



Completed to Wheeling in 1818, the National Road was America's first interstate highway, connecting Baltimore and Washington, D.C., with the Ohio-Mississippi River system and the newly established western states of Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.



SHEPHERD HALL (*Monument Place*)



Wheeling HERITAGE

WheelingHeritage.org



Special Thanks To

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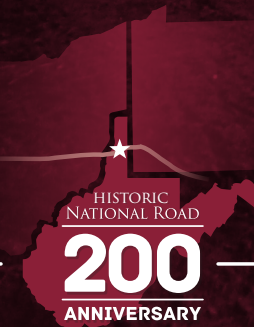
Wheeling HERITAGE

Myths & **LANDMARKS**

OF WEST VIRGINIA'S
NATIONAL ROAD



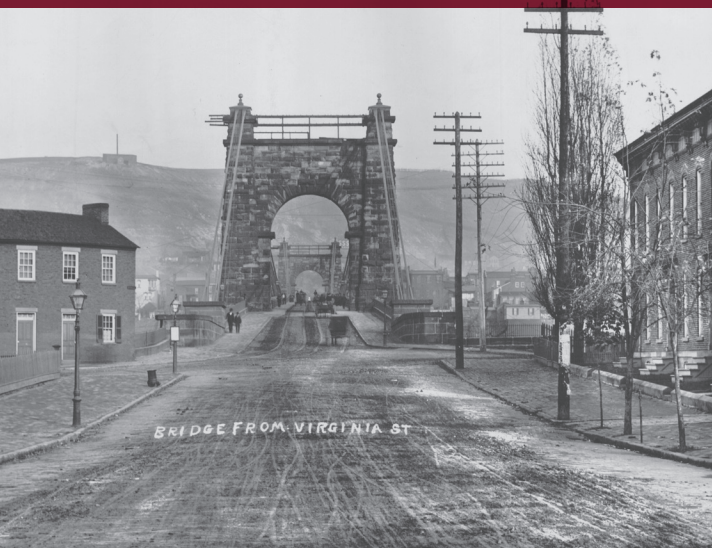
wheeling ²⁵⁰
BRIGHT FUTURE *Treasured Heritage*





The National Road was the first major project undertaken by the U.S. Federal Government, aside from harbor improvements. As such, it was steeped in controversy, with Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland interests vying for the most advantageous route.

WHEELING SUSPENSION BRIDGE



That bickering grew into the legend that follows:

Frontier heroine Lydia Boggs Shepherd convinced Kentucky Senator Henry Clay to route the National Road through Wheeling instead of Wellsburg. Her husband, Moses Shepherd, was given the contract to build the road through today's Northern Panhandle of West Virginia. Then he built two extra bridges for Lydia, so the road could pass right past their house, Shepherd Hall. A few years later, they erected a monument to Clay, but fought unsuccessfully for decades to get paid for the unnecessary bridges.

However, that legend is not based in truth.

In fact, the road was routed to Wheeling because most transportation was conducted by river navigation in the early 1800s. The commissioners appointed by Jefferson to survey the route in 1806 had three orders: make it as short as possible, keep it relatively flat (less than 5 degrees), and connect the best navigable points on the eastern waters (Potomac) and western waters (Ohio River and tributaries). They concurred with Meriwether Lewis (1803) assessment that the water is "rather (sic) more abundant" below Wheeling, due to numerous Ohio River rapids north of town. **So Wheeling was the best location.**

The road also passed through Shepherd's property because it was the best route, though some controversial rerouting did occur. The road was originally supposed to stay on the ridge along the present I-70 route from West Alexander to Dallas Pike, then drop down the hill and join the present U.S. 40 route near Roney's Point. However, because of severe mud slides, the present creek route was deemed preferable. Several small bridges and culverts had to be added for this route to work.

RONEY'S POINT TAVERN



ELM GROVE BRIDGE

Over the centuries, the notion of "extra" bridges got confused, when in fact the two bridges that Shepherd built near Elm Grove were necessary, according to the original parameters set by Congress. Complicating matters, Moses Shepherd did extend the road about 200 yards so that it would pass closer to his home, but he paid for this slight detour out of his own pocket and never asked for compensation.



Today,

1798 Shepherd Hall (i.e. Monument Place) and the adjacent 1817 Elm Grove Stone Arch Bridge stand as tangible reminders of this legend of the National Road. Further "out the pike," Old Stone Tavern (c.1820) at Roney's Point marks the intersection with Dallas Pike, which follows the bypassed route. Early stonework and cast iron mile markers from the 1830s are found along the entire 15-mile route into Wheeling, where a remarkable array of homes dating from the 1820s-40s remain between 8th and 3rd streets in North Wheeling. And the 1849 Wheeling Suspension Bridge still carries traffic to Wheeling Island and points west.