



PHOTO COURTESY LINCOLN HIGHWAY EXPERIENCE MUSEUM

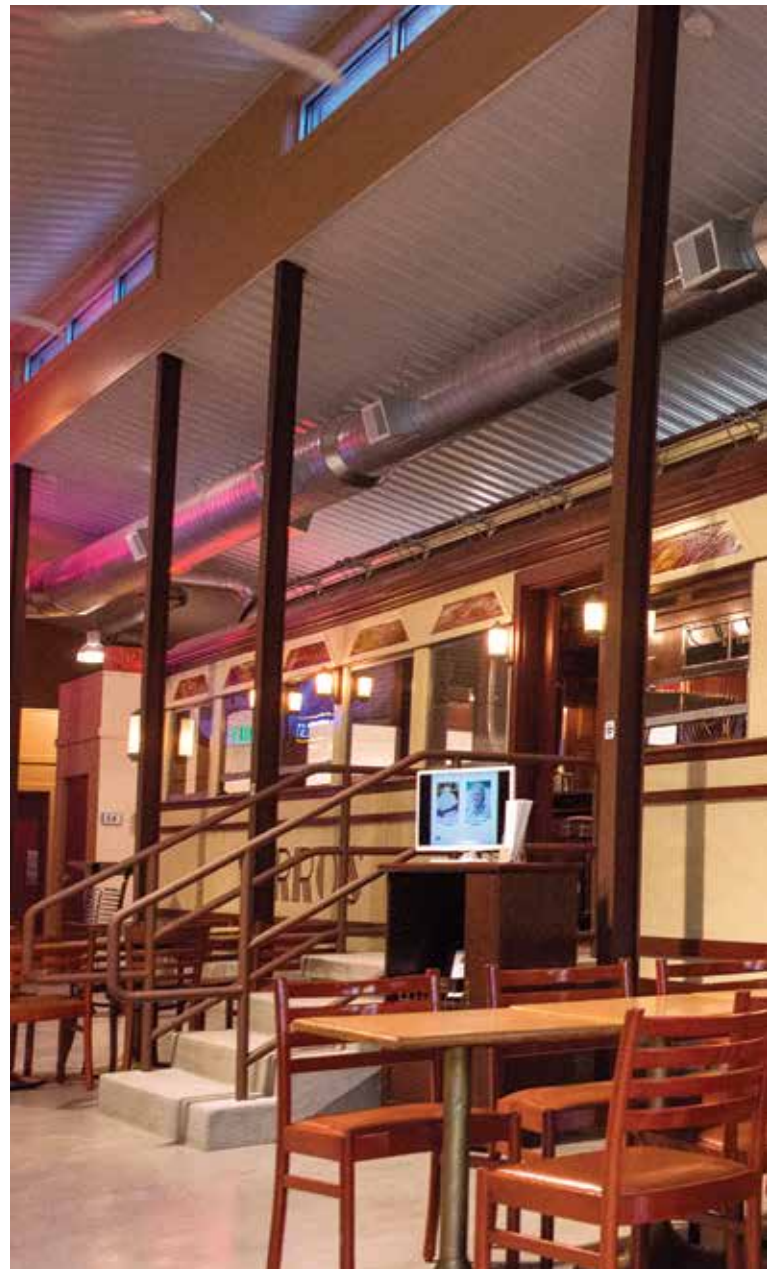


## Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands has a new Lincoln Highway Attraction

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After years of anticipation and planning, the restored 1938 Serro's Diner was moved into the newly constructed Lincoln Highway Experience Museum to take its place as the key attraction within the new museum wing; bringing the total exhibit space to approximately 5,000 square feet.

Housed in a 203-year old, National Register-listed building near Latrobe, PA, that once served as a stagecoach stop, the museum offers a glimpse of the Lincoln Highway era from 1912 – 1940. The Lincoln Highway was this country's first coast-to-coast route from Times Square in New York City to San Francisco. The museum features interpretive exhibits (several are interactive) that reflect roadside services popular with motorists during this period, including neon signs, filling station façade, vintage gas pumps, a 1937 Packard, a restored 1938 tourist cabin – and the diner.



Each visitor will have the convenience of using a Tour Mate Audio Wand that gives the ‘back story’ of exhibits. After viewing the 13-minute award-winning film, *Through the Windshield*, and other exhibits on License Plates, quirky Roadside Architecture, Eisenhower’s 1919 Military Convoy, Drive-in movies, and Postcards, visitors are invited to sit and write out their own Lincoln Highway postcard for museum staff to affix a postage stamp and mail it!

Moving into the new wing, visitors will immediately hear popular tunes of the 30s and 40s that set the stage for several large Lincoln Highway artifacts ahead. “The diner is the keystone to our museum,” says Olga Herbert, executive director of the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor non-profit that operates the museum. “It is the show-stopper. With 30 lights inside and out, it has a ‘wow’ factor.” This Jerry O’Mahony diner was considered the Cadillac of

diners when they were in their heyday. These distinctively American restaurants welcomed people from all walks of life and featured regional cooking at reasonable prices.

Brothers Lou and Joe Serro of Herminie, Pennsylvania, purchased the diner in 1938 and served patrons from its location near the Pennsylvania Turnpike Irwin Exit until 1958 when it was sold to the Rolka family who made several modifications when they moved it to Youngwood, Pennsylvania, and renamed it The Willow Diner. In 1992, the Rolkas sold the deteriorating diner to the Senator John Heinz History Center, which donated it to the Lincoln

**Facing page: The Lincoln Highway Experience Museum and new wing.**

**Below: The restored diner, housed in the new wing, is the main attraction of the museum.**





**Diner interior with ceramic tiled walls, marbled stained glass windows and original 1938 marble countertop.**

Highway Heritage Corridor in 2003. After restorations were completed in 2013, the diner received the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Award from Preservation PA. In April, the diner was moved from a Latrobe warehouse to its new home at the Lincoln Highway Experience.

The diner is an elegant and commanding centerpiece within the new wing with its streamlined porcelain exterior extending 47' long by 11.5' wide in a warm cream color accented by burgundy trim and text. On the lower right side, the words REST ROOMS highlight an amenity much valued at the time. Just outside the diner's entrance, tables and chairs once used at the Bedford Midway Travel Plaza are set up to accommodate larger groups. Visitors can enter the diner using the 3 steps in front or the ADA ramp in the rear. The exterior and interior of the entire museum, including the Gift Shop, are accessible.

“They can interact and get up close and personal to admire its Brazilian mahogany interior, ceramic tiled walls, marbled stained glass windows and marble countertop,”

Olga says. “It’s the same 1938 counter, with a few dings here and there that are part of its history. We restored it according to the stringent Secretary of the Interior Standards.”

In addition to use of the Tour Mate Audio Wand, all visitors to the Lincoln Highway Experience receive a 60-page Lincoln Highway Driving Guide; a brochure describing locations of Lincoln Highway murals, exhibits, gas pumps, and roadside giants along a 200-mile stretch of the Highway in Pennsylvania; a Lincoln Highway postcard with postage; plus a treat from the diner – a piece of pie and coffee for adults, or a fruit cup and juice box for children.

Plan your road trip to this new, fun-filled Lincoln Highway Experience attraction for all ages. It is open 10 am – 4 pm, Monday to Saturday, April to December; and, 10 am – 4 pm, Monday to Friday, January to March. Last visitors admitted at 3 pm. Group rates available.



**This 1939 Nash grill has been converted into a podium for use in the museum.**

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Neon signs, filling station facade, vintage gas pumps, drive-in movie speaker, tots fun room and many other exhibits are all part of the Lincoln Highway Experience. Plan a road trip to this fun-filled attraction for all ages.

