

# National Road Turns 200 Today

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Local heritage officials will have a close eye on Cumberland, Md., this weekend as that city celebrates the 200th anniversary of the National Road.

It was on May 7, 1811, that ground was broken in Cumberland on the nation's first federally funded highway, which at the time was known as the Cumberland Road. The initial section of the road reached Wheeling on Aug. 1, 1818, with subsequent sections continuing through Ohio and Indiana to eventually end in Vandalia, Ill.

The 200th anniversary of the road's start will be marked starting today in Cumberland with the arrival of a caravan of antique vehicles that started in Vandalia, Ill., and traveled the road to its origin point. There also will be a giant mid-day parade through Cumberland's downtown area, an afternoon ground-breaking ceremony in Riverside Park for a future National Road Memorial, and a nightfall fireworks display at Canal Place.

The celebration will conclude Sunday in Cumberland with the public sealing of a 200-year time capsule containing submissions celebrating the National Road's history from many of the communities linked by the first section of the original Road from Cumberland to Wheeling.

The Wheeling National Heritage Area Corp. submitted historic and present day photographs of the National Road in Wheeling along with a number of Wheeling related history books and Wheeling Suspension Bridge memorabilia.

Jeremy Morris, Wheeling National Heritage Area Corp. executive director, said local leaders are focusing on Cumberland this weekend as plans begin for Wheeling's 2018 celebration of the National Road's arrival.

"We in Wheeling hope their celebration goes well and look forward to learning from their success as we begin to think and plan our own celebration events for the Historic National Road in Wheeling," Morris said.