

NEWS RELEASE — For Immediate Release
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**State Museum of PA Invites Pennsylvanians
To Visit Tollbooth Exhibit for PA Turnpike Birthday**
Turnpike tunnel sidewalk art will greet museum guests this weekend.

HARRISBURG, PA. (SEPT. 30, 2022) – To commemorate the opening of the Pennsylvania Turnpike on Oct. 1, 1940, the State Museum of Pennsylvania invites state residents to consider a trip to Harrisburg to see the Turnpike exhibit, which features an original tollbooth as its centerpiece.

The PA Turnpike — often referred to as America’s First Superhighway — ushered in a new era of transportation in the U.S.

“When the Pennsylvania Turnpike opened to the motoring public on Oct. 1, 1940, it revolutionized automobile travel across the nation,” said Curt Miner, Ph.D., senior history curator at the State Museum. “In fact, it would serve as the blueprint for the modern interstate highway system that would begin to take shape in 1956, some 16 years after the Turnpike opened.”

Today, the Eisenhower Interstate Highway System is comprised of roughly 48,000 miles nationwide.

Upon entering the State Museum this weekend, history buffs will encounter a 3D sidewalk artwork depicting a retro postcard of the PA Turnpike’s celebrated twin tunnels created by Street Painter Erik Greenwald of Irwin, PA, aka, “The Chalking Dad.”

Located at 300 North Second Street in Harrisburg, the State Museum is opened Wednesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m.

Everything from early reflective signs to roadside callboxes to rumble strips testifies to the Turnpike’s leadership in highway engineering and design. Dozens of other items from the Museum’s permanent collections, including archival photographs, films, memorabilia, and scale models, further illustrate the Turnpike’s historic impact on modern automobile travel.

By tunneling through the Allegheny Mountains, rather than routing over or around them, and maintaining uniform design and construction standards across its entire length, the original section of roadway cut travel time between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh by half.

“As the Turnpike was being built in the late 1930s, it was referred to as a ‘dream highway.’ Its 160 miles of limited access, four-lane, highway were hailed as America’s answer to the Autobahn,” Dr. Miner said. “Nothing compared to the Turnpike’s scale and scope or its impact on long-distance automobile travel.”

Originally, the 160-mile Turnpike had 11 toll plazas, and 10 service plazas. Today, the Turnpike has more than tripled in length to 564 miles with 68 toll plazas and 17 service plazas.

To learn more, visit <https://www.paturnpike.com/about-us/turnpike-history>

Admission to the State Museum is \$7 for adults and \$5 for children. For ticket and other information visit <http://statemuseumpa.org/>.

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