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The Michigan Road Toll House at 4702 Michigan Road N.W., Indianapolis, Indiana 46208, is a small white frame house. The easterly portion facing the road is two stories in height, with a partial basement. The westerly portion to the rear is one story high with no basement. The foundation is brick and stone. The exterior walls are clapboard siding and the roof is now covered with composition shingles covering the original wood shingles. The interior floors are common wood, probably native timber. The walls and ceilings are plastered. The first floor consists of a parlor, a dining room a kitchen and a more recent addition, a bath. The second floor is occupied by two bed rooms.

The original house, built about 1850, was of one story and had a storeroom extending toward Michigan Road, with a toll pole out in front which, when lowered, extended as a barrier across the road. The toll pole was the first part of the original structure to be removed. When the road was widened it was necessary to remove the east portion of the house which contained the store and the porch, in order to make room for progress.

About 1882 the roof was raised to permit the addition of a second floor above the main part of the house, to accomodate a growing family. A small narrow stairway ascending from the living room provides access to the two upstairs bedrooms. An interesting architectural feature of the house is the extension of the two perpendicular casings on each side of the windows and doorways to a height of several inches above the horizontal lintel atop each opening. This same architectural feature is seen in early photographs which show the storeroom extending toward the road.

A roadside marker in front of the house, placed there in 1961 by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Indiana, commemorates the "Toll House" as "Operated by the Augusta Gravel Road Company circa 1866-1892" and "Michigan Road" as the "first major state road, built in the 1830's from the Ohio River to Lake Michigan."

A bronze marker beside the front door bears this inscription: "Toll house, Furnished by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Indiana." The two downstairs rooms sponsored by the Society contain furniture of the latter part of the last century, including a corner cupboard, cherry table, two Victorian arm chairs, a love seat, four plain straight chairs, oil lamps, an old school-master's desk, daguerrotypes and steel engravings.



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The Michigan Road had its orgins in the need for transportation and communication in Indiana to connect the Ohio River with Lake Michigan. The location of the State Capital at Indianapolis, the surveying of the National Road across the state added to the desire for a north-south road in Indiana. A treaty with the Potawatamie Indians in 1826 surrendered a 100 ft. rightof-way and a section of land for every mile of the road from Lake Michigan to the Ohio River to the State. This land was later sold to pay for construction of the Michigan Road. In 1828 the Indiana Legislature appointed three commissioners to choose a route and the road was constructed between 1830 and 1840. By 1834 the Michigan Road was open over its entire length but was extremely bad in some places and only passable for about eight months a year.

By the end of the initial construction period Indiana was having major problems with internal improvements and the Michigan Road was made part of the State highway system with responisbility for maintainence in the hands of the Counties. This did not lead to improvements on the road. After the Civil War it was a common practice to let private companies collect tolls on roads that they had improved. This was the case when the Augusta Gravel Road Company graveled part of the Michigan Road north of Indianapolis. One of the places chosen to collect the tolls was a house built about 1850 that is now known as the Michigan Road Toll House. Tolls were collected at this point from 1866 to 1892 by Samuel Howard a Notary Public and his wife, They also ran a grocery store and a Post Office at this natural stopping place.

The Michigan Road was used much more north of Indianapolis than south because there were fewer other forms of transportation and northern Indiana was being settled rapidly at this time. Settlers commonly came out to Indianapolis on the National Road and then headed north on the Michigan Road. It also served as a main road for produce of the new northern farms to reach Indianapolis. Horses, mules, cattle, hogs, sheep, and poultry were all driven past the Toll House. The average toll for a horse and buggy was a nickle and a man on horseback three cents. There was no charge for persons attending Church or funerals. Farmers who used the road regularly paid as much as \$25.00 a year.

The Toll House is a reminder of an important link in Indiana transportation. A Grocery store and Post Office made the Toll House a community center as well as a toll collection point and Indian artifacts found near the Toll House on the White River indicate it was also a place Indians had found attractive earlier. This is one of many historic sites that are being located along this highway connecting the Ohio River at Madison, Indiana with Lake

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