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National Road

Yard sale, tour of old highway are planned

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IT'S BEEN a long time since ground was broken in 1825 in St. Clairsville for the National Road, but the glorious old highway still is alive with activities.

Historic National Road Yard Sale Days are planned May 27-31, and a tour of the eastern portion of the road, including Belmont County, is slated in October by the Ohio National Road Association.

Cyndie Gerken, Ohio National Road Association president, said this is the first time that the association has sponsored a tour for the public of the eastern portion of the nation's first federally-funded interstate highway. The bus will leave Reynoldsburg and travel to the Suspension Bridge in Wheeling before returning to the Columbus area.

The association board, however, toured the eastern part of the road in March, and Eugene "Doc" Householder, who heads the Belmont County Tourism Council, joined them to point out highlights in Belmont County.

Gerken indicated in late May, people not only will have an opportunity to participate in yard sales, but association members in some areas will distribute information about the road sometimes termed as "Ohio's longest museum."

This marks the fourth annual Six-State Historic National Road Yard Sale, and the amount of participation reveals its popularity.

"Every year, it grows more and more," said Gerken. She said more people are becoming enthusiastic about the National Road, which is an All-American Road and a state scenic byway.

"It never ceases to amaze me how many people live or work on the road but don't know its history," Gerken said. She described the yard sale as "a fun way" for the association to provide information about the road.

Work also is under way on a trip on the western portion of the road, according to the association president.

Belmont County's representatives to the association are Jeana Paglialonga and Nancy Campbell, and Greg Zelenitz is an ex-officio member of the board.

Overall, the National Road, which became U.S. 40 in 1926, covers nearly 228 miles in Ohio. The upcoming yard sale, however, is along more than 700 miles of the historic road in six states.

Householder said he expects more participation in the yard sale this year in Belmont County, and Lorado Andears is distributing flyers about the sale. He added the Arrowhead Motel, Morristown, (740) 782-1091, and 2 Sibs Antique Center and Auction Co. (former Hills building), Ohio Valley Mall, 699-0801, are locations where people may set up sales, and arrangements can be made by calling the tourism council, 695-4359, or the two locations.

Householder said two-sided signs about the sale are available at no cost at the tourism office.

During the October tour, Gerken said among the places to be viewed are the Wheeling Suspension Bridge, the Blaine Bridge whose designation is Ohio's official Bicentennial Bridge, the Great Western School, Bridge Tavern and pike towns such as Morristown, which is designated as the Morristown Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places.

They'll also be able to view the S-bridge, west of Middlebourne in Guernsey County. It's the only S-bridge in the state that vehicles can still travel across.

Bricked portions of the National Road can be seen in some areas. The federal government in 1918 selected the National Road as the best way to transport military supplies overland to help in the World

Article Photos



THE ONLY S-bridge open for traffic in Ohio is located near Middlebourne in Guernsey County. The Blaine Bridge, which is the official Bicentennial Bridge for Ohio, also is an S-bridge. Another S-bridge, sometimes known as "the crooked bridge," was on the National Road near Hendrysburg, but it was covered when Ohio 800 was rerouted several decades ago.

War I effort.

More than 75 miles of the road in Eastern Ohio "were paved with brick, creating the longest continuous stretch of brick pavement in America at the time," according to the "Touring Ohio" Web site.

Then, too, some mile markers still remain from the 1800s. At the top of the old stones is listed the number of miles to Cumberland, Md., where the road construction began while on two slanting sides reveal the number of miles to the next largest towns, east and west.

In 1828, the Ohio legislature approved a penalty for breaking or defacing the mile markers. A person found guilty of this type of vandalism was "fined in the sum of not more than five hundred dollars, or be imprisoned in a dungeon of the jail of the County, and be fed on bread and water only, not exceeding thirty days, or both, at the discretion of the court."

That penalty was researched and contributed by Vicki Burton, National Road historian, for "Belmont County History 1988."

In nearby Guernsey County, those on the October tour will travel through Old Washington, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. A battle occurred in that town during the Civil War, and the cemetery includes three graves of Confederate cavalrymen, who were part of Morgan's Raiders.

Interstate 70 has resulted in less travel on U.S. 40, which does not strictly follow the National Road, but sights and sites are numerous on the old road, which was constructed at a cost of about \$3,400 a mile through Belmont County.

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