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TRAVEL

The coveted 1947 Tucker '48 Prototype Tin Goose.

A CLASSIC JOURNEY

For car lovers, Pennsylvania boasts some of the finest automobile museums in America — and crowds are as rare as the collections.

By Michael and Larissa Milne
FOR THE INQUIRER

Shunpiking is "use of a side road to avoid the toll on (or the speed and traffic of) a superhighway," according to Merriam-Webster. To fans of road trips, shunpiking is a celebration of the joy of driving — and of cars themselves, getting out into the countryside to explore interesting sights often missed while whizzing along the interstate.

For car enthusiasts, Pennsylvania offers an opportunity to shunpike around the state while visiting some of the finest automobile museums in America. Most of these museums are tucked away in unlikely locations, yet reward the visitor with rare and remarkable car collections and virtually no crowds.

We began our "victory lap" around Pennsylvania at the Antique Automobile Club of America Museum (AACA) in Hershey, in search of the elusive Tucker. The vehicle made famous in the 1988 movie *Tucker: The Man and His Dream* is one of the classic cars most prized by collectors. With only 51 ever produced, they are rare, indeed, yet the AACA is the proud owner of not one, but three, of them. The Cammack Tucker Gallery, which has the distinction of having the most Tuckers of any museum in the world, opened in 2014. Along with the rare trio, the gallery is filled with Tucker-related paraphernalia, including engines, parts, and mechanical drawings.

Hershey Kissmobile at Antique Automobile Club of America Museum, which has three of the world's 51 Tuckers. MICHAEL MILNE

Not too far from the AACA Museum, in appropriately named Mechanicsburg, is a salute to automobiles of the highest order. Tucked away on a

See **CARS** on N3

An American Bantam Roadster at the William E. Swigart Jr. Automobile Museum in Huntingdon, Pa., which has been called one of the "coolest small towns in America." MICHAEL MILNE

Mapping a great Pa. route for car lovers

CARS from N1

winding, two-lane country road, luxury-car aficionados will find the Rolls-Royce Foundation, a museum and library celebrating the coveted vehicles.

The main gallery holds about a dozen Rolls-Royces and Bentleys, the brand purchased by Rolls-Royce in 1931. A skeletal 1934 Rolls-Royce Phantom, shown without a body, demonstrates just what a discriminating buyer got for all that money. Initially, Rolls-Royce provided only the high-end engines and chassis, not the complete vehicles we see today. Customers took the engine to an independent coach builder to customize, which is why each early Rolls model was unique.

The late-afternoon sun was casting dappled shadows on the country roads as we shunpiked our way about 100 miles northwest into the Alleghenies to the town of Huntingdon. Once named as one of the "coolest small towns in America" by *CBS This Morning*, sleepy Huntingdon is home to a world-class auto museum.

After a restful night's sleep, we arrived at the William E. Swigart Jr. Automobile Museum to see what motoring treasures lurked in this bucolic setting overlooking the Juniata River. It seemed an unlikely place to spot two Tuckers, yet there they were. One of them might be considered *the* Tucker: the coveted 1947 Tucker '48 Prototype Tin Goose — the first Tucker made. Its companion, a Tucker '48, seems almost pedestrian in comparison — until you remember it is one of only 51 ever made. Car collector Swigart and his wife, Patricia, purchased both at a 1995 auction in Indiana.

The remainder of the museum features a rotating exhibit of the about 150 cars purchased by Swigart and his father, insurance tycoon W. Emmert Swigart, over their lifetimes. About 35 vehicles are on display at any one time, along with a vast permanent collection of auto ephemera, such as international license plates and antique car-logo badges.

Although we were feeling a bit "tuckered" out, we pressed on still farther northwest, into the aptly named Pennsylvania Wilds. This is hunting country, a point that is brought home at the Grice Clearfield Community Museum in Clearfield.

It's not often you find a car museum where a wild turkey is lurking among the cars; the turkey in question here is a stuffed one that's frozen in time alongside a tail-finned 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air. Lynn "Scoot" Grice, an avid hunter, founded this museum, where more than 800 stuffed trophy game mounts share space with 75 automobiles.

At the Eagles Mere Auto Museum, one of the spiffiest cars is a 1947 Ford Sportster Woodie convertible, among the museum's six "woodie" station wagons. Nearby, Eagles Mere Air Museum offers vintage aircraft.

In Mechanicsburg, the Rolls-Royce Foundation celebrates the luxury vehicles. The main gallery holds about a dozen Rolls-Royces and Bentleys.

Antique car-logo badges at the Swigart museum in Huntingdon.

FOR CAR ENTHUSIASTS

- **William E. Swigart Jr. Automobile Museum**
  Open from Memorial Day weekend through Oct. 31.
  www.swigartmuseum.com.
- **Antique Automobile Club of America Museum**
  www.aacamuseum.org.
- **Rolls-Royce Foundation and Museum**
  www.rollsroycefoundation.org.
- **Grice Clearfield Community Museum**
  Open Memorial Day weekend through Columbus Day. www.gricemuseum.com.
- **Eagles Mere Auto Museum**
  Open weekends Memorial Day Weekend through mid-October.
  www.eaglesmereautomuseum.com.
- **Eagles Mere Air Museum**
  www.eaglesmereairmuseum.org
- **Eagles Mere Inn**
  www.eaglesmereinn.com.

On the automotive side, one of the highlights of the collection is the display of seven Crosley cars. Cincinnati industrialist Powell Crosley Jr. was known more for producing appliances and for the ownership of the Cincinnati Reds than he was for cars, yet the quirky, compact autos have a cult following. Another rarity here is a 1932 Rockne, a model produced for two years by Studebaker as a tribute to the legendary Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne, who had died in an airplane crash the year before. Studebaker has its headquarters in South Bend, Ind., also the home of Notre Dame.

We began shunpiking our way eastward, and after stopping at a roadside diner for that most Pennsylvania Dutch staple, shoofly pie, we felt sufficiently fortified to forge onward to our next stop for the night, Eagles Mere.

Perched at 2,000 feet in the Endless Mountains northeast of Williamsport, the cool breezes in the tiny hamlet of Eagles Mere attracted wealthy Philadelphians in the early 1900s for summer getaways. Little has changed in the last 100 years. Streets are scattered with a few shops, some sprawling summer "cottages," and a country inn that seems purloined from an episode of the *Newhart* TV show (complete with homemade cookies).

Given the town's "time-capsule" atmosphere, it is somewhat peculiar that two museums just outside of town celebrate modes of transportation that were virtually unheard of at the turn of the last century. Perched side by side at the edge of an airstrip known as Merritt Field, the Eagles Mere Auto Museum and the Eagles Mere Air Museum offer glimpses into the bygone days of road and air transport.

Our first word upon entering the Eagles Mere Auto Museum is "wow." The collection of more than 75 cars is arrayed in a two-story gallery structure resembling a theater, offering great vantage points throughout. The focus is on American-made cars and trucks from the 1950s and '60s, including a "Class of '69" section with 10 Chevy Camaros sporting different styles and engine configurations that will have muscle-car fans drooling. A collection of six "woodie" station wagons is definitely in keeping with a shunpiking journey; one of the spiffiest is a 1947 Ford Sportster Woodie convertible.

At the Eagles Mere Air Museum, all of the vintage aircraft, including a 1917 "Jenny" biplane, are regularly taken out and flown. In addition to almost 30 planes, the museum sports a collection of reconstructed vintage engines, along with exhibits of rare artifacts celebrating early aviation pioneers.

Central Pennsylvania offers a true, and unexpected, bonanza for vintage car lovers. Consider the spectacular scenery that unfolds along the way while shunpiking an added bonus.

Michael Milne is the author of the "Roadster Guide to America's Classic Car Museums," which will be published in August.