



*...The Time is NOW!*

Friday, June 23, 2006

## Local exhibit depicts history of old National Road

*Randolph Twp., Clay Twp. and Vandalia-Butler Twp. historical societies share information for display*

**By Marilyn McConahay**  
Independent Staff Writer

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Photo by Marilyn McConahay Left to right, exhibit coordinator Sue Cummings, treasurer and membership secretary for the Randolph Township Historical Society; Jim Garwood, past president of Vandalia-Butler Township Historical Society and Jean Deitering, treasurer of Clay Township Historical Society are proud of their collaborative exhibit, "Along the National Road."

Imagine the wild and open countryside before there was an Englewood Dam or a "crossroads of America," where two once major roads intersect in a community called Vandalia – a time when there was very little population.

Three local historical societies – Randolph Township, Clay Township and Vandalia-Butler Township – have collaborated to create a comprehensive exhibit that tells a story of transformation. Many of the fascinating things that happened to evolve the area have been carefully chronicled in "Along the National Road," the exhibit open now at the Englewood Government Center.

The exhibit, which opened on June 15, will remain open through July 31 (closed July 4). Hours will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays and on two Saturdays, June 14 and July 1 from 1 to 4 p.m.

"On the two Saturdays, historical society members will be on hand to speak with visitors," said Sue Cummings, coordinator of the exhibit and treasurer of the Randolph Township Historical Society.

Also, the July 12 Randolph Township Historical Society meeting will be held at the Government Center at 7:30 p.m.

"The exhibit will be open to the public that night from 7:30 p.m. to around 9 p.m.," Cummings said.

The public is invited to "tour the historic National Road and old Route 40, from east to west across Northern Montgomery County."

"This is a self-guided tour with four stops," Cummings explained.

The first stop is the Ohio National Road video, painstakingly produced by Paul Dewey, board member of the Randolph Township society.

After taking in an overview, visitors can move onto Stop 2 on the east side of the lobby, the Butler Township display.

Stop 3, in the center of the lobby, takes visitors through the Randolph Township displays.

Stop 4 depicts Clay Township's history and is located along the west wall of the lobby.

The National Road was conceived by Secretary of State Albert Gallatin and was authorized by Congress in 1806, to cover more than 700 miles.

It began in Baltimore, Md. and crossed six states, ending at East St. Louis, Ill. Construction on the 30-foot wide road began in 1811.

It eventually opened the state of Ohio and part of the Old Northwest Territory to settlement, helped to open up trade possibilities in Ohio and enabled Ohioans to participate in affairs of the new nation.

"We're very proud of our exhibit. It was a collaboration of the three historical societies – we share a common goal of preserving local history and making people aware of events that transpired that brought us to where we are today,"

Cummings said.

"Both Vandalia's and Englewood's growth are tied to the National Road. They are called "pike towns," putting up in liveries and putting up buildings so that travelers would have a place to stay," she said.

"Clay Township had no pike towns. But they had little places called Bachman, Arlington and Swanktown, which is located at routes 49 and 40," she explained.

Jim Garwood, past president of Vandalia-Butler, is equally proud of the display.

"The Old National Trail with Vandalia started with a covered bridge that came out of Brandt across from Tadmor. T it made a curve onto what became Vandalia," he said. "Routes 40 and 25 crossed in Vandalia, making it the "crossroads of America."

"It was very small, much like Englewood, until the crossroads happened," he said.

In case you never heard of Tadmor, it was destroyed in he 1913 flood.

For more information, visit [www.historicalsocietyvandalia-butler.org](http://www.historicalsocietyvandalia-butler.org) or [www.rths.org](http://www.rths.org) or call 884-7098.

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