

LaVale Toll Gate House Tours

Six Miles West of Cumberland, Maryland

THE HISTORIC NATIONAL ROAD EXPANDED TRADE AND COMMERCE, FUELED SETTLERS' WESTWARD MIGRATION, AND SET THE FOUNDATION FOR MODERN FEDERAL HIGHWAY SYSTEMS ACROSS AMERICA.



The LaVale Toll Gate House, 1907
 1907 GILBERT PHOTO STUDIO, COURTESY ALBERT AND ANGELA FELDSTEIN

Written by: **Shelby Calhoun**

Allegany County, MD, is excited to announce the opening of the LaVale Toll Gate House for tours during the 2023 season. LaVale's toll gate house, a two-story brick structure built in 1835-1836, is a seven-sided basic polygon plan. A one-story Tuscan columned porch extends around the five outer sides of the building. Toll gate houses were developed to levy tolls on a stretch of road in order to finance its maintenance and improvement. The toll gate house in LaVale, MD, was the first constructed toll gate house on the National Road after the state took ownership of the Maryland portion of the National

TOLL RATES	
Forevery score of Sheep or Hogs.	6cents
Forevery score of Cattle.	12cents
Forevery Horse and Rider.	4cents
Forevery led or driven Horse, Mule or Ass.	3cents
Forevery Sleigh or Sled drawn by one horse or pair of Oxen.	3cents
Forevery Horse or pair of Oxen in Addition.	3cents
Forevery Dearborn, Sulky, Chair or Chaise with one horse.	6cents
Forevery Horse in Addition.	3cents
Forevery Chariot, Coach, Cochee, Stage, Phaeton or Chaise with two Horses and four wheels.	12cents
Forevery CARRIAGE of pleasure by whatever be it called the same according to the number of wheels and horses drawing the same.	
Forevery CART or Wagon whose wheels do not exceed three inches in breadth, drawn by horse or pair of Oxen.	4cents
Forevery Cart or wagon whose wheels exceed three inches and does not exceed four inches in breadth for every horse or pair of oxen drawing the same.	4cents
Wheels exceeding four and not exceeding six inches.	3cents
Wheels exceeding six and not exceeding eight inches.	2cents
All CARTS or Wagons whose wheels exceed eight inches in breadth. Free.	
DAVID T. SHRIVER. Supt.	

Road in 1835. It is the last remaining toll house in Maryland and is listed on the National Register for Historic Places.

Signage on the site of the toll gate house shows the original toll rates, a system developed on the estimated damage certain vehicles and animals could cause to the road. Rates were identified for scores of sheep, hogs or cattle, horse and rider, sleighs drawn by horse or oxen, and wagons with varying wheel sizes.

The toll gate houses were used for the tollgate keeper and his family. The tollgate keeper position was not limited to an 8-hour day, but involved any time of day or night. The toll house located in LaVale has been renovated to include an office, bedroom, antique furniture, two fireplaces, and other amenities. If you go upstairs to the bedroom, you can actually see how the tollgate keeper could get up at night and look out the windows to observe travelers.

The charging of fees required a gate, or pike, to be built across the road, hence the term “turnpike” that is associated with the National Road. Travelers who did not pay the fee were termed “pikers.” Turnpikes were placed at strategic points along the road where it was difficult for travelers to evade paying, such as at bridges or where the lie of the land constricted the road.

Despite the inconvenience of tolls, turnpikes were among the best roads available. They were often built with specific construction requirements to ensure their designation as first-class roads, often requiring drainage ditches and culverts, as well as specifying surface materials.

When Congress first met after the achievement of Independence with the adoption of the



Top: Tour guide, Ellen McDaniel Weissler, is ready to receive visitors at the LaVale Toll Gate House.

Bottom: The main living area at the Toll Gate House is furnished with period pieces and other daily living items.

PHOTOS COURTESY ALLEGANY COUNTY TOURISM



The upstairs bedroom at the LaVale Toll Gate House with period furnishings. PHOTO BY MIKE CALHOUN

Federal Constitution, the lack of good roads was a major topic. But it was not until the year 1806, when Jefferson was President, that the proposition for a National Road took practical shape. The original National Road, as envisioned by Congress, commenced at Cumberland, MD, and ended at Wheeling (then Virginia) on the banks of the Ohio River.

Today, the National Road is credited with having provided vital access for Americans interested in westward exploration. Stop by 14302 National Highway, LaVale, MD, on the following dates for interpretive history and a glimpse back in time. You'll also see the original mile marker displaying the distance to the next towns in opposite directions.

Allegheny County Tourism – 301-777-5132
Visit www.mdmountaininside.com

2023 – Operating hours 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm, on the following dates:

May

Saturday, May 6
Saturday, May 20

June

Saturday, June 3 (*20th Annual National Road Festival*)
Sunday, June 4 (*20th Annual National Road Festival*)
June 10, 11, 16, 17 & 18 (*Museum Week*)

July

Saturday, July 1
Saturday, July 15
Saturday, July 29

August

Saturday, August 12
Saturday, August 26

September

Saturday, September 9 (*Heritage Days*)
Sunday, September 10 (*Heritage Days*)
Saturday, September 23

October

Saturday, October 7
Saturday, October 21

The schedule of events is subject to change without notice. There is no cost to tour the Toll House.