



ACROSS MY DESK

By Brian Butko, Editor

A Friend of Highways and Bridges

Many years ago, someone gave me a large old photo that showed a dedication ceremony along the Lincoln Highway. It appeared to include the governors of three states impacted by the new road—Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. I wondered, however, who the fourth man was who was important enough to stand with them.

The event likely took place about 15 miles west of Pittsburgh, where the Lincoln Highway/U.S. 30 splits northwest, away from the William Penn Highway/U.S. 22.¹ The ceremony celebrated the rerouting of the transcontinental Lincoln Highway, which originally followed the Ohio River west of Pittsburgh to East Liverpool, Ohio. The realigned highway forsook the fog and congestion of the river route for a new concrete ribbon that ran overland to Chester, West Virginia, where it crossed the river to rejoin the original route in East Liverpool.

The 1930 dedication photo shows the governors and three young women, also representing the states benefitting from the new road. Under the middle girl's feet is a handwritten note: "To my friend W. N. Arthur from your friend Henry Tranter." That girl is noted as Mary Eleanor Hershberger, "Miss Pennsylvania." Tranter's name is also on back.

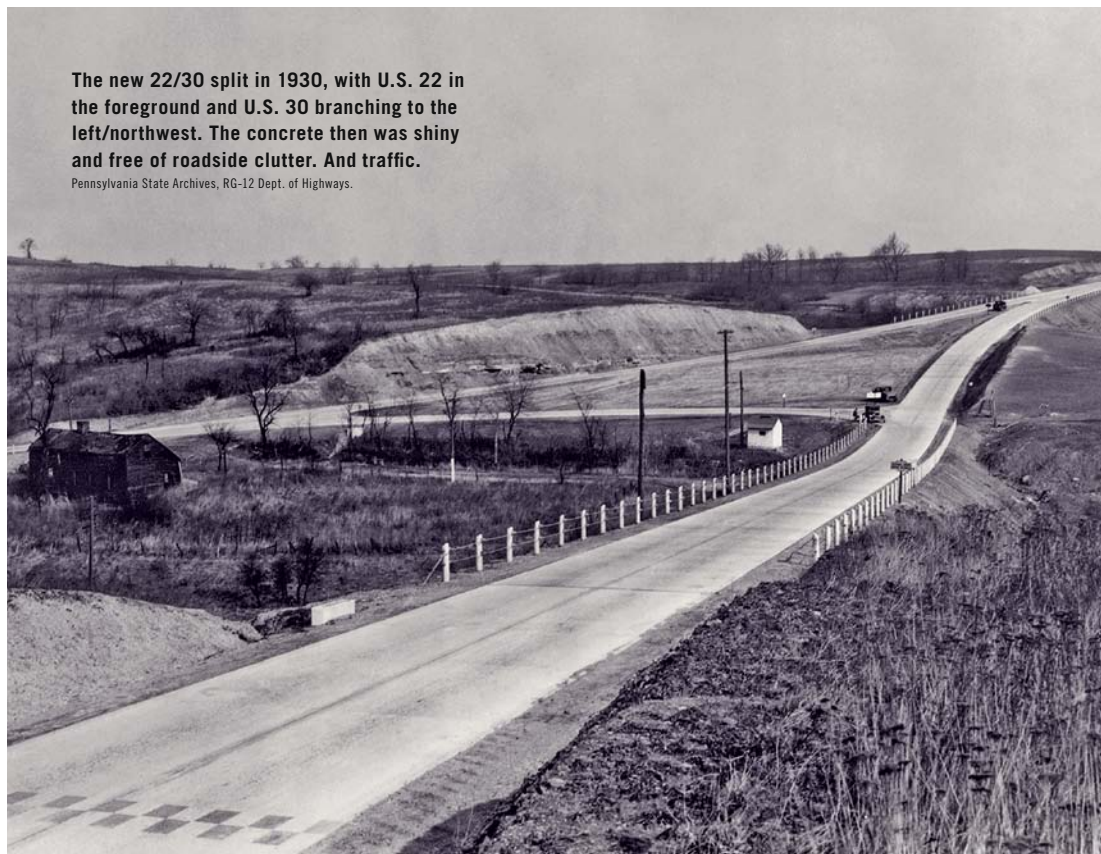
I could find little about Tranter except for a fair amount of background in the Historic American Engineering Record for the West End-North Side Bridge.² That report lists 67-year-old Tranter as being "a prominent Pittsburgh manufacturer,... an active member of the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce's Bridges and Highways Committee, and the moving force behind the building of the West End-North Side Bridge." He was master of ceremonies for the bridge's dedication in December 1932, and cutting the ribbon there too was none other than little Mary Eleanor Hershberger.

The bridge and the 22/30 upgrade were just two of many highway improvements then underway that fulfilled Tranter's dream for better transportation. The HAER report says that in 1928, Allegheny County commissioners approved a \$43 million bond issue that included roads, bridges, public buildings, even the new county airport. By 1930, the West End-North Side Bridge was just "one of 39 county bridges either under construction or awaiting action."

As for "Miss Pennsylvania," a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* story about the 1932 highway dedication says Mary Eleanor was the daughter

The new 22/30 split in 1930, with U.S. 22 in the foreground and U.S. 30 branching to the left/northwest. The concrete then was shiny and free of roadside clutter. And traffic.

Pennsylvania State Archives, RG-12 Dept. of Highways.






Celebrating the Formal Opening of the
Lincoln and William Penn Highways West of Pittsburgh
at Imperial Junction, Friday October 17, 1930.

Governor Conley of West Virginia, left - Governor Fisher of Pennsylvania, center - Governor Cooper of Ohio, right.
Frances Jacobs 'Miss Ohio,' left - Mary Eleanor Hershberger 'Miss Pennsylvania,' center - Annette Wehner 'Miss West Virginia,' right

of Stanley Hershberger, who was brother of Ida Bell Hershberger—who married Tranter; so the girl was his niece.³

In 1964, a four-lane highway bypassed routes 22/30, making this intersection a crossroads off the Imperial exit ramp. Tranter had passed away a quarter century earlier, but what became of Mary Eleanor? She was born in 1925 so she would be 86 now, yet nothing could be found about her life beyond these two incidents. Surely someone must know what became of the young woman who

cut the ribbon on two massive infrastructure projects in Depression-era Pittsburgh. 

1 An undated article about the Lincoln Highway celebration said motor caravans from the three states would attend and a banquet was planned that evening at the William Penn Hotel.

2 Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), *West End-North Side Bridge, Pittsburgh, PA (PA-96)*, text by William P. McHugh, Ph. D.; GAI Consultants, Inc., 1985, available at <http://loc.gov/pictures/item/pa1732/> and also in text form on Pittsburgh Bridges, site © Bruce S. Criddlebaugh, accessed at <http://pghbridges.com/articles/PA96-01.html/>. The HAER study says Tranter (1865-1940) headed Tranter Manufacturing, a machine shop at 105 Fort Pitt Boulevard, North Side,

that made mill, mine, and factory equipment, including pumps, boilers, engines, and hoists. He served on the Pittsburgh City Transit Commission and, from 1915-1935, chaired the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce's Highways and Bridges Committee.

3 "Girl cuts ribbon to open city's new bridge of size," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 2, 1932. The news report lists Mary Hershberger as the seven-year-old daughter of Stanley Hershberger and niece of Tranter. The HAER report incorrectly calls her Tranter's granddaughter.