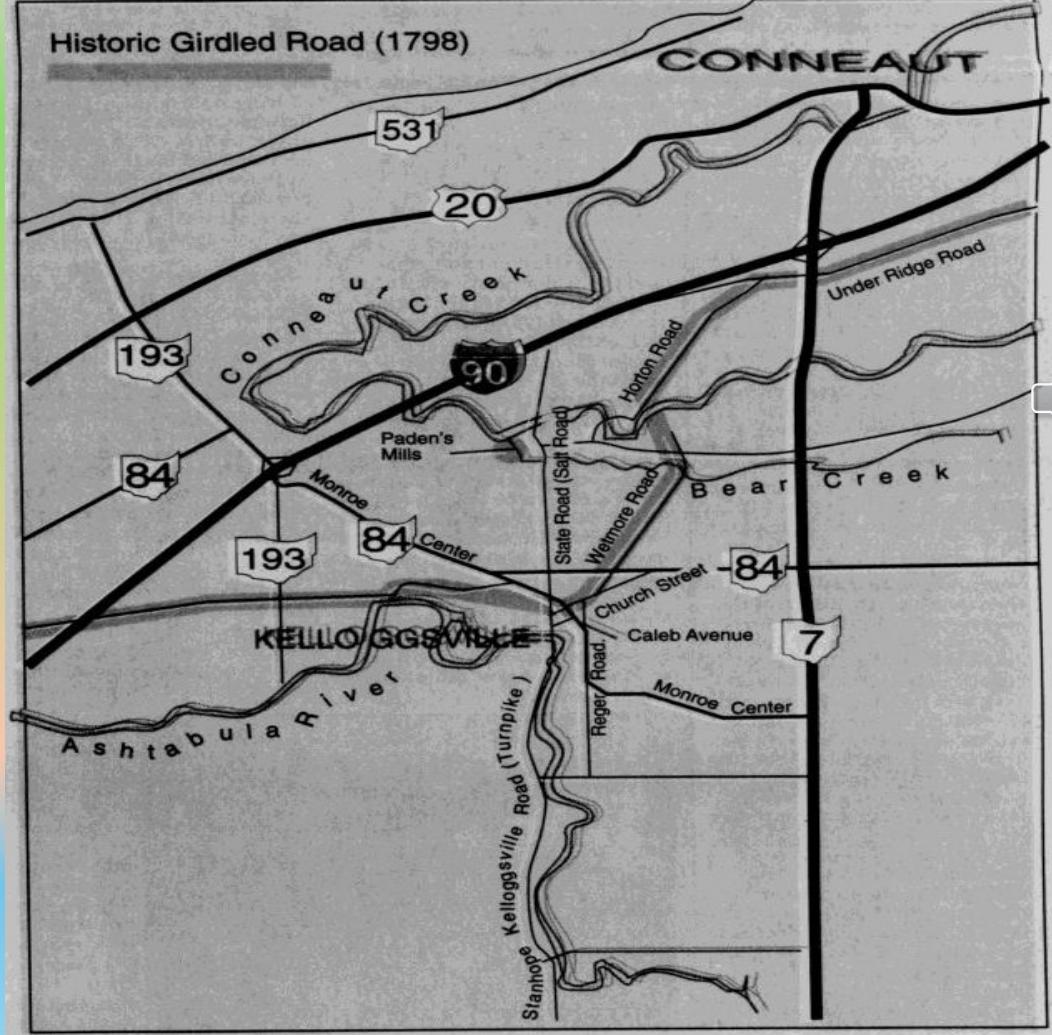


Routes 20 and 84, the Old Girdled Road and Companions: Conneaut's Roads to the World





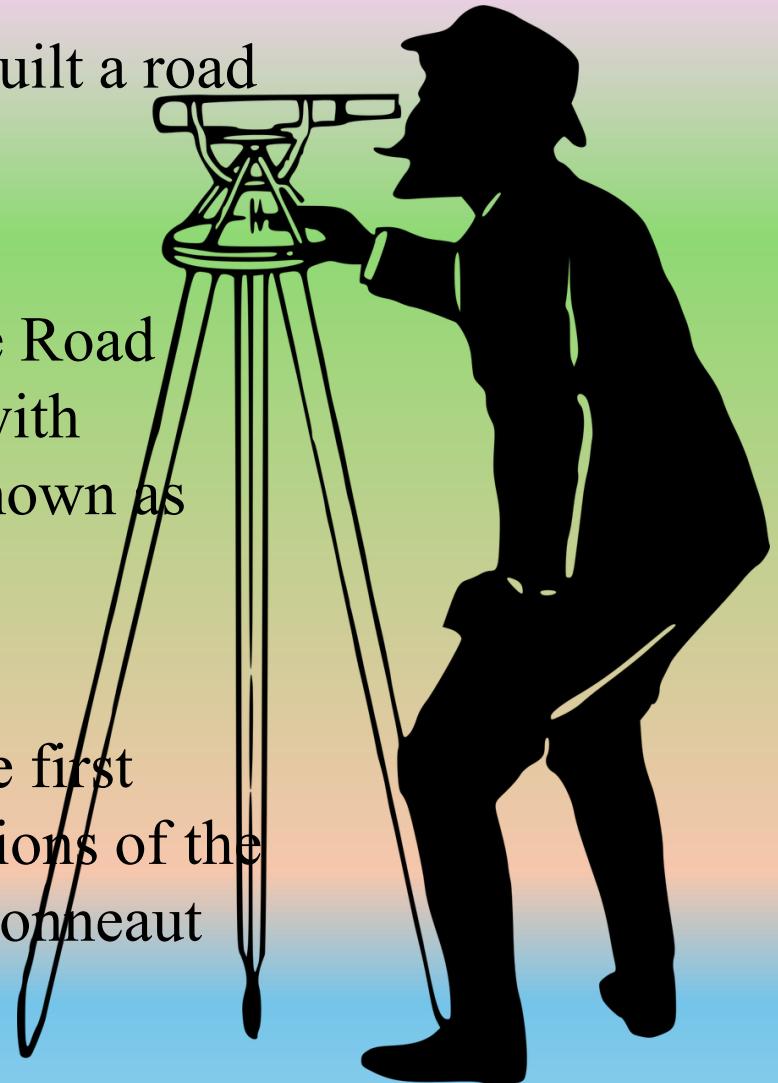
After America had won the Revolutionary War, eager setters pushed westward to establish new homes and businesses. They used Native American trails and traces that they cut for themselves, but they needed roads wide enough for horses and wagons.

Surveyors laid out the Old Girdled Road in 1797..

In 1800, Seth Harrington, Aaron Wright and Nathan King built a road along the South Ridge joining Conneaut and Ashtabula.

In 1802 surveyors laid out, the Stage Route along the Ridge Road from Erie, Pa., to Cleveland, Ohio. The road traveled west with wagons, stagecoaches, railroads and pioneers and is now known as Route 20.

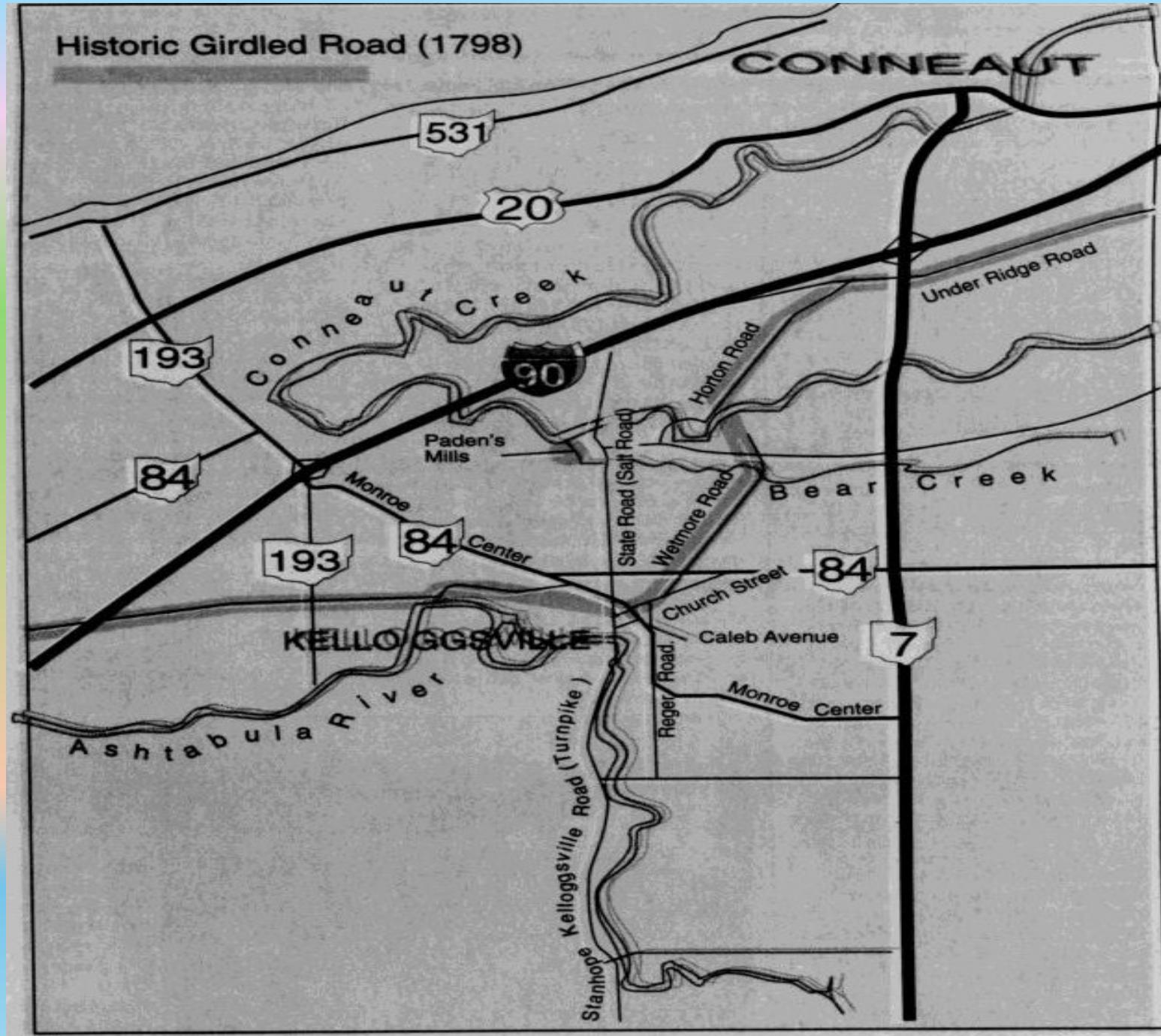
In 1804 the Old Salt Road welcomed travelers. This was the first road, leading south from Conneaut and opened up new sections of the region. These are just a few of the roads that have shaped Conneaut and Ashtabula County history.



The Old Girdled Road

The "Old Girdled Road" refers to the first road constructed by early European settlers in the connecting the Pennsylvania line to the new city of Cleveland. Today, sections of this historic route are preserved and known as Girdled Road Reservation in Lake County, Ohio. This area is now a Lake Metroparks park, encompassing over 900 acres with hiking trails and natural beauty.

Historic Girdled Road (1798)





The first road built connecting the Pennsylvania line to the equally new city of Cleveland, the “Old Girdled Road” has survived the tracks of wagon wheels, the weight of automobile tires, and witnessed the lives of generations of people traveling its length and breadth or living alongside it.

This single road led through the dense forest that had been cleared by order of the land company. This road had been girdled and cleared the previous year, 1797, by the surveyors. It ran from the east line of the county, about seven miles south of the lake, across the site of Austinburg, to Little Mountain, in Lake county, and from there to Cleveland.



In 1798, The Connecticut Land Company which owned the majority of the land in northeastern Ohio signed a 6,000-dollar contract with General Simon Perkins to cut a road measuring 33 feet, including bridges over streams too deep to ford.

The proposed route would run from the western Pennsylvania line to the Cuyahoga River parallel to what is now Route 20 to Wickliffe, where it coincided with the current Euclid Avenue. This road, The Old Girdled Road, stretched over 100 miles.



“Girdling” trees was necessary because of the trees and brush obstacles to cutting a path through the woods. “Girdling” a tree involved hacking a complete circle around its bark, which cut off the nutrients it needed, eventually killing it. No leaves bloomed on the trees in the spring to shade plants underneath and they too died. The settlers cut down the dead trees for lumber, cleared the brush, and uprooted the stumps to use for rough fences.



The Old Girdled Road caused villages to grow like corn in freshly cleared, sunshiny fields.

People used the road to travel to newly purchased land to establish homes, businesses, and communities. Travelers stopped at hastily constructed hotels and taverns. Schools and churches soon dotted the landscape.

Well known historical figures creating homesteads along the Old Girdled Road included A. Baldwin, P. Mc Kinney, J. Corrigan, F. Rockefeller, C. Otis, E. Hoyt, II, G. Crile, and William Tinker.

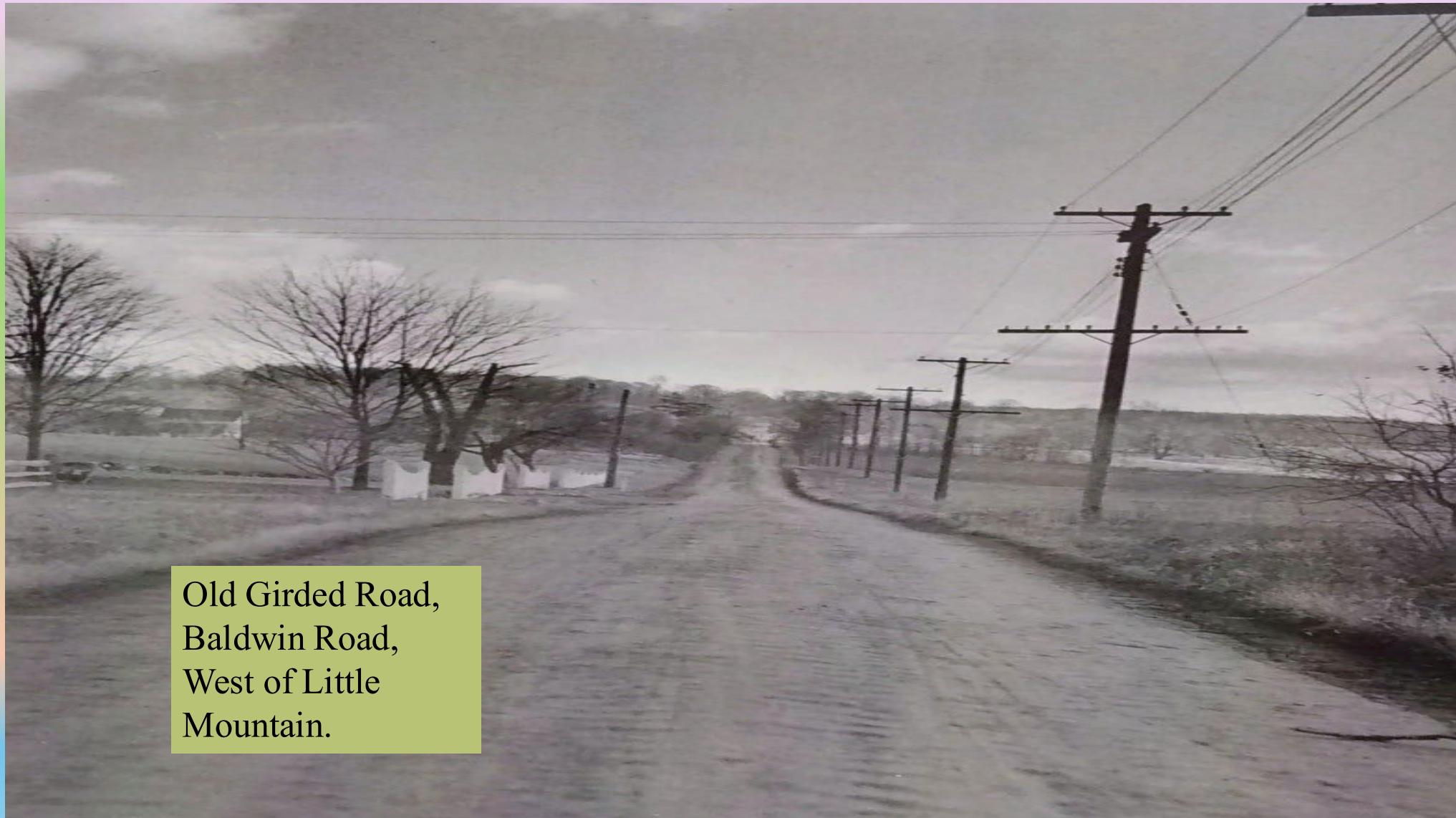
The road passed by the door of Judge Austin's log cabin, and was the only sign of civilization presented in all the great wilderness. There was in all the settlements of this region a great scarcity of provisions, and in many cases of even the ordinary comforts.

By 1802 Old Girdled Road had evolved to a wagon path to the present Route 84. Eventually Girdled Road -Rt. 84 connected to Route 20-Mentor Avenue.

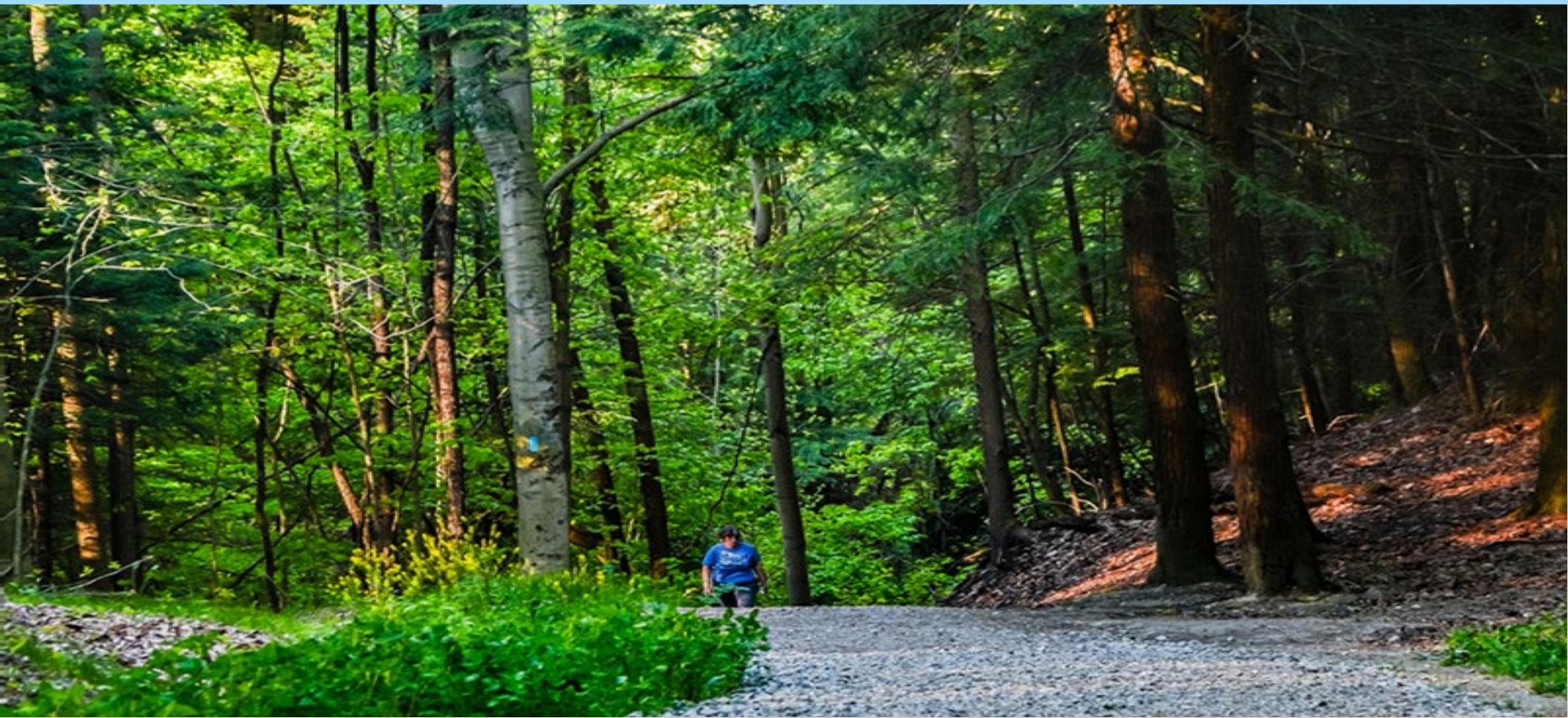




The Old Girdled Road ran in front of the
Tinker's House in Tinker's Hollow



Old Girded Road,
Baldwin Road,
West of Little
Mountain.



The remaining section of the original Girdled Road forms the northern boundary of the Girdled Road Reservation park. The park is accessible from several points, including Girdled Road (north entrance) and Concord-Hambden Road (OH-608) at Skok Meadow.



Telling Tales About Route 20



The longest highway in the US stretches 3,365 miles between Boston & Newport, OR.



Historic U.S. Route 20 stretches 3,365 miles from Boston, Massachusetts to Newport, Oregon. For most of its length it runs approximately parallel to I-90, and it is considered to be the longest highway in the United States.

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In 1926, Route 20 officially became a U.S. highway which during its early years ended at Yellowstone National Park. In 1940, continuous growth stretched it westward and it achieved its finished length in 1960. Numbered United States highways are not identified as such in national parks, so Route 20 technically doesn't run through Yellowstone National Park. Instead, it stops at the eastern entrance at the Park and restarts at the western entrance. Because of this technicality, some people argue that it is not the longest "continuous" highway in the country, but the United States Department of Transportation rules that Route 20 is considered the longest highway in the country.

Route 20s Ashtabula story begins with the Native Americans carving out a trail running parallel to the Lake Erie Shore. Over the year, many moccasins and horses' hooves left their travel imprints in the dirt clearing the way for modern pavement and transitioning the trail into a durable commercial and cultural highway, which became the main road between Cleveland and Erie.



By 1800, the Ashtabula County Commissioners had authorized a stage road through the county and in 1808, a regular mail route began between Cleveland and Erie.



John Metcalf, the first mail carrier, traversed his route on foot, in fair and ferocious weather, through dust and deep snow. He swam swift running streams carrying his mail pack on his back. In 1813, Arthur Bigelow succeeded John Metcalf carrying mail between Ashtabula and Buffalo until John Metcalf returned to the route in 1812. When John Metcalf returned to his old job, he acquired a heavy lumber wagon and team of spirited horses to haul small packages and freight.





In 1815, William Whitman of Ashtabula and David Cole of Painesville operated a company operating the first stagecoaches. Soon the line expanded to Detroit.

In 1820, larger coaches requiring four horses to pull were added, and daily mail service developed from east to west. These events introduced the golden era of stagecoach travel in Northeast Ohio that would last the next thirty years.

By 1852, trains racing over shining rails had replaced the slower, often creaking and cumbersome stagecoaches. For the next fifty years, steam and electric railroads enjoyed a heyday. Then, the automobile in turn, sped past the railroads as the chosen way of traveling. For a short time gasoline powered automobiles and interurban cars shared public favor, but the automobile won the transportation race.



In an October 1996 newspaper feature in the Ashtabula Star Beacon, writer Carl Feather included a photo by Bob Goldsmith of Conneaut illustrating the growth of Route 20 traffic in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Satterlee's Service Station was located at the corner of Parrish Road and Route 20 in Conneaut.



In his story, Carl noted that Robert Goldsmith vividly remembered the electric cars that rattled by his Route 20 home on their way to Jefferson. Robert Goldsmith said that Route 20 was then a two-lane brick road.

Carl cited a 1937 Ashtabula Star Beacon story that reported the Route 20 travel conditions of the time. Heavy traffic on Route 20 created some hazardous traveling conditions. Cars stuck behind trucks had little chance to pass because of the heavy traffic and the inadequate two lanes forced drivers

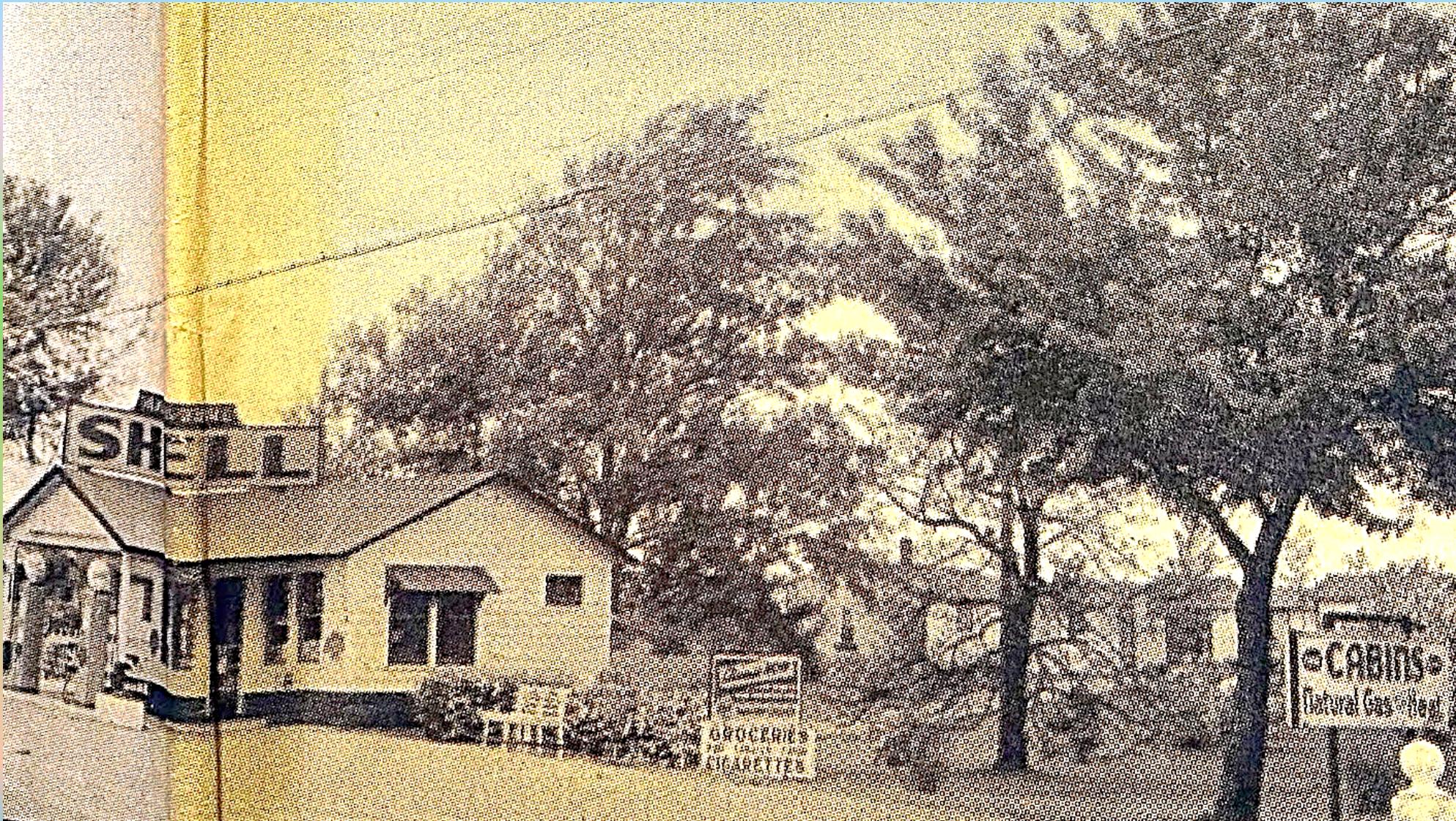
to pass on the right.



Many parts of Route 20 looked like a narrow secondary road instead of a major highway. Sharp curves, overhanging trees, and railroad crossings made some of the road an automobile obstacle course. Time and technology improved Route 20 enough to provide hundreds of travelers with relaxing scenic trips and food and shelter along the way.

Carl Feather's newspaper story in the Currents page of the October 14, 1996, Ashtabula Star Beacon provides glimpses into some of the tourist activity along Route 20 until Interstate 90 opened in 1958, luring most of its cross-country traffic away.

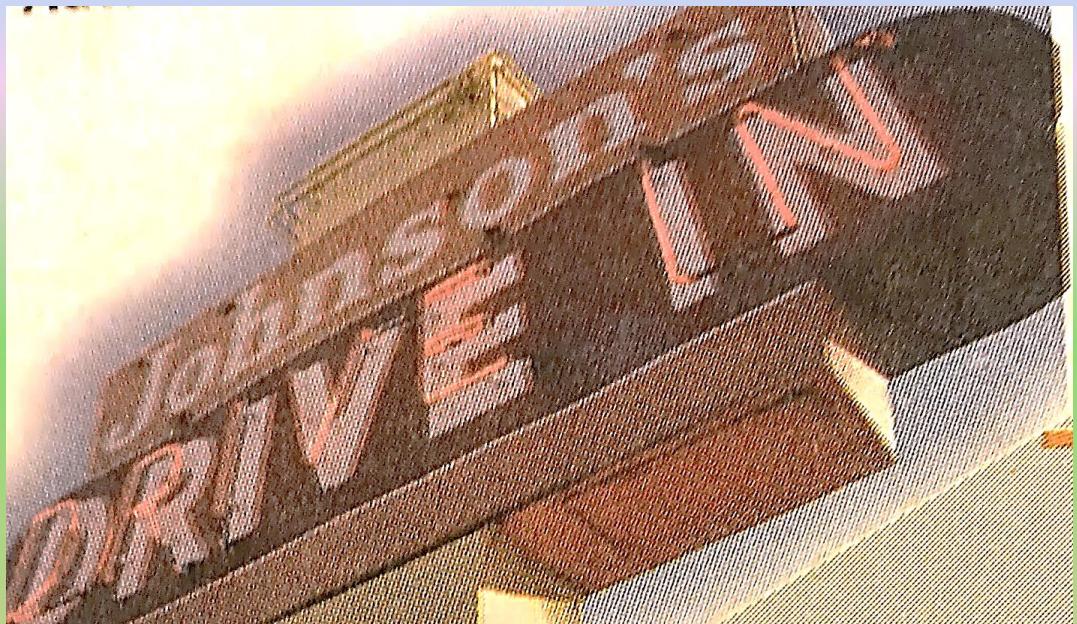




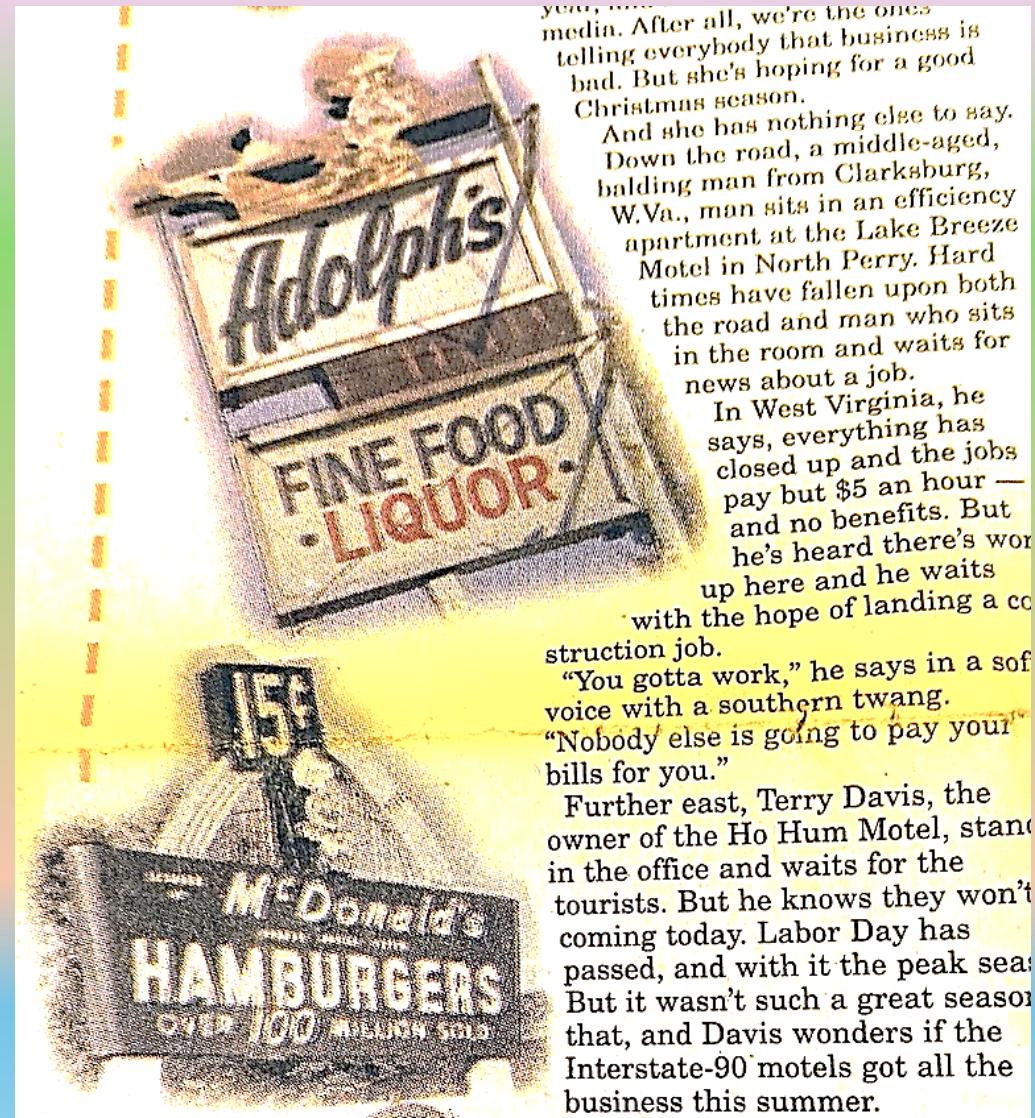
Goldsmith's Curve service station that Bob Goldsmith's father owned and operated. The service station included a convenience store and cabin rental business.



Bob Goldsmith stands outside his Studio Antiques Shop on Route 20 in Conneaut, where his father formerly operated a service station.



In his story, Carl describes the U.S. Route 20 heyday in Ashtabula County until Interstate 90 intervened. He writes that “hundreds of mom and pop” businesses sprang up along its route that capitalized upon the ready flow of travelers in need of fuel, auto repairs, food, recreation, and a place to sleep.”



media. After all, we're the ones telling everybody that business is bad. But she's hoping for a good Christmas season.

And she has nothing else to say. Down the road, a middle-aged, balding man sits in an efficiency apartment at the Lake Breeze Motel in North Perry. Hard times have fallen upon both the road and man who sits in the room and waits for news about a job.

In West Virginia, he says, everything has closed up and the jobs pay but \$5 an hour — and no benefits. But he's heard there's work up here and he waits with the hope of landing a construction job.

“You gotta work,” he says in a soft voice with a southern twang. “Nobody else is going to pay your bills for you.”

Further east, Terry Davis, the owner of the Ho Hum Motel, stands in the office and waits for the tourists. But he knows they won't be coming today. Labor Day has passed, and with it the peak season. But it wasn't such a great season that, and Davis wonders if the Interstate-90 motels got all the business this summer.



east end	<p><u>US 20</u> at the Ohio-Indiana border near <u>Edon</u></p>
Major Route 20 Junctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>US 127</u> in <u>Fayette</u>• <u>I-475</u> / <u>US 23</u> in <u>Toledo</u>• <u>I-75</u> / <u>US 23</u> in <u>Perrysburg</u>• <u>US 6</u> in <u>Fremont</u>• <u>US 250</u> in <u>Norwalk</u>• <u>I-80</u> near <u>Elyria</u>• <u>I-90</u> in <u>Cleveland</u>• <u>US 422</u> / <u>SR 8</u> / <u>SR 14</u> / <u>SR 43</u> / <u>SR 87</u> in <u>Cleveland</u>• <u>SR 11</u> in <u>Edgewood</u>
East end	<p><u>US 20</u> at the Ohio-Pennsylvania border at <u>Conneaut</u></p>

Conneaut has played a creative and historically significant part in the beginning and evolution of U.S. Route 20, from its birth as a Native American trail snaking through the woods bordering Lake Erie, to a military road during wars, and an important cross county commercial artery. Most of all, Route 20 and its companion roads have provided a reliable transition between generations of communities and people who depend on them to navigate their lives.



I reckon I drove about
100 miles

Down a bumpy road
out through the wilds

