

Narrative

The Town of New Market has been an integral part of the Historic National Road since its inception as a trade route in the late 1700's. The Town provided funding to open and build a section of the road for the passage of products and traders and established itself as a center of trade. In 1806 Congress passed an act to establish that section of the National Road that led westward from Cumberland in Allegheny County, over the Allegheny Mountains, to the Ohio River, across the Plains of Indiana and through to near Alton Illinois almost to the Mississippi River in Missouri. The road was later extended to St. Louis, Missouri.

The Town of New Market appointed commissioners and ran lotteries to raise money to improve the Turnpike; it also bore the burdens of the problems it brought.

Congress let the first contract for the National Road in 1811. Some have referred to the National Road, or the "Gateway to the West" as beginning at Cumberland. This is misleading because it refers only to that section of the road that was the first and only highway built entirely by the Federal Government. The first free standing stone mile markers were placed along the National Road near Cumberland in 1815. Maryland placed their stone markers beside the road around the same time; several of these markers stand in and near the Town of New Market. One of these markers is directly across the street from the NNCP.

As farmers and traders increasingly hauled their grain and products over wagon trails to connect to the Baltimore and Frederick Turnpike, the Town of New Market was a focal point of travel. By 1832, the large wagons of freight stage coaches, livestock, etc., coming through the Town imposed costly hardship on the Town residents. Money was raised to offset this through lotteries. The Town also asked the State to impose laws to assist. Maintenance of the Federally funded section of the roadway had also become such a burden to the government that it passed an act in 1832 transferring the National Road to the State. Maryland agreed to except the road only on the condition that it would be brought into good repair before it was received and that the Federal Government would pay for and erect tollgates for the benefit of the State. Two years later Congress agreed to this. In the Town of New Market Nicholas Hall wanted to establish toll gates, but William Plummer disagreed because he had deeded all the streets and alleys that ran through his section "for the use of the Public forever".

It has been estimated that more than three million people passed over the Turnpike between 1820 and 1852. They included the rich and poor, the famous and infamous, the leaders and followers, the mainstreamers and the down trodden, the free and those held in bondage. Some passed over the road in

wagons, stagecoaches, fancy buggies, and carriages, while some pushed carts, rode on horseback, many walked and others shuffled along in chains.

For 210 years the Town has embraced, welcomed and withstood the necessary hustle –bustle of the National Road. As in days of yore, the town wants to continue to welcome and extend its hospitality to all that would come. It was in this keeping that in 1972 the Town purchased the land for the present day NMCP and developed it in 1974 with a Program Open Space grant. The Town of New Market is in the process of completing the upgrading of the park and recreational area which begun in 1999 with another POS grant. It now has "safety" approved playground equipment, basketball court, benches, picnic tables, bike stand, waste receptacles and a soon to be completed walkway extending southward from the National Road the entire length of the park.

While visitors travel the “road less traveled” they can enter a historical town with roots in the 18th and 19th centuries. The NMCP has been established not only for local residents but especially for visitors to relax along part of MD Historical National Road. Providing a safe entrance and handicap accessibility are vital components of the visitor services in the MDHNR Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership plan.