

# National Road commemoration caravan stops in Licking County



Written by

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**Advocate Reporter**

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HEBRON -- Two hundred years ago when travelers boarded Conestoga wagons to journey along the National Road, they put bells on their horses and bade one another adieu with the phrase, "I'll be there with bells on."

If the travelers ran into trouble along the way -- a broken wheel, for instance -- and enlisted the help of a passerby, they were obligated to give the Good Samaritans a bell, said Ohio National Road Association board member and past president Cyndie Gerken.

As of Wednesday afternoon, the caravan traveling along the Historic National Road -- also known as U.S. 40 -- to commemorate the 200th anniversary of its groundbreaking on May 7 hadn't lost any of its bells.

In fact, it had gained two.

The caravan left Franklin County after a noon ceremony Wednesday with Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman. Its three bells, representing Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, were transported from there to Hebron's National Trail Raceway in the raceway's signature black-and-blue El Camino, driven by NTR General Manager Jim Layton and marketing manager Mike Fornataro.

The 2:30 p.m. stop was one of many along the caravan's seven-day, more than 700-mile journey from Vandalia, Ill., to Cumberland, Md. -- the opposite direction in which the road was constructed.

Provided that all goes well, the bell rack will be decorated with six brass bells by the time the caravan arrives in Cumberland for a Saturday ceremony.

"We are just having a wonderful, wonderful time," Mary Truitt, president of the National Road Association of Illinois, said Wednesday from the vintage car she was

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riding in.

Truitt is following the caravan -- and the bells -- through all six states the National Road crosses: Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland.

She was joined in the caravan by Gary Kruger, of Illinois, also a member of that state's National Road Association.

Kruger was to transport the bells from the National Trail Raceway stop to the West Virginia state line -- and however often he was needed after that -- in the 1934 Buick Model 67 he was driving with his wife.

"I had ancestors that worked on the road in Ohio when it was being built," said Kruger, who grew up near the road and has numerous family ties to it, he said.

The National Road goes for almost 228 miles in Ohio, with more than 25 of those in Licking County.

The group planned to stop Wednesday evening in Zanesville and on Thursday tour the National Road-Zane Grey Museum, later stopping in Cambridge and St. Clairsville before sending the bells on to West Virginia.

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Sylvia Miller, from Dublin, holds three of the six bells representing the six states the historic National Road passes through as she looks at a Depression-era newspaper clipping Wednesday near Hebron. The clipping is held by Doug Smith, vice president of the Ohio National Road Association. / Matthew Berry/The Advocate

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For more information about the Historic National Road in Ohio, visit [ohionationalroad.org](http://ohionationalroad.org).

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