

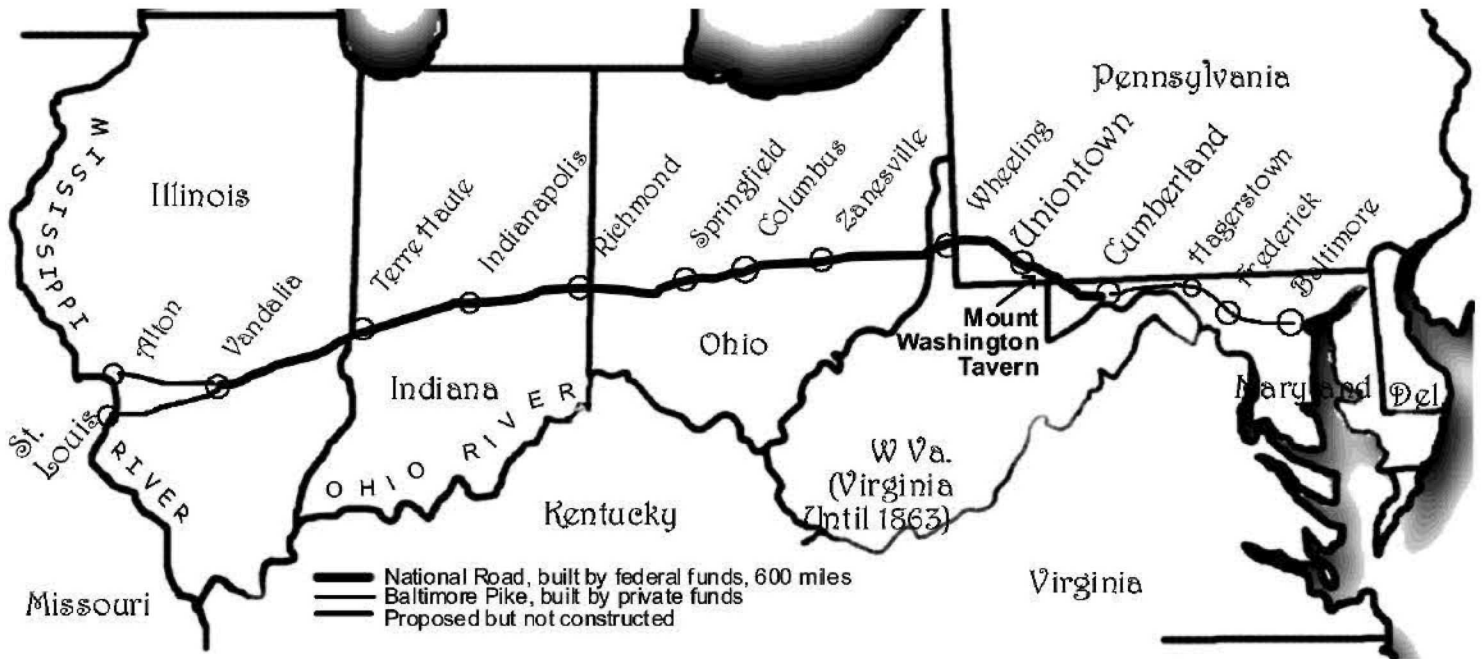
Fort Necessity

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



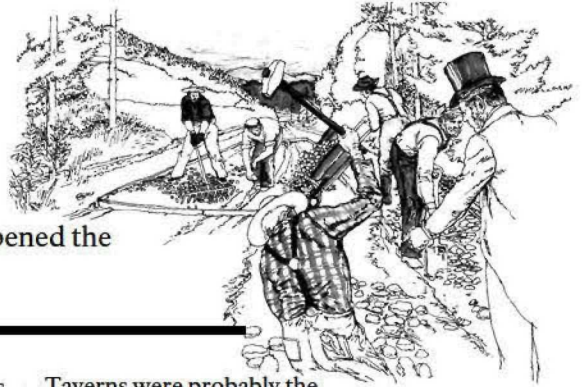
Fort Necessity
National Battlefield

The National Road



The National Road, today called U.S. Route 40, was the first highway built entirely with federal funds. The road was authorized by Congress in 1806 during the Jefferson Administration. Construction began in Cumberland, Maryland in 1811. The route closely paralleled the military road opened by George Washington and General Braddock in 1754-55.

By 1818, the road had been completed to the Ohio River at Wheeling, which was then in Virginia. Eventually the road was pushed through central Ohio and Indiana, reaching Vandalia, Illinois in the 1830s where construction ceased due to a lack of funds. The National Road opened the Ohio River Valley and the Midwest for settlement and commerce.



Traveling

The opening of the road saw thousands of travelers heading west over the Allegheny Mountains to settle the rich land of the Ohio River Valley. Small towns along the National Road's path began to grow and prosper with the increase in population. Towns such as Cumberland, Uniontown, Brownsville, Washington, and Wheeling evolved into commercial centers of business and industry. Uniontown was the headquarters for two major stagecoach lines which carried passengers over the National Road. Brownsville, on the Monongahela River, was a center for steamboat building and river freight hauling. Many small towns and villages along the road contained taverns, blacksmith shops, and livery stables.

Taverns were probably the most important and numerous businesses found on the National Road. It is estimated there was about one tavern every mile on the National Road. There were two different classes of taverns on the road. The stagecoach tavern was one type. It was the more expensive accommodation, designed for the affluent traveler. Mount Washington Tavern was a stagecoach tavern. The other class of tavern was the wagon stand, which would have been more affordable for most travelers. A wagon stand would have been similar to a modern "truck stop." All taverns regardless of class offered three basic things: food, drink, and lodging.

