Tolls on Route 80? How about tolls on Route 45!

In 1792, Pennsylvania authorized the first turnpike to be built between Philadelphia and Lancaster. Within 30 years, more than 100 turnpike companies had constructed almost 2400 miles of roads. Subscribers funded the road through purchase of shares. The state bought shares as well, thereby increasing the money available to build the road.

In 1812, a road from Lewisburg through Mifflinburg and on to Milesburg was proposed, to be part of a turnpike connecting Northumberland and Waterford, Erie County. A lack of subscribers prompted the project to be downsized several times.

The Derrstown and Youngmanstown (Lewisburg to Mifflinburg) Turnpike Company was incorporated in 1828. There were fourteen directors, with Thomas Vanvalzah, president, and Robert Hayes, treasurer and secretary. The road would run from Jacob Musser's house in Lewisburg to Jacob Maize's in Mifflinburg. John F. Linn surveyed the roadway. John Maclay, Robert Maclay and John Forster were hired to construct the road, for $3.90 per perch, by November 1829.

A one and one-half story 26' by 17' tollhouse and gate were built by Henry Barnheart for about $170. John Linn was hired as the first toll taker, paid $48 per year. Over the years, other tollhouses were built at the Lewisburg and Mifflinburg ends of the turnpike.

Many early roads were rough, rutted or muddy, and travel could be easier in winter when horse-drawn sleds were used on snow-covered roads and frozen creeks. The turnpike replaced an earlier tract, which more or less followed Buffalo Creek.

The turnpike was 60' wide with 20' of the center a hard surface of wood, gravel or stone. The turnpike company was responsible for maintaining the road and in return collected tolls for its use. A horse with rider paid 3 cents, a two-wheel horse-drawn cart cost 6 cents, a four-wheel wagon drawn by four horses cost 20 cents, a sled cost 2 cents per horse. Farmers taking sheep, hogs or cattle to market paid four, six or twelve cents per herd, respectively. People could pay an annual fee for use of the road. And there was no charge for those using the road to go from one part of their farm to another part, for traveling to church or to vote, or for soldiers reporting for duty. Toll prices did not change much over the next 70 years.

Eventually, Union County residents could use a statewide turnpike system and travel by stage or wagon to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and other parts of Pennsylvania.

Investors in the turnpike company received modest dividends on stock shares. No one investor ever controlled a majority of shares. Those who did own substantial numbers of shares benefited by becoming road supervisor, who were paid for road work and for collecting tolls, including Wm. Cameron, E.B. Walter and Wm. Wertz. Company directors and officers held titles of social, rather than monetary, importance.

The Lewisburg to Mifflinburg Turnpike Company was officially dissolved in 1906 and the road became a toll-free public way. It is recalled in the "Old Turnpike" addresses along Route 45.

Lewisburg Tollhouse

Mifflinburg Tollhouse