

## Selinsgrove Post Office

100 South Market Street  
Selinsgrove, PA 17870

MURAL

Title: *Susquehanna Trail*

Artist: George Rickey

Date: 1939

Medium: Tempera on canvas



This beautiful mural depicts spring plowing and planting in central Pennsylvania, combining richly detailed subject matter with a dramatic use of the lobby space. The artist, George Rickey, decided in his early sketches to cover more wall by having his mural wrap down around the postmaster's door. This allowed his two farmers to be painted nearly life size. The planting farmer on the

left is very close to the picture plane and appears to be ready to step onto the lobby floor and join waiting customers. This illusion incorporates the lobby: rather than being a detriment, the narrowness of the space enhances the rapidly receding horizon of the mural.

The background includes Shriners' Church, the Susquehanna River, the town of Selinsgrove and the

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Mahanoy mountain. In the middle ground is a woman, infant, and child. The letter that the woman holds, as well as the rural mail box behind her, symbolize the Post Office Department's duty "to bind the nation together by mail."

In earlier sketches, the placement of the main figures was reversed — the man sowing was on the right and the farmer plowing was on the left. But prior to executing the finished mural, Rickey observed that the plows used in Snyder county turned the furrow from right to left. Rickey moved the plowing farmer to the right. This allowed the soil to be correctly turned to the left while maintaining the mural's color scheme of the red earth in the center of the composition and the green grass along the sides.

Rickey's mural skillfully integrates many elements which were so popular in Depression-era murals: images of working men, motherhood, fertile land, and a strong community. In the midst of the Depression, his mural presented a stable present and a promising future. Despite the positive reception of the mural by Selinsgrove's residents, the Treasury Department was unhappy with Rickey's work, and he received no further commissions from it.

**About the artist:** Rickey (1907–2002) was born in Indiana and educated in Scotland and England. He was an artist and educator who taught at schools around the country, including Muhlenberg College in Allentown. In the 1950s he began to focus his work on sculpture, and later achieved fame as a kinetic metal sculptor. His works can be found in major museum collections around the world.

