

# Route 66 Economic Impact Study

**TECHNICAL REPORT, VOLUME II**

**Tales from the Mother Road: Case Studies of the People and Places of Route 66**

A study conducted by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
in collaboration with the National Park Service  
Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program  
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# RUTGERS

Center for Urban Policy Research  
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy  
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New Brunswick, New Jersey

June 2011



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ISBN-10 0-9841732-5-0  
ISBN-13 978-0-9841732-5-9

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## INTRODUCTION TO ROUTE 66 AND TALES FROM THE MOTHER ROAD

Running about 2,400 miles from Chicago, Illinois, to Santa Monica, California, Route 66 is an American and international icon, myth, carnival, and pilgrimage. This celebrated road has succeeded in mirroring the mood of the United States for nearly a century.

Gestated in the booming 1920s, Route 66 was promoted by Cyrus Avery (today known as the Father of Route 66) and others as the “shortest and most direct Route between the Great Lakes and the Pacific Coast.” Paved end to end by 1937, the highway was marketed by Avery’s National U.S. 66 Highway Association through a series of publicity events including the 1929 transcontinental footrace that followed Route 66 from Los Angeles to Chicago, and then onto New York City, dubbed the “Bunion Derby.”

During the Great Depression, Route 66 became the “road of flight” for families escaping the Dust Bowl. During World War II, it was one of the major routes for transporting armed forces—troops and materials. Later came the post-war exodus of ex-GIs and their families to join the booming California job market. In the recovery years, times were good, and American families took two-week vacations to drive Route 66 and see the wonders of the West. In the 1960s, the “hippie” counterculture lured thousands of the nation’s disenchanting youth west on Route 66, hitchhiking or packed in minibuses.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Route 66 became less important for highway travel as people flocked to the more efficient ribbons of concrete of the interstate highway system which was begun in 1956. The final section of Route 66 was bypassed by Interstate 40 at Williams, Arizona in 1985. In all, the Mother Road was “replaced” from a transportation engineering perspective by Interstates 55, 44, 40, 15 and 10.



A nine-foot wide segment of Historic Route 66 south of Miami, Oklahoma.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

## Map of Route 66



But transportation engineers do not rule the heart and the siren call of the Mother Road and its special sense of place, personality, and time continues to lure legions of United States and international tourists. To cite just one example, the Route 66 Museum of Clinton, Oklahoma (a community of about 9,000 located approximately 100 miles west of Oklahoma City) attracted about 35,000 visitors in 2009 (almost four times the local population), including about 10,000 international visitors.

Sometimes traveling the Mother Road, as Route 66 is popularly referred to, takes interesting forms. Some travelers, including one recent 71-year old retiree, have jogged its entire length.<sup>1</sup> In 2010, a Frenchman started “doing the route” entirely on stilts.<sup>2</sup> There are regular caravans of many different types of vehicles making their way on the Mother Road, ranging from bicycles to American muscle cars, from husky-tuned Harley Davidsons to rumbling big-finned Cadillacs, and including as well a dollop of vintage cars and motorcycles air-lifted from literally around the globe to take on the 2,400-mile trek.

This near-century caravan of people and vehicles traversing Route 66 has inspired media and literature and, in turn, has been fueled by the trumpeting of the Mother Road in the creative arts. Route 66 has been immortalized at various points in its history through song, film, TV, and literature. Books such as John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* and Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* both directly and indirectly contributed to the highway’s popularity during its heyday as a passage west. Bobby Troup’s seminal song, “(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66,” became a theme song for the highway, and is still recognizable today to people even only remotely aware of Route 66’s historic significance. The popular 1960s American TV show *Route 66* caused the route to soar as an icon in the public consciousness even as it was falling into decline as a highway. More recently, since the decommissioning of Route 66 in 1985, movies like

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<sup>1</sup> “71-year-old retiree jogs entire length of Route 66.” *RV Route 66*. [http://rvroute66.blogspot.com/2009\\_12\\_01\\_archive.html](http://rvroute66.blogspot.com/2009_12_01_archive.html) (Accessed March 14, 2011)

<sup>2</sup> “Ma Route 66 avril 2010.” *Il court il court l’échassier Landais*. <http://echassier.unblog.fr/> (Accessed March 14, 2011)

Disney/Pixar's *Cars* have highlighted how the once-thriving Route fell victim to the development of the Interstate Highway System, and the renewed interest in revitalizing sections of "Historic Route 66" and raising awareness of its legacy.

During the Great Depression, Route 66, along with a number of other state-spanning highways, became a passage for poor migrant workers escaping the devastating droughts in the American Midwest that would be come to be known as the Dust Bowl. John Steinbeck captured this migration in his 1939 novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. There is probably no greater poetic description of Route 66 in literature. He introduces the highway as though it is its own character, calling it "the main migrant road" and "the Mother Road," a nickname for the highway that, as noted, continues to be used to this day. Steinbeck tracks the trajectory of the Route and the way its "tributary side roads" fed migrants like a river of impoverished souls to an almost biblical promised land in California. More than any other highway, Route 66 is associated with this great migration because of Steinbeck's reverential literary treatment of it.

Jack Kerouac and his alter ego Sal had a similar impulse pulling them west in his Beat Generation novel *On the Road*, but his reference to Route 66 is brief, and considerably more realistic than Steinbeck's. It is what he perceives in Los Angeles after already having made the trek that cements Route 66 in the minds of his fellow beatniks and draws them to it. There he sees a great collection of "the beatest characters in the country," including "long-haired broken-down hipsters straight off Route 66 from New York." Where Steinbeck's Route 66 was like the passage to a mecca of prosperity, for Kerouac it was a potential passage to a culture mecca. Beatniks (and eventually their countercultural successors, hippies) would for years stream down from New York and elsewhere to California, and Route 66 became their Beat icon for that passage.



The General Store in Hackberry Arizona on old Route 66.

Source: U.S. National Park Service



This association of Route 66 reflecting a liberal, socially conscious culture would continue in a more mainstream form with the 1960s TV show *Route 66*. The show chronicled the adventures of two brothers, Tod and Buz, who were constantly on the road helping those in need and facing social injustice wherever they went. Instead of our two protagonists galloping into town on a white horse to right the wrong, they traveled in a Chevrolet Corvette with 275 horses under the hood. The show was immensely popular during its four-year run, and though the show actually had very little to do with Route 66, it raised the highway's profile to the peak of popularity, even as it was declining in use and becoming increasingly obsolete in an engineering sense after the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 was implemented.

In addition to *The Grapes of Wrath* and the *Route 66* series, Bobby Troup's 1946 song, "[Get Your Kicks On] Route 66," was crucial to cementing Route 66 in the popular consciousness. The song was written by Troup at the suggestion of his wife, Cynthia, during a 10-day trip they took that same year. Troup wrote the song, chronicling the highway's many destinations in a sort of travelogue fashion, and it was recorded that year by Nat King Cole, becoming an instant success. Since then the song has been recorded by artists like The Rolling Stones and Depeche Mode, the latter recording the track as a hybrid B-Side to their immensely popular single "Behind the Wheel" only a couple of years after the highway's decommissioning. Even though the Route was now technically nonexistent as a major transnational highway, it still soared high in American mainstream culture and fascinated a global audience.



1957 Red Corvette at the Hackberry General Store on Route 66, Arizona.

Source: Marie Berne/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0



Cadillac Ranch, Amarillo, Texas.

*Source: Richie Diesterheft/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0*

In recent years, there has been a focus in many communities and states where the highway originally ran to preserve and highlight Route 66's historical significance, and no film better illustrates this drive than Disney/Pixar's 2006 film *Cars*. The impatient, anthropomorphized young racing car Lightning McQueen veers off the Interstate in his rush to get to a race in California, and is charged to repair the damage he does to the sleepy Route 66 town Radiator Springs before he can continue his journey. In the process he learns the values of local community, respect for elders, and patience that the hyper-speed culture on the interstate seems to have forgotten. By the films' end, with McQueen's influence the town is revitalized, the rusting U.S. Highway 66 sign in town being replaced by a gleaming new "Historic Route 66" sign. The film mirrors the attitude about Route 66 as a cultural institution that never truly went away, but has only strengthened of late as a response to preserve the physical vestiges of a highway that has continued to loom large as an ideal, mythical place symbolizing pathways to progress and self-knowledge and an all-American and international love affair with the open, wandering road.

Route 66 has surely attracted the famous. As an example, “[Woody Guthrie] had traveled Route 66, he boasted, enough to run it up to 6,666, back and forth...as whim and winds took him.”<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, the famous speak condescendingly of the Mother Road as to wit Frank Lloyd Wright’s observation that “Route 66 is a giant chute down which everything loose in the country is sliding into Southern California.” More often, however, the Mother Road attracts her children who are less well-known from across the United States and from distant shores. Some sign their names on deliberately graffiti-ridden, upended, half-buried automobiles at Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, Texas. Many more opt to say their piece, often laudatory of their Route 66 experience, on the electronic highway of the Internet as the following examples illustrate.

“This trip on Route 66 will be a gift to my husband and myself for our retirement.”

–Geri Hartwig, Parma, Ohio<sup>4</sup>

“As president of the local Oldsmobile club, I plan to get a few of us together and drive those 442’s, Hurst/Olds’, Toronado’s [*sic*] down the great highway. Can’t wait to hear my 455 engine purr as we ‘get our kicks...’”

–Ken Pilidis, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada<sup>5</sup>

“I think Route 66 should be preserved. I hitchhiked my way from Michigan to California in 1968-69 on this road, and it is a part of American history.”

–Paul Blanton, Michigan<sup>6</sup>

“One of my favourite wishes of my life is to go with a motorbike on this road from Chicago to Los Angeles.”

–Elfi Blass, Bedesbach, Germany<sup>7</sup>

“Never knew about [Route 66]. Once I found out, never stopped dreaming about it.”

–Boaz Halachmi, Israel<sup>8</sup>

“Planning a trip down ‘66.’ No other road can be as interesting or educational. But I’m going for FUN.”

–Mitch Lollar, Keizer, Oregon<sup>9</sup>

The above comments encapsulate not only the widespread interest in Route 66 from Americans and foreign travelers as well, but also the wide-ranging motivations of “doing the Route.”

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<sup>3</sup> Mac&Murray Multimedia and E-TravelMagazines .com. “American Masters: Woody Guthrie: Ain’t Got No Home.” 2009. <http://www.californiatravelmagazine.com/CaliforniaTravelRT66.html> (accessed February 11, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Quotes taken from the Historic Route 66 website guestbook. <http://www.historic66.com/more/guestbook/guestbook97.html> (accessed February 11, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



People travel Route 66 for “kicks,” for “fun,” to relish their personal freedom, to see the open space and geological wonders of the American West, to share the camaraderie of fellow travelers, to experience old-time, small-town America (with periodic big cities for diversion), for the nostalgia of reliving past journeys on the Route, to view the memorable relics of road-side American (from giant likenesses of Paul Bunyan holding a hot dog to blue whales in the middle of Oklahoma) and for a myriad of other reasons. Most times, one travels on a highway for the pragmatic objective of getting from origin to destination as fast as possible. Route 66 reverses that framework: The objective is the journey itself rather than the destination to be reached; the travel is to be savored rather than endured; and the experience of the Route is singularly transforming rather than the numbing blandness of lost time spent on the interstate. As expressed by one of the major bards of Route 66, Michael Wallis, “When Russell Soulsby [a proprietor of an Illinois Shell station dating back to 1926] drives the old road—Route 66—he’s young again. The night is full of magic, and the moonlight shines on the cracked pavement and shows the way.”



The sometimes quirky nature of some Route 66 attractions is integral to the highway’s cultural identity and mass appeal. Photos (clockwise from top left) The Blue Whale of Catoosa, Oklahoma; the Bunyan Giant (Hot Dog Man) of Atlanta, Illinois; and the dinosaurs in front of the Rock Shop in Holbrook, Arizona.

Source: U.S. National Park Service

Among the main attractions of Route 66 are the unique sites and people along the Mother Road. To convey this special assemblage of place and personality, this volume written by researchers from Rutgers University, presents “Tales from the Mother Road: Case Studies of the People and Places of Route 66.”

The case studies comprise compelling tales, often involving stalwart Route 66 personalities who met and overcame adversity. The reader can get a taste of these resolute pioneers’ attributes from perusing the thumbnail sketches in Table I.1, but these short summaries only scratch the surface. So let us add some details and examples.

Born in 1902, Lillian Redman arrived in New Mexico in 1916 in a covered wagon, and worked as a “Harvey Girl” in one of the restaurants of the famous Fred Harvey Company hospitality empire of the early twentieth century. Redman received the Blue Swallow motor court—best known for its iconic blue neon sign—in Tucumcari, New Mexico, as an engagement gift in 1958. She served as proprietress of the establishment with a homespun philosophy for the next 40 years. The following text is copied from a hand-signed note from Redman to a 1992 Blue Swallow guest:

In ancient times, there was a prayer for “The Stranger Within our Gates.” Because this motel is a human institution to serve people... we hope that God will grant you peace and rest... We are all travelers...may these days be pleasant for you, profitable for society, helpful for those you meet, and a joy to those you know and love you best.<sup>10</sup>



The Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, New Mexico.)

Source: Scott Tanis/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

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<sup>10</sup> Wallis, Michael. *Route 66: The Mother Road*. St. Martin’s Press, 2001. 151

The Rock Café in Stroud, Oklahoma, was built of rocks excavated from the original construction of Route 66. Roy Stroud, who founded the town in 1892 and ran a salon selling “whiskey and libations to the rabble-rousing<sup>11</sup>” locals, bought the excavated rock for just \$5. The Rock Café’s most recent owner, Dawn Welch, who took over in 1993, reenergized the waning establishment, but then faced a catastrophic fire in 2008. She rebuilt the Rock with much grit and community assistance. Welch served as inspiration for the character “Sally” in the Disney/Pixar film *Cars*. Let Dawn (who also is an authoress of a cookbook with sass and good recipes) describe in her inimitable words how she came to the Rock, and her proprietorship there:

I grew up in the somewhat small town of Yukon, Oklahoma. As far back as I can remember, I had big dreams of working on a cruise ship and seeing the world. Soon after graduating from high school, I packed my bags and headed to Miami (where I didn’t know a soul) and miraculously within one day landed a job working for a cruise ship line. I traveled for 4 years, visiting places near and far....

During a trip home to visit my mom, fate intervened in the form of an inheritance from my grandmother, who left me 25 acres of Oklahoma property and a darn good reason to reconsider my nomadic existence. When I was given the opportunity to buy the Rock Cafe, an historic 25-seat restaurant on Route 66 in Stroud...I thought, why not give it a go?

That took a lot of gumption on my part, as I didn’t know the first thing about cooking or running a restaurant, but my hard work and trial-by-error approach paid off... It wasn’t long before the locals and tourists were back. Although throughout the years I’ve made some changes to the original menu—we no longer smoke our barbecue, and we’ve added quiche and spaetzle to the menu—I like to think we’ve never strayed too far from the philosophy of good food, good service, and good prices....<sup>12</sup>



The Rock Café of Stroud, Oklahoma after restoration.

Source: U.S. National Park Service

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<sup>11</sup> Dawn Welch with Raquel Pelzel, *Dollars to Donuts*. Rodale, 2009, viii

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* vi-vii



Cool Springs Camp of Kingman, Arizona, a sought-after oasis on a treacherous leg of old Route 66, did not seem to have much of a future after it was literally blown up in a 1991 movie shoot (*Universal Soldier*). That did not dissuade Ned Leuchtner, a real estate agent from Chicago, who discovered the remains of Cool Springs in 1997 while traveling out west. He took it upon himself to bring the place back to life and by 2004 had realized this goal, transforming the camp to its near-original state.



Cool Springs Cabins on Route 66 in Arizona.

Source: U.S.National Park Service



La Posada Hotel, Winslow, Arizona.

Source: U.S.National Park Service

The siren song of restoring a faded special place—La Posada Hotel of Winslow, Arizona—also struck Alan Affeldt, an art connoisseur and business entrepreneur, his wife Tina Mion, a renowned artist, and a third partner, Daniel Lutzick. Built in 1930, La Posada had been a jewel of a hotel made possible by the entrepreneurial acumen of Fred Harvey (of “Harvey Houses” fame), the creative genius of architect Mary Elizabeth Jane Coulter, and the good fortune of Winslow being the Arizona headquarters of the Santa Fe Railroad. But times and travel modes changed (e.g., fewer railroad passengers), which led to La Posada closing in 1957 and its museum-quality furnishings being auctioned off. Forty years later, in 1997, our trio of Affeldt, Mion, and Lutzick became inspired to bring La Posada back to its former glory. They have done just that. They have reclaimed the hotel’s elaborate gardens, restored the special room and lobby detail, and reclaimed some of the original furniture. (Hotel personnel do admit, however, that despite “clearing” over 300 ghosts from the premises, some still remain.)

The town of Arcadia was formed in 1902, not long after the Oklahoma Land Rush (1893) and before the former Oklahoma territory became a state (1907). Arcadia’s founder, Bill Odor, helped build a monumental-scale Round Barn in 1898 that became the town’s landmark and a famous Oklahoma site that stood the test of time until 1988, when it collapsed. Enter Luke Robinson, a retired carpenter who remembered the Round Barn from dances in the 1930s. Working with a group of retirees (dubbed the “Over the Hill Gang”) and sympathetic others, Robinson and others restored the Round Barn using construction



The Round Barn of Arcadia, Oklahoma, fully restored.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

techniques that mimicked Odor’s original craftsmanship (e.g., soaking huge slabs of lumber in a creek to make them pliable). Luke deadpans that “I thought I was just fixing up an old barn,” but it was much more than that as Robinson and his crew “salvaged the most powerful reminder of Arcadia’s frontier roots and probably the most recognized historic site in the state.” Complementing the historic Round Barn in Arcadia is a new Route 66 icon POPS, which hawks 500 varieties of soda pop in an eye catching modern building replete with Mother Road iconography (e.g., a 66 foot LED emblazed soda pop bottle).



One of Route 66's newer attractions—POPS—in Arcadia, Oklahoma. The soda pop bottled illuminated by LEDs is 66 feet tall, and the roof of the restaurant is angled at 66 degrees from the ground.

Source: Randy Von Liski/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

There are many other compelling tales and outsize personalities in the case studies. Brief one- to two-sentence descriptions of some includes:

- John Nunn, drawing an image in the sand with a stray nail of the rest stop he envisioned in Shamrock, Texas, a rendering that ultimately resulted in the iconic Conoco Station, with its landmark 100-foot tower (and inspiration for “The House of Body Art” in the movie *Cars*).
- Williams Shea, a World War II veteran who returned in 1946 to run, for half a century, a local Springfield, Illinois, gas station that was ultimately transformed into a time capsule-like museum with decades of oil company memorabilia (e.g., vintage gas pumps, signs, and marketing items), along with some personal items such as sand from D-Day scooped up by Shea. The museum is operated by Shea, an octogenarian, and his family.
- “Four Women on the Route” (literally) reclaimed an abandoned Kan-O-Tex gas station in Galena, Kansas (a small town of 3,000 with one-tenth its peak mining-boom population), into a snack bar and gift shop, with yet future expansion plans (converting “Steffleback House,” a former bordello, into a bed and breakfast). A rusty truck on the gas station’s premises served as the inspiration for the movie character “Tow-Mater” in *Cars*. (A Galena fourth-grader called the truck “Tow-Tater,” and this parlance is used locally).



- The Ariston Café in Litchfield, Illinois, has been run by the Adam family since the 1920s (today, husband, wife and son) and over the past near-century, its good food, proprietor warmth and conversation, and period furnishings (including a mounted marlin and neon sign beckoning “Remember Where Good Food Is Served”) have drawn customers from near and far. Challenges have been dealt with head on: When Illinois rerouted Route 66 to behind the Ariston, the Adam family responded by reorienting the restaurant and its exterior sign accordingly to face the new bypass.

To provide a larger framework for these 25 case studies, Chapter 1 presents a history of Route 66 and contemporary efforts to preserve the Mother Road; Chapter 2 then overviews the 25 “tales.” It lists the sites, briefly describes their community settings and host personalities, and then summarizes the uplifting economic and other positive impacts of many of the case examples. In many smaller communities along Route 66, tourism related to the Mother Road is one of the most significant, if not the only, “economic game in town.” The restored Route 66-themed motel, restaurant, and gift shop may not have a high-dollar business volume (especially relative to the much larger regional and state economies), yet they anchor the downtown in many small communities and change the perceived image of a place from a dowager town abandoned by the interstate to a community with a Route 66-linked past and future. This monograph’s case studies thus combine one-of-a-kind stories of sites and people with the uplifting message of meeting adversity and positive transformation. The Route 66 Preservation Foundation describes the Mother Road as follows: “Route 66 was and is the best of us, and perhaps even the worst of us, but it will always truly be a part of our American Dream...”<sup>13</sup> Our “tales” thus convey some measure of the American Dream, yet this dream is surely broader and spans the globe.



The Gold Star Boys (service men killed in action in World War II) mural of Cuba, Missouri. Cuba’s mural program has been an economic boon to the once-struggling town.

Source: U.S. National Park Service

<sup>13</sup> Route 66 Preservation Foundation, Preserving the Mother Road. <http://www.cart66pf.org/> (accessed February 11, 2011).



**Table I.1**  
**Overview of Each of the 25 Case Studies**

<i>Case Study and Location</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>Palms Grill</b> Atlanta, IL	History of iconic downtown restaurant (name inspired by the founder’s fascination with Los Angeles, California), built in 1934, that was restored with period details in the late 2000s and once again serves as a local café and anchor for the downtown.
<b>Joliet Historical Museum</b> Joliet, IL	A museum on Joliet’s history with a significant collection (15,000 artifacts) and a major focus on Route 66. The latter, a focal point for many visitors, includes such features as a Route 66 interactive drive-in and a model 1950s-era motor court room (complete with Gideon bible and a black-and-white TV).
<b>Ariston Café</b> Litchfield, IL	History and continued operation of Ariston Café (built in 1929), a family-owned and -operated restaurant with period details (original booths, counter, etc.) with a large and widespread (local, national, and international) customer base. Facility includes iconic mounted marlin and neon sign proclaiming “Remember Where Good Food Is Served.”
<b>Pontiac Murals</b> Pontiac, IL	Including a famous Route 66 shield mural on the back of the Route 66 Museum in Pontiac, this town has embraced a mural program to spur tourism and enhance its economic fortunes. The total of about 20 murals (on individuals/subjects ranging from Abraham Lincoln to a famous local candy store—“Palace of Sweets”) attracts about 20,000 annually.
<b>Shea’s Gas Station</b> Springfield, IL	A time capsule of an early (oldest portion from the 1920s) local neighborhood filling station (encompassing Marathon and Philips 66 components), with thousands of period-correct oil-company-related memorabilia (signs, pumps, and marketing materials). Facility was operated for decades by proprietor William Shea; he converted it to a family-run museum in 1995.
<b>The Mother Road Festival</b> Springfield, IL	This festival is a three-day event that has been held each September since 2001. With nearly 80,000 visitors and 1,000 classic cars on display, it is one of the biggest car shows in the mid-western United States. The event combines classic car culture, Route 66, and the historic downtown (Springfield) Main Street themes.
<b>Cuba Murals</b> Cuba, MO	Buffeted by economic adversity, such as the mid-1980s closing of major factories in the area, Cuba bootstrapped itself in large part due to a local campaign of painting murals related to the town’s history—including visits by Harry Truman and Amelia Earhart—as well as that of Route 66. The murals have become a major tourist attraction for the town.
<b>Route 66 State Park</b> Eureka, MO	A museum on Route 66, housed in a former roadhouse—the Bridgehead Inn (ca. 1935)—located in a park reclaimed from an environmental disaster (former dioxin-polluted town of Times Beach). The museum contains extensive Route 66 memorabilia, including road and motel signs, as well as vintage gas pumps, and describes the history of the Mother Road and that of Times Beach.
<b>Kan-O-Tex Station (Four Women on the Route)</b> Galena, KS	History and changing fortunes of a Kan-O-Tex filling station, built in the late 1920s, and closed in the 1980s. In 2006, the station was reopened as a small restaurant and gift shop. The business name reflects the partnership of four local women resolved to reclaim and reuse a long-lost facility and to invigorate the local and downtown economy.
<b>Round Barn</b> Arcadia, OK	Built in 1898, collapsed in 1988, a retired carpenter (Luke Robinson), an intrepid “Over the Hill Gang” (senior 60s group) and other local volunteers help restore (in 1992) the most powerful reminder of Arcadia’s frontier roots and one of the most recognizable historic sites (an authentic round barn with a 60-foot diameter) in Oklahoma and along Route 66.
<b>POPS</b> Arcadia, OK	Opened in 2007 on Route 66, POPS is a gas station, restaurant, and convenience store centered on the theme of soda pop (over 500 varieties). The POPS building is an eye-catching structure, containing thousands of LEDs and the business “links” to Route 66 through its location (on the Mother Road) and design (e.g., its signature LED soda bottle is 66 feet tall, and it originally contained 66 parking spaces).
<b>Route 66 Museum</b> Clinton, OK	Originally opened in 1968 as the Museum of the Western Trails, this institution reoriented to a focus on Route 66 from 1995 onward. One of the nation’s largest (10,000 square feet of exhibit space) museums on the Mother Road, the history of Route 66 is conveyed decade-by-decade (over six decades) starting in the 1920s.
<b>Coleman Theater</b> Miami, OK	An ornate 1929 movie theater in a small town, a treasured community resource that never closed its doors, and refurbished over the past two decades to its former glory (including the return of its famed pipe organ).

<b>Rock Café</b> Stroud, OK	History of the Rock Café (opened in 1939, incorporating stones excavated from original Route 66 construction), with a focus on operation by its current owner, Dawn Welch. Details rebuilding of restaurant after 2008 fire and current significant national/international visitor patronage.
<b>Vickery Station</b> Tulsa, OK	History of the 1930s-era Vickery Philips 66 gas station (prime example of the Phillips Petroleum Company classic Cotswold Cottage station design) and its recent (2006-2008) preservation and adaptive reuse as a car-rental office.
<b>Meadow Gold Sign</b> Tulsa, OK	History of 1940s-era Meadow Gold (dairy products company) neon sign and its recent (late 2000s) refurbishment and relighting after being neglected and going dark in the 1990s.
<b>Conoco Station</b> Shamrock, TX	History of the 1936 architecturally unique (Art Deco 100 foot tower) Conoco gas station (and U-Drop Inn), and its changing fortunes (prospered for decades, closed 1997, and restored/reopened in early 2000s as a museum).
<b>Kelly's Brew Pub</b> Albuquerque, NM	Originally constructed in 1939 as Jones Motor Company (Ford dealership and Texaco gas station), the building was adaptively reused in 2000 into a popular Nob Hill neighborhood restaurant. Its veranda is one of the popular hospitality gathering places in Albuquerque.
<b>Blue Swallow Motel</b> Tucumcari, NM	History and continued operation of a historic (built 1939) and iconic motor court-style motel with a world-famous blue-lit neon sign. The motel is perhaps the oldest vintage motor court still in operation on Route 66.
<b>Cool Springs</b> Kingman, AZ	History of the Cool Springs Camp (opened 1926), its prosperous early decades and family-run operation, demise (destroyed by fire in 1966 and blown up in a movie shoot in 1991), and recent (mid-2000s) rebirth as a snack and gift shop.
<b>La Posada Hotel</b> Winslow, AZ	Connected to famous personalities (Fred Harvey—the mastermind behind the “Harvey Houses”—and noted architect, Mary Elizabeth Jane Coulter), this historic jewel of a hotel, which opened in 1930, described as the “finest small hotel in the southwest” closed in 1957, but was recently (late 1990s) reopened and brought back to its original splendor.
<b>Rendezvous Festival</b> San Bernardino, CA	This event is touted by its sponsor as a place where “car buffs from all over the country gather...to get their ‘kicks on Route 66,’” and the event logo incorporates an iconic California Route 66 sign. It is one of the largest such events in the United States (2009 attendance of about 500,000 viewing nearly 2,000 registered cars).
<b>Main Street</b> Numerous locations	One reason people travel on Route 66 is to experience historic downtown areas. Main Street is a national effort to revitalize such downtowns. This case study highlights this program’s application along the Mother Road in places from Collinsworth, IL (home of the world’s largest catsup bottle) to Albuquerque, NM (with its famous Route 66 neon strip and other attractions).
<b>Folk Art</b> Numerous locations	Briefly describes and sets in context many examples of folk art along Route 66 including “Hula Ville” collection in the California Route 66 Museum (Victorville), Cadillac Ranch (Amarillo, TX), and the “Blue Whale” (Catoosa, OK).

## CHAPTER 1

### THE HISTORY OF ROUTE 66 AND CONTEMPORARY EFFORTS TO PRESERVE THE MOTHER ROAD

Much like the physical course of Route 66, meandering through desert landscapes, remote towns and mountain passes, there is a great deal of winding precedent to account for the course of its history. Broad patterns in society have both initiated and guided the development of Route 66, leaving behind evidence in the documents and annals of American history on which Route 66 left an impressionable mark. Yet, equally evident is that Route 66 derives its unique character from countless memorable individuals whose aspirations, convictions, and enterprise stand out against historical forces. It is the interweaving between fact and folktale that makes the historical interpretation of Route 66 as equally challenging as it is fascinating. This narration aims to identify some of the most influential individuals and figures behind the Route to account for its special character where neither social, political, nor economic forces can fully contextualize the coherence of its development. Furthermore, we aim to provide the larger context motivating the highway's instrumental figures. Finally, we conclude with a discussion on contemporary Route 66 preservation efforts and how these efforts relate to the broader historic preservation movement in the United States.

As in many instances regarding Route 66 where progress is made by standing on the shoulders of predecessors, our narrative in this chapter builds from prior research and publications. We are particularly indebted to Michael Wallis's seminal 1990 monograph, *Route 66: The Mother Road*; Matt C. Bischoff's (2005) *Life in the Past Lane, The Route 66 Experience*; the National Park Service and Michael Cassity (2004) Study, *Route 66 Corridor National Historic Context*; and the individual Route 66 state resource survey reports among others, as well as resources of the many Route 66 enthusiasts and interest groups on the Internet.

#### FROM BLAZING A TRAIL TO PAVING A ROUTE: THE GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

In its earliest years, Route 66 was a new feature on relatively new land to the United States—the summation of a rapid period of government-directed westward expansion aided by intrepid pioneers. Exploration in this region, however, can be traced as far back as the expeditions of Hernando Cortes in 1566. Prior to the American presence west of the Mississippi River, Native Americans used a vast network of trails extending between the Great Plains and California. European explorers moved north westward along El Rio del Camino to the Pacific from the lands of Central America. In terms of official land acquisition, there are but a handful of federal actions that shaped the political boundaries of the American Continent as we know it today. The first of these after the Revolutionary War was Thomas Jefferson's purchase of the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon Bonaparte in 1803. The territory was approximately 829,000 square miles, doubling the size of the United States territory at the time. Forty-two years later, Texas

was annexed into the Union, adding about 269,000 square miles to the United States.<sup>14</sup> The following year, the Americans and British signed a treaty that settled a land dispute in the Pacific Northwest, establishing the 49th parallel as the northernmost boundary of the lower 48 states, and giving control of the Oregon Territory to the United States, which itself was approximately 260,000 square miles.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the Mexican-American War (1846-48) ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, under which Mexico ceded 525,000 square miles of territory to the United States.

By 1850, there were 2.1 million square miles of American territory between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean largely untouched by Europeans; the way west beckoned to those seeking adventure, independence, and the promise of a better life. The fact that Native Americans already occupied these lands would not stand in their way. Explorers, soldiers, and gold seekers would spend the better part of the nineteenth century finding their way west over wagon routes and Native American trails. Westward travel by horse or wagon was a grueling task—not something for those weak of will or faint of heart. One was limited by the pace and durability of an animal, and the availability of water and food. Fortunately for the historian, there is inspiration in tribulation, and a variety of creative endeavors serve to shed light on the experience of the early days of westward travel:

All the past we leave behind;  
We debouch upon a newer, mightier world, varied world,  
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We detachments steady throwing,  
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,  
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing, as we go, the unknown ways,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!”

—Walt Whitman, “O Pioneers! O Pioneers,” *Leaves of Grass*

Fifty years of explosive westward expansion culminated with the Gadsden Purchase of 1854.<sup>16</sup> For \$10 million, the U.S. acquired 30,000 square miles of present-day New Mexico and Arizona from Mexico, an area roughly equivalent to South Carolina.<sup>17</sup> The purchase was the last major acquisition of land that would become part of the contiguous United States, yet by comparison with the stages of territorial expansion in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was slight. That is not to say, however, that its contribution was minimal; the Mesilla Valley in Southern New Mexico and western Texas provided the only viable route for a Southern Transcontinental

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<sup>14</sup><http://www.texasalmanac.com/environment/>

<sup>15</sup> The Oregon Territory consisted of present day Oregon (98,380 square miles), Washington (71,299 square miles), Idaho (83,570 square miles) and parts of Montana and Wyoming. <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/phc3-us-pt1.pdf>

<sup>16</sup><http://www.pbs.org/kpbs/theborder/history/timeline/8.html>

<sup>17</sup><http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/phc3-us-pt1.pdf>

Railroad line that would wrap around the southern end of the Rocky Mountains and allow for travel during the winter months when snow obstructed passage in the north.

The First Transcontinental Railroad, also known as the “Overland Route,” was completed in 1869, connecting Council Bluffs, Iowa/Omaha, Nebraska to Sacramento, California, “[bounding] across the broad breast of America the iron emblem of modern progress and civilization.”<sup>18</sup> The southern transcontinental line—running from New Orleans, Louisiana to Los Angeles, California via the land obtained in the Gadsden Purchase—was completed in 1883. These transcontinental railroads were “subduing unknown wildernesses, scaling unknown mountains, [and] surmounting untried obstacles,”<sup>19</sup> opening the vast western frontier for settlement and trade. Passenger traffic on westward rail lines grew steadily, and the tourism industry expanded as entrepreneurs like Fred Harvey catered to the needs and fantasies of eastern urbanites. Still, for the burgeoning sense of freedom and individualism the American West began to represent, the railroads could do only so much. Though the dawn of rail travel promised “lightning swiftness...ease and elegance”<sup>20</sup> when compared with overland travel by wagon, rail passengers were bound by a schedule and limited to areas in proximity to the railroad stations. The rails were an important prelude to the American discovery of the west, but it was the automobile speeding along a transcontinental highway that opened the west to vast numbers of the American public.

## **AUTOMOBILES AND HIGHWAYS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY (AND BICYCLES TOO!)**

At the turn of the twentieth century, auto touring was a popular hobby exclusive to the wealthy due to the expense of purchasing and maintaining cars. In the 1910s and the 1920s, car ownerships rapidly transformed from a novelty to a commodity. Mass production of relatively low-cost automobiles began in 1901 with the Curved Dash Olds. Still, by 1904, only 5,000 cars had been produced. It wasn’t until the introduction of Henry Ford’s “universal” car, the Model T, four years later that middle-class Americans began to realize the benefits of the “horseless carriage.” Ford’s Model T was priced at just \$850, well below the competition at the time. By 1916, the price fell to \$360.<sup>21</sup> The low-cost strategy worked. In some years, Ford’s “Tin Lizzie” accounted for nearly half of all cars sold in the United States. By 1927, just 19 years after its introduction to the American public, some 15 million Model Ts had been built.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sabin, Edwin Legrand. *Building the Pacific Railway*. J.B. Lippincott Company: Philadelphia, PA. 1919, 175.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 175.

<sup>20</sup> Clappitt, John Wesley. *Echoes from the Rocky Mountains*. The National Book Concern: Chicago, IL. 1888,8.

<sup>21</sup> Bischoff, pg. 7

<sup>22</sup> Richard White. Published by Wayne State University’s Department of Communications. 1996. “A Brief History of the First 100 Years of Automobile History in the United States.” <http://www.theautochannel.com/mania/industry.orig/history/chap4.html>

## Wheelmen Pave the Way for Automobiles

At the turn of the twentieth century, America already had two million miles of roads—nearly 10 times the total length of railroad track;<sup>23</sup> however, “the condition of late-nineteenth century roads [in America] was deplorable.... The technology of the macadam road had been available since the early nineteenth century but had fallen into disuse after the success of the railroad.”<sup>24</sup>

In 1880, five years before Karl Benz of Germany invented the gasoline-powered automobile, the League of American Wheelmen (LAW) was founded in the United States. The organization capitalized on the rising tide of Americans’ enthusiasm for the *bicycle* that began in the mid-nineteenth century. LAW had two goals: 1) to advocate for the construction and maintenance of quality roads, and 2) to protect cyclists from unjust discrimination from local governments and citizenry.

These goals were closely interlinked.

The popularity of the bicycle (there were roughly four million bicycle-owning Americans by the 1890s)<sup>25</sup> can be attributed to Americans’ developing taste for private means of transportation. “The origins of this value lay in rapidly growing wealth from industrialization, an intensified concern with the aesthetics of nature, and an increased focus on the life and mind of the individual rather than the group.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, apart from Romantic and adventuresome ideals, a bicycle was a cheap way to move around. Horses were exclusive to elites, farmers, and cowboys. Urbanite laborers, for example, had neither the income nor property to purchase and maintain a horse, but a bicycle could be had for a relatively nominal price.

Bicycles also gave women a new-found sense of mobility, even if they first had “to take a spin around the park ... confined to their long skirts and corsets.”<sup>27</sup> By 1890, feminists of the day began to ride bicycles in bloomers—puffed-out pants—and some daringly wore regular pants, though they faced being stopped by police for “indecent” attire.<sup>28</sup>

Intrepid cyclists such as Thomas Stevens completed the first transcontinental bicycle ride across the United States in 1884, covering some 3,700 miles of wagon trails, and then gamely circumvented the globe on two wheels from August 1884 through December 1886. It seemed that the bicycle’s day had arrived.

With the increased mobility for both men and women that bicycle ownership afforded, people could seek work further from their homes and expand their day-to-day living environment,

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<sup>23</sup><http://www.lafn.org/~dave/trans/hist/travel-20th.html>

<sup>24</sup> Peter J. Hughhill, “Good Roads and the Automobile in the United States 1880-1920,” *The Geographic Review* (July 1982), 328. Quoted from MO site specific preservation form.

<sup>25</sup> Hart, 2007, p.17

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, though not from the Missouri document.

<sup>27</sup> <http://ibike.org/library/history-timeline.htm>

<sup>28</sup><http://www.lafn.org/~dave/trans/hist/travel-20th.html>



opening new opportunities to improve their lot. However, the bicycle was not without its detractors.

“The cyclist is dangerous for the reason that you cannot tell from what corner the infernal machine will come from,” complained one Chicago horseman to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. “I am a victim to the tune of a broken arm and finger on the other hand, caused by a champion of the nuisance running within a foot of my horse and frightening him so that I was upset, with the above result.”<sup>29</sup> And while cyclists would most often use the road for travel, when it was too rough or muddy for a bicycle to pass, riders took to the smoothly paved sidewalks, earning them the ire of pedestrians as well.<sup>30</sup>

Shortly after the League began advocating on behalf of bicyclists to local, state, and federal governments for road improvements, they found like-minded partners for better roads in farmers and businessmen. “Good roads” societies began cropping up throughout the country, and in 1892, the foundation of the National League of Good Roads was formed, followed by the First Good Roads Congress in 1893 and the creation of the federal Office of Road Inquiry in the same year.<sup>31</sup>

As noted earlier, bicycle advocates played a prominent role in the Good Roads movement. Horatio Earle, known as the “Father of Good Roads,” wrote in his 1929 autobiography, “I often hear now a-days, the automobile instigated good roads; that the automobile is the parent of good roads. Well, the truth is, the bicycle is the father of the good roads movement in this country.”<sup>32</sup> Another leader in that movement was Albert Pope, founder of the Pope Manufacturing Company, which produced Columbia bicycles.<sup>33</sup> Among other accomplishments, Pope successfully lobbied for bicyclists to have access to the then young Central Park in New York City and, more broadly, he fought laws banning bicycles from streets and parks.<sup>34</sup>

As a transportation mechanism, the scale on which the bicycle functioned was too localized, however, to inspire the federal government to take determined action toward improving roads. However, the automobile would provide reduced travel times like never before, and as the number of motorists grew, so did their political influence. The promise of the unfettered mobility allowed by the “horseless carriage” was enough for citizens to band together to demand better, more efficient, roads connecting their villages and towns, beginning with the development of a more consistent roadway system. The automobile lobby was able to increase the budget of the federal Office of Road Inquiry from \$10,000 in 1893—a time when advocacy for this office was driven by bicyclists—to \$75 million for road improvements by 1921.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Witzel and Young-Witzel. *Legendary Route 66*. P.10 From *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 23, 1880. “The Bicycles.”

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.infrastructurist.com/2010/06/22/how-bikes-saved-americas-roads-a-historical-perspective/>

<sup>32</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good\\_Roads\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Roads_Movement)

<sup>33</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope\\_Manufacturing\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Manufacturing_Company)

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.infrastructurist.com/2010/06/22/how-bikes-saved-americas-roads-a-historical-perspective/>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



Vehicle ownership raced far ahead of a satisfactory road system. In 1912, there were about 180,000 registered automobiles in the United States.<sup>36</sup> At about that time, the country had approximately 2.5 million miles of road, but “less than 7 percent were improved in any fashion.... To make matters worse, most of these roads didn’t really go anywhere.”<sup>37</sup>

One visionary saw beyond these deplorable conditions and dreamed of a transnational highway from New York City straight through to San Francisco.<sup>38</sup> Carl Graham Fischer, an energetic entrepreneur—owner of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and promoter of Miami Beach, Florida tourism, and the like—proposed a Coast-to-Coast Rock Highway, later dubbed the Lincoln Highway and ultimately designated as U.S. Highways 1, 30, 530, 40 and 50. Fisher enlisted automobile manufacturers such as Packard and Henry Ford for his cause, though Ford opted out because “he felt taxpayers would never fund road projects if they thought private industry would carry the burden.”<sup>39</sup> The first seedling mile was completed in 1914 and, in fits and starts, the Lincoln Highway was built.

The project “fueled a great surge of highway fever in the United States,”<sup>40</sup> and local and interstate booster organizations named and branded roads throughout the country (e.g., the National Old Trails Road was designed to connect New York to Los Angeles). Each organization published maps and guidebooks, and designated particular colors and insignias to distinguish their highway for travelers. By 1920, more than 250 named roads and affiliated organizations existed in the United States. The result was a dizzying array of names and colors, conflicting maps, inconsistent routes, and self-interested booster organizations “that seemingly considered that plenty of wind and a few barrels of paint are all that is required to build and maintain a 2,000-mile trail.”<sup>41</sup> Road conditions in the early twentieth century made road travel difficult enough; the inconsistency of the named highways only made matters worse. Collaborative efforts between individuals, grassroots organizations, and government officials to relieve travelers of the burden of navigating the hodgepodge of trails would ultimately set a course for the development of the first system of federal interstate highways, including U.S. Highway 66.

## **THE BIRTH OF A HIGHWAY ICON (SEE TABLE 1.2 FOR HISTORICAL TIMELINE)**

In early 1925, the Joint Board on Interstate Highways was created by recommendation of the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) to "cooperate in formulating and promulgating a system of numbering and marking highways of interstate character" as a means of standardizing road travel in the United States. Chaired by Thomas E. MacDonald, Chief of the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), the Joint Board was comprised of 21 members, each representing a different state highway association. The initial task of designating which trails to include in the

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<sup>36</sup> Hart, 2007 p.18

<sup>37</sup> Hukanson, 1988, p.7

<sup>38</sup> Hart, 2007 p.18

<sup>39</sup> Wallis and Williamson 2007

<sup>40</sup> Hukanson 1988, p.19

<sup>41</sup><http://www.cf.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/numbers.cfm> - Quoted from State Highway Engineer Arthur R. Hirst, 1918.

highway system took about six months, after which a Committee of Five members was assigned the task of designing the numbering scheme. This group, comprised of Cyrus Avery of Oklahoma, Roy Klein of Oregon, Charles H. Moorefield of South Carolina, B.H. Piepmeier of Missouri, and Frank T. Sheets of Illinois, submitted their proposal to the larger Joint Board on September 25.<sup>42</sup>

The Committee's plan was simple. North-south routes would be assigned odd numbers, the most important of which would end with the digit "1", with the lowest (1) in the east and the highest (91) in the west. East-west roads would be even, the most important transcontinental routes distinguished as multiples of 10, with the lowest (2 to avoid a U.S. Highway 0) along the Canadian border and the highest (90) as the southernmost.<sup>43</sup> The AASHO adopted the Joint Board's Committee of Five recommended system, with the reservation that minor changes would be allowable. In all, the proposed scheme would have standardized some 75,000 miles of existing roads across the country—a desperately needed improvement for the burgeoning automobile-driving American middle class.

The public reaction to the numbered highway system was mixed. Among the supporters of the plan was travel writer William Ullman, who wrote, "The [nation's road] map[s] will be cleared of a lot of rubbish and in its stead the new highway map will tell the tourist how to reach his destination [and] where he is going.... This, indeed, is a need in motor touring long past due."<sup>44</sup> But detractors were vocal. Some believed that the "hard, cold, metallic number[s]" would never be as significant and meaningful to travelers as names like the Old Oregon Trail or the Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway. One writer in *Western Highways Builder* commented: "Of all the idealistic proposals yet advanced for the administration of highways, none can equal this for pure imbecility."<sup>45</sup>

The most outspoken critic of the Joint Board's numbering system was the governor of Kentucky, William J. Fields. Fields' critique was not of the decision to use numbers to designate highways, but of the influence of Chicago that was "written all over the map." He was referring to the proposed Chicago-Los Angeles route, U.S. Highway 60.

Unlike the other transcontinental routes ending in "0", the proposed U.S. Highway 60 was neither transcontinental, nor did it follow a strict east-west bearing. The crescent-shaped road began at Lake Michigan in downtown Chicago and swept southwest through St. Louis, Missouri, nicked the corner of Kansas, then went to Tulsa, Oklahoma. From there, it settled into an east-west orientation, stretching across the 35th parallel through the Texas panhandle, New Mexico, and Arizona, around the southern terminus of the Rocky Mountains, ultimately ending in Los Angeles, California.

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<sup>42</sup> Names to Numbers, Weingroff, Richard. <http://wwwcf.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/numbers.cfm>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

If one logically followed the numbering sequence of east-west routes, U.S. 60 *should* have followed the National Roosevelt Midland Trail, which began in Newport News, Virginia; passed through Kentucky and met the proposed Chicago-Los Angeles Route in Springfield, Missouri; and extended westward to Los Angeles. As it stood, the *proposed* U.S. 60 left Kentucky as the only state in the Mississippi Valley without a prestigious east-west route ending with a “0”. Furthermore, the Midland Trail did not even have a single number assigned to its entire length. It had been cut up and included as part of several different routes. Governor Fields was affronted by “the obliteration of [his] idol...[and] dream, the Midland Trail” and promised to “use every means in [his] power to fight [the Joint Board’s] proposition of isolation.”<sup>46</sup>

Of course the proposed U.S. Highway 60 was no fluke. Three members of the Committee of Five were from states through which the Chicago-Los Angeles route passed: Sheets (Illinois), Piepmeier (Missouri), and Avery (Oklahoma).

Frank T. Sheets was the head of the Illinois Division of Highways, where he served from 1920 to 1932. In 1925, when the Joint Board was appointed to begin looking at the nation’s highways, he was president of the AASHO. During the early 1920s, with Sheets at the helm of the Division of Highways, Illinois was a pioneer in road-paving efforts, breaking the record for miles of roads paved by any state in a single year four times. Because of these efforts, the Illinois segment of the proposed Chicago-Los Angeles Highway was paved completely, end to end, by 1926.<sup>47</sup>

B. H. Piepmeier was the chief engineer of the Missouri State Highway Commission while he served on the Committee of Five. Interestingly, he was Sheets’ boss at the Illinois Division of Highways when Sheets was hired out of graduate school in 1916.<sup>48</sup> Piepmeier left the Illinois division shortly after Sheets’ arrival and served in Missouri from 1922 to 1927. Though little is known about him after his tenure in Missouri, he was perhaps the strongest supporter of the Los Angeles-Chicago highway being designated as U.S. 60.

The best known of the Committee of Five was Cyrus Stevens Avery of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Avery was a dynamic businessman and tireless organizer who recognized the importance of good roads. Originally from the Indian Territory of Western Oklahoma, he moved to Tulsa in 1907, where his business portfolio came to include ventures in real estate, oil, farming, and hospitality services.<sup>49</sup> As county commissioner, he earned the title “Father of Good Roads” for devising an effective means of maintaining existing roads. He was invited to join the Ozark Trails Association in 1913, a booster group that promoted an unorganized series of trails that stretched from St. Louis, Missouri to Amarillo, Texas. In relatively quick succession, Avery was appointed as president of the Ozark Trails Association in 1914, founded the Albert Pike Highway

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Frank Sheets: Father of Route 66 in Illinois. David Clark. Route 66 Association of Illinois Hall of Fame Nomination Form. February, 2008. [http://windycityroadwarrior.com/blog/wp-content/Sheets\\_HOF.pdf](http://windycityroadwarrior.com/blog/wp-content/Sheets_HOF.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Cassity, pg. 58.

Association in 1917,<sup>50</sup> was elected president of the Associated Highways of America in 1921, and was appointed State Highway Commissioner of Oklahoma in 1924. Avery's appointment as one of the 21 members of the Joint Board in 1925 and subsequent appointment as one of the Committee of Five was a confirmation of his influence on the development of the highway system in America.<sup>51</sup>

The historical record shows us that neither Avery nor Piepmeier took well to Governor Fields's attempt to wrest the prestigious "60" from their Chicago-Los Angeles highway.<sup>52</sup> Though there is no official documentation of Sheets' response, one must assume that he too was upset by the idea of losing such a vital designation for a road he held in high esteem.

Soon after lodging his initial complaint, Governor Fields met with the executive committee of the AASHO. The committee initially decided to leave the U.S. 60 designation for the Chicago route and assign Route 62 to the entire Midland Trail from Newport News, VA to Springfield, MO, but Fields would have none of it. He met with Thomas H. MacDonald, chairman of the Joint Board of Interstate Highways and chief of the Federal Bureau of Public Roads, and E. W. James, secretary of the Joint Board, emphasizing the simple fact that Kentucky was the only state in the region without a route ending with a "0". James and MacDonald relented, agreeing to shift the U.S. Federal Highway 60 designation to Fields' preferred route and assign "62" to the Chicago-Los Angeles highway, contingent upon agreement of the executive committee of the AASHO and the other states involved.<sup>53</sup>

State delegations from Missouri and Oklahoma were furious. Piepmeier protested bitterly, explaining that Missouri had already printed 600,000 maps showing U.S. Federal Highway 60 passing through the state. Avery, too, took umbrage. He remarked that the sudden change risked "making a joke of the interstate highway" and that he could "think of nothing more unfair to the original marking committee [of five] or to the members of the [AASHO's] Executive Committee." Oklahoma had also produced literature and road signs with the U.S. Federal Highway 60 designation. He continued, "We shall insist on Route Sixty from Chicago to Los Angeles."<sup>54</sup>

The haggling over U.S. 60 carried on for four months. The solution came on April 30, 1926, when Avery and Piepmeier were meeting in Springfield, MO. John Page, Oklahoma's chief highway engineer, noticed that U.S. Highway 66 had not been assigned to any of the federal

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<sup>50</sup> Historic Engineering Record: Augusta Bridge HAER No. AR-13. Smith, Corrine of the Arkansas Historic Bridge Recording Project, 1988. [http://www.arkansashighways.com/historic\\_bridge/HAER Documents/AR-13AugustaBridge\(00613\).pdf](http://www.arkansashighways.com/historic_bridge/HAER_Documents/AR-13AugustaBridge(00613).pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Michael Karl Witzel and Gyvel Young-Witzel, *Legendary Route 66: A Journey Through Time Along America's Mother Road*. Voyageur Press. St. Paul MN, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Weingroff, Richard . *Names to Numbers*. <http://wwwcf.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/numbers.cfm>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

highways. Avery and Piepmeier immediately sent a telegram to Chief MacDonald that read simply: “We prefer sixty-six to sixty-two.”<sup>55</sup>

Some 132 changes to the highway numbering system as proposed by the Joint Board were considered; 96,626 miles of road were assigned numbers when the system was adopted by the AASHO on November 11, 1926. Of all those miles and numbers, history would prove no route as celebrated as the 2,448-mile crescent highway from Chicago to Los Angeles: U.S. Highway 66—better known today as Route 66.

### **Urbanization: Connecting the Heartland to the Pacific**

U.S. Highway 66 was the right highway, at the right time, in the right place. By the 1920s, Chicago was a well established transit and shipment hub from the industrial northeast to the expanding western frontier and had, 30 years prior, surpassed Philadelphia as the second most populous city in the United States. The highway’s western terminus, Los Angeles, was growing at a furious pace. According to U.S. Census data, Los Angeles’s population quintupled from 102,000 in 1900 to 577,000 in 1920. By comparison, San Francisco—California’s first large city—grew at a comparatively more “modest” pace, from 343,000 in 1900 to 507,000 in 1920. By 1930, just a few years after U.S. 66 was designated, Los Angeles had become the fifth most populous city in the United States, with a population of 1.24 million (see Table 1.1).<sup>56</sup>

Los Angeles was America’s first truly auto-centric city, a model after which many cities of the Southwest would follow. This can be seen by the rapid growth in its land area and extremely low population density. In 1910, Los Angeles covered just 99 square miles and had a population density of 3,218 people per square mile. By 1930, the Los Angeles land area quadrupled to 440 square miles, causing the city’s population density to fall to 2,812 people per square mile.<sup>57</sup>

As Frank Lloyd Wright once said, “Route 66 is a giant chute down which everything loose in this country is sliding into Southern California.”<sup>58</sup> As Table 1.1 shows, Los Angeles provided a relatively large catchment for this “giant chute” and personified an automobile-oriented city.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Gibson, Campbell. “Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990.” Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census. June 1998. Working Paper No. 27. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html>

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Powell, James R. “A Brief History of U.S. Highway 66 and the Route 66 Association of Missouri.” Route 66 Association of Missouri. January 28, 2010. <http://www.missouri66.org/joomla/index.php/about/history>

**Table 1.1: Growth of Select Major Cities in the United States, 1900-1930<sup>59</sup>**

	Population	Land Area (sq miles)	Density (Ppl/sq mile)	Population	Land Area (sq miles)	Density (Ppl/sq mile)
	<b>1900</b>			<b>1910</b>		
<b>Los Angeles</b>	102,479	na	na	319,198	99	3,218
<b>San Francisco</b>	342,748	na	na	416,912	47	8,966
<b>Chicago</b>	1,698,575	na	na	2,185,283	185	11,806
<b>St. Louis</b>	575,238	na	na	687,029	61	11,189
<b>New York</b>	3,437,202	na	na	4,766,883	287	16,621
	<b>1920</b>			<b>1930</b>		
<b>Los Angeles</b>	576,673	366	1,577	1,238,048	440	2,812
<b>San Francisco</b>	506,676	42	12,064	634,394	42	15,105
<b>Chicago</b>	2,701,705	193	14,013	3,376,438	202	16,723
<b>St. Louis</b>	772,897	61	12,670	821,960	61	13,475
<b>New York</b>	5,620,048	299	18,796	6,930,446	299	23,179

*Table 1.1 provides a comparison of population, land area, and population density of several major U.S. cities between 1900 and 1930. The cities are Los Angeles and San Francisco, the two largest cities in California at the time; Chicago and St. Louis, the two largest cities on Route 66; and New York City, the largest city in the United States.*

*NA = Not Available*

## **The Lasting Impacts of Early U.S. Highway 66**

With his new highway officially designated, Avery set to work to promoting it. In 1927, he and fellow booster John Woodruff formed the National U.S. 66 Highway Association. The Association had two simple goals for the Mother Road: pave and promote. The official charter of the group described the highway as

the shortest and most direct route between the Great Lakes and the Pacific Coast, traversing as it does the prairies of Illinois, the scenic beauties of the Missouri Ozark region, the lead and zinc section of the Joplin-Miami district, the oil fields of Oklahoma and the Texas Panhandle, the south foothills of the Rocky Mountains in New Mexico, the Grand Canyon area, Arizona and Southern California.<sup>60</sup>

At the Association’s first conference, Avery nicknamed the route “The Main Street of America,” a moniker to which contemporary Route 66 enthusiasts have held fast. The traditional Main Street evokes images of small businesses and mom-and-pop stores, locally owned butcher shops

<sup>59</sup> Gibson, Campbell. “Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990.” Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census. June 1998. Working Paper No. 27. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html>

<sup>60</sup> Wallis, p. 11



and bakeries, with a municipal building next to the police station and a fire station just down the road. That is the Main Street Avery captured with his road—it is the same Main Street that keeps tourists from across America and around the world coming back to the Route long after it was officially removed from maps in 1985.

As conceived, U.S. Highway 66 was a businessman's road. Avery designed the highway to pass through as many towns as possible, including his hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he owned a motel, restaurant, and gas station.<sup>61</sup> At the time, many of the towns between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean weren't accessible by road, but with U.S. 66 passing through, businesses popped up all across the landscape. The highway also gave farmers access to new markets, and opened up new possibilities for job opportunities and home settlements for the American middle class.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of American roadways, U.S. 66 was unprecedented in its design and magnitude. By starting in Chicago and heading southwest, the Route crossed every transcontinental highway that originated in the industrial (and wealthy) Northeast. Furthermore, it was an all-season highway. Travelers on the northern highways had to reckon with the Rocky Mountains—a task not all automobiles were up to.

Although comparatively easier than the northern highways, travel along U.S. 66 was still slow and treacherous. As of 1926, only 800 of the 2,400 total miles of the road were paved; the rest was graded dirt or gravel, bricks covered with asphalt, or wooden planks.<sup>63</sup> The highway followed the natural contours of the land, which made construction cheaper, yet made stretches of the road longer than they could have been,<sup>64</sup> and others more dangerous, such as the famous series of hairpin turns between Kingman and Oatman, Arizona. The stand-alone service stations and restaurants that the Mother Road is so famous for today were nonexistent—the number of motorists passing through in the early days of U.S. 66 could not sustain permanent businesses. Travelers were advised to carry all they needed for their journey—food, supplies, and of course, spare automobile parts. A 1926 article from the *Washington Post* reminds us of just how difficult long-distance auto travel was in the 1920s:

Experts in high-mileage motor tours recommended bringing no less than one set of skid chains, a good horn “for use on mountain curves,” one set of tools, a jack, good cutting pliers, two extra casings, four extra inner tubes, tube patches, three spark plugs, a one- or two-gallon water bag or canteen, one flashlight, an axe, a small shovel, radiator hose connections, lamp bulbs, a motormeter and one tow rope or short cable.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Cassity p. 58

<sup>62</sup> Kelly, Susan Croce and Quinta Scott. *Route 66: The Highway and Its People*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988.

<sup>63</sup> Wallis Pg. 9

<sup>64</sup> Bischoff

<sup>65</sup> “Motor Club Compiles Auto Tour Book,” *The Washington Post*, July 11, 1926 in Witzel, Michael Karl and Gyvel Young-Witzel. *Legendary Route 66: A Journey Through Time Along America's Mother Road*. Voyageur Press, St. Paul, MN. 2007.



During this era prior to local businesses catering to travelers' needs, roadside camping, also known as "gypsying," grew in popularity along U.S. 66. As the number of roadside campers increased, so did the roadside trash and unsightly campsites—as well as the ire of the people living in towns along the highway. Some towns banned campers outright. Entrepreneurial farmers, however, began designating parts of their land along Route 66 where, for a small fee, travelers could rest.<sup>66</sup> As traffic grew, auto camps and cabins began to emerge, with motels, service stations and restaurants soon to follow. Year by year, more and more travelers made the journey through the American Southwest, each willing to pay more for higher-quality services and amenities than the travelers before them.

For a time, there were so few businesses along the highway that there was little competition among proprietors. Entrepreneurs realized that it was profitable to sell all kinds of amenities at one place. Restaurants put gas pumps out front, and gas stations started serving food and making restrooms available. American entrepreneurship and creativity were fused in the creation of these new highway service-oriented establishments.

The National U.S. Highway 66 Association promoted the highway via an aggressive marketing campaign that included billboards, newspaper advertisements, and brochures.<sup>67</sup> Each Association meeting was held in a different town located on the highway. Members of the Association made speeches to the public and spoke with the press, extolling the virtues of U.S. 66 and offering updates on the progress of the road. Members would also meet with politicians and local businessmen to promote the highway and drum up donations for wider publicity efforts across the country.<sup>68</sup>

One such stunt was a transcontinental footrace. In 1928, the National U.S. Highway 66 Association hired famed publicist C.C. Pyle of the PT Barnum Circus to promote a 3,423-mile footrace, beginning in Los Angeles, following U.S. 66 to Chicago, and ending at Madison Square Garden in New York City. With a \$25,000 purse, the race attracted 275 runners from around the world and garnered the national media coverage the National U.S. Highway 66 Association coveted. More than 500,000 people showed up for the start of what was popularly called the "Bunion Derby,"<sup>69</sup> and as "there were no gel-injected Nikes in those days,"<sup>70</sup> some of the runners ran in boots, others in moccasins, and some ran barefooted.<sup>71</sup> Dignitaries, politicians and celebrities such as Will Rogers greeted runners in each of the towns that participated in the event. The winner of the race was an ultra-runner rookie, Andy Payne, a 20-year-old part Cherokee native of Claremore, Oklahoma, who finished in about 573 hours over the course of 84

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<sup>66</sup> Luton, William O. Jr. History of Route 66 and the Coral Court <http://www.isuzuperformance.com/bill/coral.html>

<sup>67</sup> Ross, Bischoff

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/histsig/missouricontext.htm>

<sup>69</sup> Wallis 1990, p. 13

<sup>70</sup> Motorcycle Cruiser, February 2009. Route 66: Riding the Mother Road. [http://www.motorcyclecruiser.com/rideanddest/motorcycle\\_tour\\_route\\_66/index.html](http://www.motorcyclecruiser.com/rideanddest/motorcycle_tour_route_66/index.html)

<sup>71</sup> Wallis 1990, p.13

days. Although the race was a financial sink for C.C. Pyle, Payne paid off the mortgage on his parents' farm and became a national hero—and the highway was all the better for his success.

There are compelling sagas regarding the specific town-by-town route of U.S. Highway 66, for this was not preordained. Instead, it was the subject of intense competition for the economic advantages of being sited on what would become “longest hard-surfaced road in the nation”<sup>72</sup> by 1937. Not surprisingly, politics reared its head concerning which towns would be connected, with one of the most bizarre cases, known as “Hannett’s Joke,” occurring in New Mexico.

Route 66 did go through Santa Fe at one time. It is a tale of power and politicians... In [1926] the governor of New Mexico, A.T. Hannett, was running for re-election. Through various incidents of double-dealing or perhaps just plain bad politics, Hannett lost the race. Annoyed with the politicians in Santa Fe, who he felt had caused his defeat, Hannett decided to teach them a lesson. He would be governor until the new man, Richard Dillon, took the oath of office in January. He still had some time....

[He decided that Route 66 would] bypass Santa Fe, the Santa Fe business community, and the Santa Fe politicians. He was the governor, he still held office and by George, he would have a road bypassing those politicians in Santa Fe. [However,] only 31 days remained [in Hannett’s term] in which to build a road sixty-nine miles long. There would be no time off, not even for Christmas....

[By the time] the new governor was sworn in, the road was still not completed. On his first day in office, the governor sent an engineer to halt the work, but a freak turn in the weather prevented his arrival. Hannett’s joke was completed and travelers were spinning down the gravel track by the time the engineer reached the work site. Hannett had his road and his joke.

Hannett often pointed out what a service he had done for travelers. By [rerouting Route 66 to bypass] Santa Fe, he shaved more than ninety miles off the trip across New Mexico and got the westbound motorists to Gallup that much faster: Hannett was the ex-mayor of Gallup, too.<sup>73</sup>

## **U.S. HIGHWAY 66 DURING THE DEPRESSION**

For travelers in the 1930s, U.S. Highway 66 became less novelty and more necessity. In the initial aftermath of the Stock Market Crash of 1929, tourists were less common, but sojourners in search of work took to the road in their stead. The great dust storms of middle of the decade also displaced hundreds of thousands of farmers from the Midwest, many of whom traveled along U.S. 66 to the verdant hills of California. In 1939, John Steinbeck published *The Grapes of Wrath*, a fictionalized account of the trials and tribulations of such a family of farmers traveling

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<sup>72</sup> Simmons, Marc. “Work on Route 66 was political ‘joke’.” *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, March 17, 2007. Pg. C1.

<sup>73</sup> Schneider, Jill. *Route 66 Across New Mexico: A Wanderer’s Guide*. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque: 1991; pgs. 204-206.

along U.S. 66. In Stenbeck's words, the migrants "come into 66 from the tributary side roads, from the wagon tracks and the rutted country roads. 66 is the mother road, the road of flight."

In many ways, U.S. 66 was a lifeline not only for those in search of work, but for the towns and people along the highway as well. While travelers may not have had as much money to spend as those in the 1920s, what money they did bring was much needed by local businesses. In a Whitman "O' Pioneers" redux, the Depression saw many Americans leaving their old lives behind and hitting the open road as their financial situation hit bottom. As described by *Harper's Magazine* in 1933:

There's gold in them there shacks – so long as the cars keep rolling by. And they are rolling by. The depression hasn't stopped them at all. On the contrary. People who used to travel by train can no longer afford three or four cents a mile. Graduates of our thousand colleges, unable to get jobs, sponge on the family, club together to buy an old Ford, and point its radiator toward the great open spaces. Salaried men who have lost their jobs but saved something (or often almost nothing) say goodbye to the landlord and take their families off to see the world before it blows up. Farmers who have failed or been dispossessed crank up the last thing which a good American surrenders – his car – and push off into a possibly happier nowhere. And then the great army of incurable wanderers, prosperous or poverty stricken, who are always yielding to the restless, pioneer, gypsy streak that lies at the bottom of most Americans, roll back and forth, to the Lakes in the summer, to California or Florida in the winter, with less reason than ever for settling in one place. And all of them must find some place to eat and sleep.<sup>74</sup>

Migrants were indeed plentiful along U.S. Highway 66, but the Great Depression didn't completely undermine tourism. For the fortunate Americans with steady work and income, a trip across the country in an automobile was a cheap and increasingly convenient way to vacation. The number of potential tourists lost to the country's economic collapse was overwhelmed by the sheer number of new vehicles put on the road. Between 1925 and 1940, the numbers of vehicles registered in the United States rose from just under 20 million to 32.5 million.<sup>75</sup> Although "Americans may have curtailed some of their driving and ridden in progressively older vehicles...they unashamedly continued to ride,"<sup>76</sup> and by 1934, the number of tourists along U.S. 66 reached 1929 levels.<sup>77</sup>

With the dawn of the motor age in America, the physical makeup of the towns along U.S. 66 changed. Savvy businessmen and women no longer relied exclusively on local patrons for income and recognized the importance of the highway to their success. While a traditional town

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<sup>74</sup> Little, Robert and John J. McCarthy. "Three hundred thousand shacks: The arrival of the new-American industry." *Harpers Magazine*. July 1933, 180 in Liebs, Chester H. *Main Street to Miracle Mile*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD: 1995, 21.

<sup>75</sup> Frederic L. Paxson, "The Highway Movement, 1916-1935," *The American Historical Review*. 51, no. 2 (1946), p. 248. From <http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/histsig/missouricontext.htm>

<sup>76</sup>[http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Gender/Walsh/G\\_Overview2.htm](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Gender/Walsh/G_Overview2.htm)

<sup>77</sup> Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 1979), p. 155. From <http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/histsig/missouricontext.htm>

was situated around a civic center, public square, or train station, the highway encouraged strip development, concentrating businesses and activities linearly. These linear market places were the incubators for the roadside businesses that are so closely identified with the Mother Road today. Given that 65 percent of the nation's westbound traffic traveled on U.S. 66,<sup>78</sup> towns tended to expand eastward as business owners vied with one another to be the first to attract the attention—and money—of travelers making their journey west.<sup>79</sup>

Travel conditions along U.S. 66 were also improving during the 1930s. While the National U.S. 66 Highway Association continued to lobby for the route to be paved from end to end, it was the federal imperative to put people back to work that finally got the job done. Under Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps, thousands of road crews were mobilized to improve highways across the country.<sup>80</sup> In the panhandle of Texas, the final stretch of U.S. 66 was paved in 1938 and was touted as the first highway in the country to afford travelers this luxury.<sup>81</sup> Fully paved, a drive from Chicago to Los Angeles took just five days. A few months later, a celebration was held in Amarillo, Texas, and the highway was dedicated as the Will Rogers Highway.<sup>82</sup>

Federal resources were also used to improve U.S. Highway 66 in other ways. While the original road followed the natural contours of the land, in some areas, the road was engineered through mountains; it was straightened, shortened, and realigned to make travel more efficient. In many areas, the cartway was cut wider, improving the road's safety for motorists traveling at high speeds, and proved adequate for the steadily growing trucking industry.

In 1935, the Public Roads Administration and the War Department completed a report showing that 2,400 bridges across the United States were unfit for military use. In response, the federal government tried, with limited success, to persuade states and counties to work on critical nodes in the transportation network for defense purposes. With most of Europe under Nazi control in June of 1941, about two weeks before Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Congress passed the Defense Highway Act, which appropriated \$125 million for strategic highway improvements.<sup>83</sup> With World War II on the horizon, the nation was shoring up its infrastructure—of which U.S. 66 would prove to be a critical part.

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<sup>78</sup>Fifty percent of the nation's eastbound traffic also traveled on Route 66, but the greater number of travelers were heading west. Arizona National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 6

<sup>79</sup> Arizona National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 6

<sup>80</sup> Bischoff, 2005

<sup>81</sup> Bischoff, 2005, p. 36

<sup>82</sup><http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/histsig/missouricontext.htm>

<sup>83</sup> Bromage, Arthur W. "III. Federal-State-Local Relations" *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 37, No. 1 (Feb., 1943), pp. 35-48 Published by: American Political Science Association Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1948992>



## THE WAR YEARS AND U.S. HIGHWAY 66

The mobilization of the armed forces following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 was the largest military mobilization in the history of the United States. With the Pacific coast lightly guarded, much of the western flow of servicemen and equipment traveled on U.S. 66. It was one of the few roads that was open all year and connected the industrial production core of America with the West Coast. In total, the U.S. government invested some \$70 billion in capital projects throughout California, much of which was in the Los Angeles-San Diego area.<sup>84</sup> In order to prepare for warfare in North Africa and the Middle East, General George Patton established a desert training facility in the desert of Arizona and California. U.S. 66 split the area in half, with major camps nearby, as well as storage facilities and air strips.

Patton was just the latest sojourner on the Mother Road at that time, for as elsewhere, the highway and the places on it were part of the ebb and flow of history. Take Chambless, California—on U.S. 66 and near Patton's camp. Where did Chambless come from? Its origins lie in the establishment of several towns by the Santa Fe Railway (first as water-tower stops in the desert) along present day Barstow and Needles, CA. The railroad company then whimsically named them in alphabetical order: Amboy, Bagdad, Cadiz, Danby, Essex, Fenner, Goff, Homer, Ibis, Java, and Khartoum.<sup>85</sup>

James Chambless established a homestead near Cadiz in the early 1920s and had the good fortune that the nearest road (the Old National Trails Road) was designated as U.S. 66 in late 1926. A gas station, motel, store, café and post office soon followed in the 1930s, and the settlement was incorporated as Chambless (recall, it lay between Cadiz and Danby). Enter George Patton on the historical stage left in 1941-1942. Patton established a 10,000-square-mile training ground near Chambless, where he trained two million men in the Second Army Corps for combat in the North African desert.<sup>86</sup> Thirty-one years after Patton's men went off to war, Chambless "essentially disappeared" with the opening of I-40 and became a ghost town in the Mojave Desert with a population of six people and one dog,<sup>87</sup> yet it is still sought out by some visitors because of its association with Route 66 and the fact that it is an "alphabet town."

As apparent from General Patton's training facility near Chambless in the middle of the Mojave Desert, federal funds for defense purposes were plentiful during the war, while federal money for general highway improvements—so generous during the Great Depression—dried up.<sup>88</sup> With the repurposing of automobile factories to generate military vehicles and the rationing of rubber, automobile production practically ceased. Gas rationing capped the distance motorists could travel and, as a result, tourists all but disappeared. For those still on U.S. 66, they were forced to pull off the road when the convoys passed. For the most part, military personnel were a primary

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<sup>84</sup> National Historic Route 66 Federation <http://www.national66.com/66hstry.html>

<sup>85</sup> Chambless Route 66. <http://chambless66.blogspot.com/>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chambless,\\_California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chambless,_California)

<sup>88</sup> Arizona National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

source of income for the businesses along the Mother Road. The trucking industry also reached maturity during this period. Due to the heavy volume of trucks and military vehicles, U.S. 66 was in shambles by the war's end.

Recognizing the deterioration of the current system of highways, Congress passed another Federal Highway Act in 1944 to create an interstate highway system. However, the act was left unfunded until after the war. A partial appropriation was made in 1952, but it wasn't until 1956, with the passage of the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, that the interstate would begin to take shape as the primary means of transcontinental auto transport. For an emergent superpower relieved of the weight of the Great Depression and the throes of World War II, the 1950s were a long way off, and the new highways would wait.

### **POST-WORLD WAR II ERA AND ROUTE 66 (1945-1956)**

In the years following World War II, the economy was booming, people were driving everywhere in their cars, and tourism was at an all-time high. There was a resurgent westward migration along Route 66,<sup>89</sup> harkening back to earlier decades, as veterans took to the road in force in pursuit of a civilian job and a place to settle. The West was a promising part of the country for seeking work; many industries gained footing in the western states during the war and beckoned to soldiers eager to regain a place in the workforce. It was during this period that Route 66 would become engrained in the American psyche as “the Open Road.”

Route 66 called to those seeking not only a stable livelihood but a lively departure from daily life as well. Vacations were among the pursuits of Americans enjoying newfound post-war prosperity, and the scenery of Route 66 offered a captivating exodus from sometimes monotonous suburban living. Improved automobile technology made the more harrowing aspects of driving Route 66 far more manageable than ever before and allowed motorists to spend more time enjoying their surroundings than struggling against them. Tourists came from across the country to drive through the rolling pastures of Oklahoma, the vast prairies of Illinois, and the stunning rock formations of Arizona. If a picture is worth 1,000 words, then the mid-twentieth century illustration shown below says it all: a big-finned convertible packed with a family of four seeing the glories of the American West on Route 66.

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<sup>89</sup> According to the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, U.S. Highway 66 was not popularly known as Route 66 until after World War II. This does not mean that the moniker was not used prior to that time. In local newspapers, “Route 66” was used to refer to U.S. Highway 66 most often in its early years in the want ads or in directions to get from one place to another. The earliest reference to U.S. Highway 66 as just “Route 66” in a different context that Rutgers University could ascertain was in the *Salt Lake Tribune* dated August 4, 1927 in an article about the “international transcontinental foot race” planned for the following year. In the larger newspapers, the *Chicago Defender* first used the term on June 27, 1936 in a blotter of local events in Joliet, Illinois in which a young woman who suffered “three broken ribs and minor injuries after the car she was in struck a cow on route 66.” The *New York Times* first used a reference to “Route 66” in a review of John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* on April 14, 1939. According to Google’s Books Ngram Viewer, which allows users to identify trends in keyword or phrase use in books published over a given period of time normalized yearly by total published material, the phrase “Route 66” was used lightly in American English books between 1926 and 1950, with a steady increase until the late 1980s when its use increased exponentially to a peak in 2006. (Google’s dataset ends in the year 2008.)

One traveler on the Mother Road was Bobby Troup, a veteran soldier riding west with his wife after returning from the war. On his journey he wrote the lyrics to the famous song “(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66,” which was first recorded by Nat King Cole. The song has since been recorded and performed hundreds of times by such artists as the Rolling Stones, Depeche Mode, and Eva Cassidy.

For many, the 1950s was the golden era of Route 66, with that period associated with honesty and innocence, especially in contrast with the tumultuous and value-challenging 1960s.<sup>90</sup> In writing on “The Mother Road of Nostalgia” concerning Route 66, Peter Dedek cites the following from an article titled “Fifties Memories” in the *Route 66 Magazine*:

People had time for themselves and each other and our lives were not consumed with “stuff.” Bad guys went to jail always, and good guys got ahead. Everyone respected the President, even if we didn’t agree with him. It was a comfortable time in America, and some of us miss it very much.<sup>91</sup>

The 1950s were not just comfortable, they were economically booming for both America and Route 66. As a result of business competition on the Mother Road, many commercial manmade landmarks sprang up during this period. The increased traffic along Route 66 attracted more entrepreneurs to the main streets of many towns. Motels, eateries, service stations, and other distinctive shops cropped up, innovative marketing tactics were used to attract business, and tourist gimmicks abounded—not to mention the ubiquitous neon signs for which Route 66 is renowned. Roadside zoos featuring rare animals, diners featuring astonishing gastronomic feats, and everything else in between could be found, making a trip along Route 66 as much a serene escape from civilization as it was a veritable living theater at the heart of American society. All in all, by the mid-1950s, automobile travel had become an American pastime, the effects of which were clearly measurable: between 1941 and 1951, the annual rate of gasoline consumption had increased from 3.5 billion gallons to more than 8 billion gallons. Likewise, the automobile industry boomed, as vehicle registrations in the United States rose from 27 million in 1950 to 57 million in 1958.<sup>92</sup> In tandem, Route 66 was flourishing. A former resident of Glenrio, Texas, who worked summers at a few Route 66 gas stations in that community in the 1950s “recalls consistent traffic during the daytime, with cars lined up five or six in a row waiting to get gas.”<sup>93</sup>

The sharp increase in traffic was not without consequence, however, and Route 66 was beset with growing pains. The 20- and 30-year old road segments were becoming worn—a condition exacerbated by heavy truck use during WWII. The road also became too narrow to handle the volume of high-speed traffic as cars became more powerful. Accidents increased, and Route 66 developed a reputation that earned it the nickname of “Bloody 66.” Motorists sought a faster way

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<sup>90</sup> Dedek, Peter. “The Mother Road of Nostalgia: Preservation and Interpretation along Route 66.” *Preserving Western History* by Andrew Guilford. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 2005. p.299

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 300

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/HistSig/OklahomaContext.htm>

<sup>93</sup> National Park Service, Glenrio Historic District: Glenrio Texas and New Mexico. [http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/route66/glenrio\\_historic\\_district.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/route66/glenrio_historic_district.html)

to travel, but they sought safety as well, and before long a national dialogue had begun calling for the road's replacement.

### **ROUTE 66 IN THE INTERSTATE ERA (1956-1984)**

At the forefront of the discussion for an improved national highway system was the President himself. While serving as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces during WWII, President Dwight D. Eisenhower had taken note of the strategic resource the Germans had in the Autobahn, the European super-highways that during the war played a key role in the transport of military operations. Eisenhower remarked on the “superlative system of German national highways crossing that country [that] offer[ed] the possibility, often lacking in the United States, to drive with speed and efficiency at the same time.”<sup>94</sup> Seen in this light, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 (commonly known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act) could be thought of as a patriotic gesture in the wake of WWII—an efficient system of cross-country travel that would not only improve the transportation of the public but also military forces for optimal emergency response. (Recall: This was during the Cold War era, with elementary school children dropping below their desks in mock A-bomb drills.) As a result of the 1956 act, the interstate highway system was an official federally funded project, and almost immediately construction began for the roadway system that would usurp the significance of Route 66.

The signing of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 was not as abrupt or reactionary as its swift passage may suggest; indeed, a national highway system had been in the works for some time. As early as the 1920s, the Army, in conjunction with the Bureau of Public Roads, had created a map of roads that would make for an effective national defense highway. However, following the enactment of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, construction began with all deliberate speed on the largest public works project in the nation's history, comprising over 41,000 miles of high-speed roadway. By the early 1970s, nearly all portions of Route 66 had been bypassed by the interstate.

For the driving public, the interstate highway was a marked improvement over existing highways. Unlike the circuitous, undulating character of early highways that followed the natural landscape and went through remote towns, the interstate was wide, straight, and fast. The split, multi-lane interstate highways allowed cars to travel legally at speeds as high as 75 miles per hour; the intrepid traveler would have no problem reaching speeds much higher. Averaging 600 miles a day on the interstate, tourists, truckers, and wayfarers of all stripes could now travel from coast to coast in as little as five days. If they didn't have to eat, sleep, or get gas, they could make the whole trip without ever passing through a single town. If faster was better, Route 66 was beat by the interstate ribbon of concrete.

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<sup>94</sup> [http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/route66/demise\\_resurgence\\_of\\_route66.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/route66/demise_resurgence_of_route66.html)

By the late 1970s, it became clear that Route 66 was becoming “obsolete” in highway-engineer parlance. In Illinois, for example, all Route 66 road signs had been removed by 1977, as signage for Interstate 55 took its place. Moreover, fewer resources were being invested in the road’s maintenance, and Route 66 continued to dilapidate. The final section of Route 66 was bypassed in Williams, Arizona in 1984, and its decommissioning occurred shortly thereafter.

### **DECOMMISSIONING OF ROUTE 66 (1985)**

Despite widespread support for the interstate, there remained some who supported the minority whose livelihoods were dependent on the road. There was also a nascent group of individuals whose support of Route 66 was motivated by cultural and personal nostalgia. The U.S. Highway 66 Association continued to produce literature promoting to tourists the merits of the old road into the mid-1970s, but the group would eventually disband in 1979. In some areas, litigation arose, and the threat of lawsuits from towns and states created speed bumps that would delay the decommissioning of Route 66. Nevertheless, it appeared that the future of Route 66 was on an inevitable track to oblivion. The road was officially decommissioned in 1985.

Thereafter, its fate met a fork in the road: Some sections of Route 66 were adopted by state or local governments and continued to carry public traffic, though much less of it; in some instances, private entities or individuals adopted portions of the road; and in still other cases, many segments of Route 66 were abandoned. Accordingly, Route 66 was left in a variety of conditions, from fully paved and updated stretches to portions that were entirely unfit for travel. Nostalgia for the Mother Road’s former prominence still burned in the memories of many individuals. Some government entities that adopted sections of the Road kept the “66” name in one way or another. Missouri, Oklahoma, Arizona, and California have kept it on as State Highway 66. Other states like Missouri have tacked the 66 number onto the end of certain roadways (i.e., highways 366 and 266).

Some began to recognize the historic significance of the road as well. In Oklahoma, for example, portions of the original road were kept intact such that one can still travel along sections of eight-foot-wide “sidewalk” or “ribbon” highway. Soon, these individuals from across the country would come together and initiate the modern-day effort to preserve Route 66.

### **PRESERVATION ALONG ROUTE 66**

From a historical perspective, Route 66 was but one of many highways commissioned as a result of broad, populous movement to promote better roads in the United States. The path it took from Chicago to Los Angeles followed a network of trails established long ago by Native Americans, European explorers, and American surveyors. Its name came about through conflict and struggle among interested parties. Then there were the excavators, engineers, pavers, and painters who built the physical road; the entrepreneurs, restaurateurs, marketers, and boosters who gave the Route its neon sheen; the gas station attendants, motel managers, waitresses, and locals who gave



the Road its character and purpose; and of course, the tourists, the travelers, and dreamers who gave the Road its meaning.

Creating Route 66, the Mother Road, was the work of many individuals. And so will be its preservation.

Contemporary focus on the preservation of Route 66 has been directed toward recognizing the Mother Road's significance in American history. However, even before the highway was officially decommissioned, initiatives to protect Route 66 were part of the public dialogue and legislative debate. Tracing the evolution of Route 66 historic preservation shows it has its derivatives in early promotional efforts—first as an economic resource and later as a cultural resource.

### **Pre-Preservation Era of Route 66**

As with all engineering innovations at the beginning of the twentieth century, Route 66 was pitted against the effects of modernization from the time it first took on traffic. Automobiles were becoming faster, safer, and cheaper. Mass-production methods paired with new financing mechanisms<sup>95</sup> could hardly meet the insatiable American demand for auto-travel and, as a result, millions of new cars were put on the road each year.

No one foresaw the impact of the automobile on America. Roads built in the 1920s and 1930s were never designed for the high-speed, high-density traffic taking shape in America, and Route 66 was no exception. The Mother Road was under constant construction for improvement, resurfacing, and realignment. The speed and efficiency of travel were improved, cutting the mileage of the highway from its original 2,448 miles to 2,238 by 1960.<sup>96</sup> Still, these gradual improvements only highlighted the ways in which automobile travel had outpaced Route 66, foreshadowing its gradual obsolescence in a technical engineering sense.

Early efforts to protect Route 66 from the effects of modernization would be out of economic self-interest for those in the smaller, more remote towns through which the highway passed, providing an economic stimulus. When it became clear that the emerging Interstate Highway System was a threat to the future of Route 66, heated opposition from townspeople along the Mother Road would result in lawsuits, which would in some cases stall the construction of new highways. New Mexico, for example, passed a law that forbade the construction of interstate bypasses if localities were to request otherwise. Similar lawsuits delayed interstate highway construction in other states like Texas and Arizona. Threats to rescind federal funding for highway projects, however, quickly forced compliance among the states. Indeed, the interstate ribbon of concrete was hard to stop.

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<sup>95</sup><http://hubpages.com/hub/Cars-in-the-1920s>

<sup>96</sup> Bischoff, pg. 10.

Many of the early arguments against the loss of Route 66 and the rise of the interstate clearly had an economic grounding rather than a cultural or historic one. Upon debating the Turner Turnpike in Oklahoma, the first major Route 66 bypass, representatives from to-be-bypassed towns “predicted ‘dire consequences’ for their communities if the main traffic corridor shifted away from their main streets and did not even slow for their businesses.”<sup>97</sup> Several scholars also criticized the interstate. Among them, American urban historian Lewis Mumford predicted that the highways would initiate a mass exodus from the cities, impoverishing those who remained. No amount of criticism though, could argue against the utilitarian truth that the majority of motorists wanted quicker, safer highways than what Route 66 could provide.

Early efforts to promote Route 66 lacked the degree of coordination that currently exists in larger measure between public, private, and nonprofit entities. Labor and financing for preservation was more dependent upon individual enterprise than government support, which meant that the loss of a particularly active individual could significantly harm the stability of a promotional effort. For example, after being resurrected shortly after World War II, the U.S. Highway 66 Association dissolved in 1979, one year after the organization’s longtime secretary, “Mr. Route 66”—Jack Cutberth—died.<sup>98</sup>

By 1985, Route 66 was replaced by Interstates 55, 44, 40, and 15. Although some of the towns along Route 66 were included in the interstates as “business loops,” traffic all but disappeared, and the predicted blow to business came quickly. “When [Route 66] was bypassed, many businesses and even entire towns “closed down.” The number of vehicles dwindled from thousands a day to less than 10 in some of the outlying communities.”<sup>99</sup> According to Scott and Kelly (1988), one hotel proprietor along Route 66, Homer Ehresman, estimated that “Interstate 40 took away 90 percent of [his] business” (albeit it a very informal estimate) when the bypass went through in the 1970s.<sup>100</sup> A few businesses, such as the Blue Swallow Motel and the Ariston Café (both included as case studies in Chapter 6 of this study) were able to remain as viable businesses on the Mother Road, but many proprietors unwilling to remain on the Route simply relocated closer to the interstate.

National franchises also added to the challenges faced by Route 66 businesses. A 1992 survey of 30 Route 66 properties in Santa Rosa, California found that many of the businesses that were built during the 1960s were early chains—franchises such as Denny’s Restaurant, Best Western Motel, and Travel Lodge.<sup>101</sup> “Chain” businesses, particularly motels, offered traveler discounts and had national promotional outlets such as the American Automobile Association (AAA) Guidebooks—resources to which most independent establishments along the Mother Road did not have access.

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<sup>97</sup><http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/HistSig/CompleteContext.pdf> (p. 241)

<sup>98</sup><http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/HistSig/CompleteContext.pdf> (p. 255)

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.nationalroute66.org/faq.html>

<sup>100</sup> Scott, Quinta and Kelly, Susan Croce. (1988) *Route 66: The Highway and its People*:183.

<sup>101</sup> <http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/HistSig/New%20Mexico.htm>

As Route 66 was in decline during the construction of the interstate system, the public began to recognize the Mother Road for its cultural significance. Some particularly salient examples of Route 66 in popular culture emerged during the 1960s and 1970s. The 1969 movie, *Easy Rider*, was a popular film about two Route 66 adventurers, and the 1971 cult film *Two Lane Blacktop* had scenes shot on Route 66. (Jumping ahead in our narrative to 2006, Route 66 figured prominently in the Disney/Pixar movie *Cars*). Also of note was the television series *Route 66* starring Martin Milner and George Maharis, which aired from 1960 to 1964. The show's plot—two Corvette-driving young men encountering different people and places across the Route—reflected the idea of Route 66 as a source for adventure. Also deserving mention is Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* where, for instance, in Los Angeles Kerouac finds “the beat-est characters in the country,” including “long-haired, broken down hipsters straight off Route 66 from New York.”<sup>102</sup> Such widely consumed interpretations of Route 66 helped to shape the uniquely American mythology of the Mother Road and establish Route 66 as a cultural resource. As American movies, television shows, and books were consumed abroad, Route 66 was transplanted to an international consciousness.

After Route 66 was decommissioned in 1985, perhaps because an abandoned highway is more concretely an embodiment of the past, the highway came to be regarded more widely as a historic resource. Toward the mid- to late-1980s a number of Route 66-related nonprofits formed, harkening a new era of preservation. Although individuals and entities alike have expressed a common interest in preserving the Mother Road, the motivating factors behind preservation are diverse.

## WHAT IS BEING PRESERVED? ISSUES OF ROUTE 66 PRESERVATION

Constructing a cohesive, historic narrative of Route 66 is a challenge. Spanning eight states and 80 years through vastly different environmental and cultural settings, there is no single entity to preserve. Throughout its history, certain aspects of Route 66 were being built while others were being modified or destroyed. Route 66 structures vary widely in their level of upkeep; some have been well maintained, such as the Rock Café of Stroud, OK (a case study found in Chapter 6 of this study), while others have been long been destroyed and forgotten. Furthermore, there is a distinction between preserving history and recreating it, and the latter sometimes entails shallow representations that cheapen the efforts of more legitimate preservation projects. Tourists appear particularly sagacious to inauthentic Route 66 offerings, such as more recently erected shops and restaurants that simply include Route 66 in their name. Yet, many would argue that these kinds of efforts are not bad, but rather are helpful to the Mother Road community wanting to acknowledge its historic identity through various means. Further, change on a living, commercial corridor is inevitable, and efforts to recreate new Route-themed entities can actually be quite beneficial, such as the contemporary POPS in Arcadia, Oklahoma (see Chapter 6 case study). Also, cheap kitsch on Route 66 is a long-standing tradition in terms of both architecture and goods for sale. So who is to arbitrate what is legitimate or authentic for Route 66?

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<sup>102</sup>Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*. New York: Viking Press, 1957.

Promotional efforts can serve to shed light on the idealized end result of Route 66 preservation efforts. Advertising for Route 66 travel since its earliest days suggest that there is a distinct experience in traveling along the Route. Route 66 does embody a unique visual experience, not only architecturally but in the natural landscape as well. As stated earlier, Route 66 was etched from older migration trails, and thus disrupts the natural landscape minimally as compared to the interstate system, which Caton and Santos (2007) describe as “insensitive to the landscape, boring through mountains, chiseling away buttes, and leaving drivers with a visual experience so monotonous that it actually became dangerous, as it encouraged drivers to speed, or alternatively, to fall asleep at the wheel.”<sup>103</sup> Thus, part of preserving the Route 66 experience entails preservation of the natural environment.

There is further the question of exactly how to preserve the physical/environment of Route 66, for instance, the appropriateness of altering/reclaiming Mother Road-related structures that have since been abandoned and now are gradually being reclaimed by nature. Some of these ruins have been sensitively restored by entrepreneurial individuals, such as Cool Springs (Chapter 6 case study), essentially rebuilt from a pile of rubble in the middle of the Mohave Desert. Yet, restoration of each and every remaining Route 66 property is not feasible, nor may it be desirable. As David Knudson, executive director of the Historic Route 66 Federation puts it, "We can't have 2,400 miles of Williamsburg."<sup>104</sup>

An additional struggle for preservationists is against the commoditization of the Route 66 experience. Tourist activity does indeed merit consideration as an indicator of the true Route 66 experience. The conjecture that Route 66 offers a distinct driving experience can be reinforced by the fact that many people vacation along Route 66. The purpose of a vacation is to escape from the routine and the confines of everyday life, thus suggesting that Route 66 offers an experience not to be found in the daily highway travel. Further research into the ways in which Route 66 differs from everyday driving is significant to shaping the direction and priorities of future preservation efforts.

## **Strategies of Route 66 Preservation**

The means through which Route 66 preservation has been accomplished can be categorized into one of three broad methods: landmarks, legislation, and group formation.

### *Landmark Designation*

While many Route 66 businesses have closed since the completion of the interstate system, some have survived for 50, 60, and even 70 years. While longevity alone is not sufficient for landmark designation, some iconic structures along the Route have earned a place on the National Register

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<sup>103</sup>Jakle 1985; Wallis 2001

<sup>104</sup>Route Structure. By: Hess, Alan, Architecture, 07460554, Sep2000, Vol. 89, Issue 9

of Historic Places (NRHP).<sup>105</sup>The National Park Service keeps a travel itinerary for tourism purposes of many Route 66 sites that also are listed on the NRHP; there are about 230 NRHP property listings on the Mother Road. Designation as a NRHP resource (1) increases legitimacy of a particular property's historic significance, (2) enhances the visibility of certain sites to tourists planning their Route 66 trip, (3) affords certain procedural protections against harmful federal undertaking (section 106 review), and (4) opens the door to federal historic tax credits, grants, and other financial opportunities. (The NRHP and the consequences of listing in the National Register are discussed in greater detail shortly.)

Achieving National Register status was among the earliest collaborative efforts between public and private entities in Route 66 preservation (which were often done in conjunction with historical societies or state highway departments). In 1989, Kaibab National Forest, AZ, became the first entity to nominate not just a building on Route 66, but a part of the Route 66 roadbed itself, to the NRHP. The multiple-property listing included not one but five segments of the Mother Road. By the 1990s, several Route 66 states had conducted surveys on their Route 66 resources, highlighting those that might qualify for the NRHP. Regardless, the designation serves as a useful tool to generate local pride in its Route 66 resources as well as legitimize marketing efforts to potential tourists, and further affords other benefits (described shortly).

Additionally, there are ample resources available in book form, tourism brochures, and web-based documents on notable Route 66 sites. Many accounts of Route 66 have helped to establish iconic status for some of the more popular features of Route 66, such as Meramec Caverns (which receives over 150,000 visitors a years) or the "Cadillac Ranch" art installation in Amarillo, Texas.

### *Federal Legislation*

The federal government has assisted in preservation efforts (1) by providing a national mechanism for the recognition and protection of well-preserved roads and 2) through an instrumental rehabilitation program implemented by the Department of the Interior.

Under the Federal Highway Administration, the National Scenic Byways Program serves to develop a uniform standard for the designation of historically significant and scenic roads and has been applied for various sections of Route 66. The program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, and reauthorized first in 1998 under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)<sup>106</sup> and again in 2005 by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The National Scenic Byways Program offers an additional level of distinction: Roadways that are determined to have a superior scenic quality, such that the roads themselves are tourist destinations, are eligible to receive the National Scenic Byways (NSB) and All-

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<sup>105</sup> Eight such structures are discussed in this study. These sites include the Rock Café in Stroud, OK; Vickery Station in Tulsa, OK; the Ariston Café in Litchfield, IL; the Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, NM; the Conoco Station in Shamrock, TX; the Coleman Theater in Miami, OK; La Posada Hotel in Winslow, AZ; and Kelly's Brew Pub in Albuquerque, NM.

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.byways.org/learn/program.html>



American Road (ARR—a higher designation) honors. Thus far, parts of Route 66 that traverse Illinois, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arizona have received such heralded designations (Missouri has state a designation). A segment of Route 66 in Arizona was first designated an NSB (2005) and then achieved AAR status (2009). Segments of the Mother Road have been designated as an NSB in Illinois (2005), Missouri (2010), New Mexico (2000), and Oklahoma (2009).

In 1999, Congress enacted the National Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act with the goal of “preserving the cultural resources of the Route 66 corridor and to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide assistance.” The National Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act was the result of nearly nine years of collaboration between legislators, the Department of the Interior, and the general public.

Route 66 resources for the purposes of the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Program are defined as (a) structures located on or near Route 66 that (b) existed “during the Route’s period of outstanding significance” (1926-1970) and (c) are still in existence at the time of enactment.<sup>107</sup> As a result of the act, the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, administered through the National Park Service, has formed as a managing entity for Route 66 preservation and interpretation efforts, while coordinating with “private property owners; non-profit organizations; and local, state, federal, and tribal governments.”<sup>108</sup> The program provides cost-share grants to qualifying projects and engages in research, technical assistance, and educational outreach for Route 66-related projects.<sup>109</sup> In 2009, the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program was reauthorized for another ten years.

This study finds enormous potential in creative uses of these federal NRHP, National Scenic Byways and Route 66 Corridor programs, as well as other federal legislation, including the federal historic tax credit and Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activity funding from ISTEA, TEA-21, and SAFETEA-LU, for preservation along the Mother Road. An in-depth discussion of these programs can be found in the concluding Chapter 7 of this study. Support through state agencies such as State Historic Preservation Offices, Departments of Transportation, and tourism offices are also key.

### *Route 66 Group Formation and Preservation Advocacy*

Groups dedicated to the preservation of Route 66 occur at all levels of government. For example, a Federal Advisory Committee was appointed in 2006 by the Secretary of the Interior to assist in the planning and setting of priorities for the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program cited above. The council was comprised of 15 members representing various transportation

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<sup>107</sup> <http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/PublicLaw106-45.pdf>

<sup>108</sup> [www.nps.gov/history/rt66/news/Newsletter5.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/news/Newsletter5.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> <http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/prgrm/index.htm>

departments, state historic preservation offices, Route 66 associations, and other nonprofit organizations interested in the preservation of Route 66.<sup>110</sup> The council charter expired in 2008.

While government groups play a significant role in the preservation of Route 66, the impetus for preservation has come from individuals and nonprofit organizations—as is the case more generally for how historic preservation is effected in the United States (shortly described). In relatively quick succession after the decommissioning of Route 66, nonprofit associations dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Route 66 resources were formed in each of the eight states through which the Mother Road runs. Common activities of these associations include creating and distributing promotional literature, organizing Route 66 events, and soliciting memberships and private donations. Below they are listed and described in order of their founding.

*The Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona* was founded in 1987 and “dedicated to the preservation, promotion, and protection of both the surface and memories [of the] magnificent old highway [Route 66].”<sup>111</sup> After nine months of lobbying, the group convinced the Arizona legislature to designate U.S. 66 between Seligman and Kingman as “Historic Route 66”—a title later extended to the rest of the state’s 200-mile stretch of the Mother Road. Resources in Arizona reflect influences from Native American culture and American frontier life. To celebrate their resources, the association coordinates the “Annual Route 66 Fun Run,” a large-scale public caravan that travels 140 miles from Seligman to Topock.

*The Route 66 Association of Missouri* was founded in 1989 and officially incorporated in 1990. Its mission is to “preserve, promote, and develop Historic Route 66.”<sup>112</sup> The group accomplishes its mission through research, cooperation with state and federal agencies, educational offerings, and the production of a quarterly newsletter, *Show Me Route 66* (a play on Missouri’s nickname, the “Show Me State”), as well as other travel literature. The Association has compiled an inventory of points of interest along Missouri’s portion of Route 66. It coordinates its efforts with various preservation groups at the state and national levels and currently provides an online database of its preservation partners and resources for undertaking projects. In 2010, the association sponsored its 21st Annual Motor Tour, entitled “Let’s Cruise into a New Decade on Route 66!”

*Route 66 Association of Illinois*. Founded in Dwight, Illinois, in October 1989, its purpose is to “preserve, promote, and enjoy the past and present of U.S. Highway 66.”<sup>113</sup> The group accomplishes its mission through tours, fairs, and other public events about or near Route 66. The association publishes the quarterly newsletter *Day Tripper* as well as a series of brochures on Route 66 resources in Illinois. It also hosts an interactive map on its website. The association organizes a Route 66 weekend motor tour annually and houses the Route 66 Hall of Fame and

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<sup>110</sup> [www.nps.gov/history/rt66/news/Newsletter5.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/news/Newsletter5.pdf)

<sup>111</sup> <http://www.azrt66.com/>

<sup>112</sup> <http://www.missouri66.org/joomla/>

<sup>113</sup> <http://il66assoc.org/>

Museum, established in 2004 to “commemorate the people, places, and events that gave Route 66 its special character.” The association’s website has links to preservation partners throughout the state, educational resources, and a digital archive of Illinois highway maps.

*The Oklahoma Route 66 Association* was formed in 1989 to coordinate “the statewide economic development, enhancement, improvement, preservation, and recognition of U.S. Route 66 in Oklahoma” by generating “whatever finances and pressures [it] can to save Route 66 landmarks from decay or destruction.”<sup>114</sup> The organization sponsors an annual road cruise, as well as other events and workshops, and provides technical assistance to communities along Route 66. It has identified critical properties and structures on Route 66 in Oklahoma, including those eligible for NRHP status. Numerous Mother Road sites in Oklahoma are listed in the NRHP.

*The New Mexico Route 66 Association* was formed in 1990 to “educate, preserve, and promote historic Route 66 in New Mexico.”<sup>115</sup> New Mexico has approximately 465 miles of Route 66 and contains a portion of Route 66 where the road crosses over itself (Tucumcari’s pre-1937 north-south alignment crosses over its post-1937 east-west alignment). The association holds an annual New Mexico Route 66 Motor Tour from Tucumcari to Gallup and has helped stimulate numerous preservation projects including the restoration of more than 10 neon signs in the state along Route 66. The organization has also publicized studies on New Mexico’s historic Route 66 resources, including a context report on the pre-1937 highway alignments in New Mexico and “The Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico.”<sup>116</sup>

*The Kansas Historic Route 66 Association* was founded in 1990 and is dedicated to “the preservation, promotion, and protection of both the surface and memories of [the] magnificent old highway [Route 66].”<sup>117</sup> The association is part of the Baxter Springs Heritage Center and Museum. In the past, the association has coordinated events such as a Route 66 5K race and wedding contests.<sup>118</sup> A second Route 66 Association of Kansas was founded in 2004.<sup>119</sup>

*The California Route 66 Association* was founded in December of 1990 and is “dedicated to the preservation, promotion and enjoyment of Historic Route 66 in California.” The group formed around the same time legislation was passed designating Route 66 as “State Historic Highway Route 66,” making signage permissible for the decommissioned highway. The association publishes a quarterly newsletter entitled *ROADSIGNS* and the *Guide to Historic Route 66 in California*, which is in its third edition. The organization’s website serves as a resource for visitors to the area and also provides links to its statewide and national preservation partners.

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<sup>114</sup> <http://www.oklahomaroute66.com/aboutus.html>

<sup>115</sup> <http://rt66nm.org/index.html>

<sup>116</sup> <http://rt66nm.org/tourism/tourism.html>

<sup>117</sup> [http://www.carrollswab.com/alynn/mission\\_of\\_rt\\_66\\_association.htm](http://www.carrollswab.com/alynn/mission_of_rt_66_association.htm)

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>119</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Route-66-Association-of-Kansas/148153651917696#!/pages/Route-66-Association-of-Kansas/148153651917696?sk=info>

*The Texas Old Route 66 Association* was founded in 1991 to promote the approximate 150 miles of Route 66 in Texas. Volunteers of the association publish a quarterly newsletter called the *Texas Route 66 Newsletter* and maintain the Texas Route 66 museum, claimed to be the first museum along the Mother Road.<sup>120</sup> The organization is involved with several preservation projects along Route 66 including the McLean Phillips Station. The association also maintains an online guide to Route 66 in Texas.

There are several programs at the national level that have also played an important role in the preservation and promotion of Route 66. Of particular note is *The National Historic Route 66 Federation*. David Knudson founded the federation in 1994 “when he was unable to locate old sections of Route 66 that he remembered traveling in college” and has now served for almost two decades as executive director.<sup>121</sup> The National Historic Route 66 Federation had an instrumental role in the crafting of the National Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act. Over the years, the federation has taken on several unique efforts, including the Federal Adopt-a-Highway program. The Adopt-A-Hundred Program offers federation members an opportunity to adopt a 100-mile stretch along the 2,400 miles of Route 66 and is intended to identify and address preservation issues along Route 66. Members of the Adopt-A-Hundred program have also contributed to the federation’s *EZR66 Guide*, a guidebook of more than 500 resources and businesses along the Route, now in its fourteenth edition. The National Historic Route 66 Federation is also responsible for the publication of a quarterly magazine, *Federation News*, which contains articles about and photographs of the Mother Road.<sup>122</sup>

The important efforts of foundations and other groups are worth mentioning here. An example is the *Route 66 Preservation Foundation*. Originally formed as the *California Route 66 Preservation Foundation (CART66)*, the Route 66 Preservation Foundation’s mission is “to develop resources for the preservation and benefit of the Route 66 corridor and its community.”<sup>123</sup> To that end, the Route 66 Preservation Foundation has sponsored Route 66 caravans, and has lobbied Congress on behalf of the Mother Road. Jim Conkle, the foundation’s executive director, is also general manager of the *Route 66 Pulse*, a complimentary newspaper distributed along the entirety of the 2,400-mile highway.

Also deserving comment is the *National Trust for Historic Preservation*, a congressionally-chartered, member-supported organization. By inculcating a heightened sensitivity to preservation in the United States, the National Trust enhances the movement to preserve Route 66. In 2007, the National Trust listed Route 66 Motels among America’s Eleven-Most Endangered Places. There is also more direct assistance to the Mother Road tendered by the National Trust through such means as the Trust’s Main Street Program (25 such initiatives along Route 66 are detailed in Chapter 5) and through the provision of preservation planning assistance

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<sup>120</sup> <http://www.barbwiremuseum.com/TexasRoute66.htm>

<sup>121</sup> Interview with David Knudson. <http://sites.google.com/site/route66map/interview:davidknudson>

<sup>122</sup> <http://www.national66.com/>

<sup>123</sup> [www.cart66pf.org](http://www.cart66pf.org)

for approximately five historic Route 66 properties. The National Trust funded a reconnaissance investigation of Route 66 by Rutgers University in 2007.

Numerous corporations have aided the preservation of Route 66. Because of space limitations, only two illustrative examples among the larger roster of such entities are mentioned here. The Hampton® Hotels, working with the eight state Route 66 associations and others, has its “Explore the Highway with Hampton Save a Landmark” program, a collaboration formed to raise awareness of the Mother Road and to encourage volunteers to refurbish select locations along the highway.<sup>124</sup> In partnership with American Express and the World Monuments Fund Sustainable Tourism Initiative and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Offices, the National Park Service (Heritage Education Service and Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program) produced the Route 66 *Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary*. The latter “aids the public to visit the historic places and to recall those images and experiences that are reminders of our past and evidence of the influence of the automobile.”<sup>125</sup> American Express is also funding the current investigation by Rutgers University with oversight provided by the World Monuments Fund and the National Park Service. (The National Trust for Historic Preservation provided some funding assistance to the early phases of this study.)

This is by no means a complete list of organizations dedicated to the preservation and protection of Route 66. There are dozens of other organizations in the United States, as well as abroad, including the Hungarian Route 66 Association (which completed its fourth annual Route 66 cruise in August of 2010), the French Route 66 Association, the Norwegian Route 66 Association, the Canadian Route 66 Association, the World Route 66 Association, and the Route 66 Association of Belgium, to name a few.<sup>126</sup>

The narrative thus far has focused on specific contemporary efforts to preserve Route 66, but just as the Mother Road was affected by larger currents of American history, so too, are attempts to preserve the Mother Road, reflecting larger and longer running developments on the American preservation scene more generally. (To encourage this comparison, Tables 1.2 and 1.3 at the end of this chapter present Route 66 and American historic preservation timelines, respectively.) So, this chapter segues to a quick overview of American preservation history and then concludes with setting the contemporary efforts to preserve Route 66 in the context of the broader American preservation framework.

## **BROADER PERSPECTIVE OF PRESERVING ROUTE 66**

### **Growth of Historic Preservation Sentiment and Programs in the United States (Table 1.3)**

Until almost the mid-twentieth century, preservation sentiment was alien to an American society with a reverence for all things new. There were but a handful of exceptions. In 1816, the City of

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<sup>124</sup> [www.cart66pf.org/66caravan](http://www.cart66pf.org/66caravan)

<sup>125</sup> [www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/route66](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/route66)

<sup>126</sup> <http://www.rt66nm.org/tourism/rt66asso.html>



Philadelphia purchased Independence Hall, which had been slated for demolition; George Washington's Revolutionary War-era headquarters in upstate New York, Hasbrouck House, was saved by that state's legislature in 1850 and converted to the nation's first house museum; and Mount Vernon was saved by a private women's group in the 1860s, as was the Hermitage (1856) and Old South Meeting House (1876).<sup>127</sup>

Private philanthropy from the Rockefeller family helped reconstruct Colonial Williamsburg in the mid-1920s.<sup>128</sup> Other historic outdoor museum "settlements," such as Greenfield Village in Michigan, date from the same 1920s era. In the mid-1930s, the Depression and the attendant governmental economic pump-priming response spurred some federal archival and preservation actions, such as the Historic American Buildings Survey, and restoration work at Yorktown and other battlefields.<sup>129</sup> And from the 1930s to the 1950s, a handful of communities established local preservation commissions to identify and protect selected historic districts.<sup>130</sup>

As noted, however, these preservation activities were the exception. More typical was destruction of even acknowledged historic landmarks. Pennsylvania Station in New York City is a prime example; this important structure was demolished and replaced by a lackluster skyscraper and a new incarnation of Madison Square Garden in 1965.<sup>131</sup> In fact, federal programs, ranging from urban renewal to the interstate highway system, fueled the demolition of the historic legacy.<sup>132</sup> Seattle's Pioneer Square, Boston's Quincy Market, and New York's SoHo were almost lost to urban renewal;<sup>133</sup> many equally prominent areas were not saved.

Partly in reaction to the widespread loss of historic places (often governmentally aided) and growing societal environmental sensitivity, a preservation system developed by the 1960s. At the federal level, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 created a National Register of Historic Places and a review process (Section 106 of the NHPA) to evaluate federal undertakings that threatened National Register resources. (The National Register is administered by the National Park Service.) Complementing the NHPA was other federal preservation legislation, such as Section 4(f) of the 1966 Transportation Act, which guards against federal transportation projects "using" historic resources for transportation purposes unless there is "no prudent and feasible alternative," and the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires impact assessments of major federal actions affecting the environment, including historic resources.

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<sup>127</sup> Hosmer, Charles B. 1965. *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States before Williamsburg*. New York: Putnam's Sons.

<sup>128</sup> Grieff, Constance M. 1971. *Lost America: From the Atlantic to the Mississippi*. Princeton, NJ: Pyne.

<sup>129</sup> Murtagh, Williams J. 1988. *Keeping Time*. Pittstown, NJ: Main Street. P. 65

<sup>130</sup> Listokin, David. 1985. *Living Cities*. New York: Priority Press. P. 32

<sup>131</sup> Whitehill, Walter Muir. 1966. "Promoted to Glory," in U.S. Conference of Mayors, *With heritage so Rich*. Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation.

<sup>132</sup> Jacobs, Jane. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House.

<sup>133</sup> Gratz, Roberta B. 1994. *The Living City: How are America's Cities Being Revitalized by Thinking Small in a Big Way*. Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation. P. xxvii

Parallel actions commenced at the state and local levels during this period. With federal funds from NHPA, State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) were established. The SHPOs helped identify candidates to be placed on the national as well as state registers. Many states further enacted “mini-106” and “mini-NEPA” procedures to evaluate state and local government actions threatening properties on the state or local registers. Some states (e.g., Kansas and Minnesota) enacted “mini-4(f)” protections. For instance, demolition of a historic hotel in downtown Hibbing, MN, was stopped on the basis that there was a “feasible and prudent alternative” to its destruction—namely, preservation.<sup>134</sup>

Of great significance was the establishment of local preservation commissions (LPCs). The LPCs would conduct surveys to identify historic resources and then act to designate those resources as landmarks.<sup>135</sup> Once designated, the landmarks could not be demolished or their facades altered in a fashion not historically appropriate without the approval of the LPC; at the least, these actions would be delayed or commented on by the LPC.<sup>136</sup> Local designation and protection was originally adopted in a few pioneering cities such as New Orleans (1925, 1937), Charleston (1931), and San Antonio (1939). The number of communities with such LPC activity rose to about 150 in the mid-1960s, to about 1,500 by the early 1980s, and to more than 3,000 as of 2010. While LPCs are today active throughout the United States, such local action is, more the exception than the rule. When in place, the LPC actions are significant, because although federal and state regulations typically focus on governmental actions that might threaten historic resources, for the most part they are not directed at private actions by the owners of these resources. LPC activities, by contrast, may regulate such private actions.<sup>137</sup> To be fair, some praise this government intervention while others bemoan local historic preservation controls as intrusive and a near property “taking.”

Also of note were new tax regulations and other financial aid for preservation. Until the 1970s, federal tax law discouraged preservation. This began to change under the 1976 Tax Act, and significant historic preservation tax credits were added by the 1981 Economic Recovery Tax Act (ERTA). While the 1986 Tax Reform Act (TRA) reduced these ERTA tax credit benefits, they still are widely used. Currently, a 20 percent federal tax credit is available for historically sensitive rehabilitation (i.e., adhering to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards). Parallel to these federal tax actions, numerous state and local governments authorized income and property tax incentives for historic preservation in the last quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>138</sup> Finally,

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<sup>134</sup> Beumont, Constance. 1996. *Smart States, Better Communities*. Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation Press.

<sup>135</sup> Cassity, Pratt. 1996. “Maintaining Community Character: How to Establish a Local Historic District.” *Preservation*. Information Series. Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation.

<sup>136</sup> Cox, Rachel S. 1997. Design Review in Historic Districts. *Preservation*. Information Series. Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation; Duerksen, Christopher J. ed. 1983. *A Handbook in Preservation Law*. Washington, D.C.: Conservation Foundation and the National Center for Preservation Law; Listokin, 1985 Ibid

<sup>137</sup> Fowler, John M. 1976. Federal Historic Preservation Law: National Historic Preservation Act, Executive Order 11693, and Other Recent Developments in Federal Law. *Wake Forest Law Review* 12(1):31.

Listokin, 1985 Ibid

<sup>138</sup> Beumont, 1996, Ibid

numerous federal transportation programs over the last two decades, namely ISTEA (1991), TEA-21C (1998) and SAFETEA-LU (2005) provided funding for transportation enhancement (TE) activities that could directly or indirectly be used for preservation purposes.

Also deserving mention in our brief historical overview are the reasons prompting American preservation. Early on, the emphasis was on preserving history, especially if that history had a patriotic connection; it was no accident that early American landmarks often had a “Washington slept here” provenance. Then the history theme expanded to include cultural- and aesthetic-furthering resources, such as architecturally distinctive buildings. More recently, the economic benefits of historic preservation have been touted, often related to the ample spending by heritage-oriented tourists. Thus, in the last two decades, at least half of the 50 states have conducted/sponsored “economic benefits of historic preservation” studies. The National Park Service, Advisory Council for Historic Preservation, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation have all been involved in this endeavor of quantifying the economic contribution of historic preservation as well. (Rutgers has conducted numerous of these state studies and has also collaborated with the NPS and the National Trust on models to quantify preservation’s economic effects.)

In sum, there is a much more heightened historic preservation sentiment in the United States today than in years past. As a consequence, there exists a much broader array of programs and mechanisms to realize preservation. These programs are justified as furthering patriotic, historical, cultural, aesthetic, and economic objectives. There has also been a broadened perspective concerning what resources merit preservation. As discussed below, there has been a shift of preservation attention from focusing only on the most significant national monuments to appreciating and preserving a much wider array of resources. (This in part, reflects the broadened reasons of why we preserve.) We shall illustrate that shift by considering changes in federal preservation legislation over time.

### **Evolving Concepts of Resources Meriting Preservation**

The first encompassing federal legislation was the Antiquities Act of 1906 (Public Law 59-209). This legislation was spurred by threats to Indian archaeological and natural history sites as American settlement moved west and south in the late nineteenth century. At first, such sites were protected through individual actions by Congress, such as federal acquisition of Casa Grande (1889) and Mesa Verde (1906). Yet a broader grant of protective authority was sought, and that was realized by the 1906 Antiquities Act which established a permit and regulatory system for the excavation of archaeological sites as a means for protecting such resources. The 1906 Antiquities Act further authorized the President to designate as national monuments those areas of the public domain containing historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and objects of historic or scientific interest. The monument designation under the Antiquities Act was limited, however, to properties and sites of significance to the nation as a whole and to sites on land owned or controlled by the federal government. In recent years, large wilderness areas, such as the 1.7 million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante region in Utah—the size of Yellowstone

National Park—have been designated and protected as national monuments. (Some have criticized the number and scale of recent monument designations).

Spurred by the economic catastrophe of the Great Depression, the 1935 Historic Sites Act broadened federal participation in historic preservation. The legislation set forth a ringing call for preservation: “It is declared that it is a national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States” (U.S.C. sec. 461). The Historic Sites Act of 1935 authorized a survey of historic and archaeological sites, buildings and objects (National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings) for the purpose of determining resources possessing exceptional value as commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States. These exceptional resources are then designated as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs).

NHLs are resources of national significance defined as

districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archaeology, technology, and culture; and that possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.<sup>139</sup>

The White House, Monticello, Vieux Carré in New Orleans, Union Station in St. Louis, Mark Twain’s house in Hartford, and about 2,500 other resources have been designated as NHLs.

Federal enactment of the truly landmark 1966 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) served as a major catalyst for the expansion of preservation activity. The act declared that “the historical and cultural foundations of the nation should be preserved” and established four means to achieve this goal: the National Register of Historic Places to inventory the nation’s cultural resources; a national Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) to provide financial aid (the fund was formally established in 1976 but has since been superseded by the federal historic tax credit); a new executive-level body, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), to advise the President and federal agencies on preservation; and a review process, Section 106, to evaluate federal actions affecting National Register properties. This section focuses on the National Register.

Section 101(a) of NHPA authorizes the creation of a National Register of Historic Places, defined by statute as a “National Register composed of districts, sites, buildings, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture.” Thus, many categories of resources are eligible, as are defined and illustrated below.

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<sup>139</sup> Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Part 65.

These criteria for the National Register evaluation encompass

the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture [that] is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and

- (a) that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- (b) that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- (c) that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (d) that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.<sup>140</sup>

Significance for National Register entry, as opposed to its predecessor federal historic rosters (e.g., National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings), encompasses qualities of regional, state, and local, not only national, importance. As noted by one observer, “The government has already been in the business of identifying the big mountains, so to speak, of our national landmarks.... The idea of the National Register was to find out what people in their individual communities put a premium on. What they say every day was important.”<sup>141</sup>

As of 2011, approximately 85,000 entries have been placed on the National Register. The entries reflect the diversity of the nation’s historical resources.

Districts include traditional urban areas, such as Georgetown in the District of Columbia, entire small towns such as Silver Plume, Colorado, and rural areas such as Green Springs, Virginia, an 8,000-acre area of eighteenth and early-nineteenth century farms. Buildings on the National Register may be grand, like The Breakers in Newport, Rhode Island, or unimposing, such as a simple farmhouse in the Midwest; they may be an excellent example of Federal-style architecture, like Liberty Hall in Frankfort, Kentucky, an early skyscraper like the Wainwright Building in St. Louis, or landmarks of modern architecture such as Frank Lloyd Wright’s Falling Water in Pennsylvania. National Register sites include important archaeological sites, such as Cahokia Mounds in Illinois, and battlefields, such as Gettysburg and Antietam. Structures range from bridges, such as the Eads Bridge over the Mississippi, to Launch Complex 39 at Cape Kennedy, site of the first manned flight to the moon. Objects include ships, such as the schooner Wawona in

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<sup>140</sup> Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Part 60, Section 60.4

<sup>141</sup> Weinberg, Steve. “Super List: the Sixteen-year old National Register of Historic Places Faces its Toughest Challenge.” *Historic Preservation*, July-August 1982: 10.



Seattle, petroglyph boulders, such as Pohaku ka Luahine in Hawaii, and even a steam locomotive, Number 152 of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad.<sup>142</sup>

Over time, there have been changes in the characteristics of the National Register listings. While most of the early entries were of national significance, this has shifted to much greater emphasis on state and especially local importance. Of the 1,929 National Register listings between 1967 and 1970, 70 percent were nationally significant and only 22 percent and 8 percent were of state and local significance, respectively. Two decades later, of the 10,536 National Register listings between 1987 and 1990, only 5 percent were nationally significant while the state and local significant listings had climbed to 24 percent and 71 percent, respectively. The emphasis of state and local significance in the National Register continues until today.

### **Route 66 in the Context of American Historic Preservation Sentiment and Perspective**

This section brings together the previously described effort to preserve Route 66 and the just-described brief narrative of the broader American historic preservation sentiment and perspective, for these two strands are related.

A century ago, even a few decades back, an argument to preserve Route 66 would have fallen on deaf ears for numerous reasons. First, American culture of an earlier day celebrated the new and now, so why bother with a highway relic of the past? It is this thinking that led to the destruction of such transportation (and other) icons as Penn Central Station in New York City. Furthermore, in the past, Route 66 would not have registered on the radar of even those more attuned to preservation because it did not fit the earlier, narrower parameters of what was deemed appropriate to preserve, namely one-of-a-kind works of art and places of defining historical moment. Had Route 66 existed in the nineteenth century, would anyone have argued for its preservation when the focus of preservation attention was on places like Independence Hall and Mount Vernon? Surely not! Few bemoaned the “decommissioning” of one of America’s first highways—the Lancaster Turnpike from Philadelphia to Lancaster, Pennsylvania—because this decommissioning was brought about by the then new, enhanced technologies of canal and railroad—the “interstates” of their day.<sup>143</sup>

Fast forward to the early twentieth century. Would Route 66 qualify as a national monument as envisioned by the 1906 Antiquities Act? For the most part, no,<sup>144</sup> as it is quite different from the Casa Grande, Mesa Verde, Grand Canyon, and Grand Tetons of the American continent.<sup>145</sup> Would Route 66 qualify as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in the context of the 1935

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<sup>142</sup> Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. *Adaptive Use: A Survey of Construction Costs. Special Issue Report*, vol. 4, no. 4., June 1976.

<sup>143</sup> A note should be made of efforts to preserve the equivalent of “19<sup>th</sup> century Route 66,” such as American emigrant wagon roads and passage of the National Trails Act of 1968.

<sup>144</sup> A Mojave Trail national Monument (originally called the Mother Road National Monument) was proposed in December 2009 for the area along Route 66 from Needles to Ludlow, California. (Route 66 News, “Senator to propose national monument along Route 66 in Mojave.” December 21, 2009. <http://rwarn17588.wordpress.com/2009/12/21/mojave-monument-route-66/> )

<sup>145</sup> National Park Status for Route 66 was considered a possibility in the 1994 Special Resource Study of the Mother Road. While National Park designation of Route 66 is technically feasible, it is not currently a preferred option.

Antiquities Act? Perhaps a small portion of the Mother Road might be designated as an NHL, but surely not major segments of the 2,400-mile highway. To date, there are no NHLs on Route 66, although the NPS Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program believes “there may be several eligible sites.”<sup>146</sup> However, the absence/paucity of NHLs on the Mother Road reflects the disconnect between the popular-culture celebration of the Mother Road and the NHL mindset.<sup>147</sup>

It is no accident that Route 66 fits most comfortably as a resource to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, which authorized the NRHP and had a broader purview of what comprised a historic resource compared with the predecessor 1906 Antiquities Act and the 1935 Historic Sites Act.

The NRHP provides a broad umbrella for designation of considerable segments of Route 66. Portions of the Mother Road that are significant from a national, state, and/or local perspective—and not all places are the same in this regard—all equally merit NRHP recognition. The NRHP encompasses various resources including “buildings,” “districts,” “objects,” “sites,” and “structures” (earlier defined), which allows for many resources on or near Route 66 to be designated—including portions of the roadway itself. The wide-ranging criteria for inclusion in the National Register (i.e. A: history, B: persons, C: artistic and cultural achievements, and D: archaeology) further permits inclusions of multiple facets of the Mother Road to be listed on the National Register, or at least be eligible for the NRHP. In short, the NRHP is a “comfortable fit” for Route 66, and NRHP designation is a good first preservation step—one that is indeed happening along the Mother Road.

While we do not have an exact current census, according to the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program,<sup>148</sup> there are an estimated 230 National Register property listings on Route 66 (about 1 for every 10 miles of highway).<sup>149</sup> The majority of the 230 are listed under the National Register’s Criterion A (history), with some listed under both Criteria A and C (artistic, cultural, and architectural achievement). Approximately 23 of the 230 listings are districts.

The following are example National Register listings on the Mother Road: Ambler’s Gas Station and the Lazy A Motel in Illinois; Wagon Wheel Motel and 66 Drive-In in Missouri; Vickery Phillips 66 (Gas) Station and Rock Café in Oklahoma; Tower (gas) Station in Texas; Blue Swallow Motel and Pig n’ Calf Lunch in New Mexico; Winslow Underpass and Ash Fork Maintenance Camp #1 in Arizona; and Bekins Storage Co. Roof Sign and Howard Motor Company Building in California. The theme of this National Register “Cook’s tour”: The popular culture characteristic of Route 66 fits well with the “big tent” historic and cultural lens of

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<sup>146</sup> Personal correspondence with Kaisa Barthuli, Program Manager of the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. November 2010.

<sup>147</sup> More broadly is a common aversion to preserving resources of the recent past as “historic.”

<sup>148</sup> Personal correspondence with Kaisa Barthuli, Program Manager of the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. November 2010.

<sup>149</sup> Approximately 15 percent of these are *not* listed for their association with Route 66 (e.g., pre-1926 buildings and bridges, Lincoln’s Tomb, Grant Park in Chicago, Harvey Houses, etc.). However, if these nominations were prepared or updated today, some would include their association with Route 66.

the National Register as opposed to the more-restrictive predecessor boundaries of monument and NHL.

There are other ways in which contemporary efforts to preserve Route 66 reflects larger themes of contemporary American historic preservation thought and practices. Contemporary preservation, for the most part, eschews earlier preservation models, such as turning historic resources into historic house museums (e.g., the Hasbrouck House approach) or emphasizing the outdoor historic “settlement” (e.g., Williamsburg, and Greenfield and Sturbridge Villages); similarly, contemporary Route 66 preservation has few of these house museum-historic settlement applications. (Recall the earlier-cited admonition by David Knudson of the National Historic Route 66 Federation against turning the Mother Road into a 2,400-mile linear Williamsburg.) Both historical and contemporary American historic preservation involved some government action (more so in more recent times), but the “heavy lifting” of preserving a resource often was done by the private-sector and advocacy groups. In the same tradition that Mount Vernon, the Hermitage, and Old South Meeting House (and countless other historic resources) were saved by private groups, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation was formed to galvanize preservation nationally, there are many private individuals (and some groups) preserving the iconic Route 66 resources in Chapter 6, and the National Historic Route 66 Federation, and more than eight state Route 66 associations, working in many ways to advocate preservation of the Mother Road.

There is also some gender parallelism. American historic preservation early on had women playing a prominent role. For instance, Mount Vernon, the Hermitage, and Old South Meeting House were all saved through the arduous efforts of Ladies Associations and the like. In more recent American preservation times, Jane Jacobs and many so-called “ladies in tennis shoes” stopped many demolition crews from leveling properties of historical significance. Route 66 also has its preservation heroines. To name just three, Lillian Redman was the heart and soul of the Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, NM. Dawn Welch literally rebuilt the Rock Café in Stroud, OK. And who brought back the Kan-O-Tex station in Galena, KS? Four Women on the Route. While both men and women have, of course, joined in preservation, both on the larger American scene as well as regarding the Mother Road, the contribution of women has been long-running and important.

It is also instructive to point out how contemporary Route 66 preservation departs in places from the larger American contemporary preservation framework. While the latter emphasized utilization of federal historic preservation (and other) tax credits, Route 66 has relatively light application of tax credit incentives, a topic discussed in Chapter 7 of this study. Further, there is a much greater emphasis of local government designation and protection on the broader American front than what is currently the case on the Mother Road. Local historic districts or locally designated individual landmarks focused on Route 66 are currently the exception rather than the rule. (Recall that local designation may restrict or delay private-sector demolition or inappropriate alteration of a local landmark, an intervention that is not the case with federal designation on the National Register.) The paucity of local designations may reflect a hesitation

to impose public regulations on private property in some of the more politically conservative areas of the Mother Road. (Route 66 encompasses many political hues—from “blue” or more politically liberal states, such as Illinois and California, to “red” or more conservative-leaning states, such as Oklahoma and Texas.) We can point to other departures of contemporary Route 66 preservation from the national preservation application as well.<sup>150</sup> While differences between preserving Route 66 and the broader American preservation scene surely exist, and one can speculate why that is the case,<sup>151</sup> the similarities in the broader historical context are much stronger.

In summary, preservation of Route 66 reflects, if not personifies, a heightened sentiment in the United States to preserve, rather than destroy, its past.

Preservation of Route 66 reflects, if not personifies, the democratization of preservation that now includes a broad array of artifacts from America’s past rather than a focus on only singularly significant monuments. The resultant democratic (with a small “d”) preservation “big tent” includes thousands of motels, restaurants, gift shops, bridge and highway segments and other elements on this 2,400-mile highway that has been in place for four-score years.

Preservation of Route 66 reflects, if not personifies, a recent turn in American preservation to tout the economic benefits of the endeavor, often related to the pump-priming effect of heritage tourism. It is no accident that the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, the National Historic Route 66 Federation, the state Route 66 associations, and others have all heralded the economic contribution of the Mother Road. (That contribution is a central theme of the current investigation.)

Finally, Route 66 reflects, if not personifies, the hard task of historic preservation in the United States. Preservation happens as a result of the toil and sweat of dedicated groups and individuals in both the private and public sectors who identify the Mother Road resources that are threatened and assiduously cobble together the human and financial capital to realize preservation. Doing this on the 2,400-mile Route 66 Corridor is daunting, but the rewards of preserving the Mother Road for future generations are greater still.

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<sup>150</sup> For example, some states have enacted “mini-4(f)” —as opposed to federal 4(f)—or other legislation whereby state or local government action (for transportation and sometimes broader purposes) involving a historic resource is precluded unless there is “no prudent or feasible” alternative. Section 4(f) affords greater procedural protection against harmful governmental action compared with Section 106-type review at the state level. Given Route 66’s obvious transportation association, state 4(f) protection would be helpful; however, there seems to be little of this in the eight Route 66 states.

<sup>151</sup> Some of the departures of contemporary Route 66 preservation from the larger national preservation application may be simply one of timing; that is, the former will more greatly resemble the latter over the course of the next few years (e.g., more local designations over time). Some of the differences, however, may be of a more fundamental nature, reflecting the particular political and personal environment of the Mother Road (e.g., public intrusion on private property rights are eschewed by many of the Route 66 states, a sentiment shared by at least some of the individuals drawn to the preservation of Route 66; see Chapter 7 for further discussion).

**Table 1.2: Route 66 Timeline: Formation, Growth, Decline and Preservation**

1925	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint Board of Interstate Highways created to form a system of numbering and marking interstate highways to replace named roads supported by booster organizations.</li> <li>Cyrus Avery, Frank Sheets, and B.H. Piepmeier work with committee of five members of Joint Board to promote Chicago-to-Los Angeles-route</li> </ul>
1926	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>November 11, 1926 - Route 66 officially commissioned. Highway runs for 2,448 miles from Chicago to Los Angeles and is considered one of the nation's principal east-west arteries.</li> <li>By end of the year only 800 miles of Route 66 were paved.</li> </ul>
1927	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The National Highway System was formed.</li> <li>February 4, 1927 - Cyrus Avery and John Woodruff form the National U.S. 66 Highway Association to promote and expedite the building of Route 66, which they dubbed the "Main Street of America."</li> <li>Phillips 66 Gasoline appropriates the highway's numbers and logo as new gas stations sprout up along its length.</li> <li>Route 66 signs are posted in Illinois.</li> </ul>
1928	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The last piece of Route 66 is connected through Missouri, between Rolla and Lebanon, the most difficult piece in the Show-Me State.</li> <li>March 4, 1928 - The "First Annual International Trans-Continental Foot Race," or the "Bunion Derby," begins. Race begins in Los Angeles, covers the length of Route 66 to Chicago, and finishes in New York.</li> </ul>
1929	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Texaco road report finds Route 66 fully paved in both Illinois and Kansas, 66% paved in Missouri, and 25% improved in Oklahoma. The 1,200-mile western stretch—with the exception of the metropolitan areas of California—is still unpaved.</li> <li>July 29, 1929 - Taking 2 ½ years to build at a cost of some \$2.5 million, the Chain of Rocks Bridge in St. Louis, Missouri, opens to traffic. It closed in 1968.</li> </ul>
1931	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January 5, 1931 - Missouri completely paves its portion of Route 66. The last mile is paved in Phelps County just east of the Pulaski County line near Arlington. The work crew tosses coins into the wet cement to celebrate the completion.</li> </ul>
1933	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Until 1933, responsibility to improve existing highways fell almost exclusively to the states. Improvements cost state agencies an estimated \$22,000 per mile.</li> <li>As part of the New Deal, the U.S. Government puts thousands of unemployed Americans to work as laborers on road gangs to pave the final stretches of Route 66.</li> </ul>
1934-1936	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dust Bowl storms in the Midwest drive hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, many of whom travel west on Route 66. An estimated 210,000 people migrated to California in search of land and work.</li> </ul>
1935	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>June 17, 1935 - Route 66 is extended from downtown Los Angeles to its current terminus at the Pacific Ocean in Santa Monica, California.</li> </ul>
1937	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>September 26, 1937 – Route 66 is officially rerouted directly west from Santa Rosa to Albuquerque, New Mexico, bypassing Santa Fe.</li> </ul>
1938	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paving is completed on the last unpaved section of Route 66 in Oldham County, Texas between Adrian and Glenrio.</li> </ul>
1939	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>John Steinbeck publishes <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>, dubbing Route 66 "...the mother road, the road of flight."</li> </ul>
1940	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> is made into a film starring Henry Fonda and John Carradine.</li> </ul>
1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>America's entry into World War II results in the cessation of automobile production, gasoline rationing, and scarcity of rubber for tires, greatly impinging civilian traffic on Route 66. Massive federal investment in the war industry, mostly in California, yields another migration, as Route 66 serves military traffic, the supplies, and equipment to the Pacific theater of war. The road deteriorates considerably as all federal funding for road improvements was diverted to the War effort.</li> </ul>
1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World War II ends, and tourism and automobile travel in America boom.</li> </ul>
1946	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jack D. Rittenhouse self-publishes <i>A Guide Book to Highway 66</i>, selling it door-to-door at truck stops, motor</li> </ul>



	<p>courts, and cafes along Route 66. It lists every community from Chicago to Los Angeles on the highway at the time, along with attractions, lodgings, and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robert (Bobby) William Troup, Jr., of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, former pianist with the Tommy Dorsey band and ex-Marine captain, composes "(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66" while driving on the Mother Road en route to Los Angeles. The song is originally released by Nat King Cole and is recorded by dozens of subsequent artists since then.</li> </ul>
1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The "family vacation" begins as a new American phenomenon in the 1950s, and Route 66 becomes a popular destination as its caverns and caves, scenic mountains, beautiful canyons, and sparkling deserts are heavily promoted by the U.S. 66 Highway Association. The competition for tourists' attention spawns trading posts, alligator farms, full-service gas stations, grills with fried chicken, "blue plate specials," and home-made pie, "mom and pop" motor courts, Native American festivals, and every other type of tourist attraction.</li> </ul>
1953	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Turner Turnpike (Interstate 44) between Tulsa and Oklahoma City opens, bypassing 100 miles of Route 66.</li> </ul>
1956	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 29, 1956 - Congress passes the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, commonly known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, authorizing and funding the Interstate Highway System.</li> </ul>
1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• October 7, 1960 - <i>Route 66</i> TV series starring Martin Milner and George Maharis begins. The show aired for 116 episodes, ending on September 18, 1964.</li> </ul>
1962	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December, 1962 - Missouri petitions American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials on behalf of all the Route 66 states, to have the interstates renumbered as I-66 from Chicago to Los Angeles. Request is refused.</li> </ul>
1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nearly all segments of Route 66 are bypassed by a modern four-lane highway.</li> </ul>
1977	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• January 17, 1977 - All of the signs come down along Route 66 in Illinois, replaced by signs for Interstate 55.</li> </ul>
1982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 23, 1982 - The city of Times Beach, Missouri, is found to be severely contaminated with dioxin.</li> </ul>
1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• October 13, 1984 - Final section of Route 66 is bypassed by Interstate 40 at Williams, Arizona. In all, the Mother Road is "replaced" by Interstates 55, 44, 40, 15 and 10.</li> </ul>
1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 66 is officially decommissioned, and all highway markers are removed.</li> </ul>
1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• February 1987 - The Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona is formed by communities along Route 66, led by Angel Delgadillo of Seligman and Jerry Richard and David Wesson, both of Kingman.</li> </ul>
1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 66 Association of Missouri, Route 66 Association of Illinois, and the Oklahoma Route 66 Association are founded.</li> <li>• Kaibab National Forest (USFS) sponsors a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Listing for Historic U.S. 66 in Arizona, including five segments of Route 66 listed on the National Register. The USFS also develops an abandoned route segment through National Forest land for people to enjoy as a hiking and interpretive trail.</li> </ul>
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Mexico Route 66 Association, Kansas Historic Route 66 Association, and California Historic Route 66 Association are founded.</li> <li>• California passes legislation designating "State Historic Highway 66," making signage permissible on the decommissioned route.</li> <li>• Governor of Missouri signs legislation that designates Old U.S. Highway 66 as a historic highway in Missouri, making signage permissible on the decommissioned route.</li> <li>• 101st Congress passes Route 66 Study Act to study methods to commemorate Route 66.</li> <li>• Michael Wallis publishes <i>Route 66: The Mother Road</i>.</li> </ul>
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas Old Route 66 Association forms.</li> </ul>
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office undertakes a historic Route 66 property survey and MPDF, with National Register nominations.</li> </ul>
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arizona Route 66 is designated an Arizona Scenic Historic Byway.</li> <li>• New Mexico Route 66 is designated a New Mexico Scenic and Historic Byway.</li> </ul>

1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Historic Route 66 Federation forms to preserve Route 66 across the country.</li> <li>• New Historic Route 66 signs are put up, documenting the different historic alignments in Illinois.</li> </ul>
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) undertakes a historic Route 66 property survey and Multiple Property Documentation Form.</li> </ul>
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illinois State Historic Preservation Office and Department of Transportation complete a historic Route 66 property survey, MPDF and Programmatic Agreement with Illinois DOT.</li> </ul>
Late 1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illinois Route 66 is designated a "State Heritage Tourism Project." Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project, Inc. develops to manage the initiative.</li> <li>• Oklahoma Route 66 designated a State Scenic Byway.</li> <li>• Bureau of Land Management designates a 42-mile section of Route 66 through their lands between Kingman and Topock as <i>Historic Route 66 Back Country Byway</i>.</li> </ul>
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 106th Congress passes the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act to preserve the cultural resources of the Route 66 corridor and to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide assistance.</li> <li>• September 11, 1999 - The new Route 66 State Park opens on what was once the town site of Times Beach, Missouri.</li> </ul>
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 66 in New Mexico is designated a National Scenic Byway.</li> </ul>
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program is established as a result of the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act.</li> </ul>
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The California Route 66 Preservation Foundation is formed to develop resources for the preservation and benefit of the Route 66 corridor in California.</li> </ul>
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame Museum is established in Pontiac, Illinois.</li> </ul>
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illinois Historic Route 66 is designated a National Scenic Byway as a result of efforts by the Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project, Inc.</li> <li>• Arizona Route 66 is designated a National Scenic Byway.</li> </ul>
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disney-Pixar releases Route 66-inspired movie <i>Cars</i>, to great acclaim.</li> </ul>
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program is reauthorized for another 10 years.</li> <li>• Oklahoma Route 66 designated a National Scenic Byway.</li> <li>• Arizona Route 66 is designated an All American Road.</li> </ul>

Timeline is adapted from the website Legends of America ([www.legendsofamerica.com/66-timeline.html](http://www.legendsofamerica.com/66-timeline.html)).

Sources:

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<http://www.nps.gov/history/rt66/>

**Table 1.3: Timeline of Federal Legislation Affecting Historic Preservation**

Year	Legislation	Activity (Partial)
1906	Antiquities Act	Designate and protect historic “monuments”; regulate excavations
1916	National Park Service (NPS) established	NPS “houses” federal preservation activities (e.g., National Register)
1933	Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)	Survey and measured drawings
1935	Historic Sites Act (HSA)	National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings (HSA is the basis of HABS, Historic American Engineering Record [HAER], and National Historic Landmarks [NHLs])
1949	Housing Act (urban renewal)	Federally subsidized demolition
	National Trust for Historic Preservation	Congressionally chartered nonprofit to facilitate preservation
1956	Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956	Federally subsidized highway construction
1960	Reservoir Salvage Act	Document archaeological resources upon dam construction
1961	Housing Act	Monies for open space and urban beautification; amended in 1966 to specifically provide grants for historic preservation
	National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)	Key federal preservation law; establishes: National Register of Historic Places; Section 106; review of federal actions threatening Register properties; Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)
1966	Dept. of Transportation Act	Section 4 (f)—transportation projects shouldn’t use historic or park resources unless there is “no feasible or prudent alternative”
	Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act	Urban renewal funds can be used for preservation
1969	National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)	Prepare environmental impact report on “major federal actions significantly affecting environment,” including historic resources
1970	General Authorities Act of 1970	Prepare annual report (section 8 report) identifying threatened NHLs
1971	Executive Order 11593	Federal agencies survey-nominate their properties to National Register
1972	Surplus Real Property Act	Allows transfer of surplus federal properties to state/local governments for public/other purposes
1974	Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act (AHPA)	Extends Reservoir Salvage Act to all federal projects; up to 1 percent of project funds can be used for archaeological recovery
	Amtrak Improvement Act	Funds for historic train stations
	Housing and Community Development Act	Consolidates categorical community development monies into block grants, such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG); CDBG and other funds can be used for preservation
1976	Mining in the National Parks Act	Requires ACHP consultation to protect NHLs threatened by surface mining
	Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act (PBCUA)	GSA should acquire space in historic properties unless such space is not feasible and prudent
	Tax Act	Allows accelerated depreciation for rehabilitation; assesses tax penalties for demolition of historic properties. (The latter were rescinded and the former was superseded by 1981 ERTA and 1986 TRA.)
1977	Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act	Guards against adverse impacts to historic resources in surface mining
1978	Executive Order 12072	Underscores policies set forth in PBCUA and directs federal agencies to give first consideration in their space needs to CBD locations
	American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA)	Guarantees access of Native Americans to sacred places

1978, 1980, 1986	Tax/Revenue Acts	Permits income and estate tax deductions for donation of conservation easements; income tax benefits for property rehabilitation
1979	Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA)	Protects archaeological resources on federal/Native American lands; permit system for archaeological excavation on federal lands; prohibits trafficking in archaeological resources (from public/private lands)
1980	NHPA Amendments	Codifies Ex. Order 11593, "grandfathers" NHLs, requires owner consent for National Register Listing, establishes certified local governments (CLGs), etc.
1981	Economic Recovery Tax Act (ERTA)	Establishes tax credits for historic preservation/commercial rehabilitation
1986	Tax Reform Act (TRA)	Reduces/limits tax credits for historic preservation/commercial rehabilitation, establishes low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC)
1987	Abandoned Shipwreck Act	Gives states titles to shipwrecks (supersedes admiralty)
1990	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	Mandates accessibility to disabled
	Native American Graves Protection (NAGP)	Consultation with Native Americans about excavation of graves; repatriation of remains in museums, etc.
1991	Intermodal Service Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)	Encourages "intermodalism"; "Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activity funds can be used for historic preservation improvements
	Legacy Resources Management Program	Dept. of Defense should enhance its cultural and natural resource stewardship
1992	NHPA Amendments	Enhances roles of Indian tribes in 106 process; penalizes "anticipatory demolition" by federal agencies; mandates greater federal agency stewardship of their historic properties, etc.
1996	ACHP revised 106 regulations	Streamlines and adds greater flexibility to 106 review
1996	Executive Order 13006	Locate federal facilities in established urban areas, with first consideration to historic properties
1996	Executive Order 13007	Avoid adversely affecting and accommodate access to Indian sacred sites
1998	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)	Encourages intermodalism and funds TE Activities (see ISTEA, 1991)
2003	Executive Order 13287	Protection, enhancement and contemporary use of historic properties owned by the Federal government
2005	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)	Encourages intermodalism and funds TE Activities (see ISTEA, 1991)
2006	Sections 1213 and 1219 of Public Law 109-280	Provides new incentives and safeguards for the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program (easements)

Sources: Rutgers University and National Trust for Historic Preservation

(<http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/legal-resources/easements/easement-reforms.html>)

## CHAPTER 2

### TALES FROM THE MOTHER ROAD: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDIES

#### INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 described the near full century saga of Route 66—from its construction, its rise to prominence, followed by its decline as a motorway, and the highway’s recent, phoenix-like return as a historic and cultural icon with national and international prominence.

One of the most prominent attractions of the Mother Road is the variety of special places and memorable people. Regarding the latter, the National Park Service notes:

One important element of Route 66 is the people who live and work along the highway. These people have faced the challenges of everyday life along the road and have enriched the experiences of travelers who stopped for gas, food, or lodging. They offer Route 66 memorabilia, the latest version of a green chili burger, or a room for the night. In addition, they may tell stories of the last Route 66 association cruise that came through or when the next one is due: they may tell what Route 66 has meant to their town or area; they may talk about Mickey Mantle, Will Rogers, Garth Brooks, or some other well-known person who came from a town along Route 66; they may recommend sights or attractions; they will probably remark on how things used to be and how they are now: and they may joke about getting your kicks on Route 66.<sup>152</sup>

You get to best know places and people through direct experiences; “to gain an understanding of Route 66 and the spirit of Route 66, there is no substitute for driving the highway.” But this is a book and not a car; even in an era of 3-D printing where one can feasibly “print a Stradivarius”<sup>153</sup> we cannot “print” a car (preferably a Corvette) to transport the reader on Route 66.

We can, however, describe 25 special places and people on the Mother Road, spanning the highway from Illinois through California. These are our “Tales from the Mother Road.”

Rutgers University has conducted 25 case studies of a variety of iconic Route 66 restaurants, hotels, gas stations and other Mother Road attractions (see Table 2.1 for a list). The cases were selected in consultation with the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program (National Park Service), an informal advisory committee of Route 66 experts, and review of Route 66 guide

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<sup>152</sup>National Park Service, *Special Resource Study: Route 66*, 1995, 14.

<sup>153</sup>“Print Me a Stradivarius,” *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper Limited, February 10, 2011.



books<sup>154</sup> and similar literature. Besides helping convey the “story” and personalities of well known Route 66 places, a major objective of this case study work was to better understand the impact of the resources studied on their host communities, especially economic effects.

Each case study comprises an approximate 10 to 15 page write-up that is consistently organized into three sections: 1) *Host Community Overview* (community location and basic population, socioeconomic and housing profile), 2) *Resource Description* (the history, significant events and principal participants of each case study), and 3) *Local Impacts* (quantitative and qualitative effects, focusing on economic consequences).

The information presented in the case studies came from a wide array of sources. For each case we began by mining for information from the census (for host community population and other statistics), the Internet, news archives, Route 66 guidebooks, and seminal Route 66 literature, such as *The Mother Road*, by Michael Wallis. Following this background of research, Rutgers reached out to the “principals” of each site (typically owners or managers). We also asked the principals for other knowledgeable contact persons /entities, often local businesses. This evoked a chain of calls as one contact would recommend another.

Another resource tapped by Rutgers were visitor logbooks as they were kept by the case study sites. These were typically a voluntary sign-in book made available by a site’s entrance/exit counter, cashier etc. where visitors, as they so elected, would write their names, state/country of origin and sometimes comments. Rutgers secured six such logbooks<sup>155</sup> (not all of our sites had these or would make them available) and then coded each of the line-by-line name entries in order to tabulate the number of entries and to ascertain where visitors came from.<sup>156</sup>

In sum, the Rutgers case studies tapped background sources, (e.g., census, the Internet, and books), conducted a chain of interviews, and tapped on-site information such as logbooks.

## **CASE STUDY DETAIL, PROFILE, SETTING, AND IMPACT**

- The 25 cases are briefly described in Table I.1. They purposely include examples in all eight Route 66 states, with the largest clusters found in Illinois and Oklahoma (see Table 2.1). This state emphasis was coincidental rather than deliberate—it reflects the sites

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<sup>154</sup>Examples included Jerry McClanahan, *EZ 66 Guide for Travelers* (Lake Arrowhead, CA: National Historic Route 66 Federation, 2005); Drew Knowles, *Route 66 Adventure Handbook* (Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2006); Sara Benson, *Lonely Planet Road Trip Route 66* (Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2003); and various state-by-state guides, such as Jim Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66* (Arcadia, OK: Ghost Town Press, 2001); Richard and Sherry Mangum, *Route 66 Across Arizona* (Flagstaff, AZ: Hexagon Press, 2001), and John Weiss, *Traveling the New, Historic Route 66 of Illinois* (Wilmington, IL: Historic 66, 2007). As always, Michael Wallis’s *Route 66: The Mother Road* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1990) was helpful as well in identifying potential sites for the kiosks.

<sup>155</sup>For the Ariston Café, Shea’s Station, Joliet Historical Museum, Round Barn, and the Route 66 Museums in both Eureka, MO and Clinton, OK.

<sup>156</sup>While a useful resource, we recognize its limitations. Not all of the sites have visitor logbooks, and where logbooks are found, not all visitors sign in (with the exception of the Route 66 Museum in Clinton, Oklahoma, where all visitors are asked to sign the guest book). Additionally, there may be self-selection bias among those that do record their visit. (Visitors from afar are more likely to sign-in as compared with “locals.”)

recommended by the advisory panel and others. The cases are listed in geographic order by state, from Illinois westward to California (mirroring the direction taken by many Route 66 travelers) and within each state, the sites are organized alphabetically. Thus, the first case listed is the Palms Grill, since it is found in Illinois in the town of Atlanta, the second case is Joliet, Illinois and so on (see Table 2.1).

- The sites are in communities of tremendously varying size (see Table 2.1), from a local population of about 300 to a city of approximately 450,000 (reflecting the diversity of community sizes along the Mother Road). The median population of the case study sites is a modest 8,800, reflecting the propensity of iconic Route 66 places to be located in small-town America. While the economic situation of each of the 25 case study communities varies considerably, as a group, the case study communities confront economic challenge (as revealed by the poverty rate and other statistics; see Table 2.1).
- The 25 case studies included a variety of resources. As detailed in Table 2.2, these include restaurants, hotel/motels, gas stations, museums (Route 66-themed), other places of art and entertainment (murals in Pontiac, Illinois and Cuba, Missouri as well as car shows in Springfield, Oklahoma and San Bernardino, California). As is also evident from Table 2.2, some of the cases involve adaptive reuse (see changes in “historical use” versus “current use”).
- About half of the 25 sites are either on the National Register of Historic Places—the federal roster of landmarks—or are eligible for the Register. The sites on or eligible for the Register include, as examples, the Palms Grill, Ariston Café, Kan-O-Tex Gas Station, Round Barn, Rock Café, Blue Swallow Motel, and La Posada. (See Table 2.1 for full specification.) Of the 25 cases, three are government-owned (Joliet Historical Museum, Route 66 Park, and Route 66 Museum) and the remainder are private non-profit or private for profit entities, with the private for-profit group predominating.
- As noted in the introduction to this monograph, the case studies comprise compelling tales, often involving stalwart Route 66 personalities who met and overcame adversity. The case studies also frequently offered economic uplift to their host communities—places that surely needed economic development.
- The direct investment incurred by the case sties, typically for building rehabilitation but including other purposes (e.g. equipment and fixtures), ranged considerably. While some investments were in the multi-million dollar level (e.g. about \$8 million in the Coleman Theater, \$3 million in La Posada, and \$1 million at the Clinton Route 66 Museum) and there were others of significant scale (e.g., POPS in Arcadia, Oklahoma), most of the

investments cited by the cases<sup>157</sup> were at a much more modest dollar level, in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range.

- The case studies became needed places of employment. As an example, Kelly’s Brew Pub reported employment at 80 to 90 personnel, La Posada indentified 50 core staff, the Ariston Café reported about 25 jobs and the Rock Café about 15. Our impression is that the employment levels at most of the case study sites are at the Ariston / Rock Cafe level or less.
- While some of the figures cited above appear modest, they are quite important contextually—in the place they are occurring. The case study sites are overwhelmingly in relatively small (in population) towns and many have been buffeted by economic challenges of different stripes. All shared the shock of Route 66 no longer being the main street through their downtowns and as case studies depict, many were buffeted by other economic calamities (e.g. Cuba, Missouri lost its shoe factories and Galena, Kansas had to deal with the closure of its mines). As such, the building investment by the case study sites and their employment rolls and tax payments, while seemingly modest at times on their face, are contextually quite significant. For instance, the Stroud, Oklahoma (2,800 population) city manager, Steve Gilbert, valued the contribution made by the jobs at the Rock Café: “They are all local and valuable jobs, and as with any restaurant, young people have an opportunity to work.” The \$60,000 in sales tax revenue from POPS first year of operation may not be a big item in a large city; however, in Arcadia, Oklahoma (278 population) it is a windfall. The \$60,000 doubled Arcadia’s sales tax revenue, a bounty that according to Arcadia mayor, Marilyn Murel, was a “wonderful surprise” and capitalized a summer youth program and other valuable services.
- While we have far from complete data on visitation to the sties, and there are issues with some of the sources tapped (e.g., locals often don’t sign logbooks) the information secured points to often consequential tourism—and the basis for site rehabilitation, employment and other investment noted above.
- The available case study site visitation/patronage data is shown in Table 2.3. The figures for four of the sites are near or above six figures. These are the Springfield, Illinois Mother Road (Car) Festival (about 80,000 visitors over one weekend), La Posada (100,000 visitors to hotel and Winslow), POPS (about 365,000 customers annually), and the Rendezvous Festival (about 500,000 visitors over one weekend). Visitation/patronage levels in other case studies where data were available included some in the five-figure annual visitation/patronage level (e.g., Joliet, Illinois Historical Museum, ± 21,000 and Clinton, Oklahoma Route 66 Museum, ±35,000) and some sites at the 2,000 to 3,000 visitor mark (Shea’s Station, 1,560 and Round Barn, 2,589)

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<sup>157</sup> In numerous cases no investment dollar figures were given because of confidentiality.

- To lend perspective, Table 2.3 compares the above-cited visitation/patronage statistics to the scale of the local population. Clearly evident is the frequent considerable scale of the former to the latter, a ratio reflecting the considerable contextual importance of Route 66 tourism to host communities. Recall the median population of the case study communities is only 800, so the thousands of visitors or patrons to these Route 66 communities is extremely significant.
- From where are people coming to the case study sites? While we have only a partial answer from such sources as the visitor logbooks the short answer is to our posed query in that people are generally traveling “from afar”—often from states other than that containing the case study site and from international locations as well. The median figures are: 33% of the visitors to the case study sites residing in the state where the resource is located, 47% coming from other states (for a median combined total of 80% coming from the United States) and a median 20% coming from abroad.
- Statements from many of the principals interviewed at the case study sites (derived from their in-house data) comport with the observation that a relatively large share of visitors come “from afar.” Visitors to the Joliet (Illinois) Historical Museum are said to come from 34 states and 24 foreign countries. For the Pontiac (Illinois) Murals, visitors trek from 43 states and 21 foreign countries. This last distribution is similar to the origins to the Miami (OK) Coleman Theater as visitors to the Coleman are said to come from 44 states and 23 foreign countries. Kan-O-Tex Gas Station in Galena, Kansas, a town of 3,300 persons in southeastern Kansas, attracted tourists from “as far away as South Africa and other countries around the globe.”
- From an economic development perspective, visitors coming “from afar” have the biggest economic stimulus because new spending is being imported, (rather than just affecting the distribution of in-state spending that would be captured anyway). Since the Route 66 case study sites seem inclined to be attracting visitors “from afar” (albeit our data is far from complete), then the Route 66-based tourism is especially important for economic development.
- The economic importance off the Route 66 case study visitors and their spending was commonly alluded to in the case study interviews. Some illustrative examples follow:

Each year, between the hotel and restaurant, about 100,000 tourists—who very likely would not have visited if La Posada was not present—are brought into Winslow. It “is a story of a small town, literally forgotten with the realignment of Route 66, which is now revitalized through tourism and historic preservation.”

–La Posada owner, Allan Affeldt

Route 66 travelers have a huge impact on the town. We get a lot of bus tours [and] we have a lot of tourism especially because of the Ariston Café. As far as tourists are concerned, without Route 66 we wouldn't have much to offer....People know of the Ariston Café....Without Route 66, the town would be devastated economically.

-Carol Burke, tourism director for Litchfield, Illinois

“The Rock Café is a stopping point for travelers and when the travelers stop at the café for a meal, the chances are increased significantly that they will spend some time in the community.”

-Steve Gilbert, Stroud City Manager, on the Rock Café (Stroud, Oklahoma)

“Local merchants lucky enough to be situated downtown [say] they wait all year for [Route 66] Rendezvous.”

-From the *San Bernardino County Sun*, on the Route 66 Rendezvous car show

“The community's 19 murals helped increase tourism by 99% during June 2009 compared with the previous summer.” The downtown vacancy rate is down from 14.5% to 2%.

-Ellie Alexander, Tourism Director, Pontiac, Illinois

- The Route 66 case study sites, with their attendant investment, tourism draw and other beneficial effects, may very well enhance a community's perspective about itself. The upbeat “can do” attitude in the face of adversity by many of the case study principals adds to that positive enhancement as well. We caught glimpses of the above-described effect in some of our interviews. The reopening of the Palms Grill in Atlanta, Illinois was said to “bring pride back to the downtown.” In reaction to the phoenix-like return of the Meadow Gold Sign, one Tulsa, Oklahoma resident exclaimed: “I'm overjoyed! It is a dream come true. Its more than a sign, it lives in people's hearts and memories.” After the painting of the Cuba murals, a businessman declared: “Murals on the walls signal that people give a damn. Towns with murals tend to be cleaner, quality of life is higher and there is a real sense of history and community. It just says it would be a great place to live.” In a similar vein, Pontiac's mayor Howard Russel summed up his city's mural project by stating “The people here work together to make our town better and make visitors feel welcome. The city of Pontiac has found its place on the map of the world.”
- In short, our 25 “Tales from the Mother Road” are uplifting stories of frequently both personal as well as community redemption.



**Table 2.1****List of Route 66 Case Studies' Location, Population, and Poverty Rate by State**

Case Studies	City	State	Community Population (2000)	Community Poverty Rate (2000)
Palms Grill <sup>a,c</sup>	Atlanta	Illinois	1,649	4.4%
Joliet Historical Museum	Joliet	Illinois	106,221	10.8%
Ariston Café <sup>a,c</sup>	Litchfield	Illinois	6,815	24.1%
Pontiac Murals	Pontiac	Illinois	11,864	11.7%
Shea's Gas Station <sup>b</sup>	Springfield	Illinois	114,454	22.3%
Mother Road Festival	Springfield	Illinois	114,454	22.3%
Cuba Murals	Cuba	Missouri	3,230	20.1%
Route 66 State Park <sup>a,c,e</sup>	Eureka	Missouri	7,675	2.2%
Kan-O-Tex Station <sup>b</sup>	Galena	Kansas	3,287	23.6%
POPS (restaurant)	Arcadia	Oklahoma	278	29.8%
Round Barn <sup>a,c</sup>	Arcadia	Oklahoma	278	29.8%
Route 66 Museum	Clinton	Oklahoma	8,833	18.9%
Coleman Theater <sup>a</sup>	Miami	Oklahoma	13,704	2.3%
Rock Café <sup>a,c</sup>	Stroud	Oklahoma	2,758	23.8%
Vickery Station <sup>a,c,d</sup>	Tulsa	Oklahoma	393,049	14.1%
Meadow Gold Sign <sup>c</sup>	Tulsa	Oklahoma	393,049	14.1%
Conoco Gas Station <sup>a,e</sup>	Shamrock	Texas	2,029	21.4%
Kelly's Brew Pub <sup>a,d</sup>	Albuquerque	New Mexico	448,607	15.2%
Blue Swallow Motel <sup>a,c</sup>	Tucumcari	New Mexico	5,989	24.8%
Cool Springs Camp	Kingman	Arizona	20,069	11.6%
La Posada Hotel <sup>a,d,e</sup>	Winslow	Arizona	9,520	20.9%
Rendezvous (Car-Route) Festival	San Bernardino	California	185,401	24.1%
Main Street	Numerous	Numerous	NA	NA
Folk Art	Numerous	Numerous	NA	NA

<sup>a</sup> On National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)

<sup>b</sup> Potentially eligible for NRHP

<sup>c</sup> Utilized cost share grant from the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program of the National Park Service

<sup>d</sup> Utilized federal historic tax credit

<sup>e</sup> Utilized federal TEAgrant funds

NA = Not Applicable

**Table 2.2**  
**List of Route 66 Case Studies Group by Function**  
 (Both historical use and current use are included where relevant)

<b>Restaurants</b>	<b>Gas Stations and Convenience Stores</b>
Ariston Café	Cool Springs Camp
Kelly's Brew Pub	Shea's Gas Station (historical use)
POPS	Vickery Station
Rock Café	Conoco Station (historical use)
	Kan-O-Tex
<b>Arts and Entertainment</b>	<b>Museums and Parks</b>
Folk Art on Route 66	Joliet Historical Museum
Rendezvous Festival (San Bernardino)	Route 66 Museum (Clinton)
Mother Road Festival (Springfield)	Route 66 State Park (Eureka)
Pontiac Murals	Shea's gas Station (current use)
Coleman Theater	Conoco Station (current use)
Cuba Murals	
<b>Hotels and Motels</b>	<b>Other Attractions</b>
Blue Swallow Motel	Meadow Gold Sign
Conoco Station/U-Drop Inn	Round Barn
La Posada Hotel	

**Table 2.3**  
**Visitation/Patronage to Case Study Sites and Contextual impact (as % of Local Population)**

<b>Case Study</b>	<b>Host Community</b>		<b>Visitation/Patronage</b>	
	<i>Name</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Total Visitors</i>	<i>% of population</i>
Palms Grill	Atlanta, IL	1,649	1,508 <sup>a</sup>	91%
Joliet Historical Museum	Joliet, IL	106,221	21,000	20%
Ariston Café	Litchfield, IL	6,815	1,507 <sup>a</sup>	22%
Pontiac Murals	Pontiac, IL	11,864	± 24,000	202%
Shea's Gas Station	Springfield, IL	114,454	669 <sup>a</sup>	0.5%
Mothers Road Festival	Springfield, IL	114,454	± 80,000	70%
Cuba Murals	Cuba, MO	3,230	± 10,000	310%
Route 66 State Park	Eureka, MO	7,675	17,400	227%
POPS	Arcadia, OK	278	± 365,000	13,129%
Round Barn	Arcadia, OK	278	2,589 <sup>a</sup>	931%
Route 66 Museum	Clinton, OK	8,833	35,000	396%
La Posada	Winslow, AZ	9,520	± 100,000	1081%
Rendezvous Festival	San Bernardino, CA	185,401	± 500,000	269%

<sup>a</sup> Log book entries only, which likely undercount total visitors substantially.

## PALMS GRILL OF ATLANTA, ILLINOIS

### HOST COMMUNITY: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Atlanta (formerly Xenia) is a small town (population 1,635 in 2009) in central Illinois. It is located in Logan County. It is 19 miles from Bloomington, IL (pop. 64,808) and is within 150 miles of both St. Louis, MO (348,189) and Chicago (pop. 2,898,016).



The earliest form of this small Route 66 town was not actually Atlanta, but Newcastle; a largely German settler town situated a mile away from one of the first railroads to be built in the state of Illinois. It was in 1854, when Newcastle relocated to be closer to the railway, that the town was renamed and Atlanta was officially formed. Census records show that Atlanta's population was 1,932 in 1880 and 1,698 in 1890.

The move proved beneficial for Atlanta, not only becoming a stop along the railroad, but eventually a stop along Route 66. Though Atlanta has experienced economic fluctuations, its population has remained stable over the period of a century; as of 2000, Atlanta had a population of 1,649, a minor 2% increase from the population in 1990. Atlanta's population in 2009 was estimated to be 1,635, a less than 1% decrease from the 2000 population.

Today, Atlanta has a tourism industry largely based around its connections to Route 66. More recently, Atlanta's historic downtown has become home to the Route 66 State Park and Tourism Center, which directs visitors to Route 66 attractions in the Atlanta area and provides background information on these attractions. Further indication of Atlanta's commitment to local tourism are the large murals that can be found in the many facades within the town, many of which are restored vintage ("ghost") images from the early twentieth century.

Another notable local attraction from the Route 66 era is the "hot dog man," (colloquially referred to as the Bunyon statue) a 19-foot-high fiberglass statue, which, like the town of Atlanta itself, was relocated from its original location. The statue was actually donated to the town of

Atlanta as a gift from the family that for 40 years owned the Bunyon Hot dog stand in Cicero, Illinois.

Atlanta has preserved several historic buildings from its past. Among these are the J.H. Hawes grain elevator on 2<sup>nd</sup> street, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and is currently maintained by the Atlanta Historical Preservation Council. There are also several historic landmarks in Atlanta tied to Abraham Lincoln, such as the Carriage Shed, a home which Lincoln stayed in as a guest while he was passing through the community, and Turner’s Grove, where Abraham Lincoln attended a July 4, 1859 celebration. The local museum itself also has historic merit, as it is located in an old, horse drawn carriage stable.

The below table summarizes Atlanta’s demographic, socioeconomic, and housing profile in relation to Illinois statewide characteristics as of the 2000 census. To illustrate, compared to the state as a whole, Atlanta has relatively few minorities and Hispanics, a lower share of college graduates and an older housing stock.

	Atlanta, IL	Illinois Statewide	Local difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	38.1	34.7	3.4 years
% 65+ years	14.8	12.1	2.7
% White	99.8	75.1	24.7
% Hispanic	0.4	12.3	-11.9
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$43,194	\$46,590	-3396
% with college degree	19.7	32.1	-12.4
Most common occupation	sales and office	management/ professional	NA
Most common industry	manufacturing	education, health & social services	NA
% poverty	4.4	10.7	-6.3
% unemployed	2.3	3.9	-1.6
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	66.2	67.3	-1.1
% single-unit detached homes	81.3	57.9	23.4
Decade most homes built	1939 or earlier	1940-1959	older homes

Source: 2000 Census

## **THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: PALMS GRILL CAFE**

It has connected travelers with other towns as a former greyhound bus stop. It has connected locals with each other as a beloved community gathering place. And now, as a restored establishment, the small café with the big neon sign in the heart of Atlanta serves to connect the present with the past. Walk through the door with the vintage round window and feel like a classic Route 66 wanderer as you recant your travels with sociable locals or friendly waitresses who call you “hon” as they serve you a piece of homemade pie. Though their Blue Plate specials change daily, the Palms Grill continues to serve up comfort, born out of nostalgia for a favorite eatery in Los Angeles, and reborn from nostalgia for what the café has meant to those who grew up in Atlanta or traveled along Route 66.

The Palms Grill was originally the enterprise of Atlanta native James Robert Adams. Born in Eminence Township, just outside of Atlanta, Adams served in World War 1 before moving to Los Angeles, California for a few years. In California, Adams worked as a realtor, spending his spare time as he traveled back and forth between Los Angeles and his hometown to hone his cultural side, being an appreciator of music and theatre. A creative individual at heart, he would eventually turn toward the entrepreneurial draw of the restaurant business. During the 1930s, he arrived in Atlanta, Illinois to open a small eatery. Adams purchased the Downey Building, an Atlanta landmark constructed in 1837, for the restaurant because of its location by Route 66. A tribute to his fascination with Los Angeles, California, Adams named the restaurant Palms Grill Café and modeled its interior after his favorite restaurant in Los Angeles. The Palms Grill Café in Atlanta officially opened in August 1934.

An advertisement in the *Atlanta Argus*, the local newspaper at that time, enthusiastically heralded the restaurant’s opening. The ad read: “The Palms Grill, East Side Square-On U.S. Route 66-Atlanta, Now Open for Business. Home Cooking, Quick Service, Courteous Treatment. Plate Lunch 25 cents. Regular Dinners and Short Orders Also Served. We Solicit Your Patronage.”

With his primary residency in California, Adams arranged for a friend, Robert Thompson, to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Atlanta, Illinois restaurant. As the owner and manager of the Eminence Coal and Grain Company, just five miles west of Atlanta, Thompson was well suited for a managerial role at Palms Grill. In his role, he was responsible for hiring and overseeing the managers who ran the Palms Grill.

Despite the distance, Adams still kept a close eye on his restaurant. According to a National Park Service interview with Thompson in August of 2003, Adams typically traveled from California to Atlanta to meet the new hires. After usually finding fault with the person, he would request Thompson to fire him or her. Every time a manager was fired, Adams would urge Thompson to count the inventory of spoons and forks in the restaurant, out of fear that the fired personnel had taken something.



Between 1934 and 1960, the *Atlanta Argus* advertised the following individuals as Palms Grill Café managers:

- 1934—Mrs. Maude Miller
- 1937—Mr. and Mrs. Verald Mooney (Wonda)
- 1939—Mrs. Florence Sullivan
- 1941—Mrs. S. P. Grange
- 1941—Mr. Delmer Causic
- 1949—Mr. and Mrs. Frank McBrayer (Mae)
- 1960—Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Hall (Ethel)

The Palms Grill Café, as with so many other establishments in Atlanta, relied on the constant Route 66 traffic for business. The restaurant was frequented by traveling businessmen, tourists, and even a few marquee celebrities. For example, within the first week of operation, in August 1934, Max Baer, the presiding heavyweight boxing champion of the world, stopped by with a small entourage. Although his visit was brief, Baer left a memorable impact as one of many famous celebrities to have dined at the restaurant.

During its heyday, Palms Grill Café bustled with a constant stream of customers. It was “the place locals and travelers along the Mother Road gravitated to for five-cent coffee, home-cooked meals, and waitresses with a bit of sass.”<sup>158</sup> The modest place had five tables, two counters and a dance hall in the rear of the building to seat its entire clientele. In the 1940s, Palms Grill Café became a Greyhound bus stop and business profited even more. When someone wanted to catch a ride, he or she would light the 11-foot-long neon sign outside of the restaurant, signaling Greyhound buses that a passenger wanted to board<sup>159</sup>. Additionally, town locals often visited the Palms Grill to use the Greyhound bus service for short shopping trips or other errands.

A popular gathering spot in Atlanta, the Palms Grill Café hit the spot for locals craving a home-cooked meal. It also served as a source of employment for several citizens and teenagers in town and was the center of Atlanta’s social life. In fact, the Palms Grill Café routinely held events for the community, promoting special nights for dancing and bingo. For instance, in January 1941, the Palms Grill advertised “BINGO-Every Tuesday Night at 8 p.m.” in the *Atlanta Argus*.

The opening of Interstate 55 gradually shifted business away from Atlanta and from Palms Grill. By the late 1960s, the Palms Grill Café had lost much of its customer base, and in 1968 the restaurant finally closed after 34 years of service. After its closure, the Downey Building remained empty for 20 years, and its future appeared uncertain.

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<sup>158</sup>[http://www.illinois-adventures.com/blog/Route\\_66\\_Stop:\\_The\\_Palms\\_Grill.html](http://www.illinois-adventures.com/blog/Route_66_Stop:_The_Palms_Grill.html)

<sup>159</sup> Hoekstra, D. (2009, July 12). With Palms open, dig in - route 66 dining stop in Atlanta, Illinois, reborn after 41-year break, feeds nostalgia . *The Chicago Sun-Times*, A32.

During its vacancy, the building's owner, John Hawkins, remodeled its interior and used it as living and working space. A small apartment was created in front and an engine repair workshop was constructed in the back portion of the building. After Hawkins' death, his family donated the building to the Atlanta Public Library and Museum.

Years went by before, finally, restoration plans to bring back Palms Grill Café began in 2004<sup>160</sup>. The man behind the project was Bill Thomas, chairman of the Illinois Route 66 National Scenic Byway program and treasurer of the Atlanta Public Library<sup>161</sup>. Thomas, a local Atlanta resident, spearheaded the project with an ambitious fundraising effort. Over the course of four years, he raised \$500,000 in grants and private donations. The Atlanta Public Library, Thomas stated in a 2010 interview with Rutgers University, raised an additional \$100,000 for the project. In sum, Atlanta residents, the Illinois Bureau of Tourism and the National Park Service's Route 66 Corridor Preservation Project<sup>162</sup> all contributed funding for the project.

With sufficient funds in place, the two-year renovation began, resulting in the official reopening of the Palms Grill Café on April 28, 2009<sup>163</sup>. The restaurant was completely restored in the same portion of the Downey building as when it first opened.

"We restored that part of the building from top to bottom," said Thomas. "There was nothing from the original café left and all we had were two old photographs that we were able to use sort of as guide for this restoration project," he admitted.

Those photo "guides" helped to bring back the café the way it once was. Today, there are several traditional-style items, including a 1947 refrigeration unit, a 1939 rotary phone, an old pie display case, and a vintage milkshake maker<sup>164</sup>. There is also an antique cash register, but it is merely for show; behind it is a modern model for actual transactions.

The revived restaurant maintains much of the original's charm. The namesake palm trees in the restaurant remain, and additional space has been built to continue the dancing and bingo programs that characterized the old Palms Grill Café<sup>165</sup>. Additionally, the home-cooked treats that distinguished the old Palms Grill are still made to this day. Homemade pies and the signature Blue Plate Special, meat and two or three side dishes on a divided blue plate, are popular menu items<sup>166</sup>. Other menu items include the time-honored fare of small-town cafes, such as hot dogs, fries and hamburgers. In addition to the restaurant, the Atlanta Museum, which

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid

<sup>161</sup> Holliday, B. (2009, May 20). Old-timey palms grill reopens Atlanta cafe restored to 1930s glory days . *The Pantagraph*, C1.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, Hoekstra

<sup>163</sup> Koettters, M. (2009, March 13). New palms grill aims for the old feel atlanta cafe restored to its roots circa 1930s . *The Pantagraph*, C1.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, Koettters

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, Koettters

<sup>166</sup> Holliday, B. (2009, May 20). Old-timey palms grill reopens Atlanta cafe restored to 1930s glory days . *The Pantagraph*, C1.

housed the library, moved into another portion of the Downey building that same year. Together, both the museum and café are successful operations today.



The Palms Grill Café during the restoration process

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*



The Palms Grill Café completely restored

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*





Outside of the Palms Grill Café

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*



A view of the Palms Grill Café from the dining room to the door, after the restoration project was complete

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

## LOCAL IMPACTS

According to Thomas, Palms Grill Café has generated seven new jobs for Atlanta residents, ranging from busboys to cooks, since reopening in 2009. Additionally, its imprint on the historic route and close proximity to the town museum, have contributed to the constant influx of customers. Thomas also shared that besides local patrons, Route 66 tourist travelers routinely patronize the Palms Grill Café.

“The grill serves the same purpose now as it did back in 1934. The Palms Grill was built on Route 66 to serve the local people and Route 66 travelers. The grill in operation now is serving a lot of tourists in addition to local people,” said Thomas.

He added: “On a weekly basis, there are several hundred visitors. 60 percent of the visitors are Route 66 travelers, and 40 percent are locals.”

Detailed records of the Atlanta Museum visitations (from 2006 to 2010) reveal that most visitors are out of state and a selective few visit from foreign countries. These records, Thomas said, provide a modest glimpse of restaurant visitors as well.

“We can’t really track café visitors but we recently started booking bus tours to the café and museum and we’ve been doing great. Those that come visit the museum, typically visit the café and vice versa.”

Museum visitation records show that 1,508 total visitors visited the Atlanta Museum in 2009—the last full year of operation (the 2009 visitation percentage was considerably higher than in previous years—about 300 to 400 percent.) Of the 1,508 total visitors in 2009, 1,366 (91%) came from the United States and 142 visitors (10%) came from abroad). Of the 1,366 domestic visitors in 2009, the majority (72%) lived in Illinois and the remaining 37% were from out of state. So the phoenix-like return of the Palms Grill Café is not only good for the palate, but additionally draws more visitors and tourists to Atlanta, some coming from distant shores.



## JOLIET AREA HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF JOLIET, ILLINOIS

### HOST COMMUNITY: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Joliet is a mid-sized city in northwestern Illinois. It is located in Will County and Kendall County, and is 40 miles southwest of Chicago (pop. 2,853,114). It is Illinois' fastest-growing city, and one of the fastest-growing cities in the United States.



Joliet (originally called “Juliet”) was laid out in 1834. Joliet found a great deal of early economic success because of its advantageous location to the Illinois and Michigan Canal, which opened in 1848. The area was dense with residential and industrial development in the form of mills and factories. Joliet also had a thriving quarrying industry, and had the nickname of “Stone City” for its rich limestone deposits. Joliet experienced tremendous growth during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; between 1880 and 1890, Joliet grew from 16,149 to 27,438, a 41% increase.

Highways later replaced the Illinois Michigan Canal, which closed in 1933. Joliet became the largest town near Chicago through which Route 66 ran, carrying many travelers in and out of the community. As Joliet’s factories and mills (primarily steel) became obsolete over the next few decades, however, the city began to experience serious economic hardship, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, when the unemployment rate was as high as 25%

Joliet has recently found a second wave in its economic growth through tourism, much of which can be attributed to its strategy to build upon its Route 66 heritage. The downtown is experiencing a renaissance, with promoters focusing on its historic and other aesthetic architectural assets. Among its many historic and cultural resources are theatres, museums, and historic architecture. These improvements have attracted new residents to Joliet; as of 2000 Joliet had a population of 106,221; a 28% increase from the city’s population in 1990. As of 2008, the population was estimated to be 146,125, a 37% increase from 2000.

A snapshot of Joliet (and for context, the state of Illinois) from the 2006-2008 American Community Survey is found below. For instance, Joliet is doing better on many economic characteristics relative to the statewide average (e.g., higher income and lower poverty).

	Joliet, IL	Illinois Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	30	35.9	-5.9
% 65+ years	7.7	15.1	-7.4
% White	70.5	72.8	-2.3
% Hispanic	26.4	14.9	11.5
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$60,934	\$55,935	4,999
% with college degree	27.5	36.8	9.3
Most common occupation	sales and office	management/ professional	
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	
% poverty	10.8	15.1	4.3
% unemployed	5.2	4.7	-0.5
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	75	69.8	-5.2
% single-unit detached homes	67.9	58.6	-9.3
Decade most homes built	2000-2010	1939 or earlier	newer homes

Source: 2006-2008 American Community Survey

## **THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: THE JOLIET AREA HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

A cultural attraction in Joliet's city center, The Joliet Area Historical Museum, serves as a tangible medium to the people and things that defined the city of Joliet in times past. The museum stands at the intersection of Cass and Ottawa streets and is the remodeled site of the former Ottawa Street Methodist Church.

Its transition from an old downtown church into what is now a \$9.4 million modern museum is a direct result of the efforts of the people of Joliet—efforts that convey both their commitment to local history and their collaborative spirit.

The Joliet Area Historical Society established its first museum in 1984 as a small storefront lodging on Ottawa and Clinton streets before moving the museum on East Van Buren Street in succeeding years. As its collection of historic artifacts grew, it became apparent that a larger quarter was needed.

In 1996, a new home for the museum became available when Joliet's city council purchased the newly vacant Ottawa Street Methodist Church Building for \$200,000. The members of the Methodist congregation had recently discontinued worship there because of its union with another area church, Grace United Methodist Church. City council members bought the site with the intent of preserving the local landmark and transforming it into a museum.

To spearhead the onset stages of this renovation project, a blue-ribbon steering committee was created. In time, The Joliet Area Historical Museum Inc. was formed and its board of directors was appointed to oversee and lead the transformation of the church to the museum. Architects and exhibit designers Ueland, Junker, McCauley and Nicholson of Philadelphia were contracted to formulate designing aspects of the plans.

With conceptual plans underway, the city council reserved \$5 million for the museum as part of a more than \$55 million economic development package in 2000. Eventually, additional city funds were provided towards the project and the city pledged its continued support to the museum with a contribution of about \$200,000 annually to cover its operating expenses.

Plans were brought to fruition when the museum eventually opened its doors on October 8, 2002. The new museum encompassed some structural additions to the old church building that included a welcome center that links the museum and the Joliet Junior College Renaissance Center.

Today, the museum, which became a 501(c) non-profit organization in 1999, is a state-of-the-art center with a range of enlightening displays (both temporary and permanent) that showcase most of the 15,000 artifacts collected by the Joliet Area Historical Society since its inception in 1980.

Exhibits depict varied facets of Joliet’s history, such as the lifestyle of a typical middle- class Joliet family from decades past. Other displays include an account of state prisons that have operated in Joliet since 1858, and an exhibit on the pivotal role transportation has had on the development of Joliet. The three-story building also houses a special events auditorium, educational spaces that include a resource area for families and school groups, a research room for scholars and community members, storage areas and a room for the Joliet Area Historical Society.



The museum sign located at the corner of Route 66 and the Lincoln Highway (Cass at Ottawa Streets, Joliet).

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

Two highlights amid its bevy of displays though, are the Route 66 Experience and the two-level exhibit, The Soaring Achievements of John Houbolt. The Soaring Achievements of John Houbolt exhibit is a space-themed permanent exhibit that pays tribute to Joliet native, John Houbolt, and recounts the historic tale of the 1969 Apollo 11 moon landing. Houbolt, who was once described by *Time* magazine as the “Apollo’s unsung hero,” was one of the NASA engineers involved in helping Americans return safely to Earth following their landing on the Moon. The exhibit illuminates aspects of Houbolt life and the critical role he played in the successful lunar landing. There are displays of Houbolt’s childhood drawings and models included in the exhibit, which suggest his overwhelming passion for flight at an early age. The exhibit also includes a detailed and interpretive array of panels and photos trace the almost perfect return flight of Apollo 11 during that 1969 moon landing.

In similar fashion, the Route 66 Experience is another exhibit that offers guests an interactive experience of Joliet’s past. Since its opening in 2007, the Route 66 Experience has become a focal point for many museum visitors.

### **Route 66 Experience Exhibit**

Through state of Illinois grant funding, The Joliet City Center Partnership, in cooperation with the Joliet Visitors Bureau and City of Joliet, the museum opened the permanent exhibit, “The Route 66 Experience” in June, 2007. Guest Curator Elizabeth Carlson devised a new look for the Route 66 Welcome Center at the Museum, adding hands-on and interactive components to the Route 66-themed space.

Entering the “Route 66 Experience,” visitors are welcomed by a large “Joliet Kicks on Route 66” carpet. As they proceed into the exhibit, they are greeted by a tall signpost whose signs point to all corners of the globe, connecting those places to Joliet and Route 66. Many international travelers use this signpost as a photo opportunity.



Replicas of the Blues Brothers

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

Since the movie “The Blues Brothers” was released in 1980, Joliet has become known as the home of “Joliet Jake” Blues. In the exhibit, visitors may pose for photographs with life-sized replicas of Jake and Elwood Blues. Guests are delighted with a small scale panorama of all eight states of the Mother Road, featuring depictions of many Route 66 icons, encircling the hall’s perimeter. Along this mural, or “road on the ceiling,” a model vintage Ford Mustang travels from Santa Monica Pier to Chicago and back, while showcasing various icons along the route. Nostalgic features such as Burma-Shave signs are also depicted on the mural. By observing the





Inside the Joliet Area Historical Museum

Source: U.S. National Park Service

car traveling along the track, visitors can see the entire eight-state route of the Mother Road, mapped out in miniature.

Visitors may park their travel-weary bottoms in seats that mimic vintage cars to experience an interactive drive-in movie. Visitors to the drive-in movie feature may choose from an eight-state menu of “Coming Attractions” to view tourist attractions that they can expect to see while traveling Route 66 (the movie was originally produced by CBS for Route 66’s 75th anniversary). This drive-in movie feature is an excellent nostalgic experience for younger visitors who may have never visited a real drive-in movie theater.

Route 66 visitors may also sign the “Green Guestbook,” a computer-based, online guest login and interactive experience. Visitors begin by pressing a touch screen to identify where they are from on a world map, and then they may leave comments or view other visitors’ entries. By using this Guestbook sign-in, the museum has been able to determine that in 2009, visitors to the Route 66 Experience had come from 29 different countries and 34 individual states.

Visitors can chart their course along the Main Street of America on an oversized, eight-state mural painted by Jerry McClanahan, noted Route 66 artist and historian. In another area of the exhibit hall, guests can re-live a trip to a Route 66 diner as they sit in a reproduction car and pretend to order food from a carhop mannequin. A mural depicts a circa-1955 drive-in restaurant, with the menu provided on an authentic lighted drive-in menu board on a post. Parked in front of the mural is a 1953 Chevy Corvette replica (80 percent scale), whose car radio has seven buttons marked with the decades during which Route 66 was in commission. When the visitor pushes a button, he or she hears a decade-specific one to four minute radio broadcast that includes a news report, a commercial, and a popular song.



The Route 66 diner is another interactive element of the Route 66 Experience exhibit

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*



The motel room featured in the Route 66 exhibit

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

Within the exhibit, guests can also visit a motel room vignette, modeled after a room that would have been common along Route 66 in motor court motels during the 1950s. The “room” contains a scaled-down bed, a nightstand complete with a Gideon Bible in its drawer, a telephone, and a vintage, working 1950s television set. The telephone is rigged as the remote control for the television. By picking up the phone to order “room service,” visitors can order clips from the actual 1950s Route 66 television show (which aired on CBS). The clips feature guest stars such as Robert Redford, Ron Howard, and Joan Crawford, as well as guest performances by jazz musicians including Ethyl Waters and Coleman Hawkins. Foreign visitors especially like the television show, and American visitors are amused to see famous actors before they became famous.

The final attraction in the Route 66 Experience is an e-mail postcard kiosk with a changeable backdrop that lets visitors e-mail their photo with a message to friends and family and allows them print an actual postcard to mail from the museum’s Gift Shop.

## LOCAL IMPACTS

Joliet Area Historical Museum's prime downtown location incidentally contributes greatly to its annual number of visitors. Since it opened nearly eight years ago, more than 106,000 people have visited the museum— about 13,000 annually. Visitation has grown over time. For the fiscal year of 2008-09 there have been 21,052 total visitors to the museum; 2,281 of which about 11% were Route 66 visitors. Preliminary numbers for this fiscal year (2009-2010) show a growth in visitors as in the five month period from July 1, 2009 through November 30, 2009, as there have been 13,820 museum visitors. Of those 13,820 visitors, 2,189 (16%) are Route 66 tourists. Over time, Route 66 visitors to the Joliet Area Historical Museum have come from a broader array of foreign countries and places across the United States.

International Route 66 visitors travel from around the globe, while domestic Route 66 visitors come from across the United States. In 2009 for instance, foreign travelers to the Route 66 exhibition in the Joliet museum came from 29 different countries, including some trekking from Australia, Brazil, China, New Zealand and Poland. Domestic visitors to the Route 66 exhibit came from 34 states across the United States. One of the most famous Route 66 travelers to the Joliet Area Historical Museum was Sir Paul McCartney, of the Beatles. His August 2008 travels to California down Route 66 garnered much media attention.

Some Joliet local businesses wax ecstatic about the museum's beneficial impact and Route 66 tourism more generally. In one gift shop, Route 66 merchandise accounted for two thirds of all sales. A restaurant owner opined,

Route 66 in the Joliet area and the Joliet Area Historical Museum are fun and innovative tourist attractions in Joliet. Being a restaurant owner of the Department Restaurant and Liquor Lounge in downtown Joliet, I have had the pleasure of speaking with guests who have just visited the museum and stopped in for a bite to eat afterwards. They always have positive comments to share about the various exhibits at the museum. It is also great fun to hear their stories and to find out how far they have traveled along Route 66. On a more personal note, I have taken my children to see exhibits at the museum and they have learned so much from these visits. After museum visits, we have lunch at the restaurant and then walk to Gigi's for candy or ice cream. It is a perfect day spent with the family.

## THE ARISTON CAFÉ OF LITCHFIELD, ILLINOIS

### HOST COMMUNITY: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Litchfield is a town in southwestern Illinois. It is located in Montgomery County, and is on the northern edge of the Greater St. Louis Metro-East Area. It is 42 miles south of Springfield, IL (pop. 114,454) and 50 miles northeast of St. Louis, MO (pop. 348,189).



Litchfield was established in 1854, around the same time that the Terre Haute, Alton, and St. Louis railroad (incorporated in 1851) was built. Litchfield eventually would have six railroads and became a regional shipping center. Though originally a mining town, Litchfield switched to oil and gas when the two were discovered in the 1880s. Litchfield's population gradually increased toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from 4,320 in 1880 to 5,811 in 1890.

Litchfield has two original alignments of Route 66, dating back to the 1930s. The stretch of Route 66 going from Litchfield to Mount Oliver, Illinois, was recently added to the National Register of Historic Places. Besides the Ariston Café, which is profiled here, several other original businesses from Litchfield's Route 66 era remain today, such as the Sky View Drive in, built in 1950.

Litchfield's population has experienced modest growth over the last century. As of 2000, Litchfield had a population of 6,815; a 1% decrease from the city's population in 1990. As of 2008, the population was estimated to be 6,647, a 3.5% decrease from the 2000 population. Today, Litchfield is a regional shopping and manufacturing center. Very little has changed in the natural landscape, and Route 66 visitors can still appreciate the same landscape that original Mother Road travelers enjoyed in the 1930s.

Litchfield's 2000 census profile is summarized below relative to the statewide Illinois profile. For instance, Litchfield has a much higher white population and far fewer Hispanics. Although the community's median income is only slightly below the Illinois average income, Litchfield's population is less formally educated and more often holds blue-collar jobs.

	Atlanta, IL	Illinois Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	38.1	34.7	3.4 years
% 65+ years	14.8	12.1	2.7
% White	99.8	75.1	24.7
% Hispanic	0.4	12.3	-11.9
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$43,194	\$46,590	-3396
% with college degree	19.7	32.1	-12.4
Most common occupation	sales and office	management/ professional	
Most common industry	manufacturing	education, health & social services	
% poverty	4.4	10.7	-6.3
% unemployed	2.3	3.9	-1.6
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	66.2	67.3	-1.1
% single-unit detached homes	81.3	57.9	23.4
Decade most homes built	1939 or earlier	1940-1959	older homes

Source: U.S. Census, 2000



## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: THE ARISTON CAFÉ

In the 1920s, Pete Adam ran a candy kitchen in Carlinville a small town in Montgomery County, IL. By the middle of the decade, when cars were in fashion and families wanted to eat out, the people of Carlinville, offering encouragement and financial support, prevailed upon Adam to open a restaurant.

In 1924, Adam strategically placed the first Ariston Café at the center of Carlinville on Route 4, which would eventually become part of the original Route 66. Seven years later, in 1931, the Illinois Highway Department realigned Route 66 to bypass Carlinville. In 1929, Adam and fellow owner Tom Cokinos relocated the Café to align with the Mother Road. They moved their operation to a leased building in Litchfield, about 20 miles from Carlinville. The Ariston Café that stands today (across the street from the 1929 leased location) is a property that Adam and Tom purchased and built in 1935 for just \$3,625.36.



Source : U.S. National Park Service

The Ariston sits at the intersection of Route 66 and Route 16, the city’s primary east-west corridor. Adam billed it as the most up-to-date restaurant between St. Louis and Chicago. The Ariston’s utilitarian commercial form cannot be placed within a particular architectural style, but the interior contains elements of the Art Deco style of the 1930s.<sup>167</sup> The original building measured 40’ by 60’, with fifteen tables and six booths inside to accommodate up to 100 guests. Its distinctive curved parapet front wall and intricate brickwork façade were a backdrop to two gas pumps and a blazing neon sign that beckoned highway travelers. There were 10 full-time staff members and a modern refrigeration system.<sup>168</sup>

A year after opening the Ariston, the State of Illinois declared Route 66 the busiest road in the state. By 1940 the congestion on the highway became unbearable and the state replaced the two lane highway with a four lane bypass that ran behind the Ariston. So Pete put up another neon sign on the back of the Ariston to match the one out front to keep customers coming to the restaurant.

“The main focus was on travelers on Route 66 in the early years,” says Nick Adam, son of Pete Adam and current owner of the Ariston (along with other family members), “not tourists as much

<sup>167</sup> “Ariston Café, Litchfield, Illinois.” 2006. National Park Service. [www.nps.gov/nr/travel/route66/ariston\\_cafe\\_litchfield.html](http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/route66/ariston_cafe_litchfield.html)

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*

as people traveling from one point to another. Especially after the [Great] Depression and the War, people were seeking new ventures.”

Times have certainly changed for the Ariston Café.

Route 66 isn't the main highway anymore. In the 1960s and 70s, Route 55 gradually replaced Old 66 as the primary thoroughfare from Chicago to St. Louis. Most other restaurants and businesses around the Ariston have relocated or went under. The gas pumps out front are gone and a banquet hall was built as an addition to the restaurant. The days of catering to the traveling masses are over. But don't think for a moment that Nick Adam is worried about business. Route 66 road warriors believe that the Ariston “will always be the best the old road has to offer in Illinois.”<sup>169</sup>

The Ariston was and remains a family owned and operated business; today involving Pete Adam's son Nick Adam, his wife Demi, and Paul (the oldest son of Nick and Demi). They've created a wide ranging menu (which currently features appetizers, salads, western favorites, southern traditions, “south of the border” fare, seafood, traditional and croissant sandwiches, desserts, and wine and beer) and a neon sign in the back that reads “Remember where good food is served” playfully boasts their skillful cooking. The warm familial atmosphere is accentuated with homey touches like a mounted marlin, and a palpable camaraderie between the diners and staff. The staff strives to recapture the old allure of the Ariston Café to continue to draw in customers from near and far. The following comment from a patron reflects some attractions:

Walking into the Ariston is like stepping back into the 1940's. I was so impressed by the Marlin on the back wall. I haven't seen one of those in decades, and it brought back memories of my childhood. I remember that as a young tyke; it seems every restaurant had one of those. If I recall correctly, the barbershop my mom and dad used to take me to had one also!<sup>170</sup>

Another comment:

The USA and its quintessential Route 66 is a place that some may find great history and pleasure at the same time. I was recently in Illinois for a week and ended up in Litchfield. Being the adventurous foodie that I am I look for the places off the beaten path to eat and places that come highly recommended from the locals.

I was driving along the short stretch of Route 66 and found the Ariston Café. The look outside is what drew me in [.] Something just told me you have to stop here and try the food. My son was with me [;] he is the perfect companion for these kinds of things and he at three said that it looked like a good place to go. When we walked in we felt like we were at home... the people there were as kind as could be.

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<sup>169</sup> Michael Wallis. 1991 *Route 66 : The Mother Road*. St. Martin's Press, 2001, 43.

<sup>170</sup> <http://www.theroadwanderer.net/66Illinois/litchfield.htm>

We sat at a booth in the back and the table I remember fondly had a white linen cloth on it and had napkins folded so fancy. The waitress took our drink order and offered us some of the best selections on the menu. I chose the corned beef sandwich with a sweet tea to drink and my son chose the chicken with mashed potatoes and apple sauce.

When our food arrived to our table you could just tell that it was homemade and love an care went into every bit of it. I bit into my sandwich and clearly this was the best food I had ever tasted [;] it automatically gave me comfort and that is (sic) a lot of what I seek with a meal. My son's food quickly disappeared from his plate and he seemed utterly satisfied [;] as any parent knows [,] getting your child to sit down and eat a whole meal can sometimes be a challenge. I asked him if he thought that his food was good and he said that it was (sic) "greeeeaaaaaat!!!!!"<sup>171</sup>

For connoisseurs of Americana and seekers of "the open road", the Ariston is a gem of the distinct character and family owned attention that the mention of Route 66 often invokes. Here is why, according to the National Park Service:

The [Ariston Café]...retains its character defining aspects of a restaurant including its original booths, counter, dining area, and kitchen. [It] is one of only a few restaurants associated with Route 66 in Illinois that remains in operation along the original roadbed. ...[It] has remained in operation since 1935, due to its quality of food and service, its location...and its dedicated local and regional clientele.

The Ariston Café remains as a rare survivor of the type of family-owned restaurants that flourished along Route 66 in Illinois during the mid-twentieth century. It is a well-known landmark and direct link to the history of Route 66.<sup>172</sup>

The Café was featured prominently in Michael Wallis' 1990 book, *Route 66: The Mother Road* (Wallis called the Ariston "The best the old road has to offer") and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006, and received a Cost-Share Grant from the National park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program in 2007. The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual National Route 66 Festival was held in Litchfield in the summer of 2008. No doubt the Ariston was a big reason why. After his restaurant was recognized as an historic site, Nick Adam observed "The National Register is a great tribute to my parents... It is something for a Greek Immigrant to establish a restaurant that would survive all those years."

## LOCAL IMPACTS

The Ariston Café has more than survived; it has expanded and currently is a flourishing business. When it opened in 1935, it seated 110 people and an expansion in 1976 added 90 plus seats to a

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<sup>171</sup>H., Terra. 21 September 2008. "The Ariston Café Route 66 Litchfield Illinois: "The best food I have ever Eaten."  
<http://www.associatedcontent.com>

<sup>172</sup> NPS, pg. 9, 2006

current café capacity of around 200 people. According to Nick Adams, in an average week (6 days) around 2,500 people will visit the café, with a spike in patronage on the weekends.

The Ariston Café's visitors often come far and wide, though locals frequent the restaurant as well. Also of note is a considerable international interest in the Ariston. For example, a 1990's German coffee table book on Route 66 prominently featured the Ariston within its Illinois section.

The Ariston Café keeps a guest book, which reflects the aforementioned international fascination with the restaurant. Rutgers University examined records from this guestbook for the period between July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006 through September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007— a time span of approximately fourteen months. Over this time period, 1,507 individuals entered their names and places of origin in the guestbook. Of the total guests, 1,049 (70%) were from the United States and 458 (30%) were from abroad. While the largest number (355) of the United States visitors were from Illinois, entries were found from those coming from both nearby states (e.g. Missouri: 134, Indiana: 44, Michigan: 22, etc.) as well as from more distant states (e.g. California: 52, Florida: 26, New York: 22, etc.). The guestbook entries from foreign countries (458, or 30%) attest to the fact that the Ariston literally draws patrons from across the globe. The number of foreign-based entries included 51 from Italy, 46 from England, 45 from Finland, and about 30-35 each from Denmark, France, Germany, and Norway.

The numbers of both domestic and international patrons suggest that the modest Ariston Café receives a significant amount of business. As reported by Nicholas Adam to Rutgers University, the Ariston's gross sales in 2009 were substantial and it paid considerable sales and other taxes. Furthermore, the café currently employs about 26 full and part-time staff members. These are significant economic contributions to a community the size of Litchfield, and are especially welcome given the economic challenges facing Litchfield (e.g. heightened poverty and unemployment rates).

The local economic contribution of the Ariston Café in particular, and Route 66 tourism more generally, is reflected in the following comments of Litchfield's tourism director, Carol Burke, in an exchange with Rutgers University:

Route 66 travelers have a huge impact on the town. We get a lot of bus tours. We have a lot of tourism especially because of the Ariston Café, which is open year round, and the SkyView Drive-in, which is open seasonally in the fall. I don't have exact numbers, but the owner of the Ariston Café keeps a register, and I know he has a lot of international travelers that will sign the book. There has definitely been increased revenue and employments in the town because of Route 66. Many people come specifically for Route 66 and the Ariston Café. The Ariston Café has been here since 1924, and has a big impact on the town.

As far as tourists are concerned, without Route 66 we wouldn't have much to offer. People know the Ariston Café. Without Route 66, the town would be devastated economically.

## THE MURALS OF PONTIAC, ILLINOIS

### HOST COMMUNITY: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Pontiac is a town located in north central Illinois, 33 miles northeast of Bloomington (pop. 64,808) and 83 miles southwest of Chicago (pop. 2,896,016), and is the county seat of Livingston County.



Pontiac was laid out in 1837, but faced tremendous adversity in establishing itself as the county seat. Its population was slow to grow, and the promises the original founders had made as contingencies for making Pontiac the county seat had not come to fruition, especially the completion of a court house building. At one point, residents from surrounding towns were trying to move the county seat elsewhere. Yet, the railroad saved Pontiac's day as the community became a stop along the Chicago and Alton line, and the sudden access to regional traffic provided Pontiac a huge boost in its population and economy.

Pontiac was officially incorporated in 1856. The courthouse was eventually finished in 1875, built by architect J.C. Cochrane, known for his work on Springfield's capitol building. The Pontiac neo-classical structure was put on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Route 4 (going through Pontiac) was built in 1922, the first paved road between Chicago and Saint Louis. The road's designation was changed in 1925 and became part of Route 66. Today, Pontiac is home to the Route 66 Hall of Fame museum. Two notable recent additions include the mobile home and iconic VW bus of the famed Route 66 artist Bob Waldmire.

Pontiac's population has seen minimal fluctuations in recent decades. As of 2000, Pontiac's population was 11,864, a 4% increase from 1990. In 2009, the population was estimated to be 11,261, a 6% decrease from 2000.



For a snapshot summary and context, we present demographic and socioeconomic characteristics for both Pontiac and the state of Illinois below. While Pontiac generally tracks the statewide average profile, there are some differences, such as a lower Pontiac median household income.

	Pontiac, IL	Illinois Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	37.3	35.5	1.8
% 65+ years	9.9	13.2	-3.3
% White	85.8	80.3	5.5
% Hispanic	5.8	5.2	0.6
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$45,830	\$55,222	-\$10,608
% with college degree	27.5	27.4	0.1
Most common occupation	Service occupations	management/ professional	--
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	--
% poverty	14.8	12.4	2.4
% unemployed	6.8	8.0	-1.2
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	71.7	68.4	3.3
% single-unit detached homes	81.8	71.4	10.4
Decade most homes built	1939 or earlier	1939 or earlier	--

Source: 2005- 2009 American Community Survey

## **THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: MURALS OF PONTIAC, ILLINOIS**

In 2007, the year Cuba, MO, unveiled its mural program, Jane Diaz of Diaz Sign Art in Pontiac, IL, commissioned a mural of the Route 66 shield on the back of the Route 66 Museum. She believes that when the city saw the impact the Route 66 shield had on drawing people into the city, that was the “the turning point. After that, it kind of snowballed ... and it kept on growing.”

The story began when the Route 66 Museum needed a new home. When word got out in 2003 that the Dixie Truck Stop, home of the Route 66 Association of Illinois Hall of Fame, had been sold, Betty Estes, Pontiac’s Tourism Director approached the Mayor and City Administrator about finding a new, permanent home for the Route 66 Association of Illinois. By early 2004, an old, abandoned fire station was rehabilitated into both a museum and visitor’s center for the Association. The Route 66 Museum and Visitor’s Center opened in June 2004 and within the first six months more than 6,000 visitors from 43 states and 21 countries passed through its doors. Because of the museum, the city of Pontiac won the Governor’s Home Town Award in 2005, noted Marilyn Pritchard, museum curator. “The museum has been a great asset,” said Pritchard. “Route 66 is the instigator.”



*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

## *History*

Pontiac Redeveloping Our United Downtown or P.R.O.U. D. was formed in 1988 to address the 14.5 percent vacancy rate in the downtown business district. P.R.O.U.D. adopted the Main Street Four-Point Approach, an economic development tool to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort by leveraging local assets – from cultural or architectural heritage to local enterprises and community pride. With P.R.O.U.D. providing opportunities and constant support, the people of Pontiac have taken ownership of their town. Heritage tourism, built upon Pontiac’s proximity to Route 66 now defines the downtown, and this small, rural town of 12,000 has grown into a popular tourist attraction. Coupled with the creation of a museum complex devoted to Route 66 memorabilia and a commitment to reinvestment and preservation of historic building stock, Pontiac now boasts a downtown vacancy rate of less than 2 percent and more than 2000 international and national visitors per month.

But, like Cuba, MO, success did not come without a struggle. Since 2008 alone, Pontiac has had to overcome many obstacles, including major flooding of the Vermilion River, which borders downtown, and the threatened closing of the Pontiac Correctional Center, which employs more than 600 people. Then-Governor Rod Blagojevich announced his plan to close the Pontiac prison in May 2008 and open the Thomson Correctional Facility, which had remained idle since its completion in 2001. A bipartisan legislative commission unanimously opposed the plan, saying that closing the prison would eliminate 569 jobs and “devastate” the local economy. Moreover, it would do nothing to address prison overcrowding in the Illinois correctional system.<sup>173</sup> Pontiac prison workers sued Blagojevich and the yearlong fight galvanized the community. Blagojevich was later removed from office removed on corruption charges and his successor, Pat Quinn, cancelled Pontiac closure plans.

The recession, however, did take a toll on two of Pontiac’s largest employers. United Fixtures/Interlake, a storage unit and shelving manufacturing plant, declared bankruptcy and was set to close in 2009. 260 people were laid off before the company was bought by Mecalux, a Spanish firm, which began rehiring last spring. Caterpillar’s Pontiac plant laid off 200 full-time employees last year as well as 98 supplemental employees. The plant stopped rolling layoffs and began rehiring in November 2009.

But Pontiac had been investing in making itself a heritage tourist attraction and their strategy paid off.

### **Walldog Festival: June 2009**

“We are very fortunate that we had the Diaz family, because without them the festival wouldn’t have happened,” said Pontiac Tourism Director, Ellie Alexander. The Diaz family of Diaz Sign Art came up with the idea for the festival in 2007. After the success of the original Route 66 mural on the back of the Route 66 Museum in downtown Pontiac, Bill Diaz said he knew people

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<sup>173</sup>According to an August 2009 state audit, the state’s corrections department manages about 44,000 prisoners in a system designed for 33,000.

wanted more. The city formed a commission for mural topics and locations, and the Diaz family chose some of the best mural project leaders in the country to design them. Each mural tells a story of something that has occurred in Pontiac dating back to more than 150 years when Abraham Lincoln stopped there. Livingston County Zoning Administrator Charles Schopp said, “I think these murals will serve as almost a history book of the community.” Alderman Donovan Gardner added, “This is more than just a one-weekend event. This is the key to our long-range tourism plan.”

“The Walldogs drew everybody close together. The Walldog people liked the town,” said Bill Diaz. “The people of this community also liked the Walldogs and showed it with their enthusiasm for the project and intermingling with the artists.” “We were surprised, in this economy, to see 139 artists coming to Pontiac, from all across the country, as well as Canada, Mexico, and Germany.” He added: “The Walldogs was a marriage between artists and community.”

Walldogs are a group of sign and mural artists from all over the globe. The tradition of painting wall advertisements dates back long before today. Evidence of this can be seen in “ghost signs” in cities of all sizes. The mural painters of old were called Walldogs. Today’s Walldogs have also adopted many other traditions to capture a sense of nostalgia and historic significance. The Walldog movement began in Allerton, Iowa, in the summer of 1993 and continues to grow. The Walldog website<sup>174</sup> serves as a clearinghouse for cities and towns interested in developing a mural program. Typically, Walldogs paint their murals in the context of a festival that brings the commissioning community together. Each mural has an approximate price tag, depending on the number of artists involved and the difficulty of the project. The money goes towards feeding and housing all the registered artists, material costs and other event expenses. In addition, each project leader is paid a minimum of \$1200 for their time and effort in designing the project while the event host is paid a minimum of \$8000. The Pontiac festival, including 18 murals, cost \$50,000.

There is more than just artistic benefit to the city from this project, added Diaz. Considerable maintenance was done to the buildings in preparation for the murals. “Buildings are being painted and tuck-pointed,” he said. Experts in brick and mortar provided valuable maintenance on these buildings, he noted, which enhance the town and gave it the facelift it deserved. “It will distinguish Pontiac from all other towns.”

Pontiac’s “Chief City Runs with the Dogs” Festival took place over four days in June 2009. The Walldogs, including over 150 artists, were painting at 18 different sites while other events, including Heritage Days, Hang Loose, the Mighty Vermilion Duck Race, and the Pontiac Woman’s Club Garden Walk, took place simultaneously. Other festival activities included live bands, a beer garden, an auction, a pie-baking contest and kids’ games. Visitors were estimated in the thousands. Pontiac tourism director, Ellie Alexander, said:

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<sup>174</sup>[www.walldogs.com](http://www.walldogs.com)

I keep thinking to myself how wonderful it is that we have something left from our wonderful weekend event. Most of the time after a community hosts a festival, they are left with only tons of garbage and waste. Instead we are left with all these murals that people from here and tourists can enjoy for years to come...I was amazed to see crowds gather at so many of the mural sites quietly looking at what had been accomplished and then taking photos of what they were seeing.”

Pontiac’s City Administrator Robert Karls added that he was especially pleased with the feedback he received from the Walldogs themselves.

Every artist I talked to said that Pontiac had the best organization and best reception of any event they have ever participated in. I heard over and over from the artists that we set a new measuring stick by which all other Walldogs’ events will be judged.

### Pontiac’s New Murals



Route 66 is probably the most well-known road in this country, if not the world. Created in 1926, along with the rest of the federal highway system, it existed until 1985 when it was decommissioned, and replaced by interstate highways. In the time between, it earned a home for itself in the hearts and memories of people across the country. The road passed through eight states: Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Illinois was the first state to have its section completely hard surfaced. It was also the first state to replace the old road with the new Interstate. Pontiac is home to the Route 66 Association of Illinois' Hall of Fame and Museum. The mural was designed by Tom and Kathy Durham of St. Louis Missouri.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*





A Coca-Cola mural was once located in the exact location as this new mural. The World War II corsairs featured in this mural were the type of planes flown by the artist's father. Along with the Coca-Cola depiction, the artist wanted to include a tribute to the nearby Livingston County War Museum and all of the veterans who have served the United States in the military forces. The artist for this mural was Sonny Franks, who lives near Atlanta, Georgia.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*



From 1920 to 1930, the Palace of Sweets was the candy dreamland of both children and adults. This locally famous candy store and soda fountain, located at the corner of Madison and Mill, offered everything from penny candy to malts and sundaes. Whether to celebrate a birthday, a graduation, a first date, or some other special event, a trip to the Palace provided everyone with a delicious treat and a lasting memory. One of the unique features of the sweet shop was the beautiful stained glass mosaic sign proclaiming its name located on both the Madison and Mill street facades. That artifact is still visible today under an awning which protects it. The mural was designed by Cam Bortz of Pawcatuck, CT.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

## **LOCAL IMPACTS**

Pontiac Tourism Director Ellie Alexander reports that the community's 19 murals helped to increase tourism 99 percent during June 2009 compared with the previous summer. Alexander said that the increase from 904 tourists to 1,798 tourists reflects the larger crowds during the Walldog mural painting weekend. The increase in visitors during the month of July was up 74 percent (1,815 in 2009 compared to 1,044 in 2008). Bob Sear of the Walldog Committee, in his report to the City Council, noted that hotel occupancy has been setting records since the painting of the murals. Although no numbers were cited, City Administrator Robert Karls did note that attendance at the Route 66 Museum was up 40 percent and Pontiac Tourism Director Ellie Alexander has been recruiting additional Jolly Trolley drivers because the number of visitors has increased so much since the completion of the murals. "Serving as volunteer chauffeurs and part-time ambassadors, Pontiac's corps of Trolley drivers is an important part of attracting tourists," said Alexander. The tour company Travelsphere brought a bus tour through Pontiac in April 2010. "Since their visit with us in April, Travelsphere has made Pontiac a 'must-see' stop for two additional coaches on their national Route 66 trip," said Alexander. The murals have also attracted press coverage in travel magazines from as far away as China and the Czech Republic.

The success of the mural festival in 2009 also inspired Pontiac to create the International Walldog Mural and Sign Art Museum, devoted to the history of murals and sign art, including those along Route 66. Since opening on May 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, the museum has had visitors from 15 states and different countries, all of whom were travelling along Route 66. "Just recently, we had some people from Australia and India come in," reports Kristen Mehlberg, manager of the museum.

New highway signs were also installed along Interstate 55 in November 2009. According to Ellie Alexander, Pontiac's Tourism Director, the hope is that "the new highway signs will draw people from the interstate into our city. It is estimated that nearly 20,000 cars will pass by Pontiac each day on I-55. If you can get just a small number of travelers to come into Pontiac to visit one of our museums, or shop in the historic downtown district, there will be a noticeable increase in our local economy." The signs were designed and fabricated by Diaz Sign Art of Pontiac and installed by state workers – representing another successful public-private collaboration between Pontiac and the State.

Pontiac's efforts have not gone unnoticed. Pontiac was named one of ten semi-finalists in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Great American Main Street Awards in 2010. The trust cited the great change and renewed sense of pride in the Pontiac community since PROUD began implementing the Main Street Four-Point Approach 1988. PROUD and the Main Street Four-Point Approach are credited with creating 488 new jobs, 235 new businesses, and 118 building rehabilitations while shrinking the downtown vacancy rate from 14.5% to 2%. Public investment of \$8.5 million was more than matched by \$12 million of private investment. But, as the Trust noted, "success is not just defined by statistics or even

tangible transformations. Success is developing a sense of pride and passion so strong that significant economic and social advancements are inevitable.”

Indeed, PROUD lists heritage tourism and the creation of a museum complex as achievements on par with their low vacancy rate. According to PROUD: “We have turned our unique, historic attractions into a distinct and successful method to promote and attract both residents and visitors to our downtown.” PROUD also attributes the success of the Museum Complex to Pontiac’s proximity to Route 66 and boasts more than 2,000 visitors per month.

In September 2009, Pontiac also created a Business Hall of Fame to honor local businesses that have contributed to Pontiac’s success. Lori Fairfield of PROUD said these businesses provided employment, tax revenue for the city, support for charitable activities, and helped to keep Pontiac a great place to live. Some of the recently painted Walldog murals memorialized certain former Pontiac businesses such as Allen Candy Co., Scatterday’s and the Palace of Sweets. “It is hoped that the new Business Hall of Fame will provide a means to further recognize former businesses in the downtown area which, because of their presence or involvement in the community, contributed substantially to Pontiac’s commercial legacy,” said Fairfield.

Although the economic climate is still tough, the success of the murals has persuaded city officials to continue to invest in economic development rather than simply freeze spending. Less than two months after the Walldog Festival, Alderman Bill Kallas told city council that “the money spent for the murals has already paid for itself.” Citing increased traffic and growing numbers of people walking around with cameras, Kallas added: “My point is that we still have to continue spending money... to generate economic development and traffic... We can’t just say, ‘These times are tough, we’re not going to spend any money.’”

Pontiac’s Mayor Russell sums up Pontiac’s achievement: “The people here work together to make our town better and make visitors feel welcome. The city of Pontiac has found its place on the map of the world.”

## **SHEA'S GAS STATION AND THE MOTHER ROAD FESTIVAL AT SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS**

### **HOST COMMUNITY: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE**

Springfield is a mid-sized city in central Illinois. It is the state capital and the county seat of Sangamon County. It is 85 miles from St. Louis, Missouri (pop. 348,189).



Springfield was originally settled in 1818 under the name Calhoun, after the Illinois senator John Calhoun and renamed Springfield in 1832 after Calhoun's local status diminished. In 1837, Springfield became Illinois' third state capital when it was moved from Vandalia, and has been so ever since. Springfield's population in 1890 was 4,703, up from 3,481 in 1880.

Much of Springfield's identity is derived from the life of former President Abraham Lincoln. He resided in Springfield for many years of his life, first arriving as a law student in 1831, and then returning during the early years of his political life starting in 1837. Numerous tourist sites related to Lincoln are in Springfield, including the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, the restored Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices, and the Lincoln family pew at the First Presbyterian Church. Many historic sites from Lincoln's era have been preserved as tourist attractions, such as the Old State Capital building, which in 1960 received major renovations to return the building to the way it appeared during Lincoln's life.

The Mother Road in Springfield is regarded by some as the birthplace of Route 66 (especially local boosters!). It was in Springfield on April 30, 1926, that officials first proposed the name of the new Chicago-to-Los Angeles highway. Many establishments catering to Route 66 travelers appeared along the Springfield stretch in the Route's heyday, as it was the only major road accessible to Springfield. According to the Illinois Route 66 Association, some of the establishments still in existence today are the Mel-O-Cream Donuts, Joe Roger's Chili, and the drive-thru window (Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop).

As of 2000, Springfield had a population of 111,454, an 6% increase from the city's population in 1990. As of 2010, the population was estimated to be 116,250, a 4% increase from 2000. In

more recent years, modern leisure and recreational activities have located in Springfield, including a water park, a zoo, and the Springfield Mall. Additionally, the city has put forth efforts to improve its downtown business district, which has resulted in a number of new locations for shopping, dining, and tourism.

A snapshot of Springfield relative to the state of Illinois as of the 2006-2008 American Community Survey is contained below. Evident are such characteristics as a relatively higher share of whites and much lower Hispanic presence in Springfield.

	Joliet, IL	Illinois Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	37	34.7	2.3
% 65+ years	14.1	11	3.1
% White	80.3	63.8	16.5
% Hispanic	1.9	38.1	-36.2
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$46,818	\$61,154	-14,336
% with college degree	39.8	37	2.8
Most common occupation	management/ professional	management/ professional	
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	
% poverty	22.3	12.9	9.4
% unemployed	15.5	4.4	11.1
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	86.8	57.8	29
% single-unit detached homes	62.9	58.1	4.8
Decade most homes built	1939 or earlier	1970-1979	older homes

Source: 2006-2008 American Community Survey



## BROADER PERSPECTIVE ON THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: SERVICE/GAS STATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Gas stations in the United States have a rich history that stretches as far back as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Filling stations with underground gas tanks became widely available for public use between the years of 1910 and 1920. Their proliferation kept pace with the rapid expansion of automobile ownership and highway travel, such that by early 1930s, there were 15,000 gas stations across the United States, a number that increased almost tenfold a decade later (123,979 by 1930) and reached about 200,000 by 1960.<sup>175</sup>

**Table 1.4: Number of gasoline stations in the United States**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1920	15,000
1930	123,979
1958	193,948
1970	216,059
1980	158,540
1990	111,657
2002	121,446

*1920-1990 data: Jakle and Sculle, 1994*

*2002 data: 2002 Economic Census of Retail Trade*

Although the presence of modern-day gas stations appears ubiquitous, their numbers have sharply dropped in recent decades. At their peak quantity in 1969, there were approximately 236,000 gas stations in the United States<sup>176</sup>. Their number is about half that today (see Table 1.4), an end result of numerous factors: the shock of OPEC oil embargos/restrictions in the 1970s and 1980s, consolidation in the number of major oil companies and the inclination of the remaining companies to emphasize high volume stations (increasingly company-owned) along major highways and thoroughfares. The traditional neighborhood gas station is bemoaned as near extinct<sup>177</sup>:

There is a subtle semantic shift going on in America these days, and you don't need to beat the bushes for an English professor to get an example. Just pick up your local yellow pages and look under the heading "convenience store." Odds are you'll see some pretty familiar names, including Phillips 66, Shell, and Chevron. There are still plenty of places listed under "service stations," but they don't offer much in the way of service these days. Wait, I take that back. The one down the street from here offers pre-paid cellular phone service. Sheesh.

If you're of a certain age, or reside in one of those parts of America where progress works through the process of erosion instead of immersion, you'll remember a unique sound: two sharp metallic dings. Their closeness was a function of the speed you were

<sup>175</sup>Liebs, Chester H. 1985. *Mainstreet to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*. Johns Hopkins University Press. p 13

<sup>176</sup>Jakle, John and Keith Sculle, 1994. *The Gas Station in America*. Johns Hopkins University Press. 77

<sup>177</sup>Steil, Tim. *Fantastic Filling Stations*. St. Paul, MN: MBI Publishing, 2002, 10-13.

traveling as you crossed the black rubber tube that stretched across the apron in front of the pumps. Typically, before the driver's window was all the way down, someone would be waiting for the inevitable "Fill 'er up!"

The windows were washed, and the oil and tires were checked. The restrooms would be clean, but not too clean, and somewhere near the front of the station there would be a soda machine stocked with seven ounce glass bottles. Inside, a few maps and cans of oil would be stacked in a neat pyramid. The men who owned and operated these places had their names embroidered onto a patch above their shirt pocket instead of a nametag pinned to the lapel of a company-issued smock.

One man had embroidered on his service station smock the name of "Bill Shea" and the following is his tale of his station.

### **THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: SHEA'S GAS STATION MUSEUM**

What was once just another Marathon station and garage along Route 66 now stands as the international landmark known as Shea's Gas Station Museum. With an impressive history along the legendary "Mother Road" that spans more than half a century, Shea's has become one of Springfield's most acclaimed roadside attractions.

Defying the traditional structure of most museums, Shea's Gas Station Museum is made from two former filling stations. It is a unique arrangement that complements the eclectic collection of vintage oil and gas memorabilia covering nearly every inch of both stations. With this compilation of gas memorabilia, the museum acts as a tribute to the historic "Mother Road" and gas stations of the pre-Interstate era.

The history of how the business evolved from a gas station to a museum is strongly connected to its owner and Springfield native, Bill Shea. Although, Shea never aspired towards a career in the gas station business, he somehow stumbled into it. His introduction to the business came shortly after his World War II service with the Army's 4th Infantry Division in the European theatre. When Shea returned home after the war, his longtime friend, Moise Deruy, offered him a job at a neighborhood Texaco station. Deruy owned the station and Shea had worked there briefly as a teenager.

Even though Shea turned down Deruy's offer at first, he later changed his mind and the men arranged a temporary business partnership. "We drew up an agreement that we would try it for six months, and see how it went," Shea explained to author Jim Steil as he discussed the station for the book, *Fantastic Filling Stations*. "You might say it was a part-time job, and I'm still on it."

Together, Shea and Deruy served Route 66 locals and travelers six days a week, from 7 a.m. till 10 p.m., and traded manning the station every other Sunday, until Deruy passed away in 1947. Shea independently ran the business for eight ensuing years until he outgrew the small Texaco station. In 1955, Shea opened his own Marathon station down the street from the Texaco shop.

This Marathon station on Peoria Road is now one of two stations that make up the museum. It functioned as a gas station for years until Shea reluctantly closed it following the oil embargo crisis of the early 1970s. Automobile and truck traffic along Route 66 had also drastically diminished over time as the “Mother Road” was superseded by Interstate 20 in Illinois. During that time, people began to cut back on their driving because of the rise in gas prices. As a result, Shea’s business suffered and the number of customers dwindled. Shea finally made the decision to stop selling fuel in 1982.

“When they came out with self-service gas, there was a four, or five-cent difference,” Shea once explained. “There’s just not enough money in pumping gas.”

He subsequently ventured into another business prospect and began selling truck covers (also known as toppers). Even with the change, Shea’s station still attracted travelers who often stopped by to reminisce about the old days. In time, the station became a mainstay for travelers who stopped and marveled at Shea’s collection of gas-station-related marketing materials and other memorabilia unintentionally accumulated over time. In that sense, the station naturally transformed into the unique storeroom of gas memorabilia that it is now.

“You know it just kind of came automatically,” Shea told author Tim Steil for the book *Fantastic Filling Stations*. “I never really thought about a museum. Someone else gave it that handle.”

Shea’s station officially became a museum in 1995 after others had long encouraged him to turn it into one. The museum’s collection is a mixture of things Shea collected over the many years he spent pumping gas along Route 66. On display are such diverse artifacts as: a dozen old cash registers, a 50-year-old rubber inner tube on display (which Shea believes is the last of its kind made from real rubber), a vintage Champion air compressor, “Killroy was here” sign, an 80-year-old peanut dispenser and a vintage 15-cents-a-pack cigarette machine, an old Air-stream trailer, as well as oil company signs, cans of motor oil, and decades of calendars. There is also a glass Pennzoil container from World War II, historic Route 66 highway signs, a section on a wall with vintage and unique license plates (e.g. “1 Free B” and 0000) and even Shea’s original Texaco uniform.

Museum items have also been donated or purchased for display beyond his personal belongings. Because of the rarity of some of these items, there are a few that are of significant monetary value. For example, there are three red gas pumps with an estimated value of \$5,000. The pumps, two Texaco station pumps and a Marathon pump, serve as visual attractions to traveling motorists that see the lit up pumps glowing in the museum’s front window at night.

This vast-ranging collage of gas-station and period memorabilia often evokes personal memories and nostalgia by museum visitors. As described in one visitor’s blog:

Every inch inside the buildings are [sic?] covered with items about gas stations, about Route 66, and about a lifetime of memories. I always loved the Mobile Gasoline Logo that Used Pegasus, the flying horse from Greek and Roman Mythology that implied if

you used Mobile Gasoline, your car would almost fly! [...] I really like seeing the Marathon Gasoline Pumb [sic] when Marathon used the Greek Marathon Runner as its logo implying your car would really run with Marathon Gasoline. At first Marathon Gasoline was called Ohio Oil Company. My father worked for them for 36 years, only interrupted by serving in WWII. My family has several items from my father's service for Ohio Oil/Marathon that we cherish.

Some display items are significant to Shea (and others) for reasons beyond their connection to gas stations. For instance, there is a jar labeled "Omaha Beach" that contains grains of sand from when Shea stormed the beaches of Normandy during WWII.

What's more, some of the displays even reflect Shea's famous (infamous, perhaps) sense of humor. In front of a pair of oil-stained boots, for example, is a sign that reads: "If it isn't here, it might be at Smithsonian, if not, check back later, ask for Smitty—he runs the place." Another sign says, "If you write in our dust, please put the date."

Probably the most prized possession though is actually a physical part of the museum—the all-metal station that's supplement to the porcelain-panel 'icebox' that used to be Shea's Marathon station.

In February of 2000, Shea bought what many believe to be one of the first gas stations in Illinois—the Philips 66 station. He purchased the station from the Mahan family, who had owned and operated the station in Middletown, Illinois for about 30 years. The Philips 66 station eventually closed down in the 1950s and served as storage shed until Shea purchased it. Transporting the 14-by-14-foot metal station with an overhead canopy to Springfield was no easy task.

Since the station was located in the town of Middletown (20 miles north of Springfield), Shea enlisted the help of an expert welder to help engineer a plan to move it down to Springfield. After elevating the Philips 66 station off the ground, it was placed on a custom-made flatbed hauler that was built with 30-foot-long rails. The hauler was then attached to a pick-up truck and the entire Philips 66 metal building was transported down to Springfield.

Once assembled next to the Shea's old Marathon station, Philips 66 station was restored and repainted in its original luster. Inside the Philips 66 station, Shea refurbished the station's wooden floor and gathered items consistent with the station's operating days.

A potbellied stove, an 80-year-old candy machine and the station's original window frames complete with wavy glass from the era, were just some of the finishing touches added. Today, the building itself and its interior collectibles are part of the featured collection at Shea's Gas Station Museum. Together, both (the Marathon and Philips 66) stations are filled with so many items that there is little room to store much else. There are trinkets on the floors, ceilings, walls, on shelves, counters, and workbenches and none of them is for sale.

Now in his late 80s, Shea is still very active in the day-to-day operations of the museum and is typically on hand to share his personal stories with visiting tourists. A personal family-run establishment: Shea with his wife Helen and his son Bill. Bill's children also pitch in when school is not in session. The hope is to keep the museum operating for as long as possible. There is a distinct home-spun and practical philosophy to the place. As Shea says "We don't sell anything and we don't charge anybody to come and look around. However, donations are appreciated."

"I've no intention of retiring. I'll keep working until I'm 90, then maybe just work half days," Shea once said. His son Bill says that he "will believe it when [he] sees it."

His droll sense of humor is ever-present. Shea's notable Route 66 personality is evidenced when Jim Conkle presented a gas globe light to the museum, and Shea deadpanned "Just what I always wanted."

The station has become a notable Route 66 attraction and an important part of the route's overall history. In similar respects, Shea as a Route 66 "personality" has become a Route 66 "attraction" and might just be the greatest "artifact" at the station. In 1993, Shea was inducted into the Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame after 47 years in the gas station business.

Shea's Gas Station Museum is open year round, Tuesday through Friday from 7 a.m. till 4 p.m. and Saturdays until noon. With the collection of items and Shea's personal tales of days long-gone, it promises to be a nostalgic journey for all who stop by. Shea typically plays host to the many visitors from around the world and has even been interviewed by national and international travel writers, radio hosts and film producers.



An outside view of Shea's Gas Station Museum

Source: U.S. National Park Service



## **LOCAL IMPACTS**

Since becoming a museum, the station has welcomed tourists from around the world. For them, a glimpse of the many antique keepsakes is an opportunity to remember and look back at what used to be Route 66. Museum visitor numbers fluctuate by season; spring and summer are the peak seasons.

Rutgers' analysis of Shea's museum visitation from visitor log books shows a rising number of annual visitors (from about 400 yearly in the mid-1990s to about 700 annually in 2005-2007) and many persons coming from afar. For instance, of those signing the museum visitor logbook between 2005 and 2007, 30 percent lived in Illinois, 50 percent lived in 42 other states, and 20 percent came from 29 foreign countries. In sum, while visitors from United States accounted for the majority of Shea's museum visitation, an important share came from abroad, including some intrepid souls from Australia, New Zealand, and the Ukraine.

Tourism is one of the Springfield's most profitable industries. According to 2008 records from the Springfield Illinois Convention and Visitors Bureau, tourism had a \$346-million-dollar impact on Sangamon County and the city of Springfield was the primary driver of that impact. Outside of revenue, Springfield's job force is also significantly connected to its tourism. In fact, there are more than 3,000 jobs directly attributable to the city's tourism sector. Two driving forces for tourism in Springfield are its historical sites connected to its most famous former resident, Abraham Lincoln, and the historic Route 66. Sites based on Abraham Lincoln are Springfield's largest attractions, but Route 66 has become one of its major crowd-pullers as well, especially with international tourists. As one of several attractions along Route 66, Shea's Gas Station Museum has had a welcome economic impact on the city of Springfield.

## THE MOTHER ROAD FESTIVAL OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

### THE CULTURAL RESOURCE: THE INTERNATIONAL ROUTE 66 MOTHER ROAD FESTIVAL AND CAR FAIR (SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS)

Throughout the Mother Road’s storied history, a combination of shared and personal experiences have served to perpetuate the Route 66 image and draw. At the International Route 66 Mother Road Festival and Car Show (held annually in Springfield and Illinois), it is in the spirit of Route 66—of capturing an idealized American experience—that compels hundreds of classic car owners to breathe new life into cars over half a century old, and thousands more visitors from across the world to come and appreciate their work.



Classic cars at the Mother Road Festival.

Source: Randy Von Liski/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

The Mother Road Festival is a three-day event held every third weekend in September. The festival has been held annually since 2001, a concept of entrepreneur C. Bruce Hubley and his promotions and marketing company. Though originally held in Indianapolis, the event has since relocated to the state capitol of Springfield, Illinois, itself a beacon of Americana as the home of the first fast-food drive thru, the birthplace of the corn dog, and the backdrop city for many minor league baseball teams. Springfield also has a proud Route 66 heritage and contains Shea’s and other Mother Road iconic attractions.



Family fun at the Mother Road Festival.

Source: Randy Von Liski/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

The “International” distinction in the festival title is not a misnomer. The event attracts visitors not only from across the United States, but from across the world. Through the extensive marketing reach of the local convention and visitors bureau, a number of visitors come overseas from countries as far as Germany and Australia. The Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau (SCVB) markets the event as the biggest car show in the Midwestern United

States, and rightfully so: visitors can expect to see nearly 1,000 classic cars from the 1930s, 40s, 50s, and 60s.

Far more than a display of classic cars, event organizers continuously add activities to entertain their growing visitor base. A vibrant street bazaar emerges in downtown Springfield, and visitors may peruse a wide variety of vendors for food and merchandise. The festival has attracted an increasing number of national commercial vendors, and recently incorporated “Gasoline Alley,” a special side exhibit featuring the latest in high-performance auto parts for the serious car enthusiast. Also new is a professionally-run classic car auction, coordinated through Arizona-based International Classic Auctions, giving restoration hobbyists the opportunity to be enterprising with their work. The highlight of the weekend, however, is the Route 66 City Nights parade, when the show registrants may take part in a massive downtown cruise. Thousands of visitors line the city street to wave and cheer for their favorite classic cars, a roaring procession of souped-up engines, vivid paint jobs, and enough chrome to illuminate the nighttime event with a sleek metallic sheen.

Of course, exhibiting cars is the central focus of the show. Some come with individual restoration projects, others come as a club. Some come with their restored toy; others come with a cherished teenage possession or family antique. Many additional newcomers arrive with their cars each year, but still others have been returning loyally year after year. Each registrant comes with their own personal narratives that shine through in the varied ways they restore their cars. Event organizers have ensured that their participants’ efforts do not go unrewarded, and offer awards in over 40 categories with Championship Auto Shows Inc. (CASI) certified national judging.



*1940 Chevrolet Coupe Master Deluxe Street Rod at the International Route 66 Mother Road Festival and Car Fair.*  
Source:Randy Von Liski/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

## LOCAL IMPACTS

The Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau (SCVB) herald the Mother Road Festival as one of the city's signature events. There is a palpable excitement that builds every year around the time of the Festival, as the town prepares for a swell of visitors and an abundance of local and national media attention. About 80,000 attendees come to Springfield to see the nearly 1,000 classic cars, and tourism bureaus throughout the state of Illinois recommend the festival as a must-see event. These attendees pump an estimated \$1 million into the local economy.

The fact that the festival is held in the historic downtown quarters of Springfield is a major drawing point. Some people have reported coming to the event specifically because it was held in downtown Springfield, which combines an active, modern business corridor with preserved 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century structures. Visitors may simultaneously view the car show and tour the local architecture, some of which are national historic sites. Several streets are closed off so that car show participants may park their vehicles and allow spectators to view them enjoying the downtown atmosphere. According to Springfield's former mayor Tim Davlin "Street festivals such as this allow us to showcase our historic sites alongside hundreds of historic automobiles."<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup>Poole, Deana. "Route 66 Show not slowed by economy." *The State Journal Register*. 23 September 2009. Site maintained by Gatehouse Media, Inc. 2010. <http://www.sj-r.com/entertainment/x593050802/Route-66-show-organizers-encouraged-by-early-numbers>



## THE MURALS OF CUBA, MISSOURI

### HOST COMMUNITY: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Cuba is a small city in southeastern Missouri, located on Route 66 in Crawford County. Cuba is 66 miles southwest of St. Peters (pop. 56,853) and 72 miles southwest of St. Louis (pop. 370,900).



There are several possible explanations behind the name of Cuba, Illinois. One is that the name was an act of solidarity with the country of Cuba, which was struggling for its freedom from Spain. Another is that recent visitors had so much enjoyed their stay in Cuba that they named their town after it. And yet another theory is that it was decided from the toss up of a stick.

The founding of Cuba in 1857 and its early economic engine was largely driven by the Pacific Railroad, the southern branch of which ran through Cuba in the 1860s. Cuba's earliest residents found work in agriculture, mining, or shipping. Cuba became a very prosperous town, serving as a regional shipping center for agriculture and industry.

Cuba later transitioned to a manufacturing community and was a prominent shoe manufacturer. Its fortunes changed however, with the local shoe industry losing business gradually throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century until it could no longer compete with foreign shoe imports and went bankrupt in the early 1980's. Without a core industry, many Cuba citizens towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were left living below the poverty line.

Cuba's present day economic vitality can be largely attributed to Route 66 tourism. Capitalizing on the renewed interest in Route 66, Cuba engaged in a mural project that is profiled in this chapter. The population has currently stabilized with minimal fluctuations: As of 2000, Cuba had a population of 3,230, a 22% increase from the population in 1990 (2,537). In 2008, the population was estimated to be 1,333, a 4% decrease from the population in 2000.



The table below summarizes Cuba's demographic, socioeconomic, and housing indicators in relation to the Missouri profile. Relative to the statewide average, Cuba's population is almost exclusively white, and it has an older housing stock amongst other characteristics.

	<b>Cuba, MO</b>	<b>Missouri Statewide</b>	<b>Difference from state</b>
<b><u>Demographic Indicators</u></b>			
Median Age	36.6	36.1	0.5
% 65+ years	19.4	13.5	5.9
% White	98.6	86.1	12.5
% Hispanic	1.2	2.1	-0.9
<b><u>Socioeconomic Indicators</u></b>			
Median Income	\$24,127	\$37,974	-\$13,847
% with college degree	16	32.1	16.1
Most common occupation	Production, transportation & moving	management/professional	--
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	--
% poverty	20.1	11.7	8.4
% unemployed	4.1	3.4	.7
<b><u>Housing Indicators</u></b>			
% owner-occupied homes	78.3	89.9	-11.6
% single-unit detached homes	70.2	68.8	1.4
Decade most homes built	1939 or earlier	1940-1959	older homes

Source: U.S. Census 2000

## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: THE CUBA MURALS

Around 1984, tourism revenue in Cuba, MO plummeted, as it did in many small towns along the Mother Road. The Missouri branch of Route 66 had been decommissioned and replaced by the interstate highway system, diverting thousands of travelers from the more isolated towns that had been surviving as Route 66 tourist stops. Adding to the blow, the loss of tourism revenue in Cuba coincided with the sudden shut down of two shoe factories, while another factory laid off half its staff. Taken together, it was an economic “perfect storm.” By the end of 1984, unemployment had soared to 21% in this town of 2,100 and nearly every other retail store had closed.

By 1989, however, Cuba was hailed as an “economic miracle”. According to Norman De Leo, Cuba’s economic development coordinator, one of the most instrumental factors in Cuba’s recovery was its designation as a State Enterprise Zone in 1985. State, county and local tax abatements and other incentives attracted more than a dozen new industries and brought 750 jobs to Cuba by 1989. The enterprise zone designation was not the only factor in Cuba’s recovery, though; the town also commenced with a project to put its heritage on display— in the form of nearly two dozen giant outdoor murals. According to Dick Cowden of the former American Association of Enterprise Zones, the most successful enterprise zones also include marketing of the area and repair of the community’s infrastructure. “They are an important tool,” he said, “because they encourage redevelopment without uprooting businesses and residents the way urban renewal did three decades ago.”<sup>179</sup> Cuba’s extensive and immensely successful mural program, which in many cases reflects its historic linkages to Route 66, demonstrates an outstanding commitment to economic recovery and growth.

For the past 10 years, the townspeople of Cuba have devoted remarkable energy to community beautification and other quality of life improvements, thereby aiding the town’s efforts to attract and retain new businesses and residents. Moreover, Cuba’s mural program is an exemplary capitalization of its Route 66 heritage, transforming the town into a cultural destination, in turn generating both tax revenue and community pride. Today, Cuba’s success with attracting new industries and literally changing the face of the community finds the town poised for tremendous growth in the coming decade, which may serve to insulate Cuba from the nationwide recession.

Historic Uptown Cuba is bordered by Old Route 66 (“Main Street”) and Route 19, generally running north and west of this intersection.

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<sup>179</sup>Mincer, Jilian. “Focus: Cuba, Mo.: Enterprise Zone Turns a Town from Doom to Boom,” *New York Times*, February 29, 1989: 81.

## **Local History and Route 66**

Cuba, MO was founded in 1857 in anticipation of construction for the southwest branch of the Pacific Railroad. Cuba quickly developed into an agricultural and industrial shipping center. From 1865-1912, Cuba was known as “The Land of the Big Red Apple” as a major producer and distributor of apples, which in 1900 was the largest such operation in the state of Missouri.

With the advent of the Model T and the proliferation of the automobile, road improvements became necessary. Paving of Route 66, the “Mother Road,” was completed in 1931. By the mid-1930s, a good part of Cuba’s economy was based on the heavily traveled new highway and featured an array of motels, cafes and filling stations. In 1968, Bill Wallis, an internationally renowned expert on Route 66, purchased a fuel dealership and opened Wallis Oil Company, Inc. Today, Wallis Co., which still has its headquarters in Cuba, employs over 600 people throughout Missouri and is one of ExxonMobil’s largest fuel and lubricant distributors in the United States.

Shoe manufacturing is also a part of Cuba’s history. In the 1930s, high labor costs on the East Coast drove shoe manufacturers to seek more affordable locations for their plants while maintaining access to transportation. Many relocated to rural areas with lower labor costs, including Cuba. The shoe industry would remain a vital part of Cuba’s economy for nearly 60 years.

Cuba gradually diversified its economic base. In 1946, Cuba purchased its own electrical system and began generating revenue to fund improvements to the town. As a result, new industries came to Cuba. Today, the electrical system continues to provide working capital to fund the needs of the Cuba’s industries.

By the early 1980s, however, foreign shoe imports, which could be produced at a much lower cost, began to dominate the market, resulting in significant domestic job losses. The decline of American shoe manufacturing, coupled with the loss of Route 66-related retail revenue, hit Cuba hard. By 1984, a third of Cuba’s citizens lived below the statewide poverty level.

Cuba responded with fervid resolve to ameliorate their economic situation. In 1985, the city purchased 137 acres to create an industrial park, secured an Enterprise Zone designation to create tax incentives for businesses to relocate, and hired an Industrial Development Coordinator to promote the Industrial Park to potential businesses. In addition, Cuba secured financing through Peoples Bank, the town’s oldest bank, to help local companies create new jobs, mostly in the automotive industry.

Initially, Viva Cuba, a beautification organization, was founded in 1984 to complement Cuba's economic development efforts. As companies began to prospect Cuba for viable property, Viva Cuba teamed up with other community leaders to address areas of blight. As Jill Barnett, a founding member of Viva Cuba put it: “Representatives of the companies would come to look

[at Cuba], and we were like, ‘Don’t take them there, oh don’t take them there.’”<sup>180</sup> Viva Cuba’s first projects entailed 1.5 miles of landscaping along Missouri Highway 19 (which ran through Cuba), planting trees in the industrial park, landscaping the Interstate 44 interchange, and construction for a park and community garden at the intersection of Route 66 and Route 19. Viva Cuba’s initial efforts did not go unnoticed. In 1987, Cuba became the first member of the Adopt-A-Highway program in the state of Missouri, and the city received the Governor’s Treescape Award in 1989.

## **The Murals of Cuba**

Viva Cuba’s best known beautification project, however, is their outdoor mural installation program, which earned the city the official designation “Route 66 Mural City” from the Missouri legislature in 2002. According to Jill Barnett of Viva Cuba, the mural project was started by accident. Peoples Bank, run by Barnett’s husband, was looking for a way to commemorate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2001. “A friend,” said Barnett, “gave me a brochure about a mural program in Athens, Ontario.” Barnett was soon in contact with Michelle Loughery, a British Columbian mural artist with a passion for teaching struggling towns to reinvent themselves through mural art.

Loughery, says Karl Schutz, architect of the Chemainus Mural Project on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, is credited with devising the art-based revitalization strategy. In the early 1980s, after 120 years of operation, the Chemainus saw mill shut down, leaving nearly 700 local residents unemployed— similar to the demise of Cuba’s shoe factories. Businessman and Chemainus resident, Schutz, came up with the idea of painting history on the town’s walls. A program of over three dozen murals, a veritable outdoor art gallery, was created, featuring images of real people and life in the early years of the mill town. With Schutz’s vision, coupled with town input and support, Chemainus went from no tourists in 1981 to over 450,000 by 1988. Chemainus won the prestigious New York Revitalization Award in 1983 and has gained world-wide attention both for the artistry of its murals and their effectiveness as a revitalization strategy. And murals have proven contagious. Not only has the strategy been employed in numerous towns in Canada – and now worldwide – but also two prominent international artists were asked to create two major public art installations in Vancouver’s most prominent locations for the 2010 Olympics – both murals.

As a child, Loughery witnessed firsthand how mural art rescued her hometown, a small coal-mining town in British Columbia. Inspired by that early experience, she has become a compelling spokesperson and practitioner of mural art in the service of community revitalization. Not only did Loughery design and paint the first mural with local Cuba artist, Shelly Smith Steiger, but she also persuaded Viva Cuba that a program of murals was just the thing to put Cuba back on the map. As Barnett put it: “[Loughery] gave us the vision that we could do a mural project that would not only transform ugly walls into public art but also increase tourism

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<sup>180</sup>Williams, Julie. “Viva Cuba Paints History.” *Detours Magazine*. Site created by Truman Media Network, 2009. [www.detoursmagazine.com](http://www.detoursmagazine.com).

and economic growth.” With the popularity of the first mural, however, Viva Cuba did not need much persuading.

Viva Cuba initially proposed a mural program devoted to the theme of transportation – a major theme in Cuba’s history. With Loughery’s help (and the participation of local Cuba/ Missouri artists such as Shelly Smith Steiger and Balogh Brand, as well as artists from other states and Canada), however, the theme was expanded to commemorate moments in Cuba’s history that tied into the nation’s history. A challenge was set: 12 murals by 2007, Cuba’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As Jane Reed, another Viva Cuba member, remarked: “At that time, nobody had any idea how far we could take this.” The entire project cost \$129,722, and all funds came from fundraising events and donations. Below is one mural celebrating Cuba’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2007.<sup>181</sup>



Cuba’s Gold Star Boys from World War II are shown aboard the Blue Bonnet Frisco Train, heading off to join the war. The train was the major form of transportation from 1927 until 1967.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

## **VISITATION AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

The notion that Cuba could reinvent itself as a tourist destination on the basis of mural art was initially met with some skepticism. A 2002 Cuba Free Press editorial titled “Tourism smourism” by Three Rivers Publisher Rob Viehman, claimed: “Cuba is not a tourism town. With the exception of a few people touring Old Route 66, the only tourists that pass through Cuba are driving straight down Highway 19 on their way to Steelville and points south.”

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<sup>181</sup> See all the Cuba murals at Viva Cuba, 2010, <http://cubamomurals.com>





The Wagon Wheel located at 901 E. Washington in Cuba, has been serving Route 66 travelers since 1934.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

murals impart. “Murals on the walls signal that the people inside give a damn. Towns with murals tend to be cleaner, quality of life is higher and there’s a real sense of history and community. It just says it would be a great place to live.”

Yet, the murals by themselves are not the sole vehicle for Cuba’s renaissance; it also took the concerted efforts of the local newspaper, the Historic Preservation Commission, city workers and officials, and Cuba’s already established businesses and organizations. It was also due in large part to new businesses that committed to the area by locating in “old” Cuba along the Route 66 corridor. Since 2001, Missouri Hick BBQ, Frisco’s Grill & Pub, Main Street Bakery & Back in the Day Café, Scrapbook Addictions, Porter’s Trading Post & Jewelry, Route 66 Fudge Shop, Mace’s Grocery, Java.net, Fanning Outpost (with its World’s Largest Rocking Chair), and many other shops have all grown in Cuba’s business district that caters to both tourists and locals. As an illustration, Fanning runs a “Race to the Rockers,” and sells Route 66-themed wines (e.g. “Route 66 Red”) and souvenirs (Fanning provides a wide range of merchandise and services from archery to taxidermy).

But as the murals multiplied, people came and small businesses along Cuba’s Route 66 corridor multiplied. Cuba was officially designated “Route 66 Mural City” by the Missouri legislature in 2002.

According to Mark Hoffman, owner of Sports Leisure Vacation in Sacramento, California, the idea of Cuba as a tourist destination is not crazy at all. “Cuba is one of the first small towns to align itself with Route 66 and get tourist attention as a result.” Hoffman has led seven Route 66 bus trips for seniors since 1995. This year, the tour – from Chicago to Santa Monica - - is 16 days long and costs \$5,195 per person. Although Cuba has been part of the tour from the beginning, the stop in Cuba now boasts a 45-minute guided tour of the murals and lunch at Missouri Hick BBQ. Hoffman credits the murals for Cuba’s growth: “Cuba is now twice the size it was 15 years ago. The four blocks from the freeway to the grocery store are now totally developed.” More importantly, according to Hoffman, is the feeling the

Indeed, many Cuba businesses emphasize their Route 66 heritage, and we mention two below:

*Wagon Wheel Motel*— The Wagon Wheel is a fantastic National Register of Historic Places property in pristine condition. A local business owner purchased it in 2009 and is restoring it through a labor of love. She is being extremely careful to follow the Secretary of Interior Standards, and as such has revealed many hidden features, such as a stone fireplace and wood floors in the restaurant. The owner has recently moved her “Wildflower Florist and Gift Shop” into the old restaurant. She also just submitted a grant application to the National Park Service Cost Share program for additional restoration work.

*Carr Service Station*— Located at the intersection of Route 66 and 19, this station is owned by Wallis Oil Company, mentioned earlier. It is a 1932 Phillip’s 66 cottage-style station that Bill Wallis bought and grew his business in. When he became successful and moved to a larger building across the street, the station became a baker to supply Wallis’ “On the Road” convenience stores. Bill passed away, but his wife Lyn (CEO of Wallis Oil) applied to the NPS Cost Share program in 2002, and restored the building to reflect both its Phillips 66 and Standard Oil history. There is currently discussion about converting it for use as an art gallery. The building is also part of the Cuba mural project.



The Carr Service Station in Cuba has been fully restored to its original appearance, down to the original Phillips 66 trademark green and orange paint scheme.

Source: U.S. National Park Service

With funding from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2002, the City of Cuba constructed a Visitor's Center, operated by the Cuba Chamber of Commerce, just north of Interstate 44, which guides visitors to the murals in historic Cuba and other sites of interest. Not surprisingly, Route 66 and the Cuba murals figure prominently at this center (the Chamber logo uses the iconic Route 66 shield).

In 2003, Cuba received a Community Block Grant from the Missouri Department of Economic Development, which matched dollar for dollar the contributions of local property owners. Property owners pledged \$237,000, and the town used the matching funds from the State to provide for new sidewalks, sewage and drainage, repaving, new parking areas, vintage lights, benches, planters and other infrastructure improvements for the historic area. The area is now known as "Six Miles on 66" and is a special draw for the Route 66 traveler.

Andy Sanazaro, Jr., a local factory owner, opened Main Street Bakery & Back in the Day Café in the historic area as a way of giving back to his hometown of the past 54 years. He contributed matching funds to the Community Block Grant and described the impact. "Before, Main Street was just a sandy, muddy area. Now it's much nicer and there's parking. When tourists drive through town, the murals get them to stop and take a picture. And now there's parking and a place to get a cup of coffee so they walk around a bit." Sanazaro reports that he and other local business owners routinely carry small brochures about the murals and place them in the hands of tourists, which, according to the Visitor's Center, have numbered over 10,000 per year since 2007.

The murals nearly pay for themselves. According to Jane Reed of Viva Cuba, Cuba has generated over \$60,000 per year since 2003 for tourism marketing and promotion by taxing local hotels and motels. The revenue funds the Visitor's Center, the murals brochures and related items. In addition, a local chocolatier has created a line of candy bars featuring the murals on the wrapper, proceeds of which help fund the maintenance of the murals – about \$8,000 per year. There is even legislation on the books for all of Crawford County, which would give the County the authority to implement a tourism tax on private tourist attractions as well as hotel and motel accommodations. The revenue would go into a "County Tourism Surcharge Fund," 75 percent of which would fund public safety services and the remaining 25 percent would be used for tourism marketing and promotion.<sup>182</sup>

By 2009, the once skeptical Three Rivers publisher was urging the neighboring town of St. James to recreate itself as a tourist destination using the Cuba model: (1) get a grant to restore some of the historic buildings along Route 66 and eliminate current eyesores; (2) create a photo opportunity; and (3) create a visitor's kiosk and a directional sign on Route 66 so traveler's know where the visitor's center is located. The editorial concludes: "As crazy as it might sound, Route 66 travelers are eager to stop and take a photo of anything unique or historic along the road."

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<sup>182</sup>England, Amy. "Tourism tax could aid emergency providers." *Saint James Press*. Saint James, MO: Three River Publishing, November 24, 2009; 22:14.



Other towns along Route 66 have followed the Cuba example, including Tucumcari, NM, which currently promotes itself as Route 66's unofficial "Mural City," thanks to over two dozen life-size and larger than life-size murals by local artists, Doug and Sharon Quarles. Most recently, Pontiac, IL, held a mural painting festival capitalizing on the city's Route 66 location. Pontiac tourism director, Ellie Alexander, reports that the city's 19 new murals helped increase tourism 99 percent during June 2009 compared to the previous summer.

### **Cuba's Future: Hopeful for Continued Growth**

Cuba has clearly made a remarkable recovery since the dog days of the early 1980s. Cuba is one of Missouri's most successful Enterprise Zones, boasting not one but two industrial parks with over a dozen major employers in the manufacturing sector, including Georgia Pacific, Aerospace Technology, and Versa Tags.<sup>183</sup> Moreover, Cuba offers a low cost of living, affordable new housing, and the lowest corporate and income taxes in the state. Missouri's average property tax rate is \$6.30/\$100 on one-third of the value and the county tax rate is just \$4.21/\$100 on one-third of the value.<sup>184</sup> Cuba itself has no personal or real estate property taxes. Lastly, Cuba has a vibrant historic center that is a source of pride to residents and draws over 10,000 tourists per year.

However, Mardy L. Leathers, founder of the newly created Cuba Development Group (CDG) , believes Cuba is about half way where it needs to be. Leathers founded CDG shortly after Cuba's Industrial Development Authority nearly went bankrupt last year. According to Leathers, it is time for Cuba to turn its attention to long-term economic planning, diversifying and job creation. To that end, Cuba—with its population of 3,500 — is poised to open its third industrial park, the Barnett Business and Technology Park, which will diversify and expand Cuba's job base. The new park is on track to receive "Missouri Certified Site" designation, which should help attract top business and technology firms – including renewable energy facilities -- to locate in Cuba.

The CDG has also proposed a \$20 million, three-phase, multi-year redevelopment project, which Leathers describes as "aggressive urban planning." The Midway Crossing Development Project will redevelop an 8 block area near the intersection of Route 66 and Highway 19, home of the historic yet condemned "Old Midway" hotel. The proposed redevelopment project will involve the demolition of existing structures – including former manufacturing warehouses, low-income housing, and blighted housing – and the creation a new Community Center, retail outlets, parking and a residential retirement complex. The proposed Community Center will feature a farmer's market, a small business incubation center, and an arts center. The proposed Center for

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<sup>183</sup> Other major employers include: Aaction Transport (hauling); American Precision Die Casting; BIPACCO Coatings (lacquers and enamels), B.W. Freeman (molded plastics); Highline Plating; Indeeco (industrial and commercial heaters); Lewis Machine and Tool; Mar-Bel (thermosetting materials); McGinnis Wood Products; Mid-Mo Truss; Norwalk-Brunn (burial vaults); Ozark Mountain Technologies (anodic coatings); S & J Metals (metal fabricating); SPS (plastic recycling); Usona (anodizing); and Wallis Companies (one-stop fuel).

<sup>184</sup> Vickers, Jenny. "Metro Spotlight: Cuba, Missouri." *Business Facilities: The Location Advisor*. 2010. Site maintained by Group C Media. October, 2008. [www.businessfacilities.com](http://www.businessfacilities.com).

the Arts will include a venue for art shows, a courtyard for street vendors, and art activities – including mural painting – for local students. The art center will retain the “mural style,” visually integrating it with the historic center just two blocks away. As Leathers remarked, the murals are a “major asset” and source of cultural pride.

The proposed redevelopment site has already been designated a Brownsville area, and the CDG is currently seeking “blighted” designation from the city for the existing residential areas, although eminent domain issues remain to be resolved. Meanwhile, the Missouri Department of Economic Development has just awarded two Cuba manufacturing facilities nearly \$4 million in Enhanced Enterprise Zone tax credits for job creation and expansion facilities. McGinnis Wood Products, for example, received \$113,079 for the creation of 45 new jobs over the next 5 years and \$2 million in new investment for an expansion facility located on old Route 66.

Lastly, the Route 66 Association of Missouri was awarded a National Byway grant in 2006 to maintain, improve, and promote the Route 66 corridor through Missouri. In preparation for National Byway designation, the Route 66 corridor is currently soliciting “best practices” to guide long-term “Main Street” economic revitalization in each Route 66 community. It is likely that Cuba’s strategies will set a high bar for economic revitalization across the Route 66 corridor.



## THE ROUTE 66 STATE PARK OF EUREKA, MISSOURI

### THE HOST COMMUNITY; GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, AND PROFILE

Eureka is a small city in eastern Missouri, located along Interstate 44 in St. Louis County. It is approximately 27 miles southwest of downtown St. Louis, two miles west of Route 66 State Park, and approximately one mile from Six Flags St. Louis.



Eureka was established as a village in 1858 along the path of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, which made its way through the area in 1853. The name of the community is said to derive from workers laying down the railroad track who shouted “Eureka!” when they first saw the level land free from rocks that made up the area.<sup>185</sup> The area was chosen for settlement for its flat, farmable land. For the first few decades, Eureka’s economy was primarily based around agriculture.

Eureka’s location at an important intersection of area roads (including sitting on the regional Route 66) and along the Missouri Pacific train line helped it grow steadily over the years. In 1890, the small farming village had approximately 100 homes. In 1954, when the City of Eureka was first incorporated, the population was over eight times that amount. As of 2000, Eureka had a population of 7,676, a dramatic increase of 63.9% from its 1990 population of 4,683.

Over the last century, Eureka’s economy has been hindered by both natural and man-made disasters, including several major fires and frequent flooding of the Meramec River. This prompted the formation of the Eureka Fire Protection District, first started as a volunteer effort and which continues to provide services to Eureka area residents.

The establishment in 1970 of the Six Flags St. Louis amusement park a mile from Eureka has had a major impact on the city. The park serves two to three million people annually,<sup>186</sup> and is a major source of revenue for local businesses. Despite its close proximity to Six Flags and St.

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<sup>185</sup>History. City of Eureka, MO. <http://www.eureka.mo.us/history.htm>

<sup>186</sup>History. City of Eureka, MO. <http://www.eureka.mo.us/history.htm>

Louis, Eureka prides itself for its own parks, proximity to natural spaces, and its ability to maintain a small-town atmosphere.<sup>187</sup>

For context, we present Eureka’s demographic, socioeconomic, and housing profile in relation to Missouri statewide characteristics. Eureka traits include a much higher median household income and much lower poverty rate.

	Eureka, MO	Missouri Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	34.1	36.1	-2 years
% 65+ years	8.5	13.5	-5.0
% White	97.4	84.9	12.5
% Hispanic	1.2	2.1	-0.9
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$74,301	\$37,934	-\$36,367
% with college degree	38.6	21.6	17.0
Most common occupation	Management/ professional	Management/ professional	--
Most common industry	Educational, health and social services	Educational, health and social services	--
% poverty	2.2	11.7	-9.5
% unemployed	1.7	3.4	-1.7
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	91.0	70.3	20.7
% single-unit detached homes	83.3	68.8	14.5
Decade most homes built	1970-1979	1940-1959	newer homes

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

<sup>187</sup>“Why Eureka?” City of Eureka, MO. <http://www.eureka.mo.us/whyeureka.htm>

## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: THE ROUTE 66 STATE PARK AND VISITORS CENTER

Route 66 has always traversed a fine line between the natural and manmade environment. Often referred to as a Scenic Byway, the paved road touches upon miles of otherwise untouched natural terrain. The Route 66 State Park in Eureka, Missouri is a large scale commemoration of the Mother Road as a link between man and nature: a 419 acre park, wedged between the Meramec River and Interstate 44. The park, which provides miles of scenic trails amidst displays and artifacts from Route 66, is designed to preserve both nature and memories of the Mother Road, so that thousands can continue to discover the recreational pleasures of a truly American experience. It is difficult to imagine that not long ago the area encompassing the park was ground zero for an ecological disaster.

### The Times Beach Story

Although Route 66 State Park is a recent creation (officially opened on Sept. 11, 1999), its genesis stretches as far back as 1925. The land was originally chartered as Times Beach, a resort community which served as a promotional scheme for the *St. Louis Star-Times* newspaper. For the price of \$67.50 (which included a 6-month subscription to the *Star-Times*), the public was invited to purchase 20'x100' lots along a scenic tract of land by the Meramec River. Yet the timing was not auspicious for a second home community, buffeted by both the economic depression of the 1930s and gasoline rationing during World War Two. The area was made even less attractive by frequent flooding (some of the earlier homes were built on stilts for this reason).

Permanent residents of a lower socioeconomic class soon took the place of a wealthier group of seasonal homeowners. This cheapened the overall image of Times Beach as an attractive resort community, and the area fell ever deeper into a dilapidated state. Yet, it was a bustling small community nonetheless and by the early 1970's, Times Beach had 1,240 residents.<sup>188</sup> It had a grocery store and gas station on its main street— Route 66— with a reported 13 saloons providing the town with an ample supply of liquor.

Meanwhile, an ecological disaster was quietly taking shape that would destroy Times Beach. In the early 1970's, city officials were figuring out how to address the dust from its many dirt roads, but recognized that the city lacked sufficient funds for pavement. They decided on a cheaper alternative, and hired waste hauler Russell Bliss<sup>189</sup> to spray the roads with waste oil. Between

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<sup>188</sup>Leistner, Marilyn. 1995. "The Times Beach Story." *Synthesis/Regeneration* (7)8. September, 2010. <http://www.greens.org/s-r/078/07-09.html>

<sup>189</sup>Bliss had been spreading the chemical for quite some time in other areas besides Times Beach; in particular, horse stables during the late 1960s and early 1970s. When the chemical resulted in the deaths of 62 horses at one stable in 1971, Bliss refused to acknowledge that it might be related to his waste oil. Horses subjected to the chemical continued to fall ill and die, and by the late 1970s, local officials became suspicious of Bliss and began to investigate his activities. Upon establishing the connection between Bliss and NEPACCO, employees of the company were initially mum, until in 1979, one employee confessed to the company's use of dioxins. The federal government swiftly filed suit against NEPACCO, and the company would continue

1972 and 1976, Bliss sprayed all the roads in Times Beach, supposedly unaware that he was spreading a deadly chemical. At the time, Bliss had also been subcontracted to haul waste from the Northeastern Pharmaceutical and Chemical Company (NEPACCO), a company that during the Vietnam War produced the notoriously diabolical herbicide Agent Orange. Agent Orange contained high levels of dioxin, a toxic compound that has been associated with cancer, birth defects, weakened immunity, and skin diseases. The waste clay and water removed from the NEPACCO reportedly had levels dioxin that was up to 2,000 times stronger than Agent Orange, which wound up in the roadway veins of Times Beach.

In Times Beach, the effects of the waste oil were beginning to take hold. Marilyn Leister, the last mayor of Times Beach, describes the ensuing horror that descended upon the community:<sup>190</sup>

Chaos broke loose. The residents immediately recalled that the roads had turned purple after being sprayed. The spraying had resulted in an awful odor. Birds had died and newborn animals succumbed shortly after their birth. One man remembered a dog found in one of the contaminated ditches. They thought the dog rabid and prevailed upon a policeman to shoot it. Another man told how he had called the St. Louis Health Department to tell them about the dead birds he kept finding. The department recommended that he freeze the dead birds and said they would be out to pick them up. No one ever came.

In 1982, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) came to ascertain the extent of the damage done to Times Beach. The soil was tested, and sure enough yielded high levels of dioxin. In December of that year, shortly after the existence of dioxin was confirmed, the Meramec River experienced some of its worst flooding ever (at one point covering the town in 18 feet of water), spreading the polluted soil, and residents became fearful of widespread contamination. In what Leister described as their “Christmas message,” the townspeople were warned by the government as follows: “If you are in town, it is advisable for you to leave. If you are out of town, do not come back.”<sup>191</sup> Shortly thereafter, the EPA purchased the town, and by 1985, the population of 2,000 was evacuated.<sup>192</sup> The Missouri Governor ordered the town’s disincorporation and Times Beach was no more (As a direct result of such incidents, however, the United States now has tighter regulations for the responsible use and disposal of toxic chemicals).

Besides the ill effects that chemicals have had on the former Times Beach residents, it has had a devastating effect on the natural environment. The quarantined area wreaked havoc among the

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to battle thousands of lawsuits for years to come. Bliss, however, would never be prosecuted as there were no regulations surrounding the disposal of waste oils at the time of his work.

<sup>190</sup>Leister, 1995..

<sup>191</sup>Ibid, Leister.

<sup>192</sup>Times Beach, MO. Legends of America. Created by legendsofamerica.com. 2010. <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/mo-timesbeach.html>

ecological balance, killing off a multitude of living organisms. It was particularly lethal for birds, hundreds of which were found dead having eaten worms and insects from the polluted soil.

The Times Beach area was declared a “Superfund” site, and a major effort began for the removal of widespread hazardous waste. The decontaminated site was then turned over to the state of Missouri, which would redesign it as a park. The decision to associate the park with Route 66 was not random; a portion of the original Route 66, including a historic bridge across the Meramec River, runs through Route 66 State Park.<sup>193,194</sup> The park opened in 1999, and after the Times Beach area was closed to the public for nearly 15 years, became a recreational area once more. It is owned and maintained by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks.

Today, the park mixes together natural splendor and Route 66 for a unique experience. One can enjoy the scenic beauty afforded to Route 66 travelers, while doing so in a more rustic sense than vehicular travel; visitors are provided over seven miles of trails on which to walk, bike, and even horseback ride. Throughout the park are a variety of exhibits on the colorful history of Route 66, documenting the unique people and places along the storied journey. Visitors can also enjoy a fine display of nature, as the former environmental disaster is now a thriving home for a diverse array of plant and animal species, including over 40 types of birds. The park also attracts avid hikers, bicyclists, and other nature enthusiasts.

### **The Visitor Center and Route 66 Museum**

The Park’s visitor center is itself a part of Route 66 history. It was once a roadhouse (Bridgehead Inn, opened in 1935) that served food to hungry travelers on the Mother Road. The long-standing structure went through several name changes and uses over the years,<sup>195</sup> but today it documents the fascinating history of the area, from its Times Beach days to its improbable environmental recovery. The building is separated from the rest of the park by the Meramec River. Until recently, guests to the Route 66 State Park could travel from the visitor center to the main recreation areas by driving over the Old Route 66 Bridge. The historic bridge had been slowly deteriorating for years, and in the fall of 2009 it was permanently closed by the Missouri Department of Transportation after failing its annual inspection. Visitors crossing from the east to the west sides of the park are now instructed to use Interstate 44. The Missouri State Department of Transportation has announced plans to tear down the old Route 66 bridge,

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<sup>193</sup>The section of Route 66 that runs through the site was constructed in the early 1930’s as Route 66 was routed to the southwest of St. Louis, over Chippewa and Watson Roads., and continuing west. The bridge on site, now closed to traffic, was built in 1931-1932 to carry Route 66 across the river and around the town of Times Beach.

<sup>194</sup>Route 66 State Park, Eureka, MO. Site maintained by Groundspeak, Inc. 2010.  
[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM4YTN\\_Route\\_66\\_State\\_Park\\_Eureka\\_MO](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM4YTN_Route_66_State_Park_Eureka_MO)

<sup>195</sup>The building which houses the Route 66 State Park visitor center was built in 1935. It was home to four different Route 66 businesses. It operated as the Bridgehead Inn in 1935. Steiny’s Inn opened in 1946 and was open until 1972. The Bridgehead Inn name came back after Steiny’s Inn closed, and the building became the Galley West in 1980. The building later became the headquarters for the Times Beach cleanup. When the park opened in 1999, the building became the Route 66 State Park visitor center.



however, the Route 66 community is hoping to stave off that fate and hopes that the bridge will be preserved for pedestrian use as was done with the old Chain of Rocks Bridge at St. Louis.

The park's signature Route 66 Exhibit is housed in the visitor center; it is very rich and the following conveys an overview:

The exhibit first describes the development of Route 66 from a national perspective, and then details Route 66 as "Missouri's Main Street".

A chronology of Route 66 is then presented. This includes a "before 1920s chronology of precedents to Route 66 before it came into being, followed by presentations on large boards of the historical highlights of the Route by decade from the 1920s through the 1980s. Interspersed in this timeline presentation are period artifacts, such as an original postcard (a 1930s proclaiming "Greetings from America's Main Street US 66 Scenic Missouri" and a rendition of Bobby Troupe's iconic 1946 song "Get your kicks on Route 66.

In presenting the Mother Road's historical chronology, the museum includes many types of maps. One encompasses famous sites along the Route. There are also one-of-a-kind Times Beach maps and historical materials such as the original town's subdivision plan prepared by the Saint Louis Times in 1925.

A plethora of memorabilia from Route 66 are presented. Examples include the following:

1. The distinctive Route 66 highway label and shields for the eight Mother Road states.
2. A vintage gravity flow gas pump and Burma-Shave sign.
3. Campbell's 66. Campbell's 66 was a trucking company that ran on 66 and the Interstates from 1926 until 1986. They were known for their camel mascot "Snortin' Norton," and their motto "Humpin' to Please."
4. All types of vintage Route 66 souvenirs, including some from the Buffalo Ranch, which once existed along 66 in Oklahoma.
5. Examples of various Route 66 signs.
6. Route 66 motels/hotels and restaurants such as the Pennant Hotel (Rolla, MO), the Coral Court (St. Louis, MO) and the Brighthouse Inn (Times Beach, MO).
7. Philips 66 Petroleum Company sign and Yamaha Route 66 motorcycle.
8. Road remnants, such as an original granite bridge ID marker from the first clover leaf interchange crest of the Mississippi.
9. Pictures and maps of tourist hotspots located on or near Route 66 (e.g. Onondaga Cave and Meramec Caverns) and much else (e.g. "red light" locations on the Route, and a pamphlet describing "Radium Water Baths" from the Hotel Will Rogers).



Visitor center at the Route 66 State Park (formerly Steiny's Inn)

Source: U.S. National Park Service



The Route 66 Exhibit in the park's visitor center

Source: U.S. National Park Service

## LOCAL IMPACTS

Visitors to the Route 66 State Park fall into two distinct categories: those that come to take advantage of the extensive outdoor recreational opportunities offered by the park and those that come to see the exhibits at the visitor's center. A total of 241,487 people visited the park in 2006. Of the 241,487 total visitors in 2006, a total of 224,079 were visiting the park's outdoor recreational areas, up from around 200,000 in earlier years, and 17,408 people were visiting the visitor center. A range of about 17,000 to 30,000 visitors have come to the visitor center annually over the last decade.

To get a better understanding of the Route 66 oriented visitor center patrons, Rutgers University examined the line-by-line entries of those signing the visitor center logbook between June 2007 and August 2009. There were a total of 4,269 entries,<sup>196</sup> with 3,426 (80.3%) coming from the United States and 843 entries (19.7%) coming from abroad. Of the 3,426 domestic entries, the largest number 1,473 (or 34.5% of the total 4,269 entries) were from the home state of Missouri, but persons came from every state of the union, both near (Illinois: 289 entries, Indiana: 157 entries, Ohio: 156 entries, Texas: 130 entries, and Michigan: 100 entries) and far (California: 104 entries, Florida: 67 entries, New York: 44 entries, and a total of 10 entries from Hawaii and Alaska).

There were also a variety of international travelers. Of these 843 international logbook entries (of the total 4,269 entries), the largest contingent came from Europe (e.g., England: 161 entries, Italy: 114 entries, Germany: 86 entries, Norway: 68 entries, and France: 53 entries), but people trekked from literally around the globe (e.g. visitors from Israel, Malaysia, Korea, Panama, and the Philippines).

The visitor center entries examined by Rutgers University also at times contained visitor comments and we present a selection of these. U.S. based traveler comments included as examples, "Route 66 Rocks!" "I rode the entire Route 66 on my bike!" and "Heading all the way to Santa Monica pier." Some international visitor comments included: "Getting my kicks on 66 going west," "Approximately 400 miles so far and we only got lost 4 times," "Stupenda la 66" and "Thanks so much for keeping it [Route 66] alive!"

While Eureka receives tourists for many reasons (e.g., dog shows and a nearby Six Flags amusement park) the town does benefit from Route 66 travelers. A representative from a popular local eatery, Super Smokers BBQ, said "Route 66 travelers had a noticeable impact on the business. In a lot of our off-season time, most of the customers are Route 66 travelers. Without local business and Route 66 it would be hard for us to survive."

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<sup>196</sup> Note: the logbook entries are far less than the total number of visitors and are likely not a representative sample.

## **“FOUR WOMEN ON THE ROUTE”(KAN-O-TEX) OF GALENA, KANSAS**

### **HOST COMMUNITY OVERVIEW**

#### **Geographic Information**

Galena is a small town in southeastern Kansas. It is located in Cherokee County. Galena is in a relatively remote part of the country; it is 70 miles northwest of Fayetteville, Arizona (pop. 58,047), and 97 miles northeast of Tulsa, Oklahoma (393,097).



#### **Population Statistics**

As of 2000, Galena had a population of 3,287, a slight 1% decrease from the population in 1990. The population in 2009 was 3,119, a 5% decrease from the 2000 population. As of 2000, Galena had 1,471 housing units and a population density of 678 people per square mile.

#### **Host Community Overview (based on the 2000 Census)**

##### *Demographic Information*

The median age of Galena residents (36.2 years) is close to the statewide median age (35.2 years), although the proportion of senior citizens in Galena (15.7%) is slightly above the state average (13.3%). As of 2000, Galena had a mostly Caucasian population (92.4%), with a Hispanic population (12.5%) that was higher than the statewide proportion of Hispanics (7%).

<b>Demographic Indicator</b>	<b>Galena, KS</b>	<b>Kansas</b>
Median Age	36.2	35.2
% 65+ years	15.7	13.3
% White	92.4	87.9
% Hispanic	12.5	7

### *Socioeconomic Data*

With a median income of \$25,401, Galena is significantly behind the Kansas median income of \$40,624. Higher education in Galena is lacking in comparison with the rest of the state; 31.6% of residents statewide have earned a college degree (including Associates) as opposed to only 9% of the Galena population. As expected, the poverty rate of Galena (23.6%) exceeds the statewide poverty level (9.9%) by over ten percent, and the unemployment rate in Galena (5.7%) is slightly higher than the Kansas rate of 2.8%. Over three-tenths (33.9%) of the Galena population are employed in production, transportation, and moving related occupations.

<b>Socioeconomic Indicator</b>	<b>Galena, KS</b>	<b>Kansas</b>
Median income	\$25,401	\$40,624
% With college degree	9.0	31.6
Most common occupation	production, transportation, and moving	management/ professional
Most common industry	manufacturing	education, health & social services
% Poverty	23.6	9.9
% Unemployed	5.7	2.8

### *Housing Data*

Most of Galena's housing units (81.3%) are single-unit detached structures, which is nearly 10% higher than the state rate of 72.4%. The proportion of owner occupied units is within 5% of the statewide rate (66.2% versus 69.2%). Most of the housing units in Galena were built before 1940, which reflects overall older housing than statewide averages (1940-1959).

<b>Housing Indicator</b>	<b>Galena, KS</b>	<b>Kansas</b>
% Owner occupied homes	66.2	69.2
% Single-unit detached homes	81.3	72.4
Decade most homes built	1939 or earlier	1940-1959



## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: 4 WOMEN ON THE ROUTE

Part of the charm of Route 66 is that even its most modest appearing businesses can boast extraordinary aspirations. Four Women on the Route, in Galena, Kansas, certainly demonstrates a drive to succeed, not only for its own business purposes, but for the benefit of the entire town. Although Galena's former affluence may have waned, its rich history— which includes Route 66— still remains. The owners of Four Women on the Route hope to capitalize on their town's interesting saga to help Galena prosper once more and run a successful business of their own.

To better contextualize Four Women on the Route, it is instructive to briefly review Galena's history.

In 1877, rich deposits of lead were discovered in the Galena area— which humans had actually utilized for quite some time, as the area's Native Americans once used the lead to manufacture bullets at camp fires. Industry was quick to materialize: by June 1877, two rival mining companies formed and they, in turn, established two rival town sites: Empire City (north of the Short Creek) and Galena (south of the creek)—the latter town named for the abundance of the bluish-grey lead. The two companies and their respective hometowns competed furiously, at times bordering on a war-like state (e.g. the towns built stockade fences, raided one another, and a connecting street was named “Red Hot”). Ultimately, Galena persevered; it annexed Empire City in 1910, during which time Galena's population numbered 6,906. In time, Galena's population swelled to over 30,000 inhabitants, and the booming mining community boasted multiple banks, three newspapers, and even an opera house. Contributing to Galena's growth was the opening of Route 66 throughout Kansas in 1926 and “Galena, like other small towns along the Mother Road, responded with services to the many travelers, bringing with it additional prosperity to the thriving town.”<sup>197</sup>

Tensions occasionally disrupted the stability of the town. Galena's legacy of fisticuffs resurfaced in the 1930's during a series of mining strikes, and in one altercation Route 66 was blocked and closed down by striking workers (supposedly, the only time the Route as an active highway ever closed). Fortunately, the discord was temporary and mining continued until the 1970s—a run that yielded almost 3 million tons of zinc and 700,000 tons of lead being collectively extracted in Galena and the surrounding Cherokee County.<sup>198</sup>

In its heyday, Galena supported many businesses, some of which boasted colorful proprietors. Take the corner of Ford and Main Street, where the “Steffleback House” once operated—a bordello that catered to the wanton whims of wealthy local proprietors and miners. Both the establishment and its owner, Ma Steffleback, are shrouded in scandal; in a particularly brutal

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<sup>197</sup>“Kansas Legends: Galena—a lead mining maven.” Legends of America. Site created by Legends of America. 2010. <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/ks-galena.html>

<sup>198</sup> <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/ks-galena.html>

twist, the madam turned murderess was said to have discreetly robbed and killed nearly 30 of her patrons, hiding her loot in an undisclosed location that treasure hunters still search for to this day.

It was during Galena's more prosperous period that the site which currently houses "Four Women" was built. Shortly after the opening of Route 66 in Galena in the late 1920's, the Kan-o-tex filling station known as Little's Station opened for business. It operated profitably from 1930 to 1943; it subsequently operated in the 1950s as Hays's Filling Station. Often parked at the filling station was a 1951 International Harvester L-170 tow truck, never receiving much attention until many years later when it was to become an iconic celebrity for Galena.

In accordance with the adage that nothing gold can stay, the prosperous mining industry would eventually leave Galena, as would Route 66 traffic upon the highway's decommissioning in the 1980s. Galena's attractiveness was further tarnished with the discovery of severe, widespread pollution. Galena was within the approximately 2,500 square mile Tri-State mining district (in southwestern Kansas, northwestern Missouri, and northeastern Oklahoma), which was contaminated with piles of waste mine "tailings" (a byproduct of zinc and lead mining). Wind further distributed the metallic dust across the land. In addition, there are dozens of abandoned mine shafts that are structurally unsound, which has resulted in several dangerous mine collapses. Since 1993, the area has required extensive cleanup efforts from the Environmental Protection Agency. With these unfortunate developments, Galena's population dropped to 3,000—a tenth of its historical peak. It was no surprise then that the previously described business in Ford and Main Streets in Galena closed their doors in the midst of the city's almost literal implosion (one business, the Green Parrot Bar, did in fact somewhat implode from the collapse of a mine that sat beneath the property in 2006).<sup>199</sup> In the parlance of Rutgers University colleague, Frank Popper, places like Galena, in the nation's Great Plains states, would be best depopulated and turned into a vast nature preserve termed "Buffalo Commons."

A quartet of ladies had a different vision for Galena than lumbering bison. Enter "stage left"—four women with a passion for their hometown of Galena and for Route 66. Their shared enthusiasm and vision for Galena ran counter to the town's economic condition. The four women—Betty Courtney, Melba Rigg, Renee Charles, and Judy Courtney—sought to purchase a business that once attracted Route 66 travelers and revive it as an attraction for modern day Route 66 tourists. Their calling, "Four Women on the Route" would be a small but bold enterprise considering the area's bleak business climate. In 2006, they purchased the long-closed Kan-O-Tex station and restored it, even bringing back two Kan-O-Tex gasoline pumps. Their original plan was to use the building as a farmer's market, but that was superseded by a more ambitious restoration and the restored building is now used for "selling snacks, Route 66 and (movie) *Cars* items, including several made by local craftsman and artists.

Although the Disney/Pixar film *Cars* draws from many aspects of Route 66, it has an especially significant tie to Four Women on the Route. In 2001, Joe Ranft, Pixar's "Head of Story" visited the community and saw a rusted old (1951) mining-related truck. That truck became the

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<sup>199</sup> Galena Lead Superfund site: <http://www.engg.ksu.edu/chsr/outreach/tosc/sites/galena.html>

inspiration for one of *Cars* characters—Tow Mater.” The vehicle, dubbed by the Four Women as “Tow Tater (for copyright purposes) sits proudly by the restored Kan-O-Tex station and is available for hire (Clay Tow Tater crafts are available for sale at the restored station).

Our women entrepreneurs have ambitious plans for the town of Galena, and they are busy restoring other buildings in the immediate vicinity. The former Steffleback bordello is slated for a bed and breakfast (in preservation parlance, preserving the “historic use” as well as the historic structure), and a farmers’ market and a stone fire pizza establishment will be housed in currently closed out-buildings by the station.

The gumption and energy behind all this activity has inspired much admiration, as is depicted in the following newspaper article:<sup>200</sup>

“Four Ladies on the Route” view this as nothing short of a calling with a “Heart” (Happy, enthusiastic, artistic, rigorous team) focus in a Route 66 community. If you think of Heart as an essence, as in “Let’s get to the heart of the matter,” these partners took on a new adventure with a filing station[...] Certainly, if you take Heart to mean spirit, as in “They put their heart into it,” then you will understand why these stakeholders put their heart on the line to achieve the needed outcomes—all for the good of this special community[...] If you take Heart to mean caring about the project, this describes each one perfectly: “they have such a big heart.” If they are not greeting tourists and showing tourists all of the neat souvenirs, they are cooking delicious hamburgers, fries and funnel cakes. No doubt many will agree Heart means hope, strength, endurance and patience to the women, as in “They have never lost heart,” and as the group celebrate the heartfelt gratitude which has been enriched by a meaningful partnership with Route 66 supporters. Each knows that as a Heart on the route they must never lose sight of their vision and must ensure that the beat goes on for the Mother Road.

Their spirit, success, and fame won the “4 women” the “New Business of the Year Award” at the 2008 annual Route 66 Festival in Litchfield, Illinois. In an event-related breakfast held in Litchfield’s Ariston Café, the “4 women” were presented with a neon sign depicting Tow Tater. That neon sign is now featured prominently in their Galena establishment.

## **LOCAL IMPACTS**

According to a Rutgers University interview, the restoration of the Kan-o-tex station took about eight months. As a family-owned business, the women run the business with some help (e.g. a cook and assistant cook). The most significant economic impact involves the number of visitors to “4 Women” and subsequently Galena. According to a Rutgers interview, “4 Women” is graced with an array of both domestic and foreign tourists, coming from as far as South Africa and other countries around the globe. The impacts of such patronage were described to Rutgers as follows: “The town [...] was deserted for a while but as Kan-o-tex was restored, it brought business [and hope] back to the town again.” Local establishments besides the “4 Women”

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<sup>200</sup><http://4womenontheroute.com/News.html>

benefit as visitors drawn to this new Route 66 icon patronize other Galena establishments as well, such as the Chopsticks restaurant and the Luck Miner Deli.

In short, Galena was well along the way to becoming a physically and economically abandoned former mining town and bypassed Route 66 community, but thanks to “4 Women” and other Route 66 attractions that has not happened, and nascent economic activity has taken hold once again in Galena. The appeal of “4 Women” to families and Route 66 enthusiasts from around the globe is evident from the following description by newsperson, Roger McKinney:

Melba Rigg [one of the “Four Women”] on Wednesday was talking up Galena and its Route 66 connection to visitors from Palm Springs, Calif. “I’m bound and determined to get Galena back on the map,” Rigg told them[...]. On Thursday, C.H. and Donna Harvey and their son, David, from Texas, stopped by in a 1995 Mustang Cobra made to resemble Lightning McQueen, a character in the Disney/Pixar movie *Cars*. C.H. Harvey pulled the car up beside the truck that inspired the Mater character in the movie. The truck belongs to the four women. “When you put smiles on kids’ faces, that’s what it’s all about,” C.H. Harvey said. Word spread around Galena, and dozens of people gathered with their children and grandchildren to see Lightning McQueen. Lou and Jo Ann Molinar, of Joplin, Mo., were in Galena to talk with Rigg about scheduling an appearance by the truck at their Fourth of July party at their house on Schifferdecker Avenue. Lou Molinar said they decided to hang around and see the car. The crowd at the gas station caught the attention of Harold deBock, 61, director of a market research firm in Holland, who is motorcycling Route 66. He stopped and took a few photos of the scene.

“It’s been a dream for a couple of years now,” deBock said of his trip. “This whole Route 66 thing in Europe is pretty big” [...] “We’re really wanting to get Route 66 through Galena improved,” Charles said. She said the viaduct and some of the culverts have been preserved, but are in disrepair. Rigg said recent visitors have included a group of Norwegian women on motorcycles, a Belgian photographer, and tourists from France and Germany. Rigg said she is considering studying foreign languages to assist international visitors. She said she was surprised one day by an Irish television crew filming a Route 66 documentary. Down the road, members of the Baxter Springs [Kansas, near Galena] Historical Society had a work day Wednesday to refurbish a former Phillips 66 station as a tourist center they hope to open this fall.<sup>201</sup>

Galena visitors from California, Texas, Missouri, Holland, Ireland, and other distant countries point to “4 Women” — as depicted by McKinney— as seeds for future economic development in the area. Interestingly, a new Galena business is contemplated by “2 sons” of the “4 women:”

When international visitors traveling Route 66 stop at Four Women on the Route, they often ask the location of the nearest pub.

There isn't one in Galena, but there will be. Its target market is those international and domestic Route 66 roadies.

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<sup>201</sup>Roger McKinney, “Unfinished tourist center already attracting crowds.” *The Joplin Globe*. June 28, 2007.

A handful of convention-goers to the Tri-State Route 66 International Adventure recently helped Danny Charles and T.J. Davis clean up the 1895 building that will become their pub and pizzeria on historic Route 66 in downtown Galena.

It's an example of how towns and businesses are leveraging their connection to the Mother Road.

Charles, 27, is the son of Renee Charles, and Davis, 30, is the son of Melba Rigg, two of the Four Women on the Route. Four Women on the Route, at First and Main streets in Galena, sells Route 66 souvenirs and has a restaurant in a restored Route 66 gas station. It has become a regular stop for Route 66 roadies.

Davis said they were grateful for the help from the Route 66 convention-goers.

"These people are passionate about the route," he said. He said they hope to open the business in the fall.

Area businesses, towns, counties and states market their Route 66 attractions, but an important aspect of the marketing is word-of-mouth among roadies.<sup>202</sup>



4 Women on the Route

Source: [www.legendsofamerica.com](http://www.legendsofamerica.com)

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<sup>202</sup> Roger McKinney. "States look for new ways to promote Route 66 attractions." *USA Today*. June 10, 2010. [http://travel.usatoday.com/destinations/2010-06-26-route-66-attractions\\_N.htm](http://travel.usatoday.com/destinations/2010-06-26-route-66-attractions_N.htm)





The inspiration for "Tow-Mater" from the Disney/Pixar movie, *Cars*.

Source: U.S. National Park Service

# THE ROUND BARN AND POPS OF ARCADIA, OKLAHOMA

## HOST COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

### Geographic Information

Arcadia is a small town in central Oklahoma. It is located in Oklahoma County, and is part of the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. It is 8 miles from Edmond, OK (pop. 68,315) and 17 miles from Oklahoma City (pop. 506,132).



### Population Statistics

As of 2000, Arcadia had a population of 278; a 13% decrease from the city's population in 1990. As of 2008, the population was estimated to be 281, a very small increase (1%) from 2000. As of 2000, Arcadia had 126 housing units and a population density of 181 people per square mile.

### Community Profile (From the 2000 Census)

#### *Demographic Information*

Compared to Oklahoma's statewide average age of 35.5 years and about one-eighth (13.2%) 65 years or older, Arcadia's residents are older overall (41.9 median age and 16.5% 65 years or older). Arcadia's racial composition (55.1% white) is markedly different from Oklahoma state averages (80.3% white). Arcadia has fewer Hispanics (0.4%) relative to the representation of this group statewide (5.2%).

<b>Demographic Indicator</b>	<b>Arcadia, OK</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>
Median Age	41.9	35.5
% 65+ years	16.5	13.2
% White	55.1	80.3
% Hispanic	0.4	5.2

### *Socioeconomic Data*

The median household income in Arcadia is \$24,844, which is 25% less than the state median income of \$33,400. Arcadia is slightly below state averages in educational attainment; 19% versus 26% statewide have earned a college degree. Just over a quarter of Arcadia’s population (26%) holds an occupation in sales and office work. The Arcadia unemployment rate is significantly higher than the state rate (22% versus 3%). *Note: the above statistics reflect data collected in 2000; Arcadia’s economic position has improved since then, in part due to its Route 66 attractions, such as POPS, which opened in 2007.*

<b>Socioeconomic Indicator</b>	<b>Arcadia, OK</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>
Median income	\$24,844	\$33,400
% With college degree	19	25.7
Most common occupation	sales and office	management and professional
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services
% Poverty	29.8	14.7
% Unemployed	22	3.3

### *Housing Data*

Almost all of Arcadia’s housing units (92.4%) are single-unit detached structures, which is over 20% higher than the state rate of 71.4%. About seven of every ten households in Arcadia owns rather than rents their dwelling—about the same as the homeownership rate statewide. Most of the homes in Arcadia are collectively older than the statewide housing stock, having been built two decades prior to the statewide peak of home construction during the 1970’s.

<b>Housing Indicator</b>	<b>Arcadia, OK</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>
% Owner occupied homes	70.4	68.4
% Single-unit detached homes	92.4	71.4
Decade most homes built	1940-1959	1970-1979

## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: THE ROUND BARN OF ARCADIA

*The following excerpt is from The Round Barn of Arcadia, Arcadia Historical and Preservation Society, 2006 and Arcadia Historical Society webpage for the Old Round Barn.*<sup>203</sup>

In the heart of Arcadia, Oklahoma, on historical Route 66, stands the Round Barn. It was built in 1898 by a very innovative educator and farmer, William Harrison Odor.

When the barn was ready for the floor in the loft, the men who had been working on the barn, talked about what a nice place it would be for dances. These three men said they would pay the difference between the cost of the rough floor and smooth tongue and groove floor if they could hold three dances there. It was agreed upon and several dances were held there when the work was completed (about 1898).

In 1902 the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas railroad was built through Odors land. William Odor and some of the railroad officials met at his home to decide where to build a town. They organized a town site company and laid out the lots, streets, etc. The town was called Arcadia. In the mid 1940's, the barn was sold to Frank and Katy Vrana and was used as a hay barn and work place.

The last remaining wooden round barn in Oklahoma perched shabbily off Oklahoma Route 66 in Arcadia for years. People would photograph it from every angle, knowing it would not be standing much longer. Some of the circular planks were starting to pull away from the outside. A section of the domed top had caved in from too much snow and ice during the winter... [In 1988, the barn's immense 60' diameter roof finally collapsed. The cost of repair: a staggering \$165,000.]

Luke Robison a retired builder and carpenter read a newspaper account of the barns' terrible condition that five decades of deterioration had exacted on it. Alarmed by the barn's plight, Robison went to the Arcadia community and visited from house to house to get acquainted with the people. He found interest in saving the barn, particularly from a lady named Beverly White. They contacted the owners of the building and land (the Vrana sisters, who were the last to use the barn for agriculture purposes). They agreed to donate it to the Arcadia Historical and Preservation Society in 1988.

The Society was formed by Luke and Anna Robison and Beverly White. "I thought I was just fixing up an old barn," Luke Robison understates. The seventy-eight year-old retired carpenter chooses to ignore the fact that his restoration of the Round Barn on Route 66 salvaged the most powerful reminder of Arcadia's frontier roots and probably the most recognized historic site in the state.

Robison grew up practical and self-reliant on a cotton farm until his family gave it up in the 1920's. At the age of twelve he set up a shop in his father's garage to teach himself

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<sup>203</sup>"The Round Barn." *Arcadia Historical Society*, 2006. And <http://www.arcadiaroundbarn.org/>



woodworking skills. He carried out jobs for the Works Progress Administration, assembled gliders for the military, and then became a self-employed carpenter, specializing in cabinetry and house construction.

“We had some contractors bid on restoring the barn,” says Robison. “Some of them didn’t think it could be done. Some did. And some of them suggested we just tear it down and start over. Of course, we didn’t want to do that because it would be a new round barn and not an old round barn.” When others might be bogged down in over-analysis and doubt, Robison forged ahead with a singleness of purpose.

The Round Barn represents Robison’s first historic preservation project. He says that schooling held little interest for him, seemingly unaware of the apparent contradiction when he describes himself as “the one who always raised my hand in history class.” He occupied the earlier years of his retirement by researching authoring, and publishing histories of Oklahoma’s brick manufacturers and independent telephone companies.

It was, however, a seasoned carpenter’s intuitive fascination with an architectural curiosity that lured Robison to Oklahoma’s only truly round barn [most other supposed round barns are actually hexagonal or octagonal], which has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1977. With a diameter of sixty feet and a hemispherical dome that peaks forty-three feet above the ground, the Round Barn dominates a cluster of gritty little buildings, some of which remain from Arcadia’s cotton-trading heyday. In the barn’s lack of conventional structural components, the continuous round wall have no top and sole plates, for example, and what little bracing it has angles in the same direction. Robison detects as much raw resourcefulness as craftsmanship. “It’s rough,” Robison admits, “but I’ve never seen any work like it.”



The Round Barn

Source: U.S. National Park Service





Round Barn interior.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

Robison himself first chanced upon the Round Barn while exploring Route 66 on a date with Anna [his current wife] in the 1930s. (They steered clear of the barn dances, he explains, because “our folks were very strict about that stuff.”) By the time Robison read a newspaper account of the barn’s condition five decades later, the years had exacted a precious toll. Arcadia never rebounded from a fire that consumed half of the town in 1924. Interstate highways robbed Route 66 of its vitality. The Round Barn, once the materialization of robust spirit, degenerated into a conspicuous symbol of decline. The building listed severely upon a crumbling foundation, its structural integrity undermined by a large incision made in its side to accommodate machinery. Dimples that formed in the weekend roof collected rainfall which, in turn, hastened deterioration.

Any hopes that the members of the resulting Arcadia Historical and Preservation Society entertained of contracting the restoration soon collapsed on a windy day in June 1988 when, as a witness described it to the *Daily Oklahoman*, the barn dome “just kind of sighed and fell in-like a soufflé. Everybody was looking at their watches and noticing the time. Everybody was talking about it and was saddened by it.”

Robison admits that “our feathers fell on that.” With contractors estimates already running into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, Robison had to tell the society that the only way they could ever do anything with the barn was to do it themselves.

Robison’s hands-on orchestration of a restoration that would have challenged experienced professionals demanded dedication from an unlikely assemblage of preservation novices. “Luke has the ability to get people to volunteer,” says Bill Peavler, a former senior architect of the Oklahoma Historical Society. “He doesn’t twist arms. People understand his sincerity and before they know it say, ‘How can we help?’ ” An “over the hill” senior 60’s group—not allergic to hard work or fund raisers—came together to save the barn.

In some instances, particularly when tasks called for heavy equipment, Robison received favors returned from his days in the construction business. From the society’s membership, Robison mustered the front lines of the restoration, the men who carried out the day-to-day chores of hauling hammering. “Most of them that worked out here were retirees like me,” Robison chuckles. “So we called ourselves the Over-the-Hill Gang.” Sally Ferrell remembers rounding the bends where Route 66 slices through Arcadia during the restoration. “I’d look up at the barn and see Luke working on top of that dome.

This is a man in his seventies, mind you, and he'd have some of his volunteer carpenters with him and I'd just say, 'Oh, dear Lord...'

Their lack of restoration experience didn't prevent Robison and his crew from completing an ingenious and faithful restoration. They sifted through the rubble for clues about construction techniques. Some circumstances challenged their resourcefulness. To return the barn to plumb, for example, Robison girded the barn with utility poles planted in the ground. Around the perimeter of the poles he looped a cable attached to turn buckles located opposite the direction of the tilt. By gradually increasing the tension, he pulled the barn upright.

Robison went to great lengths to retain original material. Where decay and destruction dictated replacement, he matched materials and methods as closely as possible. Robison utilized replacement studs and splices from new lumber. The lumber was milled with equipment that is believed to be similar to the equipment that milled Odor's lumber. When the siding pattern proved obsolete, Robison took samples to a mill that ground blades so that newly milled siding perfectly matched the original.

The dome's rafters tested Robison's commitment. To fashion the quarter-circle rafters for the roof, Odor had soaked long spliced lengths of two-by-four inch oak lumber, still green and somewhat pliable, in a creek. By setting pairs of posts into the ground at intervals that created the proper curve Odor, "the original builder," constructed a jig, or form.

He then wedged the soaked lumber into the curve of the jig. When dry, they retained the quarter-circle arc. Robison and his crew replicated the process, even going so far as to soak the lumber, setting shorter lengths in a discarded filling-station underground tank and longer lengths in a lake.

Legend holds that Odor's men balked at scaling the structure to tie the rafters, so Odor himself climbed up. (The means by which both the rafter and Odor were raised have been obscured.) When the critical moment arrived to repeat the task during restoration, "we sort of respectfully said, 'Luke, that's your job,'" recalls Eula Teuscher, the society's current president. Robison isn't sure whether he accepted the invitation out of a sense of honor or of duty; "Maybe it was just stupidity." After installing ninety-four rafters-each lifted in place by a crane, the men attached bands of sheeting from rafter to rafter, seated on installed pieces while working above their heads.

Robison relinquished the task of installing wooden shingles to professional roofers while he turned his attention to rebuilding the second floor, which the elements destroyed after the roof collapsed. "People say the floor looks just like the original," Robison says. "A few people said they remembered the platform, but when I asked them what it looked like, they said, 'Well, I don't know.' I guess they were too busy dancing."

The 60's group quickly acknowledges that without countless hours of volunteer work and generous donations, which ranged from a few pennies up to seven thousand dollars, their project would never have been completed. Business men with heavy equipment and

operators seemed to know just when their help was needed most. The Arcadia Round Barn was completely restored and opened to the public in 1992. It is estimated that between 500-600 people joined the celebration on Dedication Day.

Another great celebration occurred later. 1998 was the 100th year that the barn has been in existence.. Two permanent front markers were placed on the Wall of Friends. One was in memory of Luke Robinson and the other for the Vrana family for their generous gift.

The hands-on local restoration of the Round Barn of Arcadia has won the admiration of professional preservationists. In 1993, the National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded the saving of the 1898 Arcadia Round barn its national honors award for “outstanding crafts and preservation.” The “Over the Hill” Gang restored the barn over four years for a total cost of only \$65,000—about one third the original estimate.

## **LOCAL IMPACTS**

Today, the Round Barn continues to host local Arcadia functions and is a popular tourist site and gift shop<sup>204</sup> along Historic Route 66. In 2007, it hosted approximately 5,850 visitors from all 50 states and 44 foreign countries. This was a higher number of visitors compared to previous years because POPS (a nearby new and major Route 66-themed business that is described shortly) opened its doors in 2007. Rutgers University has obtained from the Round Barn detailed data from the log book of visitors as of spring-summer 2007. Each visitor entry in the logbook was then recorded by Rutgers. Of the 2,589 visitors to this historic site as of spring-summer 2007 (for which visitor log book data were available), 2,158 (83%) were from the United States and 431 (17%) were from abroad. Of the 2,158 domestic visitors, the greatest proportion of visitors (1,305 or 60%) lived in Oklahoma; however, 853 visitors (or 40%) came from the rest of the United States, including travelers from distant states, such as 81 from California and 30 from Florida. International Round Barn visitors came from around the globe, including 79 from Germany, 57 from England, 55 from Norway, and 39 from Italy. Long distance honors for international travelers coming to the Round Barn go to hardy souls from Australia, New Zealand and China. Kudos are also in order to those coming from such a long haul to Oklahoma and different countries as Iceland, Saudi Arabia, and Poland to name just a few examples.

Not surprisingly, local Arcadia businesses ranging from the Biker Shak (a motorcycle apparel store) to 2 Brother Pizza secure sales from the visitors to the Round Barn and others trekking on the Mother Road.

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<sup>204</sup> The Round Barn gift shop had an estimated \$25,000 in sales, the loft rental generated \$7,300, and miscellaneous donations amounted to \$4,000.

## HISTORIC RESOURCE: POPS

Oklahoma provides a diverse setting for its portion of Route 66, from scenic landscapes characterized by natural beauty, to man-made structures that amply exude character. POPS personifies the latter category. A relatively new addition to Oklahoma’s historic Route 66 landscape and just down the road from the Round Barn, POPS is one of the most distinctive features of the small town of Arcadia— as it might be anywhere for that matter. Fronting POPS is a 66 foot tall, four ton steel structure, decked out with enough LEDs to make Rockefeller Center blush. It is shaped like a bottle.

A soda pop bottle to be exact.

The effervescent monument, visible from miles away, beckons drivers to stop in for a bite to eat and a bottle of soda pop.

POPS is a gas station, restaurant, and convenience store, centered on the theme of soda pop. POPS was conceived by renowned architect and Oklahoma native Rand Elliot, and is owned by Chairman and CEO of Chesapeake Energy, Aubrey K. McClendon. POPS opened in August of 2007.



The POPS 66-foot soda pop bottle.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

From its colorful interior to its retro space age exterior, POPS is certainly a visual sensation:

POPS Oklahoma red rock and glass walls soar up three stories in the modernistic structure. The walls are lined with glass shelves covered by rows and rows of bottled soda pop arranged by color. The sunlight streaming through the bright colors turns it into a stained glass display. Blue soda, green soda, neon pink soda, purple soda... there are lots to choose from.<sup>205</sup>

POPS discreetly (sometimes less so) references Route 66 with built in puns that are both amusing and ingenious. Its signature LED soda bottle is 66 feet tall. The building is constructed at a 66 degree angle to the road. It originally contained 66 parking spaces

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<sup>205</sup>Granahan, Andrea. “Hop to POPS—the soda cathedral.” *RV Life*. 2008. Site Maintained by RV Life Magazine. 2010.

(before high customer traffic dictated a parking lot expansion), and “the steel girders reaching the length of the building symbolize the many steel bridges on the Route.”<sup>206</sup>

Though its location is not in a highly visible area, Arcadia being 20 miles from any major city, POPS remains a highly visible structure that has had a national audience on several occasions. The Today Show, MSNBC, CNN, CBS, Food & Wine, and Southern Living Magazine have all featured POPS. In the June, 2008 issue, Travel + Leisure declared POPS as one of the Top 50 places to visit in the U.S., as well as one of the “Best New Sweet Stops” in the country.<sup>207</sup>

Along with an All-American burger, fries, and milkshake menu, POPS offers more than 500 varieties of soda pop from around the world. Carbonated standards like Coca-Cola and Pepsi are available, but so are bottles of Leninade Soviet Style Soda, Jackson Hole Huckleberry Soda, and Rejuvenizer from the Scary People.

But if you look past the bustling tables and the packed parking lot, you’ll see that POPS is much more than pop.

“The landmark architecture behind the creation of POPS reflects the hope and enthusiasm for Route 66’s future role in our country and represents the spirit and individuality that made Route 66 the adventure highway many enthusiasts enjoy today,” explained Rand Elliott. “POPS’ essence is the spirit of Route 66 in today’s language. The key to POPS is that visitors experience the past and leave with the sense they have discovered a new destination and adventure along the way. POPS’ role as a gas station, restaurant/soda fountain and store represent a homage to the past, present and future of Route 66.”<sup>208</sup>

POPS’ design is a modern take on an historic setting. The edgy steel and glass structure with a smooth black and white interior is a fresh sight on Route 66, a sharp contrast to the typical home-spun (yet still appealing) attractions found elsewhere on the road. Ultra-modern gas pumps at POPS are dwarfed by a 100 foot steel cantilever awning, a tribute, as noted earlier, to the many old steel bridges found on the Mother Road.

The façade of the restaurant, shelved with thousands of bottles of soda from floor to ceiling, is a kaleidoscope of neon pinks and blues and yellows that is sure to intrigue any passerby.

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid

<sup>207</sup> Ockershauser, Jessica. “Route 66 Icon Celebrates Milestone.” *Pops*. 2008. 04 August 2008. Accessed 23 September 2009. <http://www.pops66.com/fileadmin/images/PDFs/BIRTHDAYRELEASE.8.08.pdf>

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.





POPS under the canopy.

Source: U.S. National Park Service



POPS' interior.

Source: Randy von Liski/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

As stated by POPS owner Aubrey K. McClendon:<sup>209</sup>

The mystique of Route 66 remains strong even today, captivating people from around the world. Arcadia is an unpolished gem on Route 66 and it still reflects the wonderful charm of the old-road landscape. While diners, cafes, motels and gas stations represent many of the bona fide Route 66 landmarks, POPS...add[s] a new dimension to the lure of the Mother Road by blending the character of the past with a promise of a bright future for the historic highway.

## LOCAL IMPACT

By all measures, POPS has been a remarkable success and a financial boon to Arcadia. In August 2009, POPS general manager Marty Doepke said that POPS has served more than 900,000 people since opening in 2007, averaging 1,000 customers per day. The bulk of POPS' customers come from the Greater Oklahoma region, though POPS has successfully attracted visitors from countries like Spain, Germany, China, and Japan. Doepke estimates that there is a 50/50 split between regulars and new customers.

POPS is a major draw that in turn encourages visitation to other nearby Route 66 attractions. In Arcadia, a town of only about 300 people, POPS is one of the most economically beneficial establishments because of its large tourist pull.

In 2008, The Edmond Sun reported that Arcadia's sales tax revenue had doubled since POPS opened the year before, from \$59,137 between August 2006 and January 2007 to \$123,365 for those same months between 2007 and 2008. According to Arcadia's Mayor Marilyn Murrel, the town leadership had anticipated only a 25 percent increase in tax revenue due to the opening of POPS and other local businesses, so the extra funds were "a pleasant surprise."<sup>210</sup> Arcadia is "considering how to best utilize the additional sales tax revenue from POPS and other new businesses"<sup>211</sup> with one allocation slated for the town's summer youth program. Furthermore, the POPS staff is generally from the immediate area, so the establishment has contributed to Arcadia job growth as well.

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<sup>209</sup> Ockerhauser, Jessica. "Route 66 icon celebrates milestone."

<sup>210</sup> Coburn, 2008. "Arcadia's Sales Tax 'POPS' Expectations." *The Edmond Sun*. May 24, 2008. Accessed 23 September 2009. <http://www.edmondsun.com/homepage/x519229362/Arcadia-s-sales-tax-POPs-expectations?keyword=leadpicturestory>

<sup>211</sup> Coburn, James. Arcadia's Sales Tax 'POPS' Expectations." EdmondSun.com. May 24, 2008. *The Edmond Sun*. Accessed 23 September 2009.

The following was written by the POPS marketing manager, Jessica Ockershauser, about the economic contribution to POPS stemming from Route 66 tourism:

Over the past year, POPS has seen tremendous success due to not only the prime placement on Route 66 and proximity to I-35, Oklahoma's major highway, but also because of the support from the Arcadia community. The community in Arcadia has seen much growth over the past year with new businesses being built and improvements being made on historical landmarks such as the Round Barn. POPS has definitely contributed to the growth with the national publicity we have received. Individuals who might not have had Arcadia on their list of places to visit now add this to their list and they not only stop at POPS, but they also visit the Round Barn and will stop at other Arcadia businesses.

POPS definitely benefits from its location on Route 66. The idea behind POPS stemmed from the location and it was our goal to make POPS another Route 66 Icon/Destination. The support from local and national Route 66 associations has been extremely helpful in getting the word out about our new business. We do get quite a few guests that are Route 66 aficionados that are traveling down the mother road and make POPS a stop on their trip. When we opened our doors, we had that instant base of guests that love Route 66 and want to support any and all of the businesses on the mother road.

Mary Doepke, POPS general manager, has opined further regarding the relationship of the business to Route 66:

One of the reasons POPS chose to be in Arcadia is because of the highway. POPS could have done more business somewhere else, perhaps closer to a big city. Part of the appeal of POPS is that it is relatively remote and isolated. The POPS experience includes leaving the hustle and bustle of the city.

POPS was specifically planned to be in Arcadia and to be on Route 66 because there are lots of ties between its businesses and the Route. According to Mr. Doepke, Route 66 “is about nostalgia and icons; POPS shows that Route 66 is still [relevant]. It’s still out there. It’s not an old relic, it’s still living and breathing—and it’s still possible [for business owners] to be successful on the Route.”

As might be expected given POPS’ large scale of business, POPS further benefits other Arcadia businesses. The owner of 2 Brothers Pizza, a local business, said that POPS has had a significant impact on his business. He said that people are generally in Arcadia because of POPS and he held a rosy outlook for the future, calling Arcadia the next Edmond (population 65,000).

Because of POPS, other local business owners have said they have seen boosts in their clientele, including Misty Reznicek, owner of Timeless Accents, an antique and gift shop, Melody Wilson, owner of a local Subway, and Danny and Vi Davis, owner of The Windmill Shops, a shopping center located next to the historic Round Barn. While owners will not point to POPS as the only

reason why business is booming in Arcadia, they feel that POPS is an important contributing factor to their success.<sup>212</sup>

According to Vi Davis, Treasurer of Round Barn, the effects of POPS on the Round Barn have only been positive. There has been an increase in the number of visitors to the Round Barn as a result of POPS, although she did not have specific quantitative information. Additionally, more young people are starting to visit the Round Barn. The Round Barn historically appeals to older people, but as a result of POPS, there is a younger presence at the Barn. Furthermore, people who live nearby generally have not visited Arcadia, but now they are because of POPS. The Round Barn benefits from the new local interest. Clearly POPS is generating renewed interest in the Round Barn due to its proximity.

The Round Barn and POPS have a mutually beneficial relationship. They promote each other. In addition to soft promotion, POPS sells a Round Barn root beer. POPS committed to donating a portion of the proceeds to the Barn for use of the name.

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<sup>212</sup> Coburn, James. Arcadia's Sales Tax 'POPS' Expectations." EdmondSun.com. May 24, 2008. *The Edmond Sun*. Accessed 23 September 2009. <[http://www.edmondsun.com/homepage/local\\_story\\_145225929.html?keyword=leadpicturestory](http://www.edmondsun.com/homepage/local_story_145225929.html?keyword=leadpicturestory)>

## THE ROUTE 66 MUSEUM OF CLINTON, OKLAHOMA

### HOST COMMUNITY: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Clinton is a town in west-central Oklahoma. It is located in Custer County, and is about 80 miles from Oklahoma City (pop. 506,132).



Clinton was formed in 1899 under the name of Washita Junction. The name was shortly after changed to honor local judge Clinton Irwin. The land was originally territory; however, its founders were so convinced of its agricultural viability that they devised a plan to purchase land from four Indians to bypass the government stipulation that a single Indian could sell only half of his 160 acre allotment.

In its early days, Clinton prospered in the agricultural industry, and was also an important trade center. Census data shows that in 1910, Clinton had a population of 2,791, which was a growth of over 100% from a preliminary estimate just three years prior (1907 estimate counted 1,278).

Clinton has been well-served by mass transportation. In the early 1900's, several rail lines ran through Clinton, including the Blackwell, St. Louis, San Francisco, Kansas City, and the Topeka and Santa Fe. Railway. Later, the town would be at the crossroads of several major highways, including I-40, Highway 183, and Route 66, which traversed the downtown business district. Not surprisingly, Clinton is known to some as the "Hub City of Western Oklahoma.

Clinton, besides having many service stations and rest stops for Route 66 travelers, is also an important city in Route 66 preservation history as home to the National Highway 66 Association, which operated for nearly 30 years for the purpose of promoting Route 66 tourism. Clinton has had some Route 66 mainstays, once being home to Pop, Hicks, opened in 1930 and the longest running restaurant along Route 66 before it burned to the ground in 1999. Also, across from the Route 66 museum is the Tradeswinds Best Western, which has gained fame as a rest stop of Elvis Presley.



Clinton's population has grown modestly over the last century. As of 2000, Clinton had a population of 8,833; a 5% decrease from the city's population in 1990. As of 2008, the population was estimated to be 8,768, a 1% decrease from 2000.

While Clinton's population closely follows statewide age composition trends, its racial composition shows some differences, having a lower proportion of white residents and a higher proportion of Hispanics. Overall, Clinton's population earns a below state average income, and has a slightly higher poverty rate. Regarding Clinton's housing stock, the proportion of single-unit detached homes is above average for Oklahoma communities.

	Clinton, OK	Oklahoma statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	36.1	35.5	0.6
% 65+ years	17.4	13.2	4.2
% White	72.5	80.3	-7.8
% Hispanic	19	5.2	13.8
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$27,059	\$33,400	-\$6,341
% with college degree	16.3	25.7	-9.4
Most common occupation	management/ professional	management/ professional	
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	
% poverty	18.9	16.7	2.2
% unemployed	2.9	3.3	-0.4
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	63.5	68.4	-4.9
% single-unit detached homes	80.5	71.4	9.1
Decade most homes built	1940-1959	1970-1979	Older homes

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: OKLAHOMA ROUTE 66 MUSEUM

To better understand this resource, we excerpt the following description of Route 66 in Oklahoma and the founding of the museum in Clinton written by Michael Wallis and originally published in the *Route 66 Federation News*.<sup>213</sup>

### Context

The following excerpt is taken from, *Oklahoma: The Heart and Soul of Route 66 Country*, by Michael Wallis.

I realize now that without Oklahoma there would be no Mother Road. Oklahoma truly is the heart and soul of Route 66 country. From this land came the men and women responsible for the creation of Route 66 in 1926 as well as those who helped shine the road's image through succeeding decades- Cyrus Avery, Lon Scott, Andy Payne, Dorothea Lange, Woody Guthrie, Jack and Gladys Cutberth, Will Rogers. Like those before me, I know that in Oklahoma the old highway - the free road – remains the best way for travelers to go, bar none. As I once wrote, “Nowhere is Route 66 more at home than in Oklahoma, where the pavement follows the contours of the land as though it had always been there. In Oklahoma the West and East collide on Route 66, and the state becomes the crossroads for America's Main Street.”

In 1992, after we marked the 66<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the highway's birth with speeches, parties, and ceremonies, the naysayers predicted any lingering interest in the old highway would soon fade away. Suzanna and I knew they were dead wrong. We felt the Route 66 revival movement was only just getting started. It appears we were correct. The old road is stronger than ever. As the old blue whale near Catoosa, Totem Pole Park near Foyil, and the round barn near Arcadia are (or have been) restored, as trading posts reopen and small towns and cities resurrect their historic downtowns, more people return to the highway on voyages of discovery, and the fascination with Route 66 increases throughout our state, our nation, and the rest of the world. It has reached a point that when folks ask me about the attention being focused on Route 66. I have to admit that perhaps I am a little surprised. Even this old road warrior could not foresee how large the Route 66 movement would grow. I am proud of what the old road became – a viable alternative to the homogenized super slabs of concrete that whisk Americans across the country at ever faster speeds – and of the quality of life that it promises those who dare to slow down their living.

That is why in 1993 Suzanne and I jumped at the Oklahoma Historical Society's (OHS) offer to help create an Oklahoma Route 66 Museum. We had long visualized such a moment to the Mother Road and the people of the highway. And though Route 66 remains an American icon, we knew it was appropriate that the museum reside in

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<sup>213</sup> *Route 66 Federation News* Volume 2, Number 3, Summer 1996, pp 10-13



The Route 66 Museum

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

Oklahoma, for Oklahoma not only played a critical role in the highway’s birth and history but boasts more miles (almost four hundred) of old road than any other state.

Almost immediately, there were decisions to be made. A Route 66 museum could have found a good home in any number of farm and ranch towns that line the Mother Road. From the beginning, however, we liked the location OHS officials chose – the Custer County town of Clinton (pop. 9,298), just ninety miles west of Oklahoma City. Citizens in Clinton are fiercely proud of their place in Mother Road history. The town was the headquarters of the National U.S. Highway Association (later named the Main Street of America Association), located for many years in the basement of the North Fourth Street residence of local barber and association executive Jack Cutberths’ and his wife, Gladys. (The Cutberths’ devotion to the highway earned them the monikers “Mr. and Mrs. Route 66.”) Jack who wore out an automobile every year traveling the highway on association business, passed away in 1978, but his widow remains in Clinton, guarding her husband’s memory and answering the mail that continues to arrive addressed to Jack.

We savor our conversations with Gladys. Usually we huddle with steaming mugs of coffee at Pop Hicks Restaurant, a Route 66 landmark in Clinton for generations of travelers and a bastion of hospitality for seasoned roadies. Other times we meet Gladys over a tasty catfish supper at the Route 66 restaurant, part of Walter “Doc” Mason’s legendary Best Western Trade Winds Inn, a popular highway haven where Elvis Presley and his entourage stayed on four different occasions back in the Sixties (townsfolk still

whisper about the one time Elvis was actually spotted by a local: The king responded by coming outside and playing with local children on the motel lawn).

At twilight, as I sit at the cluttered desk in my Tulsa study, I picture the museum, the busy tables at Pop Hicks, and Doc Mason offering a crisp apple to yet another guest checking into room 215 at the Trade Winds. I recall all the unforgettable places we have come to know and cherish along our beloved Mother Road in this state alone – the totem poles of Foyil, the Blue Whale near Catoosa, Arcadia's round barn, Lucille Hammon's place close to Hydro, the fine stretches of old road through El Reno, Elk City, and Sayre, and so much more. Surrounded by piles of research debris, commercial archaeology, and relics that have left their imprint on Oklahoma history and culture, I sometimes feel ghosts gathering around me. I hear their muffled whispers and the sound of distant music. I pick up odor of Frank Phillips' cigars and the sweet smell of Pretty Boy Floyd's pomade. I detect the aroma of a thousand blue plate specials cooked up at the best Route 66 greasy spoons.

Close at hand, bits and pieces of Route 66 payment and bullet-pocked road and gasoline signs are among the cherished totems that keep me from harm's way. Only a few miles from where I sit with my ghost pals, a stream of evening traffic shuffles to and fro on the old highway. I smile for my own benefit, confident there is not a better place to find both ghosts and angels in disguise than Route 66 in Oklahoma. I know this as sure as I draw breath.

## **Museum Described**

*The following excerpt is taken from the Route 66 Museum's webpage.*

The Oklahoma Route 66 Museum is operated by The Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) a state agency. The museum was originally opened to the public in 1968 as the Museum of the Western Trails, operated by the Oklahoma Industrial Trust and Recreation Department (which later became the Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation). In 1991 the museum was transferred to OHS. In 1993, plans began for a redevelopment of the museum in order to focus on transportation and Route 66. The project was funded with federal, state and private funds, with the citizens of Clinton raising over \$200,000.00.

The museum officially opened on September 23, 1995, as the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum with a grand opening celebration in Clinton including car shows, free live entertainment, a rock'n roll dance and many other activities.

Exhibits begin with "The World's Largest Curio Cabinet," home of special treasures collected from along the route. Following the Introduction gallery, the museum tells the story of Route 66 by decades (over six decades), with 10,000 square feet of exhibit space. There are seven galleries beginning with the 1920s. Along the way, visitors see vehicles and listen to music while they experience the history and culture of each decade concerning road construction, transportation, lodging, restaurants, garages, curio shops, attractions, and other artifacts, graphics, and videos. At the end of their trip down the "Main Street of America," visitors catch their breath in the drive-in theater, before stopping in the "Curio" gift shop with its wide selection of signs, books, videos, clothing, toys, games and numerous other mementos, of Route 66 and the Museum. The Museum also has a Park with exterior exhibits, such as 1950s Valentine Diner and Route 66 Picnic Benches.

In sum, the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum comprises the following:

### **Description of Inside Galleries**

Introduction: Maps and World's Largest Curio Cabinet

1920s: The Construction of the Road

1930s: The "Grapes of Wrath" Exhibit (with a Mechanic Garage)

1940s: Capitalism Along Route 66: Trucking Companies, Bus Companies, and Other Businesses

1950s: Facsimile of a Route 66 (Neon-lit) Diner

1960s: Part 1-Psychadelic Hippies; Part 2: Family Vacations



1970s: Tourist Courts (Appears to be 1940s-esque due to Rt. 66 being bypassed by interstate plan)

Drive-In Theater: 20-Min Excerpt of Route 66: An American Odyssey”



Entrance to the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum

Source: user:40ounces2freedom/flickr/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0



A 1912 International truck on display at the museum

Source: user:gouldy/flickr/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0



Antique gas pump

Source: Morgan Schmorgan/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0





Restored Route 66 Valentine Diner”

Source: Steph Mineart/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0



1960s Gallery Hippie Half of VW Bus

Source: Steph Mineart/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

## LOCAL IMPACTS

The Clinton Chamber of Commerce noted to Rutgers University that “lots of out of town traffic was generated by the Route 66 Museum.” The museum is the largest Mother Road-themed museum along the route; more than 30,000 people visit a year which generates both tax dollars and commerce. As years progress, the number of visitors increase. The Museum attracts tourism from all over the world, which has made an important economic impact on Clinton.

Of the museum’s total 30,664 in 2009, about two-thirds (21,324 visitors) came from the United States and about one-third (10,340 visitors) came from abroad. Outside of Oklahoma, the top four states from which U.S. visitors came included Texas, California, Illinois, and Missouri (with 1,901, 1,548, 1,278, and 989 visitors respectively). The top four countries abroad from which visitors came to the Clinton Route 66 Museum included Germany, Norway, Canada, and Italy (with 1,256, 807, 682, and 639 visitors respectively). But let us applaud those coming from yet more distant lands such as Australia (389 visitors), Egypt, Taiwan, and Turkey (about 5 visitors apiece) to name just a few examples.

Further the museum’s director, Pat Smith, estimates that an additional 3,000 visitors just come to its gift shop and/or just tour the museum’s exterior (that is they do not enter the galleries). Therefore, total annual visitation to the Route 66 museum in Clinton is about 35,000 (32,000 gallery entrants and 3,000 gift shop/exterior display visitors).

The visitation figures noted in the above tables and text are quite significant. To set the broader context, the total visitors to the Clinton Route 66 museum (about 35,000) is almost four times the number of people who live in Clinton (about 9,000). The foreign visitors alone (10,340 in 2009) or exceed (2009) the Clinton total resident population. Clinton, in west-central Oklahoma, is not an easy place to come to from abroad yet thousands have made that trek--a tribute to Route 66’s appeal and Oklahoma’s museum on the Mother Road.

Local Clinton businesses obviously benefit from this tourist trade. For example, the local Hampton Inn noted that many of its guests visit the Route 66 Museum. A representative from the local restaurant, the Café Downtown Clinton, concluded that the “whole town receives a lot of support from Route 66 and the Museum.”

## THE COLEMAN THEATRE OF MIAMI, OKLAHOMA

### HOST COMMUNITY: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Miami is a city in Ottawa County, Oklahoma and serves as the county seat. The nearest city with 200,000 or more people is Tulsa, Oklahoma and the nearest city with 1,000,000 or more people is Dallas, Texas.



Miami gets its name from the Latin phonetic spelling of the Myaa tribe, and the community is the capital of the Miami Native American nation. The city of Miami is correctly pronounced “me-ah-me,” although it is commonly rendered “my-um-me,” except in Oklahoma, where the vernacular pronunciation of “my-am-uh” is used.

Founded in 1890 as a trading post in Indian Territory, Miami (incorporated 1891) experienced an economic boom following the discovery of rich lead and zinc deposits in the area in 1905. The community also benefited by the completion of Route 66 through its downtown in the 1920’s; during one period, Miami’s population was experiencing a 141% increase.<sup>214</sup>

Route 66 winds its way through downtown Miami. Just outside of the city is the original nine foot wide “Ribbon Road” of the early 1920’s, which predates the original Route 66. According to legend, the state of Oklahoma was struggling financially when Route 66 was built, so it was decided to build the road half as wide as originally planned rather than compromise length.<sup>215</sup>

Miami today attracts tourists through various venues that promote its multifaceted heritage. Besides the Coleman Theater—by far the standout attraction— Miami is also home to the Ottawa County Historical Society’s Dobson Museum, which contains thousands of Native American artifacts, and the Route 66 vintage Iron Motorcycle Museum, housing a collection of rare early motorcycles and bike memorabilia from the 1920s, 30s, and 40s.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid

<sup>215</sup> “Oklahoma Legends: Miami—Culture on the Road.” *Legends of America*. January 2009. <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/OK-Miami.html>



The Indian heritage upon which the town was founded is also actively celebrated and promoted. Miami is home to about 9 tribal headquarters, and regularly hosts tribal Pow Wows and other cultural demonstrations for visiting guests.

As of 2000, Miami had a population of 13,704 people, which is 4% higher than the population in 1990. In 2008, the population was estimated to be 13,027, which is 5% lower than the 2000 population. The census 2000 data we have assembled further shows such characteristics as Miami having a higher proportion of senior citizens (65+ years) and a lower median income relative to the Oklahoma statewide average.

	Miami, OK	Oklahoma Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	36.5	35.5	1
% 65+ years	19.4	13.2	6.2
% White	81.7	80.3	1.4
% Hispanic	2.3	5.2	-2.9
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$25,582	\$33,400	-\$7,818
% with college degree	24.3	25.7	-1.4
Most common occupation	management/ professional	management/ professional	
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	
% poverty	18.5	14.7	3.8
% unemployed	3.8	3.3	0.5
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	65.8	68.4	29
% single-unit detached homes	81.8	71.4	4.8
Decade most homes built	1940-1959	1970-1979	older homes

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: THE COLEMAN THEATRE

The Route 66 traveler comes across a variety of structures in the towns they pass through—from the prototypical, modest-scale vintage motel, restaurant, or gift shop, to the atypical and the extravagant. The Coleman Theatre certainly falls into the latter category. To the casual observer, it may appear out of place to find an ornate theatre of such a grand scale well outside of a metropolitan area. But it is the close-knit spirit of small town life that courses throughout the theatre that makes it right at home in Miami, Oklahoma. The Spanish revival-style theatre was originally built as one man's gift to his community, and starting in 1989 was restored through a spirited community effort. An enduring spirit it is; the theatre has the distinguishable honor of never closing its door over three quarters of a century, and people continue to come from far and wide to appreciate its dramatic interior and high-caliber performances.

The Coleman Theatre honors Oklahoma pioneer and lead-mining millionaire George L. Coleman. Back in the 1920s, Coleman had a net worth estimated at \$1 million a month (\$40 million per month in 2010 dollars) and wanted to build a grand palace that would not only entertainer travelers, but also fulfill his genuine appreciation for movies and the Kansas City vaudevilles. He donated \$600,000 in the late 1920's (\$36 million in 2010 dollars) to build the "Coleman Theatre Beautiful," as it was originally named<sup>216</sup>.

In truly grand fashion, the theatre opened on April 18, 1929 to a sell-out crowd of 1,600 patrons; eventually the theatre grew to become the foremost source of local entertainment as Coleman had envisioned. In its heyday, customers paid only \$1 to see notable actors such as Will Rogers, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Tom Mix and dancer Sally Rand grace the theatre's stage. Athletes like Jim Thorpe and Andy Payne made appearances as well.

In addition to its ability to draw notable entertainers, the very design of the Coleman Theatre was a drawing point for patrons. Architects, Boller Brothers of Kansas City, Missouri, designed and constructed the theatre in 330 days during 1929. Reportedly, the Boller Brothers architects wanted the theatre to embody the French style and flair of Louis XV on both the outside and the inside. Coleman though, wanted the popular Spanish Mission Revival style and so the theatre reflects a unique combination of both these styles.

Its elaborate terra cotta garnishments created a level of opulence that distinguished it from other nearby theatres. The minute guests entered the marquee, a deep red carpet with the Coleman crest guided patrons to a two-level lobby adorned with crystal chandeliers, dark wood panels and carvings as well as French-styled furniture. On the interior, the theatre had framed panels of crimson silk with alternating detailed metal lamps along the walls beneath the balcony.

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<sup>216</sup> "History of the Mighty Wurlitzer." Coleman Theatre Beautiful. [www.theatreorgans.com/miami.ok/](http://www.theatreorgans.com/miami.ok/)

Additionally, yards of wood trim decorated the ceiling, which had stained-glass portraits of roses. The procession of red seats flowed from beneath the balcony all the way to the 60-foot ceiling. The curtained theatre boxes resembled the balcony ledge with in its delicate designs and bright colors. The most prized possession of the theatre though, was the Wurlitzer pipe organ that adorned the stage during memorable performances from the very best thespians.

The popular vaudeville circuit in Miami helped the Coleman Theatre thrive for years until revue eventually decreased because of the Great Depression and the rise of radio and motion pictures. Coleman Theatre then became the home for new “talkies”.

After Coleman died in 1945, the movie business slowed down even more, contributing to even greater losses for the Coleman Theatre. Many operating theatres subdivided or went out of business at this time. The Coleman Theatre though managed to stay alive, even though the structural elements of the building began to deteriorate. Struggling to survive, many of the treasured elements of the theatre were either lost or damaged. The 2,000-pound chandelier, its carpets and beautiful stained glass designs all were ravaged over time. To add insult to injury, the theatre lost its famous Wurlitzer organ.

Eventually, the Coleman family gave the theatre to the City of Miami in 1989. Entrusted with this local icon, concerned citizens formed the Friends of the Coleman, a nonprofit group of volunteers, to preserve and restore the theatre. The group rallied together and quickly began to execute this organizational mission. Their enduring efforts led to many achievements,

Friends of the Coleman have raised funds and donated their time to restoring the building for the last 20 years. As many as a 100 volunteers have labored to repair and refurbish parts of the building that were once damaged. Today, they have replicated the theatre’s original carpet, refurbished its lavish chandelier and even located and returned the missing Wurlitzer pipe organ, which had found its way into the collection of a Texas pipe organ enthusiast.<sup>217</sup>

Locating the Mighty Wurlitzer was indeed a collaborative effort; members of the Miami community donated \$85,000 to repurchase, repair and reinstall the organ in its original setting in the theatre. Sue Valliere, the administrative assistant for the city of Miami, orchestrated efforts to find the organ. Along with the Sooner Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society, Valliere contacted Jim Peterson of Burleson, Texas and arranged for him to provide and install the manual Wurlitzer pipe organ at the theatre. Incredibly the organ was circa 1929! Peterson updated the manual switching to a modern digital switch and added three ranks of pipes in the upper line, to complement the lush sounds of the original instrument. A Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI), a digital recording device, was also added in the list of updates. The MIDI can be used to play back the identical musical sounds or an entire program.

The organ is one of the wonderful attractions of the restored facility:

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<sup>217</sup> “Miami, Oklahoma.” The Road Wanderer. Site Maintained by Grandall Web Design Service, 8 October, 2009. <http://theroadwanderer.net/66Oklahoma/miami.htm>

The “Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ has been returned, and one summer morning was played with enthusiasm by a member of a visiting group of RV travelers. The Coleman is one of the few theatres in the United States to have its original pipe organ in its original place, and the sound is wonderful.”<sup>218</sup>

That’s just one example of numerous community efforts to refurbish the theatre. Members of the group, many of whom are not even Miami residents, have contributed to this cause by continuously providing donations to fund restoration projects. In 1995, Friends of the Coleman joined efforts with the state of Oklahoma, Miami Downtown Redevelopment Authority and the Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA), to make the building energy-efficient.

A string of fundraising programs has offset the cost of many of these projects. For example, several people have paid to “adopt” seats at the theatre or have their name carved in its marble walls. Seat “adopters” have their names labeled on one of the theatre seats, which are now down from the original 1,600 to 1,100 to ensure comfortable and spacious seating arrangements. The ongoing cost of the intensive restoration project at the Coleman Theatre totals nearly \$5 to \$6 million.

For all their efforts, the Oklahoma Arts Council awarded the Friends of the Coleman, the Governor’s Arts Award for Community Service in 1995. The efforts of the “Friends” group continue today to make the Coleman ever more beautiful and vibrant.

Barbara Smith, the current executive director of Coleman Theatre, has played an instrumental role in the restoration and even led efforts to complete the ballroom that was never finished in the original construction of the theatre. With cost for completing the ballroom totaling \$ 2 million, funds are still being raised for this project, which should be completed in December 2010, noted Smith.

Although not yet fully restored (as of 2010), there are routine walking tours and occasional theatre productions at the Coleman theatre. There are ongoing tours almost every day and as many as 900 show guests attend theatre productions, explained Smith.

“Most of our tours are on demand,” Smith said. “Someone walks in looking to see the place and one of our volunteers takes them on the tour. A couple of walk-ins will eventually join in and it just keeps going from there.”

Not all tours are this impromptu however; occasionally, there are scheduled lunch tours, in which guests pay \$15 to enjoy a tour of the theatre as well as a gourmet luncheon on stage. Open from Tuesday through Saturday, volunteers oversee the day-to-day operations of the theatre. In addition to guiding tours and answering phones, volunteers also serve as ushers and manage the concession stand on show nights.

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<sup>218</sup> Dolinski, Pauline. “Coleman Theatre in Miami, Oklahoma, Restored to Former Grandeur.” 19 January 2010. Site Maintained by Associated Content. 2010.  
[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2599021/coleman\\_theatre\\_in\\_miami\\_oklahoma\\_restored.html?cat=37](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2599021/coleman_theatre_in_miami_oklahoma_restored.html?cat=37)

With significant renovations completed, comes bigger productions at the Coleman Theatre, said Smith. In fact, there is a diversity of shows at the theatre now. The theatre has hosted school productions, opera shows, productions featuring organists from around the world, and even Chinese acrobats.

“There’s something for everyone of all ages and of all tastes,” Smith said. “The Coleman is the largest theatre house in any town like Miami that has just about 14,000 people and our philosophy is to continue being a source of entertainment for them and others around the world.”

Hesitant to disclose an exact date on when the theatre will be fully complete, Smith says, there’s always something more to do, but things are shaping up quite well right now.

“Everything is just beautiful,” she said describing the theatre today. “It looks as astounding as it may have looked when it first opened and it will continue to get better.”



An exterior view of the Coleman Theatre

Source: user: tambourineilene/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0





An interior view of the Coleman Theatre

Source: user: pocol/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0



The famous Wurlitzer pipe organ

Source: Janice Waltzer/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

## LOCAL IMPACTS

With visitors from all over the world, the Coleman Theatre is a major economic source for the city of Miami, Oklahoma. As noted in a recent report from the theatre:

Visitors from 44 states and 26 foreign countries enjoyed touring the Coleman last year. Television crews from Germany and Japan have visited and prepared travel documentaries for viewing in their home countries. Network and independent companies from the U.S. have prepared video presentations for public broadcasting. Many tourists journeying along historic Route 66 visit the theatre as they travel through the Midwest. The theatre has become the #1 tourist stop in Miami.<sup>219</sup>

Tourists from nearby towns and around the world may come to Miami to see shows at the Coleman Theatre, but they typically end up taking advantage of everything else that Miami has to offer, said Smith. “Tourists eat lunch or dinner at nearby restaurants and they even spend a night or two at the hotels, after seeing one of our shows. The city really benefits,” she said.

Some local businesses agree with that positive assessment. A proprietor at the Stone House Grill opined, “Whenever they have a show, people come here for dinner and its great for us ... about 30 to 50 each time.” Another Miami restaurateur commented, “Tourists to the theatre eat lunch and often sleep in town so it really helps the local economy.”

Currently, nearly 65 to 70 percent of theatre goers are from out of town. People from about 26 countries, Smith revealed, visit the theatre. These predominantly European visitors come from countries as far as Denmark, Germany, Sweden and even France.

“The funny thing is they are almost always on a motorcycle. They’re Route 66 travelers making stops at the many historic landmarks along the route and we’re one of them. Sometimes they’ll visit us two or three times,” said Smith.

Tourists typically visit in the months between April and October; the theatre’s peak visitation period. Once restorations are complete, adds Smith, the theatre will become an even greater economic resource for the city of Miami. There are plans to furnish state-of-the-art catering kitchens and several meeting-style rooms that will host business conferences, says Smith. The additions of these activity rooms will increase theatre visitation rates tremendously.

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<sup>219</sup> “History of the Mighty Wurlitzer.” Coleman Theatre Beautiful. <http://www.theatreorgans.com/miami.ok/>

## THE ROCK CAFÉ OF STROUD, OKLAHOMA

### HOST COMMUNITY OVERVIEW: GEOGRAPHY HISTORY AND PROFILE

Stroud is a small town in central Oklahoma. It is located in Creek and Lincoln counties. It is also located within Sac and Fox tribal (Native American) nations. Stroud is 46 miles from Midwest City (pop. 54,088) and 47 miles from Tulsa (pop. 393,049).



Stroud received its name from trader James Stroud, who purchased the original right of way to sell his goods from his shack of a store. Stroud had an early reputation as an alcohol purveying town, which at the time distinguished Stroud from its surrounding locales because it bordered along Indian Territory, which was a “dry” region. After Oklahoma gained statehood in 1907, however, Stroud too became “dry” as a result of prohibition-era restrictions.

The sale of alcohol was not Stroud’s only economic generator, however; in the early 1900’s, many of Stroud’s residents worked in the cultivation and manufacturing of cotton. Stroud had both a cotton gin and a cotton seed oil mill. Oil also served the local economy for some time, which was discovered in the early 1920s.

Stroud became a Route 66 rest stop in 1926, when the Mother Road was built through the town along the former dirt road that once was the historic Ozark trail, the first marked highway in Lincoln County. Many restaurants, service stations, and motor courts were established in Stroud to serve Route 66 travelers, including the Rock Café, which is profiled in the following case study.

Stroud unfortunately fell victim to natural disaster in 1999, when a tornado destroyed much of the town’s businesses. Since then, Stroud has slowly been rebuilding its economy. Over the past decade, concerted efforts have been made to capitalize on Stroud’s Route 66 heritage and encourage tourists to stop along their Mother Road travels.

To further establish the setting we present a number of demographic, socioeconomic and housing characteristics for both Stroud and the state of Oklahoma. Among other traits, Stroud is less

affluent (e.g., lower median income and higher poverty relative to the state) and has a higher share of senior residents.

	Stroud, OK	Oklahoma Statewide	Local difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	38.8	35.5	3.3 years
% 65+ years	19.7	13.2	6.5
% White	86.5	80.3	6.2
% Hispanic	1.5	5.2	-3.7
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$27,222	\$33,400	-\$6,178
% with college degree	17.1	25.7	-8.6
Most common occupation	sales and office	management/ professional	--
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	--
% poverty	23.8	14.7	9.1
% unemployed	3.9	3.3	0.6
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	66.6	68.4	-1.8
% single-unit detached homes	82.4	71.4	11
Decade most homes built	1940-1959	1970-1979	older homes

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: THE ROCK CAFÉ

It was literally born from Route 66, having been built from the same rock that went into the road. Thus are the origins of the name for the Rock Café, but since it opened in 1939, it has lived up to its name in more ways than one. It has endured changes in ownership, overcome financial hardships, and through the decades, has been recognized as a constant in the community life of Stroud, Oklahoma. Such an institution it has become along Route 66, that when “The Rock” reopened in June 2009 after a year of repairs from a brutal fire, the Oklahoma governor declared it official Rock Café day. Its unbreakable spirit comes from the love of the people who have kept the business running; a spirit that is grounded in the singular efforts of dedicated owners and reinforced by decades of loyal patrons. Its current owner, Dawn Welch, has inspired a movie character (“Sally” in the Pixar/Disney film “Cars”) is an authoress of a cookbook with sass and good recipes, and has become a modern day Route 66 celebrity.

The Rock Café has its origins in Stroud, Oklahoma and we will leave it to Dawn Welch to describe the early days of the town and the restaurant<sup>220</sup>:

To understand the spirit of the Rock, you’ve got to understand the spirit of Stroud. The town’s story dips back to the turn of the 19th century, when the land was divided into two territories: Indian to the east (home to Sac and Fox tribes) and Oklahoma to the west. Realizing that cowboys and cattlemen needed a place to unwind, entrepreneur James Stroud opened a small establishment where he could sell whiskey and libations to the rabble-rousing bunch. Stroud founded the town in 1892, more saloons opened and the town soon gained a reputation as a wild, hell-raising outpost. Soon after Oklahoma gained statehood in 1907, the town went dry and commercial enterprises turned from liquor and saloons to agriculture and oil.

In the late 1920s, big change would once again come to Stroud. It was known as Route 66, and it ran straight through town. Soon after it was finished, more than 200,000 down-and-out folks used it to escape the Great Depression, trading the Dust Bowl of the plains for opportunities in California. Of the thousands who fled the heartland and came through Stroud, one man, Roy Rieves, decided to stay and build a restaurant just on the outskirts of town. Of course it was none other than the Rock Café.

In 1936, Roy pulled together his retirement savings and used it to buy 6 ½ business lots. He paid \$5 for giant sandstone rocks excavated during the construction of 66, and over course of 3 years nearly single-handedly built a restaurant using those rocks as the façade for the outer walls. He named the restaurant after the rocks, hired Thelma Holloway to run and manage it, and opened the doors on July 4th, 1939.

Once the café opened, it achieved immediate success as a bus stop venue for serving drinks and meals to travelers. It was a profitable time to open a business, with the Great Depression coming

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<sup>220</sup>Dawn Welch with Raquel Pelzel. 2009. *Dollars to Donuts*. Rodale, viii.



to an end and the fact that people were slowly regaining their financial bearings. The café continued to flourish even into World War II and by this time had functioned as a stop for the Greyhound bus lines.<sup>221</sup> The addition of a bus stop brought thousands of additional café patrons, from travelers to soldiers departing for war. The Rock Café was the first thing returning veterans saw as they stepped off the bus, and surely the restaurant remains a fond memory for these veterans today.

Rieves never actually operated his creation; he typically leased the restaurant or hired others to manage it. Probably the most well-known renter of the café was Mamie Mayfield. Living in the house just behind the café, Mayfield rented and managed the cafe for about \$80 a month.<sup>222</sup> Under her direction, the café became a 24-hour eatery and a popular stop for vacationing families, local high school students and truck drivers traveling Route 66. For most truckers, the Rock Café was the one location where they could stop in and receive messages from loved ones. Reportedly, the wives of many truckers would call in and leave messages for their husbands with Mayfield, who would then habitually pin the message up unto a wall for the truckers to see when they stopped by the cafe.

Mayfield extended a friendly spirit to all her customers and not just truckers. She often allowed students to push the café jukebox near a window so everyone could enjoy dancing outside. In essence, the café was everything to Mayfield and she gave her heart and soul into running it, even when business began to slow down considerably. In time, it was factors beyond Mayfield's control that would contribute to the sluggish business. The construction of the Turner Turnpike between Tulsa and Oklahoma City in 1953, for example, bypassed the restaurant and decreased café business significantly.<sup>223</sup> In the end though, it was health reasons, not the hard economic times, that led Mayfield to stop running Rock Café in 1983.

Following her departure, Ed Smalley, who had worked as a dishwasher at the café for several years, took over. Smalley had heard of Rieves' intention to sell the café and decided to buy the place. For Smalley, the Rock was the place where he had worked as a boy, had departed for WWII military service, and had even met his wife, who also worked at the café as a waitress.<sup>224</sup> "Ed couldn't see the Rock torn down or mishandled, so he bought it."<sup>225</sup> Although he never managed the café as Mayfield did, Smalley regularly leased the café to different renters, who would only manage the café for brief periods before moving on to other business endeavors. Even as the Rock Café struggled, Smalley held on to it for sentimental reasons. Then, in 1993, he met the woman who would be instrumental in revitalizing the café back to its heyday. That woman was Dawn Welch, a native of Yukon, Oklahoma.

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<sup>221</sup> Cherry 2002

<sup>222</sup> *Rock café: Stroud, Oklahoma*. (n.d.). [www.nps.gov/nr/travel/route66/rock\\_cafe\\_stroud.html](http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/route66/rock_cafe_stroud.html)

<sup>223</sup> Cherry 2002

<sup>224</sup> Welch with Pelzel, 2009, vi

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

Welch was only 24 years old when Smalley offered to lease the café to her. She had approached him with an interest of purchasing some restaurant equipment for an eatery she had planned to open in Costa Rica (Central America). Welch had previously worked for the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line and of all the places she traveled, had enjoyed Costa Rica so much she aspired to open a restaurant there.<sup>226</sup> Welch just happened to be in the Oklahoma area to attend her grandmother's funeral when she met Smalley. What was originally intended to be a six-month lease agreement between Smalley and Welch eventually became a permanent arrangement as Welch bought the café from Smalley and became its new owner.

Welch has now been running the Rock Café for seventeen years (1993-2010). Even under her devoted leadership, the Rock Café was not immune from unanticipated setbacks. Business was faltering when she took over in 1993 as traffic along Route 66 continued to decline. Matters worsened in 1999 when a major tornado destroyed a large portion of Stroud and cost the town millions of dollars' worth of damage.<sup>227</sup> Determined to persevere, Welch continued running the Rock Café even after the tornado. Welch described her trail to the Rock and her new calling as follows.

I grew up in the somewhat small town of Yukon, Oklahoma. As far back as I can remember, I had big dreams of working on a cruise ship and seeing the world. Soon after graduating from high school, I packed my bags and headed to Miami (where I didn't know a soul) and miraculously within one day landed a job working for a cruise ship line. I traveled for 4 years, visiting places near and far, from exotic Caribbean islands to fancy European cities, as I dug into dishes at every port of call.

During a trip home to visit my mom, fate intervened in the form of an inheritance from my grandmother, who left me 25 acres of Oklahoma property and a darn good reason to reconsider my nomadic existence. When I was given the opportunity to buy the Rock Cafe, a historic 25-seat restaurant on Route 66 in Stroud (just 1 hour west of my hometown), the chance was just too good to pass up. I thought, why not give it a go?

[...]When I took over the restaurant in 1993, I reopened it for 7-days-a-week service. That took a lot of gumption on my part, as I didn't know the first thing about cooking or running a restaurant, but my hard work and trial-by-error approach paid off. Lucky for me, my customers (not to mention my family) have always let me experiment on them with new dishes. It wasn't long before the locals and tourists were back. Although throughout the years I've made some changes to the original menu—we no longer smoke our barbecue, and we've added quiche and spaetzle to the menu—I like to think we've never strayed too far from the philosophy of good food, good service, and good prices[...]<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Cherry 2002

<sup>227</sup> *Rock café: stroud, oklahoma*. (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/route66/rock\\_cafe\\_stroud.html](http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/route66/rock_cafe_stroud.html)

<sup>228</sup> Welch with Pelzel, 2009, vi-vii

In 2001, there was yet more reason to rejoice as the café received recognition from the National Register of Historic Places as a noteworthy landmark along Route 66.<sup>229</sup> In addition, Welch received a grant funded from the National Park Service's Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program that same year.<sup>230</sup> The federal program provides monetary assistance to preserve historic buildings, archeological sites, cultural facilities, and road segments along the Route 66 corridor.<sup>231</sup>

Although securing program funding was a lengthy process, it was well worth it for Welch and the café. Nearly half of a \$70,000 matching grant would fund significant structural renovations at the aging Rock Café.<sup>232</sup> With this capital, the café was completely refurbished. Not only was the green tin roof and its neon sign redone, but the east and west side entrances of the café were repaired as well. Additionally, the Giraffe-style sandstone exterior was restored. Inside, the entire dining room was restored to its original design with booths, counter tops with matching stools, and the old flooring was refurbished.<sup>233</sup> Along with the repairs, a new heating and air system was installed, thereby modernizing the amenities of the café.<sup>234</sup> The project was exactly the type of restoration needed to revitalize the then struggling restaurant.

Despite this rebirth, tragedy would nearly destroy the Rock Café. On Tuesday, May 20, 2008 a fire gutted the entire café, destroying the roof and much of the interior. The blaze began after business hours at around 11 p.m. when all of the staff had gone home for the night.<sup>235</sup> It took firefighters nearly five hours to put out the flames and although the exact cause of the fire was never determined, the likely cause was attributed to faulty wiring.<sup>236</sup>

Though the Rock Café sustained severe damages to its interior, its old rock walls were still salvageable. Roy Rieves' 1936 purchase of sandstone rocks had literally stood a test of fire. That lone miracle and Welch's optimistic attitude kept the Rock Café's 70 year history from disintegrating with the fire that night. With support from her family, Welch showed an unyielding determination to reopen the café. She spent an entire year rebuilding, in light of skeptics' claims that it was a near impossible endeavor. During that year, Welch, along with family and friends, documented their experience on their Internet blog.<sup>237</sup> In the following excerpts from that blog, Dawn chronicles the difficulties and high points of bringing back the Rock Café:

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<sup>229</sup>Jackson, R. (2002, November 30). Grants available to help towns with restoration; programs supporting historic preservation. *The Daily Oklahoman*, 9-A.

<sup>230</sup>Jackson 2002

<sup>231</sup>Jackson 2002

<sup>232</sup>Jackson 2002

<sup>233</sup>United State Department of the Interior, 2001

<sup>234</sup>Jackson 2002

<sup>235</sup>Logan, L. (2008, May 22). Fire guts historic route 66 cafe. *Tulsa World*, A5.

<sup>236</sup>Mikles, N. (2009, November 25). The Comeback cafe. *Tulsa World*, D3.

<sup>237</sup><http://rockcafert66.wordpress.com/2008/09/> (note: includes images 3-14)

### ***It Takes a Village***

June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008

This is an older picture of a trip that was taken during a trip to Washington DC. It was a voyage to let the government know how much we appreciate their support of Route 66--its road, businesses, and landmarks. It certainly makes me proud to be American. Despite all of our important issues, America has found a way to support our history as it is known through Route 66. It also makes me proud to be a part of that in a small way. I have always considered The Rock Cafe belonging to the bigger picture rather than just its ownership to my family. Being one of the first to receive a matching grant to refurbish the Rock, it was even more clear to me that the Rock was belonged to all Americans and those who come to visit from all around the world. Its difficult to explain this, but I didn't shed a single tear until I made the phone call to Kaisa of the National Park Service in New Mexico and told her the news and to ask some questions. It was the feeling of failure to take care of America's investment toward saving this landmark that became overwhelming to me. I know that unexplainable things happen but to not be able to answer why this would happen and then express my desire to rebuild this monument that had been entrusted to me was too much for me to handle.

So my message today is that not only are we all invested in this project. So is the state and national governments. My gratitude for their expertise is more than I can express [...]

In 2001, the National Park Service awarded me a grant and once finished. Mike and Kaisa presented me with this bronze plaque to commemorate the event. It was always my intention to have it mounted on the building. It was the first thing I pulled from the rubble. We kept it on the fireplace mantle so I knew just where to look for it. It is going to be a great honor to be able to put this very plaque on the Rock facade.

### ***Pioneering Spirit Alive and Well (most of the time)***

June 30, 2008

Certainly, it's been quite slow around here. I had the pleasure of speaking to a small group of writers who were brought in by the Oklahoma Tourism Department on Friday. It was quite a sight to have seven women sitting under the patio safe from the rainy weather eating my grandmother's peach cobbler recipe served up by Paul (my 7 yr old) while listening to me tell the story of the Rock Café. My first question to the ladies were had they ever had a stop like this. Immediately, I got a big No! It was really had to talk about the Rock Café history then tying up with the fate of the fire and the lift their spirits to understand that this is not the end of the story. One of the ladies rushed to ask the question if I felt like a pioneer woman. I was quick to answer--surprisingly--YES! What a relief to be reminded of my heritage. Another woman, Diane Lebow, PH.D., asked if I thought that my Chickasaw Indian heritage also played a role in my NEVER GIVE UP SPIRIT! Again the answer is YES! My mother's family came to Oklahoma during the Land Run and homesteaded here. Often, when I watch any movie about the hardships of this time, I'm sure these people had lost all their marbles for never giving up and staying through all the difficulties of making a home out of nothing but the land. My father's

mother was full blooded Chickasaw Indian. She walked the Trail of Tears. She married a man who was half Irish and half Cherokee. He hid the Indian side of his heritage. My grandmother was proud of her Chickasaw roots. She was smart enough to sign the Indian roles which have helped me through the years. But her real gift to me was her strength. The strength to work hard, never feel sorry for yourself, believe you can get through anything, and be proud of who you are and where you've been . . .

The past few weeks have been a very slow process with the cleanup and the paperwork end of the Rock and through it all I've had times when I wonder if it isn't smart to run away to an easier path. The way I felt some of these pioneer and Indian people of Oklahoma should have done when I listen to the hardships they endured. Quickly, the idea passes and I pick up my shovel and continue to literally dig my way back from the devastation that has become my life. I feel the strength of the women in my past and remember their struggles and think of the bright future that I can represent when this short period of my life is over. Also, I feel the strength of this great American Road that also represented that early pioneering spirit we had as Americans [...]

### ***The Gals and the Thomas Men***

July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Saturday was another day at the Rock [...]Audra, Sommer, and Kelsie are friends of the Rock who have helped out through their teen years and represent the best of youth. They came up and helped clean out a nasty smelly building and did it with smiles on their faces. I'm so proud to have a community of teens who care about the tragedies of the town and will donate their time and money to help.



Source: All photos this section courtesy the Rock Café blog, <http://rockcafert66.wordpress.com/>



***“So...What the heck are we doing now?!”***

July 18, 2008

There is so much going on behind the silence of the past two weeks. Most of which I'm not able to talk about at the moment because mainly I don't want to jinx it. I would like to say that I've met the nicest group of people and whether I get to work with them or not I'm glad to have the privilege to have had the experience. I can say that I have a preliminary meeting with a historic architect on Monday and I'm very excited. The walls are in good condition and seem to be holding their own. I can't wait to hear the architects opinion and ideas on this project. Insurance is getting closer to being over and that has been quite an experience.

So Bev and I and our familys miss everyone so much. Our heart and soul can not wait to be back to what we do best which is serve you up delicious food while sharing our lives and yours!! Even you irritating ones!!!

We have so much to tell you!!

So do not think we are off track. We are putting together the best possible plan and with any magic at all it will be more exciting than any of us can imagine!!

I truly LOVE MY LIFE and can't wait to get back to it!!

***“Tedious and Boring!!”***

September 8, 2008

I really hate it when my teenager says that she is bored! So admitting, that my stage with the Rock Cafe is boring is extremely difficult. I've been looking at the 66 e-group and noticing that many have asked about the Rock. The simple answer is that we are doing great. In saying this, it is just boring great. We have made great strides and the place is cleaned up and Mike, the architect, is doing quick but awesome research and reports. He just completed a 42 page report that circulates to all close to the project. We have good feedback from the National Park Service so hopefully we are on track to staying on the National Register of Historic Places. Mike did suggest that we immediately rebuild the wooden framing that will become the permanent inside walls and this will make the building safe for all to be around. I will keep you posted on that so if any are near they could come and feel safe about entering the building. I realize many of you have made trips inside and that makes me really nervous. But soon it will be safe and I'll welcome all who would like to visit. Here are some interesting pics!



This is a where the bathroom was. Notice the corner how haphazard looking the rock appears to be in the corners. But Wow they really have done a great job standing under all the fire and Oklahoma weather!! I'm so proud of my rock!!



Closer picture of same thing!!



This is the first wooden frame wall that went up. This is just as it was built originally and they are using the same metal anchors to reconnect the rock facade back into the framing.



Close up of metal anchors!



We discovered these 1×12's behind the recent wall coverings and will rebuild with these and as you can see originally they were stained then later painted over. We will go back to the 1939 walls which were a reddish-brown stain! I can't wait to see it!

So as you can see in these pictures it is quite tedious and boring but such an important piece of the puzzle. It must be done accurately and carefully and this stage really connects the past with the future of this building [...].

[...] Again! I can't wait to get back to the day-to-day of the Rock, I miss everyone so much you are all part of my family!! And I want it all back.”





One of the last jobs Mark had as our esteemed rock mason was to install a new pass thru window for the new kitchen. It is actually through the back wall of the original Rock Café building. We had some temporary electric lines(the yellow ones you see in the picture above) installed and Mark had forgotten they were there. He just masoned around them like they were suppose to be there. We took this picture to make fun of his fine work! Mark finished most of his work here at the Rock Cafe and we are so pleased with his craftsmanship!



*This is a front view of the Rock and its rock work! Yea its shaping up!*

We have installed a new roof system using a vinyl single ply and we love it! We used Coates Roofing which has been freinds of ours for years and they did a great job. We've been workiing on the pent roof which has been a difficult job to say the least. Terry has been doing a great job.





Installation of single ply roof system:



We have had the inside Rock walls insulated with foam spray insulation which not only additionally sturdys up the wall but also should keep those customers warm in the winter and cool in the summer!! Yea a bonus!!



Foam Factor from Chandler!! Great job and weird at the same time!

So as you can see we are getting alot done! I will be posting again soon as I have a great story about the fire! But it deserves its own post!!! Stay tuned!”

### **The Wolf Resurrects!**

March 24, 2009

The morning after the fire after I had realized that it was a great possibility that the walls of the Rock Cafe seemed to be relatively stable, I began to fear for the Rock Cafe grill. This 48 inch solid piece of steel was an anchor to the flavor and quality of the food at the Rock. I had a teensy bit of hope that under five tons of tar roof system and debris that the grill may just be salvageable. Call me optimistic. I had been told by several Stroud fireman that there was absolutely nothing salvageable inside. But with childlike optimism, I kept the faith! Something I get my nature. A few days later when I finally braved entering the building this area was where I most wanted to get to. Of course, it was in the middle of the building!



This is the pass thru window where the grill sat directly behind and where I headed entering the building.

Reaching the wall, I decided to be brave and stick my arm through the window and feel for the grill surface to check if it was smooth! Although, covered in ash and debris the surface was smooth and the butter wheel, something used to easily apply butter to bread and one of my favorite pieces, was intact.



The grill as it was behind the wall! Safe & Sound



Looking at the devastation, most would not have seen the positive of this but, it seemed to me that this grill was absolutely in tact! This was a happy happy day for me in spite of everything. The grill had been spared!!

The grill had never been moved in the over 70 years it had been in the cafe. We had no idea how it was assembled or how we would move it. As it turned out, the top comes off relatively easy and although the heaviest part we were able to get it out. Once the top is off, one can see the gas jets and that is when I discovered the name Wolf etched onto the gas jets!! I knew this piece of equipment was well made but had no idea it was a Wolf

[...] It certainly is a positive to have it restored. It tells a great story of its own! This grill has cooked burgers for men heading to and coming from WWII, family's like the Joad's running towards Cali and from the great depression, for the giant new era of the 50's when car travel became so popular carrying happy new family's to vacations, for the bands of the new found Rock N Roll movement who traveled the country on tour, and for the hippies of the 70's traveling like gypsies!! These and so much more have found there way to have a famed burger either; indeed this grill has a story to tell!!



Get your taste buds ready cause the Wolf is ready to grill!!

When I first entered the building, I couldn't believe that David and Terry were able to resurrect the grill to this glory! It really got me pumped to get the gas hooked up and start cooking! It is truly one of the things I've been most excited about!"

Even as Welch opened up about the challenges of rebuilding the Rock Café in each blogpost, her determination to reopen was always evident. In time, Welch's impressive resolve paid off. One year and nine days after the fire tore down the café, it reopened with much local fanfare on May

29, 2009. The café opened that day while renovations were still underway, but Welch silenced her critics and opened the café to a welcoming crowd of customers. Welch described that weekend and the emotion of the café's rebirth as follows:<sup>238</sup>

You can only imagine the devastating blow it was when the restaurant I worked so hard for nearly burned to the ground on May 20, 2008. All that remained were the Café's giant stone walls which had been built from the rocks excavated to make way for Route 66 so many decades ago. I made a pledge to rebuild—not just for me and my family, for all the people who consider the Rock their home away from home. One year and 9 days later, we once again threw open the doors, serving more than 1,000 people over the course of the opening weekend. It felt good to be back in the kitchen—and can you believe, the one thing from the kitchen I was able to salvage from the fire and lock into place was the original 4-foot Wolf grill from the 1930s? I was ecstatic, and our regulars were over the moon, knowing that they could once again count on my chicken-fried steak, fried pickles, and peach crisp to satisfy their cravings for good home cooking. In fact, the governor proclaimed July 9 to be Rock Café Day forevermore—what an honor!

The following photograph shows the renovated Rock Café—literally risen phoenix-like from the ashes. The reopened Rock Café is very much a part of Dawn Welch's life. She routinely wakes up early to open its doors at 6 a.m., and continues to serve meals until the end of the day, when she picks up her children from school and begins her evening shifts as a full time mom. Like the owners that came before her—Roy Rieves, who built the Rock Café with his retirement savings and Mamie Mayfield, who kept the restaurant open 24 hours a day—Dawn has invested a great deal of herself into the operations of the Café. “The Rock is really more than a restaurant,” she has said of the Café. “It's a town hall, a community center, and a human refueling station all in one.” Such a distinction captures Dawn's dedication to the Rock Café, a dedication that has attracted thousands of customers from the local to the famous.

Shortly thereafter, she had also achieved another one of her dreams and became a published author. *Dollars to Donuts: Comfort Food and Kitchen Wisdom From Route 66's Landmark Rock Café* was released in November 2009 and was Welch's first book.<sup>239</sup> She wrote the book while she was rebuilding café; a collection of recipes for easy and inexpensive dishes, many of which are Rock Café originals (see case study addendum).

Authoress is not Welch's only claim to fame though; she also holds the honor of being the inspiration behind the character Sally in the 2006 Pixar/Disney film *Cars*—an animated film about anthropomorphic cars that won the 2007 Golden Globe Award for Best Animated Feature Film. In the movie, Sally is a Porsche 911, and owner of the Cozy Cone Motel in the fictitious town of Radiator Springs. She befriends wayward racecar Lightning McQueen (See cutouts of Sally and Lightning McQueen in front of the Rock Café in following photo). Welch's resiliency throughout the Rock Café's restoration, for the sake of the café and the town of Stroud, inspired

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<sup>238</sup> Welch with Pelzel, 2009

<sup>239</sup> Welch with Pelzel, 2009



the optimistic Sally character that championed Radiator Springs and introduced McQueen to the joys beyond the self-centered pursuit of glitz and glam.



A cutout of Sally from the Disney/Pixar movie *Cars* in front of the Rock Café

*Source: Brian Butco/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0*

Today, Welch is still actively involved in the daily operations of the Rock Café. Open six days a week, this family-oriented business operates with a crew of about 12 employees. Ultimately, the longevity of the Rock Café makes it more than just a quick place to dine for tourists and Stroud residents. With a legacy that spans 71 years and more to come, it is an important part of the history of Stroud and historic Route 66.

## LOCAL IMPACTS

The Rock Café has had a notable economic impact on the city of Stroud. In an interview with Rutgers University, Stroud city manager Steve Gilbert explained that the restaurant is often a major stopping point for travelers. In fact, the Rock Café is the primary tourist attraction of Stroud, although visitors often find time to explore other local establishments. According to Gilbert:

The Rock Café is a stopping point for travelers and when the travelers stop at the café for a meal, the chances are increased significantly that they will spend some time in the community. They might find time to stroll Main Street, which is a part of Route 66, and purchase items at one of those businesses. They might also visit one of our multiple local wineries or vineyards. They could choose to stay at a local motel. That is the way other businesses are positively impacted by the Rock Café.

The Rock Café provides jobs in the restaurant. They are all local [and valuable] jobs, and as with any restaurant, young people have the opportunity to work as a waiter or waitress or in the kitchen.

Throughout the years, owner Dawn Welch has also witnessed how the café has impacted business in Stroud. “The café attracts tourists, which has made an impact,” said Welch in an interview with Rutgers University. “Notoriety and history brings in a huge amount of people that would never stop in without the café,” she added. At the time of the interview, Welch revealed that business at the café was outstanding. She said business at the café had doubled since the fire, and visitor numbers had tripled over the time span of seven years.

## CASE STUDY ADDENDUM: *DOLLARS TO DONUTS*

While her life with the Rock Café may be extraordinary, Dawn Welch recognizes that she is still much like many other Americans who must manage families and work life on a budget. Dawn balances both the responsibilities of a diner and a family, but it is not without principle that she operates her life. That principle is based on simple advice she received from her mother many years ago: “Get what you want with what you’ve got.” In her cookbook *Dollars to Donuts* (written with Raquel Pelzel and published by Channeling Media LLC in 2009), Welch shares her strategies for cost efficient, time efficient ways to prepare some of the Rock Café’s signature dishes, like chicken-fried steak and peach crisp. In showing how to prepare meals for as little as \$2 a person, she recants what many die-hard diner fans already know; that good food need not come at a high price. Her pragmatic approach to cooking comes through in her advice on how to shop smart and plan ahead, and is indicative of the discipline with which she runs her life. Structure need not come without spontaneity though; she also offers tips for making cooking

fun, part of her belief that you should love what you do. The following short excerpts from *Dollars to Donuts* convey this spirit:<sup>240</sup>

Do you ever feel like a short-order cook in your own kitchen? Juggling pots and pans on the stove while trying to keep an eye on the kids, answer the phone, set the table, and entertain a drop-in neighbor? Welcome to my life!

[...The] year away from the Café really got me thinking. Whenever customers and friends told me how much they missed my cooking, part of me wanted to ask, “Why don’t you just make it yourself, at home?” After all, the food we cooked up at the Rock was really good home cooking, if not in the literal sense, certainly from a philosophical point of view.

[...] That’s how I got the idea for this cookbook. In *Dollars to Donuts*, besides a slew of my favorite recipes from home and the Rock, I’m sharing lots of kitchen know-how that I’ve picked up throughout 15 years of making comfort food favorites on a grand scale—ideas that I used to make cooking for my family simpler and more efficient and at the same time more varied and exciting. *Dollars to Donuts* is about cooking, for sure, but it’s also about getting the best bang for your buck, feeding your family while having fun, and using time-saving strategies to maximize every minute you spend in the kitchen—and get out of there quicker.

[...] Even though it’s harder than ever to make ends meet, when you’re clever and resourceful in the kitchen, it’s not all that difficult to cook great meals for your family without sacrificing the foods you love...My mom always said to “get what you want with what you’ve got.” It’s a simple philosophy that I follow, and dollars to donuts, I know it’ll work for you, too.

[...] I love how my life and the Rock have come together as one and how I can easily jump from being a mom packing lunches and watching track meets to being a restaurant owner, grill cook, and host. I open the Cafe’s doors at 6:00 a.m., I cook breakfast for the regulars, I pick up my kids from school, I go to the Friday night games. *Dollars to Donuts* is not about just clipping coupons and getting any old dinner on the table, or hitting some arbitrary cost-per-serving target that puts taste and enjoyment at a distant second behind economy. It’s a philosophy of cooking and living where you can get it done and still have fun, all without breaking the bank. It’s how to get the biggest bang for your buck so you can spend less time fretting and more time enjoying what really matters in life—friends, family, and of course, good food!

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<sup>240</sup> Welch with Pelzel, 2009, ix-xi

## VICKERY STATION AND MEADOW GOLD SIGN OF TULSA, OKLAHOMA

### THE HOST COMMUNITY; GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Tulsa is a city in northeastern Oklahoma. It is the county seat of Tulsa County. Tulsa is 99 miles northeast of Oklahoma City (pop. 1,275,578).



Tulsa began as land in Indian Territory that was incorporated in 1898. The area proved to be rife with oil deposits and Tulsa's population grew rapidly throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Census records, between 1910 and 1920, Tulsa experienced a nearly 400% growth rate, from 18,182 to 72,075.

Another industry that took hold in Tulsa, starting in the late 1920s, was aviation. This became a true economic asset during World War Two, when the industry was heavily relied on to aid in the war effort. Significant streams of both revenue and able workers were channeled into the city. Aviation continued to support Tulsa's economy even after the oil industry began to face competition from off shore oil rigging. Tulsa's aviation industry thrives to this day, with over 300 such companies located throughout the city.

Tulsa's population has seen growth throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today Tulsa is the second largest city in Oklahoma and the 46<sup>th</sup> largest city in the United States. According to the Census data, Tulsa had a 2000 population of 393,049, which is a 7% increase from its population in 1990. The city's population in 2008 was estimated to be 385,635, a 2% decrease from 2000. Through numerous preservation measures, Tulsa promotes its rich historic legacy that harkens back to its Route 66 days, as well as its Native American and oil boomtown heritage.

For context, the following table portrays Tulsa's socioeconomic, demographic, and housing indicators in relation to statewide characteristics as of 2009. For instance, white comprise the

majority racial group in Tulsa, as they do throughout Oklahoma; however, there is a slightly higher Hispanic population in Tulsa.

	Tulsa, OK	Oklahoma Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	35.8	36.1	-0.3
% 65+ years	13	13.3	-0.3
% White	73.4	81.4	-8.0
% Hispanic	12.1	7.4	4.7
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$39,373	\$42,541	-\$3,168
% with college degree	17.1	29.2	-12.1
Most common occupation	sales and office	management/ professional	--
Most common industry	education & health/ social services	education & health/ social services	--
% poverty	14.1	16.2	-2.1
% unemployed	3.6	3.3	0.3
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	55.6	68.4	-12.8
% single-unit detached homes	82.4	71.4	11
Decade most homes built	1970-1979	1970-1979	--

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey



## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: VICKERY PHILLIPS 66 STATION

During the 1920s, several oil and oil-related businesses were headquartered in Tulsa such as the Skelly Oil Company and the Getty Oil Company. Their presence propelled Tulsa, Oklahoma to the height of the oil industry, earning the city the unofficial distinction as the “Oil Capital of the World” at that time<sup>241</sup>. That status was further cemented when in 1926, downtown Tulsa’s Second Street became part of U.S. Route 66. The Mother Road provided Tulsa with a continuous stream of interstate traffic between those bound eastward to Chicago and those bound westward to California.

Eventually, Tulsa’s Second Street quickly transformed from a residential to business district as different establishments emerged to meet the needs of Route 66 travelers. One of those establishments was a small gas station with a domestic appearance ultimately known as Vickery Station.

Vickery station was one of many small scale operations that specialized in serving travelers while their corporate counterparts such as Philtower and Philcade populated downtown Tulsa. For instance, the Phillips Petroleum Company expanded its company-owned retail outlets and intentionally located stations in Tulsa to service the highway traffic and downtown motorists. In the mid-1930s, Phillips purchased what would eventually become Vickery Station, which at the time was a two-story house at 320 E. Sixth Street.

The Vickery station followed the Phillips Petroleum Company trademark design of a Cotswold Cottage. As with other Phillips “cottages” across the country ( by 1930 there were 6,750 of them in twelve states<sup>242</sup>), the station had a central chimney and was painted a distinctive dark green with orange and blue trim so that it would stand out from its competing oil companies.

Originally, the cottage appearance of Phillips stations served to help the commercial gasoline businesses retain a certain aesthetic continuity with residential neighborhoods. In Tulsa, the Phillips Cottage Station blended perfectly with the hometown atmosphere of the area, which had Tulsa’s Central High School just two blocks west of the station.

Phillips’ facilities were commonly leased to individuals to manage, as opposed to corporate management. The employees often operated the stations for about six or seven years. This was a common practice in the industry that still allowed companies considerable oversight, since in most instances the oil company maintained ownership of the station and the right to mandate that stations sell only company-owned products.

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<sup>241</sup>Everly-Douze, Susan (August 27, 1989). "What's Doing in Tulsa?". The New York Times.<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=travel&res=950DE2D71131F934A1575BC0A96F948260>.

<sup>242</sup>Wallis, Michael. 1988. *Oil Man: the story of Frank Phillips and the birth of Phillips Petroleum*. St. Martin’s Press, New York, pg. 286.

The drawback to such an arrangement was that the variance in managers became a natural occurrence that did not lend itself to the image of company stability. In the late 1930's, the business at 320 East Sixth Street operated as the John D. Anderson Filling Station until the 1940s, when the station became the Hamilton & Coday Filling Station under the management of Hamilton and Coday.

The duo owned another station on Admiral Street and engineered a joint system that worked brilliantly until business eventually faded due to the gasoline restrictions of World War II. Around 1943, the station became Victory V W Phillips 66.

The name was a ploy to lure customers in the spirit of winning World War II and a reflection of its newest leaser—V. W. Vickery. It operated as Victory station until World War II ended. In 1946, the name changed to Vickery Phillips 66.

Virgil Vickery leased the station at that time and he lived in a small apartment less than a block away from the station. It was a true indication to the entrepreneurial Mom and Pop feel of the business; despite the fact that the Phillips Petroleum Company owned it.

Vickery fared much better than earlier managers of the station did. The end of the war, combined with the rising Route 66 traffic and an invigorated automobile culture in the post-war period, contributed greatly to turning the station into a successful business. In fact, Vickery operated the station throughout the 1950s and listed the station's diverse services in the city directory as "Phillips 66 Products, Gas, Oil, Washing, Lubrication, Tire Repairing, Battery Service."

Even towards the end of the 1950's when the alignment of Route 66 changed to go farther south—away from Tulsa and the Vickery Station—business at the facility continued to thrive for another decade. Once the historic significance of Route 66 and travel along this road faded however, business began to decline.

By 1971, the station had a new lessee and became the Downtown 66. Even fresh management could not turn the business around, and in 1973 the building became vacant and was periodically used for other purposes, such as a paid parking lot. Phillips eventually sold the property and the new owner had to agree to "be restricted for a period of ten years to uses other than for the purpose of storing, selling or otherwise dispensing of automotive fuels, oils and other products ordinarily sold at an automotive service station."<sup>243</sup>

In 2004, the station's precarious outlook began to improve when it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Then, between 2006 and 2008, under new management, funds from a Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program Cost-Share Grant as well as Federal tax credits for

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<sup>243</sup>Vickery Phillips 66 Station, Tulsa, OK. 2009. National Park Service.

[http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/route66/vickery\\_phillips66\\_station\\_tulsa.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/route66/vickery_phillips66_station_tulsa.html)

historic preservation were used to restore the station. The new owner, Michael Sager, operated the historic Blue Dome filling station, which was also on an old alignment of Route 66 in downtown Tulsa and a landmark to the arts and entertainment district.

With Sager's efforts, the vacant building was fully restored in 2008 as an Avis Rent A Car office servicing downtown Tulsa. Sager collaborated with Bill Fernau on the project, who had restored another Phillips 66 station in Chandler, Oklahoma. There were moderate renovations made to Vickery station as the windows and doors remained as they originally were, or were rebuilt in their original specifications. In addition to the filling station, another, larger, building on the Vickery Station property that once served as a garage received renovations (currently serving as an Avis Car Rental Facility). The project received a \$40,000 grant from the NPS- Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, which was quickly put to work funding the laborious restoration project.



The newly restored Vickery Station as an Avis Rent-A-Car facility.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*



The operating Avis Car rental office of Vickery Station today

Source: U.S. National Park Service



## LOCAL IMPACTS

Station owner Michael Sager observes that “Avis wanted a unique presence on Route 66 and “this proves that tiny projects have merit.”

Vickery Station is located at 602 South Elgin Ave, on the southwest corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Elgin Ave. Once a dilapidated gas station, abandoned on Route 66, Vickery Station is currently leased to Avis Rental Cars as a field office. It is now the only rental car facility in the downtown sector of Tulsa. All week long, four local employees are in charge of renting out fifty of Avis’ most upscale line of luxury cars to visitors as well as Tulsa residents. With two million visitors to Tulsa annually, business has never been better. According to Vickery Station owner and local investor Michael Sager, Vickery Station offers services and substantial amount of local access for rental cars to be made available to people in Tulsa.

The success of restoring Vickery Station to its original form is largely made possible through a three way public-private partnership. In 2006, Avis Corporation had been looking for a historic building to put the rental facility in. The reason behind corporate decision to support preservation, despite the expense, had been a desire on the part of Avis to put their asset in a high visibility location, rather than a generic strip mall location. Vickery Station operates in the downtown corridor of Tulsa, which supported the corporate vision. So Avis Corporation Representatives contacted Sager and offered to lease the property as a rental office, but only if the facility was completely restored to its original structure as a historic Route 66 gas station.

In 2007, Sager applied for cost-share grant funds from the National Park Service’s Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. The proposed project to restore the building to its historic appearance, and continue its use as a car facility in the heart of the Tulsa community was favorably reviewed. Sager was awarded \$40,000 in funding, which assisted with about a fifth of the restoration costs. As a listing on the National Register, Vickery Station qualified for 20% Federal Tax credit, without which Sager says there would have been little incentive for investing. In 2005, the state of Oklahoma also passed a State Tax credit of 20% on top of the 20% offered by the Federal Tax credit, offering owners of eligible historic properties a potential subsidy of 40% returned investment (for certified rehabilitation work) dollar for dollar. Sager was able to benefit from a combination of the Federal and State Tax credit subsidies in addition to the grant from Route 66 Corridor Cost-Share Program, as well as the long term in-user lease from Avis Corporation as a business entity. Due to the collaborative efforts of all these factors, Vickery Station was able to, at an estimated cost of 500 dollars a square foot, operate once again, contributing to the economic development of Tulsa.

To ensure further economic revitalization, the city of Tulsa constantly invests in developmental projects which enrich the cultural environment of the community. Around the same time as the restoration of Vickery Station, the people of downtown Tulsa saw the establishment of an award-winning BOK Center, Tulsa’s grandest multipurpose arena. Sager says this was really different from when Vickery Station was first worked on, because it and other parts of downtown Tulsa had



been vacated throughout the years when businesses as well as residents were moving out to the suburbs, taking away their tax dollars and revenue. But now, there has been noticeable residential development as public improvements. Sager mentions that one of his goals had been to elevate the neighborhood (rising property taxes); the past ten years saw a huge resurgence in the lived quarters (a 24/7 community in Tulsa) as well as the business sector in the metropolitan area.

This year, mere blocks away from Vickery Station, is the on-going development of Oneok Field, a new downtown venue for baseball fans. It will draw almost half a million visitors. Nearby construction crews are working on more than two hundred rooms, an expansion most hotels in downtown Tulsa are undertaking. There has also been immense retail developments, generating revenue, jobs, as well as sales taxes for the city of Tulsa.

### **CASE STUDY ADDENDUM: THE PHILLIPS COMPANY DESIGN**

Route 66 is inextricably linked to the rise of the American gas station. The thousands that proliferated along the highway were vital in fueling the 2,451 mile journey that made a pastime of automobile travel. In return, gas companies would often times capitalize on their link to the American travel icon as an effective marketing tool. Perhaps the company that most visibly did so was Philips 66, today known as ConocoPhillips. A pioneer in company trademarking, their distinctive Route 66 shield logo and prototypical cottage service stations have earned Phillips a place in Route 66 history, and the preserved stations that remain today are popular destinations for Mother Road tourists.

The Phillips company has been around since the early years of gasoline sales. L.E. Phillips and Frank Phillips got into the industry when they began prospecting for oil in 1903. With a mix of skill and luck, they achieved 81 successive oil strikes and by 1915 had begun what was to be one of the forerunners of the burgeoning gasoline industry.



A Phillips station of similar design in Chandler, OK  
*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

Phillips was one of the first gasoline companies to design a prototype building for its filling stations, a practice that has since become standardized among gas station franchises. The Phillips station though, bore little resemblance to its modern descendants. In contrast to today's familiar box design service ports and convenience shops, the earliest Phillips stations were in fact built to resemble tiny residential structures. Rather than metal siding, Phillips stations were constructed with bricks, wood, and shingles. The Cotswold cottage design was common for gas stations of this era; a reaction to the first generation gas stations that resembled utilitarian shacks and were considered neighborhood eyesores.

Several distinctive features set Phillips stations apart from the “doll houses” of its competitors, which demonstrates the company’s concerted efforts to trademark a quality appearance. To achieve the domestic look, the brick cottages featured high gables above the door, glass windows, and multi-colored roofing shingles. Some structures even went as far as having a chimney, adorned with a simple ‘P’. While the stations blended in with nearby residential structures, the company used distinctive colors to ensure that passerby could easily pick out a Phillips station. The buildings were often painted with a vivid dark green, with orange and blue trim; colors that are seldom seen on remaining structures as they have since been removed or have faded over time.

To further distinguish the Phillips gas stations, the company adopted a Route 66 shield logo in a strategic move to associate the company with the famous highway. The intriguing story by which the logo came about suggests that fate may have had a hand in the company design. In 1927, the Philips Oil Company was working toward developing a trademark logo to brand its gasoline; although talk had been circulating among company executives to associate the logo with Route 66 because of their proximity to the road, it wasn’t until a last minute case of serendipity that the 66 was decided on. On the day before a meeting was scheduled to discuss the logo, a Phillips official testing a new high-octane fuel coincidentally topped out at a cruising speed of 66 miles per hour—while travelling along Route 66. Upon relating the story at the meeting the next day, the committee gave a unanimous vote for the name change to Phillips 66.



An early Phillips station in McLean, Texas.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

The original shield logo used a black and orange color scheme, and remained the company logo for 30 years. In 1957, the shield was updated with a white, red, and black color scheme, which the company still uses to this day. The original black-orange shields have become popular collectors’ items and are widely reproduced for home decoration, an iconic piece of the early years of Route 66.

## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: THE MEADOW GOLD SIGN

A Tulsa, Oklahoma–based news source (newson6.com) penned its “Who, what, when, where, how” opening reporting paragraph in 2009 with the following three sentences:

There are 24 miles of historic Route 66 running through Tulsa. Along it are bits and pieces of our history. One of these bits and pieces has been restored and is being erected along the historic pathway.<sup>244</sup>

This case study is about the rescue of that colorful “bit and piece—a neon sign.”<sup>245</sup> The short story follows.

Over the years, a large Meadow Gold sign became a famous landmark along Route 66 through Tulsa. After going dark years ago, preservationists pushed for it to be restored and succeeded in this goal. This action is part of a larger effort to save/restore neon signs as a classic Route 66 resource.

The Meadow Gold sign was originally the property of Beatrice Food company, selling “Meadow Gold” dairy and other products. In the 1940s, a neon sign advertising Meadow Gold was placed atop a small building in Tulsa at 11th Street and Lewis Avenue (along Route 66). Each face of the sign was 30 feet by 30 feet, and this neon beacon was the largest in Tulsa, if not the entire Route 66. For decades, especially in the early post–World War II period, Beatrice Foods and Meadow Gold enjoyed market dominance (Meadow Gold was a popular provider of dairy products), and the large neon sign at 11th and Lewis proclaimed that success. Over time, it transcended a local audience and became “a beacon along Route 66.”<sup>246</sup>

But times changed. Meadow Gold’s once-sterling financial footing slipped: Once the property of Beatrice Food Company and a household name throughout America, the brand suffered following a complex series of corporate mergers, acquisitions, sell-offs, and bankruptcies. The signs further suffered by changing geography and technology; Tulsa’s Route 66 was no longer the main thoroughfare (superseded by interstate highways), and neon signs increasingly were viewed as yesteryear’s archaic medium.

The result: the sign went dark in the 1990s, was neglected, and began to deteriorate. In 2005, the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture, in collaboration with the owner, was awarded a grant from the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program to restore the sign. The rusting sign came to near death however, when shortly thereafter a car dealership bought the building upon which Meadow Gold stood, and the dealership wanted this ancient relic out.

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<sup>244</sup> Rick Wells. 2009. “Meadow Gold Sign Returns to Tulsa’s Route 66,” Site maintained by WorldNow and KOTV. 2010. [www.newson6.com](http://www.newson6.com).

<sup>245</sup>“Neon” signs used neon as well as other noble gases, such as argon, krypton, helium, or a combination of these substances. The original Tulsa Meadow Gold sign used argon with mercury added to enhance color. When the sign was restored in 2007, the argon-mercury mix was replaced with the safer and brighter-glowing neon gas.

<sup>246</sup>Rick Wells, “Meadow Gold Sign Returns to Tulsa’s Route 66,” [newson6.com](http://newson6.com).

Tulsa preservationists and the larger community collaborated with the National Park Service to save the neon icon. This group first convinced the car dealership's owner, Chris Nickel, to donate the sign to the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture if the foundation would remove and store two 20' x 40' panels.<sup>247</sup> That intricate dismantling was accomplished by Claude Neon Federal Sign (CNFS) of Tulsa. (Ironically, the car dealership moved to a suburban location shortly thereafter.) Then, the sign had to be restored, and that painstaking process, done letter by letter (the letters consisted of handmade metal and porcelain) and including replacing deteriorated sign metal bar structures, was ably done by CNFS. CNFS also updated the sign's technology by installing state-of-the-art computer-driven electronic messaging capability. In addition, brighter-glowing neon gas was installed for the first time, so technically, it was only under the recent refurbishment that Meadow Gold became a "neon sign" filled with neon.

With the sign restored, it needed a new home, and one was found at 11th Street (Route 66) and Quaker Avenue in Tulsa—about one mile west of its original location. The new site had a history of its own that spanned settlement by the Creek Nation prior to Oklahoma's statehood to multi-decade use as a grocery store along Route 66. (The site was graciously donated by its last owner, Markham D. Ferrell.) An appropriate base was needed for the refurbished sign, so a low-lying one-story brick support pavilion (mimicking how Meadow Gold was originally sited) was built with a prominent Route 66 (Oklahoma) road sign embedded in its mantel.

All this took the herculean effort of many dedicated organizations and individuals. At the helm was the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture (TFA), assisted by the Oklahoma Route 66 Association and the City of Tulsa (including Tulsa's Vision 2025, which has embraced an invigorated Route 66 as one blueprint for a revitalized future city), Tulsa County, Oklahoma state government, and other dedicated entities and persons. Funding for the project came from multiple sources, as is often the case when preservation is attempted. These sources included a \$15,000 federal grant through the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program of the National Park Service, monies from the City of Tulsa and Tulsa County (in part enabled by Vision 2025), and fundraising in Oklahoma and nationwide spearheaded by the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture and the Oklahoma Route 66 Association. An appeal to Route 66 "Road Warriors" raised nearly \$8,000 in a few weeks, in increments from \$5 to \$1,000. All told, about \$320,000 was raised from all sources, including in-kind contributions.

The dedication of the refurbished Meadow Gold sign took place on Friday morning, May 22, 2009. However, as one observer stated,<sup>248</sup> the "real treat" would take place that evening, with the sign's first nighttime glow. It was indeed a treat, as the photo below attests of Meadow Gold shining forth for the first time since it went dark in the 1990s.

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<sup>247</sup>Margaret Foster, "Tulsa's Neon Sign Shines Again" (May 5, 2009). National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation. Accessed July 2010. [www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2009/todays-news/tulsas-neon-meadow-gold-sign.html](http://www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2009/todays-news/tulsas-neon-meadow-gold-sign.html).

<sup>248</sup>"Meadow Gold Glow." 22 May 2009. Route 66 News. [rwarn17588.wordpress.com/2009/05/22/meadow-gold-glow/](http://rwarn17588.wordpress.com/2009/05/22/meadow-gold-glow/) Accessed July 2010.

## LOCAL IMPACTS

The sign's phoenix-like return elated preservationists, Route 66 "roadies," and others. The executive director of the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture, Lee Anne Zeigler, exclaimed, "I'm overjoyed! It's a dream come true,"<sup>249</sup> and "It's more than a sign, it live in people's hearts and memories; it truly is a landmark."<sup>250</sup> Tulsa city planner Dennis Whitaker declared, "It's just really unique" and "something that Tulsans are remarkably excited about."<sup>251</sup>



The Meadow Gold sign glows again.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

Lee Ann Ziegler has compared the restored sign to "a beacon that may very well set a precedent. . . . We have heard from several historic neon sign owners who would love to take their signs out of storage, restore and replace them along Route 66."<sup>252</sup>

The restoration of Meadow Gold is just one component of a larger effort by Tulsa to capitalize on its proud Route 66 heritage. Such action is viewed specifically by Tulsa's Vision 2025 as action good not only for the soul but for the pocketbook as well. Declares the Vision 2025 Route 66 Master Plan, "Route 66 was selected because the enhancement and promotion of this American icon has the potential to be a catalyst for economic development throughout Tulsa County."<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Margaret Foster, "Tulsa's Neon Sign Shines Again" (May 5, 2009). National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation (online only). Accessed July 2010 from [www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2009/todays-news/tulsas-neon-meadow-gold-sign.html](http://www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2009/todays-news/tulsas-neon-meadow-gold-sign.html).

<sup>250</sup> Rick Wells, "Meadow Gold Sign Returns to Tulsa's Route 66," [newson6.com](http://newson6.com).

<sup>251</sup> Margaret Foster, "Tulsa's Neon Sign Shines Again" (May 5, 2009). National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation. Accessed July 2010 from [www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2009/todays-news/tulsas-neon-meadow-gold-sign.html](http://www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2009/todays-news/tulsas-neon-meadow-gold-sign.html).

<sup>252</sup> Margaret Foster, "Tulsa's Neon Sign Shines Again" (May 5, 2009). National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation (online only). Accessed July 2010 from <http://www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2009/todays-news/tulsas-neon-meadow-gold-sign.html>.

<sup>253</sup> Vision 2025, Route 66 Enhancements and Promotion Master Plan of Development: Keeping the Spirit of Route 66 Alive. Executive Summary. Prepared by Dewberry, Howell & VanCuren, and Littlefield. December 2005.



## THE CONOCO GAS STATION OF SHAMROCK, TEXAS

### HOST COMMUNITY: GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Shamrock is a small town in the panhandle region of northeastern Texas. It is located in Wheeler County along interstate 40 and U.S. Route 83. It is 90 miles east of Amarillo, Texas (pop. 173,627) and 150 miles west of Oklahoma City (506,132).



The Irish heritage of Shamrock's name can be traced back to the town's first postmaster, an Irish rancher by the name of George Nickle. It is thought that he chose the name Shamrock to confer good luck upon the town. Today, residents continue to promote Shamrock's Irish spirit; not only does Shamrock host an annual weekend-long St. Patrick's Day festival and parade, it is also home to a fragment of the original Blarney Stone from Blarney Castle in Ireland.

Shamrock was fortunate enough to attract a modicum of businesses from early on in its history, including banks, cotton manufacturing operations, and the county newspaper *The Shamrock Texan*. In 1926, oil was struck and suddenly Shamrock was reaping the prosperity of the oil and natural gas industry, led by the Shamrock Gas Company. Between 1920 and 1930, Shamrock's population grew by nearly 70% from 1,227 to 3,780. Shamrock continued to be a strong player in these industries until the 1940's.

Route 66 helped both population and economic growth in the community during the 1930s and 1940s. During the Mother Road's heyday, a number of traveler-oriented businesses and services located along the main street of Shamrock, such as gas stations and motels. As the route began to receive less traffic however, most of these businesses closed or relocated, cutting off Shamrock from a major source of revenue; this impact was doubly felt by the decline of the local oil industry. The community seemed like a classic American small town going from "boom to bust."

Shamrock, however, has been working hard to regain economic stability and attract new residents, the number of which has steadily declined over time; as of 2000, Shamrock had a population of 2,029; an 11% decrease from the population in 1990. In 2008, the population was estimated to be 1,807; an additional 11% decrease from the 2000 population. A focus on improving and promoting Shamrock's livability has produced some tangible results; besides the

restoration of the landmark Conoco gas station, it also now houses the relatively new Shamrock Economic Development Corporation, along with the Shamrock Chamber of Commerce. These entities recruit new businesses and plan events to enhance and prolong the stay of visitors, the numbers of which have substantially increased since the release of the Disney/Pixar movie *Cars*—where a Conoco station look alike was featured.

To set the context for the description of the Conoco station, we present below a demographic, socioeconomic and housing profile of Shamrock as of 2000. Of note is the considerable divergence in the local profile relative to average statewide characteristics (e.g., Shamrock’s population is older and less affluent).

	Shamrock, TX	Texas Statewide	Local difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	42	32.3	9.7 years
% 65+ years	22.3	9.9	12.4
% White	86.7	73.1	24.7
% Hispanic	13.4	32	-11.9
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$25,776	\$39,927	-\$14,151
% with college degree	16.2	28.4	-12.2
Most common occupation	Service occupations	management/ professional	--
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	--
% poverty	21.4	15.4	6
% unemployed	1.6	4.4	-2.8
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	75.2	63.8	11.4
% single-unit detached homes	87.4	63.4	24
Decade most homes built	1940-1959	1970-1979	older homes

## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: THE CONOCO “TOWER STATION”

It was the early 1930s and John Nunn was in an advantageous position; his lot at the corner of the newly formed crossroads of Highway 83 and Route 66 was a coveted piece of property, and developers offered to build him a business in exchange for the land. So, standing the parking lot of a nearby motor court, Nunn drew an image of the edifice he had in mind with a stray nail. Thus, the Conoco Station at Shamrock, Texas was literally built from the ground up—way up, as it is accentuated with a tower that extends nearly 100 feet into the air. The “Tower Station,” as it has been nicknamed, was the first commercial business located on the newly designated Route 66 in Shamrock, and is one of the most imposing and architecturally creative buildings along the length of the road.



The Conoco Tower Station today.

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

James Tindall and R. C. Lewis built the Conoco Station in 1936 at the cost of \$23,000. The property is not one, but rather three businesses, all of which have home-grown elements. Next to the locally designed Conoco gas station is the U-Drop Inn, a café which received its name from a local 8-year old schoolboy whose suggestion was the winning entry in a naming contest. A third

property in the complex was originally intended to be a retail shop, but the success of the café dictated the owners gradually turn it into a sort of auxiliary space for the café, which served as a ballroom and held extra seating.

Architecturally, the building complex is a sturdy, practical structure beneath its flamboyant styling. It is essentially a one story concrete and brick building with a rectangular, flat roof.<sup>254</sup> It was primarily designed to serve its business purposes as a gas station and a café, although it is certainly designed to attract business as well; of the gas station's two canopies, one faces Route 66, while the other captures travelers along Highway 83—which the Tower Station was able to do because of its corner lot location. Its decorative touches playfully go over the top, and in the case of the Tower Station's two obelisks, several dozen feet over the top. The taller Conoco Station tower is emblazoned with the large letters C-O-N-O-C-O so the business and not just the building could be clearly visible to passerby on the road. The tower is one of the tallest structures in central Shamrock; it is also topped off with a distinctive metal “tulip,” which happens to give the tower the appearance of the nail with which the design was originally designed. Both towers are covered with a zigzag motif, stucco, and accented with green and gold terra cotta tiles—characteristic embellishments of the Art Deco style. It was considered beautiful architecture in its day, and remains widely regarded as iconic and unique.

Its grandiose appearance may appear especially extraneous given the buildings' historical and locational context, for not only was it rare to encounter an ornate Art Deco structure during the Great Depression era, but for the structure to be a gas station in a small remote town.<sup>255</sup> One might chalk it up to small town irreverence, but the scale of design is really an echo of the backdrop to Shamrock's economy at the time. Since the 1920's, Shamrock had been experiencing steady growth, which picked up upon the local discovery of oil in 1926. In addition, the Shamrock Gas Company operated natural gas wells, further boosting the local economy so that by the early 1930's, at the height of the Great Depression, Shamrock's population was at its highest levels to date (3,778, while in 2008 it was 1,802). If economic optimism was the prevailing local attitude, then the rich details of the Conoco Station fit right in.

The self-assured presentation was not just for show, as the Conoco complex did a very good business in its early years. “The building was beautiful in its day: neon lighting, deco details and glazed ceramic tiles.”<sup>256</sup> The unique beauty of the place and its fortuitous business location (when it opened it was the only restaurant within 100 miles of Shamrock<sup>257</sup>) combined to make it a thriving enterprise. When it opened, a local newsstand declared it to be “the swankiest of swank eating places,” and “the most up-to-date edifice of its kind on U.S. Highway 66 between

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<sup>254</sup>Olsson, James (August 12, 1997). *National Registry of Historic Places Registration Form*. National Registry of Historic Places.

<sup>255</sup>Scott, Quinta (December 2001). “*The Architecture of Americas Highway: Streamline Moderne, U.S. Highway 66, Route 66*,” *Along Route 66*.

<sup>256</sup>*Shamrock, Texas: 7 March 2009. U-Drop Inn. Site maintained by texascrossroads.com.*  
[http://www.monsterfm.com/texascrossroads/u-drop\\_inn.htm](http://www.monsterfm.com/texascrossroads/u-drop_inn.htm)

<sup>257</sup>Wizel, Russel Olsen (2004-05-01). “Texas”, *Route 66: Lost & Found: Ruins and Relics Revisited*. Osceola, Wisconsin: Motorbooks International, p. 84

Oklahoma City and Amarillo.”<sup>258</sup> Many locals and Route 66 highway travelers would purchase gasoline at the Conoco pumps and then eat at the café, drawn by the diner’s motto of “Delicious food courteously served.” As Route 66 continued to bring highway traffic through Shamrock, garages, gas stations, and diners continued to spring up downtown, but the Conoco station remained the most recognizable of these roadside amenities. Prosperity was visible throughout Shamrock, with the Tower Station as the neon-trimmed glowing centerpiece.

Such a rosy picture did not last in Shamrock, nor did it for Conoco, or for Route 66— all of which depended on each other for their survival. In 1956, the Interstate Highway Act was signed and Route 66 traffic through Shamrock declined. Part of Conoco’s essence died with its owner, John Nunn, who passed in 1957. Lacking the stability it once had, the building went through several owners and name changes over the next decade. Even its design changed; in the 1970’s, the building became a Fina Station and was given a red-white-and blue color scheme.

The tides of fortune continued to ebb and flow: in the early 1980’s, James Tindall’s son, James Tindall Jr., bought the building in the hopes of restoring it to the glory days of his father, reverting the building’s exterior to its original color scheme. Unfortunately, idealism could not stand up to the reality of Shamrock’s faltering economy. The town’s dismal economic downturn, in part brought on by the decommissioning of Route 66 in 1984 left many of Shamrock’s roadside businesses closed and abandoned. Not even the Tower Station could stay afloat, and the business closed in 1997, ironically just about the time the buildings were listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Such a unique and historic building could not stay closed for long; recognizing it as a distinguishing feature of Shamrock, residents and neighborhood leaders came together to bring it back. In 1999, the property was purchased by the First National Bank of Shamrock, and in a gesture of benevolence was given to the town of Shamrock as a gift. A painstaking restoration process began soon thereafter. “In 2000, the city hired Architexas, a firm specializing in historical preservation, to begin implementing a phased restoration plan.”<sup>259</sup> To ensure historical accuracy, developers relied on old photographs and the memories of longtime Shamrock residents. With \$1.7 million in funding by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the restoration was completed in 2003.<sup>260</sup> Until about the late 1970s, the Tower Station and U-Drop Inn Café was light brick with green glazed tiles. Now refurbished with light pink concrete highlighted by green paint, it looks today much the same as it did during the heyday of the Mother Road.

It was not only the residents of Shamrock that recognized the significance of the Tower Station. Across the country Route 66 enthusiasts celebrated its restoration as well (completed in 2003),

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<sup>258</sup>[http://www.monsterfm.com/texascrossroads/u-drop\\_inn.htm](http://www.monsterfm.com/texascrossroads/u-drop_inn.htm)

<sup>259</sup>Degrood, Thomas J. (July/August 2005). "Roadside Renewal". *Texas Architect*; 55 (4): 42–43.

<sup>260</sup>Tower Station and U-Drop Inn.

Architexas.[www.architexas.com/pdfs/historic\\_preservation/tower\\_station\\_and\\_u\\_drop\\_inn.pdf](http://www.architexas.com/pdfs/historic_preservation/tower_station_and_u_drop_inn.pdf)



and the distinctive structure even caught the eye of Disney/Pixar. The animators were researching iconic Route 66 structures to aid in writing the story for the movie *Cars* (2006) and were impressed with the newly restored structure. They gave a very noticeable nod to the building in *Cars*, as “The House of Body Art,” a fictitious business for the character Ramone, closely resembles the Tower Station. The movie generated national attention for the building, which in turn has generated a new wave of tourists who come to Shamrock to photograph the iconic structure.

Today, the restored Tower Station serves multiple uses, not only as an artifact of the past, but as an actual museum. The interior portrays the operation of a typical 1940’s gas station, while also documenting the atypical origins and history of the Conoco Station and U-Drop Inn. The building also houses the Shamrock Economic Development Corporation, which shows how the renewed Conoco station has given the town of Shamrock a renewed sense of optimism and hometown pride. The historic structure is a cherished component of the local identity; much as the Tower Station was traced from the ground, it has traced the course of Shamrock’s history for the past 70 plus years, reflecting the town’s economic ups and downs. Besides capturing the development of modern-day Shamrock, the Tower Station’s unique design has unceasingly captured the imagination—from the original artistic inspiration of John Nunn, to its inspiration for a major motion picture—and hopefully the imposing structure will continue to inspire Route 66 travelers for years to come.

## **LOCAL IMPACTS**

Back in 1999, the director of the board of the First National Bank of Shamrock purchased the buildings from their owner because the owner was just going to have the place torn down. The Tower Station and the U-drop Inn Café was turned over to the city of Shamrock and donated under the stipulation that Shamrock would restore both buildings. Both Phoenix 1, a construction company based in Dallas TX, and ArchiTexas which specializes in architectural planning and historical preservation, were contracted to work with the funds granted by the Texas Department of Transportation as well as tax-deductible contributions/donations from the people of Shamrock.

The restoration was an investment on Shamrock’s part meant to boost the tourism and subsequently the local economy. As many as 2000 people per month would stop by the Tower Station and U-drop Inn Café. Summer months are a peak season for Shamrock’s tourists, the majority of which are European or Asian. During the summertime, the Tower Station holds a special event called Thursday Night Under the Neon. Every Thursday night from June to August, musicians gather around the Tower Station and U-Drop Inn Café to perform concerts, all free to the public. Around 80% of the musicians are local, while a few regional groups are invited from the nearby Cactus Theatre in Lubbock, TX.

Since the Pixar/Disney movie *Cars* came out, there has been a 10 to 15% increase in the people that came through. Tourists that stop by not only benefit the Tower Station and U-Drop Inn Café but also benefits local restaurants and shops.

Recently, Ford Motor Company flew into Shamrock and spent three days shooting for a new commercial. The photographers would usually stay overnight so they can get shots of the iconic neon which comes on in the evenings. During March, Shamrock holds a major car show for its annual St. Patrick's Day celebration. According to David Rushing in the Shamrock Chamber Office, the population of Shamrock booms from approximately 2,000 people to 12,000 people celebrating the special event. Last year a group at the U-Drop Inn Café spent the day serving barbecue to the public.

The U-Drop Inn has other involvements with the Shamrock community through on-going events. Bigger events, such as reunions, would utilize the large banquet room, which holds a hundred people. Other rooms are booked for smaller venues such as Mexican styled quinceaneras and traditional weddings. During the first two weeks of August 2010 (when the interview occurred) there had been two weddings so far.

## **KELLY'S BREW PUB (JONES MOTOR COMPANY) OF ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO**

### **THE HOST COMMUNITY; GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE**

Albuquerque is the county seat of Bernalillo County and is situated in the central part of New Mexico, straddling the Rio Grande. The Sandia Mountains run along the eastern side of Albuquerque, and the Rio Grande flows through the city, north to south. The closest city of 1,000,000+ people to Albuquerque is Phoenix, Arizona (330.8 miles).



Albuquerque's history can be traced as far back as its early Pueblo Indian inhabitants who lived some 12,000 years ago. Native American civilization continued to thrive up to the time of Albuquerque's official founding in 1706 by Spanish explorers. The area was chosen for its irrigation qualities; thus, Albuquerque's early economy was rooted in agriculture and trade.

Albuquerque's modern history began with its connection to the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, which in 1880 located about two miles east of the early settlement and effectively divided the city into Old Albuquerque and New Albuquerque. The population quickly grew around the center of New Albuquerque, which is today the downtown business district of the city. Albuquerque was officially incorporated into the United States in 1885 and quickly grew in population; between 1890 and 1900, the area within New Albuquerque increased from 3,785 to 6,238 people.

Albuquerque's Route 66 history begins in the late 1920s, and the road would have a transformative effect on the downtown environment. Over the decades, many restaurants and diners, service stations, garages, and motels were established. Such establishments became plentiful after Route 66 was realigned in the late 1930s from a north/south to an east/west alignment, creating an important crossroad in the center of the downtown district.

Albuquerque's population has shown tremendous growth in recent years such that today it is the largest city in the state of New Mexico and the 32<sup>nd</sup> largest city in the United States. As of 2000, Albuquerque's population was 448,607, which is 14% higher than the population in 1990. As of 2009, Albuquerque's population was estimated to be 528,497, which is an additional 18% gain

from the 2000 population. As some other Sunbelt cities in the United States, Albuquerque is growing rapidly! Albuquerque is home to the University of New Mexico, Kirtland Air Force Base, Sandia National Laboratories, and Petroglyph National Monument. The economy has grown to be diverse, but has become oriented toward research and technology-based industries. A renewed interest in Albuquerque's historic buildings and structure has brought about a wave of preservation efforts, and many Route 66 structures have been rehabilitated for the sake of tourists and for local character. It also has a wonderful neon strip that personifies the Mother Road in its heyday.

As is indicated below, many of Albuquerque's socioeconomic, demographic, and housing traits resemble the statewide profile for New Mexico. One exception is a higher share of college graduates, perhaps ensuing from the fact that New Mexico's state university flagship campus is located in Albuquerque.

	Albuquerque, NM	New Mexico Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	35.4	35.8	-0.4
% 65+ years	12.2	12.8	-0.6
% White	70.4	72.8	-2.4
% Hispanic	44	44.5	-0.5
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$45,962	\$43,202	-\$2,760
% with college degree	39.4	32.1	7.3
Most common occupation	management and professional	management and professional	
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	
% poverty	15.2	17.9	-2.7
% unemployed	3.5	3.7	-0.2
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	61.7	69.4	-7.7
% single-unit detached homes	60.6	63.7	-3.1
Decade most homes built	1970-1979	1970-1979	--

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

## **THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: KELLY'S BREW PUB**

Kelly's Brew Pub was established in 2000 in an historic building originally constructed in 1939 as the Jones Motor Company. In its day, it was considered one of the most modern automotive facilities in the West. The building was designed in the Streamline Moderne style of architecture, a variety of Art Deco that was particularly popular during the Great Depression. It was originally a combined Texaco gas station and Ford dealership, located on the corner of Central Avenue (Route 66) and Wellesley Drive in the Nob Hill neighborhood east of the University of New Mexico campus. Its position on the corner allowed cars access to the gas pumps from two sides while the large curved front window afforded passing motorists a view of the latest Ford automobiles. Located on what was then the eastern edge of Albuquerque, Jones Motor Company was one of the first stations westbound motorists encountered as they entered the city on Route 66. Many of these early customers carried heavy loads as they fled the dust bowl states for greener pastures to the west. Responding to their needs, Jones built a canopy off the back of the building so cars could be unloaded in the shade prior to servicing. Through Jones's entrepreneurial spirit and ability to respond to change, his business thrived in this location for almost 20 years.

The Jones Motor Company moved to a new location in 1957 and subsequently the building housed a series of lesser economic uses: a moped shop, auto body shop, and army supply store.

The building was designated as historic in 1993, but while its rich past was recognized, its future was in doubt. By the time the current owners took over the building in 2000, it had been vacant for several years and was in poor condition. They substantially refurbished it and established Kelly's as a hotspot for high-quality food and beer. The renovations restored the original Art Deco image of the building and emphasize its automotive heritage (the interior of the restaurant is decorated with old photographs and news clippings about its past as a car dealership); historic gas pumps on the patio next to a prominent Texaco Company sign, preserving the dealership's garage doors, and a clever sign on the façade reading "Food" in the style of the Ford logo are among the more noteworthy touches. The patio is one of the largest in Albuquerque and a major draw for customers.





Kelly's Brew Pub exterior

*Source: Jedediah Drolet, Rutgers University, July 2010*

Kelly's now employs 80 to 90 people and serves an average of 300 people a day, about three-quarters of whom are local residents rather than tourists. It is one of the major anchors of the Nob Hill area, which has recently come back from a period of decline in the 1960s and 1970s as more suburban development elsewhere in the city drew attention away from the small-scale historic retail establishments and motels along Central Avenue (See Exhibit 1 for a history of Nob Hill and its link to Route 66). Today, Nob Hill is one of the most popular and prosperous neighborhoods in the city, due largely to its walkable ambience, proximity to the large state university campus, and assortment of small shops and restaurants (see Exhibit 1 below). It has a more urban, walkable feel to it than do most other parts of Albuquerque, and several key businesses such as Kelly's have contributed to making it a destination for residents from throughout the city.



The Kelly's Brew Pub "Food" sign

Source: Jedediah Drolet, Rutgers University, July 2010

## LOCAL IMPACTS

In a discussion with Rutgers University, Kelly's manager opined "[Kelly's] helps set the atmosphere for the area, and the pub is able to attract patrons since it has a downtown location with lots of little shops around it." Some local businesses consulted by Rutgers University shared this assessment of the drawing power of Kelly's.

*Object of Desire* (fine furnishings and accessories)—"People will be eating at the pub and will be attracted into our store. Kelly's Brew Pub has a very comfortable atmosphere; visually, it draws a lot of people from the highway."

*Zine Wine Bar & Bistro*—"I think [Kelly's] draws more people into the area, which in turn helps out our business."

*Astro Zombies* (comic book store)—"It is a unique coffee shop and brewery, so it definitely brings groups of people into the area."

## **Exhibit 1: The Historic Nob Hill District (from the Nob Hill-Highland Renaissance Corporation)<sup>261</sup>**

Central Avenue, Nob Hill-Highland's main street, has a split personality. It is Albuquerque's original "Main Street," like Main Streets all across the country, but its other personality is Route 66, the great Mother Road which carried countless Americans westward to California during the Great Depression [...]

Until the mid-1930's Central Avenue east of UNM, Nob Hill's Central Avenue consisted of a few motor courts, gas stations, campgrounds and a cafe. Albuquerque proper was still off to the west, but the city's street car system did make it out to Nob Hill.

Although Route 66 already crossed New Mexico, it seemed to be in no great hurry. From 1926 through 1937, when you headed "west" on the route, you turned north near Santa Rosa, made your way through Santa Fe and then turned south toward Albuquerque via Fourth Street. But, in 1937, Route 66 straightened out and headed directly west across the state, cutting 107 miles from the journey. The realignment let motorists run from Tucumcari straight to Grants, bringing them right down Albuquerque's Central Avenue from Tijeras Canyon to Nine Mile Hill.

With this the only paved road crossing New Mexico, development began to spread east and west along its shoulders. Small towns and businesses no longer on the route were cut off, but other entrepreneurs sparked into action as the tourist stream flowed down its new course.

Suddenly, travelers were driving through the Highland and Nob Hill neighborhoods on their way to downtown Albuquerque. Central Avenue was no longer just a country road. Motels with neon signs competed for the travelers' attention, and retailers and restaurateurs vied to meet their needs.

Roadside architecture beckoned to drivers: A cafe shaped like an iceberg, evoking images of cold drinks and ice cream cones, opened for business on the present site of the Lobo Theatre; a sombrero-shaped restaurant offered Mexican food. The Aztec Lodge and the De Anza Motor Lodge presented pueblo-inspired accommodations, while others such as the Wigwam boasted teepees in which children could play [...]

Route 66 travelers eventually traded the exotic little motels for the comfort of familiar national chains who had been attracted by the increasing traffic flow. The completion of Interstate 40 in 1959 was another blow. Motorists no longer had to travel through the city on the somewhat narrow Route 66, littered with stop signs and traffic. They gave up the slow, romantic journey through the "enchanted" state of New Mexico to move at speeds of 60 to 70 miles an hour to get to their destinations, often driving through the night. In 1955, Albuquerque's Route 66 had 98 motels; by 1992, only 48 remained.

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<sup>261</sup>"The Historic Nob Hill District." Nob Hill Main Street. Site Maintained by EliasQuinn.com. 2010. <http://rt66central.com/history.html>

But the Historic Route 66 designation does remain, and the road has been named a Scenic Byway by both state and federal governments. Although many examples of Route 66-era roadside architecture have been lost, the Nob Hill-Highland stretch is considered the most intact in the state.



Central Avenue (Route 66) in Nob Hill

*Source: Jedediah Drolet, Rutgers University, July 2010*



## THE BLUE SWALLOW MOTEL OF TUCUMCARI, NEW MEXICO

### THE HOST COMMUNITY; GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Tucumcari is a large town in northeastern New Mexico. The county seat of Quay County, Tucumcari is 105 miles west of Amarillo, TX (pop. 173,627) and 160 miles east of Albuquerque, NM (pop. 448,607).



Before it became a settlement, Tucumcari began in 1901 as a construction camp for the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad. The camp, originally named Douglas, earned the nickname of “Six-Shooter-Siding” for its reputation with outlaws and saloon gunfights. The name Tucumcari came shortly thereafter, and is taken from the nearby Tucumcari Mountain, a local geological feature and the subject of Native American folklore.

Tucumcari began servicing passenger trains in 1902, which served to boost the local economy and population. Besides the number of small businesses scattered throughout the community, Tucumcari’s early economy was based on ranching and the railroad industry. Census records show Tucumcari’s population to be 3,349 in 1910.

While the Great Depression left Tucumcari struggling, two notable developments helped the local economy; one was the commissioning of Route 66, and the other was the damming of the South Canadian River, which tremendously aided the agriculture industry in Tucumcari by creating thousands of acres of irrigated farmland. During the 1940s and 1950s, a number of motels were established along the stretch of Route 66 which ran through downtown Tucumcari, many of which adorned their signs with colorful neon displays and the downtown area came to be known for its colorful nighttime scene. Fortunately, a good number of these signs have been preserved over the years and today they have helped to make Tucumcari a Route 66 “must see” tourist destination. In recent years, the town has focused its efforts on maintaining its population; as of the 2000 Census, Tucumcari had 5,989 residents, a 12% decrease from the population in 1990. In 2009, Tucumcari was estimated to have a population of 5,247, an additional 12% decrease from 2000.



Tucumcari’s socioeconomic, demographic, and housing characteristics differ in many regards from the average New Mexico statewide profile. For example, Tucumcari has a larger senior (65+ years) and Hispanic population and lags the state in median income and other economic statistics.

	Tucumcari, NM	New Mexico Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	39.4	35.6	3.8
% 65+ years	17.5	11.7	5.8
% White	78.2	69.9	8.3
% Hispanic	51.4	42.1	9.3
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$22,560	\$34,133	-\$11,573
% with college degree	16.3	29.3	-13.0
Most common occupation	sales and office	management and professional	--
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	--
% poverty	24.8	18.4	6.4
% unemployed	3.6	4.4	-0.8
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	64	70	-6.0
% single-unit detached homes	74.7	61	13.7
Decade most homes built	1940-1959	1970-1979	Older homes

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: THE BLUE SWALLOW MOTEL

The vivid outline of a graceful blue bird marks the location of one of Tucumcari, New Mexico's most photographed structures; a picture of individuality and perseverance along Route 66. Though the restored vintage motel—the oldest still in operation on Route 66— may have a modest 11 rooms, on an average day it caters to 30-40 visitors; at the peak of the travel season, it is not unusual for there to be as many as 100 visitors each day. The secret to its long-standing success is not to be found in luxury furnishings or spacious rooms, but in its owners' unwavering commitment to personable service, and travelers' unwavering loyalty to independent establishments that maintain such integrity.



The Blue Swallow Motel

Source: Scott Tanis/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

To be precise, the Blue Swallow motel is what was called a motor court, a derivative of Route 66's early cabin camps. Motor courts made a more efficient use of property space, grouping the rooms under one roof, as well as travelers' amenities like restaurants, gift shops, and pools.<sup>262</sup> It was from the phrase "motor court" that gave birth to the term motel; a combination of motor court and hotel. The Blue Swallow sits in the same location as when it first opened in 1942, along a central drag in downtown Tucumcari often referred to as "motel row" because of its cluster of over a dozen operational motels. During the evening, motel row illuminates Tucumcari, but the Blue Swallow sign, taller than the motel itself, easily stands out from the rest. Its electric blue neon tubing, shaped into an angular silhouette of the motel's namesake, is perched atop the main office's front awning, perpendicular to the Route 66.

The restored motel stands largely unaltered from its original construction: 11 rooms, separated by single car garages, arranged in an L-shape around a common courtyard. Its simple architectural design manages to convey its age in its 1940s stucco walls, once a pale pink that has since been repainted to take on a more thematic blue color. Around the back, over an acre of land has been set aside to accommodate the bus-loads of tourists that come to the Blue Swallow to photograph this famous motel and meet its owners.

Construction of the Blue Swallow Motel began in 1939 along Route 66 by an East Coast architect, W.A. Higgins. Ted Jones, a prominent New Mexican rancher, opened the motel for business in 1942, at the height of World War II. The economic climate was not hospitable to new

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<sup>262</sup> "Historic Route 66—the road that shaped America." The Mother Road: Historic Route 66. Site maintained by Squidoo, LLC. October 2009. <http://www.squidoo.com/themotherroad>

motels: with gas and tire rationing in effect, fewer people were traveling and as a result, Jones sold the hotel at a loss. It may never have been in the cards for the Blue Swallow to be a lucrative endeavor for its owners, but that has never kept them from delivering a level of hospitality that has given the motel a reputation among Route 66 travelers.

At any one time, the Blue Swallow has only been run by one or two proprietors. As fixtures at the front desk, they are just as much a part of the Blue Swallow's legacy as the motel itself. Most famous is its long standing proprietor Lillian Redman. Born in 1902, her life captured the history of the American Southwest, having arrived in New Mexico in 1916 in a covered wagon. She gained her first experiences in the hospitality industry as a "Harvey Girl," the name given for the uniformed maids working for the burgeoning Fred Harvey Hotel Franchise (see "La Posada" case study) and made famous in the 1946 movie starring Judy Garland. Redman received the Blue Swallow as an engagement gift in 1958. Known to be a sagacious "people person," she infused her brand of virtue into the operation of the motel. It has been said that when guests could not afford a room, Redman would sometimes accept bartering instead of cash, occasionally even going as far as providing a room at no cost. The postcards sold at the Blue Swallow are emblazoned with a heartfelt message Redman often delivered to her guests: "From 'birth 'til death' we travel between eternities. May these days be pleasant for you, profitable for society, helpful to those you meet, and a joy to those who know and love you best." The Blue Swallow itself actually represents two virtues: the blue color for trust, and the bird for love. They served as guiding principles in Redman's work life, as she strove to deliver loving hospitality and develop deep bonds of trust with her loyal customers.

Redman attributed the constant human contact to her persistence in the Blue Swallow. "My life has been really blessed with all the people I've met," Redman once said in an interview, commenting on the thousands of guests she met over her 40-year proprietorship. "Everybody is going somewhere and everyone has something to say."<sup>263</sup>

Redman continued to operate the Blue Swallow well into her 90's, persevering through four decades of economic growth and downturns. The biggest blow to business came from the construction of the Interstate highway system, which diverted travelers from Tucumcari. Perhaps recognizing that visitors to the Blue Swallow would now be coming more out of nostalgia than necessity, she continued to preserve the character that the Blue Swallow had developed, selling penny candy and soda pop from her refrigerator in the lobby. Gradually, the motel began to show its age, as its aging owner found it increasingly difficult to maintain the property. Finally, after what seemed to be a marathon proprietorship, Redman sold the Blue Swallow to Dave and Hilda Bakke in 1998. Redman passed away soon after in February of 1999, and the Blue Swallow's new owners resolved to keep her spirit alive in her beloved motor court. They began to restore the Blue Swallow to its glory days; they repainted the walls, changed out old mattresses, added carpets, and refurbished the infrastructure. Dave, an electrician by trade, also sought to update

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<sup>263</sup> Andrews, Ted. 19 October 1997. "Small Motels Struggle to Survive." *Daily News of Bowling Green, Kentucky*, 5-C. <http://bgdailynews.com/>

the amenities of the 60 year-old motor court by installing telephones and color television sets in every room. Not to drown out the motel's antiquity, he was sure to install only vintage rotary telephones and retro-looking television sets. The restoration and updates were funded with a grant awarded by US West, Inc.

Stiff competition from chain hotels and familial responsibilities proved to be too much for the Bakkes. There was still much work to be done to the dilapidated Blue Swallow, but their attention was needed elsewhere. They put the motel up for sale in 2005 after they reported a relative in Minnesota had become seriously ill. They continued to run the motel until Bill Kinder and Terry Johnson purchased it in early 2006. Kinder, formerly a contractor from Florida, was intrigued by the history of the Blue Swallow and saw it as an opportunity to be closer to his children who had moved to different places across the western United States. Like the Bakkes, Terri and Bill were interested in restoring and preserving the historic motel, but they wanted to dig deeper than the Redman years. Eager to learn about the Blue Swallow's earliest days, Bill did extensive research on the motel; among the things he learned was that the original paint scheme was not pink, but a pale blue, and so they took to restoring this more suitable color considering the motel's name. They also learned that a block glass sculpture that sat near the front door was actually a fountain at one time. They excavated the mote surrounding the fountain, and stocked it with fish and plants.

Though structurally updated, they continue to operate the Blue Swallow with Redman's legendary service mentality. They do not charge for the beverages they put in the lobby's refrigerator; travelers simply pay what they are able to. Kinder will also take pictures of his guests in front of the famous Blue Swallow sign and print them out for free. The Blue Swallow Motel was prominently featured in Michael Wallis book, *Route 66: The Mother Road*, in the early 1990s, and more recently in *Sunset Magazine*. The Blue Swallow was listed on the National Historic Registry in 1993 and received Cost Share Funding from the National Park Service in 2007.

The longevity of the Blue Swallow has received much admiration from travelers and fellow Route 66 proprietors alike. After almost 70 years of operation, it stands as the criterion of outstanding motel service and hospitality along the Mother Road. In an era of chain hotels, independents are a welcome, nostalgic backroad discovery, as they deliver a brand of service that cannot be replicated. In keeping with the Redman philosophy, the personable service is a reminder of the deep bond that exists between transients and natives along Route 66; it is by word of mouth that independent establishments remain afloat, and it is through their endurance that they continue to provide to travelers' material and spiritual needs.

## LOCAL IMPACTS

Bill Kinder noted that he has spent approximately \$42,000 on restoration in the past two years. The small business is not a major employer, but rather a labor of love for as Bill observed “no one is employed but me and my wife and we do everything from cleaning the rooms to booking the reservations.”

Bill and Terri’s efforts have contributed greatly to the local economy. According to the Tucumcari/Quay Chamber of Commerce, last year’s lodger’s taxes toward the city came to a total of \$450,000; a figure that includes the Blue Swallow Motel and other hotel stays, local RV parks, and campgrounds.

It is clear that the community of Tucumcari has benefited in terms of the museum, city conventions, restaurants, and other businesses such as gift shops. Since the Blue Swallow Motel is an iconic motel in New Mexico, it draws thousands of Route 66 tourists annually, whose stay at the Blue Swallow and around Tucumcari contribute to lodger’s taxes and the local sales taxes.

Overall, feedback from previous guests indicates the Blue Swallow provides a pleasurable visitor experience. One out-of-state traveler said: “Bill and Terri are happy, helpful hosts. You can stay in any cookie-cutter place anywhere in the world; this place is a one-of-a-kind experience. Here are some tips: Reserve your room well in advance. This is not a big motel and people from all over the world have discovered it. The guest book has recent entries in many different languages, and there were several other nationalities there when we were there earlier this July 2010. Second tip: if you smoke, or smell of smoke, stay away. It is for non-smokers, and Bill is vigilant to keep the odor out of his linens.”

The Motel is only open six months out of the year. Mainly families stay at the Motel. In March the owners paid \$103 toward lodger’s taxes, in June \$472—during the summer months the rate of lodger’s taxes reflects more than four times the activity in the early spring. Although the rooms are almost always packed, June was the Motel’s highest month so far this year for visitation. Bill reckons it was because the gas prices were down in June, and July has not been so good on the price of gas. Because three-fourths (75%) of the guests are Europeans, Bill attributes the decrease in visitation lately toward the value of Euros going down— a statement which suggests that their visitation rate is also directly impacted by the international economy.

Another visitor in July also recommended the Blue Swallow “If you are looking for a great vintage Route 66 experience, this is a great place to be. Everything in the rooms has been immaculately restored to what the motel might have been like in its inception. In addition, all the neon has been restored. Route 66 themed murals have been painted in each of the garages. The owners were very welcoming and hospitable, and our five-year old son enjoyed seeing the old-style room and special *Cars* mural. This is a great place to stay!”



One repeat visitor from Missouri describes in her blog “Owners Bill and Terri have strived to retain the ‘50s retro look. The whole motel is a trip back in time from the single individual car garages that have themed Hollywood Movie walls like: ‘Easy Rider’ or Marilyn Monroe. As you arrive at Tucumcari, NM at night you are greeted by the famous blue swallow in neon. All along the Motel’s walls are neon lights drawing the tired visitor into their 50s room with original porcelain basin sinks with twist handles. The bathroom floor is done in honeycomb tile with black and white shower stalls. Your black telephone is an original dial phone that has been retrofitted for modern use. The rooms are immaculately clean. You will not be disappointed if you are looking for a trip back in time. Sit out and visit with the owners in original metal chairs of the era at night and learn about Tucumcari’s past and the Route 66 feel. This is the destination spot for the Route 66 genre!”

Additionally, the Blue Swallow Motel has had a positive effect on the visitation to Tucumcari Historical Research Institute, Inc. The museum administrator informs Rutgers University that “Bill’s usually very good about sending people over to the museum especially his overnight guests who are looking for things to do.”

Martin Encinias-Angel, the Programs Director at the Tucumcari Convention Center, is in the business of hosting events such as the largest 50th year reunion in New Mexico. The Convention Center also caters to all functions required by the New Mexico State University, as well as putting old restored cars on display for car enthusiasts. There is a Chevy 66 monument right in the front of the Convention Center which is often photographed by tourists who are interested in photographing the iconic neon swallow at the Motel. Mr. Encinias-Angel, who admits to staying at the Motel a few times himself, spoke fondly of the fuzzy chenille bedspreads and the dark woodwork of the Motel. He also said “the Motel impacts the city by paying lodger’s taxes and attracting visitors, which in turn impacts me [business at the Conventions Center] since the Conventions Center is city-owned.”

Del’s Restaurant, renowned for its Southwestern cuisine, has been an establishment in Tucumcari since 1956. According to the manager, “I’m sure it has an economic impact on us; the Motel itself brings in lots of travelers who always want to photograph the place. And the Motel is four blocks away so it’s really close to Del’s.”

## COOL SPRINGS CAMP OF KINGMAN, ARIZONA

### THE HOST COMMUNITY; GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

*(Note: Cool Springs is located about 20 miles west of Kingman)*

Kingman is a small city in northwestern Arizona and is the county seat of Mohave County. It is 80 miles from Henderson, NV (pop. 175,381) and 95 miles from Las Vegas, NV (pop. 478,434).



Kingman receives its name from Lewis Kingman, the engineer who established the area in 1881 as a railroad stop for the Santa Fe Railway. Kingman became the county seat of Mohave County in 1887. Early in its history, Kingman served as a shipping center for the numerous mines that were built in the mountainous area to the west of the community.

The stretch of Route 66 that runs through Kingman is on Andy Devine Drive, along which many motels and diners located during the Mother Road's heyday. Some of these establishments still operate today, primarily catering to the new wave of Route 66 tourists that visit Kingman.

Today, Kingman serves as a regional trade and distribution center, owing to its location near Interstate 40, US 93, and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway. It is also emerging in the tourism industry. Kingman has abundant historic resources with over 60 structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Kingman has experienced tremendous growth in the past 20 years. As of 2000, Kingman had a population of 20,069; a 37% increase from 1990. In 2008, the population was estimated at 27, 817, a 28% gain from 2000.

For context, we present Kingman's demographic, socioeconomic, and housing profile in relation to Arizona statewide traits. For instance, Kingman's population is predominately white, it has a lower proportion of Hispanics, and it has a lower relative median income.

	Albuquerque, NM	New Mexico Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	39.6	34.2	5.4
% 65+ years	17.8	13	4.8
% White	92.3	77.9	14.4
% Hispanic	9.2	25.3	-16.1
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$34,086	\$40,558	-\$6,472
% with college degree	17.1	20.9	-3.8
Most common occupation	management and professional	management and professional	--
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	--
% poverty	11.6	13.9	-2.3
% unemployed	3.5	3.4	0.1
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	71.4	68	3.4
% single-unit detached homes	72	56.8	15.2
Decade most homes built	1980-1989	1980-1989	--

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

## **THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: COOL SPRINGS CAMP**

Looking at the dark rock exterior of Cool Springs Camp, which looks to be carved from the surrounding desert crags, it is hard to believe that at one time this durable roadside service station was a pile of rubble. That is because Cool Springs has undergone significant renovation and now mirrors its original design. Despite its vintage service pumps and convincing appearance, Cool Springs no longer dispenses gas, but inside the old service station is a thriving gift shop and art gallery showcasing the history of Cool Springs and the area around it.

The solitary, minimalist nature of Cool Springs casts an ominous shadow on the stretch of Route 66 that passes by the camp, and rightfully so. Between Kingman and Oatman in the northwest corner of Arizona, there is a strip of the historic road that is as empty as the desert it divides. This is not the place to find a cozy café to soak in the local folklore, nor the place to admire the warm glow of neon signs, flashing in pinks and blues and yellows and greens—commonplace on other well-known parts of this highway. Heading westward, the desolate landscape stretches on through the eastern edge of the Mojave Desert, where Route 66 passes through the notorious Black Mountains, so steep and treacherous that apprehensive drivers would once hire a tow truck from the town at the top of the pass to help with the ascent. It is a landscape that sets the scene for an intriguing history of the life of Cool Springs.

The story of Cool Springs is intimately linked to the life of Route 66. Cool Springs first opened in 1926, around the same time when the first travelers took to Route 66. The original structures of Cool Springs Camp included a Mobil Oil Station and a café. Business was modestly successful, as Cool Springs benefitted from a guaranteed customer base: virtually any traveler about to go through the treacherous Goldroad and Sitgreaves pass through the Black Mountains would stop at Cool Springs to fill up their stomachs and their gas tanks.

Cool Springs underwent several ownership changes over the years, but was almost always run by a husband and wife team, giving Cool Springs a real “Mom and Pop” feel. In the 1930s, James Walker and his family moved from Huntington, Indiana to take up residence at Cool Springs. While James maintained the service station, his wife prepared food, and his children helped out wherever they could. It was during this time that Cool Springs became more of an actual camp with the addition of eight cabins, intended for travelers who wanted to be particularly well-rested before the next leg of their journey.

The Walkers split in the early 1940’s, leaving James’ wife to run the camp on her own for a brief period until she remarried to Floyd Spidell. Under their ownership, business continued to improve as Route 66 travel increased, and by the late 1940’s, in step with the nationwide post-war prosperity, Cool Springs was enjoying its most prosperous times as word circulated through travelers’ circles of the exceptional chicken dinners to be found at the café.



Cool Springs in 2008 after restoration.

Source: U.S. National Park Service

All that prosperity came to an abrupt halt several years later when Route 66 was rerouted, essentially cutting the lifeblood from Cool Springs. The new Yucca Bypass cut out the challenging Black Mountains; a convenient development for motorists, but a devastating blow to Cool Springs. Business faltered and the Spidell's divorced. Another husband and wife team, Chuck and Nancy Schoenerr, Floyd Spidell's niece, came to take over operations of Cool Springs in 1957. Cool Springs only hung on for a few more years until it was finally destroyed in a fire in 1966. Any structure that did remain was blown out of the ground during a film shoot for the 1991 movie "Universal Soldier." Cool Springs seemed fated to succumb to the unforgiving nature of the Mohave desert, a forgotten symbol of early Route 66.

It took the dedication of one individual to put Cool Springs back on the map. That individual is Ned Leuchtner, a real estate agent from Chicago. He discovered the remains of Cool Springs in 1997 while traveling out west and immediately recognized its uniqueness. He took it upon himself to bring Cool Springs back to life, and in 2001, he successfully purchased the property from former owner Nancy Schoenerr Waverka after convincing her of his sincerity of returning Cool Springs to its former dignity. In 2004, with the help of on general contractor Dennis De Chenne, Leuchtner began the laborious restoration process. Using old photographs of Cool Springs in its heyday, Leuchtner and De Chenne transformed the crumbling camp to its original state.

Cool Springs reopened in 2005 and has been attracting a steady stream of adventurous tourists interested in learning about the edgier personality of Route 66. The site is continually expanding: beginning in 2005, the old café by the service station was redone into the aforementioned art gallery/museum, and construction began in 2008 to restore one of the former traveler's cabins.

While Route 66 may no longer be a complete road, its history does not have to be incomplete as well. Though small, Cool Springs plays an integral role in putting together the patchwork narrative of Route 66. It is in these small sites that we learn of the multifaceted nature of Route



66; the individuals and scenery that characterized the journey across the Mother Road. People like Ned Leuchtner prove that sometimes it only takes one person to keep the story of Route 66 alive. Although these solitary service stations are now tourist sites, their past as functional necessities remind us of the challenges of early automobile travel which we often take for granted in our efficient modern highway system. It is this sense of discovery, of having obtained new insight that creates memories that perpetuate the Route 66 saga for generations to come.

## LOCAL IMPACTS

Cool Springs is a unique case in our collection of Route 66 sites because of its remote location, about 20 miles from any town. Thus, because of it is so far removed, assessing any sort of economic benefit on a host or “nearby” community is a challenge. It may be more accurate to say that rather than directly impacting Kingman or Oatman, its two closest towns, Cool Springs more broadly contributes to Arizona Route 66 tourism offerings, which in turn increases traffic through Kingman or Oatman as towns along Route 66.

Among Arizona’s many Route 66 attractions, visitor feedback indicates that Cool Springs is a welcome travel stop located on the long mountainous stretch between the communities of Kingman and Oatman. One Route 66 traveler from Nanaimo, Canada took home this impression of Cool Springs on his road trip:

In April 2009, my wife and I visited Laughlin Nevada and took a day to do some Route 66 exploring in the area. I had heard from friends that the stretch of Route 66 from Kingman to Oatman was unique and incredible for beauty and its potential danger for careless drivers. Both friends' statements proved to be absolutely correct.

However the real treasure for us was the discovery of Cool Springs, a recently recovered and restored business with a rich history on Route 66. It has a little museum with lots of artifacts, some light refreshments including Route 66 Root Beer and some nice souvenirs. It is free to enter and well worth the stop as you head over to Oatman. The setting is stunning, with a mountain in the background, which I believe is Thimble Mountain. The peace you feel there is amazing.

We returned to Laughlin once again in September ‘09 and couldn't wait to visit Cool Springs once again. There had been some minor changes and it is clear that the restoration is ongoing. It is clearly a labor of love and of history. Route 66 explorers will love this spot. Those just wishing to find one of the most spectacular places on Earth won't be disappointed either.

As a unique structure, Cool Springs has received its share of publicity, which has the potential to yield increases in visitation for both Cool Springs and surrounding Route 66 attractions. A *Great Weekends* episode, “Gettin’ My Kicks on Route 66,” (broadcasted in May 2010) features Cool Springs. Samantha Brown, a 10 year veteran of the Travel Channel, hosts *Great Weekends*, and shares this with her fans:

I love driving and I also love shooting driving sequences. [...] Driving along Route 66 you are reminded of a young America still filled with such hope and promise. With all that's going on right now in the world and us as a country I really ache for a time I was never even a part of. But that's the allure of this trip, to turn back time and feel things more simply I guess. In our traveling world these days we want hotels with wave pools and restaurants that serve 5 different types of cuisine, we want to be entertained constantly and we want to make sure we are overloaded in our options of what to do. So just driving in a car stopping at an old gas station to enjoy a soda? Now that's a vacation. Funny story with Cool Springs Gas Station; when we went in for a snack all they had were cans of soda. It was also a knick-knack and souvenir shop and I spied in the back an old green glass coca-cola bottle. The owner happily rinsed it out with hot water and soap and then we poured the 2009 can of coke into something that looked more appropriate for the place. Once we were done the scene, sitting outside some motorcycles pulled over saw my drink and said, "They have bottles of coke? Great!"

Sharlene Fouser, Byway Leader from the Historical Route 66 Association of Arizona, explains that Cool Springs is dependent on travelers going between Oatman and Kingman. In a complementary fashion, sites such as Cool Springs help reinforce the area's Route 66 heritage, and thus contribute to increases in tourism for these towns. Recognizing this mutually supportive relationship, the Association has worked to help publicize Cool Springs (and other area Route 66 attractions).

Cool Springs is a small refurbished Mobil Gas station [...] Inside is a small gift shop, and some memorabilia. The owner hires George to manage everything from the running of the gift shop to the gas station itself. George is a wonderful manager [...] but] does not have a budget for advertising Cool Springs beyond maintaining a webpage<sup>264</sup> and producing flyers which he prints off and distributes. Fortunately, the Association has recently started a new marketing initiative focused on providing better visibility to communities and sites such as Cool Springs which may otherwise be missed.

The marketing initiative has earned Cool Springs a place on the Association's distributed travelers' maps and brochures. A section on Cool Springs and its history is also publicized as a designated stop of the Annual Route 66 Fun Run, which is hosted by the Association. The Fun Run is a volunteer-based grassroots fundraising event which takes place the first weekend of May. The three day event is open to all vehicles, including busses, bikes, RVs, station wagons and "anything with wheels that runs in 2011!" Since the Fun Run's inception in 1988, it has helped to generate widespread enthusiasm for Route 66 and other Arizona Mother Road sites. According to Sharlene Fouser, one of the Event's coordinators, the Fun Run has 841 cars registered so far for the 2011 entrants. Tom Spear, the executive vice president of the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona, notes to the *Kingman Daily Miner* that "registration for this year's Fun Run is already running about 5 percent better than at the same time last year." Local newspapers report crowds of four thousand people that traveled the designated Fun Run route to

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<sup>264</sup>"Historic Cool Springs Camp." Cool Springs Cabins. Site Created by GRandall Web Design. 2010.  
<http://www.coolspringsroute66.com/index.htm>

the smaller Arizona communities between the starting point, Seligman and the Run's destination, Topock/Golden Shores.

Along the 140 mile stretch, vendors, restaurants, hotels are all impacted positively from the patronage of Fun Run participants and spectators. The event benefits many local organizations along the way. Boy scouts would fundraise by selling wagons full of bottled water and soda to the thirsty participants. A scholarship dinner served to registered guests at the Fun Run generated \$15,000 to go toward funding scholarships for needy students at Mohave County Community College in 2010. In addition to this donation to the College, the Historic Route 66 Association also donates at least \$25,000 generated by the Fun Run to various historical preservation projects along the Arizona Route 66 Highway.

Before the Fun Runners' departure from Kingman, veterans of VFW Post 10386 conjure up a hearty breakfast of pancakes, sausages, coffee, and juice to send off the Fun Runners with calories galore while local bands such as the Honkin' and Rollin' Buffalo Nickel perform live. Fun Runners are often eager at the opportunity to stop to buy a drink and soak up some Route 66 history in Cool Springs, before traversing the ascending road into the Black Mountains up Sitgreaves Pass to Oatman, where tourists are encouraged to feed carrots to the burros before continuing on the Fun Run route.

Would the Fun Run happen without Cool springs? Yes. Does Cool Springs contribute to the Route 66 character of the Fun Run and more broadly to area Route 66 tourism? Yes again—with emphasis!

## LA POSADA HOTEL OF WINSLOW, ARIZONA

### THE HOST COMMUNITY; GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE

Winslow is a small city in northeastern Arizona, and it is located in Navajo County. Winslow is 45 miles from Flagstaff, AZ (pop. 78,488), 120 miles from Scottsdale, AZ (pop. 202,705) and 130 miles from Phoenix, AZ (pop. 1,321,045).



Winslow was established in the early 1880s and served as a railroad division terminal. The presence of the railroads helped to strengthen

Winslow's economy and boost its population. Between 1890 and 1900, the town grew from 363 to 1,305 people. Winslow was officially incorporated in 1900. Winslow served as a transportation hub up until the mid-1900s for both rail and air travel. It also was a proud stop on Route 66.

Today, Winslow has made efforts to preserve its historic frontier-era buildings, such as the Lorenzo Hubbell Trading Post, one of several that operated throughout the region in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Winslow also promotes its claim to fame as the town featured in the song "Take it Easy," first performed by Jackson Browne and later by the Eagles. A park in the downtown area commemorates the song and its performers. As of the 2000 Census, Winslow had a population of 9,520, a 14% increase from 1990. In 2009, Winslow's population was estimated to be 9,833; a 3% gain from 2000.

For context, we present Winslow's 2000 Census profile in comparison to that of the state of Arizona. Of note is the demographic composition; Winslow has a considerably lower proportion of white residents relative to the state average. The median income is also lower, as is the proportion of college degree holders.

**Winslow, AZ      Arizona Statewide      Difference from state**

<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	30.6	34.2	-3.6 years
% 65+ years	10	13	-3.0
% White	55.8	77.9	-22.1
% Hispanic	30.6	34.2	-3.6
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$29,741	\$40,558	-\$10,817
% with college degree	17.1	30.3	-13.2
Most common occupation	service	management and professional	--
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	--
% poverty	20.9	13.9	
% unemployed	2.8	3.4	-0.6
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	64.1	68	-3.9
% single-unit detached homes	70.5	56.8	13.7
Decade most homes built	1940-1959	1980-1989	older homes

Source: 2000 U.S. Census



## THE HISTORIC RESOURCE: LA POSADA

Within the walls of La Posada Hotel, in the hand-crafted furniture and artwork, linger the hopes and dreams of yesteryear. Travelers find this historic hotel has an enduring allure for several reasons: the novelty of finding luxury in an unlikely place, the elaborate decorations, and La Posada's time-tested reputation for high-quality service. Through its painstakingly preserved interior and exterior, the spirit of the hotel's past comes to life—sometimes quite literally for the



La Posada Hotel

Source: U.S. National Park Service

scores of visitors who have reported ghostly apparitions. But it is all part of the rich character of La Posada, the product of multiple legacies of the American Southwest.

The most foundational context of La Posada's history can be found in the Santa Fe Railroad, first chartered in 1859 and a vital link to the towns of Midwestern and Southwestern United States. Its Arizona headquarters was located in the town of Winslow, which during the time of La Posada's construction in the late 1920s had become a major transportation hub, served by both the railroad and Route 66, which ran directly through downtown Winslow. The town was growing rapidly, and

employees from the Santa Fe Railroad were anticipating Winslow would become as prosperous as Santa Fe itself (which had enjoyed a late 19<sup>th</sup> century period of economic growth).<sup>265</sup>

As a travelers' stop, Winslow seemed perfectly poised for an enterprising individual to take advantage of the potential for a booming hospitality industry—and in steps Fred Harvey. In 1870, the Santa Fe Railroad company began a contract with Harvey to build hotels and restaurants by various train stations along their line. His endeavors were very successful; as the mastermind behind the famous "Harvey Houses," he has been credited with the first American hotel and restaurant chain, and has been said to be responsible for "civilizing the west."<sup>266</sup> Harvey saw so much potential in Winslow that he made plans for what he envisioned to be one of the grandest hotels in the Southwest. No expense was spared on the resort hotel that was to be known as La Posada, "the resting place" in Spanish. Nearly \$2 million went into construction, art, ornate furniture, and landscaping—which by today's standards equates to nearly \$40 million.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>265</sup>"Santa Fe, the City Different." Legends of America. Site maintained by legendsofamerica.com. 2009. <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/nm-santafe.html>

<sup>266</sup> Bleiberg, Larry. "10 Places to Follow Fred Harvey's Old West Tracks." *USA TODAY*. 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2010. [http://www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/10great/2010-06-17-fred-harvey-sites\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/10great/2010-06-17-fred-harvey-sites_N.htm)

<sup>267</sup> La Posada Hotel and Gardens. Site maintained by La Posada LLC. 2010. [http://www.laposada.org/hotel\\_history.html](http://www.laposada.org/hotel_history.html)

Last, but certainly not least, there is the legacy of the hotel's designer, Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter. The Pittsburgh-born architect was one of the few females in her field during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and respected in her own right as a very detail-oriented architect. Her work, which played an integral role in the design of the early National Parks system, can still be seen across the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, where many of her structures remain today as National Historic Landmarks. Colter was first hired by the Fred Harvey Company in 1910 and during her 40 year tenure she designed buildings that showed an incredible sensitivity to the local culture and history, the product of intense research and planning. Colter lived up to Harvey's vision for La Posada; designing a hotel she ultimately considered her defining work. She was given a great deal of freedom in her design, and took charge over the tiniest of details, from the paint colors, to the furniture, to even the maids' attire.<sup>268</sup>

The exterior was designed to be a distinctive building that still had aspects familiar to Winslow. The architecture of La Posada features a fusion of Native American and Spanish excellence, in what would be the last of the historic Santa Fe Railroad "Harvey Houses." La Posada proudly opened to the public on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1930.

During La Posada's 27 year run, it attracted hundreds of travelers, from the run of the mill road weary traveler to the elite: famous guests such as Charles Lindbergh, John Wayne, and Shirley Temple, Howard Hughes, Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, and even the Crown Prince of Japan. In addition to travelers, La Posada was host to a number of bridal showers, weddings, dances, style shows and club functions<sup>269</sup>. In its heyday, La Posada was described as the "finest small hotel in the Southwest, a romantic Spanish castle with 70 guest rooms, three dining rooms, and grand public spaces<sup>270</sup>." However, after World War II, the Santa Fe's revenues were suffering due to competition from the automobile and Route 66 was replaced by Interstate 40 which bypassed Winslow. By 1957, the hotel closed to the public.

The hotel began to collect the desert dust and slowly deteriorated over the next 40 years. Following the 1957 hotel closure, its museum quality furnishings were auctioned in 1959. In the early 1960's, most of the building was gutted and transformed into office space for the Santa Fe Railway Company. In 1993, the Santa Fe Railroad announced it would no longer maintain the grounds of La Posada. A local group of volunteers who called themselves the Gardening Angels watered, trimmed and nurtured the grounds until a new owner could be found<sup>271</sup>. Things became dire when the hotel was placed on the National Register for Historic Places endangered list in 1994.

Fortunately for the hotel, salvation was in the offing. In 1997, Alan Affeldt, an art connoisseur and business entrepreneur, and his wife Tina Mion learned about La Posada and they were

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<sup>268</sup>[http://www.laposada.org/hotel\\_history.html](http://www.laposada.org/hotel_history.html)

<sup>269</sup> Clark, Virginia. *How Arizona Sold Its Sunshine: The Historical Hotels of Arizona*. Blue Gourd Publishing, 2003.

<sup>270</sup> La Posada Hotel. Hotel information, Expedia Travel Agency. 2010.  
<http://www.expedia.com/pub/agent.dll/qscr=dspv/nojs=1/htid=201103>

<sup>271</sup> Clark, Virginia. *How Arizona Sold Its Sunshine: The Historical Hotels of Arizona*. Blue Gourd Publishing, 2003.

inspired to bring it back to life. Daniel Lutzick became the third partner and General Manager. The trio, with Affeldt at the helm, became determined to make the hotel their personal project and purchased the hotel from the Santa Fe Railroad. The Company did not readily let go of La Posada, and it took nearly three years of negotiations regarding legal, environmental, and financial obstacles before Affeldt was sold the hotel. Construction has been ongoing since 1998, which indicates the painstaking detail that has gone into the restoration process, not unlike the detail that was taken by Mary Jane Colter in designing the hotel in the first place (Figure 3).

Each partner has adopted their own role within La Posada:

Although none of the partners is a hotelier by training, they have accomplished what once seemed impossible—transforming a forgotten but magical place into a living museum. Allan oversees the overall rehabilitation—design, architecture, financing, and planning. Tina, a renowned artist, paints in her studio upstairs; her art is now an integral part of La Posada’s experience. Dan, a sculptor, retired according to plan in 2003 and now operates Snowdrift Art Space down the street at 108 West 2nd.<sup>272</sup>

Sections of La Posada have gradually opened over the last decade. Each room has its own name, taken from famous guests of its past. Some of La Posada’s original furniture remains, having been obtained through donations or auctions. In 2000, the Turquoise room, a four-star restaurant that seats 100, opened for business and includes a 20 seat martini lounge. It serves some of Harvey’s original recipes, such as coq au vin and French apple pie. To help fund further restoration of the hotel, revenues from the gift store are diverted toward restoration projects.

## LOCAL IMPACTS

La Posada continues to attract Route 66 travelers, and Winslow, Arizona has been a mainstay for Route 66 tourism since the Eagles hit song “Take it Easy,” which refers to a street corner in town which has been replicated as a small park depicting the inspiration of the song (Figure 4). Despite its heritage catering to the elite and prominent, staying at La Posada has been kept affordable for modern-day tourists and rooms range from \$99 to \$149 a night. As mentioned earlier, La Posada has also garnered a reputation among ghost hunters as a hot spot for otherworldly encounters from its past employees and famous guests. Although hotel personnel say over 300 ghosts were “cleared” from the hotel several years ago, reports from guests sensing an unseen presence indicate that there may be many that still remain.

La Posada has been featured in a variety of television spots and magazine articles, mostly in relation to the enduring legacy of Mary Jane Colter. Virginia Grattan’s *Mary Colter: Builder on the Red Earth* devotes an entire chapter to La Posada, Colter’s favorite building. *Preservation Magazine* did a great cover story on Colter and La Posada in July / August 1997. PBS aired a prime-time 90-minute special on Colter’s life during 1999. Two other recent films feature very

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<sup>272</sup>[http://www.laposada.org/hotel\\_restoration.html](http://www.laposada.org/hotel_restoration.html)

good historic footage of *La Posada: House Made of Dawn* and *The Desert Vie*.<sup>273</sup> In addition, La Posada has been featured in programs from the BBC, Arizona Highway TV, and every major national newspaper such as the NY Times, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune et cetera. Tourist guides rated La Posada to be the third best budget hotel in the nation. Hotel owner (and ex-mayor of Winslow) Allen Affeldt attributes La Posada as the poster child for its role in revitalizing the town of Winslow, which is why all this publicity about the hotel is generated. Affeldt says “[La Posada] is a story of a small town, literally forgotten with the realignment of Route 66, which is now revitalized through historic preservation.”

All this publicity and the wonderful restoration of an iconic hotel has been good for business. La Posada’s manager has informed Rutgers University that the hotel’s 43 rooms are “almost always full” and “over \$100,000 is brought in per month, but that number can vary.” As to the hotel’s impact on Winslow, the manager opined “We are definitely a destination in the town. We bring in a lot of money. We are a historic hotel and people travel to Winslow just for us. So we definitely have had an impact on the town.” The manager further observed that “a lot was invested in the hotel’s restoration—a ballpark figure is around \$3 million” and further stated “we created quite a few jobs during the restoration process.”

In recent interview with Rutgers University, owner Allen Affeldt revealed an occupancy rate of 85%, which means a surplus demand even in the winter when people are not travelling as much in this part of the country. Since there is surplus demand, the overflow guests go elsewhere in Winslow. There are currently 45 rooms in La Posada, with prospects of more rooms added by the end of the year. With current work on the East Wing completed, there is still a part of the main building left to restore, and plans are in the offing to tackle a bit of the train station next year. Significant garden restoration has also been on-going, boasting a maze of indigenous southwestern plants, a medicine wheel, and even its own honeybees. The hotel’s restaurant makes its own jams and jellies from quince trees, and makes use of the garden’s vegetables, such as basil and tomatoes. Each year, between the hotel and restaurant, around 100,000 new tourists—who very likely would not have visited if La Posada was not present—come to visit Winslow.

According to the Winslow Chamber of Commerce, La Posada alone contributes more than a third of the Chamber of Commerce’s funding. Not only is the hotel the largest local employer at 50 core-staff, a crew of engineers and master gardeners, but hotel-generated taxes are paid back to Winslow: \$500,000 in sales taxes, and an additional \$30,000 from the hotel and separate \$30,000 from the restaurant in targeted tax revenues (bar license for example). The presence and success of La Posada has encouraged historic preservation projects throughout Winslow. Millions of dollars have been invested, restoring virtually all the buildings downtown, from private businesses to tourist business, such as Route 66 trinket stores, coffee shops, secondhand stores, Navaho Trading Post, Winslow Theatre, and art galleries. Downtown public infrastructure has been enhanced, including the repair and maintenance of new sidewalks, lighting, and city

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<sup>273</sup>[http://www.laposada.org/hotel\\_history.html](http://www.laposada.org/hotel_history.html)

parks. This sort of investment and restoration has enabled Winslow to become a hub of Northern Arizona tourism, particularly in September when the city hosts a big car show which is always sold out a year in advance. For the past 12 years, September is when most people visit Winslow. There are around 20,000 people in town for the car show, as well as the non-stop concerts featuring local, celebrated talents such as Hall of Famer Tommy Dix. “When I was Mayor, I made a big push to incorporate local businesses into this annual event” says Affeldt “and there is still too much from the outside, but people in Winslow take pride in this activity.”

When asked if he and his partners had foreseen La Posada as a profitable venture when efforts were first made to restore the hotel, Affeldt laughed: “Nobody was willing to give us a loan. It was an area full of drunk bars, and people were skeptical that the Hotel could bring in any money to sustain itself, much less the forgotten town. At first we relied on contractors from outside and they were not very reliable, then we had local construction contractors and it has really been working out for us.” Not only are the hires local, the volunteers are also local. Guided tours of La Posada and its museum are open to the public and run by former Harvey girls who worked for the South Harvey Company back in the 1950’s. These women wear period costumes and teach visitors about the history of La Posada. In regard to La Posada’s future relationship with the town of Winslow, Affeldt concludes: “In as many ways possible whether it is directly impacting Winslow by hiring locals therefore providing local revenue, or indirectly employing locals by merchandising local products such as homemade jewelry in our gift shop, La Posada boosts Winslow’s economy significantly.”



## **THE ROUTE 66 RENDEZVOUS CAR SHOW AT SAN BERNARDINO, CALIFORNIA**

### **HOST COMMUNITY; GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND PROFILE**

San Bernardino, a midsize city in southern California, is the county seat of San Bernardino County and is the 18<sup>th</sup> largest city in California. San Bernardino is 13 miles northeast of Riverside (pop. 255,166) and 60 miles east of Los Angeles (pop. 3,694,820).



San Bernardino was established by Mormon pioneers in 1810 and is one of the oldest communities in California. It was officially incorporated in 1857. San Bernardino's early economy was based around trade and distribution, and it was an important trade center for the region. In 1883, the California Southern Railroad was built through San Bernardino, further elevating San Bernardino's status as a trade and transportation hub.

San Bernardino has an iconic legacy in automotive history. Of the numerous service stations and eating establishments that were established in downtown San Bernardino after the creation of Route 66, several went on to achieve success on a national level. The first McDonald's restaurant was built in San Bernardino in 1948 and would revolutionize the drive-thru service window—among other fast food concepts. Other national franchises that had their start in San Bernardino include Taco Bell and Del Taco.

Toward the later quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, San Bernardino's downtown business district lost much of its viability by both the decommissioning of Route 66 and the opening on the Central City Mall, which captured much of the downtown shopper traffic. Through events such as the Route 66 Rendezvous, local officials hope to promote San Bernardino's downtown area to a regional and national audience. San Bernardino continues to transport rail commuters through Metrolink routes that service Los Angeles and Orange County. As of 2000, San Bernardino had a population of 185,401; an 11% increase from 1990. In 2008, the population was estimated to be 198,580; a 7% increase from the population in 2000. So, the community is surely growing!

For context, the table below shows local demographic, socioeconomic, and housing characteristics in relation to statewide traits. For instance, San Bernardino has a greater Hispanic representation, a lower median income, and fewer college degree holders.

	San Bernardino, CA	California Statewide	Difference from state
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>			
Median Age	27.9	34.7	-6.8
% 65+ years	7.5	11	-3.5
% White	50.7	63.8	-13.1
% Hispanic	55.6	38.1	17.5
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
Median Income	\$40,764	\$61,154	-\$20,390
% with college degree	19.9	37	-17.1
Most common occupation	sales and office	management and professional	--
Most common industry	education, health & social services	education, health & social services	--
% poverty	24.1	12.9	11.2
% unemployed	6.3	4.4	1.9
<b>Housing Indicators</b>			
% owner-occupied homes	52	57.8	-5.8
% single-unit detached homes	60.3	58.1	2.2
Decade most homes built	1950-1959	1970-1979	Older homes

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

## **THE CULTURAL RESOURCE: ROUTE 66 RENDEZVOUS**

Surely, the allure of Route 66 is in part shaped by cultural themes associated with automobile transportation. Nowhere is the car culture more apparent than at automobile expositions, one of the largest in the country being the Rendezvous Car Show in San Bernardino, California. Every third weekend in September, thousands of automobile enthusiasts from across the country come to San Bernardino to showcase and appreciate skillfully-restored classic cars. Route 66 Rendezvous provides visitors with a variety of activities, from competitions such as the open header contest and the burnout contest, to live entertainment and special guests, to vendor shopping amongst food, souvenir, and commercial auto-parts merchants. It is one of San Bernardino's signature events, and a highly-regarded event within the community of classic car owners.

### **History**

The Rendezvous Car Show began in 1990 as a project of the San Bernardino Convention and Visitors Bureau (SBCVB). The intention was to create an event that reflected the idealized Southern California lifestyle of the 1950's and 1960's, while showcasing the modern-day downtown of San Bernardino. Rendezvous has gained national attention, receiving pitches from newspapers to popular auto magazines like *Car and Driver* and *Super Chevy*. It is recognized as a success in tourism planning, and has received the "Best special event in California" designation from the California Tourism Council.

The show is touted by its sponsor as a place where "car buffs from all over the country gather in San Bernardino to get their 'Kicks on Route 66' (their logo incorporates an iconic California Route 66 road sign). The event has effectively linked San Bernardino with tens of thousands of tourists, not only from California but from the entire country. Posted one blogger on the Historic Route 66 Forum website, "[Rendezvous is] going to be perfect for me, coming from PA in my 72 [Chevrolet] Monte Carlo." Rendezvous is evidence that Route 66 and the car culture have a powerful draw for tourists and those who want to sell to tourists.

### **LOCAL IMPACTS**

The first Rendezvous took place in 1990 with 300 vehicles and 4,000 spectators, and since then these figures have grown geometrically. At the 2009 Rendezvous, over 500,000 visitors came to view 1,700 registered cars. Because admissions to spectators is free, there is no sure way of determining where the visitors came from, although SBCVB estimates around 60% of the crowd are locals (within a 20 mile radius of San Bernardino) and 40% are "non-locals" (those who reside beyond the 20 mile radius).

Although the event is free to spectators, it generates significant revenue from its automobile registrants. In 2009, approximately 1,700 cars were registered for the show at rates ranging from

\$70-\$80, producing between \$119,000 and \$136,000 in registration revenues.<sup>274</sup> Registration ensures reservation for all the available parking spaces throughout the “cruise route”, which are assigned based on requests by participants. Even RV parking locations such as the one at Arrowhead Ave. & 2<sup>nd</sup> St (offering 80 spaces) were sold out. In addition, the four day three night event, spanning 35 blocks of downtown San Bernardino, produces a weekend’s worth of local spending. According to a 2004 economic impact survey conducted by the SBCVB, the Rendezvous Car Show puts \$43 million into San Bernardino’s local economy through spending on restaurants, hotels, gasoline purchases, and retail spending.<sup>275</sup>



Posing with performers at the Route 66 Rendezvous

Source: *The Fabulous Palm Springs Follies/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0*

People come to the car show spend their dollars and enjoy a true spectacle! Let us briefly describe a portion of the 2009 event. Shortly after the Kick-Off ceremony on Thursday evening (September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009), 27 vehicles cruise the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Contest Area in a Neon Lights Contest. Categories to win are the “Best Use of Lights” (went to the creative drivers of a 1967 Buick Wildcat) and “Crowd Pleaser” (1969 Ford Mustang). On Saturday (September 19<sup>th</sup> 2009),

the Open Header Contest consisted of 50 vehicles revving up a crowd of over 3,000 people for winning the highest decibel reading. The “Loudest car” had been a ’68 Chevy Chevelle, and the “Best Sounding” was determined by the crowd to be a ’65 Ford Mustang (3-Peat). Also on Saturday, held at various participating San Bernardino businesses downtown, with a total of 223 participants, was the Poker Run Contest, where drivers with winning hands vie for prize money by driving around the businesses and trying their luck. The 2009 Favorite Poker Run Stop trophy went to Victoria Woods Senior Apartments on Kendall Drive in San Bernardino. Also notable was the Burn-out Contest down NOS Speedway: 40 vehicles participated, but only a ’64 Chevy Nova and a ’69 Chevy El Camino took home their respective “Freestyle Pro” and “Freestyle Street” trophies. However, all of the automotive enthusiasts enjoyed the numerous events and legendary guests as well as the signature cars hosted at Stater Bros’ Route 66 Rendezvous Car Show.

<sup>274</sup>Stater Bros. Markets. 2010. Rendezvous Car Show. <http://www.route-66.org/>

<sup>275</sup>McNaul, Shelly. San Bernardino Convention and Visitors’ Bureau. Interview. 29 April 2010.

## **THE MAIN STREET PROGRAM AND ROUTE 66**

### **INTRODUCTION**

At its zenith as the Mother Road, Route 66 was literally a Main Street for countless communities along its 2,400-mile length. For decades, the downtown Route 66 thoroughfares thrived, as did many other Main Streets in the United States. These were the downtown areas where many worked, and yet more shopped, ate, and recreated. Yet, times changed. For many communities that were reliant on Route 66 traffic, the Interstate Highway system took away a great deal of their downtown audience. More generally, the Main Streets of many communities throughout the United States were superseded by suburban malls, restaurants, movie theatres, and the like—many conveniently clustered by Interstate and other highway exits. To counter this trend, and to revitalize the often historic character of the traditional downtown center, the National Trust for Historic Preservation established the Main Street Program. This effort has grown nationally, and not surprisingly, communities along Route 66 have participated in the program.

This case study tells the national and Route 66 Main Street story. It begins with national background to this initiative and highlights its cardinal themes and principles. Following this national overview, the Main Street programs along Route 66 are introduced. The case study describes a cross-section of the preservation and reinvestment activities in the communities—many of which have Mother Road and automobile themes. The case study concludes by assembling the reinvestment statistics in the 25 Route 66 Main Street communities (from data maintained by the Main Street program). The reinvestment from these 25 Main Street communities has been considerable, i.e., an annual average recent reinvestment from the full group of over \$60 million per year.

### **A NATIONAL OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN STREET PROGRAM AND MAIN STREET IN THE EIGHT ROUTE 66 STATES**

The national Main Street program follows decades of economic and physical decline in America's cities and downtowns. Nathaniel Baum-Snow (2007) documents that the aggregate population of the 139 largest metropolitan areas in the United States declined by 17 percent between 1950 and 1990 while aggregate metropolitan area population growth was 72 percent during this period.<sup>276</sup> In addition, "central cities as defined by their geographies in 1960 were the origin and/or destination of only 38 percent of commutes made by metropolitan area residents in 2000, down from 66 percent in 1960."<sup>277</sup> As roadways were expanded and people moved farther

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<sup>276</sup> Baum-Snow, "Changes in Transportation Infrastructure and Commuting Patterns in U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 1960-2000." Presented at the 2010 American Economic Association Meetings in Atlanta, GA, in the published session "Housing and Labor Markets" (2007).

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.



away from city centers, downtown retail districts began to lose their customer base and employment centers to suburban areas and subsequently experienced significant decline, leaving formerly vibrant and successful downtown districts in economic turmoil.

In 1980, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (the National Trust) established “The National Trust Main Street Center<sup>®</sup>” (NMSC). The NMSC was created to revitalize declining downtown centers through a “preservation-based strategy” to restore the economic activity that was on the decline in downtown retail centers. Since 1980, more than 2,000 affiliated Main Street programs have been launched in 43 states. Today, the program consists of a coast-to-coast network of more than 1,200 state, regional, and local coordinating programs.

The NMSC is a community-driven, comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization that provides professional training, networking, technical assistance, and national resources and support for participating communities. The program operates through the Main Street Four-Point Approach<sup>®</sup> to implementation—organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring—that corresponds to the NMSC-envisioned four forces of real estate value, which are social, political, physical and economic.<sup>278</sup>

The NMSC keeps a statistical database of all participating communities which includes the following data:<sup>279</sup>

- **Dollars reinvested** (Total amount of reinvestment in physical improvements from public and private sources. This includes building rehabilitation, new construction and enhanced public infrastructure.)
- **Net gain in businesses** (new less closed businesses)
- **Net gain in jobs** (new less lost jobs)
- **Number of building rehabilitations**
- **Reinvestment Ratio** ( The average number of dollars generated in each community for every dollar used to operate the local Main Street Program)

Statistics collected from more than 2,200 communities and tracked from 1980 to December 2008 reveal that the Main Street Program has been quite extensive. Table 2.4 details the change over time of the various economic data collected by the Main Street Program between 2001 and 2008.

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<sup>278</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, <http://www.preservationnation.org/>

<sup>279</sup> Main Street: The National Trust for Historic Preservation Economic Statistics, 2008.  
<http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/reinvestment-statistics.html>

**Table 2.4: National Main Street Statistics 2001-2008**

Year	Dollars Reinvested (billions)	Net Gain in Businesses	Net Gain in Jobs	Number of Building Rehabilitations	Reinvestment Ratio	Average Reinvested Per Community	Approximate Number of Participating Communities
2001	\$16.1	56,300	226,900	88,700	39.96 to 1	\$9,659,000	1,668
2002	\$17.0	57,470	231,682	93,734	40.35 to 1	\$9,512,151	1,787
2003	\$18.3	60,577	244,545	96,283	35.17 to 1	\$10,000,000	1,834
2004	\$23.3	67,000	308,370	107,179	26.67 to 1	\$12,431,287	1,800
2005	\$31.5	72,387	331,417	178,727	28.31 to 1	\$12,486,058	1,900
2006	\$41.6	77,799	349,148	186,820	25.76 to 1	\$11,083,273	2,050
2007	\$44.9	82,909	370,514	199,519	25 to 1	\$11,083,273	2,212
2008	\$48.8	87,850	391,050	206,600	25 to 1		2,200

Source: The National Trust for Historic Preservation National Main Street Reinvestment Statistics

The amount of dollars invested has consistently increased between 2001 and 2008. The net gain in jobs and businesses, as well as the number of building rehabilitations, has also risen. There has been a recent decline in the reinvestment ratio, however, which may be linked to national economic trends, including the recent housing price crash, and the beginnings of the current economic recession. Although dollars reinvested into the program have consistently increased, the average reinvestment per community began to decline in 2006, which may be related to the fluctuating reinvestment ratio. Program participants currently stand at 2,200 communities, up from about 1,700 in 2001.

All eight Route 66 states have active Main Street programs. There are over 300 Main Street communities in these states and they have realized to date about \$5.1 billion in reinvestment, about 11,000 net gains in businesses, and about 41,000 net gain in jobs. Given the considerable scale of the eight state Main Street effort and the common historic small town character of many communities along Route 66, one would expect that Main Street would be operative along the Route. That is precisely the case as there are about 25 Main Street programs along Route 66.

To give a “flavor” of these programs and their connection to Route 66, we describe in synopsis form all the Route 66 Main Street programs in Illinois (to convey one state’s Main Street effort along the Mother Road) and then include some sample Route 66 Main Street programs in other states.

## ILLINOIS MAIN STREET PROGRAMS ON ROUTE 66

### Berwyn, Illinois

Berwyn (2008 pop. 49,919) is a suburban area 6 miles west of Chicago. The town blends entrepreneurial and creative endeavors—sometimes with interesting results. For a number of years, the Cermak Shopping Plaza in downtown Berwyn showcased the 50-foot-high “Spindle,” created by artist Dustin Shuler and featured in the motion pictures *Wayne’s World* (1992) and

*Wanted* (2008). Berwyn also claims to harbor one of world's largest Laundromats, housing 140 dryers and 161 washers. Anchoring this creative enterprise is a financial core of savings and loan centers, which at one time the *Chicago Sun Times* reported was the highest concentration of financial institutions in the world.

The Berwyn Main Street program was established in 2006 to enhance the commercial activity along the Cermak Road corridor in downtown Berwyn while preserving its historical aspects. The goal is to revitalize downtown Berwyn such that it is recognized as a vibrant place to shop, dine, and explore.<sup>280</sup> Berwyn Main Street (BMS) is comprised of four volunteer-run committees, one for each aspect of the national Main Street Program's four-point approach: Organization, Design, Economic Restructuring, and Promotion.

BMS actively promotes new businesses through the organization's website and welcomes new stores with fanfare. As new businesses arrive in downtown Berwyn, the Board of Directors from BMS often organizes a ribbon-cutting ceremony which they attend, alerting the local press to give the new business as much publicity as possible.

Part of the original U.S. Route 66 ran through Berwyn. Today, Ogden Avenue in Berwyn remains a usable part of the old Route 66. It is a popular destination for "Mother Road" tourists, particularly during Berwyn's annual Route 66 Car Show, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary in September 2010. Classic cars are judged in a variety of categories for cash prizes; last year over 8,000 people were reported to have attended, with more than 200 vehicle registrations.<sup>281</sup> To further celebrate the car show culture that permeates Berwyn, BMS has recently helped launch "Cartopia," an annual parade showcasing playful art cars and attracting car artists from across the United States.

Though Berwyn residents celebrate mobility and progress, they do not forget where they came from. Several times a year, the downtown area comes alive with cultural festivities, the result of BMS's efforts to promote Berwyn's ethnic roots. The Houby Day Parade in the fall is an entertaining Czechoslovakian festival, while local Italian heritage is showcased every Labor Day weekend during the Maria SS Laurentana Italian-Sicilian Religious Festival.

### **Bloomington, Illinois**

When a portion of Route 66 was built along the Chicago and Alton Railroad Corridor in 1926, downtown Bloomington (2008 pop. 73,026) was transformed from a modest local business hub to a bustling commercial district serving travelers from across the country. Today, the Downtown Bloomington Association (DBA) strives once again to invigorate the downtown, creating a destination that is as much fun for visitors as it is livable for residents. DBA's efforts include business expansion and preservation of its historic assets, as much of the downtown Bloomington area inside U.S. 51 is a district recognized by the National Register of Historic Places.

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<sup>280</sup> <http://www.berwynmainstreet.org>

<sup>281</sup> Adam Rosen. "Berwyn hosts annual Route 66 car show." *Berwyn Life*. 22 September 2009.

Bloomington became a designated Main Street community in 2005, with the DBA serving as the coordinating organization. DBA serves the downtown area by providing “technical assistance and, in partnership with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, design assistance to the Downtown business and property owners.”<sup>282</sup>

The downtown retail sector aims to cater to a customer base seeking a shopping experience distinctive from the standard mall. There are a wide variety of privately owned, one-of-a-kind shops and restaurants, including cafes and art galleries.

Downtown Bloomington has a youthful buzz but shows its maturity in its historic, stately architecture. Courthouse Square is dotted with early 20th century buildings that tell the story of Bloomington’s past. At its center is the former McLean County Courthouse, a domed structure from 1903<sup>283</sup> that serves as the downtown’s signature landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. For a building from the Route 66 era, Cotton’s Village Inn, a former rest stop named after its owner, M.F. "Cotton" McNabney, remains standing along Main Street.

DBA promotes the community’s mobile lifestyle in its ties with both historic and modern transportation. It has an active volunteer base that plans numerous leisure and entertainment options for both its residents and visitors, such as Tour de Chocolat, Hot August Nights, Tour de Metro, Pub Crawl, and Once Upon a Holiday. While the downtown atmosphere provides for spur-of-the-moment entertainment, DBA has its mind on the city’s future as well. It has been working closely with city officials to develop the Downtown Development Strategy, a comprehensive plan that will guide development over the next decade. The plan covers such things as parking, transportation, market assessment, form-based zoning, and an implementation strategy.<sup>284</sup> DBA receives funding through private contributions, contributing members, and the City of Bloomington.

### **Collinsville, Illinois**

Collinsville (2008 pop. 25,960) is a classic American town, but the giant catsup bottle that is perched in the center of town, known as the world’s largest, is testament that Collinsville has a personality of its own. Collinsville is located 14 miles east of Saint Louis, Missouri. Two famous American roadways run through Collinsville: National Road (US 40) and Route 66. Since becoming a Main Street community in 2000, city officials and Downtown Collinsville, Inc. have worked to recreate a viable downtown district that is livable for its residents and engaging for its visitors. Downtown Collinsville is designed to be a traditional close-knit Main Street, particularly in its array of unique “mom and pop” businesses.

The downtown area reflects Americana heritage in its quaint and historic buildings. The Collinsville City Hall at the heart of the downtown district, built in 1885, has been restored and

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<sup>282</sup> <http://downtownbloomington.org>

<sup>283</sup> <http://www.cityblm.org/historic/downtown1.htm>

<sup>284</sup> <http://www.downtownbloomington.org/strategy/about-strategy.html>

is still in use today, demonstrating the resilience of local history. Over 30 historic buildings are preserved in the downtown area, and a self-guided walking tour has been prepared for visitors. Other vestiges of America's past besides architecture are on display downtown, such as an original "Bull Durham" sign dating back to 1908, one of a few left of its kind.

Collinsville has a rich heritage that is also diverse, which Downtown Collinsville promotes through the local surroundings and festivities. An event of local pride is the annual horseradish festival, drawing in hundreds of citizens to celebrate Collinsville's distinction as the "horseradish capital of the world." In a nod toward its much more distant past, the Illinois Archeological Society holds an annual Indian and Artifact Show. The premiere event, however, is when the town opens up and welcomes visitors from across the globe, in a celebration of the town's Italian heritage, as many of Collinsville's residents are of Italian descent. The 2-day Italian Fest features professional Italian artists and performers, and offers dozens of opportunities to sample Italian cuisine and craftsmanship.

Through collaboration with the Catsup Bottle Preservation Group, Downtown Collinsville also organizes an annual homage to Collinsville's most unique attraction. The annual Largest Catsup Bottle Summerfest and Birthday party, held in early June, is a popular family festival with quirky contests and attractions. During the festival, the Collinsville-based Cruzin' in Antiques Classic Car club puts on a car show, part of the local car culture (and an echo of its Route 66 heritage) that permeates the Collinsville lifestyle. It is estimated that about 5,000 motor enthusiasts attend the event each year.<sup>285</sup>

### **Dwight, Illinois**

The town of Dwight (2008 pop. 4,267), is located 70 miles southwest of Chicago. Its town motto, "Not just another bump in the road," alludes to the efforts of the Dwight Main Street organization, established in 1998, to turn Dwight into a place to take an extended stay and explore all the town has to offer. Dwight has become a tourist attraction for viewing historic buildings, shopping, local entertainment, art appreciation, and Route 66 travel.

A portion of Route 66 runs right through Dwight, giving travelers the opportunity to cruise the fabled highway and re-create a cherished American experience. A number of 1930s-1950s structures decorate the roadway here, making Dwight a living museum of Route 66 memorabilia. Vestiges of America's past also dot the downtown area, a place few Mother Road tourists come to Dwight without visiting. Dwight Main Street's commitment to historic preservation allows the downtown area to showcase a variety of classic architectural styles: Greek Classic, Carpenter Gothic, Messkar, and one of three banks in the world designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

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<sup>285</sup>Thomas Raber. "Red All Over." *Riverfront Times*. 23 July 2003.



One of Dwight's most famed preserved structures is Ambler's gas station, an early Texaco gas station that ranks high on the itinerary of many Route 66 tourists. This classic service station, after recent renovations, continues to operate as a Route 66 museum and visitors center. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.



Ambler's filling station

Source: U.S. National Park Service

A primary focus of Dwight Main Street is “rekindling the economic vitality of downtown Dwight into the exciting central core of the community that it once was.”<sup>286</sup>

Route 66 is one component of that rekindling. In an effort to preserve not only the structures of Route 66 but its culture as well, Dwight Main Street organizes an annual car festival. The show, known as “Let’s Buzz the Gut,” harkens back to the 1950s when young street-rodders would use the phrase when they were ready to race through downtown Dwight. The event features a car cruise, judging, raffles, and other contests. All proceeds from the event go toward Dwight Main Street projects.

## Lincoln, Illinois

Lincoln (2008 pop. 14,541) received the Main Street designation from the state in 1994. The local managing agency, Main Street Lincoln, focuses its efforts on downtown business development while promoting the town’s ties to two great American icons: Abraham Lincoln, and Route 66.

Lincoln was christened by none other than President Abraham Lincoln in 1853, and since then the town has worked to maintain the quality and character that President Lincoln loved in his namesake town. Thanks to the preservation efforts of Main Street Lincoln, much of the original courthouse square remains intact, and all properties are contained within as a National Register of Historic Places District. One of Lincoln’s signature buildings is the neo-classical Logan County courthouse dating back to 1905.

After Abraham Lincoln sightseeing, Route 66 is the next most popular tourist attraction. Thousands of travelers pass through Lincoln every year to experience a cruise along an extensive stretch of Route 66, which is maintained through Main Street Lincoln. A number of remnants from the Route 66 era remain downtown, including the sign for the once popular Tropics

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<sup>286</sup> <http://www.dwightmainstreet.org>

Restaurant, and the Old Mill Restaurant, originally opened in 1929 and recently saved from demolition thanks to a local “Save the Mill” campaign.

Main Street Lincoln has worked to provide plenty of other reasons besides sightseeing to venture downtown; throughout the year a variety of events are held catering to families and fun-seekers, such as Taste of Lincoln, Fantastic Fridays, Prom Grand March, and Holiday Car Giveaway.<sup>287</sup> These events are made possible through partnerships and contributions with downtown businesses.

The Lincoln downtown provides a variety of activities to keep visitors entertained. More than 100 shops and eateries make this small town a major shopping destination, featuring all kinds of mercantile, from locally run boutiques to familiar national franchises and some Illinois state specialties thrown in between. Some of these businesses are housed in designated historic buildings. To further promote Lincoln’s image as a shopping destination, Main Street Lincoln now offers a Main Street Saver Card that provides shoppers with discounts at downtown retail locations.



Most recently, Main Street Lincoln has been collaborating with city officials to develop a streetscape plan that will serve as a blueprint for historic district revitalization. The area hopes to further capitalize on Abraham Lincoln historic tourism, which has become increasingly popular over the years. The plan is intended not only to support the historic sites but to enhance the downtown business district.

The Mill Restaurant  
Source: U.S. National Park Service

### **Pontiac, Illinois**

Pontiac (2008 pop. 11,258) is a suburban area located 100 miles south of Chicago off I-55. Pontiac has long been recognized as an exemplary Main Street community and was one of the first towns registered under the state program. Since 1988, a dedicated group of volunteers known as P.R.O.U.D. (Pontiac Redeveloping Our United Downtown) has pursued its mission to revitalize the central business district and promote its historic assets.

P.R.O.U.D. has focused its efforts on historic preservation, and several of the buildings in the downtown area are on the National Register of Historic Places, providing visitors with a full day of architectural sightseeing. The downtown embodies much of the nostalgic charm of a historic downtown, right down to its core where the city courthouse from 1900 is still in use today.

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<sup>287</sup> <http://www.mainstreetlincoln.com/events.php>

P.R.O.U.D. has had a major role in attracting business to the downtown area. As one strolls through downtown Pontiac, they may browse over 40 shops offering a diverse array of products, from locally made crafts and novelties to more practical shoppers' goods like furniture and housewares. Shoppers also benefit from a relatively modest sales tax (6.25% versus 9.75% in Chicago).



Route 66 Shield mural

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

Pontiac has made use of its local artistic talent; more than 20-hand painted murals adorn walls and building facades throughout the town. (See Chapter 6 and the Technical Report Volume II for a

detailed case study of the Pontiac murals.) The murals were painted during one weekend in 2009 when Iowa-based Walldogs International chose Pontiac as the host city for its annual convention. The Walldogs began in 1993 as an effort to preserve the art of mural painting, a form of advertising that was prevalent at the turn of the 20th century but since replaced with computer design programs and now remaining on a dwindling number of faded facades across the county (often referred to as “ghost signs”).

The murals in Pontiac depict scenes from both Pontiac’s past, such as a visit from Abraham Lincoln, and an advertisement for Pontiac’s former newspaper, the Weekly Sentential. In general, the murals also hearken back to simpler times in American history, depicting iconic Americana imagery like Coca Cola advertisements and old Main Street storefronts. The oldest and largest mural in Pontiac is the Route 66 shield mural that sits behind the Route 66 Association of Illinois’ Hall of Fame and Museum, which also has the distinction as the largest Route 66 shield in the world.

The Walldogs have left a lasting impression on the buildings of Pontiac and in the minds of local residents. The village of Pontiac, encouraged by the tourist appeal of its murals, pooled its resources to further promote and preserve mural art, and in May of 2010 the Walldogs Sign and Art Museum was opened to the public. The museum tells the history of mural advertising, with photo archives and artifacts of ghost signs across the country.

Pontiac is particularly proud of its association with Route 66 and celebrates it with several annual events. During 50s/60s weekend, a hot rod cruise culminates at a stop at a classic local

gas station, while the Father's Day weekend Antique and Classic Car show is a favorite local family event.

P.R.O.U.D.'s efforts have paid off in the form of national publicity for its picturesque downtown. Pontiac has many characteristics of the traditional American town, and it has been recognized by *Time* magazine (1997) as one of the best small towns in America.<sup>288</sup>

## Springfield, Illinois

The city of Springfield (2008 pop. 117,352), is located in central Illinois and is about 80 miles northeast of Saint Louis, Missouri. Besides being the Illinois state capital, Springfield is most famous for being the town where Abraham Lincoln spent the early years of his legal and political career. Many sites throughout Springfield chronicle the places Lincoln frequented throughout his young adulthood. Since 1993, the non-profit, volunteer-driven Downtown Springfield, Inc. has taken the responsibility for ensuring these structures remain preserved, as well as other buildings in downtown Springfield. An important example is in the heart of the downtown area, where the Old State Capitol building from the late 1800s takes a prominent position in the city skyline.



Springfield Old Capitol Building

Source: U.S. National Park Service

Downtown Springfield, Inc. is funded primarily through private-sector grants and corporate sponsorships. The group is very active; it has two full-time staff members and a board of directors that meets monthly. They have organized a number of events for visitors and residents alike, such as the Old Capitol Art Fair, the International Carillon Festival, the Illinois State Fair, and the Springfield Air and Rendezvous Show.

As a large city, Springfield offers a large-scale shopping experience. Downtown Springfield, Inc. has worked to attract a diverse array of shops that cover a variety of price ranges to draw in a broad customer base.

Also of importance is the local connection with historic Route 66. A portion of the road runs by Springfield. A popular attraction for Route 66 tourists is Shea's vintage filling station, which has been operating in Springfield for over 50 years, first as a gas station and currently as a museum for Route 66 service station memorabilia. The annual three-day International Route 66 Mother Road Car Show is among Springfield's most highly publicized events, attracting thousands of car

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<sup>288</sup> [www.pontiac.org](http://www.pontiac.org)



enthusiasts each September. Both Shea's and the Mother Road Car Show are described in greater detail in the case studies in the current volume.

Downtown Springfield, Inc. also strives to maintain a quality appearance in the downtown area and operates a banner program under a licensing agreement with the City of Springfield. Businesses may purchase banners and rent poles at discount prices that promote the downtown area and help create an integrated design among the downtown businesses.

## **SELECTED OKLAHOMA MAIN STREET PROGRAMS ON ROUTE 66**

### **Miami, Oklahoma**

The City of Miami, nicknamed the "Gateway to Oklahoma," is located in the northeastern corner of the state. The section of Route 66 that goes through the city has the last original Ribbon Road that is listed as an Oklahoma National Historic Landmark. The Miami Main Street Program was established in 1995. Its mission is to improve the quality of life in the City of Miami by strengthening the downtown area as the center of the community. Some key initiatives in this regard include:

- Public/Private partnerships that facilitate below-market-interest financing for storefront rehab (1% below prime)
- No-cost assistance preparing detailed business plans for businesses in the district
- No-cost assistance from professional interior designers and exterior architects
- Window and awning grants for which Miami Main Street will provide 50/50 matching funds up to \$500 for projects such as uncovering windows and making repairs

One of the notable projects in the downtown district includes the ongoing restoration of the 1,600-seat Coleman Theatre, which was originally a vaudeville theatre and movie palace that opened in 1929. The theatre was donated to the City of Miami by the Coleman family in 1989, and successful restoration efforts are ongoing<sup>289</sup> (see detailed case study in the current volume).

Another local attraction is The Dobson Museum, which is part of the Dobson Memorial Center Campus and located just 1 block off historic Route 66. The Dobson Museum displays locally



The Coleman Theater

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

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<sup>289</sup> <http://colemantheatre.org/pgs/rebirth.htm>



pertinent historical items including an Indian cultural collection, an area mining display, a family history center, and over 5,000 local historical items.<sup>290</sup>

## **TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM ON ROUTE 66**

### **Amarillo, Texas**

Amarillo is the 15th largest city in the state of Texas, the largest in the Texas Panhandle and the seat of Potter County. In 1991, concerned citizens from the City of Amarillo established a non-profit organization called “Center City” to oversee the revitalization of Amarillo’s historic downtown area. The organization is governed by a volunteer board of directors and receives financial support from the city government, private donors, and through fundraising events. Through a partnership with the City of Amarillo and Center City, there have been 59 façade grants awarded to improve the first impressions of buildings in the core downtown area. Each recipient had to invest a two-to-one match to receive \$10,000; in its 10 years, more than \$1 million has been invested in downtown improvements.<sup>291</sup> As of March 2009, the total amount of money invested in downtown Amarillo was just over the \$46 million mark in just three years.<sup>292</sup>

Amarillo holds annual events that capitalize on its location along Route 66, like the Annual Texas Route 66 Festival, the Route 66 Annual Fall Festival and Car Show, and the Polk Street Block Party. The city has 6 different home-owned eateries, multiple bars and clubs, the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, and the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame and Museum. Area historic attractions include the Cadillac Ranch and The Big Texan Steak Ranch, both located along I-40 (Historic Route 66). The Cadillac Ranch is a public art installation along I-40 (Route 66) and consists of a number of Cadillacs from different periods half buried in the ground. The Big Texan Steak Ranch is a restaurant and motel, famous for the “Texas King Challenge” which challenges diners to eat a 72-ounce steak nicknamed “The Texas King” in one hour for the distinction of having their names recorded and posted at the restaurant and receiving their meal for free.

Center City recently teamed up with the Amarillo Historical Preservation Foundation to restore the 1936 pueblo-deco Paramount Theater sign. Once a lively, decorative host to shows like “The Phantom of the Opera,” it has recently been converted to office space. The restoration was made possible by Center City’s contributions totaling \$40,000. Another major boost for downtown economic activity occurred in 2008 when West Texas A&M University moved into two floors of the 31-story Chase Tower in the historic downtown area, which increased the amount of people to support local restaurants and other downtown businesses.

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<sup>290</sup> <http://www.route66memorabilia.org/dobson.html>

<sup>291</sup> <http://www.centercity.org/programs.php>

<sup>292</sup> Loftin, Billy. “Downtown Amarillo’s Impressive Re-Investment Numbers” March 30, 2009. <http://www.connectamarillo.com/neighborhood/story.aspx?list=196277&id=280354>

A recent project undertaken in Center City is the \$16 million conversion of the Fisk Building to become a 108-room Courtyard by Marriott Hotel. The building was originally constructed in 1927 as the Fisk Medical Arts Building and had been a bank, a jewelry store, and medical and professional offices. The hotel opened on December 31, 2010 as part of the Center City Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone initiative. Another key initiative currently underway in Amarillo is the \$5 million restoration of the Potter County Courthouse through the Texas Historical Commission.

## **SAMPLE NEW MEXICO MAIN STREET PROGRAMS ON ROUTE 66**

### **Albuquerque, New Mexico**

Amidst the expansion and modernization of Albuquerque (2008 pop. 521,999) is a neighborhood whose small-town atmosphere remains as intact as the stretch of Route 66 that bisects it. The Nob Hill neighborhood, in downtown Albuquerque (near the University of New Mexico), has a Main Street program to promote its downtown business district and its ties to the Route 66 era. Nob Hill has remnants of two different alignments of Route 66, one along Fourth Street, and a later version when the road was realigned to Center Avenue. The intersection of Fourth and Central is not only an intersection in the literal sense but represents the intersection between past and present, and is the meeting point of a variety of different cultures and lifestyles.

The Nob Hill Main Street program is coordinated through a joint initiative between Nob Hill-Highland Renaissance Corporation, the Nob Hill Business Association, and the Route 66 De Anza Corporation. Their mission is to “provide for the continued revitalization of the Nob Hill business district and surrounding neighborhoods by increasing awareness of the district and providing for its continued vitality, sustainability, preservation of its historic resources, and economic and social diversity.”<sup>293</sup>

Central Avenue is the street along which the downtown retail sector runs. The area has a number of privately owned businesses, many of which have redesigned building facades, giving Central Avenue a colorful, artistic character. It is a functional Main Street that provides goods and services for residents, but also offers unique one-of-a-kind items showcasing the cultural diversity of Albuquerque to visitors.

Nob Hill Main Street is devoted to preserving the area’s past, and Central Avenue contains many historic structures, particularly those relating to Route 66, such as the Route 66 Diner that reproduces the iconic cultural ambience of the 1950s. From an architectural standpoint, there are many Nob Hill and nearby buildings to appreciate. The Kimo Theatre in downtown Albuquerque is a rare example of pueblo deco architecture, which blends the Main Street design with ornate southwestern Native American art. The theatre was saved from demolition in 1977 and has since undergone renovations to showcase this unique architectural style. Kelly’s Brew Pub, a

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<sup>293</sup> [www.route66central.com](http://www.route66central.com)



The Kimo Theatre

Source: U.S. National Park Service

restaurant converted from a former Ford car dealership, is also found in Nob Hill. Kelly's is detailed as a case study in the current volume.

At night, Central Avenue comes alive with color from nearly a dozen vintage neon signs from the Route 66 era pointing travelers toward accommodations along this road, giving it the nickname "motel road." One of its most recognizable structures is El Vado Motel, which has been in Albuquerque for nearly 60 years and is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

Nob Hill Main Street also organizes a variety of events to bring together its diverse community and share its cultural assets with others. Starting in July 2010, Nob Hill will pay homage to its Route 66 heritage with the launch of the annual Route 66 Days and Nights festival. Nob Hill

Main Street has worked with the City of Albuquerque to wrap several events into the three-day festival, which will include the Albuquerque Summerfest (part of the New Mexico Jazz Festival), and the tenth annual Neon Car Cruise.

## **Bernalillo, New Mexico**

Bernalillo, located 15 miles north of Albuquerque, is a small town (2008 pop. 9,238) that has a rich history dating back to its founding in 1655. For decades, Bernalillo has served as a crossroads for several major roadways, including El Camino Real, Old Highway 85 and Route 66. The Main Street, Camino Del Pueblo, is one of the oldest roads in the town and was formerly an important link between Santa Fe and Mexico City. As such, Bernalillo played a historic role as a service stop for travelers, and has saved many structures from its past from destruction, including old signs, gas stations, and service garages.

Bernalillo became a New Mexico Main Street community in 1987. The program is run through the Bernalillo Main Street Association, a non-profit, volunteer-driven organization. The Main Street District runs along Camino Del Pueblo through downtown Bernalillo, which contains many historic buildings. As of 2006, Bernalillo has 26 businesses located in Main Street, which accounted for a quarter of all Bernalillo businesses. The retail sector is the largest employer in the Main Street area.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Bernalillo Main Street: Community Economic Assessment  
[http://www.townofbernalillo.org/bsa/BBER\\_Bernalillo\\_CES\\_110207\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.townofbernalillo.org/bsa/BBER_Bernalillo_CES_110207_FINAL.pdf)

Bernalillo perpetuates an interest in classic automobiles, which reflects its connection to Route 66. The Old Route 66 Antique, Custom, and Classic Car Show attracts residents and visitors from surrounding towns to show off their restored automobiles and enter them for judging. Classic cars can also be found at the J&R Vintage Auto Museum, where they're not only on display but available for purchase.

Bernalillo Main Street also promotes the town's multicultural heritage and celebrates it every August during the Las Fiestas de San Lorenzo festival. Many local offices and business close to attend the event, which recognizes Bernalillo's predominantly Hispanic population. The highlight of the festival is a downtown parade featuring dancers from Los Matachines as they perform dances whose origins date back to the 1600s.

### **Santa Rosa, New Mexico**

Santa Rosa is a small town of just under 3,000 (2008 Census) that was founded in 1856 as a Spanish Rancho. Its scenery is emblematic of Route 66, such that John Ford chose Santa Rosa as the filming location for the closing scenes in the 1940 movie *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The downtown area is small but offers attractive stores and reflects the architecture of an old western town. As of 2007, the area had 18 businesses that created 75 jobs.<sup>295</sup> At one point, Route 66 provided the foundation for the local economy, bringing in travelers seeking food and shelter; today Route 66 still



Downtown Santa Rosa

Source: U.S. National Park Service

drives the economy, but in the form of heritage tourism. Santa Rosa is known for its many vintage restaurants, diners, and roadside food stands. Among these landmarks are the Comet II, Sun N' Sand, and Lake City Diner—all establishments that have garnered a reputation among seasoned Route 66 travelers.

Another popular icon is the “Fat Man,” a distinctive caricature that once belonged to the Club Café, and upon demolition was saved by local restaurant owners to be moved to Joseph's Bar and Grill, itself a long-standing eatery.

In cases where old buildings no longer stand, their preserved signs mark their place, such as the neon signs for the Comet Drive-In and Silver Moon restaurant.

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<sup>295</sup> 2007 Santa Rosa Community Economic Assessment [http://bber.unm.edu/pubs/MAINSTREET\\_Santa\\_Rosa.pdf](http://bber.unm.edu/pubs/MAINSTREET_Santa_Rosa.pdf)

Santa Rosa Main Street puts on several annual events to drum up community spirit, like its annual Block Party event. The events are designed to promote tourism as well; one of the most popular annual events is the Route 66 Festival and Main Street events. In June 2010, it held its 10th anniversary, featuring activities such as car judging, live entertainment, games, and exhibits.

The car culture that permeates Route 66 tourism can also be found at the Route 66 Auto Museum, owned and operated by local mechanic and classic car collector James “Bozo” Cordova. The museum showcases 30 cars from the 1930s through the 1970s that are also available for purchase. In addition, many signs and other Route 66 memorabilia are on display.

### **Tucumcari, New Mexico**

Tucumcari (2008 pop. 5,268) is a small town in eastern New Mexico. It contains many structures from its past as a rest stop along Route 66 and is a well-known place to visit to get a sense of the historic and cultural essence of Route 66. Many of the Route 66-era structures have been renovated with the help of the Tucumcari Main Street program, which the town implemented in 2006. Some of these buildings can be found along Tucumcari’s “motel row,” like the Blue Swallow Motel, which has been servicing Route 66 travelers since 1939 (detailed as a case study in the current volume), and Teepee Curios, an old trading post with a distinctive storefront.

A historic structure in which Tucumcari Main Street is strongly invested is the train depot located in the downtown area. The train station was built in 1926 and is a unique example of Spanish colonial revival architecture. In 2009, Tucumcari Main Street received a \$1.4 million grant from the state government to improve its downtown infrastructure, most of which has gone toward the rehabilitation of the train station.<sup>296</sup>

Tucumcari Main Street Association’s local sponsors are the City of Tucumcari, the Greater Tucumcari Economic Development Corporation and the Tucumcari/Quay County Chamber of Commerce.<sup>297</sup> The organization has a strong focus on its downtown area and strives to make it a destination for shopping and cultural diversions. As of 2007, 72 businesses were operating downtown, employing 444 people.<sup>298</sup> To help draw businesses, Tucumcari Main Street keeps a list of available Main Street properties on the organization’s website.

In enhancing the design of the downtown, local artists Sharon and Doug Quarles were commissioned to paint more than a dozen murals depicting the history and local heritage of Tucumcari. Tucumcari Main Street has been working to expand its arts and entertainment options, and in 2007 a volunteer group of local artists and art supporters raised enough money to open Eastern New Mexico ArtSpace, an organization that plans art-related events and has a gallery to showcase local art. Business development is a high priority among leaders. The members of Tucumcari Main Street have been working hard to regain the confidence of local

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<sup>296</sup> “What’s happening on Main Street,” <http://www.tucumcarimainstreet.com/Default.aspx?pagelid=399029>

<sup>297</sup> [www.tucumcarimainstreet.com](http://www.tucumcarimainstreet.com)

<sup>298</sup> 2007 Tucumcari Main Street Economic Assessment, [http://bber.unm.edu/pubs/MAINSTREET\\_Tucumcari.pdf](http://bber.unm.edu/pubs/MAINSTREET_Tucumcari.pdf)



residents after an initiative in the middle 1980s to close off Main Street to vehicular traffic resulted in widespread business failures.

To guide further development, Tucumcari Main Street is working with the City of Tucumcari, the Greater Tucumcari Economic Development Corporation, and the Tucumcari Chamber of Commerce to develop a master plan for the downtown area. The initiative was made possible by a \$70,000 grant received in 2008 from the New Mexico Economic Development Department's Main Street Division.<sup>299</sup>

## **ARIZONA MAIN STREET PROGRAMS**

### **Williams, Arizona**

Williams, also known as the “Gateway to the Grand Canyon,” is located in Northern Arizona, 30 miles west of Flagstaff and just off I-40 on Route 66. Williams was the last town located on Route 66 to be bypassed by I-40 in 1984, which was the same year that the downtown business district was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Williams is also the terminus of the Grand Canyon Railway, a significant tourist attraction and year-round source of revenue.

Tourism, tourist-oriented retail, and service firms are the economic backbone of the Williams economy, and the Williams Main Street Association has been an integral part of cultivating these industries.<sup>300</sup> The Williams Main Street Association is a very active organization, engaging in both public outreach and informational sessions throughout the year and publishing monthly newsletters to keep businesses and the local residents informed about the Main Street program's activities. The program has worked to encourage façade renovations of the historic Jackson and other buildings. The Main Street Association has acquired a trademark on the phrase “Cruise the Loop” and is utilizing the town's proximity to historic Route 66 to attract Route 66 enthusiasts as part of their economic development marketing campaign. There is a designated “Cruise the Loop Lane” that guides visitors around the Main Street district in order to get the full “Main Street Experience.” In 2006, Williams was designated as a “National *Preserve America* Community,” and in 1997 Williams Main Street received two Arizona Main Street Awards for Best Façade Renovation (the Jackson Building) and New Main Street Business of the Year (Route 66 Magazine—no longer located in Williams).<sup>301</sup>

## **OVERALL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ROUTE 66 MAIN STREET PROGRAM**

Let us step back from the individual Main Street programs and consider what they as a group have accomplished to date and their future potential.

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<sup>299</sup> “What's happening on Main Street,” *ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> <http://www.williamschamber.com/Main-Street-Association.25.0.html>

<sup>301</sup> Arizona Communications Group. Williams Fact Sheet <http://www.arizonatravelnews.org/williamsfactsheet.html>

The Route 66 Main Street programs have *fostered preservation of local, often downtown, historic resources* through securing financing, encouraging adaptive reuse, and other strategies. Examples include preserving historic court houses and downtown squares in Bloomington and Lincoln, Illinois; preparing a self-guided tour of 30 historic downtown buildings in Collinsville, Illinois; operating a heritage express trolley in El Reno, Oklahoma; restoring a 1946 pueblo deco Paramount Theatre sign in Amarillo, Texas; preserving a 1926 train depot in Tucumcari, New Mexico; and the façade renovation of the historic Jackson Building in Williams, Arizona.

The Route 66 Main Street programs have *engaged in many activities to promote improved local business activity*. They publicize local businesses, such as the Berwyn, Illinois program publishing a downtown vendor directory and the Main Street in Springfield, Illinois offering business banners. They offer financing, technical and other assistance for façade improvements (e.g., Miami, Oklahoma and Amarillo, Texas). They stage festivals and “events” of all stripes to attract tourists and regional shoppers. Examples include: “Cartopia” Annual Parade (Berwyn, Illinois), annual Horseradish Festival and “Largest Catsup Bottle Summerfest” (Collinsville, Illinois), International Carillon Festival (Springfield, Illinois), Las Fiestas de San Lorenzo (Bernalillo, New Mexico) and the annual Lemon Festival (Upland, California).

The Route 66 Main Street programs, not surprisingly, *frequently help preserve and publicize Route 66 historic resources*. The Miami, Oklahoma program helps spread the word regarding the Mother Road-sited Coleman Theater and, in a similar vein, so has the Albuquerque, New Mexico program regarding the Route 66 Diner and the Kimo Theater. The Upland, California Main Street program helped preserve the iconic neon sign at Taco King. The Main Street programs frequently stage or participate in Mother Road-themed events, many of these automobile related. Examples include the Route 66 Annual Car Show (Berwyn, Illinois), “Cruzin” Car Show” (Collinsville, Illinois), “Lets Buzz the Gut” (Dwight, Illinois), International Route 66 Mother Road Car Show (Springfield, Illinois), Annual Texas Route 66 Festival and Route 66 Annual Fall Festival (Amarillo, Texas), Annual Neon Car Cruise (Albuquerque, New Mexico), Old Route 66 Antique, Custom, and Classic Car Show (Bernalillo, New Mexico), “Fire and Ice” Bike Rally (Grants, New Mexico), Route 66 Festival and Main Street Event (Santa Rose, New Mexico), and “Cruise the Loop” (Williams, Arizona).

*The Route 66 Main Street programs have realized substantial activity and investment*, as is summarized in Table 2.5 from data obtained from each state’s Main Street office. From the inception of Main Street in the 25 communities (recall this inception varies among this group) to date (2008, last year program data are available), there have been cumulatively 1,193 rehabilitation projects, 772 new construction projects, 319 public improvement projects, \$923 million in investment (\$122 million rehabilitation, \$203 million new construction and \$599 million public improvements), and the creation of over 5,000 permanent jobs. On an annual average over the three-year period between 2006 and 2008, the 25 Route 66 Main Street programs have realized in total 157, 60, and 153 rehabilitation, new construction, and public improvement projects, respectively, \$67 million in investment (\$17 million rehabilitation, \$17 million new construction, and \$33 million public improvements), and the creation of 806 permanent jobs.

**Table 2.5: Route 66 Main Street Program Investment Statistics, 2006-2008**

Activities	Cumulative Program Total ( Inception to 2008)	2006 - 2008	
		Total	Annual Average
Number Façade Rehabilitations	1,193	471	157
Number of New Construction Projects	772	179	60
Number of Buildings Sold	326	101	34
Value Buildings Sold (\$millions, nominal year)	\$53.8	\$33.6	\$11.2
Net Gain in Business	1,183	351	110
Number Public Improvement Projects	319	158	153
<b>Investment</b>			
(\$ millions 2008 adjusted for inflation)			
Rehabilitation	\$121.8	\$50.0	\$16.8
New Construction	\$202.8	\$51.9	\$17.3
Public Improvements	\$598.8	\$98.7	\$32.9
Total Rehabilitation, New Construction and Public Improvements	\$923.4	\$200.6	\$66.8
Number of Jobs	5,643	2,417	806

In sum, the existing Route 66 Main Street programs have accomplished much through hard work and the implementation of a range of organizational, promotional, and other activities. The future potential is bright for a Main Street approach to revitalizing yet more communities on the Mother Road.

## FOLK ART ALONG THE MOTHER ROAD

One of the most popular and unique displays at the California Route 66 Museum in Victorville is this institution's collection of folk art, specifically "Hula Ville." Hula Ville is joined by neon signs, a blue whale, Midas Muffler Men, upended Cadillacs that invite graffiti and other art of the people that add to, if not personify the distinctiveness of Route 66. Our discussion begins at an earlier point, namely, what do we mean by folk art? As we shall see, the concept of folk art construed narrowly may lead to the finding of a limited folk art presence on the Mother Road. A contrary view that characterizes much along Route 66 as folk art (if not the entire Route itself) might be a bit of a stretch, but perhaps the concept of folk art requires some stretching to keep up with the times.

### INTRODUCTION: FOLK, POP, AND THE COMMERCIAL VERNACULAR

#### An American Original

Route 66 is enmeshed in Americana art and culture. From Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* to Kerouac's *On the Road*, from the 1960's TV show, "Route 66" to Disney/Pixar's recent *Cars*, the celebrated road has succeeded in mirroring the mood of the nation time and time again. Today, the icons and attractions of Route 66 capture a sense of place and time that still lures visitors from here and abroad. In sum, Route 66 has not only inspired art but has itself become art—a linear museum of a various times and places in 20<sup>th</sup> century American culture.

It is tempting to designate the visual attractions of Route 66 folk art. Etymologically, "folk art" means art of and for the people, in which case Route 66 may be said to offer ample examples. Though, historically, folk art is also understood to mean art coming out of a specifically identifiable tradition, "learned at the knee," and passed from generation to generation or through established cultural community traditions such as quilts, weathervanes, and hobbyhorses. In this latter sense, then, there appear to be very few examples of folk art along Route 66.

To be sure, there are at least some fairly traditional folk artists associated with Route 66. Robert Waldmire, for example, was awarded the 2004 John Steinbeck Award for his Route 66-themed drawings, featuring icons of the Mother Road. Recipients are chosen by the Historic Route 66 Federation and the John Steinbeck Foundation for their work to preserve, restore and promote the historic highway.

Yet most of the icons and attractions of Route 66 exceed the typical scale and intention of folk art. While Waldmire's works could easily be displayed in the home, nearly everything else of interest along Route 66—gas stations, motels, neon signs, billboards, Muffler men, roadside attractions of various sorts—are too large for a museum, let alone a home. Built to accommodate the speed and needs of the automobile traveler, the attractions of Route 66 are intimately

connected to commerce, mass production, and advertising rather than domestic needs commonly associated with folk art. What is at stake, it seems, with the folk art designation is the sense of authenticity one feels surely applies – somehow, despite their evident commercial origins – to the best attractions on Route 66.

Significantly, neither folklorists nor art historians have reached a consensus on the nature of folk art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – American or otherwise. At mid-century, for example, the American magazine, *Antiques*, invited 13 experts to answer the question ‘What is American folk art?’—a request that inspired nearly as many definitions as contributors. Other terms also began to proliferate: outsider art, visionary art, and vernacular art among others. At root, however, is the fundamental distinction between “folk art” and “high art”. Yet, it will be the influence of the folk art of Route 66 on the high art of the Sixties—Pop, Minimalist, and Land Art—as well as the architectural theory and design of the Seventies that will be one of this section’s most interesting discoveries.

### Pop Art and the Mother Road

Although Route 66 has influenced several distinct currents in the high art of the Sixties, Pop Art has been the most significant. The rise of Pop Art in the Sixties is contemporaneous with the last heyday of the Mother Road. Both celebrate the popular, the familiar, and the everyday. Both revel in commercial materials and processes. Andy Warhol, America’s best-known Pop artist, said people liked Pop Art because its subject matter was familiar: “It looks like something they know and see every day.”



Route 66, Hackberry, Arizona

Photo Source: Matthew High/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

Initially poorly received, the pervasiveness and familiarity of Pop Art’s subject matter quickly became emblematic of the essential populism of American society. Warhol summed it up well<sup>302</sup>:

What's great about this country is that America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you know that the President drinks Coca-Cola, Liz Taylor drinks Coca-Cola, and just think, you can drink Coca-Cola, too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All the cokes are the same and all the cokes are good. Liz Taylor knows it, the President knows it, the bum knows it, and you know it.

<sup>302</sup> <http://www.iwise.com/nfwbA>



At the same time, Pop Art turned the attention of high art, and its audience, toward popular culture. Conversely, Pop Art turned the attention of the mass audience toward high art. Cultural critic Umberto Eco focused his 1971 commentary on Pop Art on the shifting nature of the references running between high and low culture. He argues that Pop artists borrow from mass-media sources, while the mass media in turn borrow back. Other commentators noted that many Pop Art paintings recreate the tension between handmade and mass-produced signs and symbols – a tension everywhere visible on Route 66 and one that marks the transition between folk art as it is traditionally understood and as it has evolved in response to the frenetic economic developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Route 66 and the Commercial Vernacular**

Indeed, the use of the term ‘folk art’ has undergone a decided evolution in response to the socio-economic conditions in which its artifacts are made. Prior to the nineteenth century, folk art was simply equated with traditional, handmade crafts. In the nineteenth century, however, as industrialization and urbanization shrank the remaining areas of traditional culture, collecting and studying the traditional arts of rural folk became a scholarly interest and an issue of national pride. In the twentieth century, folk art came to be recognized by the art world as an area of collection, exhibition, and criticism with its own museums and galleries, beginning with folk art exhibits at the Newark Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in the early 1930s. Until the 1970s, many cultural critics, art historians, and sociologists presented folk art as the expression of an authentic culture that was fast disappearing before the onslaught of modern “mass culture.” In this view, the arts of the unspoiled folk who once made and enjoyed their own artifacts are contrasted with the popular arts supposedly manufactured by a distant and exploitative culture industry for mass consumption. With the rise of Pop Art and the cultural re-evaluations it generated, the simple dichotomy between authentic folk art and exploitative popular began to be questioned.

One historian, for example, recently made several interesting observations about the rise of America’s industrial-commercialization in the 1930s and the contemporaneous rise of popular ethnographies such as Dorothea Lange’s *An American Exodus*, John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, and James Agee’s and Walker Evans’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. According to this account, documenting places and people feared to be most threatened by industrial-commercial development at first appeared to depict America’s socio-economic fringes as a repository of redemptive “folk” culture. Upon closer inspection, however, these popular ethnographies also located commercial capitalism’s own heroic and authentic “roots” in these same sites and sources. The “artifacts” of Route 66 encompass both seemingly antithetical poles: a redemptive “folk” culture and commercial capitalism’s authentic “roots.” Route 66’s ability to sustain a productive tension between the two may well account for its lasting power to attract.

The notion that commercial capitalism may itself have authentic roots—at least in the popular imagination—is deeply indebted to *Learning from Las Vegas*, which exploded on the cultural landscape in 1972. Using the drive-in culture as a point of departure, architect Robert Venturi

issued a controversial call to explore "the messy vitality" of the existing built environment, including embracing the strange new landscape of cars, casinos, billboards, and motels. According to Venturi, "architects are out of the habit looking non-judgmentally at the environment, because orthodox Modernist architecture is progressive, if not revolutionary, utopian, and puristic; it is dissatisfied with *existing* conditions." As Venturi summed it up: "I. M. Pei will never be happy on Route 66."<sup>303</sup>



Legendary entrance to Las Vegas

Source: user: Jess1820/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

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<sup>303</sup> In a comic twist, the Las Vegas Luxor Hotel and Casino built a colossal "replica" of I. M. Pei's best-known work, the glass pyramid at the Louvre, Paris, shortly after Pei's work was completed in 1989.



I. M. Pei, *Glass Pyramid*, the Louvre, Paris

Source: Konstantinos Dafalias/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

Noting that fine art often *follows* folk art and “pure” architecture often *follows* the vernacular, Venturi indicts modern architecture’s rejection of the combination of fine art and “crude” art that had animated many architectural developments in the past. Coining the term “commercial vernacular” for the existing conditions—i.e. that profusion of neon signs, motels, and gas stations that define the commercial strip—Venturi argues that the new architecture must follow and engage the commercial vernacular. His contends that an examination of popular culture could make architecture more responsive to the changing needs of people in an automobile-oriented commercial environment.

In the context of Venturi’s manifesto, then, Route 66 is the motherload of the commercial vernacular. It has and continues to accomplish important cultural work by demonstrating what “folk” art and architecture become when the folk drive cars and carve out a living in an increasingly commercial, mass-produced world. The restoration and maintenance of Route 66’s iconic attractions is essential not only for historical reasons but because the art and architecture of the future has not yet fully mined the “folk” material that Route 66 so amply presents. As Venturi would say, commercial vernacular’s moment has not yet passed.



## HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS: FLIGHT FROM TRAGEDY, HIGHWAY TO THE AMERICAN DREAM

Just as the icons and attractions of Route 66 span folk, pop, and the commercial vernacular in a “messy vitality,” so too the road itself accommodated a variety of histories—both tragedies and dreams—such as the flight from the desperate poverty of the Depression and Dust Bowl years to mile after Miracle Mile in the post-war boom. Without detailing the rich and varied history of the Mother Road in its entirety, a few episodes should be highlighted to illustrate that not only the artifacts but also the history of Route 66 has sustained a messy vitality, a productive tension between loss and gain.

Route 66 unified a set of privately named auto trails in 1926, and during its lifespan did much to make one nation out of the United States. With the number of registered automobiles exploding from a mere 8,000 in 1900 to over 23 million by 1930<sup>304</sup>, a unified, national road system was in big demand. The federal numbering of U.S. 66 gave highway boosters a distinctively signed route to promote travel from the Midwest to California and initially established the identity of U.S. 66 as a road of scenic wonders of the Southwest. From the beginning, however, the National Highway 66 Association also appealed to local sensibilities across the nation by dubbing Route 66 “America’s Main Street” in 1927. In various campaigns to promote travel on the new highway, Route 66 boosters managed to convey a sense that the Mother Road was both local and national at the same time.

When a decade of despair followed the stock market crash of 1929, the Mother Road became both an escape route and, for some, a chance to eke out a living by providing roadside services, however provisional. *Harper’s Magazine* described the phenomenon in 1933:

There’s gold in them there shacks – so long as the cars keep rolling by. And they are rolling by. The depression hasn’t stopped them at all. On the contrary. People who used to travel by train can no longer afford three or four cents a mile. Graduates of our thousand colleges, unable to get jobs, sponge on the family, club together to buy an old Ford, and point its radiator toward the great open spaces. Salaried men who have lost their jobs but saved something (or often almost nothing) say goodbye to the landlord and take their families off to see the world before it blows up. Farmers who have failed or been dispossessed crank up the last thing, which a good American surrenders – his car – and push off into a possibly happier nowhere. And then the great army of incurable wanders, prosperous or poverty stricken, who are always yielding to the restless, pioneer, gypsy streak that lies at the bottom of most Americans, roll back and forth, to the Lakes in the summer, to California or Florida in the winter, with less reason than ever for settling in one place. And all of them must find some place to eat and sleep<sup>305</sup>.

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<sup>304</sup>*Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*. (Washington DC: US Bureau of the Census, 1975), Series Q 148-162.

<sup>305</sup>Little, Robert and John J. McCarthy. “Three hundred thousand shacks: The arrival of the new-American industry.” *Harpers Magazine*. July 1933, 180 in Liebs, Chester H. *Main Street to Miracle Mile*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD: 1995, 21.

A pragmatic, entrepreneurial spirit began to develop the roadside—from auto camps to motels, fruit stands to diners and, of course, the ever-present gas station. When a drought of biblical proportions forced an exodus of farm families out of Oklahoma and Texas panhandle toward the hopeful horizon of work in the fruit fields of California in the mid-1930s, the roadside marketplace was there to meet them. And with the help of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and Dorothea Lange's photo essay, *An American Exodus*, Route 66 was soon immortalized as an icon of Dust Bowl migration.

While World War II slowed the growth of automobile travel and roadside development, the explosion of travel after WWII promoted a new commercial spirit along Route 66. The next stage in the evolution of the roadside marketplace began with federal improvements to the national highway system, which ultimately became the Interstate and Defense Highway Program of 1956, a truly national network of superhighways. From that point on, relocation and renumbering from the Interstate system gradually eliminated the original U.S. 66 routings and, bypassed small town centers across the Mid- and Southwest. The 40,000 mile network of four-lane speedways, in addition to eating up thousands of acres of land and ripping through the historic cores of countless cities, also did much to alter the pattern of roadside commercial development.

With the advent of the new Interstate highway system, the physical identity of U. S. 66 was continuously eroded by widening and relocation throughout the 1960s. As its physical identity was challenged, nostalgia for Route 66 grew, and the transformation of the route from physical road to national symbol accelerated. The final closure of Route 66 within the living memory of its travelers contributed to the sense of sudden loss, evoking the memory of the highway as a departed spirit.

At the same time, the bypassing of Route 66 engendered a popular fascination with the highway, one that increasingly appealed to youth who had little experience of the road itself. From the Beat classic, *On the Road*, in 1957 to a Pop Art icon only a few years later, the road's identity was increasingly appropriated by a variety of media including radio, television, and film. From covers of "Route 66!" by Chuck Berry and The Rolling Stones to the hit television series "Route 66," the road was embraced by the youth of the Sixties, who sought freedom from the stifling uniformity of the 1950s. Perhaps the greatest commercial success was the TV series, "Route 66," which first aired in 1960 following the Nixon-Kennedy debates and ran for four seasons. Its popularity was attributed to its successful blending of existential Beat Generation wanderlust and the enlightened optimism of Kennedy's New Frontier. In many ways, Dennis Hopper's "Easy Rider" (1969), with its references to the assassinations of JFK, RFK, Martin Luther King, marked the closing of the decade's dreams of freedom on the open road.

Of course, the popular, media-generated fascination with Route 66 coincided with the highway's heyday and many profited—both those who worked the roadside market and those who portrayed it. It is as if time and time again Route 66 has provided—be it a way to make money or



a sustain a dream. Since the official closing of Route 66 in 1985, many small towns have devised ways of boosting economic development by marketing their connection with the Mother Road. Steinbeck got it right: Like a good mother, Route 66 just keeps on giving.

## ICONS OF THE ROAD

In what follows, specific Route 66 icons and attractions the “high art” that they influenced are examined in greater detail. Pop Art’s recuperation of roadside American “folk art”—and other familiar items of everyday life—is arguably a factor in the increase in popular interest in “high art,” as indicated, for example, by the rise in the Blockbuster museum exhibit. Pop Art leveled the field of objects worthy of attention and people came. While a great deal of Route 66’s continuing ability to attract has been mediated by print and electronic media, it is the icons themselves and our ability to see them as both as history and as art – however one chooses to qualify the term – that has become essential to reinvigorating the fortunes of the towns and people of the Route 66 roadside today.



Phillips 66 on Route 66, McLean, Texas

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

### Architecture: The Gas Station

The gas station was the first structure built in response to the automobile and is undoubtedly the most widespread type of commercial building in America. Today, the gas station is one of the few building types that has been standardized and distributed across the entire country. But for the first few decades of Route 66’s active duty as a national highway, the gas station was often a vernacular building form of great invention. The first gas stations on Route 66 were curbside pumps outside general stores, but stand-alone gas stations began to appear in the 1920s.

One chain of gas stations is intimately linked with Route 66. As Arthur Krim tells the story in his rich study of Route 66, Phillips Petroleum, then a local Oklahoma oil company, perfected a cold-weather, high-gravity, naphtha-based gasoline in the fall of 1927. Phillips executive John F. Kane and his driver, Salty Sawtell, were returning to Oklahoma City on Route 66 for a meeting to name the new gasoline. “This car goes like 60 with our new gas,” Kane said to his driver. “Sixty, nothing!” said Sawtell. “We’re doing 66!” The “66 on 66” campaign was adopted immediately. By the following year, “66” was incorporated into the design of the Phillips logo, and, in 1930, the federal route shield was adopted as the Phillips 66 logo. By the onset of the Great Depression, regional marketing for Phillips 66 had spread the double-six shields

throughout the Midwest, well beyond its original Oklahoma core and into the national culture. Phillips and 66 became entwined, a new part of the roadside landscape, transforming 66 from a federal highway number into travelers' beacons from Illinois to California.

Some 35 years later, Los Angeles Pop artist Edward Ruscha took the gas stations of Route 66 as the subject for his limited-edition book of photographs, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* captured the roadside architecture in simple snapshots, documenting the highway as part of the image. Many critics have suggested a connection between Ruscha's treatment of the gas stations and the Stations of the Cross, which Ruscha did not wholly deny: "There is a connection between my work and my experience with religious



Sprague's Super Service Station, Normal, Illinois

Source: U.S. National Park Service

icons, and the stations of the cross and the Church generally, but it's in one of method, you know." For early travelers on Route 66, crossing the vast open spaces of the American Southwest, a gas station appearing on the untamed horizon may well have been something of a religious experience, while today the gas station is largely experienced as an eyesore, if noticed at all. The gas station also inspired Ruscha's most famous painting, "Standard Station, Amarillo." Both works have become icons of Pop Art. They also helped establish the American highway as a valid subject for art.

Today, iconic Route 66 gas stations are receiving the attention they deserve. Both vintage gas stations reference classic architectural styles of the past—a strategy that Las Vegas will deploy years later to "soften" its purely commercial functions (think the Egyptian-style Pyramid at the Luxor Hotel and or the Paris Hotel's Eifel Tower). To illustrate, thanks in part to a grant from the National Park Service, Sprague's Super Service Station, in Normal, Oklahoma, is being restored. Sprague's is a Tudor Revival-style gas station and one of only three two-story service stations left on the Route 66 corridor. With a roofline suggesting a Tudor manor, Sprague's traded on its distinctiveness and charm in its heyday and does so again now.

Like Sprague's, the Miami Marathon Oil Company Service Station in Miami, Oklahoma, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Built to suggest a Greek temple with a simple portico supported by two Doric columns, it is a unique example of the Neoclassical Revival style applied to the gas station. Now a nail salon, it is an important Route 66 icon.



Miami Marathon Oil Company, Miami, Oklahoma

Source: U.S. National Park Service



Blue Swallow Motel, Route 66, Tucumcari, New Mexico

Source: U.S. National Park Service

### Signs: Neon, Neon, Neon

In *Learning from Las Vegas*, Robert Venturi remarked that the buildings were nothing compared to the signs—an observation with which many would agree. Johnny V. Meier, president of the New Mexico Route 66 Association and tasked with restoration of the state's neon signs along the

byway, noted: "Folks across the country are coming to regard the great neon signs as American folk art" In a review of the American Sign Museum in Las Vegas, the *New York Times* added: "These American signs speak a remarkable language, competing for attention and graphic inventiveness." The *Times* continued:

But we also see something that the creators did not: how the typeface or imagery fits into broader ways of thinking and feeling. The signs speak to us, long after "Old Barbee Whiskey" or "Cole Batteries" or "Flying A Service" have ceased to mean much, because we can hear the voice of their origins ... these signs have channeled those voices with such vitality, making uncanny connections to lost worlds.

Sign makers were, for the most part, vernacular designers—common people making common things—they incorporated well-known and well-worn patterns of form, material, shape and symbol to ensure that their signs had meaning and relevance to the people who used them. When neon technology arrived in the United States in 1923, sign-making acquired a powerful new technology to extend their meanings across greater distances. Neon signs are produced by glass benders, who bend glass tubes into various shapes. The glass tubes are then filled with neon gas and electric current is applied to create the "liquid fire," as its first observers called it. Merging folk craft (glass working) and new technology, neon signs represent a unique collaboration between "old" and "new."



*The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths* —Bruce Nauman, (1967).

Photo Source: Andrew Coulter Enright/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

Neon signage also had a significant impact on the art of the Sixties and beyond. Bruce Nauman is the best-known artist to use neon into his artistic practice. One of Nauman's first pieces, the neon sign "The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths" (1967) was initially displayed in the artist's grocery storefront studio. Precisely because he wanted to make art that didn't look like art, Nauman appropriated the neon sign and created "just another advertisement on the street." The occasional pedestrian who stopped to consider the work would have been confronted by an advertisement for what art claims to do, using the best commercial techniques and materials available at the time. Such a strategy ultimately doubles back on the possibilities of neon signage itself, expanding its range of meanings and cultural resonances. Nauman has continued to use neon throughout his career, no doubt influencing other well-known "light artists" such as Robert Irwin and James Turrell as well as contemporary neon artists.



Given both the historical and aesthetic interest generated by neon signs, restoring vintage neon signs has become an important cultural task. The Meadow Gold neon sign on Route 66 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is a case in point. A city icon since at least the 1940s, the Meadow Gold sign had been dark and neglected since the 1970s and was slated for demolition in 2004 by a local car dealership. Working with the Oklahoma historic preservation office and the National Park Service, the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture and the Oklahoma Route 66 Association saved and restored the sign, which was dedicated in May 2009. The project is part of a larger Tulsa plan to reanimate the city, and its extensive neon signage, thanks to its connection to Route 66.



Restored Meadow Gold sign, Tulsa, Oklahoma

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

### **Sculpture: Muffler Men, Multiples and a Blue Whale**



Two of the remaining Muffler Men along Route 66 in Illinois

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

The very first Muffler Man was a Paul Bunyan done for the Paul Bunyan Café on Route 66 in Flagstaff, Arizona in 1962. Made of fiberglass from a fiberglass mold by International Fiberglass, Muffler Men were sold as attention-getters for retail businesses during the slow season. When an American Oil gas station in Las Vegas reported his sales doubled after installing his Paul Bunyan, the “invasion” began. Nearly all subsequent Muffler Men were cast from the same mold, including



the Phillips Petroleum Cowboys, the Texaco Big Friends and the Midas Muffler Men. The Muffler Men are—in art world parlance—multiples, cast from a single mold, a mode of production embraced by Minimalist artists at the same time. They required a high level of fabricating skill, which is still highly prized in certain segments of the art world today.

Minimalism was an American phenomenon of the Sixties that embraced an industrial sensibility that developed in reaction to the painterly, emotion-driven forms of Abstract Expressionism. Although most Minimalists were centered in New York City, a related movement in Los Angeles—known as Finish Fetish—was inspired by the bright light, popular techniques of automobile modification associated with the car culture, and the burgeoning plastics industry in southern California. Minimalists used common industrial materials such as fiberglass and often relied on industrial fabrication. While Pop artists such as Andy Warhol wanted their work to look industrial and thus initiated studio practices simulating the commercial, Minimal artists achieved an industrial appearance as a result of relying on fabricators to provide them with efficient and practical means of production. The best Minimalist works evince a stark spirituality despite their manufactured means of production.

Claes Oldenburg adapted many of Minimalist’s fabrication strategies—as pioneered by the Muffler Men—to a Pop sensibility. Best known for colossal public sculptures of mundane objects such as the iconic *Spoonbridge and Cherry* (1988) in Minneapolis, Oldenburg’s work was initially ridiculed before being embraced as whimsical and insightful additions to public space.

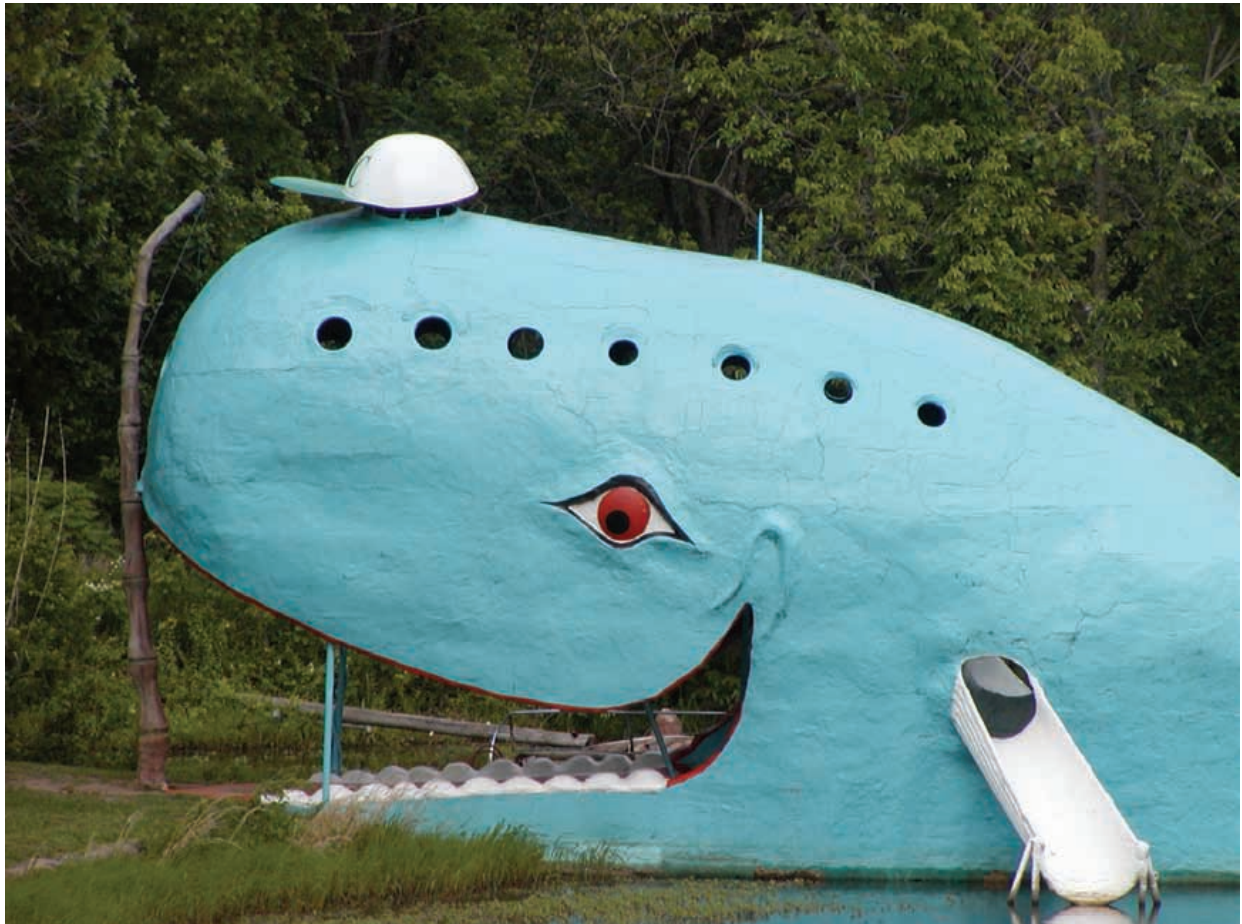


Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, *Spoonbridge and Cherry* (1985-88)

Source: Tim Wilson/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

Significantly, Oldenburg’s large-scale whimsical sculptures were preceded by the construction of one of the most recognizable attractions on old Route 66 in Oklahoma. Hugh Davis built the

*Blue Whale* in the early 1970s as an anniversary gift to his wife. The *Blue Whale* and its pond became a favorite stop and swimming hole for both locals and travelers alike. Hugh was an entrepreneur in the grand old tradition of those roadside attraction proprietors of old. Over the years, his park became a destination in itself and included picnic tables, concessions, a couple of boats and a zoo housed in a wooden ark. The *Blue Whale*, pond and zoo were closed in the late 1980s and soon fell into disrepair. A decade after the *Blue Whale* was closed, citizens of Catoosa, Oklahoma, along with Hampton Inn employees cleaned up the grounds and gave the whale a fresh coat of paint. Today the *Blue Whale* lives again as an attraction worth seeing.



The Blue Whale, Route 66, Catoosa, Oklahoma

Source: U.S. National Park Service

## Folk Art Environments

Folk art environments are not native to Route 66 but they do highlight the roadside environment's important relationships with both the vernacular architecture of the Southwest and the Land Art movement of the Sixties and Seventies.



Bottle trees

*Source: U.S. National Park Service*

Hula Ville is an example of the kind of unique roadside attractions once found all along the Mother Road. Created in the mid 1950's by Miles Mahan, a retired carnival worker and poet, on a two and a half acre parcel of desert beside Route 66. The land was littered with wine bottles, which Mahan hung them on nails driven into fence posts; he called this his "Cactus Garden". He rescued a nine-foot metal sign of a dancing hula girl from the rubble of a demolished restaurant to preside over the garden. In failing health, Mahan was forced to leave Hula Ville in 1995. In his absence, Hula Ville began to disintegrate but California Route 66 Museum was able to dismantle the major artifacts and preserve them at the California Route 66 Museum in Victorville, California.

Hula Ville bears a startling relationship to an unusual form of high desert vernacular architecture. Bottle houses, an example of which is not far from Route 66 in Rhyolite, Nevada, were built during the Gold Rush when building materials were scarce. Saloons were the first commercial establishments and empty beer, wine, and liquor bottles were plentiful. Bottles embedded in adobe or concrete proved an excellent building material and created strikingly beautiful lighting effects. Sadly, only a few bottle houses remain. Hula Ville's bottle garden, created some fifty years later, seemingly creates an environment—a bottle forest, if you will—from which the bottle houses might, in a leap of imagination, be built. A tribute, then, to the early high desert settlers.





Bottle house in Rhyolite, NV

Source: Bradley Fulton/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0

Cadillac Ranch is a very popular stop on Route 66. It is a wildly successful melding of the folk art environment format with a Pop Art aesthetic and the seemingly antithetical Land Art of the Seventies. A monumental tribute to Route 66, it was created by the San Francisco-based Ant Farm, an association of art students and architects formed in 1968 to reinterpret American cultural icons in contemporary form. The proposal to bury classic, Cadillac tail-fin cars along Route 66 originated with Ant Farm and was backed by Texas millionaire, Stanley Marsh III. His fortune in natural gas had allowed him to fund several large-scale installation art at his Hidden Art Ranch, west of Amarillo, Texas, including Claes Oldenberg's *Pool Table* (1969) and Robert Smithson's monumental *Amarillo Ramp* (1973).

Smithson was a leading figure in the Land Art movement. Unlike Pop Art which had exalted industrial objects and mass-production, Land Art was an anti-industrial and anti-urban art movement that aimed to remove art from the commercial art world and free art from the traditional categories of painting and sculpture. Drawing inspiration from primitive monuments such as Stonehenge and the immense, unexploited territories of the American Southwest, Robert Smithson's best-known work is *Spiral Jetty*, Great Salt Lake, UT (1970).

Cadillac Ranch initially consisted of ten Cadillacs, each with a different tailfin, buried 20 feet apart, nose first in the concrete, and angled to match the inclination of the Great Pyramid at Cheops. Over the years, additional Cadillacs have been added and graffiti welcomed. It is both a tribute to the heyday of Route 66 and the capacity of the Mother Road to welcome all comers: lovers of the road, Pop, Land Art, and graffiti included.

## CONCLUSION

This case study has tried to show that Route 66 animates and in a certain way makes sense of a whole range of antithetical notions and ideologies, many of which still animate popular and political discourse today. Federal highway vs. America's Main Street; folk vs. pop; lost past vs. slick future; personal vs. mass-produced; authentic vs. commercial; low art vs. high art, national vs. vernacular; and nostalgia vs. progress. The list goes on. Because Route 66 often achieves a productive tension between stances that might otherwise provoke a fight, it accomplishes important, instructive, and ultimately unifying cultural work – no matter which side of the antithesis one prefers. In the end, art – whether folk or high, Pop or vernacular – simply asks for and rewards our attention.

In sum, the man-made landscape is a mirror; it reflects our values, identity, our past and our future. As Arthur Krim put it: “Route 66 was the American highway of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, straddling it from Jazz Age to Computer Age, in gravel and concrete, in song and film, in television and Pop Art Projected as an idea in the euphoria of the Gold Rush, Route 66 endures as an idea in the euphoria of the Internet.” The Mother Road keeps on giving.



Yahoo! Neon Sign in Route 66 "style," San Francisco, California

Source: Scott Beale/CC-BY-SA-NC-ND-3.0



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