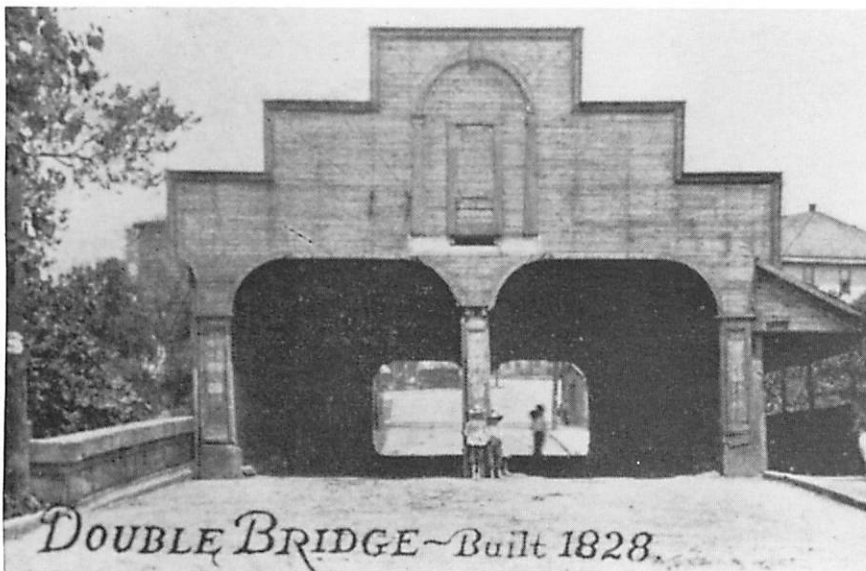
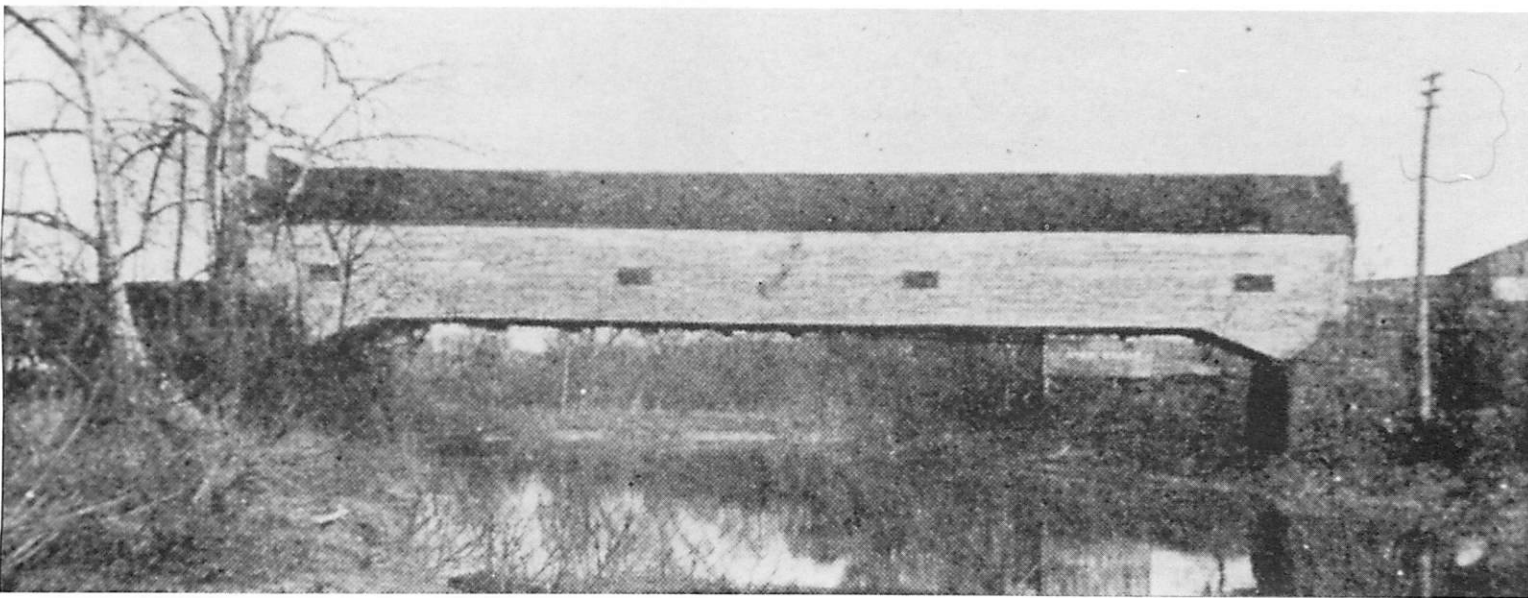
Toll gate on East Wheeling Ave.

## The Double Bridge

For nearly a century, all of the traffic over the National Road that passed through Guernsey County also passed through the famous Double Bridge. Built in 1828, it lasted until the 1913 flood, after which it was condemned.

According to Wolfe, the bridge was originally built over dry land in a field just south of the creek, and after it was completed then the creek was re-channeled under the bridge.

Because of its unique place in Guernsey County history, several of the best of the existing pictures of the bridge are set forth below.

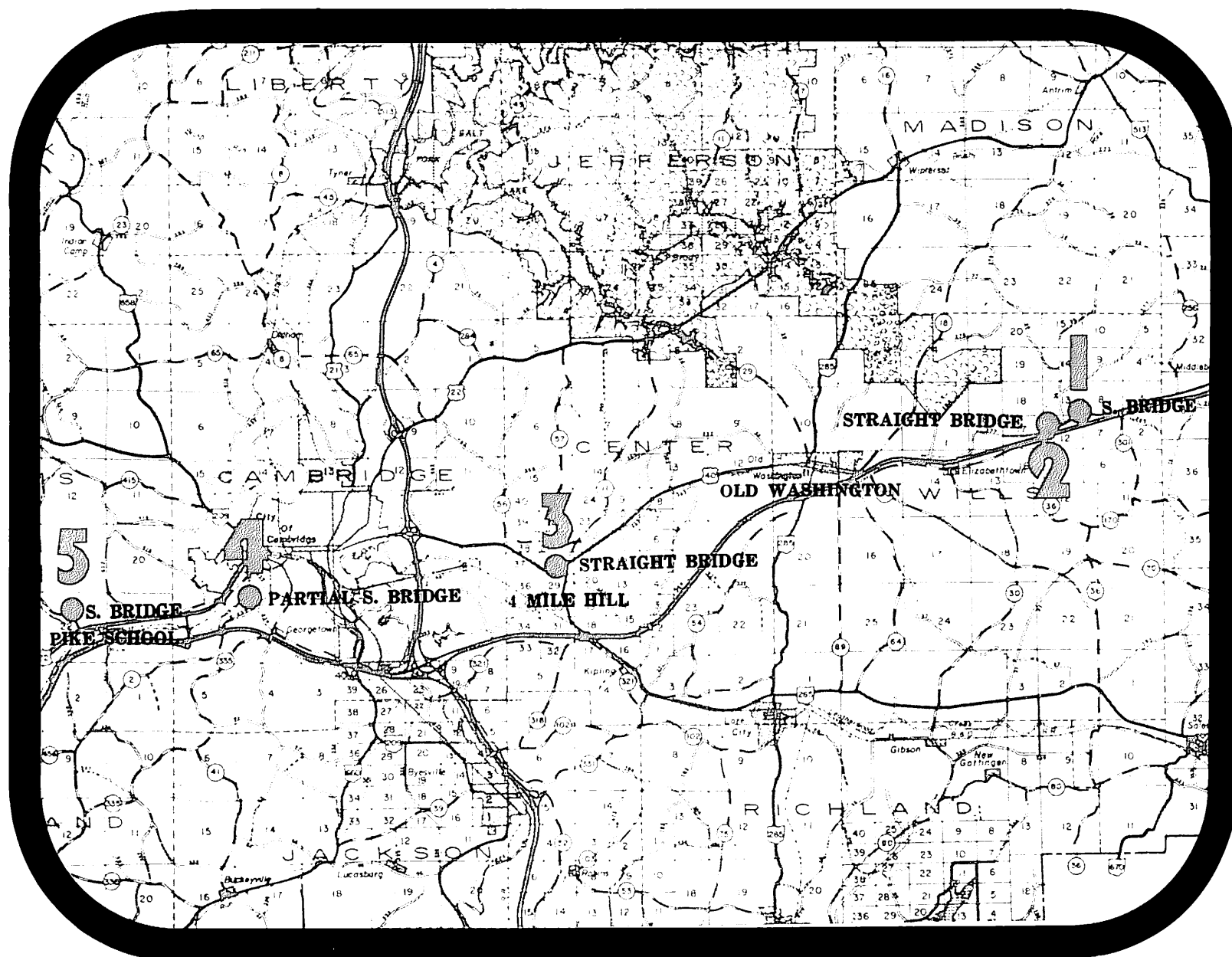


*This page courtesy of* Guernsey County Auto Dealers Association

# The Stone Bridges Of The National Road "S" And Otherwise

Guernsey County has five bridges that date back to 1828. These are the stone bridges that were built when the National Road was constructed through the county. Two of the bridges are S-Bridges, one is a partial S-Bridge, and the other two are straight bridges. These bridges are all original, and from 1828 until the latter part of the nineteenth century helped to carry literally millions of persons into the heartland of America in its

westward expansion. President Andrew Jackson passed over these bridges while President in 1831; so did President Santa Anna as he was being taken, a prisoner, to Washington City after the battle of San Jacinto. These bridges are among our most historic links with the past. They are pictured on the next page and their locations are set forth on the schematic chart below.






# Stone Bridges



**"S" BRIDGE**



**Old National Road**

**Built about 1828**

Where the road crossed a creek at an angle, a stone arch bridge was built at right angles to the stream flow. "S" shaped walls were then built to guide traffic around the jog from the direction of travel across the bridge and back onto the road line. An arch parallel with the stream flow and in line with the road would have been more difficult and costly to build.

THIS MARKER ERECTED BY OHIO SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS - 1964

