

Allegany Museum Opens 1st Floor Exhibits

CROSSROADS *of* AMERICA



Where rails, trails, canals and roads converged to make American history



This mural depicts Nemaquin, Thomas Cresap (standing), Christopher Gist (kneeling), Hannah Cresap and others exploring trails toward the Ohio River Valley. ©2021 CHAD WEATHERFORD, COURTESY ALLEGANY MUSEUM



This dramatic mural tells the story of Braddock's troops hacking a road over Haystack Mountain to make it wide enough for the passage of wagons and heavy artillery. Wagons and horses tumbled over cliffs due to the rough and steep terrain.

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The recently opened 1st floor of Allegany Museum's "Crossroads of America" permanent exhibition begins with Native American history more than 10,000 years ago, progressing through the Colonial Era with George Washington and General Braddock, and continuing on to the evolution of travel and transportation. History unfolds from Nemaquin's Trail, Fort Cumberland, the National Road, Canals, and Railroad expansion through Cumberland.

Precolonial Era

Small groups of Native Americans first populated the region during the Paleoindian Period, living a semi-nomadic existence. They hunted game, collected wild plants, and lived in camps near raw materials they could use to make tools. By 500 BCE, the Potomac River floodplain was home to several important Woodland villages. American Indian groups developed political and trade relationships that stretched over long distances using a sophisticated transportation network of trails.

George Washington and the Colonial Era

George Washington traveled to this area numerous times between 1753 and 1794. In 1755, as aide-de-camp to General Braddock, a 23-year old Washington accompanied the general towards Ft. Duquesne where they planned to attack

the French. However, the British column was surprised not far from Fort Duquesne and roundly defeated. They retreated to Fort Necessity where General Braddock died of his wounds. Washington's final visit to this region came in 1794. He arrived to avert a near rebellion caused when the fledgling federal republic sought to tax whiskey production. This is the only time a U.S. president led troops into the field. When the well-loved Commander in Chief arrived with over 10,000 militia men, the rebellion quickly dissipated. This George Washington exhibit features a 3-D recreation of him as a teenager, young man, and President of the newly formed United States. This likeness is based on a sculpture of Washington that his family said was the best image of him and was created by scientists using AI-powered facial recognition techniques.

GO WEST! The Evolution of Travel and Transportation

The museum's new exhibition space highlights the evolution of transportation, the technology that facilitated it, and the impact it had on immigration and industry. In the Colonial era, an Indian path called Nemaquin's Trail, which General Braddock's army turned into a rough mountain road, became the main route west over the Allegheny Mountains. For its first 50 years, there was no

plan for its maintenance or improvement, and it suffered wear and tear from the increasing use. In 1806, President Thomas Jefferson authorized the building of a reliable road west for settlement and commerce. Work on the National Road, what became the first highway built entirely with federal funds, began in Cumberland in 1811.

Not long after, one of the most consequential races in American history began on July 4th, 1828. It wasn't between athletes but between two competing methods of transportation. The winner of this great race would determine how the country developed. And the end of the line—the goal—was Cumberland. On that Independence Day, construction began on both the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O) and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal (C&O). The railroad arrived at Cumberland first, in November 1842. The 184-mile C&O Canal did not reach Cumberland until 1850. The B&O and C&O provided a huge boost to the economy. The town became



This 1929 Durant Town Car is on display in front of a replica Gulf station facade of that era, complete with gas pump.

the center of travel westward, as passengers and goods had to change here for the onward journey.

As the B&O Railroad moved further west, reaching Wheeling, WV, in the 1850s, the National Road entered a period of sharp decline. Yet, just as technology caused the National Road to decline, it also led to its revival with the increasing popularity of the automobile. “Motor touring” became a favorite pastime, and the need for roads that did not kick up dust when dry, or turn to mud when wet, grew. Many

The Conestoga wagon pulled by teams of horses, mules or oxen, was a common sight on the National Road in the late 18th century and early 19th century. It was large enough to transport loads weighing up to 6 tons and designed to keep its contents from shifting and to make it easier to cross rivers and streams.



early wagon and coach roads, including the National Road, were revived as smoothly paved automobile routes.

2nd Floor Exhibits

The exhibits on the 2nd floor of the Museum feature Cumberland as a manufacturing town. Coal mining and coal-fired factories created robust employment, and Cumberland became a boomtown by the end of the 1800s. The first quarter of the 20th century saw Cumberland triple in size and become Maryland's second largest city. Cumberland produced a wide range of items, including glass, rubber tires, beer, chemical products, and textiles. Its industry, like that of many manufacturing towns, also became involved in war efforts, especially during WWII. America's industrial boom reached a crescendo in the mid-1900s and then declined as technology changed and manufacturing moved overseas.

Featured exhibits include Glassware, Kelly-Springfield Tire Company, Historic Fire Protection, Children's Exhibits and Toys, Appalachian Folk Art, Whiskey and Beer Production, and Allegany Ballistics Laboratory.

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