Cumberland—If you take trip down US Highway 40 in Indiana, it’s like traveling through history. This Historic National Road, sometimes known as the Cumberland Road, was our Nation's first federally funded interstate highway, connect the eastern seaboard in Maryland to the western interior in Illinois. It was conceived by George Washington and finally became a reality in 1806 when Congress passed legislation during Thomas Jefferson’s administration. For over 175 years and for over 524 miles, this glorious road of ours stretches across 6 states. It is the evidence of our history that remains visible to all.

The road reached Indiana in 1827, and the 156-mile stretch, across the state through eight counties from Richmond to Terre Haute, was completed in 1834. Even though the Federal government did nothing more than clear a dirt path with trees cut just low enough for Conestoga wagons to clear, the National Road still brought thousands of travelers to Indiana every year. In the more than 175 years that have followed, the road has been through many phases of construction and reconstruction, railroad tracks were built, automobiles were invented and I-70 was constructed. Through it all, the National Road has remained one of Indiana’s Main Streets and primary transportation corridors. The road passed through Hancock County just east of Indianapolis. Along this highway, many of the original log cabins have been restored. The following story is about the discovery and restoration of one of these original cabins.

In 1889, Ron Sanders and his Father Alva Sanders purchased a piece of land one half mile west of Cumberland, Indiana on the south side of the National Highway. On 26 April 1900, the house caught fire. The fire was subdued, but caused extensive internal structural damage and the house had to be torn down. As the rubble was removed, it was discovered that the house had been built around an old log cabin. In late August 2001, restoration was started. On the back side of the cabin, there were that had opened into two bedrooms. A fireplace was installed where the doors were located. The chimney and fireplace was built using the famous Brown County, Indiana stone. At one time the cabin was used as a grocery shop and the proprietor held concerts on the porch. The cabin has also been rented as a mortgage broker's office.

Upon the discovery of the cabin, Ron Sanders began an extensive search for the previous owners and residents. The earliest record is a copy of the Abstract on the 80 acres property where it was patented to Powell Scott on February 4, 1834. In November of 1831, Mr. Scott sells the land to William and Jane Harvey. There is some discrepancy as to when this sale took place. Dates on the property abstract are inconsistent.

It is not known if William and Jane Harvey ever lived in this cabin since most, if not all, of their married life was spent in Franklin County. It is possible that some of their children may have lived in the cabin at one time. However, the abstract shows the property belonged to William Harvey for several years. Some time after his death, it passed to his nine children. In 1865, they in turn sold the property. Jane Harvey, William’s wife, lived near Cumberland somewhere close to the property, with her son Milton until her death in 1889. Historic documents of Sugar Creek Township state that in 1832 John Eastes opened a little grocery along the National Road in the Western part of the township. John Eastes was Jane Harvey’s brother.

Above: House fire that revealed cabin structure. Below: Ron Sanders’ restored log cabin

Wayne County Historical Museum’s New Building

Richmond—The Wayne County Historical Museum is entering a new phase. Recently, the museum constructed a new building. The Barn, as it is called, serves to fulfill four goals for the museum: a space to display a collection of agricultural items, a community room for events, and storage for an extensive textile collection, and an outside display area.

The construction of the new building was made possible by two bequests that became available. The funds were ample enough to tear down an old apartment building and construct the new building. The museum is seeking continued support to finish the project and reach the organization’s goals.

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