Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program
National Trails System Office - Intermountain Region
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Route 66 Corridor

National Historic Context

Study

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Executive Summary

U.S. Highway 66—often referred to simply as Route 66—has a special hold on the American imagination and its name commonly evokes images of the romance of simpler times, progress in the development of the nation's economic and technological infrastructure, the visible despair of migrants on the road, the glory days of small businesses, and in myriad other ways the icons of a mobile nation, a nation on the road. Those images are easily recalled by the traveler on Highway 66 who sees the artifacts of that busy highway still standing, motels, gas stations, cafés, bridges, parks, and other structures and buildings. Often just ghosts of their former lives, these historic resources serve both as reminders of a past that has slipped away and as objects of investigation into the origins of current society, culture, economy, and political forces in the United States.

This study is undertaken to provide a statement of historic context to facilitate the evaluation and listing of historic resources along Route 66 on the National Register of Historic Places. Since an essential part of the nomination of any property to the National Register is the evaluation of the property's historic (or prehistoric) significance, the following narrative is designed to assist researchers as they nominate resources. Often the immediate and direct history of a resource can be documented—when it was constructed, by whom, and how the property changed over time in use and in structure, and when the property was perhaps taken out of commercial or other active use—but determining the significance, understanding the meaning, of that history, requires placing it into context with other historic resources locally and nationally. This, in turn, involves conducting research that goes beyond the immediate site to identify patterns of historical continuity and change. This is not an effort to identify and document every resource along Route 66, but instead is an effort to provide an understanding of the circumstances in which those many resources originated and evolved.

Although Route 66 had its beginnings officially in 1926 when the Bureau of Public Roads launched a numbered highway system in the United States, and Highway 66 was one of those, this highway had already been used, in its component parts, as parts of local, state, and national road networks. Extending from Chicago to Los Angeles, the new highway went through eight states and was not completely paved until more than a decade after its designation. Many of the merchants in the small and large towns through which the highway passed looked to the road for salvation by bringing much needed outside revenues into their often isolated communities, and so the highway was actively promoted in its early years, especially because it offered a more weather-friendly alternative to other east-west roadways. As the highway became busier with the nation's traffic, the roadbed was markedly improved and the infrastructure of support businesses lining its right of way expanded dramatically, and those developments stimulated a dynamic spiral in which better roads and accommodating businesses (especially providing fuel, lodging, and food) made travel more attractive, and conversely, as more people traveled the road, the more it stimulated such public and private growth.

As the Depression worked its baleful effects on the nation, it also produced an ironic consequence along Route 66; the vast migration of destitute people fleeing from the privation of their former homes actually produced an increased volume of business along the highway, thus providing commercial opportunities for a multitude of low-capital, mom and pop businesses. The buildings that were constructed for these businesses reflected the independence of the operations, a general absence of standardization, and a decentralized economic structure. At the same time, however, it became clear that life along Highway 66 presented opportunities not available to the nearby towns and businesses that lost traffic to the important highway and who suffered accordingly. At a very early point it was evident that a major nearby highway could both bring business and take it away, could bring success or spell failure.

World War II generated both a decline in civilian traffic, especially tourism, and stimulated local economies along the highway where military and defense production installations cropped up, a circumstance enhanced by their location to this important transportation corridor. The war also brought diminished highway maintenance and hard times for the businesses that had depended on the large volume of traffic passing by their front doors. These circumstances, in turn, meant that when the war ended, the surge in traffic was all the more dramatic; and that traffic increase skyrocketed in the new era of prosperity in which people who had never taken a vacation in their life now had the opportunity to travel west, not in pursuit of a job to ease their desperation, but for the sheer enjoyment of it. As the traffic increased, once again the small businesses along the highway also boomed and the icon of Route 66 of the migration of Okies in the 1930s transformed to an icon of freedom and kicks; the bleak image of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* faded and the upbeat sounds of Bobby Troup's and Nat "King" Cole's "get your kicks on Route 66" took over.

The history of Route 66 is filled with ironies—from start to finish. Just as hard times in the nation actually had produced a modest level of prosperity for many of the operators of gas stations and tourist courts along 66 in the Depression, the enormous traffic on the highway in the decade after World War II sent the whole Route 66 experience into free fall. The crowding of the nation's highways, with Route 66 an exemplary case, meant not the improvement of the highway, but its replacement with the interstate highway system written into law in 1956. After that, and with the construction of each mile of limited-access, four-lane, divided highway that paralleled Route 66, a development which converged with powerful forces of consolidation in the economy as seen in the growth of chains of branded gasoline stations, motels, and restaurants, the pressures on the institutions that had been indelibly associated with the famous highway ratcheted up. By 1985, when the last section of Route 66 was bypassed by interstate highway, many of the businesses were forced to move to a location where the flow of traffic could find access. Yet again, however, the ironies of Route 66 emerged. In the decommissioning of this important roadway, in the official repudiation of a highway that two or three generations of Americans had looked to for their future, the highway gained yet more appeal, and each year, once again, large numbers of not only Americans but people around the world who identify this highway with America's identity and past, continue to follow the 2400 miles of roadway in an effort to remember, to experience, to savor, and to understand.

It is in this context of social, economic, and political transformation that the properties of Route 66 are associated and can be evaluated. Because the National Register of Historic Places also requires the identification of property types in the submission of multiple property nominations, this statement, in addition to discussing the evolution of the roadway and integral features and the private and public roadside features important to Route 66, also defines the relevant property types and the registration requirements for each. These property types include: (1) Roadbeds, (2) Road Bridges, (3) Gasoline / Service Stations, (4) Garages / Dealerships, (5) Restaurants / Diners, (6) Motels / Tourist Courts, (7) Recreation / Travel Stops / Destinations, and (8) Roadside Parks / Picnic Areas / Markers. The period of significance—the time period in which properties eligible for the National Register must be demonstrated to have been associated with Route 66—for these features is 1926-1970. Properties eligible will in most instances meet the requirements of Criterion A (association with "events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history") or of Criterion C (architectural or engineering design significance) or of both Criterion A and C. It is important to note, however, that some properties which have deteriorated significantly so that only ruins are left or which were in their origins ephemeral in nature with a light footprint on the terrain, may be eligible under Criterion D as archeological properties. As with any large grouping of properties, there may also be individual properties that are also eligible because of their association with significant individuals, in which case they would qualify under Criterion B.

Acknowledgments

I have accumulated many debts in the preparation of this project, some of them direct and immediate in the research and writing of the National Historic Context Study, and some reaching back especially into my earlier work on Route 66 in Oklahoma. First of all, I have benefited much from the good counsel, productive discussions, and careful readings by Michael Taylor, Dr. Arthur Gómez, and Kaisa Barthuli of the National Park Service. They have been unfailingly generous and cooperative in sharing their knowledge, official files, photographs, and perspectives, and Michael Taylor kindly introduced me to important New Mexico segments of the highway and their resources. They have each raised important questions and made valuable suggestions and I am pleased to have been able to work with them.

Before launching this national study, I was fortunate in being able to focus my energies on Route 66 in Oklahoma, surveying sites in that state and nominating some to the National Register of Historic Places. In that process I learned much about both the highway and the National Register, and I am grateful to Melvena Heisch and the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office. Jim Gabbert, architectural historian in the Oklahoma SHPO, in particular guided me in the intricacies and requirements of the National Register and he deserves special thanks for his advice and patience.

Many others have also contributed to the present study, including the historians and others who have prepared studies of Route 66 in the various states, the capable staffs of museums and libraries, scholars and writers who have pursued their own interests in this fascinating highway, activists in preservation organizations, and the owners of highway properties who have shared their stories with me. At the last minute, the staff of the New Mexico SHPO offered valuable suggestions for some critical formulations in this study and thereby improved the work. I also want to acknowledge a long standing debt to the Wyoming SHPO where my continuing service as a member of the state review board has been a source of knowledge and perspective, both from my colleagues on the board and my many friends and associates in the SHPO staff. I am happy to acknowledge the contributions of these diverse professionals.

I have made many new friends in my efforts, and older friends have been not only understanding and tolerant, but also supportive, of what sometimes must appear to be an odd fixation on derelict gas stations, motels, and diners. David Kathka, has spent much time discussing with me the highway and its resources, as well as the contours of twentieth-century American history, much of it while traveling Route 66 just as we have also followed parts of the Oregon Trail and Lincoln Highway. Once again Lee Ann Swanekamp cheerfully and patiently helped me explore a multitude of issues, in the process providing me much needed encouragement and inspiration. And I have been able to count on my family, Constance, Rebecca, and Jessica, for their assistance and even enthusiasm at many points.

For the help of all of these people, I am grateful. The errors and flaws in the study, of course, remain my responsibility alone.

Contents

Chapter I

Purpose and Scope of the Historical Context Study

Few artifacts of the twentieth century are capable of expressing the cultural changes of life in modern America so deeply as the roadway, the businesses, the buildings, and the images associated with Route 66. At the same time, too often our understanding of the history of that great highway has been reduced to caricature and generalizations, and stereotypes have been applied without being tested against the actual history of the route. One of the most recognizable and most popular historic routes in the nation, and one with significant associations in the development of modern America, Route 66 is more often invoked as a symbol rather than as a subject of close historical study. Perhaps most frequently, Highway 66 has been frozen in time, with neither substantive origin nor social consequence—a historical artifact without a history.

While the full history of Route 66 is yet to be written, this study hopes to indicate the general contours and historical issues that need to be addressed in such a study and does so by focusing on two specific objectives. One is to contribute to a fuller understanding of the history and meaning of U.S. Highway 66 by addressing the broad patterns of change and continuity of which it was a part; another is to articulate within the framework of the National Register of Historic Places the way in which the highway and cultural resources associated with it can be identified and evaluated for historic significance. While these objectives offer different perspectives on the highway, there is a vital convergence and interaction between the two that holds the potential of integrating them into a coherent historical narrative.

i. Highway 66 and History

Route 66 holds a complex and rich history that goes well beyond any chronicle of pavement and account of the road itself. As an artery of transportation, as an agent of social transformation, and as a remnant of America's past that stretches across two-thirds of the continent, from Grant Park in Chicago next to Lake Michigan to a point near the piers of the Pacific at Santa Monica, Route 66, and the buildings associated with it, slices across the continent and through the history of the nation, and, like a road-cut or drilling core sample for the geologist, reveals the process of historical change that transformed the lives of people and communities—and the nation—from the time that the highway was first officially designated in 1926 until the highway was replaced, at its last point in Arizona, in 1984. Along its route, including its multiple alignments and realignments over the years, the road connected not only the East and the West, but the past and the present. While all roads, by their nature, link different points to each other to facilitate movement between them, the nature of the connections made by U.S. Highway 66, and the dynamics stimulated by those connections, hold a significance that is critical to an understanding of the shaping of modern America. In this regard it would be possible to compare the highway to other transportation routes, like the Oregon – California Trail, the Lincoln Highway, or even the railroads that crossed the nation in the late nineteenth century, and this study proposes to offer some comparisons at least implicitly in those cases. But more valuable is the consideration of the highway for what it reveals about how those transportation systems operated to unleash powerful forces of change and what the consequences of those changes have been—and still are. Part of the context for understanding Route 66 is placing it in the framework of transportation history itself in the nation. Part of the context, however, is placing it in the history of the American people more broadly.

Over the years Route 66 became a legend in American popular culture not only as a focus of great nostalgia and romance but also as a source of inspiration for television entertainment, for movies, for literature, and for graphic art. As a metaphor and as a cultural icon it has few parallels in twentieth century representations of evolving social organization. Considered within the larger framework of technology, an arena that includes also television, nuclear energy, and space travel, the one obvious dominant image throughout the twentieth century that goes to the core of modern life would be the automobile, a factor to which Route 66 is intimately related and to the significance of which the road contributed enormously.

Route 66 as it crossed the nation—in time and on the ground—shows how one highway could both be a product of cultural and social change and also generate additional changes wherever it touched, and still more changes when it faded from the scene. In this way the national economic, social, and political forces that shaped the history of the road, and the patterns of history into which the highway fits, can be explored. Those patterns are generally associated with specific themes and topics, such as transportation, migration, ethnicity, gender-differentials, depression-era work-relief, World War II, tourism, economic growth, the evolution of automobile travel and trucking, construction technology, and the vast area of popular / commercial culture.

This study endeavors to inquire into these areas and issues which each hold important implications for the understanding of American history.

It also, however, seeks to connect these issues together into a coherent framework that captures the broad pattern of change along Route 66, a framework generally associated with the concept of modernization. Modernization is a model of historical change that is more commonly drawn upon than articulated, more commonly assumed than explored. Many of the features associated with modernization in fact are so obvious that they are taken as given, as if they somehow were inevitable and pre-ordained. Those features include the varied but related innovations familiar to modern society such as the impersonalization of relationships, the erosion of traditional or parochial loyalties and identities, the rise of more cosmopolitan identities, the specialization and synchronization of economic activities, and overall the growth of a national social structure that embodies a transfer of social, political, and economic authority from local to central levels which can coordinate massive activities in a presumably rational manner. Not that modernization explains, or even adequately describes, the pattern of change, for it clearly does not since many individuals, businesses, and communities actively resisted the process of change underway. In fact, much of the story of Route 66 is the story of life at the local level being overtaken, overwhelmed, and overrun by the engines of economic and social change at the nation level and then how people dealt with those consequences.[1]

Even a cursory glance at businesses and communities alongside U.S. 66 reveals

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[1] See a similar discussion of the process of modernization, and the resistance to it, in the context of railroad growth and the proliferation of institutions associated with that growth in a small town in the 1880s in Michael Cassity, "Modernization and Social Crisis: The Knights of Labor and a Midwest Community 1885-1886," *Journal of American History*, 66 (June 1979), 41-61.

this process in the demise of mom-and-pop businesses, the rise of chains, the loss of individuality in business structure and appearance, the increasing emphasis on integrating the local into a national framework instead of enriching the lives of local people with national opportunities. The irony, of course, is that originally Route 66 held forth the promise of liberation from isolation, emancipation from social and economic barriers to fulfillment, and release from the limited choices people along the route sometimes found in their lives. By the end of the period, when Route 66 was being replaced by the new interstate highway system, the restraints were heavier, the choices were perhaps more limited, and the culture of sameness pervaded the landscape. As Christopher Hitchens reflected, after driving Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles in 2002: "You hear a lot about the standardization of America, the sameness and the drabness of the brand names and the roadside clutter, but you have to be exposed to thousands of miles of it to see how obliterating the process really is."[2] The history of Route 66 is in important ways a window onto the past and how the fundamentals of modern social organization emerged.

In this aspect of the study, it is possible to use local developments to illuminate the national and national patterns to illuminate local events. By using the events and institutions related to Highway 66 as microcosms, as particular elements that shed light on the whole, as ways of focusing large questions by looking at particular instances, the connection can be made and the context that gives meaning to what might otherwise be viewed as insignificant or isolated events may be articulated. The alternative is to apply a national framework to a local, a practice commonly exercised, but which does an

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[2] Christopher Hitchens, "The Ballad of Route 66," *Vanity Fair* (November 2002), 182.

injustice to both the local and the national experiences. When Richard Strout, writing as T.R.B. in *The New Republic* in 1956, declared that "The most American thing in America is US Route 66,"[3] he articulated one of the central tenets of this inquiry and raised the fundamental question to be explored.

ii. Route 66 and the National Register of Historic Places

The second objective of this study, which optimally overlaps with the first, is to develop a statement of historical understanding that can be used to help future investigators evaluate the resources left remaining along Highway 66 in America within the terms of the National Register of Historic Places program. The resources that still line the roadside of Route 66 are comprehensible as both monuments to particular aspects of our past and as opportunities for exploring more deeply an important part of the nation's heritage; they are thereby sometimes eligible for listing on the National Register. One part of the evaluation process is to determine the significance of the resource and that significance can be established through one of four criteria made explicit on the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form:

> *A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.*
>
> *B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.*
>
> *C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.*

[3] T.R.B., "Washington Wire," *The New Republic*, 135 (August 6, 1956), 2.

D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Although the other criteria are just as important and could be drawn upon equally well, the primary application of this statement of historic context will utilize Criterion A—historic significance— and Criterion C—architectural, engineering, or design significance—and the main effort has been to identify and illuminate "the broad patterns of our history" associated with Route 66.

This statement of historic context for the future nomination of resources associated with Route 66 to the National Register of Historic Places draws upon previous historic context statements developed by the State Historic Preservation Offices along Highway 66 but also endeavors to go beyond the parameters of some of those contexts so as to broaden both the period of significance to include the years spanning the highway's existence and use until generally it was decommissioned (although the official termination of the period of significance is 1970) and also to expand the conceptual coverage to include broader changes in community, in migration, in transportation networks, in recreation, and in other areas related to the patterns of history associated with Route 66 that sometimes have not been addressed. It follows that the identification and discussion of eligible property types will hopefully include more types, and more actual structures, than some of the state contexts presented, although others were sufficiently expansive that they have informed the current study in many ways.

One of the premises of the current study is that the patterns associated with Highway 66 are often of substantially greater breadth than local or state contexts might otherwise suggest because of the more limited geographic areas covered. At the same time that it is important to be aware of the distinctiveness of state and regional—and local—contexts, the patterns often take on a larger dimension when viewed as part of a national process. The straightening and streamlining of a road, for example, may mean life or death for local business or community and that is of enormous importance in understanding the impact of the highway and its changes. It also, however, may be taken to reveal an even larger shift in priorities and philosophies about the purpose and application of transportation systems in the nation when considered as part of a national pattern; this approach thus does not minimize the local impact of change but even makes it part of a larger process of social transformation. The rise of war-related economic activities with the location of an army base or munitions depot near a town, to take another example, reveals a crucial feature in local economic trends, but the identification of a string of such bases and depots along Highway 66 suggests the role that the highway played in the larger economic picture. And the bypassing of communities and businesses along the highway in its final years, from a local and state perspective, may have created ghost towns and left shells of buildings that led to the closing of schools and decline of tax bases, but on a larger scope it indicated the location of political and economic power in the nation, and the purposes to which that power would be put.

One particular element, often included in state historic contexts, needs to be made explicit. A critical element of understanding the historic significance of U.S. Highway 66 and its associated historic properties is the notion that the highway, and the area that it served, changed over time. This may seem to be obvious, yet a quick review of much of the published literature examining the highway reveals an abundance of studies that reduce Route 66 and its denizens to a caricature, frozen in time with neon lights and tailfins, a nostalgic moment seemingly capable of perpetual regeneration. History meets many needs in society, but those needs must quite legitimately transcend the nostalgic and the evocative. The history of the highway is above all an evolutionary history and the significance of a gas station or road segment in 1929, if fully explored, must necessarily be vastly different from a station or road piece in 1939, 1949 or 1959. It is hoped that this study will assist in identifying those changing elements of significance.

In fact, the notion of historical context deserves comment. The technical mandate for a National Register of Historic Places statement of historic context is to provide "a standardized means of describing and explaining the significance of a wide variety of properties." To take this further, however, one way to view the notion of "historical context" is that of identifying the larger set of circumstances and forces that illuminate specific events by suggesting broader patterns of which those events may be a part or to which they may even be exceptions. Historical context thus is identified by determining what else is happening at the same time and also what happened before and after—there and elsewhere.

There is very, very little that is cut and dried in history. There is very, very little that can just be looked up in some kind of reference. It is the close analysis of each aspect of the past and then the comparison of those findings with what other historians have found in similar inquiries that produces historical debates; this also produces growth in our knowledge. Without that thoughtful and creative historical analysis of the past, we will be locked into the views of others, hoping, with our eyes closed, that they were right and will continue to be right no matter their human limits and no matter what new evidence suggests. While this statement of historic context for Highway 66 suggests ways of understanding individual resources, it is not intended to be a final, simple framework into which a building, road, bridge, sign, or park can be summarily categorized to automatically determine its significance. This context will certainly assist in that effort and thereby prevent redundancy in nominations. But each place has a story, its own unique story, and while context helps us understand that story, the cultural resources of the nation deserve closer historical examination than simply applying a schematic overlay to determine into which pigeonhole a property should be inserted. Rather, with careful examination of enough of those resources the expectation is, as with any other form of historical interpretation and presentation, that the formulation of their meaning and significance will itself be revised over time.

Chapter II

Crossing the Continent: Roads and Trails before Route 66

i. The Visionary Road to National Unity

In 1808 Thomas Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin made a grand proposal for the U.S government to build a road that would extend from Cumberland, Maryland to Wheeling, Virginia. This was not a new proposal and Gallatin had been pressing for it for years. In fact, an earlier version of his plan was approved by a U.S. Senate committee in 1802 that said that such a road would

> . . . . make the crooked ways straight, and the rough ways smooth, ... will, in effect, remove the intervening mountains; and, by facilitating the intercourse of our western brethren with those on the Atlantic, substantially unite them in interest . . . .

The road, highway chronicler Timothy Crumrin quotes the originators as saying, would be the "cement of the union."[1] This was a bold vision for a country that was just crossing the Appalachian mountains and the vision propelling the construction of the Cumberland Road, or, as it became better known, the National Road, was a vision of unity and connectedness, of weaving together remote communities into a single fabric of communication, commerce, and social concord. The key project in a program of what was called "internal improvements," the National Road met delays caused by budget

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[1] Timothy Crumrin, "Road through the Wilderness: The Making of the National Road," http://www.connerprairie.org/historyonline/ntlroad.html.

shortfalls, political opposition from sections (like New England which already had enough roads) left out of the benefits of its traffic, and the slow construction methods of the technology of the day. Although President James Madison endorsed a plan for construction of this and other roads, he vetoed appropriations for it in 1817 on constitutional grounds, and James Monroe likewise vetoed a measure to place toll gates on the Cumberland Road, because of his own opposition to federal funding of internal improvements.[2] Yet, the obstacles to its expansion notwithstanding, the National Road was completed to Wheeling, Virginia (later, West Virginia) and then extended beyond that point into the interior of the continent. By 1839 it was macadamized as far as Columbus, Ohio, but the "pavement" after that was intermittent.[3] The road was more than a strip of paving materials, though, and its accompanying structures proved integral to traffic and sometimes remain as important historic features:

> The bridges came in a wide variety of styles and types and were made of stone, wood, iron, and later, steel. They were the wonder of their day and bridgebuilding did much to advance engineering knowledge in America before the Civil War.[4]

In some respects the turnpikes of the ante-bellum years have been adjudged failures. Their financing wound up being largely private and they seldom made a profitable return to their investors. And because they charged a toll, the main users were the traveling public rather than freight operators who shied away from paying the tolls,

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[2] George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1951), 19.

[3] Crumrin, "Road through the Wilderness."

[4] Crumrin, "Road through the Wilderness."

either by taking alternative free roads or devising surreptitious ways around the tollbooths. But some of the roads, like the National Road, left a clear mark on the physical and cultural landscape of the nation. After the road reached Wheeling and then Columbus, Ohio, it continued west, across Indiana and finally at mid-century it reached Vandalia, Illinois. For a variety of reasons, at that point, as George Rogers Taylor explains,

> Then for more than half a century it suffered neglect until, with the coming of the automobile, it became a part of National Highway No. 40. Its sturdily constructed stone bridges, though built for oxcarts and stagecoaches, safely supported the motor-driven traffic of the gasoline age. And its remaining taverns, which had in the dull days of the latter nineteenth century become commercial hotels, country stores, or private residences, came to life again as taverns, inns, and "tourist homes."[5]

The significance of the National Road—its historical importance—lay much deeper than the physical remains that it bequeathed to future generations, a paved surface connecting points A and B, even if A and B were progressively farther apart. In addition to enhancing commerce at both ends of the road, it brought business to the intermediate points as well. Soon a variety of commercial institutions arose alongside the road that offered a multitude of services to the traveling public; inns and taverns increased in number, providing also commercial opportunities for people perhaps a generation removed from the agricultural pursuits of their neighbors. Moreover the technology involved was significant; macadamized roads had not been conceived at the time of the beginning of construction, but soon the macadam standard was written into the construction requirements. (Because the concept and materials evolved over the

[5] Taylor, *Transportation Revolution*, 22.

nineteenth century, and even into the twentieth century, Macadam can suggest a variety of paving techniques, but it generally refers to the use of three separate layers of rock, progressively finer as the layers rise, and often included a crowning of the pavement to facilitate water run-off; later, the roads would still be "macadamized" when they included a tar—*tarmac*—or asphalt sealant.) Wooden plank roads were also utilized as a less expensive alternative to the macadam pavement. And bridge construction similarly evolved, although the stone pier and wood superstructure dominated before the rise of the railroad required different materials and technologies. And ironically, while connecting point A with point B, it separated socially both of those points from locales closer to them that lacked the convenient transportation system that they now had. Finally, in yet one more of the ironies that would ever be associated with transportation development, the traffic along the National Road stimulated the construction of other roads, both as feeder routes and as alternate arteries, and more broadly stimulated the demands of commerce for improved systems that ultimately would supplant the road itself. In this case, the alternate forms of transportation, not so much in direct competition with the National Road, and even in some ways abetting it and placing additional pressure on it for carrying greater traffic, were the burgeoning canals and railroads.

It should also be noted that for all the talk of binding together a nation, bringing its disparate parts into a single fabric, and drawing communities closer to each with the lifeblood of transportation, the transportation system probably drove them further apart as it created a process that divided those who benefited from the roads from those who did not. Before the Civil War brought this division to a crisis, some elements of the basic pattern of road building in the nation had already been set.

ii. Across the Continent

Perhaps the greatest challenge of nineteenth-century transportation had to do with the question of connecting the beckoning lands of the Southwest and the West Coast with the states and territories of the East. Aside from the questions of foreign relations this raised, and aside from the fact that there were peoples already settled on the west coast and in the vast hinterland in between whose heritages dated back for centuries, the pressures for expansion of the nation's borders and political and economic infrastructures increased with the result that significant new trails, or in reality, roads, began to reach beyond the civilized parts of the nation. In both cases, the roads stretching in advance of territorial boundaries served as devices for the exercise of economic, cultural, and political suzerainty and collided with the territorial claims of Spain, Mexico, and Great Britain, on the one hand, and the occupancy and traditions of Native Americans, few of whom were enthusiastic about the American commercial and cultural emissaries they met, on the other. Several significant points become evident at this early stage of expansion of the road network of the United States, and the leading lesson may be that commerce could have not just a liberating effect on local economies and cultures, but even a transformative one, and even at that be perceived as a highly volatile, warlike action.

Although Americans had ventured into the Spanish province of New Mexico as trappers and traders, they did so against the weight of provincial authorities and sometimes suffered the loss of their freedom or their goods as a consequence, and it was only in 1821 after Mexico proclaimed its independence from Spain that trade opened between Santa Fe and the United States. Immediately afterwards a regular and thriving commerce ensued between Missouri merchants who loaded caravans of wagons with manufactured goods to ply the market of Santa Fe. They hauled their merchandise over what became known as the Santa Fe Trail, which in reality was a substantial road and one that was subject to revision in its routes and alignments. The initial path traversed Kansas and across the corner of what is now Colorado before crossing Raton Pass and moving on to Santa Fe, but subsequent efforts to create a better road routed it more directly, and avoiding the steep terrain of the mountains, across the Cimarron Desert separating the Arkansas River and the Cimarron River in Kansas. After that, the travelers could make a choice in the path to follow, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. And the U.S. government in the late 1820s helped the effort. Although the road itself often amounted to little more than ruts of previous wagons in swales across the prairie, the government helped mark the trail with mounds of earth, located the best fords, and leveled the banks of rivers at the crossings. For a while it provided military protection for the caravans. An enormously successful trade at first, the commerce did remove the isolation that had hung over northern New Mexico, 1700 miles removed from the Mexican capital, and it provided employment locally. When more traders entered the Santa Fe market with more caravans from outside, the additional competition on the trail and in the market sometimes reduced individual profits. This would be a continuing legacy of transportation there.

But the road to Santa Fe, which continued well beyond the peace following the Mexican War when the territory was absorbed into the United States, was much more than just a road between Missouri and Santa Fe. As Susan Calafate Boyle demonstrates in her study of the Hispanos and the Santa Fe trade, the rise in commerce brought by the Santa Fe trail effectively introduced Santa Fe to the world wide market. The Santa Fe merchants, by virtue of this road, were now better connected to the markets of Europe as well as the United States. And local merchants, especially the *ricos*, by the end of the 1830s became integrated into the national market, venturing, as Dr. Boyle chronicles, to New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh for business "became part of a widespread commercial network."[6] Moreover, the American traders quickly tapped into a new market as they proceeded south using long-established roads, like the Camino Real de Tierra Adendro which had already served as a primary artery for two centuries connecting the interior with the northern entrepots. And yearly caravans also started heading west toward the prized California trade following the Old Spanish Trail that went in a roundabout way north into central Utah area before heading southwest across the future states of Nevada and Arizona and then across the Mojave Desert en route to Los Angeles. After the Mexican War, this route was supplanted by other routes to the south that were more direct.

If the Santa Fe Trail created, directly and indirectly, a southern route to California, then the Oregon Trail, more accurately known as the Oregon-California Trail, offered a northern alternative as part of the expanding transportation network of the United States. As with its southern counterpart, this road also followed trails that had

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[6] Susan Calafate Boyle, *Commerciantes, Arrieros, y Peones: The Hispanos and the Santa Fe Trade* (n.p.: Southwest Cultural Resources Center, 1994), 65. A more accessible version of this study is also available as *Los Capitalistas: Hispano Merchants on the Santa Fe Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 57.

been used by Native Americans but which were marked and used more by trappers and traders. Where the Santa Fe Trail had an official starting point that moved progressively westward at the Missouri communities of Franklin, Boonville, Arrow Rock, Independence, and Westport, respectively, and then, by various accounts, even into Kansas, the eastern terminus of the Oregon Trail usually was considered either Independence, Missouri or Council Bluffs, Iowa, depending on the point of personal origin. In either case the road followed the Platte River until the junction of the North and South Platte Rivers and then followed the North Platte into modern Wyoming as far as modern Casper. Topography clearly dictated the path of this road as it followed the rivers, picking up the Sweetwater River after the North Platte and then crossing the continental divide at South Pass. On the west slope of the Rocky Mountains, however, the road began to divide, or even splinter, into a variety of routes that could take the traveler, again with still more choices known as cutoffs, to California, Utah, Washington, or Oregon. As the trail, or road, splayed out like the fingers of a hand, it etched the contours of a new artery of communication that linked the East and West.

Yet, like the Santa Fe Trail, what is so important about the Oregon Trail is much less where it went than what its consequences were. For the Oregon Trail was more than a road to Oregon. It was also a road to California and a road to Utah. And it was more even than that. It was a road that carried families to dreams of farming independence and abundance in the fertile valleys of the Willamette River. It was a road that carried miners and business people to their hopes of striking it rich in California. For Mormons it was a road of flight from persecution on their way to their new Zion in Utah. Except for its earliest years, the Oregon Trail was barely related to the popular image of lonely, isolated settlers seeking day-by-day the path through the wilderness. In the two decades of the

1840s and 1850s more than a quarter of a million emigrants traveled to California and Oregon. The number of people who traveled this road on their way to Utah in the same period brings the total to more than a third of a million emigrants, and some knowledgeable estimates suggest as many as a half-million people, with multiples of that in livestock. Plus, the traffic was two-way with some people traveling from west to east.

This volume of traffic becomes important when one realizes that the thread of burgeoning traffic created a corridor of business establishments. As John D. Unruh points out in his important study of this road, "by 1850 the river-crossing, postal, and repair services available from the trailside entrepreneurs were so commonplace that they were no longer viewed as traveling luxuries; like food, outfitting supplies, draft animals, and information they had come to be regarded as necessities."[7] By the end of that decade, in fact, Unruh says, "rarely did the emigrant travel more than twenty-five or thirty miles without encountering at least one habitation. Usually there were more."[8] The growth of businesses along the road makes clear that, far from being a simple set of ruts, the Oregon Trail actually became a highway with the support institutions that can easily be associated with modern travel. Commercially operated ferries and bridges, trading posts and blacksmith shops, livery sales, and other related businesses began to pepper the path of the trail. There were even trading establishments that could be confused with tourist spots because of their conscious efforts to attract travelers with the appeal of the exotic and the weird. At Independence Rock in Wyoming, one entrepreneur advertised his operation by appealing to the curious, with his grizzly bear there for the viewing and so did others. And these trading posts, blacksmith shops, and other businesses had to be supplied with goods, and the freight traffic necessary for that supply

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[7] John D. Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 267.

[8] Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 298.

increased the volume and size of traffic on the road. Very quickly it becomes obvious that this was not a trail; it was a road, a highway, even a superhighway for its time.[9]

In addition, this steady stream of traffic, moving in vast numbers at about the same time of the year, meant a significant challenge to the economies, cultures and domains of the native inhabitants of the region. The massive intrusion into their territories disrupted traditional food sources. Plus, there were always the countless opportunities for misunderstanding and tension that derived from different cultures and different perspectives on day-to-day life. In some years a group of people the size (and more) of any city that has ever existed in Wyoming passed through land that these tribes had occupied; this tended to bolster the confidence of the whites who invaded this land and to increase the apprehensions of those indigenous peoples who considered it their home. Within that set of circumstances the relations between whites and Indians moved in a very short period from cooperation and mutual assistance to distrust, tension, and conflict. The legacy of the Oregon Trail in the matter of contact between natives and whites is immense and is filled with tragedy and far reaching consequences. Put another way, once this major thoroughfare passed through, life would never afterwards be the same as it had been before.

In all this, the United States government, as historian John D. Unruh made clear, was an active agent, surveying the road, protecting traffic, licensing trade with Indians, and generally promoting and encouraging commerce and the development of "civilization" in the area along the trail. Confirming the road to Oregon as a powerful and purposeful institution of social and economic change, this was also the path that the mail system followed, carrying the postal packets on a stage coach and then that the Pony

[9] Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 299.

Express followed in its eighteen month career (1860-1861), only to be replaced in 1861 by a telegraph system that operated by a thin wire strung on poles alongside the trail. The expansion of the transportation system facilitated a revolution in technology in communications.

The Oregon Trail may be evidence confirming the observation by Lewis Mumford that road development is ironic in that it produces an effect opposite of what is often intended. Instead of alleviating traffic, Mumford suggested, roads do not actually solve transportation problems but create them, that new roads attract more traffic, and create new demands that the new roads themselves cannot satisfy, thus pushing further the cycle of change.[10]

Certainly this was the case of the Oregon Trail and would be true of later transportation arteries as well. As additional roads left the main road to Oregon or California, going both north and south from the main trunk connecting to the gold fields in Montana and Colorado, for example, yet more roads began to be constructed that would replace the Oregon Trail. One of the most successful of these roads was the one that became known as the Overland Trail—in another bit of irony taking the name that had originally defined the Oregon Trail and distinguished it from the route by sea. This road, though, was named after the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Co., the private company that secured the mail contract and then shifted the stage route so that it would leave the Oregon Trail and go to Denver and then traverse the southern part of what is now Wyoming on the way to Salt Lake. The U.S. government also preferred

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[10] See Lewis Mumford, *The Highway and the City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964).

that route. While there was no official designation of highways, the government preference was decisive: the telegraph line was moved south to the Overland route in 1862 and soon afterwards dismantled some of the forts that had been built along the Oregon Trail. The increased traffic on the Oregon Trail had undermined the trail itself and a replacement was created and by 1867 the Oregon Trail was largely abandoned in its central sections.

The cycle was quickly repeated when the railroad survey followed the Overland Trail and the construction of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads, linking into a single transcontinental transportation route in 1869 and replaced the roads that had spawned the forces that led to its construction. And this too was but a beginning. The staggering growth in the number of miles of rails placed on the ground between the Civil War and 1890—a rate of about ten percent a year for more than thirty years—and the volume of freight carried by rail in that period actually conceals some of the larger significance of railroad construction. In those years more railroads extended their steel tendrils across the plains and mountains connecting the West Coast and the states of the East and in the process they connected not only the terminal points but the interior as well. They brought transportation—and commerce—to areas that without a railroad could have had very little or no commercial existence. Old cities became large and new cities boomed; unlike earlier forms of transportation that connected existing points, the railroad took vitality with it and new towns emerged along its path in a way that seemed to defy the conventions of settlement as they had been understood for ages. Where the railroad went, life went. By the same token, the railroad, contrary to the mythmakers of history, often appeared as a death force to the communities where the railroad did not pass, the communities without a siding, the communities who did not pay for the bonds that the railroad asked for, the luckless communities separated from the railroad by another town. The commerce in those communities followed a new logic and gravitated toward the railroad, in one way or another, and the communities near enough to feel the effect of the railroad, but not close enough to benefit from it, withered in a pattern that would become common in the transportation history of the nation.

The railroad also represented not just the technology of the future but the social force of the future in ways that went beyond its impact on local economies. Business was now not only greater in terms of investment and volume of trade, but it was also national in scope and businesses that literally reached across the country provided a key ingredient for a complex, sophisticated system of economic organization and marketing capacity. The isolation, whether beloved or cursed, was fading, even in the interior of the sparsely settled West.

Across the northern plains from Omaha to San Francisco, following the route of the Oregon – California Trail, and then of the Overland Trail, and their variations, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific etched a path and brought new towns to life with names like Cheyenne and Laramie and Rock Springs. The Southern Pacific did the same reaching eastward with towns in the Mojave Desert like Amboy, Barstow, and Goffs, and the Colorado River crossing near Needles. The Atlantic and Pacific Railroad in the 1880s reached across northern Arizona connecting towns like Hackberry and Peach Springs and Williams and Flagstaff and New Mexico communities like Gallup, Laguna, Los Lunas, and Albuquerque. When the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad in the 1870s extended its lines westward from the Missouri River across Kansas to Pueblo, Colorado, the rails generally followed the Santa Fe Trail and moved directly to the town of La Junta, Colorado. When the Santa Fe Railroad purchased the A&P in 1880 it acquired a line that went from St. Louis on a diagonal to the town of Vinita in Indian Territory on one end and across Arizona and New Mexico on the other. In 1883 the expansion of the line in the west reached Needles, California, at which point it connected with the Southern Pacific. By 1885, after purchasing the A&P and negotiating an arrangement with the Southern Pacific, the Santa Fe Railroad could boast a continuous connection between St. Louis and the Pacific Ocean.

Once again, it is important to note, the change was not just a matter of building a faster means of transportation to the West Coast, nor of just connecting the communities at either end and along the line to the opportunities associated with the world of communication and commerce, for this process held far reaching implications as it forced people into a society defined by and governed by the priorities of market capitalism, an adjustment unpalatable to many and even repugnant or hostile to a good number. Increasingly class divisions replaced sectional divisions as the fulcrum of tension within American society, but even so, the West, and especially the Southwest, appeared, with special and distinct glances to the South, as the section of the nation left behind, or at least left beside the road to the future.

iii. The Road Builders

As dramatic as the expansion of the railroads was, one further consequence was concealed in the process: although the railroads tended to replace the wagon roads whose paths they followed, they placed additional pressure on the other roads that would connect distant places to the railroads. Plus, the United States was becoming increasingly an urban nation although it would only be 1920 when a majority of the population lived in towns of more than 2500. That meant that roads were also being used as a form of recreation for the new city dwelling middle class, and by the end of the century the pressure for better roads came not from the farmers but from an often forgotten group of promoters of change, the bicycle riders of the nation. Hardly conspicuous as far as the world of interest group politics is usually concerned, these people became well-organized and articulate advocates of improving the roads of the United States so that they would be able to ride their bicycles pleasantly and safely. The obstacle was both political and economic, not to mention traditional. The prevailing system of road maintenance called upon the inhabitants to devote a certain number of days in labor to scrape the road, fill the holes, and clear the path of obstacles, and any alternative to this system would necessarily involve a tax to pay for materials and labor. To that tax, the agricultural community was almost solidly opposed in state after state. As one commentator on a publication by the League of American Wheelmen directed at the farmers noted,

> The farming community, as a body, is conservative to the verge of bigotry, and may be reckoned on to oppose, tooth and nail, any attempt to improve its condition that might be associated in the bucolic mind with a higher tax rate. This has been the universal experience in the past, and in our opinion will continue to be the experience of the future. With few isolated exceptions, the only advances in the condition of the highways throughout the States have proceeded from the large cities and towns as centers, where the settlement of the suburban country for ten or twenty miles about, by an intelligent and progressive population from the cities, has taken place, and from whom the spirit of improvement has emanated. The American farmer, if left to his own devices, would, a century hence, be found contentedly working out his road tax, to save a few dollars in cash, by shoveling a few feet of dirt on the roadway, as his fathers have done

before him.[11]

While that reviewer's urbane judgment of the rural population may have been severe, it was also common. And while it often mistook an opposition to a larger process of social change in which life was becoming less personal and more standardized and regimented, and authority further removed from individuals for a simplistic opposition to higher taxes, it also accurately identified the chasm in American society separating those who wanted improved roads, who happened to live in the city, and those who resisted, who happened to live in the countryside where the roads would go. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, business interests aligned with commercial agricultural operations (as distinct from the large mass of small and subsistence farmers) and formed private organizations which pressed forward their agenda of road construction and improvement. In virtually each state (and territory) these organizations lobbied from the courthouse to the state house for the better roads in what has become known as the "Good Roads" movement.[12] Of course, the key feature that added speed and power to the movement was doing the same on the roads of the nation as the automobile made the improved road that much more of an imperative.

The achievements of the Good Roads movement were many, and public funds at the state and county level began to pour—or, more frequently, trickle—into road building

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[11] Review of *The Gospel of Good Roads* in *The Manufacturer and Builder*, October 1891, p. 238.

[12] See, for example, William P. Corbett, "Men, Mud and Mules: The Good Roads Movement in Oklahoma, 1900-1910," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 58 (Summer 1980), 133-149 and Paul S. Sutter, "Paved with Good Intentions: Good Roads, the Automobile, and the Rhetoric of Rural Improvement in the *Kansas Farmer*, 1890-1914," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*, 18 (Winter 1995-1996), 284-299.

programs. But there was a structural change too as states began to create special departments to oversee that construction and manage the maintenance of the roads in their jurisdictions. Even though very few of these roads were hard surfaced to accommodate the growing number of automobiles, the attention that roads were receiving increased virtually everywhere in the nation. And one of the byproducts of the Good Roads Movement was an encouragement for more private road promotional organizations, and these organizations, or clubs, often regional, began to multiply in the 1910s as each one promoted a specific route dear to the hearts and plans of its organizers. Characteristically, these groups would solicit community support for their roads and lobby the state and county governments to improve the designated routes. The associations proved remarkably successful, at least in their own organizational aspirations; their abilities to secure support for their favorite routes, however, varied widely. Highway historian Richard Weingroff estimates that by the mid-1920s these organizations had named more than two-hundred fifty such routes, although sometimes these routes overlapped and sometimes shifted their course as rivalries with other groups caused competition.[13] Sometimes these organizations promoted single routes from one population center to another. Sometimes they created veritable webs of roads in a region. Occasionally they aspired to connect one coast to the other. In some instances they were able to give the impression that their road was indeed an official transportation artery, even though they were private and the U.S. did not have such a system of official roads.

The theory of operation actually made sense, even though it was subject to less

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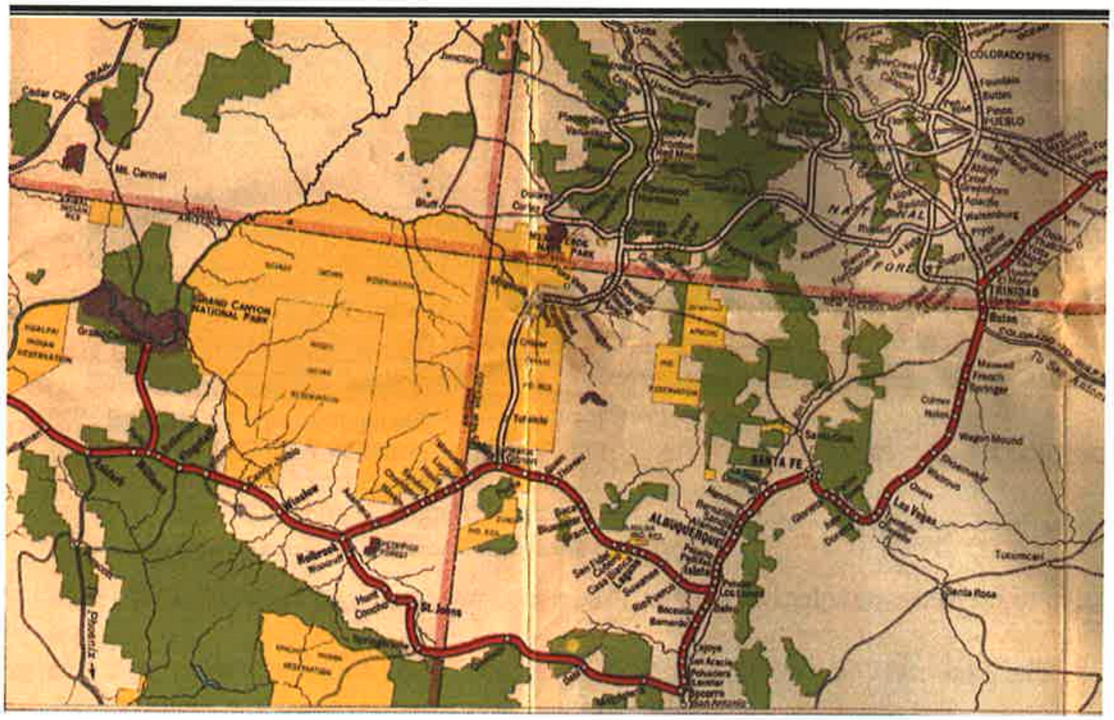
[13] Richard Weingroff, "From Names to Numbers: The Origins of the U.S. Numbered Highway System," *AASHTO Quarterly* (Spring 1997), published on the World Wide Web as http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ infrastructure/numbers.htm.

than honorable application and even if its results were uneven in the extreme. The private association would raise funds and sometimes secure volunteer assistance in improving a stretch of road that local citizens, usually businesses, saw as valuable in their own commercial success. They would improve the road and make it an attractive route to travel, complete with the colorful markers on posts and barns and rock, with their own distinct logos and emblems. They would then advertise the presence of the fine road to outsiders and locals alike in hopes that greater traffic would encourage yet additional resources for improving the road. And so the cycle would go, with each advance in improvement bringing increased traffic, and each surge in traffic bringing additional improvement. In a not-very-subtle way, this was a reliance on the free market to provide for a highway system for the nation.

Several of these roads and supporting associations are especially significant. One of the oldest of these organizations, and roads, was the National Old Trails Road. Based upon the original National Road that stretched west from Washington, D.C. to Illinois, the road went across Missouri generally following the path of the Santa Fe Trail, continuing with the trail across Kansas and the branch that went through southeastern Colorado into New Mexico on its way to Santa Fe. From there it followed the path of the Santa Fe

National Old Trails Map label indicating grand aspirations of the highway. Source: J. M. Lowe, *The National Old Trails Road: The Great Historic Highway of America* (Kansas City, Mo.: National Old Trails Road Association, 1924).

Railroad west—or as at least one description termed it, "the old Padres Trail, followed by the San Franciscan Fathers bent on carrying the gospel to the Pueblo Indians and Navajos of New Mexico and Arizona."[14] The road was not new, and in parts it was ancient. Its modern fathers and mothers included several organizations that emerged as its sponsors. The National Old Trails Road Ocean-to-Ocean Highway Association, created in 1911,

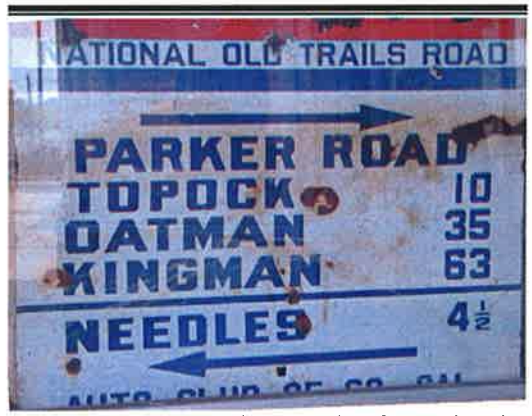


Map showing part of National Old Trails Road, 1924. Source: J. M. Lowe, *The National Old Trails Road: The Great Historic Highway of America* (Kansas City, Mo.: National Old Trails Road Association, 1924).

appears to have been a product of the efforts of the Missouri Old Trails Association and the Santa Fe Old Trails Association which sought to promote the road through the center of that state that had been followed by western bound emigrants and traders in the nineteenth century, and since those trails connected to the southwest, the road would be

[14] A. L. Westgard, "Motor Routes to the California Expositions," *Motor Magazine*, March 1915; published on the World Wide Web at

national, rather than the jurisdiction of a single state. Moreover, the organization in some of its earliest statements endorsed the plan of the Daughters of the American Revolution who wanted to identify the road with red, white, and blue markers on its side, but originally they planned multiple branches that would follow various pioneer trails, including the Oregon Trail, although the organization subsequently focused on the Santa Fe Trail and related trails.[15] The National Old Trails Association determined the final route of the road that would reach into the southwest. The Automobile Club of Southern California began an active campaign to mark the road, even well beyond its home territory to help out members and also to facilitate travelers to the San Francisco Pan-American Exposition of 1915.



Red, white and blue highway sign for National Old Trails Road posted by Auto Club of Southern California. Source: Needles Museum, Needles, California.

The National Old Trails Road, from St. Louis to Los Angeles, was often a meager path, but it had institutional support and increasing visibility in the national press. Drawing upon its own efforts and successful in mobilizing public funding in the various states through which it passed, by 1914 around two million dollars had been spent on its improvement. In 1915, A. L. Westgard, the vice president of the National Highways Association, pronounced that the Old Trails Road, "takes first place" among the possible routes across the nation available for motorists to go to the San Francisco Panama Pacific

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/westgard.htm.

International Exposition. The connection to the past was visible, and Westgard pointed out that "many old parallel wagons ruts [are] still to be plainly seen, . . . Along the Santa Fe trail may be seen at frequent intervals stone monuments erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution." But the road on many occasions left much to be desired. There were the spectacular moments, as Westgard cautioned prospective travelers, such as the one on the steep descent from Santa Fe to Albuquerque known as La Bajada, which had formed part of the Camino Real de Tierra Adendro; on La Bajada, the traveler would stop suddenly and spend "a half-hour in admiring contemplation from the rim of La Bajada Hill." There, the motorist would encounter "three or four turns [that] are so sharp that with a long wheelbase he will be compelled to back up to make it. Though the road is good, one had better go slow and use extreme caution, with the hand on the brake, because a couple of the sharpest turns, where he may probably have to back up, simply lead into nothing more substantial than atmosphere, and mighty thin atmosphere at that, should the car refuse to stop at the exact

La Bajada. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

[15] Richard F. Weingroff, "The National Old Trails Road," published on the Federal Highway Administration Infrastructure website: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/trailstoc.htm.

spot on an inch ruler where it is necessary to manipulate for the turn."[16] More generally, Westgard commented, "there is no paved road on the route west of Kansas City before reaching within a day's ride of the Pacific Coast, except short stretches near the larger towns, the improvements being confined to grading the natural soil and building bridges and culverts." And the bridges? When crossing the Colorado River at Topock, Arizona, "one pays the railroad three dollars and a half toll to cross the planked ties of its bridge." Traveling the National Old Trails Road, the best in the land, would be at the least an adventure. There was one saving grace to the road for the less adventure-inclined. The Harvey system of hotels along the railroad provided reliable accommodations in New Mexico at Las Vegas, Albuquerque, and Gallup, and in Arizona at Holbrook, Winslow, Grand Canyon, Williams, Ash Fork, Seligman, and Kingman, and at Needles and Barstow, California.

Another road association, one with great ambitions, but on a regional scale, was the Ozark Trails Association which stretched its network from southern Missouri and northern Arkansas through Oklahoma and Texas into New Mexico. And this organization reflects the local enthusiasm for road building, or at least the enthusiasm in some parts for the vision it promised. Founded by W. H. "Coin" Harvey, in years past a novelist of some fame and an economist of somewhat less repute and now a promoter of good roads, the Ozark Trails Association's roads were designed in some form to make it possible for travelers in the region to have easier access to Harvey's resort in Monte Ne, Arkansas; the people in the communities to be served by that road, however, had their own

[16] A. L. Westgard, "Motor Routes to the California Expositions," *Motor Magazine* (March 1915). This article is reproduced on the world wide web at: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/westgard.htm.

aspirations and Harvey pitched the road to them. At one meeting in Chandler, Oklahoma in 1915, for example, the local enthusiasts hoped to connect their county to Oklahoma City to the southwest and Tulsa and Sapulpa to the northeast. The local promoters held forth a vision of the future that included good roads at the center, and Coin Harvey called them "the primary principles of civilization, the symbol of abundance, the spirit of progress." The local newspaper interpreted this vision so:

> The plan of the Ozark Association is to promote a system of good roads connecting the four states of Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, and Missouri. Imagine, if you can, what it will mean to be connected with such towns as Oklahoma City, Sapulpa, Tulsa, Springfield, Wichita, Kansas City, Emporia, St. Louis, and the summer resorts of Missouri and Arkansas by even a good dirt road. Much of this road in Missouri and Arkansas is the finest road possible to build, and if we can have the road through our towns along the Frisco from Sapulpa to Oklahoma City designated as the trail, it will be but the beginning of a permanent road to last perhaps as long as the Appian Way. . . . Farms all along the route will rapidly increase in value, tributary roads will be built to the main line, and everybody will be happy to walk or drive along such a road.[17]

Cities and towns competed to have the road go through their own communities, but even then they discovered that "Coin" Harvey was sanctioning multiple routes so that the system was more of a web or network than it was a single line of traffic; in this way he was able to disappoint not only those who did not get the road but also those who did, but gradually a road system began to emerge with citizens literally "building culverts, some driving teams, some plowing, some blowing stumps, and removing rock, some grading and some shoveling," and pressing their counties to provide bridges both in hopes of securing

[17] "The Ozark Trail Meeting," Stroud *Democrat*, April 30, 1915.

Ozark Trails designation and to improve the road afterwards.[18] The association then provided signs, in this case often even obelisks such as the one in Stroud, Oklahoma that was described thus:

> The new trail now being built from Drumright, south to Stroud, on west to the R. R. Green corner, thence south to Prague will be of great benefit to the traveling public. The pyramid [marking the road] is twenty-one feet high and the foundation is five feet below the surface and is set on solid rock. It will be painted three coats of white, and equipped with five electric lights. Then the painter for the Ozark Trails Association will come through and paint the whole structure of white enamel with green trimmings and place the proper inscription on it. . . . The lights will be kept burning all night.[19]

One of three Ozark Trails association markers in Miami, Oklahoma. Source: Ozark Trails Association, *The Ozark Trails Route Book 1919* (Monte Ne, Arkansas: The Association, 1919),18.

Nan Marie Lawler, who has studied the Ozark Trails and their markers, has noted the location of these obelisks, called pyramids by the organization that erected them, and surviving trail guides sometimes picture them.

Those guides also identify the routes that travelers should take and what to expect on their way. Again, in Oklahoma, one such description would indicate the pattern: While some of the landmarks have changed, the road segments following the

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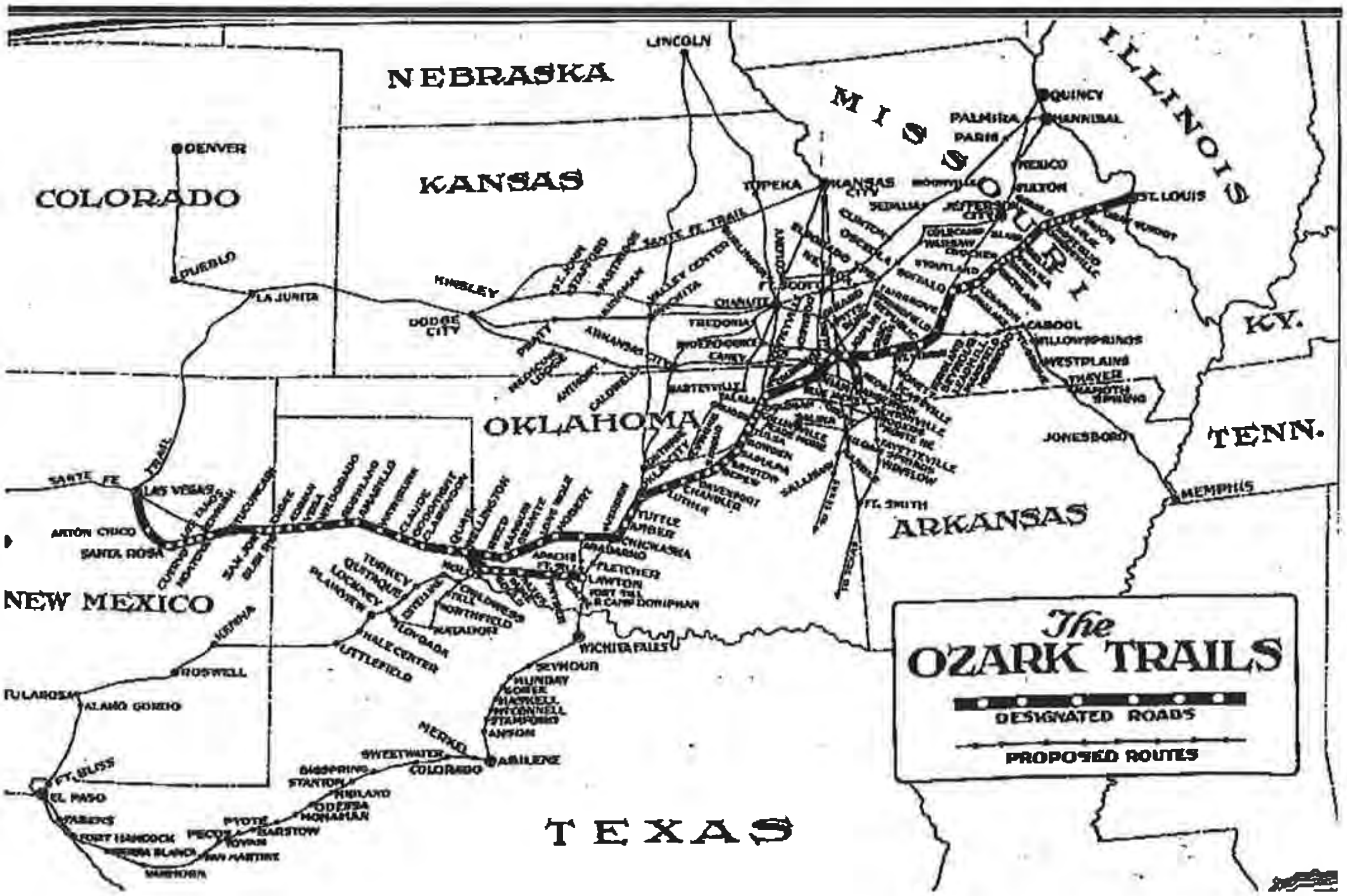
[18] "Citizens Worked Roads Tuesday," Stroud [Oklahoma] *Democrat*, May 14, 1915.

[19] Stroud *Messenger*, May 1, 1920, typescript located in Notebook in Stroud City Library. Additional information about the standard appearance of the obelisk can be found in Nan Marie Lawler, "The Ozark Trails Association," M.A. Thesis, University of Arkansas, 1991, 47: "The OTA used a white background with a green 'OT' in the middle and a green stripe at top and bottom." See also specification for such an obelisk printed in the Sulphur [Oklahoma] *Democrat*, September 29, 1921. The top light was red and the other four lights were positioned to light the markings on each side; the lights were a new feature on the markers in 1919 or 1920. Lawler, "The Ozark Trails Association," 53-54.

section lines can still be traced. It would use a base mileage figure with which travelers would calculate not just how far they went, but where to turn the corner, usually at an intersection with a section line road.

60.0 Four corners, red gin on left, turn left across R.R.
60.4 Four corners, turn right with phone line.
61.3 Four corners, turn left away from R.R.
61.8 Four corners, turn left.
63.8 Three corners, turn left [eastern terminus of this road section]
65.2 Cross bridge and R.R. [western terminus of this road section]
65.8 Cross roads, straight ahead, school on right[20]



Map of Ozark Trails. Source: Ozark Trails Association, *The Ozark Trails: A 1200 Mile Link in a Transcontinental Road from Ocean to Ocean* (Amarillo: Russell & Cockrell, 1918).

[20] Ozark Trails Association, *The Ozark Trails: A 1200 Mile Link in a Transcontinental Road from Ocean to Ocean* (Amarillo: Russell & Cockrell, 1918), 46.

By the late 1910s the Ozark Trails network provided the dominant pattern of roads in southwestern Missouri and northeastern Oklahoma, although it continued beyond Oklahoma City in the western part of the state too, and in the Texas panhandle and eastern New Mexico it established an important network of roads that would become the basis of the transportation system for decades to come.

Probably the best known of all the road organizations was the Lincoln Highway Association. Not the first road organization to be formed, it was one of the most ambitious. In this case, there was an organization and there was even money behind it before the route was decided upon. The Lincoln Highway Association was not born in the small towns of America seeking a road to connect their businesses to the Atlantic and Pacific. The Lincoln Highway was born physically in Indianapolis and spiritually in Detroit, cities neither of which the famed road ever came close to. The conceptual and organizing talent behind this proposal for a cross country highway that would be named after Abraham Lincoln was Carl Fisher of Indianapolis and creator of the Indianapolis 500. Fisher's company manufactured carbide headlamps for automobiles (the Prest-O-Lite Company) and Fisher turned to the automobile manufacturers of Detroit and their suppliers and parts-makers, hoping that they would see the benefits to their own industry in his plan. Within a half-hour of making his first pitch for the road, his first contribution came, in 1912, from Frank A. Seiberling of Goodyear who pledged $300,000.[21] Within a month he had over a million dollars. The first officers of the association included Henry Joy (Packard Motor Car Company), Roy Chapin (Hudson Motor Car Company), Emory

[21] Drake Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street across America* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, revised edition, 1999), 6.

Clark (First National Bank of Detroit), and their friends and lawyers.[22] This was clearly a different league from the world of the local road promoter. The obvious person missing was Henry Ford, who declined to contribute to the effort because he believed the association should not be building a road with private money, but should be educating the public about why public funds should be used for the roads—a tactic the association soon adopted.

At this time, the association had not even selected a route for its proposed highway. Even so, and perhaps *because* of that, the Lincoln Highway Association soon found support not just in the communities it would touch, but more broadly across the country. As historian Drake Hokanson notes, by the end of 1913 the organization had members in forty-five states and even in other countries: "These donations," Hokanson says, "actually amounted to little real capital, but the association milked them for all possible publicity value."[23] When the organization finally selected a route, from New York to San Francisco, crossing through New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California, it encountered financial problems in building the road, and it thereupon switched strategies, drawing upon the back-handed suggestion of Henry Ford. As Hokanson describes:

> . . . Joy proposed to publicly abandon the goal of building a gravel road at association expense and completing in time for the fair, and instead to concentrate on assisting the country in building its own road. The Lincoln Highway Association would continue to seek donations for construction but would leave the burden of major funding to the states, counties, and

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[22] Hokanson, *Lincoln Highway*, 11.

[23] Hokanson, *Lincoln Highway*, 15. Hokanson also notes that the five-dollar member certificates, "hardly paid the costs of distributing them." Hokanson, *Lincoln Highway*, 17.

communities along the way. It further proposed that this be a model road, a road as permanent and enduring as any could be—from coast to coast, it would be built of poured concrete. It would take much longer than the original Fisher plan of using gravel, but it would be a truly lasting monument to Lincoln.[24]

Although the idea of using concrete for roads was relatively new, and not altogether proven, and although it was more expensive than gravel, the association proposed building samples of concrete roadway in each state, intentionally far out in the country and away from the cities—"seedling miles"—as an encouragement for states and communities to fill in between them. Plus, just as the automobile and related industries saw the benefit of sponsoring the Lincoln Highway, the Lehigh Portland Cement Company also joined the effort. Two decades later the association made clear the critical nugget of its vision of the future and what much of its contribution was based upon:

> The automobile is worthless without the improved road and the road is of limited value without the automobile. Together, they have lengthened the span of average life appreciably. They have reduced the amount of time we must spend in travel. They have emancipated man from provincialism. They have given him quick and easy means of direct contact with distant communities. They have opened up to him, for business or enjoyment, thousands of square miles of country, educated him to the healthfulness of outdoor travel and recreation, enabled him to live amid more healthful surroundings at no sacrifice of convenience.
>
> They have knit the many detached groups of the American people into a compact and homogenous nation. They have unified interests, brought rural communities into contact with governmental and educational centers, helped the farmer get more for his products and given the manufacturer a

[24] Hokanson, Lincoln Highway, 18.

> wider market. They have both reduced and increased congestion in the cities.[25]

Ultimately the membership of the Lincoln Highway Association included Will Durant, president of General Motors, Edsel Ford of Ford Motors, Frank Seiberling of Goodyear Tire and Rubber as well as others like the president of the U.S. Tire Company, the owner of the Wyllis-Overland company, B.F. Goodrich, the Portland Cement Company, and others. These people and companies had a common interest: the promotion of automobile sales. As the association admitted, the highway and the motor vehicle "really are a unit," dependent upon each other for success.

With celebrated, highly visible trips across the continent, members and publicists would ceremoniously dip their wheels in the Atlantic Ocean before heading west and then wet them with the waters of the Pacific upon the conclusion of the journey. Along the way they would host meetings to proclaim the benefits of increased commerce to the communities along the path of the road and demonstrate the practicality of their vision. They also, however, lobbied Congress for federal support for extending and upgrading the roads that would make up the Lincoln Highway. That effort reached partial success when Congress passed the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, and with this measure the organization would occasionally provide money to states which could then use their existing resources, like engineers, instead of cash, to secure federal support—an ingenious way to leverage each dollar invested by the companies.

Traffic increased dramatically on the Lincoln Highway. Those travelers, however, did not always find what they anticipated. In Wyoming, one of the more

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[25] Lincoln Highway Association, *The Lincoln Highway: The Story of a Crusade that Made Transportation History* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1935), vii.

challenging stretches, the road went generally along the path of the old Overland Trail and Union Pacific across the southern part of the state. Much was unpaved. Accommodations were limited. The study by Drake Hokanson reflects that after Cheyenne, "for the first time the early Lincoln Highway travelers would be away from civilization." It was, at any rate, not easy going. Sometimes travelers would mistake the trails and wind up far from where they planned. Sometimes they would cut cross-country, going overland "following the terrain through arroyos and irrigation ditches, opening and closing gates and following a trail as best they could." Along the road, just as travelers sixty and eighty years before them had done, they crossed the continental divide at places that did not seem like the backbone of the continent and when they crossed streams and rivers they often had to cut away the banks and drive on. Unlike their earlier counterparts, sometimes they could cross, perilously, an existing railroad bridge.

Such was the status of highways in the nation at the time of the much anticipated and heralded San Francisco exposition that would bring thousands of motorists flocking across the country that the country's foremost advocate of taking that trip, A. L. Westgard of the National Highways Association wrote in *Motor Magazine* that the prospective motorists should "remove from his heart all fear of danger, insurmountable obstacles or serious discomforts." But Westgard quickly acknowledged that the roads were not like "park boulevards" and that there remains "a chance to rough it to some extent, but it is my belief that a month's [!] living out of doors, the ever changing scenery, besides acquiring a knowledge of our vast country, obtainable no other way, will add sufficient zest to the trip to forget and forgive any minor discomforts encountered."[26]

Two points are clear in the consideration of the role of the privately sponsored and named highways of the 1910s. One is that the identification and naming of a route to some degree reflected the general quality of the road, both in terms of condition and in regard to routing. The second point, though, is that such designation actually generated more pressure and resource allocation for improvement of the route than it already possessed. More than an indication of the progress that had been made in developing the nation's highways, these efforts are best viewed as statements—by different parts of society—of how much attention the roads of the nation needed.

iv. The State and Federal Governments as Road Builder

During the decade following the halcyon year of 1915, which was probably more anticlimactic than it was demonstrative of a dramatic revolution in transportation, the improvements in the nation's highway system followed two paths, one involving material improvement to those roads and the other moving in a political direction. Generally the politics preceded the improvement.

While the local organizations, like the Ozark Trails chapters, tended to focus their efforts on county and state roads in their areas, and did so with sometimes impressive results, the organizations showed their lobbying prowess effectively at the national level. In both efforts another organization added professional, and official, weight to their efforts. The creation of the American Association of State Highway Officials in December 1914 brought the new state highway departments into the discussion. The

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[26] Westgard, "Motor Routes to the California Expositions."

AASHO, the Lincoln Highway, the National Old Trails Highway Association, and other groups had different goals, constituencies, and priorities, but they shared at least one common interest: the desirability of federally financed highway construction. There was some sentiment in Congress for such assistance and some gestures in that direction had been made, as, for example, with the establishment of Rural Free Delivery in the Post Office at the turn of the century which required passable roads and vested the federal government with a specific interest in seeing that the roads were improved. With the growth of the Good Roads movement the discussion increased and the pressure of organizations like the road associations and the AASHO facilitated passage of a measure in 1916 that became law.

It is important to note that some quarters were opposed to federal aid to highway development. In Albany, New York, for example, the *Knickerbocker Press* labeled the proposal pork barrel politics that would punish the states that had taken it upon themselves to build roads and reward those who did not. Moreover, the paper charged, "we may expect within a few years a Federal highway bill which will carry hundreds of millions out of the efficient and independent communities into the backward regions."[27] The New York *Evening Post* argued that the states would have to learn how to build good roads and pointed to the fact that "fifteen states in 1914 did not spend a cent on roads."[28] The advocates for the measure, however, painted a rosy picture of the future for the areas some had dismissed as backward. The Washington D.C. *Herald*, for example, predicted that the government would now "become a powerful agent in lifting the countryside,

[27] Albany *Knickerbocker Press* quoted in *Literary Digest*, July 29, 1916, 236.

[28] New York *Evening Post*, quoted in quoted in *Literary Digest*, July 29, 1916, 236.

from Cape Henry to the Golden Gate, out of the mud and dust, giving the farmers access to markets, the children better roads to school, and the farmers' wives a measure of social life with neighbors from whom bad roads now isolate them in a life of drab monotony."[29] The elimination of isolation on the farm and in the small town became a familiar leitmotiv in the campaign for federally financed highways.

The Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 was a compromise, and also an indication that not everyone favored federal assistance to road construction. Populous states with substantial highways (and short distances) remained skeptical of such a program. The South, which had almost always been left out of transportation development programs, also was critical. And, as Richard Weingroff points out, the other states, those who would benefit from such assistance, thought the aid too paltry to them and too generous to those states which did not need it.[30] The compromise measure, signed into law in July 1916, did provide for the first time a systematic program of assistance to the states for the construction of roads, required that states organize a highway agency to receive funding, required them to submit plans to the Bureau of Public Roads in the Department of Agriculture for approval, and forbade the states from charging tolls or fees for the use of the federally funded roads.[31] The federal government would pay up to fifty percent of construction costs, up to a limit of ten thousand dollars per mile. Modest though it was,

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[29] Washington *Herald*, quoted in quoted in *Literary Digest*, July 29, 1916, 236.

[30] Weingroff, "Federal Aid Road Act of 1916: Building the Foundation," http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ Infrastructure/rw96a.htm.

[31] The provision requiring states to create a highway department likely revolutionized road building in the country since, according to one magazine, "As recently as 1916 a score of important States did not have State highway departments." Newton Fuessle, "Pulling Main Street out of the Mud," *The Outlook*, 131 (August 16, 1922), 641.

clearly a corner had been turned.

The initial appropriation under the 1916 law was but five million dollars (out of a projected seventy-five million over a five year period), but more ominous was the timing since the United States was on the verge of entering World War I. While road construction thereby failed to take off, there were notable exceptions, as with the construction of the important bridge crossing the Colorado River at Topock, Arizona. This splendid arch bridge with a suspended deck was actually built by Office of Indian Affairs, with help from both Arizona and California, and enabled traffic on the National Old Trails Road to cross at that point near Needles, California. On the other hand, traffic on the various roads increased because of the wartime mobilization and the amount of freight haulage especially increased, a combination which placed greater pressure on government at all levels to provide better roads. This was an important development for two reasons. One was that the war demonstrated that the railroads were insufficient

This postcard produced by the Albertype Company shows the "Topock Bridge on National Old Trails Highway between Kingman, Ariz. And Needles, Cal." It was mailed in July 1927 shortly after becoming part of new U.S. Highway 66, and the message noted that the sender was, because of the heat, "travelling mostly at night." Built in 1916, the bridge over the Colorado River at Topock, Arizona, actually preceded the Federal Aid Program enacted that year. "An extraordinarily graceful span, the Topock Bridge was at the time of its completion in 1916, the lightest and longest three-hinged steel arch in America." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination, "Vehicular Bridges in Arizona," Section E, p. 10.

by themselves to carry the nation's freight, and the other was that freight required better roads than motorists did. The roads had to be able to withstand substantially greater weight loads, plus, where A. L. Westgard had in 1915 cautioned travelers on the National Old Trails Road to travel only in "June, July, August, September, and October," limiting travel to one third of the year would not suffice for commercial traffic. The potential of the transportation system, and the limits of the system, were both coming into focus at the same moment.

This circumstance led to an important inquiry into the actual state of the roads, and of one road in particular. In 1919 Lieutenant Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower led two truck companies, a medical unit, a repair unit, and an engineer unit on an expedition over the Lincoln Highway. Sometimes heralded as a victory of the significance of the Lincoln Highway, with some merit, as the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company band and a host of Lincoln Highway and other officials accompanied the group, the report that Eisenhower submitted after the several-month long journey had implications that reached well beyond that one road. If the Lincoln Highway were the most improved route, which it probably was, Eisenhower's conclusion that "Extended trips by trucks through the middle western part of the United States are impracticable until roads are improved, and then only a light truck should be used on long hauls," was even more damning of the rest at least once the vehicles got outside the sections of the East where roads were developed and the parts of California that had paved roads.[32] It needs to be remembered, however, that Eisenhower and the Army applied a standard to the roads that exceeded the purpose

[32] LTC Dwight Eisenhower to Chief of Motor Transport Corps, "Report on Trans-Continental Trip" November 3, 1919, published online at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/convoy.htm.

for which they were built; they were not intended to haul heavy trucks, so this was a ratcheting up not only of the politics of road construction but of the standards, costs, and implications of the system too. With this report, the pressure for additional construction and improvement of the nation's highways system (informal and unofficial though it was) not only gained strength but took a different twist that tied the roads less to tourism than to truck traffic, even though the tourists would be quicker to take advantage of such improvements.

The 1921 Federal Aid Act revised the 1916 system and changed the formula so that the basic requirement now was that only seven per cent of a state's roads would qualify for federal assistance (thus hopefully assuring state financing of other roads) and requiring that three sevenths of these Federal Aid Roads (as they were known) be "interstate in character." This was an important new dimension and one that went to the heart of the efforts of the larger road associations like the Lincoln Highway Association and the National Old Trails Road Association. To these groups it was critical that resources used for roads be directed especially to those routes that connected with roads in other states, so that the funds would go toward a network of roads rather than just to building more roads in a disconnected array, however sensible that might appear from a farm-to-market or urban/suburban transit scheme, or even given political and economic considerations within a state. The priority should go to those roads that together formed a grid, a system of roads for the nation. The organization of that network, however, remained outside the halls of government and in the hands of the states and the private associations that were promoting their own roads. Although the Bureau of Public Roads designated between 1921 and 1923 the roads included in the federal aid system, this still was not a coherent pattern of highways purposely planned—for better or worse. The act, moreover, stimulated enormous growth in highway construction and highway historian Richard Weingroff calls the 1920s a golden age for road construction, noting that in one year, 1922, three times as much roadway had been improved than had been achieved in the years since the 1916 law was passed.[33]

Legislation in 1921 underscored and deepened the pattern that would shape the future as the federal money went beyond fifty percent and the requirement of interstate coordination was made more compelling by the necessity of designating up to seven per cent of its state non-urban road mileage as primary roads, thus requiring a prioritization of roads to receive aid.[34]

By the 1920s, there was a new impetus to highway expansion in the United States. One obscure change, in fact, that revealed the broader process at work, was the expanding role of the petroleum industry in the nation, and that industry became an effective partner of the automobile manufacturer and the road builders in urging the construction of roads. Historians of the gasoline station in America John Jakle and Keith Sculle observed in their history of gasoline stations that "gasoline consumption soared from 25% of the petroleum market in 1909 to 85 percent only ten years later," and this statistic reflected social organization as much as it did commerce.[35] The new market for petroleum products was less that of the family lighting a lamp at dusk than it was the

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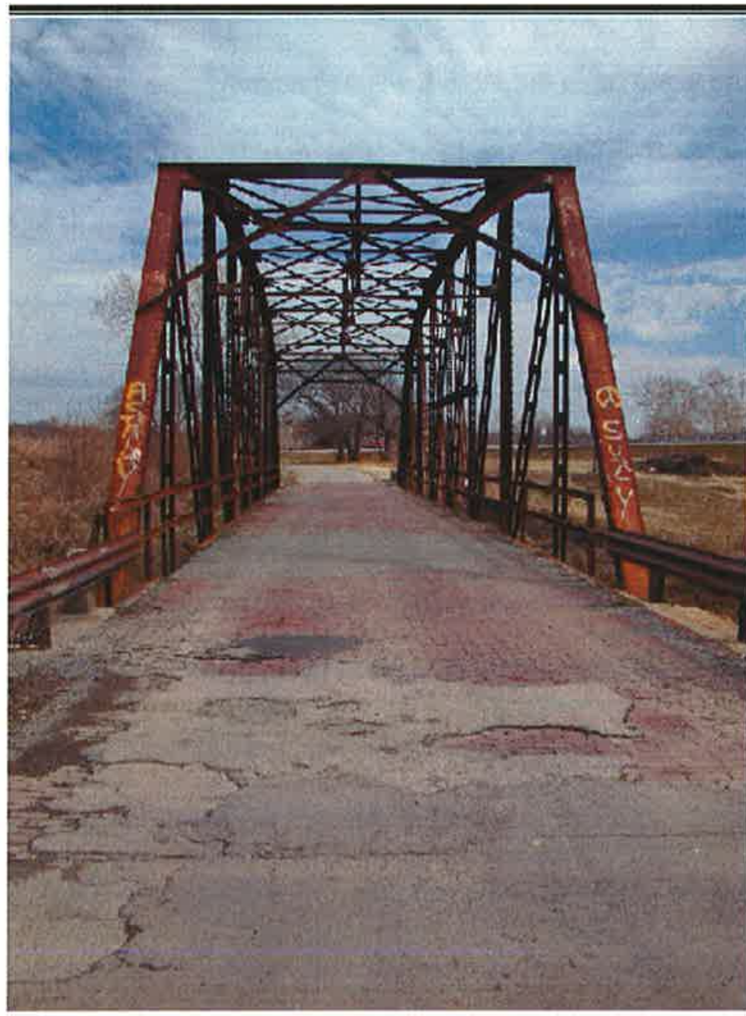
[33] Richard F. Weingroff, "From 1916 to 1939: The Federal-State Partnership at Work," published on the World Wide Web at http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/summer96/p96su7 .htm.

[34] John B. Rae, *The American Automobile: A Brief History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 89.

traveler in the automobile. One implication of that statistic, moreover, was that the isolation of the family in the countryside who used coal oil for illumination would soon erode as the small villages came into closer relationship to what was known in the interior as the "electric light towns."

The new construction moved in several directions at once. One aspect of the Federal Aid system was that the Bureau of Public Roads was working with the state highway departments to determine which roads to be built. That meant that, ironically, the private organizations had been dealt a blow with the success of the new funding. The associations were no longer in a position to chart the routes to be improved, not to mention to receive and disburse the funds for such road building. One other signal development was that the increase in



Rock Creek Bridge near Sapulpa, Oklahoma, with its brick deck, was one of the multitude of Federal Aid Projects undertaken prior to the designation of U.S. 66. Photo: Michael Cassity

[35] Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 50.

public roads, far from meeting the demand placed on them by increased motor travel, actually stimulated further demand. Plus, even as early as 1922 it was clear that the Bureau of Public Roads was working on a master plan of what the new highway system would look like, some kind of a grid of roads, connected in a network, that would replace the individually promoted roads. These factors were both clear to most people, although in the last instance, there remained the tendency of the road associations to believe that a new system would integrate their own outstanding, exceptional, road into it and that it would be the other lesser highways that would be replaced.

Two other factors, however, were hotly denied by the proponents of road building. One was that the new roads for automobiles and trucks presented a challenge to the railroads. This, in fact, was a claim that opponents had used for a good while to resist public funding of a road system. Thomas MacDonald, the U.S. Commissioner of Public Roads who was moving with vigor and vision in this road construction initiative, tried to put that charge to rest and told one magazine that the roads would augment the railroads, not compete with them. "The railways as freight movers," the magazine dutifully reported, "are essentially long-haul carriers of such commodities as grain, live stock, and coal, while motor trucks cannot hope to figure in the long-haul movement of these products, but are primarily useful in the local gathering and distribution of dairy products, merchandise, and the relief of rail congestion at the terminals." Similarly with the heavy impact of the trucks on the roads themselves, MacDonald countered that "if trucks are properly built, loaded, and operated they do not menace the roads" and that the roads would be not be damaged by truck traffic so long as the roads themselves are properly maintained.[36]

The expansion of the nation's highway system through the mid-1920s was still dominated by the private associations even though more roads were being added each year and construction was overwhelmingly publicly financed. One result of this expansion was that the possibility of transcontinental motor travel was coming nearer to reality for the average automobile owner (who was still far more affluent than the average citizen). Arthur Cobb, Jr., the manager of the Blue Book Touring Club encouraged more people to undertake such a journey, noting only the limitation that "you have sufficient leisure at your disposal."[37] With an average of 150 to 200 miles a day, leisure time was indeed a requirement. There was another limitation, too, that Cobb reported in passing:

> Unfortunately a great deal of confusion and in some cases deliberate misrepresentation exists. In many cases even nationally known highways coincide for a distance, tending to confuse the tourist who attempts to follow the markers; and in other cases, owing to sectional disputes or road construction, the exact routing is uncertain, the officials of the highways themselves not being able to give a straight answer to questions about the routing. The highway officials are in many cases not answerable, as these conditions sometimes arise from causes beyond their control.[38]

In other words, the condition of the road surface aside, from the perspective of the long-distance traveler, the road system was a mess in its organization. This seems to have been the standard assessment. In 1925, John F. Mixer, the secretary of the Automobile Touring Club of America, reported in *Motor Life* that some of the roads, especially in the Middle West,

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[36] Fuessle, "Pulling Main Street out of the Mud," 643.

[37] "Four Great Highways from Sea to Sea," *The Literary Digest*, May 26, 1923, 61.

[38] "Four Great Highways from Sea to Sea," *The Literary Digest*, May 26, 1923, 61-2.

are not well enough marked to be easily followed without some guide other than the markers. Some of the different States that have adopted a system of marking their own highways are prohibiting the marking of organized highways through the State. The State authorities find that some of these highways associations do not use the best and easiest routes across the State and misdirect those who follow the highway markers without first ascertaining which is the best road to use.

We have numerous instances of motorists calling at our office for information, who state they started on their long journey without first making extended inquires they merely purchased a map of the United States with the main routes shown, picked out a trip that looked the shortest, and followed a marked highway. They encountered so many detours and so much trouble that they decided to secure some reliable information before proceeding farther on their cross-country trip.[39]

The private associations were in trouble from several directions. The federal government was not only involved in the planning of the roads, but also in the financing of the roads, a situation which increasingly left out the road associations. The results of the private organizations' efforts, further, became more and more evident as an uncoordinated tangle of roadways in the nation. Plus, the associations themselves were falling into bad repute. Engineers led the charge on this front. Consider the remarks of the *Engineering News-Record*, clearly an advocate of road construction, in 1922:

Legitimate highway-improvement financing is making such heavy demands upon the public's pocketbook that a diversion of private funds into other channels than construction and maintenance of routes economically justified constitutes a menace to the good-roads movement. The public has made such a ready response to calls for money that the good-roads slogan has been seized upon by scores of road-boosting organizations as a means of supplying "easy money" to the promoters who head these bodies. At the present time there are somewhat more than 200 of these organizations which select highway routes for their boosting operations, give them a fine-sounding name, like the "Yankee-Doodle Highway," and then proceed to go out for money. Some of the funds may be used for legitimate purposes of highway promotion, but the chances are that a large portion does no other good than to fatten the pockets of the

[39] Mixer quoted in *The Literary Digest*, April 25, 1925, 65-66.

professional road-boosters. The danger in the situation is that the public, once victimized by one of these booster organizations, will withhold funds from legitimate highway-development projects.[40]

Moreover, while there were four main roads that crossed the continent—the Lincoln Highway (New York to San Francisco), the Yellowstone Trail (Boston to Seattle,

"The Spreading Network of Transcontinental Highways." Source: *Literary Digest*, May 26, 1923, page 60.

or sometimes described as Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon), the National Old Trails Road (Washington to Los Angeles), and the Old Spanish Trail (Jacksonville, Florida to San Diego)—there still was not a good way to go. Two of them even could not be traveled reliably during most of the year. The prevailing advice was to travel the Lincoln Highway from June 1 to the middle of October, but even so, "its reputation is suffering

[40] "Pro- and Anti-Road Campaigns," *The Literary Digest*, April 8, 1922, 27-28.

severely from conditions in Nevada and western Utah." The Yellowstone Trail was similarly limited to the summer and early autumn. Thus, for the traveler who planned to cross the continent Cobb advised that only the National Old Trails Road and the Old Spanish Trail were usually open year-round, and "of these two the National Road is by far the better." The National Old Trails Road, moreover, held a scenic potential that the others did not because it went through the Petrified Forest and provided access to the Grand Canyon. Apparently, the Lincoln Highway, much touted though it was and labeled by some "the longest road in the world," was in decline and the National Old Trails Road was in ascendancy.

The greatest challenge to the private road associations, however, was but the fulfillment of the general goal they had espoused, a system of national roads for better travel, but at the hands of the federal government. In 1924 the AASHO called upon the federal government to select and identify "transcontinental and interstate routes" in the nation and called for an end to naming roads by associations which had even become a peril: "Resolved: That we hereby warn the citizens of this nation to investigate carefully the responsibility of trails organizers and demand convincing evidence insuring proper expenditure of funds before contributing to or otherwise supporting such agencies."[41] In 1925 Secretary of Agriculture Howard M. Gore appointed a "Joint Board on Interstate Highways," chaired by Thomas MacDonald and made up of nineteen representatives from state highway commissions.

The board began meeting in April 1925 and early on decided to reject not only the

[41] Richard F. Weingroff, "From Names to Numbers: The Origins of the U.S. Numbered Highway System," published on the World Wide Web at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov /infrastructure/numbers.htm.

names given to highways, preferring numbers instead, but also declined to invite or hear the representatives of the named highway associations for fear of showing preference to one or another association and route and of then having to receive all of them out of fairness. A multitude of issues arose, some of them easy to settle, some a little more contentious, and some were left to committees to resolve. After a series of meetings in the various districts of the nation, a tentative map had been developed that showed the various highways to be included in the new U.S. system and the primary issue left was simply that of numbering the roads. For that purpose a group known as the Committee of Five was given the responsibility to develop a system and report back to the main Joint Board. Largely the inspiration of E. W. James in the Bureau of Public Roads, the Committee assigned numbers, odd and even to indicate the general direction of travel, to the roads on the proposed map. The draft map remained tentative and comments—and protests—poured in from states that felt slighted in some way by the plan, and quickly the planned system increased in miles by fifty percent to accommodate some of the concerns.

Finally, in November 1925 the Bureau of Public Roads indicated that it was on the verge of completing a plan of organizing the highways of the nation, an effort that had required extensive collaboration between the bureau and the state highway departments. The nation's press generally greeted this development with enthusiasm: "At last the touring motorist may experience a peace of mind which to him will be a glimpse into the millennium. Roads, 75,000 miles of them, simply designated and uniformly marked, making travel safe and divesting it of directional complications and entanglements—this is the prospect that is to become a reality. . . . the Department of Agriculture is about to announce a gigantic system of "U.S." highways. Never before has such a project been undertaken; never before has similar effort been made to simplify motor travel."[42] So said *The Outlook*, and in that sentiment the magazine was joined by others. The key to the new development was not the provision of federal funding for road construction; that was already in place. Instead the key was the selection and identification of main arteries of travel, each designated for its entire length by a single number, those numbers arranged in a pattern with even-numbered roads going east and west and odd numbered roads traveling north and south; the numbers would progress sequentially with the lowest numbers in the north and west and the highest numbered routes in the south and east. Main routes that traveled across the continent, or nearly so, would end in 0. An organized grid was about to emerge. Moreover, standard signs would be placed on the standardized road patterns using the U.S. government shield to indicate that they were U.S. highways, although the top section of the sign would indicate the state, and other road signs would be made uniform, and "counterfeit" signs used for advertising would be banned. With this development, clearly another corner had been turned in the road to a national highway system; all that remained were a few details that had to be worked out.

Those details, however, proved to be more than incidental and it would be another year before agreement would be reached. One problem was that the private road associations balked at the proposal. The Lincoln Highway Association, in particular, saw the implications of the proposed system and in retrospect they had good reason for anxiety. As Drake Hokanson notes, "The new federal highway system was a near-fatal blow to the Lincoln Highway and a death knell for all the other named highways of the

[42] "Safeguards for the Motorist," *The Outlook*, 141 (November 25, 1925), 464.

country. Not only was the Lincoln broken up into several numbered roads, but the officials had ruled that all markers and signs for named highways would have to come down."[43] Henry Joy, once again president of the Lincoln Highway Association, wrote that "My thought is to send the president, his cabinet and all members of Congress a copy of the Lincoln Highway Proclamation and along with it a printed slip saying: 'The Lincoln Highway, a memorial to the martyred Lincoln, now known by the grace of God and the authority of the Government of the United States as Federal Route 1, Federal Route 30, Federal Route 30N, Federal Route 30S, Federal Route 530, Federal Route 40 and Federal Route 50.'"[44] Other highways also protested, usually through the state governments, but it was clear that the new system was close to being launched. The arguments presented in favor of keeping the old named roads had more to do with the romance of the roads than with their efficiency or equity in serving the traveling public, and in that perception their comments revealed a chasm in the way the proponents of the differing road systems viewed the purpose of the highways and, in fact, the way they viewed the purpose of life. When the road known as The Old Oregon Trail was to be replaced with a two-digit number indicating its status as part of the U.S. highway system, Richard Weingroff quotes the Portland, Oregon, *Journal*: "only a meaningless number, a hard, cold, metallic number, like the figures in a cash register or on a bank ledger, is used to designate the greatest migration in history."[45] Even the Lincoln Highway Association,

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[43] Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway*, 108.

[44] Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway*, 109.

[45] Weingroff, "From Names to Numbers: The Origins of the U.S. Numbered Highway System," published on the world wide web at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/numbers.htm.

by February 1926, recognized its own preference for a single number marking its path as "only a sentimental consideration."[46]

There was one particularly delicate problem that took two forms. U.S. Highway 60 on the proposed map extended southwest from Chicago through St. Louis and Tulsa to Los Angeles, an aberration from the otherwise consistent pattern of separate east-west and north-south roads; this proposed Highway 60 was a diagonal for a good portion of its route. The other aspect of this was that the governor of Kentucky correctly noted that Kentucky was the only state in the huge Mississippi Valley that had no main east-west highway, a highway ending in 0. The governor of Kentucky, William J. Fields, pressed his concern with the Bureau of Public Roads and also with AASHO's executive committee. Kentucky rejected one proposed solution which would leave U.S. 60 untouched but would make the highway through Kentucky 62. When that failed, the Bureau of Public Roads and AASHO agreed to simply switch the numbers 62 (which had gone through Kentucky) and 60 (the Chicago to Los Angeles road). This, however, generated a new storm since two of the members of the Committee of Five who had settled on the numbers were from Oklahoma and Missouri and were directly impacted by the change. They too wanted a continuous highway—from Chicago to Los Angeles—with a number that ended in zero. The representatives from Oklahoma and Missouri, Cyrus Avery and B. H. Piepmeier, had other ideas. They insisted on retention of the U.S. 60 designation for the highway that ran through their states.

Little is known about Piepmeier who served as Chief Engineer of the Missouri

[46] Weingroff, "From Names to Numbers: The Origins of the U.S. Numbered Highway System."

State Highway Commission, from 1922 to 1927, the second to serve in that position which was essentially the director of the agency. In 1927 he left government service and went to work in private business. Cyrus M. Avery of Tulsa, Oklahoma, on the other hand, was and remained well known along the highway that he was trying to get through his hometown. Avery had been active in real estate, in oil development, in farming, and in promoting commerce, especially that associated with road travel, and had built in 1919 The Old English Inn and Service Station next to his farm on the far reaches of Tulsa's eastern outskirts, later to have a tourist camp with twenty-five cabins, a restaurant, and a service station—a huge and imposing operation for its time.[47] His vision of the future impelled him into public activity to promote the construction of more and better roads. Thus around 1916 – 1917, according to Susan Croce Kelly, Avery

> was a director of a local booster organization known as the Tulsa Commercial Club and a director of the Tulsa Automobile Club, among other civic endeavors. He worked closely with a new Road Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, which was organized to raise separate funds to support the building and maintaining of roads in eastern Oklahoma. Avery and his Chamber of Commerce associates were instrumental in the formation of Coin Harvey's Ozark Trails Association, which encouraged the maintaining and marking of a highway from Springfield, Missouri, through Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to Amarillo, Texas.[48]

About the same time that he promoted the Ozark Trails Association and Road, he also "helped organize" the Albert Pike Highway Association with its Colorado destination. Moreover, he was able to attract the Ozark Trails Association to Tulsa for its annual

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[47]Susan Croce Kelly, and Quinta Scott, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 36.

[48] Kelly and Scott, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People*, 11-12.

meeting in 1919 and was elected vice president of the group.[49] An indefatigable organizer, promoter, and entrepreneur, Avery served not only on local committees, but in 1921 was elected President of the Associated Highways of America, a confederation of highway organizations not to be confused with AASHO.[50] In 1924 Avery was named to the Oklahoma Highway Commission, and soon became chairman. Moreover, in 1925, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Howard Gore appointed Avery to serve on a joint board associated with the Agriculture Department's Bureau of Public Roads to, as Avery said, "lay out and designate an interstate highway system for all of the United States." Subsequently Avery chaired the Committee of Five to number the roads so designated.[51]

When Piepmeier and Avery—both of whom had served on the Committee of Five—protested the loss of the Highway 60 designation, they protested vigorously and loudly. Piepmeier noted that Missouri had already printed signs and maps with U.S. 60 marked on it as it made its way from St. Louis to the southwest corner of the state. Back and forth the discussions—and demands and angry telegrams—went and finally Kentucky was able to claim the route of U.S. 60; as an alternative to the designation of the Chicago – Los Angeles route as U.S. 62, the Oklahoma Chief Highway Engineer, John M. Page, according to Richard Weingroff, "noticed that the number '66' had not been assigned to any route. Avery and Piepmeier immediately sent a telegram to Chief MacDonald: 'We prefer sixty six to sixty-two.'" Other issues continued to nag the

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[49] Kelly and Scott, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People*, 7, 12.

[50] Ruth Sigler Avery, "Cyrus Stevens Avery," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XLV (Spring 1967), 87.

[51] Jim Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66* (Arcadia, Oklahoma: Ghost Town Press, 2001), 2; Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years*

agency, but finally, on November 11, 1926, AASHO accepted the new system of numbered highways, including the new highway 66 which was different not only because of its number but because of its diagonal path and because of its limited span from Chicago to Los Angeles, not coast-to-coast. Oklahoma officially accepted the system a few days later and Route 66 was born, at least on paper.

So the villages and towns and cities along this narrow corridor would be now connected not just by ambitious private organizations proclaiming a road and encouraging local governments to maintain it, but by a road sponsored by the United States government, connected to commercial and population centers in other states along the same traffic route, and also by a vision of the future that promised to end the isolation, the loneliness, the distance from markets, the lack of access to social opportunity, and a vision that promised to bring people closer together. After more than a century of proposals, plans, and building, the United States finally had a public highway system.

1925 to 1926, Inclusive, 8.

Chapter III

U.S. Highway 66 Takes Shape: 1926-1932

The designation of Route 66 in 1926 did not suddenly open the gates of transportation enabling eager travelers to hop onto a highway and make a quick trip between Chicago and Los Angeles. The announcement of the road's course, number, and termini, moreover, did not regularly generate excitement for communities along its path with an awareness that they were now connected to the rest of the world in ways that could change their lives; often the realities of the road's impact came later. For that matter, it did not even mean that there was a paved road to travel. When Highway 66 was officially designated in November 1926, and when news of the route became generally public in the spring of 1927, U.S. Highway 66 simply followed roads that already existed, roads that were sometimes part of the private road association networks, and sometimes roads that existed on paper as much as they did on the ground. Pavement covered only a fraction of the road—by some calculations as much as one fourth, though that is probably too large. The alignments that the roads took usually reflected local needs more than they did the convenience of the interstate traveler. Although U.S. 66 was a highway that drew upon significant advantages from the past, at its beginning in 1927, it was little more than a highway in name only; it was, in many ways, just a beginning.

It was the beginning, however, of much more than a roadway. In its earliest years some elements of the social transformation that the new road initiated were beginning to be seen. While the roadway appeared to offer the promise of national unity and the erosion of isolation, and while the highway quickly became associated with the speed and convenience of transcontinental travel to those who could afford the phenomenon of automobile tourism, those impacted by the road in the small towns sometimes experienced the change in less salutary ways. The advent of Highway 66 brought not only excitement and enthusiasm in some quarters, but uneasiness and distress in others.

i. Across the Country, 1927-1932

One of the distinguishing elements of U.S. 66 from the very start, it seems, was a prevailing conception that traffic flowed mainly from east to west. Drawing upon popular conceptions of history and the unofficial national mythology rooted in the frontier, people who knew full well that all highways carried traffic in two directions suspended their reason and conjured images of automobiles following the traces of emigrants in covered wagons to the West, even though those ox-drawn wagons had also gone both directions. In truth, of course, there was some merit in that conception since the concentrations of population in the nation were east of the Mississippi River and therefore the chances were greater that more would go west than east, at least initially.

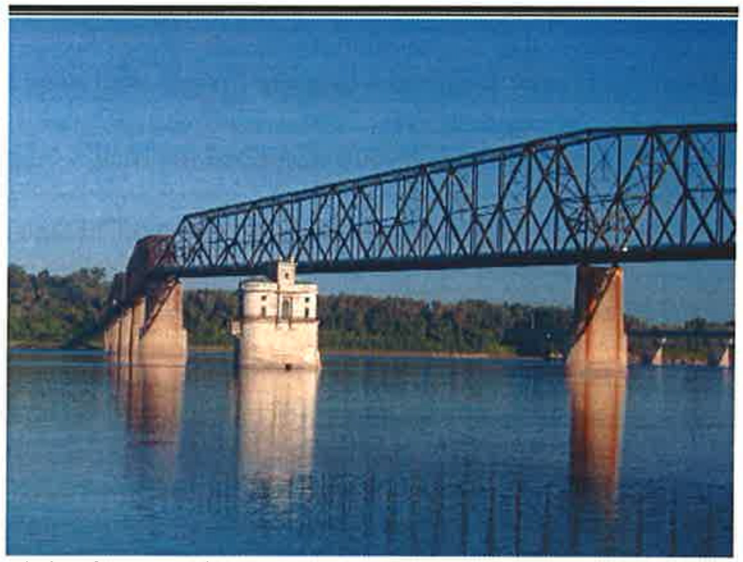
Following that geographic orientation, it is possible, by starting at Lake Michigan and working southwest and westward along Highway 66, to identify a baseline for understanding the highway. That baseline is social and historical as much as it is geographic, though, since the road would undergo a profound evolution in the coming decades. This is important because just as the fabled road was constantly changing over time, it was also dramatically different in the different states and communities it crossed and connected. Just as traveling the highway in 1927 contrasted sharply with traveling the same road three decades later, so too did traveling Highway 66 in Illinois differ from driving it in Oklahoma or Arizona. In fact, the sensitive motorist could possibly have discerned a pattern of change in the road, and along the road, that suggested the different histories of the sections traversed, and, if exceptionally perceptive, that person could have mentally transferred some of the issues from a section more developed to a section that was less so.

The most developed, and thereby also the best, and also paved, portions of Route 66 were those in the older states at each end and in some of the sections adjacent to the large cities along its path. Thus Illinois, where the highway began, represented some of the most advanced routing and paving of the road. With seven and a half million citizens, and the state having been admitted to the union more than a hundred years before Route 66 came into existence, Illinois had already developed the towns and transportation routes that served its citizens and U.S. 66 would probably play less of a role in shaping the state than it would in those places farther west that had been settled and organized by whites more recently.

Unlike the early travelers on the Lincoln Highway who would ceremoniously dip their wheels in the Atlantic Ocean before heading to the Pacific, where they would repeat the ritual in a token wedding of the waters, the first Highway 66 travelers did not perform that ritual, but they could have, substituting Lake Michigan for the Atlantic. Beginning in Chicago at the intersection of Jackson Boulevard and Michigan Avenue at Grant Park, near Lake Michigan, Route 66 followed the urban roads that were part of what was known as the Pontiac Trail. State Route 4, or even more properly State Bond Issue 4, or just SBI 4, as it was also and more commonly termed, was paved all the way to St. Louis, making Illinois the first state to have complete paving for its section of the highway. It was still narrow, with two narrow lanes, sometimes traveling a narrow corridor of trees like a country avenue and some of it even used bricks that had been laid before it became a federal highway.

State Bond Issue Route 4 Sign (1926) and Bridge Plate on bridge, Pontiac, Illinois. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Not far outside Chicago, at first at Joliet and then at Plainfield, Highway 66 portentously crossed its celebrated forebear, the Lincoln Highway, now labeled the far more prosaic U.S. Highway 30 in this area, and from the very beginning of the numbered road's history provided an alternative to those travelers headed west who might prefer a route that was open more of the year. Often the road south simply followed the railroad which had established a basic route that the highways used. The streams and rivers already had bridges by the time the road was called Route 66. When it crossed the Des Plaines River and then the Kankakee River, it crossed an alternate transportation route that linked Lake Michigan with the Mississippi River. In this area, it is fair to say, Highway 66 did not pioneer a new thoroughfare of commerce, but it would soon pull away traffic from the others that preceded it. Not long after leaving the cluster of towns near Chicago, the motorist would soon work a clear path among the gentle hills and through a series of coal mining towns, beginning near Joliet and gaining at Braidwood and Godley and continuing until near Pontiac, towns that were often but a shadow of their former activity from the turn of the century mining boom. From there the road left the lake district of the north and then crossed the Till Plains of the state, the vast, relatively flat and fertile land that produced the state's corn belt, where transportation was easy and where farming communities lined up along the path of Route 66, or more accurately where Route 66 made it appear that they were in a line. The highway, like the Pontiac Trail before it, connected Chicago with the state capital in Springfield, after having passed through the college towns of Normal / Bloomington. After Springfield the highway continued south, skirting another coalfield, more substantial than that in the north, and then plunging through it to Edwardsville. From Edwardsville, on the fringes of the St. Louis metropolitan area, the highway continued south and west until it encountered the Mississippi River. Initially, the highway went directly into St. Louis by way of Granite City and the McKinley Bridge, but



Chain of Rocks Bridge (1929) showing bend in bridge. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

in 1929 two brothers named Scott built an alternate bridge to the north just below the confluence of the Missouri and the Mississippi. The mile-long Chain of Rocks Bridge was one of the most spectacular built-features of the early road, not only because of its length but because the bridge actually turned at an angle to the north on the west side. The bridge owners also charged a toll, so it would only be 1935 before the 66 Highway officially turned to go over the huge bridge and it would do so as a free bridge. At St. Louis, too, the new Highway 66 crossed another of the main private east-west roads, the National Old Trails Road, or, as it had become known under the new dispensation, U.S. Highway 40.

Once on the Missouri side of the river, the road followed what was known as the Old Wire Road connecting St. Louis with Springfield, Missouri, in the southwest corner of the state, on the edge of the Ozarks. This road even predated the private association roads, having followed the telegraph before the Civil War and before that it had been a regular route sometimes referred to as the Osage Trail or Kickapoo Trail.[1] Subsequently the Southern Pacific Railroad—then the Frisco—followed the same general path. In 1941, the WPA guide to Missouri described the road's origins thus:

> US 66, principal highway between Chicago and the Southwest, crosses Missouri diagonally from the Mississippi at St. Louis to the high plains southwest of Springfield. As it cuts through the Ozarks, the highway follows approximately the route of a stage line established by the United States Government two decades before the Civil War. During the war, the road was an important military thoroughfare, traveled by the Federal commands of Frémont, Phelps, and Bliss, and by the Confederate troops of Price, Bains, Hindman, Parsons, and Slack. The Federal Government at that time put in a telegraph line along the road with

[1] Becky L. Snider, Debbie Sheals, and others, "Route 66 in Missouri, Survey and National Register Project," January 14, 2003, published on the World Wide Web as, http://www.cr.nps.gov/rt66/HistSig/MissouriContext. htm.

> stations at St. Louis, Rolla, Lebanon, Marshfield, Springfield, and Fort Smith, Arkansas, and the route was known as the Old Wire Road. The Confederates frequently cut the wires. After the war, the government took down the wires, leaving the poles gray and gaunt along the roadside. The country is generally rough to rolling, with slightly more than half the area in hardwood forests.[2]

Like many other states, Missouri engaged in little road construction in the final third of the nineteenth century, but began to pick up the effort with the Good Roads movement. In 1921, with encouragement by the federal government's new highway aid laws, Missouri embarked on a major effort to construct roads, including the road that ran from St. Louis to Springfield. The condition of the road that year is evident from a magazine article cited by the authors of the Missouri Route 66 Context statement in which the journal of the AAA Club of Missouri counseled motorists that "From St. Louis to St. Clair the roads are very good . . . . Between St. Clair and Rolla the roads are largely of dirt, which present the usual difficulties in wet weather. It is inadvisable to attempt the Rolla trip unless you have first secured from the Automobile Club the latest information

U.S. 66 near Carterville, Missouri, looking east. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

[2] *Missouri: A Guide to the "Show Me" State*, compiled by the workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Missouri (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), 405.

concerning the condition of the stretch between St. Clair and the terminus."[3] In 1922 that road became State Highway 14. Extending beyond Springfield westward to Joplin, the stretch between those two cities actually had one of the first sections of concrete pavement on this route in the state outside the major cities. Indeed, state Route 66 aficionados are quick to note that the meeting of the Oklahoma and Missouri highway officials—Cyrus Avery and B. H. Piepmeier—at which the number 66 was agreed upon as an alternative to 60 took place in Springfield on this newly paved road.[4] Missouri forged ahead with its efforts after the designation of Route 66 and the entire span of the highway in the state was paved by 1931, the third state to claim that distinction and six years ahead of neighboring Oklahoma which opened its final stretch of Route 66 pavement less than twenty miles from the Missouri border and less than that from the Kansas line.

Although the terrain in Missouri as the road went beyond Springfield opened into a rolling plain, the section of highway from St. Clair and Bourbon near St. Louis to Springfield, as it went through the Ozarks, could be adventuresome for the traveler. The Ozarks were often heavily wooded with second growth pine and also thick brush so that sometimes the hills were foreboding in their darkness and depth and sparse human population, and the terrain proved often sharp, rocky, and filled with obstacles, the combination making sometimes the earth close in on the road as if the highway were a

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[3] Snider and Sheals, and others, "Route 66 in Missouri, Survey and National Register Project," http://www.cr.nps.gov/rt66/HistSig/MissouriContext.htm.
[4] See, for example, James R. Powell, "The Birthplace of Route 66," and Arthur Krim, "First Numbering of Route 66 Discovered in Missouri," in C. H. Skip Curtis, ed., *Birthplace of Route 66: Springfield, Mo.* (Springfield, Missouri: Curtis Enterprises, 2001), 11-15, 16-17.

tunnel. Tiff mining, vineyards for the production of wine, and logging had been major industries, although the logging had faded as a result of overcutting and depletion of the pine forests (hence now the second growth forests) and the tiff mining had left a human scar, trachoma, prominent in the area. This was not a prosperous area, although occasional patches of farming areas dotted the landscape. Despite some gestures in the direction of recreational development of the area, especially for St. Louis urbanites, access was not easy. A map of the road in the area resembles not so much a road as a river with writhing twists and turns as it followed the contours of the earth, often in sight of the Frisco Railroad that preceded it. Even with the highway going through, the Ozarks continued to protect and isolate the people who had lived in the hollows and hills from the outside world for several generations and that isolation of the "hill people" remained powerful. As late as 1941 the WPA guide could talk about the culture of Waynesville as something of an oddity in the modern world. The town, the guide reported,

> has a leisurely atmosphere, unmarred by the smoke of industry and the impatient panting of trains, and but little jarred by farmers' Saturday visits or meetings of the county court. Hill people buy their blue denim and flour, their coffee, salt, and sugar with unhurried deliberation. Between purchases they talk. All are called by first names, except the very old. They receive the title of "uncle" or "aunt," and are always referred to by both given name and surname, as "Uncle Jim Corbin."[5]

This was, however, changing and the new road would increase that change. A study of the Missouri Ozarks by a sociologist in Springfield found that in the 1930s the "archaic rural American culture, protected until recently by relative isolation, is rapidly giving ground before the impact of urban civilization introduced by the automobile and

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[5] *Missouri: A Guide to the "Show Me" State, 417.*

improved highway, the newspaper, the radio, and other agencies."[6]

After traversing more of the Ozarks, linking the small communities together with a ribbon of road soon to be turned into concrete, the highway emerged into open prairie at Springfield, and then moved toward the zinc and lead mining district near Joplin and the Kansas border. Route 66 made a jog through the southeast corner of Kansas—Cherokee County—for a total of thirteen miles before heading straight south into Oklahoma, following a road constructed in 1923 by the county and linking the communities of Galena, Riverton, and Baxter Springs. A continuation of the lead and zinc mining area, this followed the Ozark Trails, as indicated by a 1918 logbook the Ozark Trails Association published. Because of the zinc mines in the area, the county actually had prospered and the mining was at its peak in the World War I period and early 1920s, so the roads were hard surfaced by the time U.S. Highway 66 came through; the fundamental component in the roads, however, was the contaminated chat from the mines. One of the more remarkable features along this brief road was the beautiful Brush Creek Bridge built in 1923. That bridge, a graceful structure technically termed a Concrete Marsh through Arch with 10 verticals, is often referred to simply as a rainbow bridge because of the graceful curve of the arch. After

Brush Creek Marsh Arch Bridge, near Riverton, Kansas. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

[6] Walter O. Cralle, "Social Change and Isolation in the Ozark Mountain Region of Missouri," *American Journal of Sociology*, 41 (January 1936), 435.

passing through the town of Baxter Springs, the road continued deeper into the mining district, but in Oklahoma.

When the highway left Kansas and Missouri behind, it entered into a different part of the nation. Three of the four states to follow had been admitted to the union within two decades of the designation of the highway—Oklahoma in 1907, New Mexico and Arizona in 1912—so the political, economic, and social infrastructure was, if not more malleable, then less anchored than in the more established states previously traversed by the highway. The three states and the highway through them would, in some sense, develop together over the next several decades. If the Texas panhandle can be seen to follow a different course from the remainder of the state, and there is reasonable argument for that case, then that may fit the pattern too.

Route 66 in Oklahoma was made up generally of the Ozark Trails from Baxter Springs to Oklahoma City and the Postal Highway from Oklahoma City west. Well established roads, and obviously part of larger systems, they were, alas, also lacking in development more than in any other state. The Oklahoma Highway Commission report for 1926 counted the miles of roads in the state. More than three thousand miles of official state routes were dirt or "improved dirt," two thousand of them lacking any such "improvement." Nine hundred seventy-five miles were gravel. Fewer than 640 miles of roads—less than twelve percent of the total 5500 miles in the state system—were concrete, asphalt on concrete, or rock asphalt on concrete.[7] Literally, the state had more

[7] Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1925 to 1926 Inclusive* (Oklahoma City: 1927), 168.

miles of railroad than it did of roads, even dirt roads, in the state system.[8] Less than one fourth of Highway 66 in Oklahoma was paved when the road achieved official designation. The state did have Highway Patrolmen, but that referred not to an officer of the law traveling the roads to apprehend speeders or reckless drivers, but to the maintenance of the roads:

> The organization of the department is simple and direct. There is a minimum of "overhead." The basis of our system is the patrolman. All the state highways are divided into sections or patrols. These sections vary in length from seven miles to twelve and fourteen miles each according to the type of road, the nature of the soil, extent or volume of traffic and the type of equipment used. On all dirt roads and nearly all gravel roads the patrolman employed furnishes four horses, a wagon and some small tools such as shovels, picks, etc. He is paid on a daily basis and works every day in the year except Sundays. On paved roads and on some gravel roads the patrols are lengthened to from twenty to thirty miles each and the patrolman is furnished a light inexpensive truck and given two helpers. As nearly all the maintenance on paved roads is hand work we have dispensed with steady team hire.[9]

In November 1927, a year after the creation of Route 66, one state newspaper that offered weekly reports on the conditions of roads, described its condition thus:

> Entering the state at Miami on U.S. highway No. 66, you have gravel or pavement to the town of Bristow, passing through Afton, Vinita, Claremore, Tulsa, Sapulpa, and intermediate points. Traffic to Oklahoma City should route from Tulsa to Oilton over state highway No. 1, as the

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[8] The Oklahoma Agriculture Department, in a brochure distributed in 1926 to attract farmers to the state, noted that "Oklahoma is traversed in every direction and through every county by more than 6,000 miles of railroads. A night's ride carries one from Oklahoma to St. Louis on the north, or to the Gulf on the south. There is corresponding fast freight service to these and other big markets." It also went on to acknowledge about roads, though, as optimistically as possible, that "The state is building highways to connect the larger markets and county seat towns just as other states are doing." T. M. Jeffords, *Oklahoma; Its Unparalleled Growth, The Present Status and the Basis for Future Development* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture, [1927]), page 11 of the unpaginated brochure.

[9] Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1925 to 1926 inclusive*, 167.

highway from Bristow to Arcadia is under construction and very rough. From Oilton, highway 11 should be followed through Drumright, Cushing and Guthrie. The road from Drumright to Guthrie is dirt and is rough, much of it being under construction. The road from Tulsa to Bristow is good. Paved through Oklahoma City to Yukon in Canadian County; from El Reno, Calumet, Geary, Bridgeport, Weatherford, Clinton, Elk City, Sayre, Erick, Texola and west to Amarillo well-maintained dirt road. There is a ten mile detour between Yukon and El Reno, and some sand.[10]

Route 66 had miles to go, in every sense, before it could be objectively regarded as a significant highway in Oklahoma.

That news account following the road was not an encouraging report, but it only told part of the story. The Ozark Trails system represented a network of roads of sorts, the main advantage of which was that it connected multiple towns and villages together in a web instead of channeling traffic through one particular route and overburdening that route and underserving the communities not touched. The roads they promoted, therefore, were not exactly through routes. The prevailing system in Oklahoma was the use of the grid of roads that followed section lines. That meant that in some instances the roads went for miles and miles almost perfectly straight; at other times, however, when the road needed to follow a course different from those section lines it would follow a zigzag pattern, stairstepping across the countryside instead of proceeding at an angle and cutting across the sections. And the fact was that Highway 66, after it entered the state in the northeast

Road turn of U.S. 66 near Miami, Oklahoma where the corner is a 90 degree turn to follow the section lines. This is a section of the highway where the roadbed was only nine feet wide, with concrete curbs on each side. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

[10] *Daily Oklahoman*, November 6, 1!

corner, followed a route to the southwest connecting that corner with Tulsa and then farther to the southwest with Oklahoma City. There were exceptions where the road deviated from the section lines, usually when it followed the railroad grade, but that zigzag pattern entailed many a 90-degree turn at the section corners, thus slowing down the traffic and creating a hazard at each intersection. The name Deadman's Corner seems to have been applied to more than one such corner.

Moreover, some that was paved was only technically so. South of Miami a stretch of the road had been paved in 1922 was paved beautifully with concrete and with concrete curbing on each side with asphalt then applied on top of the concrete to the level of the curbs. This pavement, however, not only zigzagged in the characteristic fashion of the early roads, but it also was only nine feet wide. It was a one-lane road. The expectation was simply that with vehicles moving at thirty or forty miles per hour, there was always time for cars that met to each pull to the side but still have two wheels on the pavement. There was, to put it another way, no thought at the time it was built, that eighteen wheelers traveling 75 miles per hour would use it.

The highway was a fragile road across the northeast corner of the state and it was one that generated hopes wherever it went. In the small towns and

F. D. Mitchell Filling Station (1929 or 1930), located at main intersection in Commerce, Oklahoma, where Highway 66 turned south. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

large metropolises alike gasoline filling stations positioned themselves strategically to catch the traffic, the corners where the traffic slowed to turn being one of the prime locations. In other instances, though, the road clearly was routed to go past the commercial establishments already there. When Highway 66 went into Tulsa, the route was anything but straight. One need not be familiar with the streets of Tulsa to discern the meandering course of the road as it approached the downtown from the east: The first alignment of Route 66 in Tulsa came in on 193rd south to Eleventh, west to Mingo Road, north to Admiral, then west again to Lewis, and south to Second, where it again turned west. By turning north and making a loop through the Whittier Square neighborhood before turning south again and then west, the highway appears to have made a conscious diversion to serve that community's business district.[11] One might also note that on its way downtown, at the corner of Admiral and Mingo where the road made a sharp turn, it passed the service station and tourist camp owned by Cyrus Avery.

The topography of Oklahoma is such that if one were to draw a north – south line through Oklahoma City, the state would be divided into two roughly equal parts, that to the east being hilly and wooded, with the part west of that line opening up and climbing onto the high plains. That meant that Highway 66 would follow an increasingly straight line as it worked its way toward the Texas panhandle, although there were important and notable exceptions. Generally this portion of the highway followed the old Postal Road which ran through Oklahoma from Fort Smith, Arkansas in the east to Amarillo in Texas

[11] See the alignment of Route 66 in Kathy Anderson, Jim Ross, and Gary Ray Howell, Oklahoma Route 66 Association, *Oklahoma Route 66 Roadbed Documentation Project (1926-1970): A Survey of Roadbed and Integral Structures* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma SHPO, 2002), Map 17.

and beyond, much of which followed the old Beale Wagon Road; with a more arid climate the population thinned out and the towns along the highway were farther apart. By the time the traveler had worked along the dusty road from Yukon through El Reno, Calumet, Geary, Bridgeport, Hydro, Weatherford, Clinton, Foss, Canute, Elk City, Sayre, Erick and Texola there could be no doubt that this was a different world, not only from the East, but from Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas, and, for that matter, from eastern Oklahoma too. Although the new highway snaked its way through a few towns large enough to have a business establishment spread out, such as in El Reno, in the same way that it did when it went through Oklahoma City and Tulsa, increasingly the highway would make a straight line through the middle of town, exactly along the main street.

As the traveler continued west, the hot wind in the summer, the clouds of dust blowing across the plains, and the broad prairie and wide open skies signaled a new horizon, that of the Llano Estacado—the vast, short-grassed plains on which survival can be a challenge and travel can be eternal, both in all their positive and negative connotations. With the Texas – Oklahoma border defined precisely by the one hundredth meridian, this was also the beginning of the arid country that had historically represented a challenge to those with settlement on their minds, or for that matter, to those with an eye to just crossing it. When the Spanish conquistadors crossed the area, legend has it that they would drive stakes into the ground to help them find their way back since there were as many landmarks on the plains as there were on the ocean, a comparison many modern travelers would make.

As sheep ranching gave way to cattle ranching in the Texas panhandle in the early twentieth century, both of which had displaced the bison and the Native Americans who made their living with the bison, and as late as 1940, the WPA guide for Texas could comment without great exaggeration that "The population of the region is predominantly native-born white. Since settlement is comparatively new, any 25-year resident is considered an old-timer."[12] More than years in residence, though, what separated the old timers from the new arrivals was the way they made their livings. In the 1920s the oil industry emerged as the dominant economic force and turned Amarillo into a corporate center for the region. At the same time, agriculture in the region became both more extensive in individual holdings, and more mechanized in operation, with also fewer farmers and farm laborers, but it was sufficiently profitable in the aggregate in the 1920s that one analyst proudly remarked in 1932: ". . . the large scale system of agriculture now in vogue on the High Plains is producing and maintaining a thriving civilization with a newness and color all its own."[13] With agriculture booming, but especially because of the oil activity, and the industry it in turn generated, another history notes that "in the 1920s the Panhandle led Texas in the development of highways."[14] And U.S. 66 was the stellar road in that development. Even so, and as something of a commentary on the relative isolation of the panhandle from the rest of the state, the official, but informal,

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[12] *Texas: A Guide to the Lone Star State*, compiled by the Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Texas (New York: Hastings House, 1940), 490.

[13] J. S. Gibson, "Agriculture of the Southern High Plains," *Economic Geography*, 8 (1932), 245-261.

[14] "Panhandle," *The Handbook of Texas Online*. http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook /online/articles/view/PP/ryp1.html. This is a publication of the Red River Authority of Texas.

history of the Texas Department of Transportation makes no mention of Route 66.[15]

From Shamrock, Alanreed, and Groom in the east to Adrian, Landergin, and Wildorado in the west, the towns were small, with a population seldom above five hundred except for Amarillo, and Amarillo prospered because of the boom of the twenties. The others, though, were marked mainly by grain elevators and gas stations and a general store to serve the needs of the farming community that stretched out for miles to the sparsely settled lands beyond the town itself.

Not long after entering New Mexico, the westbound traveler on the newly designated Highway 66, still traveling on largely unpaved roads, would experience several changes indicating how far he or she had really gone. The names of the towns were in a different language, with a mix of predominantly Spanish expression—San Jon, Cuervo, Santa Rosa—and an occasional Native American reference—like Tucumcari—and the Anglo names shrank into the minority (and some of those, like Endee and Bard, derived from the exotic language of cattle brands), and the people who lived in the towns and countryside often had a darker skin than the generally white highway travelers. These towns, strung along the railroad (itself only coming through at the turn of the century) previously, were now strung along Route 66 as it climbed the bluffs and mesas to the piñon-dotted highlands of central New Mexico. In fact, from Amarillo westward to Las Vegas, New Mexico, U.S. 66 followed, once again, one of the routes marked by the Ozark Trails Association. When the highway turned north, generally following the Pecos River toward Las Vegas, New Mexico, it crossed through open and rolling hills with but the sparsest of human habitation, until it joined the National Old Trails Road outside Las

[15] Hilton Hagan, *An Informal History of the Texas Department of Transportation* (n.p.:

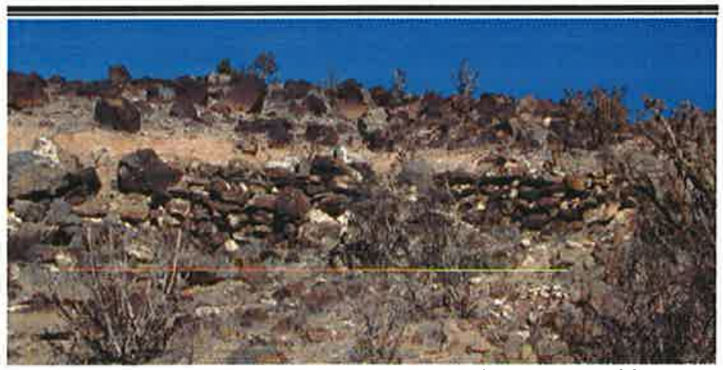
Vegas at Romeroville. Winding its way through the mountains, the road, very little of which had a hard surface, followed the route not only of the National Old Trails Road but also of the Santa Fe Trail, and the Santa Fe Railroad which had used the same passes for their traverse of the region.[16] While connections with the state capitals were not obligatory, they added important anchors for the highway even when, as in New Mexico, it meant going through mountains; besides, the legendary Santa Fe was a welcome stop on the long highway. In addition to the usual array of small businesses that could supply the traveler's needs, Santa Fe also marked the beginning of a new feature along the road all the way to California. The Fred Harvey company had built along the railroad a series of large hotels near the depots that had served the traveling public on the rails. In the late 1920s the Harvey Houses would accommodate the highway travelers too. Located in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Gallup, Winslow, Williams, Seligman, and Needles, this chain of hotels and eating houses provided another resource for the travelers on the new highway, just as it had for years on the road's predecessors, yet each one was distinct, reflected local architectural and cultural patterns, and provided a different kind of base—and daily goal—for the traveler. Ominously, along Highway 66—Fourth Street—in Albuquerque, as hotel / motel historians John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers note, were "virtually all of Albuquerque's tourist camps" in the 1920s.[17] The automobile traveler was shifting away from the large hotels, even away from the Fred Harvey hotels.

Texas Department of Transportation, 1991).

[16] Historian David Kammer, has noted that of the original 506 miles of Route 66 in New Mexico, 28 miles were concrete "and seven were scheduled to receive a concrete surface." Kammer, "The Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico," (Santa Fe: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1992), 45.

[17] John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America*

When U.S. 66 departed Santa Fe to the south, it once again followed the ancient road of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, and also the National Old Trails Highway down La Bajada, a sometimes harrowing experience, and on through the Little Cut and the Big Cut through the ridges on its way to Albuquerque. To shore up the road on the precipice of La Bajada, the state had added a second set of retaining walls to the road in 1924, but the passage down the road still was breathtaking and intimidating and gave cause for deliberation on the descent. In 1925 a tourist court emerged at the bottom of the hill and that provided relief for those who successfully descended the escarpment as well as haven for those anticipating its ascent the next day.[18] To attract those who ventured up the road, the proprietors of the Santa Fe Campground had painted a sign advertising their camp on the rocks of the escarpment.



Retaining wall on La Bajada allowing motorists on U.S. 66 to gain a slightly better hold on the road. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

When U.S. 66 reached Albuquerque it went through the city from north to south and finally turned west again at the town of Los Lunas. When the road proceeded westward from this point and arrived at the pueblo of Laguna, it was clear that the highway had completed a huge S curve since heading north toward Las Vegas—a perception probably noted by both travelers and highway planners and one that would

(Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 291.

[18] National Register of Historic Places nomination for "The Route 66 and National Old Trails Road Historic District at La Bajada," nomination document on file in the Route 66

lead to considerations of alternate routes. The road followed the Santa Fe Railroad westwards and made a course that, after leaving the linear oasis of the Rio Grande valley, etched a path through red rocks and mountain peaks, with Mt. Taylor on the north and the Acoma pueblo on the south, with small villages, or just clusters of houses and an occasional filling station, at irregular intervals. After passing through Grants the road crossed the symbolic and major threshold of the continental divide, before leaving the state just beyond the railroad and mining town of Gallup, on the southern periphery of the Navajo reservation and into the reservation when it crossed into Arizona.

Consistent with the pattern in both New Mexico and Oklahoma, very little of the original U.S. Highway 66 in Arizona was paved in 1926. The road crossed the state following the route of the railroad, which itself often followed the path of the old Beale Trail. In 1857 Lieutenant Edward F. Beale crossed Arizona with a caravan of camels, and the next year he reported to Congress that the path he took "will eventually be the greatest emigrant road to California," and the following year claimed that the road was the "shortest, best timbered, best graded, best watered and certainly in point of grade better than any other line between the two oceans with which I am acquainted."[19] On a less exuberant, and much more ominous, note, Beale also commented on the Native Americans in the region, observing of the Hualapais, "Poor creatures! Their time will come soon enough for extermination when the merits of this road are made known and it becomes, as it most assuredly will, the thoroughfare to the Pacific."[20] His callow

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Corridor Preservation Program, National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

[19] Beale quoted in Velma Rudd Hoffman, "Lt. Beale and the Camel Caravans through Arizona," *Arizona Highways*, 33 (October 1957), 8.

[20] This quotation is from an unattributed source in the Beale Exhibit of the Mohave

sympathy aside, and his buoyant optimism notwithstanding, in that one sentence, Beale articulated the germ of a penetrating perception that saw at once the benefits that would accrue to the outsider and the devastation that could fall upon the native inhabitants in the wake of the development of the road. He saw, and candidly acknowledged, that some sacrifice would be involved on the other side, the darker side, of the coin of highway development.

Perhaps the travelers on that general road when it first became known as U.S. 66 would have questioned Beale's sunny assessment of the road; the magazine *Arizona Highways* in the late 1920s described one portion of the highway, between Williams and Flagstaff, as "18 miles of narrow, crooked, poorly surfaced road which is particularly dangerous in dry weather due to ravelling and innumerable potholes," while near the small community of Valentine, the road was "narrow and rough with sharp turns."[21] With piñon – juniper punctuating the sandstone and weathered rocks in the east and the west, and thick pine forests in the center, either side of Flagstaff, the road's main attraction was not its speedy and smooth driving, but the spectacular scenery, with the Painted Desert and Petrified Forest offering an early sample of sensational attractions to come, culminating with the Grand Canyon as a sidetrip north from Flagstaff or Williams. One of the most harrowing drives on Highway 66 anywhere could be found west of Kingman. The Beale road actually went to the southwest from Kingman to the Colorado River and then to Needles. But the existence of gold mines high in the Black Mountains meant also the existence of a major road that climbed the steep grade to Sitgreaves Pass.

Museum of History and Arts, Kingman, Arizona.

[21] *Arizona Highways* quoted in "Historic U.S. Route 66 in Arizona," multiple property submission to the National Register of Historic Places, 1989, E-4.

Given the gravity feed fuel system of some of the automobiles of the time, backing up the precipice was often a necessity. Perhaps the only drive worse than going up the hill was coming down. When the traveler made it to the Colorado River and was able to cross the

Looking west as Highway 66 descended Sitgreaves Pass. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

bridge at Topock, already ten years old by the time the highway was designated, one counted the successes that day not in the number of miles driven but in the number of narrow escapes from disaster. In that short drive, the altitude dropped from 3550 feet to less than 500 feet.

Highway 66 in California proved, like the road in Illinois, something of an anomaly in that it already had a well-developed highway system in comparison to the other states, at least as the stretch that became 66 reached east from Los Angeles to Barstow and Daggett; beyond there, however, it would be years before the road between Daggett and Kingman would be paved. A dozen years after the highway was designated, the WPA Guide for the state commented on the topography it crossed in California:

> West of the green banks of the Colorado River, US 66 traverses the arid Mojave Desert, a bleak plateau furrowed by scores of untillable valleys, shimmering in the fierce sunlight. The road mounts and dips in and out of these sinks, unrelieved in their desolation except after rare rains, when a thorny mantle of delicate-hued vegetation blazes into flower. Ahead rises the blue bulk of the San Gabriel Mountains. The highway runs steadily toward them, between hills of jumbled beauty, passing through widely spaced "towns" -- mere groups of tourist cabins about gas stations and lunch rooms -- to the desert city of Barstow.[22]

The Mojave Desert, as that description suggests, formed the dominant feature of the region and called upon all the resourcefulness of the 1926-1927 traveler in assuring enough water and fuel, and in surviving the summer heat, in terms of both human and automobile endurance. In some of the towns, like Daggett and Barstow, where turn-of-the-century mining activity had faded, the new highway may have promised a new beginning as more and more travelers made their way across the road that was a part of the new U.S. highway system. Beyond Barstow the difficult travel resumed, but increasingly the road converged with more, and older, travel routes than that of the Santa Fe Railway, which it had been following. The Spanish Trail, the corridor used by Mexican traders and subsequently developed by Mormon expansion in the late nineteenth century (from Salt Lake to San Bernardino), and a spider web of local roads actually provided an appearance of urbanization, especially once the traveler started the descent toward the Pacific on the west slope of Cajon Pass. And once the road passed through San Bernardino with its orchard and fruit packing plants, memories of the desert crossing were submerged beneath images of paradise. The towns were now closer together, with town centers every few miles, reflecting the dynamics of early urban sprawl in the Los

[22] *California: A Guide to the Golden State*, compiled and written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of California (New York:

Angeles area. Where U.S. 66 had, in the more sparsely populated states to the east, represented a bold innovation and started early on to work a channeling effect on local social and economic forces and institutions, the highway as it approached the city hall of Los Angeles, its initial terminus, was being submerged among the many avenues available—just as it had been at its start in Chicago. In future years, when the route was extended to within a few blocks of the Piers of the Pacific at Santa Monica, one would be able to compare the Pacific Ocean to the waters of Lake Michigan, but would, no matter the terminus, be able to reflect on a journey through the heart of a nation in the midst of social upheaval, from rural to urban, from traditional to modern, and from local to national in its orientation. U.S. Highway 66, in fact, would not just provide an observation platform for this process of social change but would provide an engine for generating those changes.

ii. The Promise of the Future

While Highway 66 at its beginning represented the culmination of powerful forces at work for over a century in the nation, it even more importantly rested on a vision of the future. Its alignment and its pavement held serious deficiencies and the commercial infrastructure along its path was sorely limited, but its potential seemed infinite. One national writer described the future a few months before the creation of Route 66, as he remarked on how much had been accomplished in road construction:

Hastings House, 1939).

"The end is not yet—not by many more miles of highway, the last more perfect than its predecessor—not by tens of thousands of miles of gleaming roads which will, in the not distant future, pierce hamlets now sleeping beside dust-laden, rut-ridden lanes, will push through mountain passes now somnolent, and echoing only the tumble of stream or the hoot of owl, will connect fertile lands with prosperous markets, will tie the whole of the nation in one strong and indissoluble chain of transportation facilities."[23] It was a grand future of society that seemed to be at hand, one that still promised to unify the nation, to tie people together with bands of concrete and asphalt, thereby echoing the dreams of roadbuilders from Albert Gallatin to the Lincoln Highway Association.

At least one part of this experience was different though. Unlike the example of the Lincoln Highway, along Route 66 the motive force for change came less from the automobile industry and the road building industry, at least initially and directly, than it did from merchants who sought greater commerce for their businesses and their communities. Route 66 provided them the opportunity to break the isolation that hung like a pall over their communities. The forces associated with the change grew apace and received nurturing from a new association that resembled the old road clubs that promoted travel. The U.S. Highway 66 Association sprang into being almost from the start. In February 1927 promoters of the highway—businesspeople along the road—convened in Tulsa for an organizational meeting in much the same spirit as their predecessors with the Ozark Trails Association and other road booster organizations and created the new body. The inspiration for the organization appears to have derived from

[23] William Ullman, "Enormous Roads Program Still Is Ahead of Country: Highways Are Injecting Life into America," *Daily Oklahoman*, August 22, 1926. Ullman was a prominent travel writer whose work appeared nationally.

the example of the private road associations; Cyrus Avery and John T. Woodruff had both been active in leadership roles in the Ozark Trails Association.

As early as the summer of 1926, before the highway plan had been finalized, Woodruff and Avery met in Springfield, Missouri, and agreed to bring together businesses interested in promoting the new highway. These two men then invited chambers of commerce along Highway 66 to an initial meeting in Tulsa in February 1927 at which the Highway 66 Association organized. In response, businesses and chambers sent representatives from many points. It is notable that neither Illinois nor California sent representatives, perhaps neither one anticipating great gains to their existing system from additional commerce from places like Oklahoma and Texas. Arizona also did not send anyone. Woodruff was chosen the leader of the group and the organization met again in May in Springfield and in June in Amarillo, followed by Albuquerque a few months later. This schedule is instructive since it reveals that an important part of the mission, the first priority, of the organization was to increase awareness of the highway and its potential in the communities served by the road and thereby to drum up enthusiasm for its future. After Woodruff served two terms as president of the group, Cyrus Avery stepped into the position and the headquarters for the group was located with Avery in Tulsa.

But this was not just the alter ego of the Ozark Trails or any other group. The members of the Highway 66 Association saw themselves on a grander mission than the earlier clubs which, in most cases, had sought to generate support in the various communities for the road. At its first meeting Avery persuaded the group to call the road "The Main Street of America," a name that merged the positive connotations of small town life with national bonds and linkages, truly an inspired motto that glossed over both the highway's potential to divide people and the possible losses entailed with the new road with a veneer of unity that suggested the possibility of holding onto small town values and identities at the same time as claiming the advantages of national commerce.[24] The group had other objectives as well and embarked on a campaign for paving the road in those many miles where it lacked a hard surface and also on a promotional venture to make travelers across the country aware of the presumably unparalleled advantages of taking Highway 66.

The promotional effort took a novel turn almost at the outset. In 1928, the organization raised the profile of the new road when it conceived the idea of a business promoter—some would say huckster—to publicize a road race from Los Angeles to New York, by way of Route 66 to Chicago. But this road race would, perhaps appropriately given the condition of the roads, be a footrace, not an automobile race. More than two hundred runners entered the race and it did indeed garner national attention and publicity, much of it favorable. Organized by C. C. Pyle (and unflatteringly called "Cash and Carry" Pyle), a professional promoter of athletes and kindred celebrities, the race featured not only the runners but a substantial retinue of announcers and reporters who wired progress of the race to their newspapers and brought the highway into the spotlight. In fact, when the racing group reached the small towns of Highway 66 it was truly an unprecedented event for many of them. In April 1928 the group approached Bristow, Oklahoma, for example, and there the local newspaper announced that, "Bristow expects

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[24] Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 24; Jim Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66* (Arcadia, Oklahoma: Ghost Town Press, 2001), 1.

to entertain thousands of visitors upon the occasion of the arrival of the party here, it being undoubtedly the greatest athletic event of a marathon nature in the world's history."[25] At Sapulpa, Oklahoma, not far from Bristow, the local press described the phenomenon: "Moving toward Sapulpa along the path of the 'Main Street of America,' there is a footrace of unusual proportions." Although the original number of entrants in the race had dwindled to eighty-two runners, there was also the promotional and service infrastructure. The Sapulpa reporters itemized what would hit Sapulpa around 10:00 a.m. on Monday, April 16, 1928: "There are 125 cars and trucks with the caravan, including hospital and dining cars. A broadcasting outfit and receiving sets are a part of the equipment. A carnival show and other concessions are a part of the caravan." Businesses opened their doors for the crowd and the schools closed theirs to allow the students to participate in this event hardly imaginable a few years before.[26] This was the real inauguration of Highway 66. It linked the people along the road not just to the next town, but to the world.

Moreover, the winner of the race was nineteen-year old Andy Payne from Foyil, Oklahoma, a village through which Route 66 now passed. Payne's victory may have augured well for the road, for Oklahoma, and for his village, given the symbolism of the new developments associated with the race and the road, and there was a certain poetry to the achievement. A young man of Cherokee ancestry living in a small town that was representative of the many isolated villages now linked by the highway, and who had seldom traveled beyond his own town and maybe not outside his state, not only

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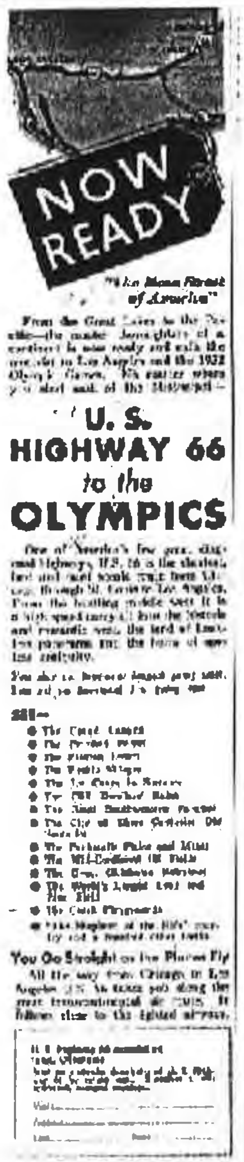
[25] "Pyle's Runners to Arrive Here on Next Sunday," Bristow *Record*, April 12, 1928.

[26] "Sapulpa on Main Street Highway Number Sixty-six," [Creek] *County Democrat News*, April 12, 1928; "Transcontinental Races Have Passed Oklahoma," [Creek] *County Democrat News*, April 19, 1928.

completed the race but triumphed in a coast-to-coast enterprise put together by a charlatan who promised the world to the villagers and the merchants who eagerly sought



Source: *Saturday Evening Post*, July 16, 1932.

some kind of connection to the larger world. He used the prize money to pay off the mortgage on his parents' home—a dream to which many people could relate—which cemented his image as a hero. And it was U.S. 66 that took him there. The parable perhaps continues since the race, instead of stopping in Chicago, continued to New York and offered the impression that the highway actually went from coast to coast. It also generated a high attrition rate; running across the Mojave Desert, across Arizona and New Mexico and the Texas panhandle had exhausted a majority of the runners. And it had financial problems aplenty and there was some question whether Andy Payne would be able to collect the promised prize of twenty-five thousand dollars, and by the time the race reached New Jersey, Pyle was referred to in at least one newspaper in that state as "the demon promoter" and reported that some accounts had him losing forty-thousand dollars.[27] Although Pyle paid the prize and Payne paid off the mortgage, and the public heard all about Highway 66, another race the following year, which did not attract the attention of the first, was the final such venture—a

[27] Hudson, New Jersey, *Dispatch*, May 28, 1928.

short run of exactly two.[28] The race served its purpose but in the future the fate of the road would be shaped more by fundamental social pressures rather than by planned events like the great footrace.

The promotion efforts continued and while with less hullabaloo than the footrace, advertising itself was by no means entirely conventional. Some of the promotion involved distributing literature encouraging travel on the road, making the road more widely known and fostering a national image for the highway. But more significant, and more in keeping with the association of the highway with a national audience, the Highway 66 Association also advertised in the nation's periodical press. Mass market advertising was new in the 1920s and its practitioners were a new breed of marketers who sought out ways to draw upon social science research and pop psychology to target, and capture, audiences. In 1932, even though this was hardly a propitious time to encourage people to spend their money on vacations, the U.S. Highway 66 Association paid for an ad in the *Saturday Evening Post* encouraging travelers to the Olympics in Los Angeles that summer to use 66 to get there. 66 was, the ad said, "One of America's few great diagonal highways," and was "the shortest, best and most scenic route" from Chicago to Los Angeles. The part of the nation it traversed included, "the historic and romantic west, the land of limitless panorama and the home of ageless antiquity," and the road was "a high speed carry-all" to those exotic destinations. Even acknowledging that it wasn't paved all the way was turned into a positive by comparison: "You stay on pavement longest going west. You get on pavement first going east." The highway was "NOW READY" and calling to the motorist. The motorist answered. According to Susan Croce

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[28] See the brief summary of this race in Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 45-48.

Kelly, "Within a week of publication, the Route 66 Association office, in Tulsa, received more than seven hundred of the ad's cut-out-and-send-in coupons from people seeking more information."[29]

What is most revealing about this advertising, however, is that it carried a different message from the promotional efforts undertaken in the towns where U.S. 66 formed the Main Street. In those towns the promise was that of hordes of motorists stopping to use local facilities and bring in money from the outside, and also the promise of connections to the outside world that transcended the local social islands where energies were focused inward and where tradition ruled. In the national market the promise was vastly different: Highway 66 beckoned for its ease and speed of transportation, not the opportunity to stop and learn from these intriguing pockets of distinct cultures and not the elimination of their isolation, and certainly not a pluralistic cultural, economic, and social interaction. The implicit contradiction in these two messages would never be successfully reconciled and would enable their different hopes to crash on the shoals of the fulfillment of each other. Route 66, it is fair to say, would ever be a two-way street.

How successful such promotional efforts may have been in terms of actual traffic generated is difficult to say. On the other hand while there were not turnstiles on the highway, at least one state counted the traffic volume carried on the road. At a point one mile east of the town of Chelsea in the northeastern quadrant of Oklahoma, for instance, the official census of traffic (a daily average taken at multiple times in the fall) showed an

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[29] Susan Croce Kelly and Quinta Scott, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 37.

increase from 547 vehicles in 1926 to 1338 in 1930; a point a mile north of the state capitol in Oklahoma City saw an increase in the same period from 3362 to 7365; traffic over the South Canadian River bridge at Bridgeport climbed from 428 to 1072; and at the border on the Texas panhandle, traffic went from 384 vehicles to 849 in that four year period. Equally important is the percentage of "foreign traffic" recorded, percentages that hovered above ten percent for the metropolitan areas but over twenty, and even thirty, percent in the smaller villages where local traffic was minimal.[30] These figures may be fairly reflective of patterns both to the east and west of Oklahoma where long-range linkages were new, but in states like Illinois and California the road traffic doubtless expanded in a much less dramatic fashion in these early years; they already had a substantial volume. Plus, it should be noted that the travelers themselves were not themselves the statistical average American. Long distance travel was an opportunity still largely restricted to those people who could afford the automobile and who had the time and financial resources to embark upon such an adventure. Most Americans, it is fair to say, did not make plans to go to Los Angeles to watch the Olympic Games of 1932. Even as the automobile came within reach of more people in the 1920s, the tourist was the person, in the discreet words of historian Earl Pomeroy, who "continued to be (as he continued to be still later) of more than average wealth and income."[31] Yet that definition of the demographics of travel was consistent with the aspirations of the

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[30] Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1919-1930 Inclusive*, (Oklahoma City, 1930), 165-166. Of course near state borders, the "foreign" traffic increased disproportionately, even above fifty percent, because of the nearby, but out-of-state, traffic.

[31] Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New

promoters; they sought not just travelers, but travelers with money to spend in their stores and towns.

What is more clear than the exact volume of traffic traveling the road are the twin products of that increased traffic, phenomena that escalated in a cycle of almost mutually assured enhancement as traffic and road improvement engaged in a reciprocal dynamic, a *pas de deux* on the highway. The more traffic there was on the roads, the more those roads would become candidates for paving. The better the roads, the more attractive they would be for outside travelers. The greater the traffic, the more business would grow along the roadside. It is impossible to say exactly which force carried the greater weight and both contributed to the other in a symbiotic relationship, but it is possible to identify not only an increase in traffic but also the consequent increase in pavement and increase in highway-associated business. It was not, perhaps, possible at that time to identify the tragic denouement of the ever-escalating crescendo.

As an extension of the building activity of the early 1920s, the campaign to pave Route 66 increased in intensity with visible results almost immediately. An energetic campaign for pavement coincided with Highway 66 Association meetings and communities and businesses were encouraged to contribute money, to lobby county and state officials, and even to volunteer their own labor in improving the roadbed. Often the towns would hold grand parties when a section between two towns was completed. In Rolla, Missouri, where the last section of pavement in the route across the state was completed in 1931, the local newspaper described the celebration in terms usually reserved for presidential or gubernatorial inaugurations:

York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 129.

One of the biggest events organized by the U.S. 66 Association was a celebration to commemorate the completion of Route 66 in Missouri. The event headquarters was the newly completed Hotel Edwin Long and the celebration included a parade through Rolla. More than 8,000 people turned out to hear the bands, watch the floats and automobiles go by, and hear speeches from dignitaries including Missouri Governor Henry Caulfield.[32]

In Oklahoma the enthusiasm was palpable. When paving proposals—and bond issues—were discussed for the highway between Tulsa and Oklahoma City, local supporters in Bristow declared the plan splendid because it "will give Creek county motorists a paved road to Oklahoma City, and because of the importance of having the 'Main Street of America' national highway No. 66 run through the cities on its present routing between Tulsa and Oklahoma City." And it would not just be local traffic or people on their way to Tulsa and Oklahoma City: "It is said that more than 5,000 cars daily will pass through Oklahoma during the tourist season, all following the 'Main Street of America.'"[33] When the road between those two cities was completed soon afterwards, Cyrus Avery himself planned to host the celebration, an occasion that underscored "bring[ing] the two towns closer together."[34] In New Mexico, many of the original road segments of Highway 66 never were paved, but those parts that received the heaviest traffic were either paved or replaced by pavement, such as the replacement of the La Bajada section with new pavement several miles to the east in 1932. In Arizona, Teri A. Cleeland has observed

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[32] "8000 Attend Highway 66 Celebration Sunday Completion of Concrete Slab on Highway 66 across Missouri," Rolla *Herald*, March 19, 1931, quoted in Snider and Sheals, "Route 66 in Missouri," 23.

[33] "Lincoln County Casts Big Vote for Road Bonds," Bristow *Record*, March 31, 1927.

[34] "Tulsa Takes Lead for Highway Fete," Tulsa *Daily World*, September 6, 1927.

that "The outmoded 1920s roadway had to be rebuilt . . . ." And Cleeland, in a penetrating conceptualization of the process, describes a course in which the road evolved from one that coexisted with the landscape to a road that dominated it.[35] The highway, the very roadbed itself, was beginning to evolve, to change, and with that change, the world around it changed.

The highway came to dominate not only the physical landscape but the social landscape as well. As the road changed, so too did business along the road. As traffic increased, so too did business. That, after all, had been part of the forecast offered by promoters of Route 66. The institutions that provided lodging and fuel especially reflected this. Much more adapted to the new mobility of travelers and requiring less formal and public interaction with hotel staff, tent camps and cabin camps on the outskirts of towns increased while hotels in the business centers declined. The store that had sold gasoline on the side was replaced by a new filling station where customers purchased gasoline for their cars as the primary business activity, and then that activity became modified, and enhanced, as the filling station became a service station, a place where repairs and maintenance and the purchase of tires, batteries, and accessories became a significant portion of the business. And the restaurants sometimes became cafés, places where short orders were prepared, quick meals for people on the move. Moreover, automobile dealerships took their place alongside the other new retail establishments. And these businesses multiplied. The small towns and the larger cities alike began to throb with a new rhythm of commerce. The dynamic was that the more

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[35] Teri A. Cleeland, "Historic U.S. Route 66 in Arizona," National Register Multiple Property Context Statement, USDA Forest Service, 1989, E-5.

business they took in, the more they generated. The easier it was to travel, the more people traveled; the more that people traveled, the more businesses there were to cater to their needs. All this was enhanced by the multiplication of automobiles on the roads in absolute numbers in the 1920s. It was as if a new force had been unleashed in the hinterland, and that force began to transform the communities along the road. The key element here is that this was not just quantitative, but qualitative; it was not just an increase in business, but a transformation of business.

This increased traffic generated new institutions and new patterns of relationships. One clear need was simply for a place to stay for the night, and the short distances traveled at a time underscored that need. When the usual daily range of travel nationally was about 200 miles in 1925 and 250 in 1930, the figure was lower for those states where fewer miles of highway were paved. The national response to that need was the auto camp. Indeed, the tourists were known more often as "auto-campers" than as anything else, although they also became known as well as "tin can tourists." In something of a classic statement of the neighborly spirit behind such municipal campgrounds along the Lincoln Highway, a County Supervisor in Iowa explained that his county had a "reputation for hospitality" but travelers had no place to rest and cool off, and no facilities for the convenience of people on the road. So a group of people, aware of the "need for some place where tourists might make temporary camps, open their lunch baskets, prepare their meals, and perhaps set up their tents for the night away from the dusty roads," organized themselves and found "a beautiful walnut grove" and provided a well, a stove, and a toilet for the tent campers. And they did this for free. He explained: "The camping grounds could easily have been made to yield a little revenue, but the men who donated the money were of the opinion that the good will to be purchased by the provision of these facilities without charge was of greater value to the community than the slight revenue that might be derived."[36]

Writer James Agee noted that "At night you could, in say 1922, see their campfires for miles, a flickering fringe to the trunk roads which led out of the Middle West into California, down into Florida."[37] In that year, even before the advent of Route 66 as a formal construct, one map showed 129 such auto-camps in Illinois, 57 in Missouri, 105 in Kansas, 54 in Oklahoma, 86 in Texas, 14 in New Mexico, 14 in Arizona, and 168 in California.[38] These numbers were slightly lower than those in the states along the Lincoln Highway, which was reaching its pinnacle in fame and usage (and this was also years before the birth of Highway 66), but substantially higher than other areas, like the South, and, for that matter, the urban East. And the campgrounds increased in number. These campgrounds often had free facilities—generally fireplaces, some form of lighting, sometimes showers, various degrees of sanitary facilities, and, of course, a place to pitch a tent. There was also an ominous development associated with the establishment of these free camps. The towns themselves became competitive: "First one town and then another added rest houses and comfort stations to their camp sites, while others went still further and installed such things as completely equipped kitchenettes, laundries with electric washing machines and irons, tent floors, electric

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[36] Thomas B. Reid, "Camp Grounds for Lincoln Highway Tourists," *American City*, 22 (May 1920), 502.

[37] [James Agee], "The Great American Roadside," *Fortune*, 10 (September 1934), 56.

[38] "Municipal Auto Camps," Bartlesville *Morning Examiner*, July 2, 1922. The map only indicated the total number in the states and did not indicate further their distribution.

lights, gas for cooking and lighting, filling stations, supply stores, and even free touring information bureaus."[39]

The impetus behind the free camp is not hard to find. As Agee said, "The automobile camp became a cash crop."[40] One newspaper correspondent who studied this new feature of roadside life noticed that "farmers go through camps with eggs, butter, milk and vegetables. The campers buy, for they must eat. It is a show that seems likely to have a long run."[41] That public show, however, led to another, more privately motivated and benefited feature. In Tulsa, for example, the local press reported that "In addition to municipally owned camps, practically every Oklahoma town has what is known as 'pay camps' where for a small sum, generally 25 or 50 cents a night, tourists may find camping facilities and accommodations. Tulsa has a number of such camps, all widely used during the summer months."[42] One of those, of course, was the camp that belonged to Cyrus Avery, a camp that had cabins instead of camp sites, but had a common cooking facility; in this transitional period, Avery's "cabin camp" required customers to furnish their own linens as well as their own utensils.[43] One of the most famous was Camp Joy in Lebanon, Missouri, built there after Emis and Lois Spears

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[39] "Municipal Auto Camps," Bartlesville *Morning Examiner*, July 2, 1922.

[40] [Agee], "The Great American Roadside," 56.

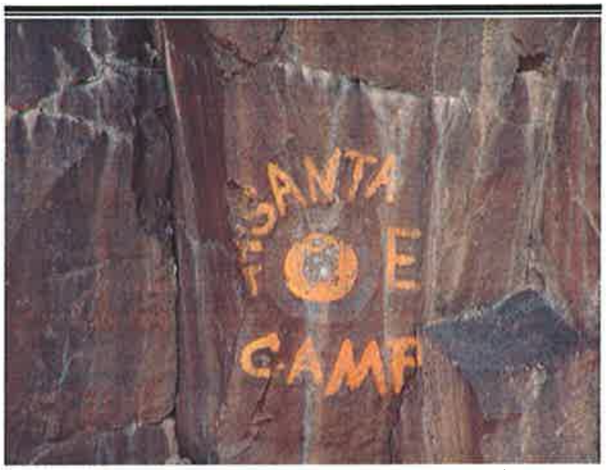
[41] Anderson, "'Tin-Can Tourists' Celebrate Their Season."

[42] Anderson, "'Tin-Can Tourists' Celebrate Their Season."

[43] Kelly and Scott, *Route 66,* 36. See also the discussion in John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 15: "Private entrepreneurs saw an opportunity to profit by upgrading facilities, often through the provisioning of rental cabins, and so the cabin

counted the cars going past a particular point and then purchased a square block and placed their tourist camp there.[44] The emergence of new businesses made it clear that change was in the air even at this early point in the history of Highway 66.

The historic resources along U.S. 66 often reflect this early surge of roadside business activity even though they sometimes now appear to be far away from the more commonly recognized alignments of the highway. They often also show the ravages of decades of pressures for change. The tourist camps tended to be upgraded as they provided more services and as cabins soon replaced tents. So these early lodging opportunities were quickly dismantled. Occasionally a sign remains indicating the location of a campground, and seldom more than that. But the campgrounds still speak to the historical issues and evoke something of the spirit of optimism that prevailed when they opened their doors—or, more exactly, greeted their campers.



Painted sign for Santa Fe Camp, La Bajada. Photo Credit, National Park Service, Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, 2002.

The vision of the future that was so ardently embraced by the roadside merchants, however, was but one part of the Highway 66 revolution. Beneath the buoyant atmosphere surrounding the new pavement and the new connections that was so public, however, there were other sentiments that revealed anxiety about the changes in store. In Illinois, though less dramatically affected by the new highway's designation because of its existing highway

court was born."

system, the greater emphasis on statewide and interstate road generated celebration, but it also gave cause for concern. As Dorothy R. L. Seratt and Terri Ryburn-Lamont carefully note in their discussion of historic and architectural resources in that state, in those early years of Highway 66, "some people feared that cross-state highways, while they were good for garages and motels and gas stations that lined the route, might weaken the other businesses in town."[45] This account goes on to suggest a deeper level of apprehension for those communities: ". . . an uneasiness existed over whether the roadway might ultimately undermine small towns' economic independence." That uneasiness would persist, in one form or another, and for good reason.

In Missouri, pavement activity proceeded boldly on the new highway, but it also had implications for the towns along the path. In Rolla, for example, as the pavement was being completed between that city and St. Louis in 1929, the local newspaper advised the community to pave its business streets in the city or else "lose many dollars from the tourists who come through Rolla, otherwise they will stay on the highway and pass us by."[46] The economic and social ripples generated by the paving of Route 66 were just beginning. And the road was just then starting to change its alignment in a process that would last for as long as the road itself.

The benefits of the new highway for those who lived near it were not evenly dispensed and the new pavement and construction on the road underscored the inequity. The communities that benefited materially from this increased commerce, from the trade

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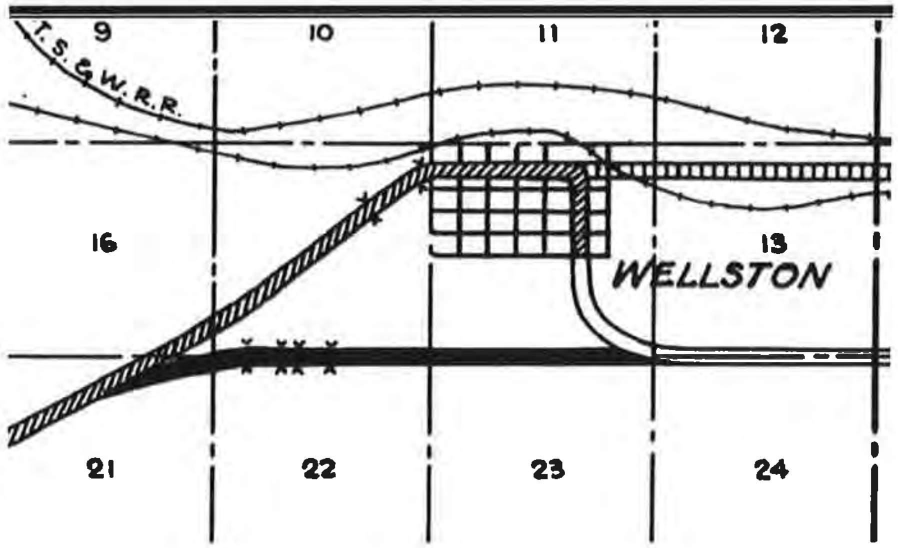
[45] Dorothy R. L. Seratt and Terri Ryburn-Lamont, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 Through Illinois," Multiple Property Submission Context, 1997, E-18.

[46] "Commence Paving 66," Rolla *Herald*, June 13 1929, quoted in Snider and Sheals, "Route 66 in Missouri," 21.

in fuel, food, and lodging and other goods stimulated by this traffic, included probably all of those served by the route. But at the same time that the road generated changes often associated with commercial development, even if they did disrupt old relationships, the dependence on the traffic revealed a less obvious element of the new order. It was clear to all that the traffic brought pavement and the pavement brought more traffic. But as state and federal officials moved to pave the road, they also changed its course. The road had often followed the section lines, sometimes following them straight as an arrow for mile after mile, but at other times the road winded and curved sharply at the section corners, zigzagging across the countryside. The highway engineers, with their penchant for wider roads and smoother curves and straighter lines, saw those deviations as impediments to travel and the small towns that the jogs and bends served began to be left behind. For them, business not only did not increase, but it followed the road elsewhere.



Although Highway 66 originally looped through the town of Wellston, Oklahoma, the paved alignment bypassed the town, albeit after years of litigation and negotiation that brought a second paved portion through on the original alignment. Source: *Report of the State Highway Commission of Oklahoma 1931-1932* (Oklahoma City: December 31, 1932).

This other, darker, side of the traffic-commerce dynamic can also be seen in an

Oklahoma example. The Ozark Trails had passed through the town of Wellston north and east of Oklahoma City and when Highway 66 was designated, it traveled through the middle of town in that small community as it did in so many others. Instead of waiting on the state to pave their road, the people of Lincoln County voted a bond issue indicating the route of the anticipated paved road on the ballot itself five months after Highway 66 became a reality and the measure received broad support at the polls. Since the existing road through Wellston, however, had to make a loop away from a straight line, and thus a longer route, the state highway commission balked at the proposal, and after a new commission took over and approved the plan, then the Bureau of Public Roads objected. Through literally years of negotiation and litigation, the road was finally paved in 1933. The statewide newspaper reported the final resolution, at least in part:

> Highway 66 which, since 1927, has been a bone of contention as to whether the road should run through Wellston or miss the town less than a half-mile, now runs right through the town, which is just what the folk of Lincoln county voted for six years ago. These folk tied up the state highway department every time a move was made to build the road without bending through Wellston. Justice finally prevailed, the road is built, all signs guide the tourists through the middle of town, and everybody is happy, and to give everybody a chance to let loose and cheer about it was the reason for the day's celebration.[47]

What the newspaper did not report, however, was that at the same time the road was constructed through Wellston, the alternate route south of town, completely bypassing the community, was also constructed since the Bureau of Public Roads would not accept such a deviation from the straight path of travel in building the new highway, and this bypass became U.S 66, with the road through town an early alternate route. For

[47] "Wellston Takes Day Off to Celebrate over New Road," *Daily Oklahoman*, May 4, 1932.

at least a generation after this, the people of the town of Wellston, which lost a substantial amount of the traffic that it not only expected but at one time attracted, harbored angry feelings toward the state and the federal governments, feelings that they maintained grew out of being double-crossed at every turn.[48] If there was any doubt previously about the different fates of communities who were on the highway and able to serve it and be served by it, and those who were bypassed by it, there could be none after the Wellston experience.

In addition to the direct commercial implications, positive and negative, for the communities along the highway, there were the indirect consequences that some noticed at an early date. Again, Oklahoma provides a clear example, possibly because of the dramatic shift that the new road entailed in this overwhelmingly rural society. If one were to talk with the hotel operators or the livery stable owners, surely a different perspective on the changes abroad would have been articulated; entire trades, crafts, and businesses were becoming obsolete. Plus, from its very beginnings, the new road system generated new social and economic relationships that replaced old patterns. Access to markets previously beyond reach meant that the local trading center declined and the farmer carried goods increasingly to the more distant markets. In 1929, Jennings J. Rhyne, a sociology professor at the University of Oklahoma, noticed the change in the Oklahoma countryside:

> Everywhere there is evidence of the lessening importance of the village trading center in the economic and social life of the farmer. Formerly when roads were few and very poor and the farmer had to depend upon the wagon and mules to transport his commodities and farm

48 National Register Nomination for Captain Creek Bridge, Lincoln County, 2004, in files of Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City.

> products, it was distinctly to his advantage to do his marketing at the closest point available. Thus the village trading center which acted as a middle man in the transport of good [sic] to larger centers assumed an importance unquestioned by the rural farmer. To-day it has to a large extent lost that importance. The farmer comes to see the advantage of transporting his goods to a larger trading center and one more adequately equipped for handling goods. This transition from village trading center to the county seat or another larger and nearby town or city has been facilitated by improved road systems which give rise to the substitution of cars and trucks for the wagon and which also facilitates transportation by wagon when that method is used.[49]

This change, however, was not just restricted to matters economic. The disintegration of culturally self-sufficient local neighborhoods, made possible by the combined forces of automobiles and radio, even penetrated spiritual life according to Rhyne:

> There is no doubt that the country church is losing membership to the town and city church through the advent of the good roads and the automobile. . . . It is no longer necessary for the farmer to go to a church to hear a sermon. He can sit comfortably in his home and hear over his radio a sermon of a noted divine in a distant city which is far better prepared and more capably delivered than that being preached by the pastor at the little neighborhood church. . . . The increased mobility of rural population and the consequent tendency toward the breakdown of neighborhood and community life is having a telling effect on the country church. Increased facilities for transportation along with the desire to travel is taking many a farmer away from the church on Sunday who formerly went to church dutifully.[50]

For better or worse, the advent of the new mobility not only presented new opportunities and possibilities, opened new doors, and broadened the distances by which people might travel in the course of making their living and healing their souls, but it also more

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[49] Jennings J. Rhyne, *Social and Community Problems of Oklahoma* (Guthrie: Co-operative Publishing Co., 1929), 76-77.

[50] Rhyne, *Social and Community Problems of Oklahoma*, 99.

fundamentally restructured the social relationships of the village and countryside. Moreover, those social relationships would continue to be restructured by the forces unleashed by that mobility.

Chapter IV

Highway 66 and the Depression

Within a few years of the creation of U.S. Highway 66 the nation plunged into an economic depression that became the benchmark for economic privation in the twentieth century and that would reshape much of American society and culture. It would also leave its mark on the new highway. The Depression generated vast contradictions, cultural and economic, in the use and construction activities associated with the highway. At the same time that the hardships of Depression increased travel on the road by people emigrating to the West Coast, that traffic ironically made possible the emergence of small businesses alongside the road hoping to gain a toehold in the economy as part of the burgeoning automobile-related service sector. Moreover, because so many people were out of work, the initiation of federal work-relief programs spawned a focused effort to improve the nation's infrastructure, including especially roads. This stimulated the expansion of road building activity along the route of U.S. 66 which literally cemented the road into the nation's transportation system. In addition, the highway became embedded in the nation's psyche as it carried not only a continuous stream of traffic but also the cultural icons of hard times and despair. Moreover, beneath the veneer of Depression, subtle changes were also underway as tourists discovered the Southwest via Route 66 and as an inchoate trucking industry began to edge out the railroads as the preeminent freight carriers of the nation, with both of these developments impacting the businesses and communities lining the newly paved ribbon of concrete stretching between Los Angeles and Chicago.

i. "A Stream of Distressed Humanity"

When the nation officially entered a period of economic depression following the stock market crash of October 1929, a significant portion of the country's residents were already in tightened circumstances and had been suffering for years from the same hardships that were just beginning to settle upon the rest of the country. This was true especially for the rural parts of the nation where agricultural pursuits characterized the economic and social callings of the people, and, as it happened, much of the vast area traversed and served by the new Highway 66 was farming and ranching country, albeit punctuated by important urban centers. Since around 1923 or 1924, the rural sectors of the United States had been afflicted by a persistently deepening agricultural depression as a downward spiral in crop prices intersected with an upward spiral in costs. The cost of loans taken out in more prosperous years, when expansion had seemed not only opportune but essential, and the cost of machinery to work the larger holdings also mortgaged—these costs were innocent enough when incurred but now they were costs that had to be paid in times where income actually declined. The combination of increased costs and diminished income worked powerfully against the tillers of the soil who worked the land of others or who owned small parcels. Those small parcels were planted now in single crops for the market rather than in diversified patches for subsistence, and by 1929 the annual per capita income of people living on farms was roughly a third of what their urban counterparts were receiving.[1] In this way the farmers were compressed in a vise of economic pressures that pushed them elsewhere seeking opportunities not just for a brighter future, but for a future in which they and their families just survived. To these people, Highway 66 beckoned in ways vastly different from what the road's promoters had in mind.

The way the process worked that brought these people to the decision to give up hope of staying where they had made their homes and to cast about for opportunities elsewhere was knifelike in its simplicity and efficiency. For the farm owner who faced escalating costs of production, all unnecessary expenses would be eliminated, including in that category the money that had gone for education and clothing and food that could not be produced at home. Often the need for food drove them to their bank, if they were landowners, and to their merchants or landlords if they were not, for an advance of credit until their crop came in. Sooner or later after repeated years of falling prices combined with increasing expenses, the loans were refinanced and then refinanced again as the debt burden increased, and mortgages went unpaid, and if the land were owned outright, the taxes on the land went unpaid, and the result was the same: foreclosure. For the workers who helped produce the crops on someone else's farm or ranch for a share of the crop, they discovered that their wage was one of the costs that had to be cut, so they had to move elsewhere to find employment, usually in the nearby cities and towns. Those landowners who could hold onto their land had a ready incentive for letting their tenants go and using the money saved to buy a tractor, which would enable them to operate with

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[1] Gilbert C. Fite, "The Farmers' Dilemma, 1919-1929," in John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner, and David Brody, *Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America: The 1920's* (n.p.: The Ohio State University Press, 1968), 67.

even fewer helpers and those who were retained would by paid hourly wages—not a portion of the crop. The people cast off from the farms then either flocked to the cities, in search of relief, or wandered the roads looking for a job or even a rumor of a job. As early as 1922 one observer driving west from Chicago ventured through the huge Midcontinent Oil Field of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, and as he journeyed through Oklahoma he noted that the traveler there "sees red-faced men who wear no collars; he sees women who wear boudoir-caps in automobiles . . . ," but he noted one feature with a poignant sense of tragedy: "Our farmers are drifters. 'These are the people who are to be seen along any of the main highways, in rickety prairie schooners, traveling – God knows where . . . . The hardest thing is to see the children, --poor little beings,--under-nourished mentally and physically, their mouths drawn in the hard firm lines that tell a terrible story.'"[2]

Nor was it just the farmers who were forced onto the highways by the agricultural depression of the 1920s. The merchants themselves faced the same pressures and as their agricultural customer base declined in both numbers and in purchasing power, they too closed their doors. Even the banks of the region were themselves being squeezed and in the period between 1921 and 1929s, the number of banks in the nation declined by one sixth, with "a large fraction" in towns of under 2500 people and most of them in "seven western grain states." As the pre-eminent history of banking and monetary policy concluded, these failures "were primarily explained by improvements in transportation and increase in urbanization, which benefited the large banks at the expense of the small,

[2] Philip Kates, "American Domestic Manners: The Accounts of Two Travelers," *Atlantic Monthly*, 130 (August 1922), 193.

and by the agricultural difficulties of the twenties."[3]

In this inexorable, unforgiving process of purging the countryside and small towns of its denizens, was soon added yet another element that drove the cycle even harder as drought intensified an already grave situation. Technically the Dust Bowl, where severe drought converged with serious wind erosion to create the worst forms of agricultural catastrophe, dominated the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles and portions of the adjoining states, but drought afflicted a much wider area; in southwest Missouri and in Arkansas the plight of farmers was as bad, although the engines of despair were in those places a combination of drought and lack of credit as much as drought and wind elsewhere. In Arkansas in 1931, 519,000 people were being fed by the Red Cross, the only system of relief available. In Missouri at the same time, the Red Cross was "feeding and clothing 70,690 poverty-stricken people" on a full-time basis, with the expectation that the number would climb shortly to over a hundred thousand.[4] The Dust Bowl was not an inverted oasis with desert surrounded by verdant pasture and farming country.[5] The Dust Bowl was both a real phenomenon in a particular place, but more than that it was a symbol, a metaphor for a much broader area that had suffered devastation and where its people were desperately looking for hope itself. If there is any distortion or misapprehension in its use as a description of a broader process, it is by way of

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[3] Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867-1860* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 249.

[4] "Drought: Field Reports from Five of the States Most Seriously Affected," *The New Republic* (February 25, 1931), 37-38, 40.

[5] See Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) for a study that especially focuses on two counties in Kansas and Oklahoma.

suggesting that the hordes of migrants on the road were there because of natural disaster not because of human forces. And Highway 66 both traversed and drew from that wide area of agricultural despair in the 1920s and 1930s, providing a ready conduit for those with no place to go, but needing to go nonetheless.

With the new system of highways people would also roam farther and farther seeking employment, not just taking the fruits of their labor to market, but their labor itself to market. And the rise of a second-hand market in automobiles contributed dramatically to what is often viewed as the democratization of the travel experience; even people down on their luck were drawing upon the automobile to meet their needs. The automobile, at the beginning of the decade, largely the province of the well to do, by the end of the 1920s was available to many users.

The contours of migration from the land include the dynamics of weather and climate, an unabated pattern of soil erosion, the matrix of class and property, and the dream of better circumstances elsewhere. The hopes focused on either jobs in the city or jobs in California, and sometimes one then the other, both within reach thanks to the automobile and the new avenue of commerce. When the dreams finally settled on the distant shores of the Pacific, they often did so because they had been stimulated by operators in California who let it be known that there were opportunities aplenty in the state for workers who would come. Even the entrepreneurial magazine *Business Week* found this tactic shameful and reprehensible. *Business Week* quoted an account from a California rural newspaper in which a migrant was asked why he had come to California:

> He pulled two newspaper clippings from his pocket, one from an Oklahoma paper and another from Texas. In them were unsigned advertisements painting in glowing terms the wonderful opportunities to be found in California. Are certain interests exploiting these people as

> ruthlessly as the steamship companies did during the days of the great immigrations from southern Europe two or three decades ago? Is there any doubt of it?[6]

The documentation of this vast migration has taken three forms: the analysis by contemporary social scientists, the photographic record, and the annals of literature. All three combined to paint a tragic portrait not just of the human lives involved in the exodus but to imbue Highway 66 with an enduring image. Defining the exodus in precise statistical terms proved an elusive task, but one of the more compelling descriptions, that also suggests the complexity of the phenomenon, was that offered by Carey McWilliams in his study *Ill Fares the Land: Migrants and Migratory Labor in the United States in 1942*. Reflecting on the events and patterns of the previous decade, McWilliams wrote, "Across the broad acres of American agriculture, a shadow has been lengthening. It is the shadow cast by an army of migrant farm families uprooted from the land, which, here and there, merges with the moving shadows cast by processions of migratory workers following one of the established crop cycles."[7] In a similar assessment, University of California economist, Professor Paul S. Taylor testified in 1940 that ". . A stream of distressed humanity forms and hopefully seeks outlet to the West, in Arizona and California."[8] A huge, ongoing march westward was at work and these people were traveling Route 66 and the "Main Street of America" was often lined with people leaving

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[6] "Flee Dust Bowl for California," *Business Week*, July 3, 1937, 36-7.

[7] Carey McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land: Migrants and Migratory Labor in the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1942), 3.

[8] Taylor's testimony before the Temporary National Economic Committee, studying technology and the concentration of economic power (1940) was quoted in Seymour J. Janow and William Gilmartin, "Labor and Agricultural Migration to California, 1935-40," *Monthly Labor Review*, 53 (July, 1941), 23.

town.

Between July 1935 and the end of 1940 more than a half-million people in need of employment entered California by car or truck. If they had been counted prior to 1935 there is no telling how high the number would be. In the second half of 1935 alone, 43,180 people entered California in search of manual labor positions. The vast majority of these people were from the Southern Plains, where, according to the *Monthly Labor Review*, published by the U.S. Department of Labor, "the dislocating forces of depression, mechanization, and drought sent thousands westward in search of economic rehabilitation."[9] Most of them were white—91.1%—and 5.8% were identified as Mexican (this appears to have been an indication of ethnicity rather than citizenship), and 1.4% were African Americans. They were mainly families rather than individuals. They traveled cramped in cars and trucks with an average of 4.8 persons per vehicle. The average family in the migratory labor camps in California after they arrived had 2.1 persons actively in the labor market, including almost all adults, male and female, and nearly half of the teenage children. Where they came from was a wide swath of the nation's interior, but they were all called Okies; Oklahoma alone supplied nearly one-fourth of the migrants, and along with Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri, the four states were the point of origin of around half the migrants in the 1935-1940 period. Historian Donald Worster includes those who left Oklahoma for contiguous states, such as Texas, and counted 309,000 Oklahomans departing between 1935 and 1940.[10] In addition

[9] Janow and William Gilmartin, "Labor and Agricultural Migration to California, 1935-40," 18.

[10] Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, 49.

Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico provided important contingents in the migration. The Highway 66 states seem to have dominated the exodus.

And within those states the Highway 66 counties also proved important. In Oklahoma, three of the four counties that supplied the heaviest migrant forces—Oklahoma County, Caddo County, and Tulsa County—were crossed by Route 66, while the fourth, Muskogee County, was thirty-five or forty miles from the highway. But while these people were seeking manual jobs and were often entering the agricultural labor market, approximately a fourth of the migrants had been engaged as farmers or farm laborers prior to the move. There is no way to determine the proportions of these people by occupation, but Carey McWilliams noted that

> The farm families, however, are by no means the only refugees who have taken to the road. The United Provident Association in Oklahoma City is the agency through which verification of residence of former Oklahomans is effected by welfare organizations outside the state. In 1940, the association analyzed 1000 such requests, 844 of which came, incidentally, from California. Farmers were the largest single group involved, with day laborers and WPA workers constituting the next largest groups. But it is interesting to note the wide variety of occupations represented in this group of former residents who had moved elsewhere. The list included butchers, barbers, bookkeepers, cab drivers, carpenters, cobblers, domestics, janitors, machinists, mechanics, miners, musicians, painters, policemen, printers, roustabouts, rug cleaners, salesmen, schoolteachers, truck drivers, waitresses—almost every imaginable occupation. The bulk of the exodus from Oklahoma has been, in fact, from the populous counties of the central part of the state.[11]

The ultimate destination for many of these migrants was California, but it was not always their first choice. It was never an easy trip and it was often complicated. Sometimes opportunities arose, or desperation reached its limit, and the cars and trucks of people found refuge or employment on the way. Again, Carey McWilliams, who studied

[11] McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land*, 197.

the phenomenon of migration carefully, noticed this when he found many stopping in Arizona.

> When migrants start out on Highway #66 for the Coast, many of them are headed, in the first instance, for the cotton fields of New Mexico and Arizona. Arizona is not only the conduit through which the stream of migration must pass in its general westward flow, but it is also the initial goal that many migrants have in mind when they set out. . . . Arizona has become . . . a winter resort for the migrants—a way station en route to the Coast.[12]

Sooner or later they usually wound up in California. By 1937 *Business Week* estimated that "Over the main highways leading into southern California from Oklahoma, Texas, Arizona, and Arkansas, a steady stream of vehicles, mostly in a condition immediately preceding complete collapse, moves westward. The influx is now averaging one immigrant outfit every ten minutes, and the trek has only begun."[13] Clearly it was true in the magazine's perspective on the migration as a whole for the season, that the trek had only just begun, but it was also true in another sense. Once they arrived in California, in their "old automobiles, piled high with poor household belongings and crowded with persons of all ages," the procession would break up and spread out into the state, in the reverse way that it had followed multiple tributary roads until they converged with Highway 66 as they began their trek. For them, as they left Highway 66 behind, they were at the beginning of another journey, but the epic migration part, where they crossed from the Mississippi Valley to California's Imperial Valley or even to the migratory camps of the Farm Security Administration, was one indelibly associated in their experiences, in their memories, in official studies, and in the popular press, with

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[12] McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land*, 71.

[13] "Flee Dust Bowl for California," 36.

U.S. Highway 66.

This brief statistical profile of the migration, while it conveys something of the magnitude and demography involved, does not do justice to the human dimensions of the experience, nor does it convey any appreciation of the contours of daily life on the road. There are other sources that help in this regard. One of the most important is the photographic record compiled by the Farm Security Administration in the 1930s. In 1935 the Franklin Roosevelt administration created an agency known as the Resettlement Administration, and that agency was charged with assisting farm families, and others in rural America, who had been severely impacted by the powerful forces reshaping the countryside through loans, through relocation to better farmland or into planned communities, through land renewal programs, and through establishing camps for migrant workers. In 1937 this agency would merge with the new Farm Security Administration, under which organization the collection of their work is better known. One small part of this program was the creation of a unit of photographers who roamed the backroads of the nation to document the conditions under which people lived and the assistance that they found. While the record of photographs they produced is especially strong in areas where Resettlement Administration programs were undertaken, their lenses captured much, much more than was originally anticipated. And because some of these people they visited and photographed were in the process of migrating to the West on Highway 66, they also produced important documents of the history of that highway.

The small cadre of talented photographers included well-known photographers and also soon-to-be-well-known photographers who scattered around the country, and in the process they captured the experience of the people in their homes, packing up to leave, and journeying to Highway 66, on the journey itself, and their fate when they reached their destination—in California or in other states short of that goal.

One of the photographers in that FSA program, Dorothea Lange, joined with economist (and soon to be her husband) Paul S. Taylor to produce one of the major studies, still in print, of the migration. The two published a book of photographs and essays about the migration called *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion.*[14] Taylor, who had studied the problem intently, found Lange's photographs especially apt for expressing what the statistics alone could not say. One photograph in that volume, dated June 6, 1938, and probably taken along Route 66 in the vicinity of El Reno, Oklahoma, shows a man and family in their car with boxes tied to the sides and more gear on top, with the caption and quote from the subjects of the photograph: "Returning from California— 'People aren't friendly there like they are here, but they appreciate the cheap labor coming out. When there's a rush for work they're friendlier than at other times.'"[15] The next page showed a scene from Muskogee with the caption: "—Returned 'Whole families go to Los Angeles, Phoenix, Bakersfield. Half the people of this town and around here have gone out there.' *—Said at the drug store* Also many come back, like this family just home from California. *Muskogee County, Oklahoma. August 10, 1938.*"[16] The photographs and their stories told the tale of tragedy, and also told the tale of Highway 66.

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[14] Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor, *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, Inc., 1939; revised edition, Paris: Jean Michel Place, 1999).

[15] Lange and Taylor, *An American Exodus*, 60.

[16] Lange and Taylor, *An American Exodus*, 61.

The Farm Security Administration photographs do not provide a comprehensive documentation of the migration from the economically devastated agricultural areas of the Southern Plains and Mississippi Valley since they focus primarily on the experiences that drove people to such migration, as well as to government programs, and on their experiences once they reached California. But along the way, they also captured aspects of the migration experience. And not everyone took Highway 66, and when they did, they often took detours and had delays and stopped to make enough money to see them through the next part of their journey. They gave not only the Depression and the Dust Bowl and sharecropping a human face, but also Highway 66 and the other roads that the migrants took. Plus, the photographs, like the people who traveled it, became part of the highway. The images are sometimes iconic, as with the Migrant Madonna, and sometimes prosaic, such as a photograph of a migrant fixing a flat tire, but after the migration, and after the images were published by the newspapers and magazines of the nation, could there be any mistake about where Highway 66 led? It led west. It led to California. It led to hope. And sometimes it led just to hope and little more.

The photographs taken by the Farm Security Administration photographers are sometimes identified as to exact location, but often they lack descriptions with sufficient detail to place them in a particular locale, or even on a particular roadway. Certain photographs clearly show the road and road features of Highway 66. The filling stations, the road signs, the cafés, the bridges, and the highway itself can be documented in the FSA collections. In the others, where the location is not specified, the photographs reveal the same building types and features that could be found on Highway 66 and are even generic representations of life on the road. But photographing buildings and road features was not their point. The point was rather to capture the face of America in need, the face of the nation in crisis, the face of proud citizens struggling as best they could to build better lives in the hardest of circumstances. In the process, the FSA photographers also captured the face of Route 66 and provided an important documentary record of the historic context of the highway at a pivotal moment.

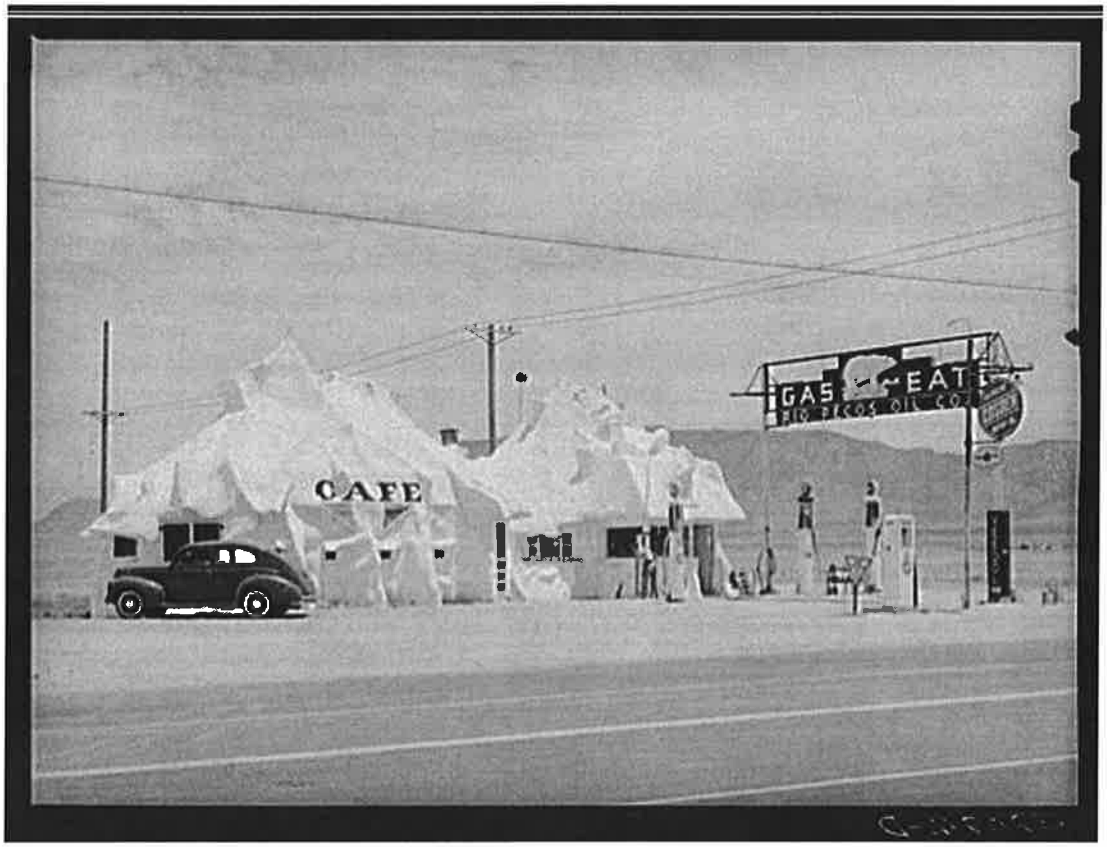
John Vachon, "Ozark farmer and family, Missouri" 1940. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

Russell Lee, "Getting ready to Leave. Kissing migrants goodbye. Muskogee, Oklahoma," 1939. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

Russell Lee, "Getting gas, migrant family en route to California at small town near Henrietta, Oklahoma," 1939. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

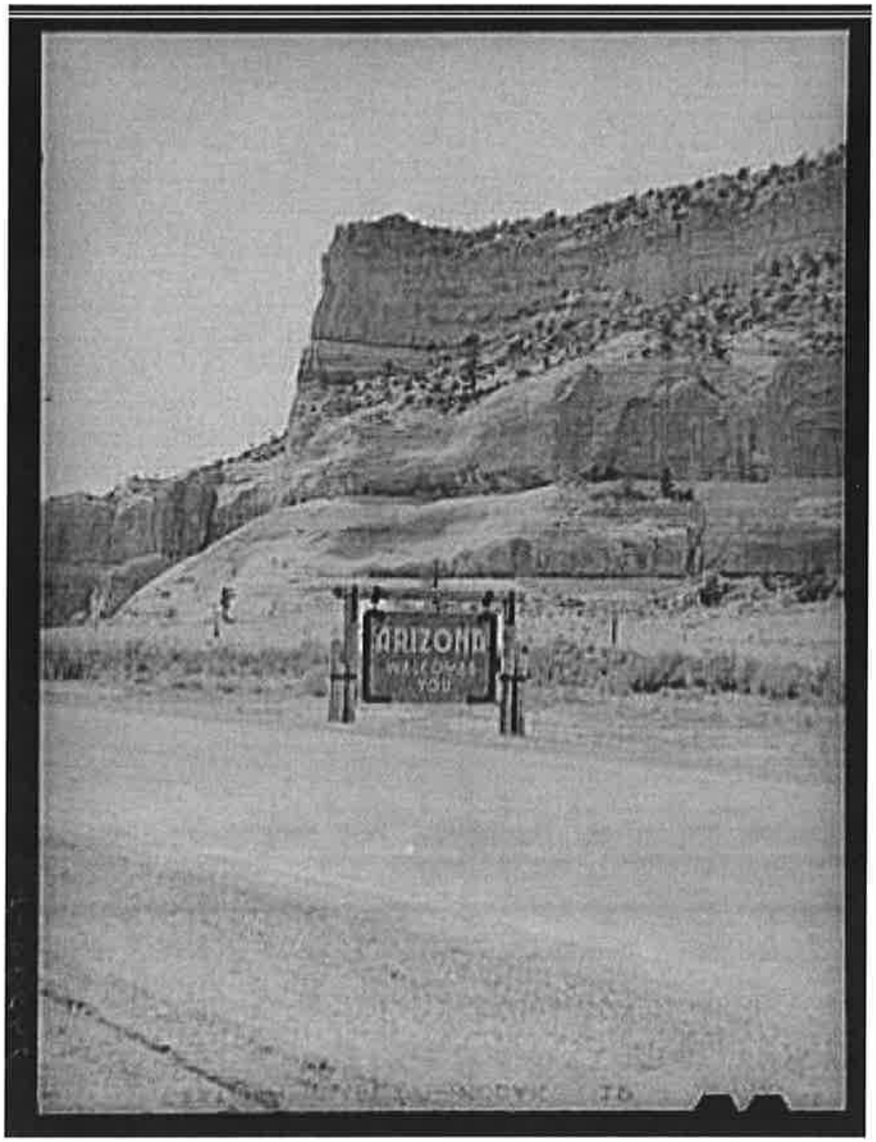
Russell Lee, "Camp of migrant workers near Prague, Oklahoma," 1939. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

Dorothea Lange, "Migrant family from Oklahoma in Texas. A family of six alongside the road. An example of how they fall between the relief agencies. The father, aged thirty-five, is an intelligent fellow, a painter by trade. Advanced tuberculosis, victim of an occupational disease. Ineligible for WPA (Works Progress Administration), rated as totally disabled. As a state charge under Oklahoma relief standards, the family were told the maximum relief would be seven dollars every two weeks. They lost their home, their furniture, took to the road a year ago and when the photographs were made they were found to be without money, shelter, and without food for the four children." 1936. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

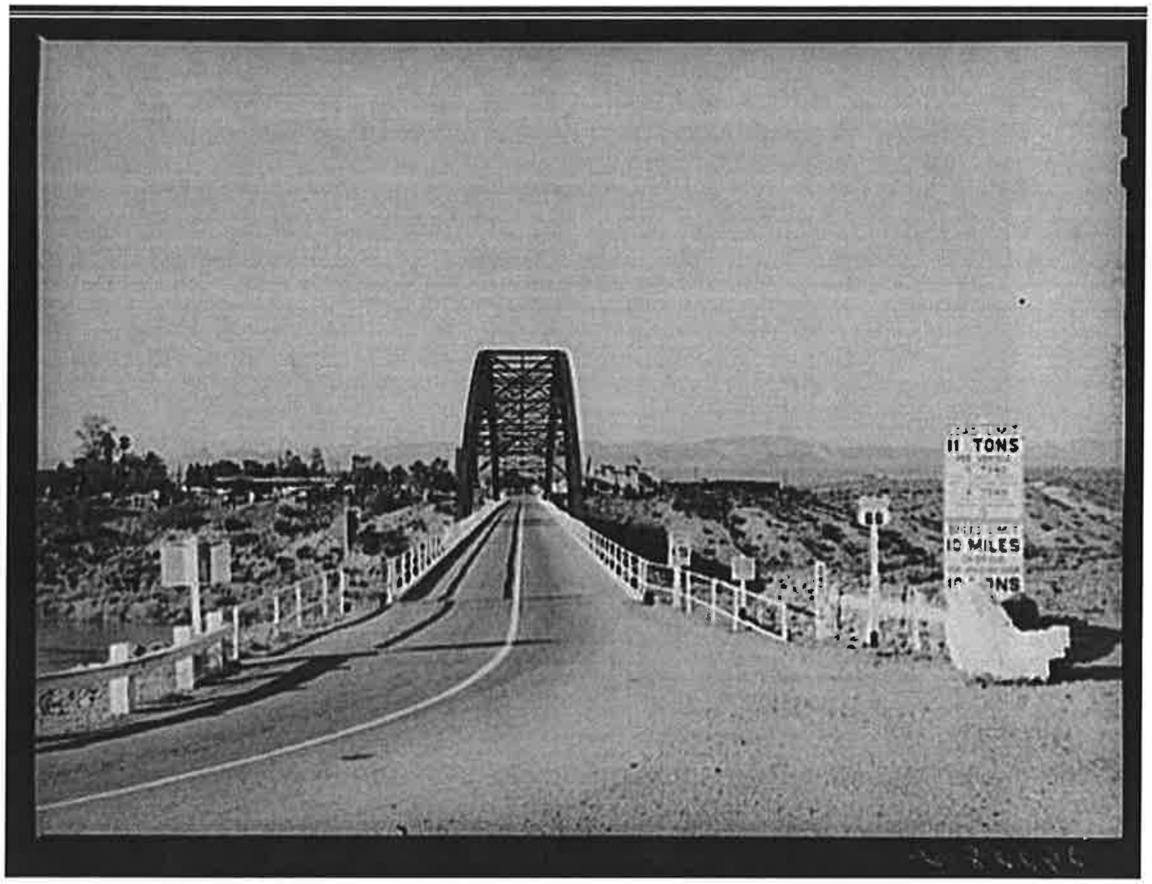


Russell Lee, "Cafe and filling station of U.S. Highway 66, east of Albuquerque, New Mexico," 1940. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

Arthur Rothstein, "State line. Arizona - New Mexico," 1940. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.



Arthur Rothstein, "State line. Arizona - New Mexico," 1940. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.



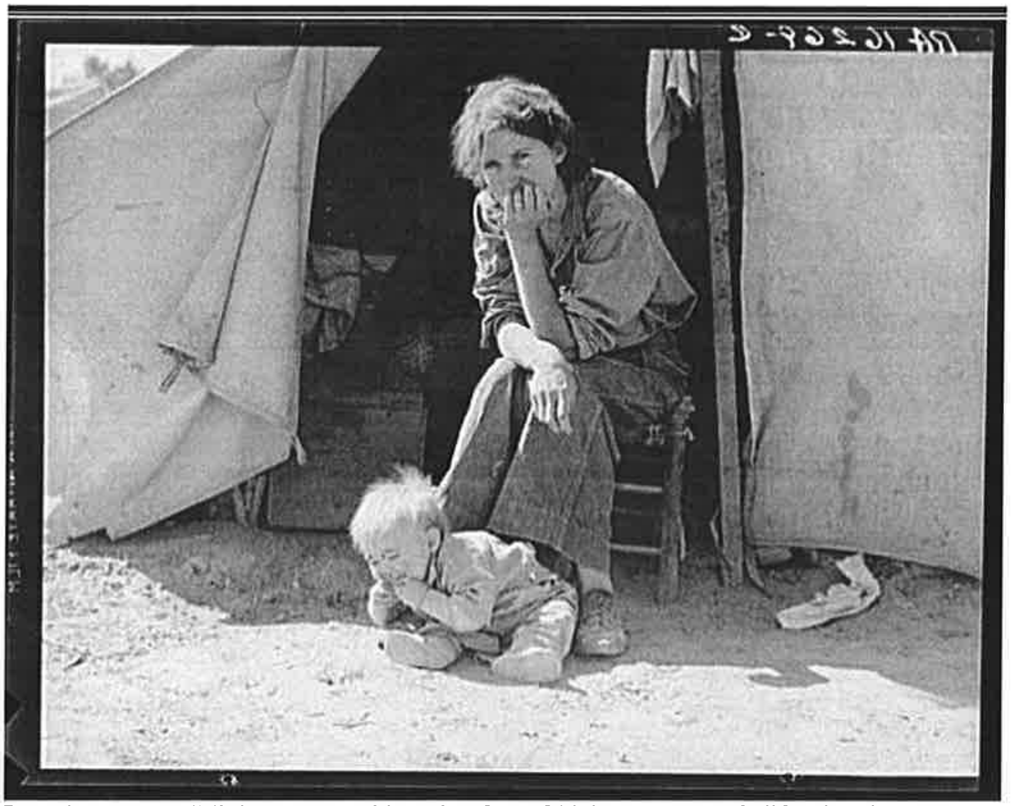
Arthur Rothstein, "Bridge. State line. California – Arizona," 1940. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

Dorothea Lange, "Drought refugees stopped at inspection station on the California –Arizona state line to have their baggage examined for plant pest." Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

Dorothea Lange, "Oklahoma sharecropper entering California stalled on desert with his wife and four children." 1937. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

Dorothea Lange, "Migrant worker from Oklahoma repairing tire on California highway," 1936. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

Dorothea Lange, "In Farm Security Administration (FSA) migrant labor camp during pea harvest. Family from Oklahoma with eleven children. Father, eldest daughter and eldest son working. She: "I want to go back to where we can live happy, live decent, and grow what we eat." He: "I've made my mistake and now we can't go back. I've got nothing to farm with." Brawley, Imperial County, California." 1939. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.



Dorothea Lange, "Eighteen year-old mother from Oklahoma, now a California migrant," 1937. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

The statistics told much of the story. And the photographs helped people see faces in the numbers. But turning the highway into a literary device brought the highway to life. Route 66 had become an American institution before John Steinbeck traveled U.S. 66 west in 1937 doing research for his novel. And when Steinbeck described what he called "the mother road, the road of flight," and when he wrote that "66 is the path of a people in flight, refugees from dust and shrinking land, from the thunder of tractors and shrinking ownership, from the desert's slow northward invasion, from the floods that bring no richness to the land and steal what little richness is there," and when he followed the tracks of the Okie migrants to their roots, "From all these the people are in flight, and they come into 66 from the tributary side roads, from the wagon tracks and the rutted country roads,"[17] he was both uncovering a sociological fact, although there were many who denied that fact, and also becoming the poet of the migration, the troubadour of the downtrodden making the road, making Highway 66, their own, their only possession. And indeed, with the help of John Steinbeck, 66 came to be not only the possession of the dispossessed who followed its narrow ribbon across the land, but it came also to be the possession of the American people. It had been socially and culturally transformed from a ribbon of pavement stretching across the West traveled by vehicles and served by commercial operations along the way. Highway 66 had become a social institution itself, an institution that held both the capacity to change other parts of society and to reflect the deep convulsions and trends in society.

[17] John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: Viking Books, 1939; reprint,

ii. New Roads, New Tourists, New Trucks

It is common to think of Route 66 in the 1930s exclusively in terms of the great migration that it carried, but other forces were at work at the same time that also deepened the importance of the highway to the nation. One set of those changes had to do with literally improving the road so that it was paved and met engineering standards. Another development was a surge in tourist traffic as motorists in the east journeyed into the wondrous geographies and cultures of the southwest for recreation. And yet another trend was the emergence of a highway alternative to the railroad for carrying the goods of commerce.

It was not long after Highway 66 was designated on paper that a systematic program was underway to improve the roadbed, provide new bridges and culverts, and alter the alignment to make the highway more trafficable and in that way make it more attractive for travelers and also, given the logic of highway construction and traffic counts, more attractive for businesses to locate along its path. During the Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt administrations the road was being pulled out of the mud and mire, and along with it the businesses that depended on the road. The vast amounts of money that were poured into highway construction can be seen in one way as an effort to provide relief to the unemployed who desperately needed work; those expenditures can also be seen as a form of relief to the businesses whose communities needed money to spend and who needed commerce from outside their towns to increase the volume of trade. Although sometimes this aspect is forgotten, the New Deal provided not only

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Bantam edition, 1966), 128.

relief to those out of work, but in the process dramatically enhanced purchasing power with the business community a prime beneficiary.

As early as the autumn of 1930, when President Herbert Hoover appointed his Emergency Committee for Employment, the nation's highways became the focus of a way to get people to work at the same time that the government would improve the transportation infrastructure. In November of that year, Colonel Arthur Woods, who chaired the committee, declared "that carrying out a broad and comprehensive public roads program at a time like this is one of the soundest procedures to meet a situation of depression because it not only employs labor and materials necessary in actual construction, but also utilizes a background of additional labor to provide the materials and the effective completion of such a program. It is estimated that for every man actually employed in working on a road, three other people become gainfully employed as a result, not only in the supplying of materials and equipment, but in other industries all along the line."[18] As Hoover moved to stimulate road construction—and also public building construction and some large dams too—he went against the advice and philosophy of some of his own cabinet, and he worried as well about the cost of the projects, but the result was that road construction gained a major boost during the Hoover years. It was under this program that Missouri was able to complete paving its section of Highway 66 in 1931 and other states increased their pavement too. In 1931 a new bridge crossed the Rio Grande in Albuquerque and construction began on a two-hundred fifty foot long through-truss bridge over the Rio Puerco west of Albuquerque, to be completed

[18] "Three Types of Highway Building Favored by the President's Emergency Committee for Employment," *American City*, 43 (December 1930), 158.

in 1933—modifications that would be key in altering the alignment of U.S. 66 later. At the same time, U.S. 66 from Santa Fe to Albuquerque was being paved, and moved, so that the treacherous switchbacks of La Bajada would ever after be avoided.[19] In 1932 the

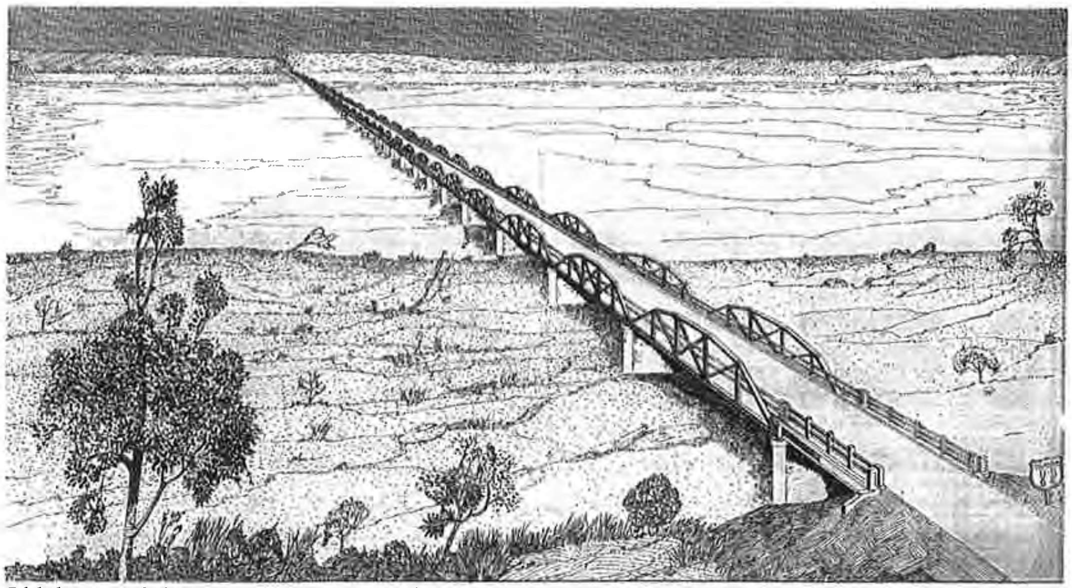
Rio Puerco Bridge, west of Albuquerque, completed in 1933. An example of the property type Bridges, this is a splendid Parker Cambelback Through-Truss bridge. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

highway was realigned in the stretch between Williams and Ash Fork in Arizona and a major chunk of Highway 66 in that state was thereby paved.[20] Oklahoma paved the controversial Wellston Gap of Highway 66 and created a new alignment of the highway, including one of the longest bridges in the state, west of El Reno, both completed in 1933. The William H. Murray Bridge on that segment was hailed by the Oklahoma Highway Department as "the most pretentious bridge engineering project ever undertaken

[19] David Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico*, (Santa Fe: New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office, 1992).

[20] Cleeland, Teri A., "Historic U.S. Route 66 in Arizona," National Register Multiple Property Context Statement, USDA Forest Service, 1989, E-5

by the Oklahoma Highway Commission." It noted, further, that "when completed it will be the longest bridge in Oklahoma, and one of the longest in the entire Southwest."[21] About three-fourths of a mile long, the bridge is made of thirty-eight spans with Warren



Oklahoma Highway Department drawing of proposed William H. Murray Bridge, 1933. Note Route 66 highway sign in lower right corner. This bridge is an example of a camelback pony truss bridge with its characteristic feature of exactly five angles in the upper chord of each span. Source: Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1931-1932 Inclusive* (Oklahoma City, 1933).

pony trusses, each a hundred feet long. While the highway construction program of the New Deal is often credited, appropriately enough, with massive highway construction programs, the groundwork established during the previous administration, and its impact on local economies, has too often been neglected or even subsumed as part of the New Deal.

The Roosevelt administration geared up for its public works program in a cautious fashion, with primary considerations given to economy in expenditures and

[21] Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1931-1932 Inclusive* (Oklahoma City, 1933), 49.

procedural correctness and with unemployment relief as a consideration that came after other criteria had been satisfied. Harold Ickes, the Secretary of the Interior, and the head of the Public Works Administration, with his zeal for honesty and meticulous attention to detail, made sure that the entire program was under close control, and, as historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., acknowledges, "Nor can it be said that Roosevelt brought any driving sense of urgency to PWA."[22] As a result, almost all of the PWA's contracts by the end of the first year of the FDR administration had gone to naval construction projects that had already been planned and approved. Instead, the primary road construction funds came from the National Industrial Recovery Act which created the National Recovery Administration and granted funds to other agencies, including the Bureau of Public Roads, and to cities and states.

While money was being expended for roads, one of the greater consequences of the NIRA funding was a revision of the formulas to be used by the states which received road funds. A complex array of considerations now entered the picture, including the necessity of spending federal money on roads outside the city limits of municipalities (no more than 50%), on extensions of federal roads inside the city limits (at least 25%), and the new formula limited spending on secondary roads to no more than 25% until the Federal Aid road system in the state was 90% complete. In addition, the National Recovery Administration required that the funds be spent in 75% of the state's counties unless unemployment concentrations (and thus also employment opportunities) mandated otherwise. Under the National Recovery Administration it was clear to most that a

[22] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton – Mifflin Company, 1958), 286-287.

different priority had been accepted: "The practical planning of the Recovery highway program aims to put as many men as possible back to work as quickly as possible and to pay them a living wage. The 30-hour week and a minimum wage for various sections of the country have been established. Men will be hired from employment lists prepared by State Directors of Reemployment."[23] This program infused much needed additional money into the effort, but it was only in 1935 when, with the economy still sagging, the unemployment rate still unconscionable, and after trials with other direct-relief and work-relief programs, the New Deal created the Works Progress Administration which was much speedier in processing and set unemployment relief as the top priority; it also was established with a budget of five billion dollars, far more than previously allocated to construction or relief. This was the point when larger amounts of money began to pour into the nation's road system.

The most visible consequence of the new emphasis on road construction along Highway 66 was the achievement of, finally, a continuous ribbon of pavement that stretched from Chicago to Los Angeles, complete with bridges, culverts, and other highway features. On September 13, 1937, when Oklahoma governor E. W. Marland snipped the ribbon dedicating the fourteen mile stretch between Afton and Miami that replaced the nine foot wide ribbon of pavement that earlier linked the two towns, U.S. 66 was completely paved for both lanes of traffic through Oklahoma.[24] In May 1938, the last gap in the road in the nation was paved with asphalt, in Oldham County, Texas, and

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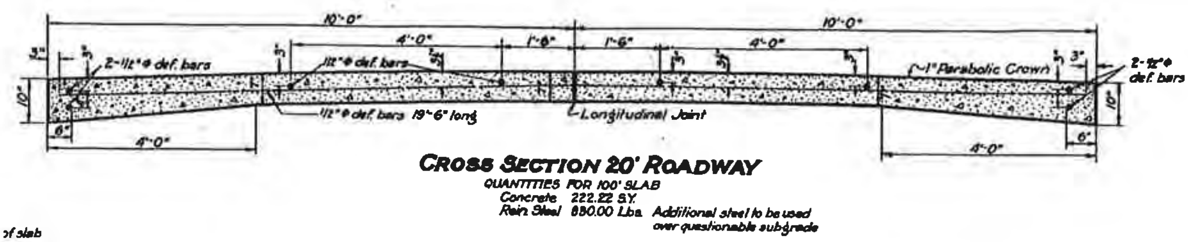
[23] "Roadside Improvement Projects Actively Sponsored by United States Bureau of Public Roads," *American City*, XLIX (January 1934), 44.

[24] "U.S. Highway 66 Opening Monday Links Interesting State Areas," Tulsa *Tribune*, September 12, 1937.

with that Highway 66 was completely paved for its entire distance. On top of that, U.S. 66 was the first transcontinental highway to be paved.

There were, however, other consequences of this new burst of construction. The highway had a different feel, especially in its newer sections, than it previously had. Different standards prevailed. The effort of the engineers to make the roads of such a design that they could carry more traffic, heavier traffic, and faster traffic involved progressive changes in construction standards. The roads and bridges became wider, so that in the 1930s U.S. 66 was being built twenty feet wide and soon this was revised to



Source: Road construction plans for Federal Aid Project Oklahoma 204, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma City.

twenty-two feet; just a few years earlier the standard had been eighteen feet for a two-lane road. The concrete was being poured thicker to withstand the growing volume of truck traffic. But the most conspicuous revision in the highway construction standards had to do with the effort to straighten the roads and to smooth out the curves. The other engineering changes required more and better materials and bigger budgets. This change required social adjustment. And it happened virtually everywhere on Highway 66.

The realignments of Highway 66 in the 1930s, taken together, amount to probably the single greatest alteration in the highway until the road was replaced by the interstate highway system in the 1960s. In Illinois, bypasses around some of the major cities were constructed. Joliet and Springfield, and the dual cities of Bloomington and Normal were bypassed to keep the heavy traffic out of the dense urban centers. Where towns elsewhere on the route were clamoring for the business and proud that their main street was also The Main Street of America, the Illinois cities depended far less on the traffic to bring them business and asked that the traffic be diverted away. In Missouri, the most significant realignments occurred at St. Louis. In 1936 a bypass directed travelers in Illinois toward the Chain of Rocks Bridge and then looped them around the western edge of the city. This realignment, in fact, came after two previous alterations in the route. There was also a new traffic control device, the cloverleaf, that made its first appearance west of the Mississippi River at St. Louis on Highway 66. In February 1932 it received this description in a Missouri motoring magazine:

> Traffic desiring to turn from one road onto the other uses a paved circle or ramp constructed at each corner of the intersection. All left turns are prohibited, and neither is traffic allowed to cross either road. The necessity for left turns is eliminated by constructing the drives so that traffic makes two right turns. It is expected that drivers may be slightly confused the first time they use this structure, but it is neither complicated nor difficult. The one important thing to remember is that in place of making a left turn, the driver of the vehicle goes over or under the bridge and then makes two right turns.[25]

It was in the states farther west, however, where the realignments dramatically altered not just the configuration of the road but the patterns of life along it as well. That had already been clear in Oklahoma with the case of the Wellston Bypass which doomed the small town to dwindling traffic as the community watched traffic speed by to the

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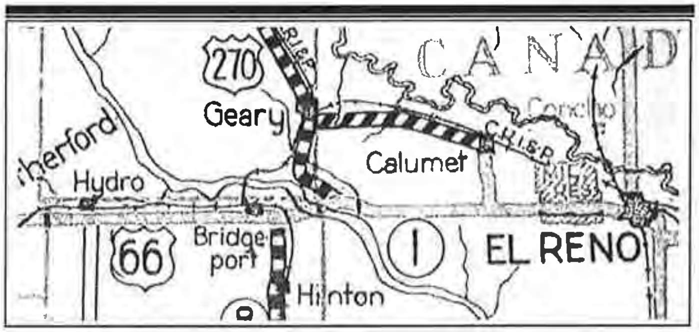
[25] This passage from the February 1932 issue of *Missouri Motor News* was quoted by Becky L. Snider and Debbie Sheals, *Route 66 in Missouri: Survey and National Register Project* (n.p.: Missouri State Historic Preservation Office, 2003).

south of town. It was also clear in Canadian and Caddo Counties, west of Oklahoma City, when the highway was rerouted—and paved—so that it went almost straight west from El Reno to the town of Hydro. Previously it had turned to the north and made a loop to swing past the towns of Calumet and Geary and then turned southwest toward the town of Bridgeport where a toll bridge enabled travelers to cross the south Canadian River. With the construction of the new William H. Murray Bridge across the river and with the new pavement, the highway now was not only much shorter, but it also missed all three of those towns. Calumet survived because of another road that went through, and Geary managed as well, although neither prospered as they would have had the highway continued to connect them and bring them the growing stream of traffic. Bridgeport, on the other hand, faded quickly. The once busy toll bridge was generally abandoned, used only for local traffic, and then was damaged by fire in 1946 and sold for salvage in 1952. Bridgeport, as noted by Oklahoma Route 66 chronicler Jim Ross, "is today considered a genuine Oklahoma ghost town." As Ross observes, this was once "the county's premiere town until the proliferation of motor cars caused its demise."[26] One history of the town of Bridgeport notes that "Bridgeport became an isolated town in 1934 when U.S. Highway 66 was opened to the public. . . . The swinging Key Bridge



El Reno Cutoff, showing shortened route of U.S. 66 west to Bridgeport in 1934. Dashed roads are unpaved. Source: Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Official Maps.

[26] Jim Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66* (Arcadia, Oklahoma: Ghost Town Press, 2001), 144, 150.

was sold but years before that the town had already lots its bank. Later the large three story hotel was torn down and the material sold. In 1944, the high school was transferred to Hinton and still later the grade children were included in the transfer. In 1945, the large brick gymnasium of which Bridgeport was so proud was sold to the highest bidder who wrecked the building and hauled it away."[27] Just as the traffic on Route 66 could nourish commerce when it came into an area, so too could it starve that commerce when it left.

The same pattern developed, more or less, in a multitude of communities each time the highway was straightened and shortened. Probably the most conspicuous instance came in New Mexico. The alignment that was agreed upon in 1926 at the beginning of Highway 66 did not follow a straight line east and west between San Jon in the east and Gallup in the west. Such a course would have taken it directly through Albuquerque on an east-west axis. Instead, the highway left that east-west orientation at Santa Rosa and looped up to the northwest, connecting to the National Old Trails Road near Las Vegas at the town of Romeroville and following that road to Santa Fe and then south to Albuquerque and Los Lunas, south of Albuquerque, and then up close to Laguna before it went directly west again. This S configuration of the road, while it generally followed some of the path of the National Old Trails Road, the railroad, and the Santa Fe Trail, clearly added miles to the route and made for a scenic, if slower and sometimes challenging, drive. Even at the time that the road was designated, Albuquerque businesses, who saw their community as a crossroads community, despite the absence of

[27] Hinton Quest Club, "History of Bridgeport, Oklahoma," Oklahoma Historical Society Files, Oklahoma City.

a major east-west thoroughfare, pressed for a highway to cut directly across the state, bypassing both Santa Fe and Los Lunas, and the governor, Arthur T. Hannett, appeared sympathetic to their pleas. The New Mexico legislature enacted a measure creating a road west from Santa Rosa to the town of Moriarty, about thirty-five miles east of Albuquerque, and Hannett, either in 1925, or after his re-election defeat in November 1926—almost exactly when the new U.S. highway system was finalized—ordered the road built as vengeance on Santa Fe, the capital and town to which he attributed a substantial share of his political misfortune.[28] Even so, it would only be in 1931 before the Santa Rosa cut-off and 1933 before the road west from Albuquerque to Laguna would become Federal Aid Projects and the roads would not be completed until 1937.[29] When that happened Highway 66 in New Mexico was not only made straighter and less mountainous, but the road's length was reduced from 506 miles to 399 miles.

The alteration of the New Mexico central segment of Highway 66 reveals additional contours of the dynamics of highway building. On the one hand this clearly would benefit travelers who sought primarily to speed through the state as quickly as

[28] The legends and lore on this matter are difficult to sort from the documentary record and while the story of Hannett's alteration of the highway appears in multiple accounts, the years of his election and the years of the mandated road construction vary in those accounts by as much as a decade, Hannett's political affiliation is listed as both Democrat and Republican, and how this impacted the alignment of Highway 66 has been widely assumed to be obvious and direct. Probably a more important individual shaping this alteration was Clyde Tingley who was chair of the Albuquerque City Council (and thus, as David Kammer notes, "was the city's nominal mayor,") and who lobbied vigorously for the road change, and who was also in his day job maintenance supervisor for that district of the State Highway Commission, where he also pressed for the realignment and completion, and who served as governor from 1935 to 1939, the time at which the highway realignment was completed.

[29] Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico*, 66.

possible on their way east or west. On the other hand, it was not just about efficient routes and straighter roads. In this instance the key to the revision of the alignment was that it also helped the Albuquerque merchants who were frustrated since they competed with Santa Fe and Las Vegas for a significant portion of the tourist traffic; even though Highway 66 passed through Albuquerque on the north-south alignment of Fourth Street, Albuquerque businesses had to compete with other towns that held the strategic advantage of being located near the scenic northern part of the state. Historian David Kammer has shown that the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce in particular lobbied the state highway commission heavily for the construction of the cut-offs to the east and west.[30] When the new road was completed, Santa Fe and Las Vegas were no longer on the highway, were no longer directly in competition for the Route 66 tourist traffic, and soon a host of highway-related businesses emerged along the path of U.S. 66 in Albuquerque to serve the massive traffic crowding the road.

The other side of the political environment was that the businesses in the small towns and villages were finding themselves being left, not even at the side of the road, but far from any road. When the highway moved, these businesses had to move too, or

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[30] Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico*, 56-57, 68, 70, 76-77. This position of Albuquerque in relation to the other towns on Highway 66 meant, according to Kammer (56), that "Albuquerque was simply a stopping place along the north-south corridor, a place between the 'City Different' as Santa Fe called itself,' and the wonders of 'The Heart of Indian Country,' as Gallup billed itself." The competition at this point thus was less between the Central Avenue merchants and their counterparts on Fourth than it was between the Albuquerque merchants and those in Santa Fe and Las Vegas. While the business owners on the north-south Fourth Street route of U.S. 66 would also lose when the alignment changed to east-west, it appears that the Chamber of Commerce persisted in seeking the east-west route through Albuquerque. This in turn raises large, but as yet unanswered, questions about the division within the business community of the city.

depend on a smaller volume of almost exclusively local trade. While Tingley Beach and El Vado Court and their lesser known counterparts opened on the west side of Albuquerque on Central Avenue, and while many more businesses opened on the east side, creating ultimately a thirteen mile long commercial strip, the tourist camps and gas stations on Fourth Street shriveled when the traffic moved. And it was not just along the loops of the S curve that had been eliminated. From Thoreau to Tucumcari as the new alignment was straightened and adjusted, businesses felt the impact of the new road—the impact of a double-edged sword that could both bring customers literally to the doorstep of a business but also could take them miles away to the doors of another business, could take them away from one community and into another. Even at this early point there was the hint that the new rivalry was increasingly between the small towns and the larger cities along the road.

And the volume of traffic surged again and again. Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, the construction of the new roads brought more and more travelers. Depressed economy or not, some people were still able, or newly able, to take vacations and travel for pleasure, not just to find another place to work. "East, for many Americans today," Lewis Gannett wrote in 1939, "is where we earn the right to vacation in the West."[31] And Highway 66 increasingly was the road to the West. As it was paved and straightened, this would be the case ever more emphatically. Travel as a leisure activity remained largely the province of the well to do. But more of them were going to the Southwest.

The phenomenon of tourism is complex because of its social and psychological

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[31] Lewis Gannett, "Cross Country by Car," *Current History*, 51 (September 1939), 60.

roots in modern social organization and the analyst must avoid dismissing the activity as empty recreation, for even when it is shallow or passive, or even devoid of apparently meaningful interaction with the surroundings, that behavior conceals an attitude toward, and more subtle contact with, the visited country and people and also about the circumstances of life from which vacation is taken. John A. Jakle has examined twentieth-century tourism and suggested some of the larger meanings the activity can take, finding it "a nearly universal behavior in advanced, industrialized societies" and arguing that tourism represents a way in which tourists "explore the complexities of the world beyond everyday existence," and provides "a significant means by which modern people assess their world, defining their own sense of identity in the process."[32] What this suggests is directly relevant to the historic context of Route 66 in at least two ways. Tourists from the East, as Lewis Gannett's yearning implies, were seeking some place different from where they lived, and the West, with its different geography and natural features and its multiple cultures beckoned to them. In addition, this perspective suggests that tourists along Highway 66 were not just driving through the area the road traversed, but were bringing to this area their own needs and expectations. They were in the process changed by the experience, but they also changed the area as they interacted with it, as they created a market for not only food, gas, and lodging, but for local cultures as well, often commercializing traditional and even sacred customs and art and nature itself.

This had always been true of tourists in the West and Southwest, but the process was now different in the 1930s. Earlier generations of tourists had taken the train, and

[32] John A. Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), xi.

some still did, but that travel was limited first of all by income level to those who could afford the luxuries of such an excursion and secondly limited by geography to the area along the tracks or accessible by planned, organized side trips into the hinterland. Moreover, by the 1930s the railroads were in decline and the automobile was in ascendance. The availability of better roads, especially a primary transcontinental route that could boast the best weather, invited those who could, to travel. And more could travel. Historian Earl Pomeroy observed the shift from railroad to motor car and wrote that "What the motor cars and the motorists did to the outdoors would be long debated, but there is no doubt that the age of the automobile was the age in which the average American vacationer first found the West within his grasp."[33] When Pomeroy wrote those words a half century ago, he was one of the first historians to make the connection between automobile travel, tourism, and western development. Since then, the discussion has gone further. Hal Rothman has argued that

> The rise of automobile travel played a crucial role in the transformation of western tourism. As automobiles became common possessions of middle class families and the broader network of roads crisscrossed the nation, the cultural dimensions of tourism shifted from the tastes of the elite, the sometimes cumbersome intellectualizing of places such as the Grand Canyon, and toward the more common tastes of ordinary people, often oriented toward recreation. . . .
>
> Auto travelers became a source of revenue, especially in remote places, and communities offered amenities, from campgrounds to hotels, diners to fashionable restaurants. Arterial highways sprouted new businesses, especially as the construction of major cross-continental highways throughout the West—the famed Route 66 to the south and the Lincoln Highway, route 50, over the northern plains—began in earnest after 1926.[34]

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[33] Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 149.

[34] Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*

And historian John Opie further suggests, "Even during the 1930s Depression, Americans took to the vacation road."[35] Many of them went to the "Scenic Southwest" for that vacation, spurred on by improved roads, improved and inviting facilities, and energetic promotions to attract travelers to the towns along the way.

The Southwest until near the turn of the century had been largely viewed in publications as a foreboding area to be avoided but those perceptions began to change in a mix of romanticism, anti-modernism, and paternalism toward the area and its inhabitants. Earl Pomeroy notes in his history of western tourism that "Perhaps the most striking aspect of the changing attitudes toward nature was the new vogue of the Southwestern desert that had developed since the 1890's and reached spectacular dimensions in the thirties and

Russell Lee, "Tourist buying piece of petrified wood near Petrified National Forest, Arizona," 1939. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

(Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 147-148.

[35] John Opie, "Environmental History in the West," in Gerald D. Nash and Richard W. Etulain, eds., *The Twentieth Century West: Historical Interpretations* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 217.

thereafter."[36] Santa Fe and the Grand Canyon had already been well established as popular tourist attractions, but new national monuments and parks created recreational opportunities for visiting the area's abundant natural wonders, and in a regular pattern, private commercial operations cropped up near the entrances to the parks and monuments. Highway 66 in Arizona passed through the Petrified Forest and the Painted Desert and made the South Rim of the Grand Canyon easily accessible from a side trip. In addition, particular enterprises like the Fred Harvey Indian Detours popularized the Native American cultures. In Gallup, New Mexico, one of the most famous of the efforts to attract tourists with Native American culture was the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial, which began in 1922 and by 1934 had become sufficiently established as an institution that the president of the New Mexico Press Association would write that "The Gallup Indian Ceremonial out Herods Herod for originality of conception, human interest, poetic beauty, attractive presentation and fundamental appeal."[37] This revival of Indian culture, even if for crass commercial purposes by local businesses, often amounted to an appropriation of Indian cultures on the part of the white society, but it also represented a movement beyond explicit denials of Native American humanity, crude efforts of annihilation, and it offered Native American culture a legitimate presence in modern American culture.[38] As with so many other features of life on Route 66, the

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[36] Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West*, 158.

[37] Karl Kilby quoted in Sally Noe, *Greetings from Gallup: Six Decades of Route 66* (Gallup: Robert C. Noe, Noe Enterprises, 1991), 22.

[38] The issues surrounding tourist cultural contact with Native Americans in the Southwest and the larger pattern of cultural interaction and white attitudes toward Indians in the first several decades of the twentieth century can best be explored in Sherry L. Smith, *Reimagining Indians: Native Americans through Anglo Eyes 1880-1940* (New York:

contradictions and ironies run deep.

In addition to the Okies and their kindred spirits of despair eking their way westward, and in addition to the newly mobile tourists traveling and exploring the nation, a third element was increasingly taking to the roads, especially once they were straightened and paved. The trucking industry of the nation was but an infant when the U.S. highway system was created. Part of its origin, in fact, can be found in the circumstances of the Depression. The railroads, an important provider of transportation, suffered cutbacks in business as a result of the Depression and in turn initiated cuts in service, those cuts falling especially heavy on remote areas, on small towns, on regions where the traffic was both politically and economically expendable. As the railroads reduced their operations, an increasingly robust trucking industry stepped up to fill the void.

In Illinois, trucking had already been a thriving business, carrying freight between Chicago and St. Louis, and a commercial service infrastructure emerged to serve the maintenance and driver needs of the truck lines in that state. In Springfield, Missouri, three brothers, Jewell, Harry, and Herman Powell started a truck line the year after Highway 66 was designated and in the 1930s as other companies faltered, they were able to take over their routes and expand their clientele between Oklahoma City and Chicago, developing in the process an efficient and large business, Powell Brothers Trucking, with its headquarters at Powellville near Rolla.[39] Also in Springfield, Frank G. Campbell, who

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Oxford University Press, 2000) and Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson : University of Arizona Press, 2001).

[39] Alf D. Smith, "The Powell Brothers," in C. H. Skip Curtis, *Birthplace of Route 66:*

had started a freight business in 1926, in 1933 merged with 66 Rapid Express and created Campbell's 66 Express. Initially concentrating on the freight business between Springfield and Kansas City, the line soon expanded along Highway 66 and across the nation—doing so against the active, and personal, pressure of the railroads, the Frisco also being based in Springfield.[40] In Baxter Springs, Kansas, five different national truck lines established hubs there and Yellow Freight, in the years following 1932, made a hub and division point for its operations.[41] In western Oklahoma in the 1920s Whit Lee had started a small passenger bus operation and after some structural changes and reorganization, in 1930 he had moved to Oklahoma City and operated LeeWay Stages, a bus line that carried passengers along Route 66 from Oklahoma City to Amarillo and on to New Mexico. Whit Lee's son Bob Lee reflected on those beginnings and noted: "The Depression saved us in the bus business. . . . People couldn't drive as much as they used to, so they rode the bus. The Depression kept us alive."[42] In 1934 Lee sold the bus company and bought several trucks. Susan Croce Kelly quotes son Bob Lee about the circumstances of this new trucking business:

> The railroads would fight very bitterly when you applied for a certificate over routes that they served, but the trucking business really started because of lack of service from the railroads for small shipments. When

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Springfield, Mo. (Springfield, Missouri: Curtis Enterprises, 2001), 44-45.

[40] C. H. Skip Curtis, *Birthplace of Route 66: Springfield, Mo.*, 103; Kelly and Scott, Route 66, 45.

[41] Cathy Ambler, "Historic Resources of Route 66 in Kansas - Cherokee County, Kansas," Multiple Property Nomination to National Register of Historic Places, 2003, published on world wide web at: http://www.cr.nps.gov/rt66/HistSig/KansasContext.htm.

[42] Quinta Scott and Susan C. Kelly, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988)., 45-46.

> we started, we would unload boxcars from Saint Louis at Oklahoma City, then take the contents to Amarillo, Albuquerque, and that part of the country. The rail service just wasn't very good from Oklahoma City to Amarillo. It was good from Wichita to Albuquerque, so we were the connecting link between the East and the Texas Panhandle.[43]

Other trucking companies also emerged, like the Mistletoe Express, started by E. K. Gaylord, owner of the company that published the *Daily Oklahoman*, as a vehicle for delivering his newspapers to parts of the state where railroad service had been withdrawn.[44] In New Mexico, the trucking business boomed in the 1930s and Albuquerque became a main hub for trucking in the state, able to use both the new Highway 66 that routed directly through the city and also its location near the center of the state to great advantage.[45] The trucks in New Mexico, in fact, were able to deliver goods in half the time that the railroad could.

All along Highway 66 the trucking industry expanded its operations and made huge inroads into the market that had been the private domain of the railroads. In 1934 the state of Kansas set up port-of-entry stations at which commercial carriers were required to stop for inspection and tax assessment. For the first time a state government had a system for determining what was actually being shipped on trucks and the results were surprising. Although agricultural products were predictably at the top of the list, accounting for nearly a third of the total tons shipped by truck, the data revealed that "long-distance hauls of dressed poultry and eggs, necessarily refrigerated, have been

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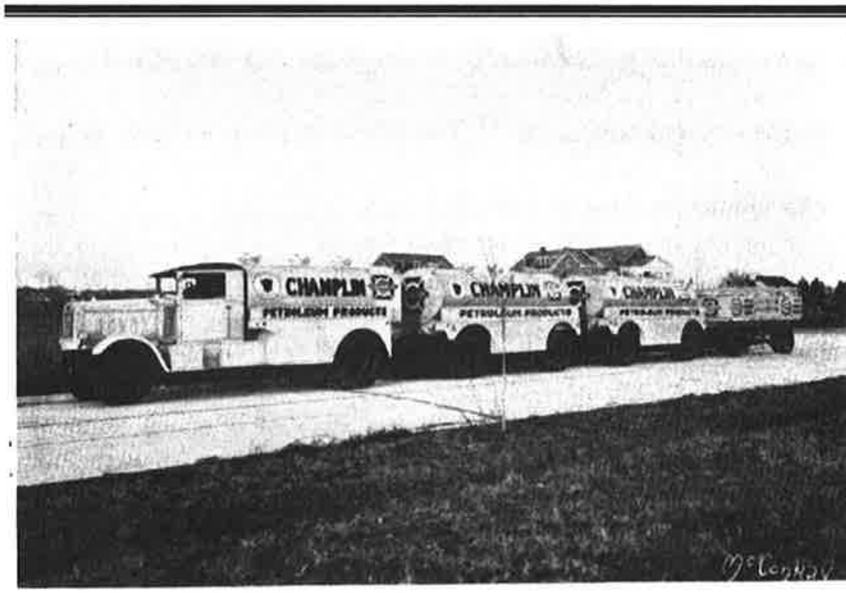
[43] Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 64.

[44] "Child of the Depression, Mistletoe Grows up to Mark its 25th Birthday," *Daily Oklahoman*, October 7, 1956.

[45] Kammer, *The Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico*, 85.

generally regarded as strictly railroad business, yet the survey shows many trucks are now regularly moving them to points as far away as California, Massachusetts, Florida."[46] Of course, Highway 66 provided a primary route for those perishables to be taken to California quickly, and just as important, for California's produce to be shipped to Kansas and points beyond. The port-of-entry stations quickly expanded to other states on the highway, although New Mexico, and perhaps other states too, conducted inspections that some of the tourists resented—were they carrying passengers for hire?—the stations, and the state, received attention from the eastern terminus of the road when the Chicago *Tribune* published letters from travelers protesting their "harassment" at those stations.[47]



Veritable trains of gasoline tanker-trailers to supply the service stations increased the burdens of Route 66 at the same time that they fed the demand. Source: Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1929-1930 Inclusive*, (Oklahoma City, 1931).

The significance of the rise of the trucking industry along U.S. 66 is not so obvious as the expansion of other parts of the local economy, such as service stations or motels, but it was nonetheless profound. In the first place it increased traffic along the

[46] "What Interstate Trucks Carry," *Business Week*, March 16, 1935, 30.

[47] Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico*, 79.

routes that it served, thus generating additional business in those enterprises that served the traffic, whether the corner café or the service station. Secondly, it provided connections to places that had never been served by the railroads, and with each additional customer it made it that much more difficult for the railroads ever to regain their prominence as a conveyor of freight, which, in turn, only increased the importance of highway arteries like Route 66 that much more. If the traffic along Route 66 were to some degree a self-perpetuating phenomenon, the trucking industry would be the purest example of the process as it supplied the businesses that depended on the traffic and as the traffic increased with the load of the trucking industry and the need for more services also increased, those services then also to be supplied by the truckers who used the road. In this way it shows some of the significance, and perhaps also some of the fragility, of this magic road across the country. So long as there was traffic there would be growth.

There was, however, one other factor that can not be separated from the dual evolution of the trucking industry and U.S. 66. In addition to studying the volume and content of truck freight haulage in 1934, the state of Kansas did another study of trucking, and this study showed, ominously, that "the trend in truck operations seems to be in favor of the large fleet operator, who is slowly crowding the one-truck fellow off the road."[48] That change in the structure of this part of the economy was already becoming manifest throughout the roadside business community and was also being reflected in the buildings they occupied.

[48] "What Interstate Trucks Carry," 30.

iii. The Store Beside the Road

The volume of traffic that included the migrants heading west, the tourists seeking a respite from the urban east, and the trucking industry carrying bigger and more loads of freight required not only trafficable roads but also a commercial service infrastructure that grew and evolved along with the highway. The remnants of these businesses form a vital component of the historic resources associated with U.S. 66. One way to view this is that suggested by the New Mexico state highway engineer Grover Conroy in 1936: "Filling stations, tireshops, supply houses, cabin camps, and hundreds of small enterprises employing thousands in gainful occupations are all the result of improved highways."[49] The road construction did not just put unemployed laborers to work; it also made it possible for private businesses to thrive. But there is more even than that. A close examination of the resources associated with those businesses, moreover, reveals an often-subtle transformation not just of the kinds of businesses alongside the road, and not just of the architecture used by those businesses, but a transformation of social relationships generated by the road.

When U.S. 66 was designated in 1926, a substantial portion of the new highway came with a ready-made system for providing meals and lodging to travelers on the highway. The National Old Trails Road, because it followed the Santa Fe Railroad, was able to draw upon the network of institutions established by the Fred Harvey Company as it built its lunchrooms and hotels across the southwest, near the railroad depot where the

[49] Grover Conroy quoted by David Kammer in *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico*, 76.

traffic was. By 1910, Harvey Hotels were located in Las Vegas, New Mexico (Castaneda Hotel, and Montezuma's Castle), Albuquerque (the Alvarado), Williams, Arizona (the Fray Marcos), Barstow, California (Casa del Desierto), Winslow, Arizona (La Posada), Needles, California (El Garces), Ash Fork, Arizona (the Escalante), and Seligman, Arizona (the Havasu). In the 1920s hotels also opened in Gallup, New Mexico (El Navajo) and Santa Fe (LaFonda).[50] These hotels, sometimes built in the mission revival style that became popular in the southwest in the 1910s and 1920s, tended to be grand hotels in every sense. They were large, they were sumptuous, they were well staffed, and they appealed to travelers of more than average means. That they were often not exactly on the highway, their locations having been selected with train travelers in mind, was not much of a difficulty given the slow, circuitous, or winding routes the travelers took anyway. The alternative was the ubiquitous camping grounds that cities provided for the visitors, and they increasingly became commercialized operations.

El Garces Hotel, Needles, California, one of the Fred Harvey chain of railroad hotels. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

[50] Lesley Poling-Kempes, *The Harvey Girls: Women who Opened the West* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 233-234.

Likewise when the early Highway 66 travelers sought out fuel for their automobiles, they depended on the institutions that were already there. Of those early filling stations—and the services were generally limited to filling up with gasoline, except for some larger stations that offered battery charging and replacement—the range was enormous. There were the tiny stations that were but the second generation of gasoline sales, their predecessors having been the general store with a gasoline pump at the curbside, and there were the (by comparison) palatial stations with pumps and canopies under a porte cochere, usually with an exceedingly narrow lane for the 1920s automobiles. The common denominator of these stations is that they tended to be owned by the individuals who built them and their designs often reflected not just their personalities but their taste, their ambitions, and their eccentricities.

Hicks' Garage and Service Station, Depew, Oklahoma (c. 1922).
An elaborate service station that predated U.S. 66, this is an example of the property type Gasoline / Service Stations. A house with canopy station in general form, it represented several distinctive features with the unusual configuration of the office/store and service area, but it is especially notable because of its individualized construction that does not conform to a larger chain or corporate branding effort. The lanes at the pump islands would not long be able to handle the cars and trucks because of their narrow dimensions. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

The increasing volume of traffic on U.S. 66 changed this. Initially the traffic supplied both the hotels (and the lunch rooms and cafés associated with them) and the filling stations with increased business, a ready market, even a windfall for people who had planned their businesses without calculating the impact of a growing volume of people in automobiles depending on them. Soon, however, a different clientele was coming to town with different expectations and needs and this changed the business formula, and so too were new businesses springing up to serve those new customers. The pressures on the older, existing businesses mounted with each day's string of cars passing in front of the business. A general Depression was not in the business plans of many. Again, this was the curious anomaly: at the same time that there was a Depression, more and more people were taking to the road.

Odell Standard Station, Odell, Illinois (1932). This station, built to Standard Oil Company requirements, has been restored to its original appearance, including, however, the service bays added in 1940. Although the drive has been altered, the original configuration enabled the pumps to be accessed on both sides, with one lane under the canopy and the second outside. A café once was located next to the service station. An example of a house with canopy station, with additional service bays, the evolution of this gasoline station reflects both changing corporate identities (in 1940 it was selling Phillips 66 products and later on it sold Sinclair) and service station functionality. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

The tourist campsites were also quickly transformed. By the late 1920s they attracted more and more, not just the adventurous traveler who enjoyed the sport of auto camping. They were attracting people who were on the road for more basic reasons in their quest for a sustainable livelihood. Families who found themselves homeless and out of work used the same roads and descended upon the same tourist camps that attracted the travelers on vacation, sometimes using horse and wagon, sometimes using automobile. They were not always welcomed. In 1927 the *Daily Oklahoman*, in Oklahoma City, expressed its disgust with this new feature of that state's highways:

> . . . The friendless, neighborless, businessless wagoneers is a lone band; one impoverished, unequipped, usually incompetent, man standing against the whole world. Such property as he owns, his creaky wagon with the tarpaper and lath-covered shack aboard, his half starved, ratty horses and his ignorant, unprivileged family, follows daily in his wake and all are outcasts, unknowns.
>
> The tourists on any highway will run across these families and they will usually come to their notice when they have pulled into a blackjack fastness to camp for the night . . . . There the wagon stands, with a group of scraggly children playing around it, the horses wandering unhobbled through the copse and man and wife bent over a struggling campfire in which there are a half-dozen rusted, blackened, battered cooking pans and kettles.
>
> The man began as a renter, a cropper, moving every season. Indolent, wasteful, slothful and careless, he agreed, either by written or parol contract, to farm a plot of ground for a season and to share with the owner the usufructs . . . . It was too wet in the spring for him to plow, too windy to cultivate, too hot to chop cotton. Consequently, most of his effort was devoted to a desultory sort of plowing and planting and then the forces of nature were called upon to do the rest.[51]

In this way it is clear that the landless who took to the road, "moving every season," did so not only against the weight of accumulated material burdens, but also against the weight of the harsh judgment and disapproval of society's leaders.

[51] "Summer Brings 'Wagoneers,'" *Daily Oklahoman*, June 5, 1927.

Within five years of this account, however, it was clear to many that there were far more of these itinerants on the road and in the campsites and that the number was growing. There may even have been enough of them in the land to suggest that not all came upon their hardship as a result of individual character flaws that suddenly surfaced.

As for lodging, the grand hotels were often, despite their willingness and their availability for the new automobile travelers, the casualties of the new mobile traffic. The hotels, located downtown, requiring the motorist to sometimes leave the highway, also required more time to load and unload, required greater public contact between the traveler and the hotel staff, proved inappropriate to the new generation of travelers—whether comfortable middle class families on vacation, the traveling peddler with a suitcase full of wares, or people facing hard times who sought better opportunities elsewhere—and so they faded in the wake of exhaust fumes of the increasing numbers of automobiles on the roads. The Harvey Houses were able to survive, but they were becoming anachronisms, located next to the railroad and not the highway, providing comfortable rooms and restaurants in a leisurely atmosphere, and often with great formality. They were also expensive, both for the consumer and for the builder.

Tourist camps and tourist courts and the inchoate motel suffered no such burden. The first step in the transformation from free tourist campground was simply to start charging fees. By the late 1920s most such campgrounds were charging travelers to spend the night. This had two effects as it turned out. One was to produce some revenue. The other was to exclude those who could not afford to pay. One Tulsa writer noting the spread of tourist camps in that city in 1928 noted this immediately:

> One feature of the new tourist camp is the almost entire absence of what is known as the auto tramp. This species is very numerous, especially on

> east and west routes. The tramp outfit consists of a dilapidated car and a large family. Generally the tramp family has left whatever home it had and has no other definitely in view. The charges are supposed to bar them from camps, and every camp owner will tell you he has nothing but the very best customers. The tramp element usually camps along streams and not near the established camps. . . . The only free grounds worth while are those donated to all comers by the filling station men.[52]

The bringing together of the American people by virtue of the new highway seemed to have taken a detour.

Those who could afford the more comfortable quarters often moved up and stayed in cabins while those unable to do so continued to camp. As James Agee wrote in 1935, it was not just the person seeking employment who was kept out of the pricier facilities, but the employed working class families as well: "for already, today, the cabin camp is a luxury to the workman, and every bit good enough for the lower middle class."[53]

After the assessed charge for the tourist campground, the cabin camp was the next step. Requiring minimal capital outlay, people who operated a store or service station could easily enhance their business by building a row of cabins for travelers to use. Or a farmer might build some cabins on land adjacent to the highway. Marshall Smith, writing in the Tulsa *World* in 1928 estimated that the cost to construct a cabin was $250, not including the land.[54] So the number of tourist camps multiplied in the coming years and they attracted more and more traffic to the main highways, with U.S. 66 the prime example. These were the traditional "mom and pop" type operations, businesses run by a family where everybody in the family participated, though not necessarily in tasks and

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[52] Marshall L. Smith, "Tourist Parks Spreading Fast," Tulsa *Daily World*, July 22, 1928.

[53] [Agee], "The Great American Roadside," 61.

[54] Smith, "Tourist Parks Spreading Fast."

time of equal burdens.

These cabin camps, often called tourist camps or courts, were the early forms of motels. The construction of a motel unit required little capital and the labor was cheap. In their standard history of the motel in America, Sculle, Rogers, and Jakle observe that "Motels indeed were born and flourished because of the Depression, not despite it."[55] The same authors note that *Architectural Record*, in 1933, "declared cabin-camp construction to be one of the few 'booming' building sectors of the Depression. . . ." "The secret to success," the historians suggest, "lay in the jack-of-all-trades, do-it-yourself nature of the business."[56] The motels, increasingly known as tourist courts instead of camps, were easy to build, and *Popular Mechanics*, in 1935, offered a simple design for construction of a 10' x 12' cabin with gable roof along with the following encouragement:

> If you live near a well-traveled highway, or can lease space near one, a few low-cost tourists' cabins of the attractive type shown will afford you a substantial income during the summer months. If the cabins are erected in a well-kept grove where there is an adequate supply of pure, fresh water, so much the better. Also, electric lights are an added inducement to tourists.[57]

Most owners, according to Sculle, Jakle, and Rogers, "literally built their own motels."[58]

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[55] John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 68.

[56] Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 39.

[57] "Tourists' Cabins that Get the Business," *Popular Mechanics*, 64 (July 1935), 151-153.

[58] Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 38.

These tourist courts were not only inexpensive to construct, but were also cheap to operate, circumstances that made them prime for the locally-owned, individualistic "mom and pop" nature of the business. James Agee commented on the decentralized structure in the motel industry: "Low overhead is the very essence of the industry and there is little that centralized management could contribute besides capital of dubious value."[59]

While one advantage of this structure was the "sweat equity" or "self-exploitation" it permitted, as family members worked the motels without wages, there were costs that cut deeply into that arrangement. Within the "mom and pop" organization, the burdens tended to fall more heavily on mom than pop. Again, Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers: ". . . women clearly provided the preponderant amount of labor for these family businesses."[60] Even when they hired help to work cleaning the rooms, that help tended to be female and it tended to be low wage.

This is not to suggest that the businesses always flourished, for often, given the needs of the traffic along Route 66, money simply was not to be had. Lucille Hamons, who operated a service station and motel on Route 66 near Hydro, Oklahoma, recalled that "I used to rent cabins to those heading west. A dollar and a half a night. Everyone was going to California to get jobs, and they were broke. And if they were hungry I'd feed 'em a little."[61] She also noted that "I've kept people in the rooms that couldn't pay

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[59] [Agee, James], "The Great American Roadside," *Fortune*, 10 (September 1934), 61.

[60] Sculle, Jakle, Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 69.

[61] Hamons, quoted in Craig Wilson, "A Ride down Route 66: Exploring Life at the Legendary Crossroads," *USA Today*, July 9, 1992.

their room rent. They've sold me all kinds of things for gas—clothes, cars, everything."[62] At Dixieland, a recreational park with lodging and dining facilities just west of Sapulpa, Oklahoma, on Route 66, it was not uncommon for the owners "to accept chickens and various produce instead of money in exchange for gasoline, oil, or other park services . . . . Many a traveler on old Route 66, 'down on his luck' received a free handout at Dixieland," relates one account of the Depression years at the park. "No one was ever refused or turned away, if he needed help."[63] The social organization still retained enough of its personal interaction, merchants knowing that they were perhaps a few steps away from needing help or moving down the road themselves, that neighbors still helped neighbors, even if that neighbor was a stranger.

The expansion of motel construction and operation along U.S. 66 in the 1930s generated both additional motels and motel units, but those motels tended to be more functional than stylish and the construction reflected their low capitalization and utilitarian design. Jakle and Sculle have suggested that, even with the extremely independent, individualistic nature of the enterprise, the motels tended toward a common pattern since they tended to draw upon the same basic design requirements and since they conformed to the same general considerations of operation. Their standard history of the motel describes that structure as follows:

> Cottages were increasingly arranged geometrically around a central open space, or court. The width of U-shaped courts was dependent on the depth of the lot and the extent of highway frontage. Cottages were usually arrayed as individual units with open spaces between the units. Attached garages were popular after 1930, and it was not uncommon to find

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[62] Hamons, quoted in Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 59.

[63] James W. Hubbard, "Dixieland Was a Dream Realized," Sapulpa *Herald*, October 18, 1992.

> cottage-garage combinations linked wall to wall to form continuous facades, the integrity of each building preserved in individual roof lines, since the units were usually freestanding . . . . The typical cottage court contained an office building that usually included private apartment space for the motel manager and his family. Another building might contain a coffee shop. As in the case of the cabin camps, public space was primarily outdoors. Space not given to parking was often landscaped to give motels a more gentrified aspect. Architecturally, cottages were made to look like little suburban houses in order to enhance their appeal for the middle-class tourist and the traveling businessman. Cottages were furnished like suburban houses, with rugs, dressing tables and bureaus, radios, and the like. Sometimes they were provided with steam heat from central heating plants . . . . Motor courts were structured like cottage courts except that room units were totally integrated under single rooflines usually as a single building.[64]

In addition, factors like the role of sanitation generated structural conformity by often providing a centrally situated bathhouse that all the guests would draw upon instead of having individual bathrooms in the separate units. This pattern can be confirmed along Route 66 today by noting the small number of surviving units separated by garages with sliding doors, and house / office in the center. At the same time, it would be easy to overstate any uniformity since these motels, a multitude of independent operations, were anything but replicas of each other. The uniformity had more to do with structure and utility than it did construction, appearance, policy, or furnishings. The motels were perhaps most characterized by their idiosyncratic nature; they reflected the personal preferences and tastes of their owner/builders. Many, indeed most, motels from the 1930s no longer exist—a testimony to both their simple, low-cost construction and the fact that they were often pioneers on the outskirts of town that were consumed in subsequent development.

[64] Jakle, Sculle, Rogers, *Motel in America*, 41.

As with the motels, so too with the gas stations of the period. Indeed, the gas stations were transformed into service stations, businesses that provided much more than a full tank of gasoline. John Margolies captures the expansion accurately: "The overbuilding of gas stations in the 1920s was exceeded only by the building boom of the 1930s. There were 143,000 retail outlets for gas in 1929, 170,000 by 1933, and this number ballooned to a staggering 231,000 in 1940."[65]

West wing of V-shaped Riviera Courts, Miami, Oklahoma (1937), showing units separated by garages and decorative parapet. Commonly such "motor courts," simply were the next stop theoretically unifying separate cottages under a single roofline. The house for the manager's residence and office was located inside the semi-circle or V, often with a circle of trees defining the drive around the property. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

Those numbers, however, conceal a more fundamental transformation in the gasoline retail business. Where the dominant form of gasoline station had been the independent operator who owned a station and worked it, often with the family pitching in, the trend in the 1930s was for the petroleum companies to own and operate their own stations. These stations obviously had a competitive advantage over the independents,

[65] John Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance: Glory Days of the Gas Station* (Boston: Bullfinch Press, 1993), 58.

especially in their ability to withstand price wars and to take deliveries of large quantities of gasoline so that they would not run out and be able to reap the economies of scale.[66] Because of the expansion of the chains of gasoline stations, more and more independent operators were forced out of business. In Iowa the independents were able to secure state laws prohibiting chains of gasoline stations, so the petroleum companies resorted to a subterfuge by owning the stations but leasing them to independent operators, a circumstance which enabled them to retain the advantages of horizontal integration, to shift onto the lessor the burdens of competition, and to dodge the weight of the anti-chain store law. The result was the same, as *Business Week* noted in 1939: "The economic pressure is hastening liquidation of the inept retail operator." By "inept" was meant independent. When the lease-holder would get in trouble, the oil company response was simple: "What can you expect with 400,000 inexperienced business men [the retail dealers] setting the price?"[67] Consolidation and the elimination of the independently-owned and operated gas station to raise the prices was the answer.

When the oil companies owned the stations, directly or indirectly, they were able to launch coordinated marketing plans to attract customers to their stations. The companies used three devices, all evident along Route 66: one was to expand into new territories, even sparsely settled areas where the traffic might justify new stations and where existing supply lines (trucks supplying other stations) could be utilized; another was to broaden the service they provided; and the other was to generate an identity

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[66] "'Iowa Plan' on Way Out," *Business Week*, August 12, 1939, 27.

[67] "'Iowa Plan' on Way Out," 27. The text in brackets in this quotation was added by *Business Week*.

through increasingly standard construction. The nation's small towns, especially those strung along Route 66, provided some companies a prime target, particularly those companies with refineries in the state. Thus, as Sculle and Jakle offer the intriguing observation that "Skelly, Sinclair, and Continental's Conoco brand . . . heavily favored low-volume small-town dealers."[68]

The new stations took on a more modern appearance. Company stations looked

Phillips 66 Station, Chandler, Oklahoma (1930). One of Phillips' many cottage stations, this building conformed to the branded pattern of the company with its Tudor-revival connotations, its chimney, windows, and orange and blue shingles. Note the roundel for the Phillips 66 logo in the chimney and in the right gable. The two service bays at left were added during the period of historic significance as the station added service functions to gasoline sales. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

alike within the company framework and thus looked different from all the others. Phillips 66 built its brick cottage stations complete with chimney, like the several

[68] John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 62.

excellent examples that remain along Route 66, as early as the late 1920s, and built more in the 1930s, switching designs to a more modern appearance in 1937. Other companies followed suit, using standard designs for easier consumer identification. Often they developed along Highway 66 a Mission Revival aspect with stucco and parapets as part of a southwestern motif. More stations also took on, with their corporate sponsors, some of the features of the Art Deco or Streamline Moderne style with the image of movement and change and progress. Walter Dorwin Teague designed for Texaco, in the mid 1930s, a formula for standardizing their stations that included appearance and functionality, that were "physical and psychological."[69] Texaco and Socony then introduced the oblong box station with rounded corners on the office section in what Sculle and Jakle termed "thoroughly functional, and thoroughly bland in its functionality."[70] Although nationally the canopy was in decline, along Highway 66 in the Southwest more and more stations had canopies over the pumps, and those pumps were increasingly the industry standard Tokheim automatic pumps. By the end of the decade, Harold Haliday Costain could write in *Architectural Record* that "Modern gasoline stations range from tidy, somewhat sentimental little structures . . . to rationalized service buildings planned both to function as efficiently as possible and to dramatize the station facilities and service process rather than conceal them."[71] What he did not say was that the former were being replaced with the latter.

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[69] "Standardized Service Stations Designed by Walter Dorwin Teague," *Architectural Record*, 82 (September 1937), 69-72.

[70] Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 146.

[71] Harold Haliday Costain, "Modern Gasoline Stations," *Architectural Record*, 90 (October 1941), 69.

In addition, the stations became larger, reflecting a broader sales mission with greater complexity and multi-functional intention. In the 1930s, according to Jakle and Sculle,

> The large integrated corporations moved to broaden product and service mixes. Service bays were added to gasoline stations to handle increased repair work. Office spaces were enlarged to accommodate the sale of accessories—tires, batteries, and accessories comprising the so-called TBA line. Emphasis was placed on service and the term "gasoline station" gave way to "service station." Some corporations built large complexes, dubbed "super service stations" with large repair, lubricating, and washing floors tied to sales offices.[72]

Those stations, moreover, employed more people to provide these services, sometimes picking up on the tradition that had been observed locally. For example

Marland Refining Company Station, El Reno, Oklahoma, about 1925. The Marland stations incorporated a triangular building design that echoed the Marland Oil Company triangular logo. The street in the foreground would become U.S. Highway 66 in 1926. Photo courtesy, Mark Waller, El Reno, Oklahoma.

[72] Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America,* 66.

Marland Oil Company, an independent oil company based in Oklahoma, ran the following advertisement:

> No! Not a convention—just Regular Marland Service Here they come . . one, two, three . . . sometimes four Marland Men. One is putting in water, another air and another wiping the dirt and grime from your windshield. Seems like you hardly had time to come to a full stop . . . in goes your gasoline and oil and before you can realize it you are waved a cheery good bye and asked to come again. Really nothing unusual about it after all . . . it is just regular Marland service rendered by Marland Men who realize the importance of your time and are glad to save you every moment possible. If you like this kind of service and like super quality motor products, always turn in at the sign of the Red Triangle.[73]

Ominously, the Red Triangle changed hands as Conoco, the eastern-owned company replaced Oklahoma-owned independent Marland Oil Company in 1929. But Conoco made its own version of the same service function explicit in an advertisement in the *Tulsa World* in 1932:

> Friendly Service is Not "Out of Date"
>
> It may be "modern" to render only the service that is absolutely necessary, but Conoco thinks otherwise. We believe that a Service Station should live up to its title, wholeheartedly. Of course, you go to a service station primarily for oil and gasoline, but isn't it pleasing . . . and fitting . . . to have your windshield cleaned, the radiator filled, the tires checked, without having to ask? Isn't it satisfying, too, to know that the service station affords clean, adequate rest-room accommodations; that the service men will check parcels for you, give you dependable road information and maps, and inform you fully concerning local hotels, camps and sports if you are traveling? All these free services and many more are standard at Conoco stations. Conoco men do these things in a friendly, courteous manner. They are chosen because of their willingness to serve you . . . . and trained to render their service expertly. Whenever you want gasoline, motor oil . . . or service . . . drive to the nearest Conoco station. It's easily identified by the sign of the Conoco Red Triangle.

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[73] Undated newspaper advertisement clipping in "Gas / Fuel Companies," Route 66 files, box 4, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Collections.

> Every Conoco station is a branch of the Conoco travel bureau . . . a nation-wide free service for motor travelers.[74]

And these ads did not mention the increasing likelihood that the additional services offered also include repairs, a feature that required additional equipment and configuration of the larger stations.

If the pattern of the social structure was toward centralization at the level of the

This is the same location as the Marland station above. After J. P. Morgan & Co. took over Marland Oils, the Conoco stations that replaced Marland gas stations eliminated all signs of the Marland Oil Company except for the triangular red logo with a crossbar that now read Conoco instead of Marland. This 1934 station included the office and service bay to the left; the large service bays on the right were added later during the period of historic significance. The official company history relates that "The words 'Marland Oils' were painted out on every tank car, filling station, pump station and building and replaced with one word: 'Conoco.' " One Conoco vice president, John Morrow, later recalled that "J. P. Morgan wanted the merger simply because he was looking for any way to do away with the Marland name." Russ Banham, *Conoco: 125 Years of Energy* (Lyme, Connecticut: Greenwich Publishing Group, Inc., 2000). Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

oil companies themselves, as it had been in the case of Marland, that same pattern prevailed at the level of the gas station. In such an environment, the smaller station without services, equally dependent upon the majors for gasoline, could not compete and

[74] Tulsa W*orld*, August 9, 1932, pg. 4.

often faded from the scene. They faded, that is, unless it was possible to add a motel or a restaurant to the existing facilities, and those additions remain characteristic of the small stations that survived.

Where there was a gas station, and where there was a motel, there was increasingly likely to be a restaurant nearby, and in fact often it was a restaurant associated with the other two businesses. In 1937 the U.S. Census Bureau surveyed the number of tourist camps in the nation and discovered that the tourist camps that included a filling station in the operation generated revenues between two and three times as great as those camps without stations.[75] And where there was a small town, there would be a restaurant or two willing to provide some level of culinary competence to the hungry travelers. The short order cook became commonplace and probably came and went as often as the businesses that employed them; often the cook was, of course, the owner (or, again, the woman whose husband operated the gasoline station next door). Perhaps the best description of these independent cafés, with low capital and home-grown food and labor, all of which looked different from the others but all somehow looking alike, was that provided by Steinbeck in a description that runs for pages and captures not only the flavors and fragrances of the establishments but also something of their social organization:

> Along 66 the hamburger stands—Al & Susy's Place—Carl's Lunch—Joe & Minnie—Will's Eats. Board-and-bat shacks. Two gasoline pumps in front, a screen door, a long bar, stools, and a foot rail. . . . the nickel phonograph with records piled up like pies, ready to swing out to the turntable and play dance music, "Ti-pi-ti-pi-tin," "Thanks for the Memory," Bing Crosby, Benny Goodman. At one end of the counter a covered case; candy cough drops, caffeine sulphate called Sleepless, No-

[75] "Tourist Camp Census," *Business Week*, June 12, 1937, 54.

> Doze; candy, cigarettes, razor blades, aspirin, Bromo-Seltzer, Alka-Seltzer.
>
> Minnie or Susy or Mae, middle-aging behind the counter, hair curled and rouge and powder on a sweating face. Taking orders in a soft low voice, calling them to the cook with a screech like a peacock. Mopping the counter with circular strokes, polishing the big shining coffee urns. The cook is Joe or Carl or Al, hot in a white coat and apron, beady sweat on white forehead, below the white cook's cap; moody, rarely speaking, looking up for a moment at each new entry.[76]

The restaurants—more accurately cafés—were many and varied, some right downtown, some on the outskirts, but most were not built to last. Along with their counterparts in the new roadside lodging industry, these buildings have seldom survived into the twenty-first century, as pressures both natural and social have taken a heavy toll of the businesses and the structures alike. What is especially revealing in both categories, and one can add the "the one-truck fellow" who was being squeezed out of the rapidly consolidating trucking industry, is that even the "typical" hamburger stands and cafés held their own individuality.

The trends in social organization were clear and they often held positive, beckoning images. The prospect of efficient transportation bringing new opportunities to the village and the small town, the grand parades and fanfare generated with the opening of a stretch of pavement connecting the small town with a larger city, the availability of new brands with new buildings and services, the promise of new businesses, and the fluid mobility that disrupted a closed society—all of these features heralded a new day. Soon, it seemed, the problems of the past—isolation, separation, inequity, and hopeless futures—would be resolved to the benefit of the whole community.

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[76] Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 166-167.

And indeed, the signs of change were clear, even though they were not always in the headlines. By the end of the 1930s the automobile—that agent of change and sign of the future—pervaded the life of communities where just a brief while before the horse and wagon prevailed. And the automobile was being manufactured and sold by fewer companies. The petroleum companies, since the age of Rockefeller and Standard Oil vertically integrated combinations, were now becoming horizontally integrated so that fewer and larger companies dominated the production, refining, and distribution of oil and its products. The gas stations were correspondingly owned by fewer and fewer companies. Everywhere the signs of change surfaced. In 1936 a motel appeared in Oklahoma City that was different from the other mom and pop, independently owned and operated, businesses. The Alamo Plaza Court was the first unit in Oklahoma of a new chain based in Texas that began to reach into the hinterlands all around.[77] Likewise, Beverly Osborne, the owner of a group of restaurants in Oklahoma City, in the late 1930s began to sell, not franchises to his restaurant, but the rights to use the menu item that he conceived, an entrée called "chicken in the rough" which consisted of half a fried chicken served with French fries and honey; by no means a mom and pop corner café, Beverly's Chicken was beginning to standardize the fare available not just on Route 66 but across the country.[78]

In motels, in gas stations, in cafés, in the multitude of small businesses lining Highway 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica, in the low-budget, low-capital, low-overhead "mom and pop" businesses of Highway 66, the independent entrepreneur was

[77] Sculle, Jakle, Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 107.

[78] Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 120-121.

being left behind. And so too were the small communities that had looked forward to the connections with the outside world that Route 66 had initially promised. In one sense, they were starting to suffer the same fate that beset their cousins in the countryside who moved to California. Only they didn't have to move to be displaced.

Chapter V

Highway 66 in Wartime and in Postwar America

The impact of World War II—and the events leading up to the war as well as those following the end of hostilities—on U.S. 66 remains dimly understood because of the complexity of the war itself. Indeed, the war affected different people, different businesses, and different communities in vastly different ways. Yet there remains a pattern of change and that pattern reflects a continuation of trends previously evident in the structure of society. While Highway 66 generated substantial military growth, and thereby also economic booms, at many points along its entire length, the actual civilian use of the highway declined and the highway and its associated roadside business suffered during the war. In one of the many seeming contradictions and ironies in the history of Route 66, the pattern of increased use of the highway by families during hard times reversed after 1940 and 1941 as the dramatic economic expansion of World War II along the highway was accompanied by diminished use of the highway because of military service, rationing of gasoline and tires, and a dramatically less mobile society. In all of these changes, contradictions, and convulsions, Highway 66 both reflected and shaped the course of the nation.

Although the highway had become an important cultural icon during the Depression, the associations of that icon were transformed in the post-war period as the road came to represent not hardship but prosperity, not flight from poverty, but vacations to fantasy lands. The ubiquitous tourist attractions along the road reflected some of this transformation, but the social and cultural landscape associated with the road transformed as well. The individually-owned mom and pop commercial businesses along the road were increasingly undermined by chains of motels, gas stations, and cafés.

i. *The Highway in Wartime*

World War II affected different people, different businesses, and different communities in vastly different ways. It would even be accurate to suggest that two contradictory patterns were unfolding at exactly the same time, one pattern having to do with the military and the other having to do with civilian usage and construction. Both, however, converged in the continuation of trends previously evident in the structure of society.

One pattern involved a demographic and economic shift that would have repercussions for decades to come. Even before the war, the potential significance of the highway was becoming clear. John T. Woodruff, first president of the U.S. Highway 66 Association, and collaborator with Cyrus Avery in getting the highway designated in 1926, was still active in 1941, writing his memoirs. Woodruff noted the transition in that work:

> U.S. Highway 66 is today the most important east-west highway west of the Mississippi River. Indeed just recently the Highway Department at Washington made an order favoring Highway 66 above all others in Missouri for improvement as a military route. It would seem at this time, March 1941, that Highway 66 has preference over every federal highway

in Missouri as a military road, . . .[1]

Although what document or order Woodruff referred to is unclear, he probably was right in that Highway 66 was the most important road in Missouri for the military, and it may have been true in other states as well. Well before U.S. entry into the war, the government poured money into what was then called preparedness and began to build up military installations of various sorts and also contract for armaments with private industry, especially on the West Coast. And that activity often took place along Highway 66. As early as 1922 General Pershing had ordered a map created that identified critical wartime routes for national defense, an action less important for the actual roads charted than for the perception that highways would have military implications. In 1940 as the United States began to mobilize for war—enacting a new conscription law and building military bases—the immediate implications were substantial for Highway 66.

From Los Angeles to Chicago the economics of development along Highway 66 took a distinctly military turn. Outside Chicago, two facilities—later known as the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant but at their origins known as the Elwood Ordnance Plant and the Kankakee Ordnance Works were established in 1940. Ultimately, during the war, more than ten thousand people would be employed at these two plants on Highway 66; by some reports these two installations were regarded as the largest, most sophisticated munitions plants in the world. At Granite City, on the old alignment of Highway 66 just east of the Mississippi River, the army constructed in 1942 the Granite City Engineer Depot, employing at the peak of the war effort in 1944 over 5,200 people and training

[1] Woodruff's memoirs quoted by Skip Curtis in Curtis, *Birthplace of Route 66: Springfield, Mo.* (Springfield, Missouri: Curtis Enterprises, 2001), 25.

3,500 military personnel in engineer supply and maintenance functions. In Missouri, the new Fort Leonard Wood was constructed in 1940 as a basic training center and became an Army Engineer Replacement Training Center; by the end of the war over three hundred thousand soldiers had trained at Leonard Wood. At Springfield, the army located O'Reilly General Army Hospital in February 1941. A flight school for British pilots operated at Miami, Oklahoma and also in Tulsa, and the Spartan School of Aeronautics, and the Douglas Aircraft plant in Tulsa made a mark there, with Douglas hiring over ten thousand people to build bombers in that community. An army air force base in Oklahoma City, Tinker Field, was constructed and another base, the Clinton Naval Air Station emerged in 1942. The Amarillo Army Air Field, eleven miles east of Amarillo Texas, was built in 1942, which, according to the base, became "one of the largest installations in the Western Technical Training Command, was established for training of air crew and ground mechanics to service B-17 aircraft." In New Mexico, the Albuquerque Army Air Base, constructed in part by the WPA beginning in 1939, became Kirtland Army Air Field in 1942 and trained flight crews for the B-17 and B-24 bombers. On the west side of the state, east of Gallup, the old Fort Wingate, which had served as a

Soldiers from Ft. Leonard Wood on leave at Fassnight Park south of Route 66 in Springfield, Missouri, spring 1941. Prior to travel restrictions, soldiers would commonly travel to Springfield on Highway 66 for recreation. Photo: Ralph Cassity, 1941.

munitions depot since World War I, took on new life with the storage of munitions in its earthen "igloos" visible from Highway 66. When the army established a larger munitions depot—the Navajo Ordnance Depot—at Bellemont, outside Flagstaff, in 1941, it generated a genuine boom for what historian John S. Westerlund has termed "Arizona's War Town."[2] A few miles east of Kingman, another army air base was located, Kingman Army Airfield, for the training of gunners for the B-19. In California, in those stretches before the highway faded in the maze of roads leading in and out of and around Los Angeles, the Barstow Marine Logistics Base was inaugurated in 1942 and Victorville Army Airfield was constructed in 1941 and later named George Air Force Base.

Entrance to Fort Wingate on Highway 66 near Gallup, New Mexico. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Each of these military installations made a significant contribution to the war, of course, and each made perhaps an even greater contribution to the local economies. Yet there is more to this long list of bases, which could doubtless be expanded by noting other activities, for there is a distinct pattern to be noted. Aside from the air bases and aircraft plants, many of these installations were logistics operations or depots, dealing in the materiel of war making more than the fighting of war. The huge ammunition depots, from Kankakee to Fort Wingate and Flagstaff were the clearest

[2] John S. Westerlund, *Arizona's War Town: Flagstaff, Navajo Ordnance Depot and World War II* (Tucson: University of Arizona, Press, 2003).

examples, but there were also the engineering depot at Granite City and the Quartermaster training that took place at Fort Leonard Wood. The key to this pattern is that logistics required a significant transportation element, and location on Highway 66 was vital to the success of the mission of those activities. In some ways, it would not be an overstatement to consider U.S. 66 in World War II to be a corridor of military activity. If the increase in mineral activity—helium at Amarillo and tungsten at Kingman—is also included, the war effort demonstrably helped some parts of the economy in some parts of Route 66. At Amarillo, for example, the U.S. Bureau of Mines had located a helium plant west of the city shortly after the designation of Highway 66, and in the 1930s this single plant provided the nation's supply of helium. the government dramatically expanded the Amarillo Helium Plant with the preparations for World War II, and increased its size and production during the war and the explicit reasoning focused on not only its location next to a helium field, but its position directly adjacent to Route 66. Like Fort Wingate and other installations, trucks and cars turned off Highway 66 into the drive and parking lot of the Amarillo Helium Plant.[3]

Highway 66, Kingman, Arizona, 1943. Jack Delano. Cars line the streets, but the highway is empty. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

[3] See the documentation of the Amarillo Helium Plant in the Historic American Engineering Record, Helium Activities Recording Project, HAER TX-105. The history of the plant and line drawings showing proximity to Route 66 can be found on the World

The war also spawned something of a migration, and this took place with a rush of emigrants especially to the burgeoning aircraft industry on the West Coast. Indeed, as half a million people now moved to California and additional numbers moved to other war industry locations, the new migration was termed by columnist Drew Pearson, "The Defense Grapes of Wrath."[4] Lucius Beebe referred to the new migrants, because they were sometimes less desperate than their 1930s forerunners, as "Dress-Suit Okies."[5] But there was another migration, too, as some people did not migrate to the coast but moved to town, and even moved their business so that it would be located on Highway 66 where the prospects looked brighter than in the benighted villages where they had struggled to make ends meet. In 1939, for example, Reese Kincaid, who had earlier operated a trading post in the small community of Colony, Oklahoma, moved his business north to Route 66 and situated in Clinton in 1940.[6] In Kingman and Amarillo, in Albuquerque and Springfield, people from nearby towns were moving to be closer to where the jobs were—at the bases, in the mines, and in the businesses. The result of such shifting—from farm to city, from small towns to bigger towns, from Oklahoma to California or Texas—was a substantial redistribution of the nation's demography, a continuation of the

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Wide Web at http://www.nm.blm.gov/amfo/haer_drawings/haer.htm. I am especially grateful to Dr. Art Gómez, a member of the team preparing the HAER study for alerting me to it.

[4] Drew Pearson, "The Defense Grapes of Wrath," syndicated column for February 21, 1941, as cited in McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land*, 346.

[5] Lucius Beebe, "The Dress-Suit Okies of California," *The American Mercury*, 52 (May 1941), 533-540. Beebe, a journalist of high society, sometimes referred to these people scornfully as "black tie drifters."

[6] Barbara Palmer, "Clinton's Kicks," *Oklahoma Today* (July 1992), 42-43.

process that Route 66 had known intimately for more than a decade already.[7] The other side of it, as the neighboring towns could testify, was the draining of population from the farms and the small towns that lacked the transportation and military connections.

The problem was, though, that this movement did not translate into greater use of the roads, at least not for more than a short period time. This was the second pattern associated with the highway during World War II. The migration was brief, largely confined to the beginning of the war, and then it faded. Instead, traffic volume slid dramatically even from Depression levels as a consequence of increased production and employment, the rationing of gasoline and of tires, and the halt in the production of automobiles and the increased military use was not sufficient to compensate for the drop in private travel. The statistical dimensions of the decline of traffic along Route 66 cannot be precisely measured, but some indication can be found in the larger tally of traffic levels for the state of Oklahoma. Considering only the paved roads in the state, the average number of vehicles traveling the paved roads, per mile, per day, dropped by around a third from 1940 to 1944, from 1460.6 vehicles to 974.5 vehicles.[8] With that reduction of traffic, businesses along the road, especially the smallest of them, the most marginal independent mom and pop operations, suffered dramatically. While the

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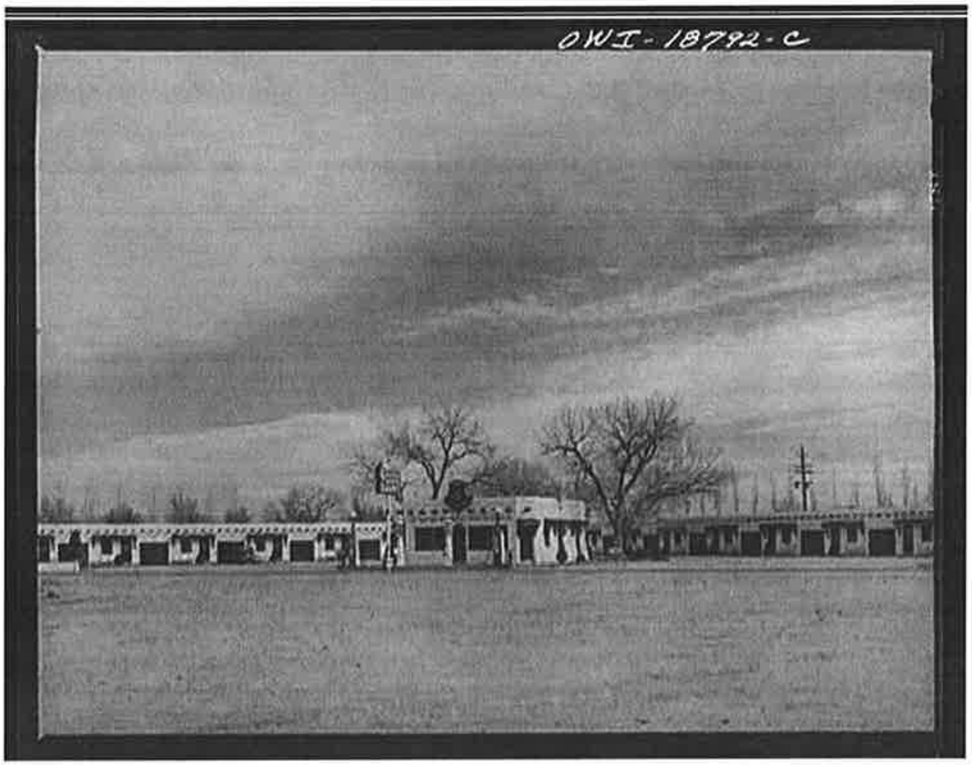
[7] One contemporary student of both highways and the demographic shifts of the war period went so far as to suggest that "Social mobility rose to unprecedented heights during World War II," and backed that statement up with the announcement of the Census Bureau that "Never before in the history of our country . . . has there been so great a shuffling and redistribution of population in so short a time." Francis E. Merrill, "The Highway and Social Problems," in Jean Labutat and Wheaton J. Lane, *Highways in our National Life: A Symposium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 137.

[8] *Biennial Report of the Oklahoma State Highway Commission for the period ending June 30, 1946* (Oklahoma City, 1946), 24.

migration from farm to city and from Oklahoma to California had helped sustain some of



John Collier, "Albuquerque, New Mexico. One of many elaborate auto courts. Originally intended for transcontinental tourist travel, they now house defense workers." 1943. Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

these businesses in the years of the Depression, without the steady stream of traffic, they now found themselves closing their doors and moving to larger cities to find jobs in war production or, indeed, moving to California where the war industries especially flourished. During the war Leon Little and his wife Ann, who had held on throughout the hard times of the 1930s, leased their business out to others.[9] When Lucille Hamons recalled the war years as "especially lean," many other businesses along the road that had

[9] Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 156-157.

depended on the traffic to slow down and spend money doubtless shared the judgment.[10] In the spring of 1942 the impact of the "tire-gas shortage" was being felt nationwide, and while *Business Week* noted that Missouri and Oklahoma and Kansas tourist courts were managing, thus far, that magazine also noted that the tourist courts "built to provide a haven for the traveler on the long, dry stretches of highway in West Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico have been hard hit."[11] In some instances the lodging facilities were able to survive by converting to permanent or semi-permanent housing for nearby military bases.

Postcard: "Big Piney River Bridge and U.S. Highway 66 near Hooker and Devils Elbow between Rolla and Lebanon in the beautiful Missouri Ozarks." Curteich postcard.

The Big Piney River Bridge (1943) pictured in the post card remains a splendid example of a concrete deck bridge with open spandrel arches. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

In many parts of Route 66 the highway languished, lacking for repairs and ordinary maintenance as state budgets suffered as much during the war as they had during the Depression. But some areas, in fact, saw dramatic improvements in the roadway.

[10] Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 154.

[11] "Touristless Courts," *Business Week*, April 25, 1942, p. 28.

In Missouri, for example, because of the location of the new Fort Leonard Wood, federal funds were made available to create a divided four-lane highway to facilitate transportation with the fort and the St. Louis connections, bypassing a difficult stretch of steep and winding roadways in the Ozarks.

While the pressure on the family who operated a diner or a motel or a gas station—those people who depended on the highway to bring customers their way—during the war was palpable, others managed to flourish through the expanded role of government in the economy. The trucking industry that had taken hold during the Depression moved to a new level of prosperity during the war—or at least some of the trucking companies did. LeeWay was one of the businesses that did well. Susan Croce Kelly quotes Bob Lee on the impact of the war: "We had a tremendous increase in business . . . from hauling war supplies for government contractors, and in shipping engines to the West Coast, ammunition from McAlester, Oklahoma, ordnance from Kansas City and outside Saint Louis, and we'd bring empty steel shell casings there to be loaded and shipped out. The war really made LeeWay Motor Freight."[12] Government contracts helped LeeWay, but there was more to their success than doing business with a customer much larger than any that might stop at the gas station and also get a burger. LeeWay had been part of a "pool" of trucking companies, presumably rotating the distribution of contracts among the members so that they would not sacrifice their freight business with private customers. Thus, after the war, Bob Lee explained, "There was a real shakeout in the trucking industry." Those companies that had not joined a pool and had become dependent on government contracts to the exclusion of their civilian

[12] Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 77.

customers disappeared in that shakeout.[13] This was a sign of the times as centralization in the economy and society moved rapidly and with government support during the war years and afterwards.

One can see some of the same centralization in the petroleum industry during the war, and even in the portion of it that connected to the automobile and trucking landscape of Route 66. Jakle and Sculle summarize the trend cogently:

> For domestic consumption, gasoline was pooled and delivered from bulk plants to the nearest gasoline stations irrespective of brand or company linkages. Many bulk plants and over one-quarter of all gasoline stations were closed. Retail sales through the war years stood at less than 70 percent of 1941 levels, the result of strict gasoline rationing overseen by the Petroleum Industry War Council.[14]

Cooperation rather than competition, consolidation of like businesses, and the closing of the independent operators was underway in all parts of the economy.

This consolidation in the economy, in turn, had other consequences including especially a tendency to conformity. In the gasoline stations, the effect was distinct, but pallid, as argued by John Margolies:

> The advent of World War II marked the end of a grand and glorious era in the history of the gas station. Indeed, it marked the end of an age of idealism and innocence in American culture. Never again would there be the fervor and zeal of the free-enterprise system so sumptuously and joyously expressed in commercial design. The new reality after the war would be more ascetic, economical, and practical, and what little joy remained in the commercial environment would be expressed in scaled-back imitations of the big-time hoopla of the "wonder years" from 1920 to 1940.[15]

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[13] Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 77.

[14] Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 67.

[15] Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance*, 62.

Margolies was doubtless accurate in his assessment of the dampening affect of institutional discipline in the architectural qualities of gas station construction as the variety and imagination sometimes found in earlier buildings faded into the conformity mandated by each company for its stations. On the other hand, the sheer number of stations—and also of fast food operations and motels as well—after the war increased dramatically to serve the traveling needs of a nation from which the pall of Depression and war seemed finally to lift.

World War II along Highway 66 had demonstrated the significance of the road as an artery of commerce, even as an artery of war. The irony was, though, that the communities and businesses along its path, and the individuals who earned their livings in ways directly and indirectly related to the highway, felt that power both when the road delivered prosperity and when it deliver carried hardship. Either way, the symbolism was powerful and undeniable.

ii. The Icon Transformed

In March 1946, Jack D. Rittenhouse set out to put together a guide for all those people who he thought would want to travel Highway 66 and who would need information about the road, about places to visit, about where to stay, and how to find a good place to eat. Rittenhouse was not a writer so much as an aspiring writer and during World War II he wrote technical manuals for the Army Air Corps and afterwards was employed as a copy-editor in Los Angeles.[16] "During World War II," Rittenhouse later wrote, "I realized that there might be a great postwar migration from the eastern states to California. Many young men and women had received their war training at the great bases in California, and once having seen that pleasant land they would want to return." So that year he spent a month on the road, traveling from Los Angeles to Chicago and back, and published *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, a small book that he billed as "A mile-by-mile complete handbook on how to get the most fun from your trip. Full data on towns, historic spots, & highway facts: roads, hills, & garages."[17]

Years later, Rittenhouse would look back and tell Highway 66 explorer Tom Teague, "I wasn't an expert. I was one guy who made the trip and took notes. That's about the best I can say."[18] In truth, most people who purchased and used Rittenhouse's guide probably had little idea of the author's expertise or accuracy, although he was clearly an experienced user of the highway, one well-versed in its path and roadside facilities. Some motorists may have been attracted to the guide because of its price. It retailed for a dollar. Plus, it was slender, only 128 pages long, and was small enough to fit in a hip pocket. But the main advantage of the guide when it was published it was that it was the only such guide to Route 66. Even at that, Rittenhouse printed (setting the print himself) only three thousand copies of his guide and marketed it himself. This

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[16] Tom Teague, *Searching for 66* (Springfield, Illinois: Samizdat House, 1991; 1996), 153.

[17] Jack D. Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66* (Los Angeles: privately published, 1946; reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989, 2000); Rittenhouse's recollections are in the unpaged prefatory sections of the reprint.

[18] Teague, *Searching for 66*, 155.

inconspicuous guide, written by an unassuming author, and published in such a small edition, might therefore easily be mistaken for an ephemeral brochure or token of the trip, but actually it represents one of the most important documents associated with the highway.

The key to the value of the *Guide Book to Highway 66* lies primarily in Rittenhouse's keen observations of the road and the towns and facilities associated with it. As a snapshot in time, Rittenhouse's guide provides a clear view of U.S. 66 a half year after the end of World War II that is valuable to the historian in the same way that travelers' guidebooks for emigrants on the Oregon – California Trail provide the basis for an understanding of the social dynamics of the landscape they crossed and how those routes changed over time. This guide is more than a mileage log. It is a social statement that conveys an image of the institutions and people along the way, of the expectations the traveler might have, and something of the values and rhythms of life they might encounter. It offers historical observations about many of the points the traveler would pass through, and offhand assessments of local economies. He was careful to note the gasoline stations and cafés (in contrast to restaurants east of the Mississippi, he wrote, in the West "Many roadside 'cafes' serve only chili, sandwiches, pie, coffee, etc. Other establishments bearing a 'cafe' sign may be chiefly devoted to the sale of beer or liquor."), some of the motels ("In view of the unsettled condition in this immediate post-war period, any such detailed listing might change quickly."),[19] and the rest areas off the road.

A close examination of the volume reveals much about the highway and the

[19] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 7, 5.

people along it at the end of the war. Rittenhouse's guidebook is a significant departure from earlier guidebooks, like the logbooks used for the Ozark Trails; those earlier guides had to tell the traveler where to turn, but since the road was by this time paved and marked clearly, Rittenhouse focused on what accommodations and points of interest would be found along the way. Using exact mileage references from one point to the next to aid the reader, his references were clear; his descriptions were concise. And the change since the highway was designated two decades earlier was unmistakable. In Illinois, for example, he noted the freeway that the driver would take part of the way between Chicago and St. Louis, a "super-highway" "which will allow speed and safety by skirting all smaller towns, and by restrictions against operating gas stations, cafes, courts, etc., directly on the highway."[20] The same was true near Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri where a four-lane road had been built during the war to serve the base and better connect it to the national network. He offered sociological observations too. Ocoya, Illinois, was "another dwindling community with the ever-present grain elevator, a score of homes, two small stores and a gas station."[21] He made the connection with the highway more explicitly when he said that Cuba, Missouri, "although still important as an agricultural center, . . . is now an important highway town."[22] Often he would note how a new alignment had been put in use, leaving the stores on the old road section, within sight, off the main traffic. In Missouri he told about "stubby telephone poles" that were still in the area from when the telegraph followed the old Wire Road.

[20] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 10.

[21] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 12.

[22] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 24.

In Oklahoma he sometimes went into more detail, perhaps because he was warming to his task, possibly because he found himself moving into a different country. Thus he identified parks, like the one just north of Commerce: "At the curve is a roadside park . . . with tables and fireplaces."[23] And he described traffic conditions to expect near the larger cities and the smaller towns: "on week-ends the traffic is somewhat heavier near Oklahoma City. The road is good, but the shoulders are soggy in wet weather. In the smaller towns, brick streets are often bumpy."[24] He pointed out isolated lodging facilities for the equally isolated traveler; east of Kellyville, Rittenhouse noted: "Gas station here, with a few cabins. This part of the route enters a farming territory." Indeed, some of the accommodations that the traveler might seek remained undeveloped and even speculative. Ten miles west of Depew he wrote that "at this point you pass over a steel bridge. Just west is what appears to be a good campsite (R), but there is no indication as to whether camping is permitted here or not. There are several such spots along here."[25] Shortly after passing "several good tourist courts" in western Oklahoma City which he was quick to name ("Boyer, Deluxe, Rush, Carlyle, Major, Oklahoma, and Hutchison"), Rittenhouse noted that at Lake Overholser, "Many tourists pull over to the side of the road here for a short rest in the shade, while they watch the water."[26] On across the state he drove, taking willing readers as passengers in his 1939 American Bantam coupe, helping them see the town of Erick: "US 66 crosses the one main street of the town,

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[23] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 40.

[24] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 47.

[25] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 49.

[26] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 55-56.

which is the first town you encounter, going west, which has any of the true 'western' look, with its wide, sun-baked street, frequent horsemen, occasional sidewalk awnings, and similar touches" and driving on until he crossed the state line into Texas: "At once the road improves."[27] The tempo of the traveler seemed to be matched by the pace of life along the road.

He also provided the reader an astute sense of the changing topography and culture as he drove his car westward. Across the Texas panhandle he pointed out picnic tables under some trees ("A pleasant place for a casual lunch" east of Shamrock and the rows of trees planted along the road as windbreaks west of there, also cautioning drivers to watch for cattle on the road. In New Mexico he derided the condition of the road, but noted that the state had embarked upon "an extensive program of highway improvement and is giving special attention to US 66."[28] His comment on car care at Santa Rosa spoke to the condition of the cars many were driving after the war years in which cars were not even manufactured: "If your car needs attention, better check it at Santa Rosa, because the next major community is Albuquerque, about 122 miles west."[29] After Albuquerque, Rittenhouse also became something of a tour guide, drawing the attention of the traveler to the exotic scenic and cultural resources of the area: "Now truly you are in a fabulous

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[27] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 61. Rittenhouse even offered a brief homage to an earlier "guide" to the road when he recommended (p. 54) John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*: "The story of an Oklahoma farm family who lost their farm during the Dust Bowl days of the 30's and journeyed by car over US 66 to California. Their route over US 66 was approximately from Oklahoma City to Barstow, Calif., from whence they turned northwest. Many fine descriptions of scenes along US 66."

[28] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 69.

[29] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 74.

land, for in this part of your trip you will pass ancient pueblos, volcanic lava flows, the Continental Divide, Indian reservations, the Painted Desert, the Petrified Forest, and many Indian trading posts."[30] He also suggested that the inhabitants of the area were catching on to the opportunity presented by travelers passing by. Near San Fidel, New Mexico, he commented, "Along this section of US 66, Indians sit by the roadside selling pottery."[31] There seems to have been some thought to the social inequity of the situation in his observation at Houck, Arizona, regarding the Navajos, that "They are not allowed to vote, but were subject to the draft in the war."[32]

An example of the property type Recreation Travel Stops / Destinations, Two Guns, Arizona's zoo, like most of the attractions involving animals, holds little of its once grand highway splendor and possesses serious integrity issues. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

It is also clear that there were, even at this early point, some of the tourist attractions that in coming years would be a hallmark of traveling U.S. 66, as Rittenhouse described the business at Two Guns with its stores and zoo.[33] His advice in the stretch between Kingman and Topock, through Sitgreaves Pass, was decidedly practical as he informed eastbound travelers of the service offered by a Goldroad filling station. For a fee, a tow truck would

[30] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 81.

[31] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 85.

[32] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 92.

[33] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 99.

haul the cars up the hill to the summit if they were unable to make it on their own. In the same vein, he pointed out a "Water faucet at the roadside here (R) for cars that need water on the climb driving east."[34] In this case, the modern reader gets not only the tempo of travel, but its temperature as well. If the point is not clear enough, once into California he warns the westbound driver: "in the hot months, it is advisable to make the drive from Needles to Barstow, over the Mojave Desert, either in the evening, night, or early morning hours. In any case, it is advisable to carry extra water for the car."[35] A few pages later the consequence of not taking his advice is hinted at: "Skeletons of abandoned cars are frequent along the roadside."[36] If the Mojave Desert was not a ritual passage enough, the state of California had erected its own barrier near Daggett—the infamous inspection stations checking cars for diseased fruits and plants, to the extent of requiring passengers to "open all suitcases, untie all parcels, and unlock rear trunk compartments for inspection."[37]

This is a unique document, and it is important for several reasons. Rittenhouse's selection of Highway 66 as the best route across the country reflects the road's prominence in the culture and society at the end of World War II. It was an easy, automatic choice for him, one that did not require explanation. The extent of his justification was in one sentence on the back of the book: "Highway 66 is the great artery from Chicago to Los Angeles, via St. Louis, Joplin, Oklahoma City, Amarillo, Albuquerque, Gallup, Flagstaff, and Needles." Highway 66 was the road west. That he

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[34] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 110-111.

[35] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 113.

[36] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 115.

published a guide to that highway, moreover, caused that prominence to increase.

But it also provided a sense of historical context by comparison to what came before and what would follow in later years. It shows in subtle ways the changes in the two decades since Highway 66 was designated. The route of the highway had changed, the pavement had changed, and there was much more development along it. This was not just a comparison with the Ozark Trails years or the National Old Trails path. This book showed that the highway, as an institution, as a cultural icon, as a commercial corridor, was not the same that it had been in the years of the great migration to California. And for that, the volume is significant enough.

But there was more as one turned from the past and looked to the future. The changes to come, changes that sometimes Rittenhouse anticipated and that sometimes he just provided a baseline to measure against, may suggest the real value of the little book. Rittenhouse had, after all, provided a volume that helped the outsider move into the orbit of the local community, helped the traveler find local accommodations, a reasonable meal and convenient gas station, and even find an interesting historic site or pleasant rest area. Within a decade that frame of reference would itself be replaced along with many of the familiar businesses along the road. If Highway 66 in the spring of 1946, right at the beginning of the first heavy travel season of the post-war period, coursed through a country where camping alongside the road was still common and where people might stop to watch the waters of a lake and where some of the locals still rode horses, that was all about to change. Unprecedented numbers of people took to the road and as a result, businesses along 66 expanded and flourished—and changed—in dramatic ways.

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[37] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 118.

One indication of the change was the reference to the road in commercial culture. It had been less than a decade since Route 66's most common association was with *The Grapes of Wrath*. As a result of Steinbeck's novel and Darryl Zanuck's movie, many people identified the road with the steady stream of Okies and Arkies heading west, looking for employment and new homes, and it was not a pretty picture. About the same time that Jack Rittenhouse made his post-war trip along Route 66, though, so did Bobby Troup. Troup, a songwriter with one substantial pre-war success, and his wife Cynthia went to California to try to make it big in the recording industry. On the way Cynthia suggested a song title and Bobby came up with lyrics and music. "Get Your Kicks on Route 66," was the result and soon the radio airwaves were saturated with Nat "King" Cole's version of the upbeat melody that sang the praises of the towns along the way, and urged people to "get hip to this timely tip," and "travel my way, take the highway that's the best."

The music and the words beckoned strongly for people to make the journey and get their kicks on Route 66.[38] In a nation of radios, in a nation of automobiles and travel, in a nation where the possibility of making a decent living was not unrealistic after all, and in a nation where the great Southwest summoned the wanderlust in people who had not taken a vacation in their life, or in a generation, the upbeat tempo and the fetching lyrics of escape and release turned the highway itself into a different road and into a vastly different icon.

The U.S. Highway 66 Association sought to take advantage of this new popularity and this new yen to travel the nation's highways. During World War II the Route 66

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[38] Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 148-150.

Association, which had also billed itself and its road as the Main Street of America, faded away. Perhaps it was the Depression that caused both businesses along the road and the potential travelers of the road to dampen their enthusiasm as either purveyors or targets of travel promotion. Perhaps it was even the success of the effort; with the road now paved and crowded with people, who needed to solicit more travelers? Possibly it was the increasing effort put forth by chambers of commerce along the road to advertise not the highway, but their community, and then as even state travel bureaus made their pitch, both of which made a highway association a little redundant or archaic. Or maybe it was the specter of The Main Street of America filled with people leaving town. Or, during the war, what was the point of such promotional activity when the kinds of optional travel plans that could respond to enticement had yielded to other pressures? Whatever the cause, the association fell by the wayside, but after World War II, in the buoyant atmosphere and promising future of travel, the merchants along the road once again organized.

In 1947 the group reorganized at a meeting of Road Boosters Clubs in Oklahoma City, calling itself the U.S. Highway 66 Association. Gladys Cutberth, who along with her husband Jack Cutberth, soon operated the business of the association out of their home in Clinton, explained that "Our purpose was twofold: To improve the road by paving and four-laning it, and to attract tourists. We advertised Route 66 as the fastest, safest and best all-year route from Chicago to L.A."[39]

There is something especially poignant in the efforts of this new organization.

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[39] "A Legend's Eleventh Hour," [Phillips Petroleum Co.] *Shield*, VII (fourth quarter, 1982), 14-23.

The advertising campaign, of course, was precisely what it had been two decades earlier when its predecessor association billed the highway as the fastest, safest, and best all-year route. At the reorganization meeting, Ralph Jones, a New Mexico motel owner, pressed the basic message that "people must be sold on coming to 66 before they leave home."[40] So the merchants organized and pressed their common interest together. But what is especially revealing is that the organization now was dominated not just by merchants, but that those merchants were noticeably mom and pop businesspeople—as Tom Teague describes them at their first meeting, "a thousand innkeepers, café owners, gas station operators and other merchants from every state along the highway"—and they were especially from the small towns along the highway where 66 really was the main street in the town. The larger cities needed the organization less and less; they already had the dynamos of growth and commerce in other forms; they were not dependent upon the traveling public for revenue while the small towns were. Symbolic of this difference was Jack Cutberth, a barber who had served on the city council in Clinton, Oklahoma and who saw the critical relationship between the small communities along the road and the traffic that the highway brought into those towns. As a result of that first meeting in Oklahoma City, Cutberth became the state secretary of the organization and in a few years he became the executive secretary, the full-time spokesperson and prime mover, of the national organization.[41] He kept that position for about twenty-five years.

In fact, the Highway 66 Association seems to have self-consciously clung to the images of the past, somewhat reticent about changing the identity too much. There were

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[40] Tom Teague, *Searching for 66,* 113.

[41] Teague, *Searching for 66*, 114.

some who wanted to change the name of the road, but they did not prevail. Ever since August 1935 when Will Rogers was killed in a plane crash and Oklahoma Congressman Wesley C. Disney introduced legislation to call Route 66 the Will Rogers Highway, the road had sometimes been referred to by the name of Oklahoma's favorite son from Claremore on Route 66. But at the 1947 meeting, the group abandoned that designation and "the association voted to readopt the route's former designation as the 'Main Street of America'. . ." and specifically to reject "The Will Rogers Highway."[42] The representative from Claremore, Oklahoma—generally regarded as Will Rogers' hometown—fought hard against the change but contingents from California, Arizona, and New Mexico successfully sought the more universal, and older, slogan and they prevailed.

Will Rogers Memorial Highway Sign, Commerce Oklahoma. (date unknown). This privately placed sign, located at a roadside park created by widening the curve of the road at a 90° intersection, is an example of the property type Roadside Parks / Picnic Areas / Markers. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Five years later, however, the name of the highway was officially designated as the "Will Rogers Highway," and in that five years a significant transformation had taken place. In 1952 Warner Brothers Studios had filmed the movie, *The Will Rogers Story*, and as part of the pre-release publicity, they secured the cooperation of the Highway 66 Association—which evidently reasoned that the road would benefit

[42] Typescript of unidentified news article of Oct. 28, 1947, in file, "Press Releases, " in Route 66 files, Oklahoma Historical Society.

from publicity as well—and placed markers proclaiming The Will Rogers Highway in Santa Monica and Saint Louis (suggesting that the Illinois segment of the road was outside the core focus of their promotional efforts). Then they sent a caravan down the Will Rogers Highway to generate more publicity. Cameras whirred and clicked as the caravan made its way with various publicity stops along the road. The designation of the road as the Will Rogers Highway was less a memorial to the universally beloved humorist and satirist, as it was an effort to tie on to the commercial success of the advertising campaign for the movie.

iii. Business along the Road in Boom

Whether as a result of the advertising of the Highway 66 Association or not, many people decided to get their kicks on 66. There is a widespread quotation attributed to Frank Lloyd Wright in which the architect purportedly said that Highway 66 was "a giant chute down which everything loose in this country is sliding into Southern California." The quote may or may not be authentic, but certainly the volume of traffic seemed to increase in about that proportion. The statistical measures of traveling exuberance are revealing. In 1941, gas stations in the U.S. sold three and a half billion gallons of gasoline. During the war that number obviously declined, service stations closed their doors, gasoline was rationed, and travel dropped. But by 1951, the service stations in the nation sold over eight billion gallons.[43] Likewise, the number of registered motor vehicles, which had dropped during the war, by 1950 not only recovered to the pre-war level of around twenty-seven and a third million, but had grown dramatically in the last five years of the decade to more than forty million. By 1955 registrations had doubled, and by 1958 there were fifty-seven million cars registered in the United States.[44] John Gunther offered a slightly different perspective on these numbers. In 1947 Gunther wrote, with good authority, that the United States contained "four-fifths of the world's automobiles."[45] However measured, Americans were taking to the road in ever expanding numbers in the years following World War II. Understandably, their experience would be different from that of their predecessors along the highway.

There were several forces operating in this. One was the readjustment when soldiers and sailors returned to their homes and began the search for new jobs with California once again being the target of many dreams. There was also the reconstitution and sometimes breakup of families that for understandable reasons had yielded under the pressures of prolonged separation and even coming of age separately during the war.[46]

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[43] Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance*, 84.

[44] John B. Rae, *The American Automobile: A Brief History*, 238; Sculle and Jakle, *The Gas Station in America*, 67. In Sculle, Jakle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 20, the authors count 24 million passenger cards registered in the United States in 1956 and 57 million in 1958, figures that are not only impossible to reconcile with the two year period of measurement, but that are also inconsistent with any others, including the work of the same authors.

[45] John Gunther, *Inside U.S.A.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), x.

[46] See especially the chapter, "Daddy's Coming Home" in William M. Tuttle, Jr., *"Daddy's Gone to War: The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), which documents the toll of the war on home life and the soaring divorce rate after the war.

These circumstances often put people on the road in search of what they could not find at home, or in search of a real home. Another was simply the urge, by people who had suffered the restraints of Depression and war to celebrate, to let loose. As historian Elaine Tyler May writes, "Americans had postponed and pent up their desires to create something new and liberating, . . . People looked forward to spending their money when the war ended, in much the same way as they looked forward to delayed gratifications in other areas of life."[47] There was also a discovery, or rediscovery (as was the historic pattern), of the Southwest and its exotic charms, a perception that took forms ranging from gushing romanticism to raw exploitation. Whatever it was that beckoned, or whatever it was that pushed, more and more people were getting a car and traveling U.S. Highway 66, or, as it was now famously sung, Route 66.

The postwar period saw Route 66 develop and change in powerful ways along its full course and along the roadside. The pattern of change often took the shape of "progress" because of the opportunities for economic growth it contained, or at least it did so in the initial perceptions. That growth potential, however, concealed other forms of change that for many on and along the highway produced fruits they neither anticipated nor relished.

The end of World War II clearly marked a new era in Route 66 and it likewise did for the service stations along its path. Within a couple of months of the end of the war the Cities Service official publication, *Service*, presented a guide for "service men everywhere" who wanted to go into business after leaving the armed services, suggesting

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[47] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 89.

that they consider opening their own gas station. In so doing the company presented a composite picture of that retail business. In autumn of 1945, one third of all service stations produced less than $5000 a year in gross sales; more than a quarter of all the service stations operating at the beginning of 1941 had closed by the end of 1943; it required between $1,000 and $2,500 capital to start a gas station business; after the shakeout of World War II 95% of all service stations were leased from an oil company with only a few actually owned by the operator. But the article also offered specific guidance for the prospective service station entrepreneur:

> Let's assume you're satisfied with this, a small, compact station with two bays, some inside space for display, and a modest driveway area. Now where do you want it? That greatly affects the starting price and character of your business. A commercial location caters chiefly to transients and its income is mainly from gasoline, with little revenue from services. A residential location, however, allows a build-up of regular trade. A highway station must depend on trucks, transients, and tourists.
>
> . . . From now on, it is probable that [the motorist] will patronize district and community shopping centers more than downtown and metropolitan areas. This should afford the station operator a chance to spread out rather than bunching up in the old four-on-a-corner pattern. [48]

This presented a difficult choice for many prospective operators—whether to locate so as to serve the highway traffic or the downtown traffic or the shopping centers. Fortunately for the people along The Main Street of America, it was possible to serve all three clienteles with one location. If the station were right on the main street, and if that main street happened to be right on the major highway, the future was promising indeed. From Chicago to Los Angeles new stations sprouted up in anticipation of the volume of business carried past its pumps, and many of them did well.

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[48] John S. Cordell, "In Reply to Yours –," *Service: A Publication of Cities Service Company*, October 1945, 2-4.

In addition there were the existing stations, and they expanded their operations. The service stations became busier as people like Ann and Leon Little in western Oklahoma, who had leased-out their station during the war, went back to operating it. During the 1930s the Littles had been open twenty-four hours a day and now they resumed that schedule. Others followed suit to serve not only the traveling public that sought to either maximize their daily mileage or to travel in the cool of the night but also the expanding bus and truck lines. And they remained busy all day, partly a result of the shortage of new automobiles and the abundance of older automobiles that needed frequent repairs, at least into the 1950s.

Whiting Brothers Gasoline Station, near McCarty's, New Mexico (date unknown). This post-World War II gas station reflects the tendency to use canopies that sweep upward. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

The stations increased in number and they changed in appearance. They took on a sleeker, shinier appearance, often with plenty of aluminum and glass and the porcelain enamel that had been used to some degree since the 1930s continued into the 1950s. The Texaco stations with their finned porte cocheres still can be found commonly as examples of the streamlining pervading the architecture of the service station.[49] As they moved into the 1950s, canopies, once (and often still in the postwar years, because they

[49] Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance*, 86, 99.

endured so well) an important element of the structure of the station and a testimony to the transition of motoring from a fair weather activity to year round duty, returned to use. Indeed, says, John Margolies, ". . . canopies reappeared with a vengeance. The box designs of the 1930s and 1940s had eliminated canopies. They were a distraction from the flowing lines and contrasting colors of the station designs. The new canopies became longer and longer, and sometimes there were two canopies. Some of them swept upward like tail fins on 1950s automobiles, and there were so-called butterfly canopies used as devices to display huge advertising signs mounted on top of them. By the 1960s, there were even freestanding canopies."[50] Within a decade there would be abundant signs of these elaborate, gravity-defying canopies, sometimes termed a "populuxe" style.

On a different level, the stations were changing in their functionality. Dominated by large oil companies, the new stations of the 1950s were constructed in ways that stressed volume of sales as never before; they rested on huge storage tanks that increased their capacity for sales of larger quantities of gasoline. The companies themselves even made reciprocal agreements so that they could more efficiently (if less competitively) supply their stations by using each others' products. And the stations were becoming increasingly specialized, which also meant that they were increasingly separate from the motels and restaurants which just a few years earlier had enabled them to present a variety of services to the traveling motorists in a single package.[51] Indeed, the presence of the combined operations of service station, motel, and diner increasingly became a

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[50] Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance*, 90.

[51] Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance*, 68; Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 79.

mark of age, not a key to success.

The motels similarly changed and so did the motel industry. The numbers of motels in the nation are subject to various estimates. In 1953, one discussion of the motel business in *The Saturday Evening Post* estimated that five years earlier there had been 18,000 motels in the nation and that number had increased in half a decade to 40,000.[52] As substantial as that growth would be, the estimate is probably not far off. Sculle and Jakle indicate that in 1953 the total was around 45,000 and that was double what it had been in 1946.[53] The rate of growth, at any rate is undeniable, and that is reflected along Route 66. All along the highway new motels emerged to take advantage of the newly mobile public.

These motels, moreover, were becoming ever more modern—and expensive—in their construction. They remained, by and large, the same mom and pop operations that had always characterized the industry. One analysis indicated in 1948 that 98.2 per cent of the motels were such individually owned operations.[54] The same analysts, however, go on to note "But they came to provide the least number of units as well as the least desired form of lodging after 1945." Indeed, according to Warren Belasco, by 1953, a pivotal year in retrospect, the trade journal *Hotel Management* estimated that, "although only 10 percent of the country's courts had twenty-five or more rooms, these leaders did

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[52] Evan M. Wylie, "Troubles of a Motel Keeper," *Saturday Evening Post*, 226 (July 18, 1953), 69.

[53] Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 82.

[54] Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 79.

40 percent of the business, especially along the lucrative main routes."[55] Route 66 was certainly one of those lucrative routes.

What this indicated was a profound shift underway in the motel business. Up until then, motels beckoned not only to the tourists driving down the road but also to the person who wanted to start a small business and who did not have much capital. That was the way that it had always been in the motel business, whether they were called camps or courts. In 1945 the Small Business Administration prepared a guide to the motel business and the Veterans' Administration paid for its distribution to soldiers and sailors encouraging them to enter that business, and in 1951 *Fortune Magazine*, as quoted by Jakle and Sculle, observed that "There was a time when the sailor home from the sea went to chicken farming. Nowadays he buys a motel by the side of the road."[56]

Portion of Rock Fountain Court (1945), Springfield, Missouri. With nine separate cottage units, this tourist court was typical of post-war "mom and pop" roadside business developments. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Along Route 66, as in the rest of the nation, the motels were undergoing the same specialization as the rest of the economy—like the service stations and restaurants that

[55] Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 170.

[56] Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 40.

used to be their neighbors and associates. Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, in their study of *The Motel in America*, identified some of the forces involved in this. They note that even though the Small Business Administration "championed the mom-and-pop motel," the SBA also advocated "management procedures that effectively pointed away from small operators."[57] The industry was much more demanding than it had been when simply providing a safe and reasonably adequate room was sufficient. Travel associations were not only evaluating and approving motels along the major routes but were rating them as well.[58] Motels were becoming sometimes plush, but at any rate they had more amenities. Telephones in individual rooms, for example, was not a requirement at the end of the war, but each year meant additional pressure to install them. To build a new motel was no longer the simple task it had once been; in 1953 one motel owner explained the motel business to an aspiring couple and started by telling them that "You'll need between fifty and a hundred thousand dollars."[59] The small businesses remained. The mom and pop motels lingered on, and they did so in large numbers. But they did so with marginal returns, with a declining share of the business, and without the funds essential for major investments to remodel or reconstruct.

Their replacements were emerging along Route 66. In 1949, perhaps ten, and at the most thirteen motels on Route 66, except for those in Chicago and Los Angeles, were members of the American Motel Association. This trade association sought to promote its members through publishing a guide listing approved member motels, and providing

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[57] Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 74.

[58] Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 136.

[59] Wylie, "Troubles of a Motel Keeper," 70.

the hallmark of professional association and identity.[60] Being an individual mom and pop operation along the side of the road was no longer enough and more associations and more motels, especially the newer ones that could afford the additional expenses and the trade association membership, attached their identities not to the community but to the organization of like-minded operations. The next step was the referral chain. A 1951 map of Best Western motels—a chain of independently owned motels that referred customers to others in the chain—shows a clearly defined arc from Chicago to Los Angeles tracing the path of Route 66.[61] What was happening was that the "amateurs"—the moms and pops—were being separated from the "professionals"—the companies that could afford the new dispensation, and what was happening more was that the smaller businesses were being left behind in the wake of the new inns associated with either a chain or a referral group. And what was happening further was that the national chains were building properties that were identical to their other properties in other states and the tendency toward conformity and standardization and even uniformity replaced the highly individualistic businesses that once dotted the path of Route 66 through America.

The separation of the amateurs from the professionals, the separation of the small from the large, and the separation of the local from the national proceeded even faster and more relentlessly beginning in 1954. The federal income tax code enacted that year brought sweeping changes to investments in commercial construction, enabling investors to achieve significant tax benefits through accelerated depreciation of such properties. While this encouraged a wave of investment in new properties, it also foreshortened the

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[60] Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 133.

[61] Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 144, figure 5.17.

life expectancy of such investments since there now became a distinct incentive to sell the property after eight or ten years, or even as soon as five years, when the tax benefits dwindled.[62] The motel industry had moved quickly and rapidly from the world of the small business operated by a couple to provide a service to the travelers who drove past.

iv. Snakes on the Road: Luring the Tourist

Route 66 was changing in other ways too. The parks that had provided a place for motorists to pull over and rest, maybe even to watch the water, were being replaced by more commercially-oriented attractions. And those early parks that operated as businesses found themselves outranked and out-glitzed by the newer recreation stops.

All along Highway 66 such parks were either a necessity or a luxury, depending on the expectations of the traveler. In Lyons, Illinois, Fairyland Park at the corner of Highways 66 and 42A, had years earlier created a set of attractions designed to appeal to children as well as adults, with its famous "Whoopee Coaster," an undulating plank roadway with dips and dives that tourists would drive in their own cars—an early form of roller coaster. Although the coaster could not withstand the weight of heavier cars, the park developed other amusements, including Shetland pony rides after the war and a

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[62] Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 45-47, 54. See also, Harold G. Vatter, *The U.S. Economy in the 1950's: An Economic History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963), 144-145 on the use of accelerated depreciation schedules in the 1954 Revenue Act to reduce corporate net income tax and increase the proportion paid by individuals. Vatter's analysis would suggest that the law thus further encouraged the corporatization of the motel industry.

merry-go-round.[63] In Missouri, some of the caverns provided refuges in a park-like setting for travelers, some dating back to railroad days. In Oklahoma, there were places like Dixieland, a park just west of Sapulpa that opened in 1928, right after the designation of Route 66. The owners dammed up a creek and created a substantial lake which they stocked with fish and they also built a swimming pool and bathhouse, as well as some tourist cottages, a restaurant, a gas station and service garage, and picnic tables and barbecue pits. Dixieland even had a miniature golf course and a roller skating rink. The park catered to locals, but it also served the burgeoning traffic along Route 66, and, in fact, it fit well with the general expectations and pace of the traffic on the highway, bringing the distant traveler into the social and economic world of the community.[64] Where motels were designed to remind travelers of their homes, so too did the parks offer familiar forms of relaxation and recreation.

But these parks receded like the old motels and gas stations in the wake of postwar social change along Route 66 as commercial operations tried to attract travelers and to persuade them to open their pocketbooks. Susan Croce Kelly aptly captures the new wave of tourist stops along the road: "Especially after World War II, Route 66 was lined with establishments that seemed to wave their arms, whistle, blow bubbles, sing, dance, flash lights, and make outrageous promises just to get drivers to slow down and pull off the highway."[65] The presence of such tourist attractions along the highway is

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[63] Thomas Arthur Repp, *Route 66: The Empires of Amusement* (Lynnwood, Washington: Mock Turtle Press, 1999), 5-9.

[64] James W. Hubbard, "Dixieland Was a Dream Realized," Sapulpa *Herald*, October 18, 1992.

[65] Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 170.

legendary and their number appears to have been substantial, although precise data are not available. The two compilations of accounts of such attractions on Route 66 by Thomas Arthur Repp offer the most comprehensive list and body of information concerning these elusive roadside stops.[66]

There were trading posts and curio shops that sought to capitalize on the romantic appeal of Native Americans who sometimes became tragic features in a living diorama of conquest, sometimes caricatures of themselves to fulfill untutored expectations of outsiders, and sometimes entrepreneurs themselves. Mohawk Lodge, in Clinton, Oklahoma, had moved to the side of Highway 66 in 1939; previously it had operated in the small town of Colony, Oklahoma, with its origins as a trading post established by the Dutch Reformed Church to serve the Apaches on a nearby reservation. Even there, however, the name had been corrupted from its original Mohonk, after the Lake Mohonk, New York, conferences of the Friends of the Indians in the 1880s.[67] Across New Mexico and Arizona, especially in the western part of New Mexico and into Arizona, trading posts abounded. Often one could find concrete teepees where one might expect a hogan or pueblo, but the teepee was the billboard of the traders, and inside one could find an assortment of curios that ranged from authentic jewelry and rugs and tools to rubber tomahawks and toy drums.

These circumstances offered the dual situation where on the one hand Native American culture was being revived, and sometimes even revered and respected, but at

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66 Thomas Arthur Repp, *Route 66: The Empires of Amusement* (Lynnwood, Washington: Mock Turtle Press, 1999) and Thomas Arthur Repp, *Route 66: The Romance of the West* (Lynnwood, Washington: Mock Turtle Press, 2002).

67 Barbara Palmer, "Clinton's Kicks," *Oklahoma Today* (July 1992), 42-43.

the same time being tainted by commercialization. As Paul Horgan observed in the 1950s, when writing about the same process underway earlier under the auspices of the Fred Harvey Indian Detours,

> Not only the Indian past was revived; but the Indian present was given new energy. . . . it seemed like a sensitive and generous thing to do—to help the Indian in his process of inevitable acculturation by giving him the means of exhibiting and selling his old skills which had fallen into decline. It was true that things once made wholly for use were now made for sale; and it followed that, in a shift of purpose in their making, something was lost of spirit and quality in the piece of pottery, the silver jewel, the woven blanket, the carved fetish, the worked buckskin which resulted. But the society of which the Indian must one day, however far in the future, became a full member was essentially a commercial society. Was he to be denied his chance along with the rest to make money out of his knacks?[68]

Sometimes these attractions started as small roadside adventures, even as hobbies. Ed Galloway, in 1948, had completed the first phase of construction of his Totem Pole Park near Foyil, Oklahoma, and began to draw tourists several miles away from Route 66 to see his ninety-foot tall concrete totem pole with more than two hundred images of Native Americans painted on it as well his collection of three hundred fiddles and nearly a hundred inlaid wood pictures and tables.

Natural attractions abounded. With Highway 66 driving through national monuments and national parks like the Painted Desert and Petrified Forest, and near the Grand Canyon, the competition was stiff but the target market interested in the wonders of the natural world was already on the road passing by. That was evident from the very beginning. Hal Rothman reports that immediately after World War II, in the fall of 1945, the Grand Canyon's visitations "reached new highs each month . . . as discharged

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[68] Paul Horgan, *The Centuries of Santa Fe* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1956), 319.

military personnel and departing war-industry workers returned to the places they left when the war began."[69] Moreover, there were the natural attractions that were privately managed too that hoped to draw upon this stream of traffic. There was, for example, the Meteor Crater in Arizona where its original owners during the Depression had failed to make a go of it selling lectures and books and operating an observatory. After the war, however, a new owner of the American Meteorite Museum, as it was newly named, collected more than thirty-three thousand admission fees.[70]

On the other end of Highway 66, the owners of Meramec Caverns, another natural wonder, harbored even larger aspirations of huge crowds and equally large profits. This network of caves was opened in 1936 as a commercial

Barn sign for Meramec Caverns, north of Pontiac, Illinois. This sign has lost integrity not by being repainted, but by being revised to include Interstate 44 in its message. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Barn sign, actually on a bulk plant station storage / distribution unit, near Chandler, Oklahoma. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

[69] Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 202.

[70] Repp, *Route 66: The Romance of the West*, 155.

venture and by the end of the 1930s had caught on as a major tourist attraction. The Missouri WPA guide described it in glowing terms, and the marketing of it quickly billed it as more than a cave; it was a special cave, in size, in historic associations, in lighting, in all human dimensions including sensory grandeur:

> Left from Stanton on a marked graveled road (slippery when wet) that winds downward onto the narrow floor of the Meramec River gorge to MERAMEC CAVERN (open day and night; adm. 40¢ and 25¢; guides), 3.8 m. The electrically lighted first room of the cavern contains parking space for 300 automobiles, and a large dance floor. Reversing the usual direction of caves, this one tunnels upward through the river bluff to a height of 240 feet. It is naturally divided into four floors, through which graveled walks have been laid. The interior formations, often grotesquely shaped, have been given names such as the Natural Stage, 68 feet in height and of 5 different colors; the Wine Table, in what is called the Wine Room, and the Echo Room, in which the sound of one's voice rebounds from formation to formation for several seconds. At the entrance of the cavern is La Jolla Springs, with a flow of 4,700,000 gallons daily. The entrance to the cavern is said to have been discovered by Spaniards about 1760. It was not open to the public, however, until explored by professionals in 1936.[71]

Beginning in the 1930s, the highway was lined with barns painted to advertise the Meramec Caverns, and those signs became a signature element of the highway. After the war, Meramec Caverns was more aggressively marketed. The cave included, in the post-atomic bomb days, "The World's First Atomic Refuge" and constituted a virtual Noah's Ark for survival. Thomas Arthur Repp writes that customers "were given tiny cards with their admission tickets—cards that insured them they had room reserved inside the fallout shelter in the event the Big One dropped."[72] The point was not that people in the event of

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[71] *Missouri: A Guide to the "Show Me" State*, compiled by the workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Missouri (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941).

[72] Thomas Arthur Repp, *Route 66: The Empires of Amusement* (Lynnwood, Washington:

nuclear holocaust would be able to actually travel across the country to claim their designated space inside the cavern but that the attraction had one more attribute to draw people into its depths. A prototype of many of the other tourist attractions along Highway 66, Meramec Caverns offered up a litany of delights and allures. During World War II the owner of the caverns, Lester Dill, discovered artifacts that he claimed indicated that Jesse James had sought refuge there, and in 1949 he produced a man who claimed to actually be Jesse James.[73] The appeal of the exotic and the different, of unfamiliar parts of the country and distinctive cultures, was being replaced by showmanship.

Perhaps nowhere was the tourist market more intense and more developed than in the Southwest. Especially in New Mexico and Arizona, but also in Texas and Oklahoma, roadside attractions came to be not just incidental to travel but integral to the travel experience, to the point that for perhaps a generation of young people after World War II, those attractions came to be the defining elements of Route 66. In the eastern states of Illinois and Missouri, the tourist attractions tended to be places that also catered to the locals, but in the West they were designed and pitched to pull the traveler from far away off the road and into their doors. Thomas Arthur Repp has written two separate volumes recounting the histories, and providing images, of these institutions in all their glory, glitz, and idiosyncrasy. These businesses, he notes, were different from the other roadside businesses which simply provided necessary services—gas, food, lodging—since they had to devise ways to attract customers unfamiliar with what they offered.

Mock Turtle Press, 1999), 58.

[73] Repp, *Route 66: The Empires of Amusement*, 58-59.

"By their very nature," Repp observes, "

> they were capsules of ingenuity that allowed individual talents to shine. Anyone could run a café, a service station or a motel. But it took inspiration to bury stunt men alive, run gas lines to perpetually-burning covered wagons or fix flea markets with shacks that looked like Howard Johnson's restaurants. Necessity stopped motorists for food, fuel, and sleep. The operators of roadside entertainments lived by brains alone.[74]

There were the zoos. A frequent feature of roadside attractions, entrepreneurs would often gather an assortment of exotic animals, sometimes indigenous to the location like bison and sometimes simply domestic animals, although on occasion the zoos would contain species of all kinds in the expectation that travelers might be interested in creatures they had never seen before, at least not in nearby-living proximity. The more dangerous the creature the greater the attraction, at least in theory, so an entire subgrouping of attractions featured snakes and snake-handlers. As Thomas Arthur Repp notes, "Snake pits, Dens of Death, and their larger cousins, Reptile Gardens, were perennial

This sign (date unknown), between Shamrock and McLean, Texas, advertised the snake pit of Mike and Addie Allred, who together "stand responsible for raising the snake pit to prominence on Route 66," according to Thomas Arthur Repp (*Route 66, Empires of Amusement*, 157). The sign may date from post-Route 66 association and therefore lack integrity. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

[74] Repp, *Route 66: The Empires of Amusement*, 1.

attractions along U.S. Highway 66. They made their strong debut in western Oklahoma, grew thick in the Texas Panhandle and remained common sights through New Mexico and Arizona."[75] Rattlesnakes were a common star of such businesses although cobras and pythons were especially noted and Atkinson's Cobra Gardens west of Grants, New Mexico, according to Thomas Arthur Repp, "became the premiere snake house on all of Route 66." With hundreds of poisonous snakes (not just king cobras, although they were a big draw), Atkinson's Cobra Gardens pulled in a steady flow of customers to a shopping strip size parking lot and provided lectures, tours, and demonstrations to the awed crowds. Many a lesser store generated smaller audiences, but the reptile gardens and snake pits became a hallmark of Route 66.

Many of these establishments were legitimate businesses, some of longstanding and honorable reputation in the communities where they lived, and some, even among those who pitched the lure of the exotic and the dangerous, were but small mom-and-pop businesses with an unusual commodity for sale as entertainment. There were, however, the others. In 1939 Graham Greene, the writer whose works were not only literary but carried the reader to interesting places, appears to have coined the term "tourist trap" as a label for those roadside establishments that operated less than savory businesses (often in disguise) and made their money not as mainstream retailers or entertainers but as purveyors of various fraudulent schemes. The snakes, on occasion, had legs, and even owned businesses.

These unscrupulous businesses kept Lyman Riley busy. Riley, a promoter of

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[75] Thomas Arthur Repp, *Route 66: The Romance of the West* (Lynnwood, Washington: Mock Turtle Press, 2002), 33.

Meramec Caverns, became president of the Missouri section of the Route 66 Association after World War II, and in that capacity he was called on to keep the businesses "safe" in neighboring Oklahoma. When Susan Croce Kelly and Quinta Scott interviewed him, Riley explained that "The worst things along the highway was these zoos all through Oklahoma with signs advertising pythons. They have snakes and reptile gardens and free admission—anything to get you to stop—and then they'd get you in a bunco game. One whole year all I did was check them out."[76] The way the system worked is captured in a memoir by writer Calvin Trillin, regarding his family's summer vacations from their home in Kansas City where his father and mother were grocers. On one such trip along Highway 66, Trillin was disappointed that his father, after stopping at a zoo and after trying his hand at a shifty dice game offered by the owners, had declined to play once the stakes got serious. A grocer who tallied up the total sale on the paper bags, his father was quick in his arithmetic and perceptive in his understanding of the way the game was played. As Trillin observed, much to the shock of the young boy, his father "had known that the preliminary wins were a come-on because, unlike about everyone else who might stop at the roadside zoo, he could actually add up the dice faster than the man could scoop them back into the cup."[77] Such were the snake pits along the road.

Yet, tourism was changing, and changing dramatically, with the rise of what historian Hal Rothman has called entertainment tourism.[78] Against the backdrop of fundamental shifts in society that included the rapid growth of television, the rise of

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[76] Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 168.

[77] Calvin Trillin, *Messages from My Father* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 61, 63-64.

suburbia, and increases in consumer spending, the market for entertainment also altered. And this often had both a direct and indirect impact on Route 66. One indication was the emergence of the drive-in movie theater. While less directed to tourists than to locals, but still oriented to those people who piled into their cars for a good time, the drive-in theaters appeared as part of the larger culture surrounding the automobile, and providing another recreational outlet. The first drive-in theater opened in New Jersey in 1933, and the institution slowly spread throughout the country, although the progress was seriously impeded by the circumstances of Depression and war. By the beginning of World War II there were only fifty-two such theaters in the country, and that number remained low during the war. The American Association of State Highway Officials' Committee on Traffic, Subcommittee on Roadside Control, noted in 1949 that "Postwar years, however, brought a rapid increase in popularity, many new improvements in equipment and services, and a sudden and rapid rise in the number of drive-in theaters opened for operation." The group studying the drive-in concluded, "Apparently, America has accepted the drive-in theater and it is here to stay." Within a few years drive-in theaters could be found in most towns along Route 66, and elsewhere too. Since the highway provided the only access to such movie-viewing, it generated even more traffic along the road. From Chicago's suburbs to the Los Angeles metropolitan area, one by one, drive-in theaters took root alongside Highway 66 just as if they were institutions made for the highway, which they were. Drive-in theaters became as familiar along Route 66 as the ubiquitous Burma Shave signs.

But the drive-in theaters represented only the opening salvo on the institutions

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[78] Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 24-25, 288-289.

that had previously characterized entertainment along Highway 66. The major assault came with the development of theme parks in California in the mid-1950s. Much can be made of the artificial environments of entertainment emporiums like Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, and Balboa Park, self-consciously promoting mythical history, exotic locales, and futuristic experiences, but they also represented the emergent wave of high-capital amusement parks clustered in Southern California in the 1950s. Where the snake pits and roadside tourist attractions along Route 66 had counted success by their ability to lure tourists off the highways and out of their cars, these new tourist meccas used national advertising and sought to lure Americans out of their homes in every part of the country. With airline travel not yet a mode of tourism, when people went to southern California they tended to travel by automobile. And the road to California was Highway 66. By this point, by comparison with the heavily-capitalized theme parks at the end of the road, the small establishments on the way that were reflections of their owners personalities seemed either quaint or amateurish. The prospect of competing with Walt Disney for the tourist dollar was not a happy thought.

Those who entered that competition along Highway 66 were not the traditional mom and pop businesses, but other capital-intensive projects seeking to build not a building but an entertainment city that imitated the Southern California parks. In 1958, Jim Burge, the developer of Frontier City Amusement Park on the outskirts of Oklahoma City, opened his theme park with two considerations in the location of his new venture. It had to be on land that was included in the 1889 land run, and it had to be just off the westbound lane of Route 66.[79] As Thomas Arthur Repp quotes Burge saying, "Families

[79] Interview with Rodger Harris, oral historian, Oklahoma Historical Society, May 23,

on the way to California will stop for every snake pit and rock pile along the way . . . when they start back, they've seen Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm. They've spent all their money. They're three days late getting back to Ohio, and they wouldn't stop for the Last Supper with the original cast."[80] The westbound focus appears to have derived from an association with frontier imagery and emigration but also was based on the expectation that tourists would have more money heading west than upon returning east. It was a major theme park, with a sketchy claim to historic Oklahoma (although it also had a flying saucer to be toured) that brought to the middle of Highway 66 the attractions of the end of the road in Los Angeles and Chicago. According to Thomas Arthur Repp, "By 1960, Frontier City was billed as the most photographed spot in America."

During the 1950s the change was clear. The old businesses, the old parks, the mom and pop roadside stands and diners were receding into the background and the businesses that now served up the meals and hosted the weary traveler and entertained the shining faces of awe-struck youngsters were yielding to corporate chains and competing with televised entertainment. The older cohort of roadside businesses had been passed by, not only by the motorists whizzing past on Highway 66, but by a new generation of business that appealed to vastly different needs and held vastly different orientations. Where the early visionaries of highway travel saw the road as bringing them customers for their businesses, markets for the goods they grew and made, and a larger social outlet for their various energies, the modern network of commerce was more profoundly bringing new institutions and priorities and products to them, and integrating the local

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2002. Harris gained this information in a separate interview with the developer.

[80] Repp, *Route 66: The Empires of Amusement*, 141.

into the national. The orbit had changed as locals were now operating within the national commercial culture instead of bringing the nation's travelers into theirs.

v. Alberta's Hotel

Traveling Route 66 conjures pleasant memories and happy nostalgia for many people as they reflect on the adventures of journeying down the road, referring sometimes to the postwar period as "golden years." And the diffusion of the automobile after the 1920s and especially after World War II imbues the whole experience with a character of an open road and open community, dreams uniformly attained regardless of social standing. Yet there is more to the Route 66 legacy than that, and there were those whose experience of a road trip was laden with hardships that went beyond traveling the desert and negotiating heavy traffic. There were, in the first place, those who already lived in the communities that the tourists passed through. Their experience, especially if they were a different color than the tourists, was not always salutary. Consider Rudolfo Anaya, author of the immensely popular and poignant, *Bless Me Ultima*, and who grew up along Highway 66 in Santa Rosa, New Mexico. Anaya tells of discovering tourists, tourists he says who generally fit into a pattern dominant in that area for several centuries since Spanish tourists came—and stayed, and changed the people they found.

> The first tourists I encountered were in Santa Rosa, New Mexico, my home town. On highway 66, right after World War II. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. People were moving west, tourists in search of California. I remember one particular afternoon at a gas station where we went to fill our bike tires after goathead punctures. A car stopped. Dad, mom, son, and daughter. Blonde, blue-eyed gringos from

> the east. They usually didn't pay attention to the brown Mexicanitos gathered at the gas station. [81]

In this instance the youthful Anaya was noticed by the tourists and in their brief conversation he discovered that they were from a different world, one where people could travel just to look, just to see, and not to learn. In that experience, there was a metaphor for many of the communities and peoples alongside Route 66 as they welcomed or discovered or fled from the tourists who descended upon them.

But what of the tourists themselves? As Marguerite Shaffer notes of the early years of automobile travel in America, "the America of automobile camps, tourist attractions, and the open road comprised a relatively homogeneous community of native-born, upper- and middle-class, urban, white Americans."[82] How much that had changed by, say, 1950, is difficult to say, although it is clear that more Americans were on the road and that this doubtless included a greater diversity of travelers. Two caveats, however, must be applied. One is that there were abundant circumstances at mid-century that militated against extended travel by people who were not white. The combined weight of class and color meant vastly different circumstances of daily life for African-Americans, whether that was experienced in education, in job opportunities, in voting, in residential opportunities, in medical care, and in transportation. Virtually every aspect of life was literally separate, often legally required. And that separation, as the U.S. Supreme Court would subsequently declare, was also inherently unequal. To speak of a

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[81] Rudolfo Anaya, "Why I Love Tourists: Confessions of a Dharma Bum," in David M. Wrobel and Patrick T. Long, *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 65.

[82] Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 233.

"vacation" by people in those circumstances is almost to trivialize the conditions of pervasive racial injustice and oppression.[83] Which leads to the second caveat: when African-Americans did take to the road, their experience was profoundly different from that of the white travelers on the same highway. Irv Logan, Jr., of Springfield, Missouri related it this way: "There were things money couldn't buy on Route 66. Between Chicago and Los Angeles you couldn't rent a room if you were tired after a long drive. You couldn't sit down in a restaurant or diner or buy a meal no matter how much money you had. You couldn't find a place to answer the call of nature even with a pocketful of money...if you were a person of color traveling on Route 66 in the 1940s and '50s."[84]

The Threatt Service Station near Luther, Oklahoma, is listed on the National Register for its association with Route 66 and in the area of significance Ethnic Heritage, Black. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

By virtue of the selective nature of archival sources and other historical documents, the record of the experiences of people who do not generally benefit from the established organization of society is not only incomplete but exceedingly fragmentary

[83] The classic statement of that inequality at the end of World War II, supported by massive documentation and confirmed by countless other studies, begins with the two volume study by Gunnar Myrdal with the assistance of Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose, *An American Dilemma*: Vol. 1, *The Negro in a White Nation* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1944) and Vol. 2, *The Negro Social Structure* (Nation (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1944).

[84] Irv Logan, Jr., ". . . Money Couldn't Buy," in C. H. Skip Curtis, ed., *Birthplace of Route 66: Springfield, Mo.* (Springfield, Missouri: Curtis Enterprises, 2001), 31.

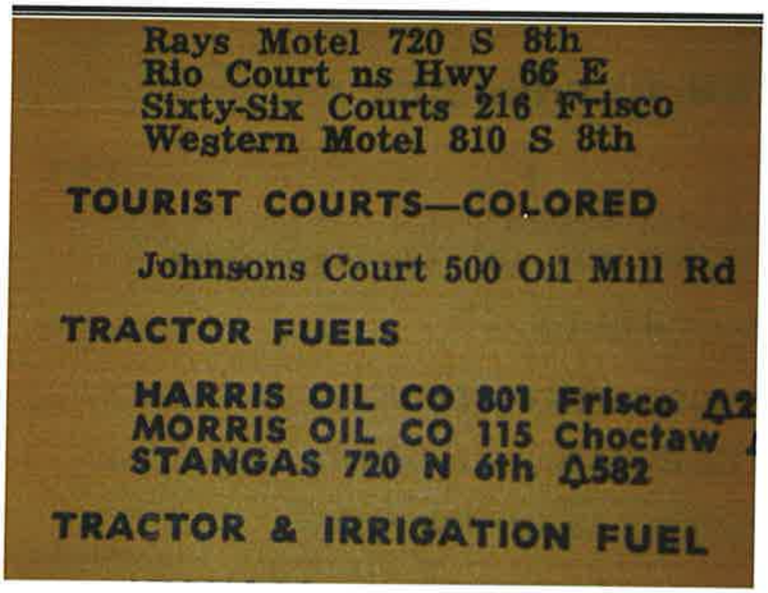
and can only be suggested by scattered references. A pattern, however, does emerge. Christopher Hitchens, who began his trip west on the remnants of Route 66 in 2002 quickly encountered a man who had grown up in Chicago's black south side and recalled for Hitchens "the old days of '66' as it ran through his neighborhood, things I could never have learned from driving through it. People knew which stretches they weren't allowed to use along Cicero and Cermak and McCormick, but on July 4 they liked to block a section of Ogden Avenue for drag racing."[85] Assuming they got on the road and headed west, one of the pervasive problems they had to confront was the simple matter of food and lodging. When Irv Logan, as a young man, saw his grandparents prepare large quantities of food to take, he knew they were going to travel to St. Louis by way of Route 66. He would ask, "Why do we need to take so much water? Why do we have to take toilet paper? What is the empty jar for?"[86] It was a different kind of travel than many white travelers experienced. Locating restaurants and lodging could prove a daunting task, and African American travelers customarily had to find a segregated community where those services would be available to them, or at least a motel or restaurant operated by other African-Americans. There

Sole remaining lodging unit of Wishing Well Motel in Springfield, Missouri, that served African American customers. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

[85] Christopher Hitchens, "The Ballad of Route 66," *Vanity Fair*, November 2002, 176.

[86] Logan, ". . . Money Couldn't Buy," 31.

even appears to have been a modest market for African Americans to provide services to others. Near Luther, Oklahoma, northwest of Oklahoma City, the Threatt service station was operated by an African American family on Route 66. Evidently, the service station was able to cater to whites and blacks both, given the association with the station with service industry work. Lodging was more difficult than gasoline. In Springfield, Missouri, several tourist courts emerged to serve the African American traveler, including one started by Irv Logan's grandmother, Alberta Ellis: Alberta's Hotel. That hotel no longer exists but one cabin of another of these "colored" hotels, the Wishing Well Motel, remains. Farther west, in the high plains of western Oklahoma, the message was still clear that black people were not welcome in white-only motels. The telephone book and city directory might even contain a listing to direct those people to different establishments. If it did not, word of mouth would have to suffice.


Rays Motel 720 S 8th
Rio Court ns Hwy 66 E
Sixty-Six Courts 216 Frisco
Western Motel 810 S 8th

TOURIST COURTS—COLORED

Johnsons Court 500 Oil Mill Rd

TRACTOR FUELS

HARRIS OIL CO 801 Frisco Δ2
MORRIS OIL CO 115 Choctaw
STANGAS 720 N 6th Δ582

TRACTOR & IRRIGATION FUEL

This 1956 city directory listing for a town in western Oklahoma suggests the different lodging experience of African Americans on Highway 66. Not only was the lodging separate, but it was located well away from the main highway.

The record of separate travel conditions and circumstances—and treatment—for African Americans along Route 66 is incomplete and requires additional research, but promises to bear significant fruit. In the meanwhile, the remains of an ironic picture haunt those interested in this highway: Nat "King" Cole made a song popular about this highway, urging people to get their kicks on Route 66, but when Cole traveled Highway 66 and spent the night in Springfield, Missouri, he stayed at Alberta's Hotel.[87]

[87] Logan, ". . . Money Couldn't Buy," 32.

Chapter VI

The Replacement of Route 66

At the same time that Highway 66 was being filled with motorists after World War II, and was seemingly successful beyond the wildest dreams of its original promoters, that success also undermined the future existence of the road. Soon, the nation found itself struggling to control the forces Route 66 had unleashed. The enormous increase in traffic brought additional pressure to widen and divide the road and to straighten it and eliminate the many stops in the nation's small towns. The result was sometimes the improvement of the highway, but soon that turned into the replacement of the highway with an entirely new system of roadways crossing the nation.

i. Cracks in the Pavement

Perhaps the most obvious problem facing Highway 66 after World War II was that it was carrying far more traffic than it was designed for. The highway was crowded. So were other highways, but U.S. 66 bore a special burden because of its preeminence as the main best-weather route between Chicago and California. World War II had left the roads in bad shape, sometimes because of the heavy military vehicles that used the highway but more because they were not receiving attention. The surge of highway construction in the 1930s had put in place a ribbon of pavement from Chicago to Los

Angeles, but after ten or fifteen years that road was starting to wear thin; because necessary repair and maintenance had been postponed, the roadways needed to be rebuilt and because of the surge in traffic the demands on the roadway skyrocketed. Freight transportation was heavier, both in tonnage per truck and in the number of trucks, as pent up consumer appetites were unleashed and wartime production controls faded. Tourist traffic exceeded prewar levels with cars that were more numerous and also heavier, wider, and faster. And this trend continued to grow. By 1951 one magazine reported that "if all the new automobiles built since the end of the war were lined up end to end on all the highways built since the end of the war, there wouldn't be enough room to accommodate them."[1]

In addition to a deteriorating roadway, there were the related needs, as shoulders and bridges were too narrow and sight distances were too short. One undeniable consequence of this, although hard data are elusive, was the increasing challenge to highway safety. The first widely publicized accident along Route 66 probably came when a motorist hit one of the runners in the 1928 Bunion Derby—and then sped away. In the following decades, as traffic mounted on the road, so did accidents. The paving of the highway and the straightening of the route enabled traffic to move faster, but as speed increased both the likelihood and severity of collisions climbed on the predominantly two-lane highway. Statistics documenting what was sometimes termed "Bloody 66" are seldom separated from the state and national traffic accident / fatality rates, but the

[1] "Highways Run Losing Race With Traffic," *Business Week*, December 8, 1951, 109. See also, "More Traffic than Ever Now on the Road," *The American City*, January 1950, 121; and "Billions for Roads—but Not Enough," *Business Week*, December 5, 1953, 116-117.

plethora of "Deadman Curves," the flourishing wrecker industry along the road, and the anecdotal evidence of mishaps and catastrophes can be found in every community along the road. Increasingly, after World War II, those accidents seemed to be associated with not just the speed and narrowness of the road, but with the volume of vehicles of all sizes using it, both as cause and consequence. By the 1950s the stories usually mixed highway tragedy and highway crowding. In 1952 when a truck hit the Highway 66 bridge near Laguna, New Mexico, killing the driver and destroying the bridge, traffic on the highway was delayed twelve hours and had to be rerouted to be able to cross the arroyo the bridge had traversed.[2] In Arizona, James Cook recalled of the early 1950s, that as youths "With morbid fascination, we inspected mangled wrecks towed in from "bloody 66." Someone used to put a white cross at the scene of each traffic fatality; the shoulders of some dangerous intersections, like Cottonwood Wash east of Winslow, looked like veterans' cemeteries."[3] And the situation was only getting worse.

At the beginning of the 1950s, in a lobbying campaign reminiscent of the Lincoln Highway Association's effort to build concrete roads in the teens and twenties, the auto-related businesses pressed for greater governmental expenditures on roadways, even while those expenditures essentially doubled in 1951 from their pre-war level. Goodyear, Firestone, Mack Trucks, General Motors, and the American Trucking Association launched a coordinated effort to alter the tax structure so that more revenues would go

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[2] Jill Schneider, *Route 66 Across New Mexico: A Wanderer's Guide* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 41.

[3] Michael Karl Witzel, *Route 66 Remembered* (Osceola, Wisconsin: Motorbooks International, 1996), 165.

toward highway construction and maintenance.[4]

The U.S. Highway 66 Association participated in this call for improved roads, hoping that 66 could be turned into a four-lane highway that could carry even more traffic, and in this goal the organization may have been successful—if lamentably so—or it may have just converged with other pressures for highway improvement.

What they had in mind, of course, was an enhancement of the road that was already there, the highway that connected the small towns and big cities, the East and the West, that brought business through the main street of the myriad villages and cities that depended on the traffic that 66 carried, and that would provide an opportunity for new businesses to grow alongside them. What they got, was something entirely different. Occasionally it seemed to work out exactly the way the Route 66 promoters hoped. In 1950 *The American City* reported that "the most heavily traveled roadway in the State of Oklahoma was widened and received a new surface last summer as part of a $3,000,000 program of city street improvements in Tulsa. This roadway is Sapulpa Road, which carries the traffic of U.S. 66 and U.S. 75 and is the main highway between Tulsa and Oklahoma City."[5] That wonderful, new, improved stretch, however, was not even three miles long. This solved little. More indicative were the alterations elsewhere in the nation along Highway 66.

Two patterns emerge from the construction efforts along Highway 66 in the postwar years. One was that the road was widened, often making it into four lanes. The

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[4] "Highways Run Losing Race With Traffic," *Business Week*, December 8, 1951, 109.

[5] William B. Wooten, "Paving Oklahoma's Busiest Street," *The American City*, 65 (June 1950), 110.

other was that the highway alignment was moved. In Illinois the highway was made four lanes and was moved in the sections between Braidwood and Gardner and between Staunton and Troy. Not just businesses but towns were being bypassed by the changes. This was the same all along the highway. In Arizona, a new road in 1952 replaced the winding road that went over Sitgreaves Pass and through Oatman on the way to Topock. The road, already often straightened and widened, was being straightened and widened even more, and it was changing course as well.

There was an even more fundamental change at the same time. Partly philosophic, partly a result of engineering principle, partly the rise to political power of businesses that were national in scope and whose interests sharply diverged from the mom-and-pop businesses that had motivated earlier road promotions, and partly a convergence of fundamental trends toward modernization in the nation, the very conception of the highway and road travel had shifted. In 1953, *Nation's Business* announced the revision:

> Along with many other ideas in this changing world, our concept of overland transportation has changed in the past generation. The purpose of a major thoroughfare today is not what it was just a few decades ago. Then the road or street was expected to serve everybody who lived along it. Everybody, in short, was to have direct access to it—that was the whole idea of the road.
>
> Today, however, the primary purpose of a major thoroughfare is to move groups of people and goods from area to area. Plenty of roads and streets—too many, as a matter of fact—serve the individual home or business. What is lacking is the road or street which will move groups of individuals across country or across town at a reasonable speed with reasonable safety.[6]

[6] Booton Herndon, "The Roadside Is Part of the Road," *Nation's Business*, 41 (October 1953), 58.

The fundamental requirement of the highways, the writer explained, was captured in the phrase "limited access," the ability to restrict entrances and exits of a highway, to limit interchanges, and to eliminate roadside businesses. This, he admitted, was a concept "difficult to get over," and his fellow engineers lamented that "The idea of limited access is not easy to sell the people." The beauty of the system, its detractors notwithstanding, was that the highway engineer could make it right: "instead of a long open stretch along the highway to serve commercial establishments, for instance, he'd block it all off except one entrance and exit."[7] In fact, this new system of limited access highways was in the ascendancy, whether the people living and working along the highway approved or not. And this meant that not only was the alignment of the highway changing, but the institutions associated with it, dependent upon it, were being bypassed and left behind.

The changes came in different forms as states proceeded to build new roadways. These were common enough in the states at the ends of Highway 66; Illinois and California had already been building new roads with exactly such features, so this was nothing new. The pervasiveness of the new system rather became evident in, of all places, Oklahoma in what amounted to a case study of the replacement of Route 66. In that state the pressure for widening and straightening Highway 66 into a four lane road wound up focusing not on improving Route 66 but replacing it, and replacing it with a toll road. In 1949 the Oklahoma legislature debated the issue and representatives from the towns and counties along Route 66 led the opposition to a new turnpike that would bypass the communities between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. They predicted "dire

[7] Herndon, "The Roadside Is Part of the Road," 60.

consequences" for their communities if the main traffic corridor shifted away from their main streets and did not even slow for their businesses. Boyd Cowden, a powerful state representative from Chandler, asked why this new road was necessary and indicated the nature of the division in the state: "Why? Just because a few white-collared boys in Oklahoma City and Tulsa are just hell-bent upon getting somewhere. It will be right of way 300 yards wide with stud-horse high fence on each side of it."[8] Cowden, in his homespun rhetoric, neatly captured not only the consequence of the new road, but also reflected the fundamental social division it created. But the governor prevailed over what was widely viewed as a "reluctant" legislature, and construction began on the Turner Turnpike.

Promises had been made to communities, like Sapulpa, southwest of Tulsa, that the new road would, in fact, follow the route planned for a new, improved Route 66. When the engineers straightened out that route and moved it farther from town, another hot protest ensued, and finally the Turnpike Authority "chose a new straight-line route that skirts the northern edge of Sapulpa. The authority finally took this action after bond buyers warned no more money would be available unless the authority built the highway in the most economical manner possible."[9] The turnpike was finished and opened for business in 1953 with the promise that it would become free once the bonds were paid off in forty years.

Oklahoma journalist Kent Ruth announced the opening of the Turner Turnpike in

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[8] Ray Parr, "After Six Years and $38 Million, Turner Turnpike is Nearing Completion," *Daily Oklahoman*, March 1, 1953.

[9] Parr, "After Six Years and $38 Million, Turner Turnpike is Nearing Completion."

the New York *Times* stressing the advantages of the new turnpike but also hinting at some of the darker meanings the new road held:

> . . . Near-by U.S. 66, which has always carried most of the year-round traffic from the North and East to the Southwest, is narrow and over-crowded. Offering driving ease, safety and economy at a moderate cost, the Turner Turnpike is expected to siphon off a sizeable chunk of this cross-country highway load. . . . At the maximum 70-mile-an hour speed [the driver] saves close to two hours in actual driving time between the oil capital of the world and the Oklahoma state capital . . . . Should an Easterner find the Phillips 66 service shield unfamiliar, he will at least recognize the ubiquitous Howard Johnson Company, to whom the Oklahoma-born Phillips Petroleum Company has sublet the food concessions . . . . By-passing scores of curves on U.S. 66 of from 40 to 90 degrees and several miles of 4 to 7 per cent grades, and eliminating stop-and-go driving in four towns, the through traveler can easily save the other 70 cents [the toll].[10]

The stop and go driving that small retailers, the garages and the hamburger stands and the mom and pop motels, had depended on was being eliminated. The Howard Johnson restaurant reflected the integration of this route not just into the emerging national highway system but more deeply into the national commercial structure.

ii. The New System Arrives

This toll road, and other divided highways whether toll or free, anticipated the nation's new highway system. The genesis of what became the Interstate Highway System can be traced as far back as highways themselves, but the specific point of departure that led to the development of that highway network probably emerged during

[10] Kent Ruth, "Oklahoma Opens a Turnpike," New York *Times*, May 24, 1953.

World War II. With the military requirements of transportation very much in mind, Congress enacted the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944 which approved, but did not create, a "National System of Interstate Highways" and that system became a referent point in subsequent discussions of how to improve the highways. Roads were first contracted under this system in 1952, but the conception remained inchoate and lacked specific parameters of philosophy and alignment. Dwight Eisenhower, who, as a Lieutenant Colonel had commanded an expedition along the Lincoln Highway after World War I, was now President and pushed hard for the new road system. He later reflected on his motivations, connecting his convoy on the Lincoln Highway expedition and his World War II experience:

> A third of a century later, after seeing the autobahns of modern Germany and knowing the asset those highways were to the Germans, I decided, as President, to put an emphasis on this kind of road building. When we finally secured the necessary congressional approval, we started the 41,000 miles of super highways that are already proving their worth. This was one of the things that I felt deeply about, and I made a personal and absolute decision to see that the nation would benefit by it. The old convoy had started me thinking about good, two-lane highways, but Germany had made me see the wisdom of broader ribbons across the land.[11]

It was only in 1956 after further study, more reports, significant debate, and wrestling with financing formulas and issues, that, Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act and Highway Revenue Act of 1956. Given the military importance of an efficient highway system in the Cold War, and given the direct benefits to be reaped by different producer groups, the idea of the highway system was widely endorsed and some kind of change was almost universally believed to be necessary. But because its

[11] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (New York: Avon Books, 1967), 166.

advocates held wildly conflicting views of what it would look like, not to mention the opposition of the railroads, legislation enacted in 1954 had satisfied virtually no one; the final 1956 measure gained passage in Congress only because it granted each of the competing interests a significant measure of what they had sought.[12]

The new system was widely hailed by highway engineers, by the automobile, trucking, and construction industries whose interests would be directly served by the legislation, by the labor unions whose members would benefit from the construction projects, and by the other businesses who saw a new, more efficient system of transportation in the offing. As the bill went toward President Eisenhower's desk for his signature, it was even touted as "The biggest public works program in history," an implicit comparison to the massive work-relief programs of the 1930s.[13] Eisenhower himself considered the new program

> The most gigantic federal undertaking in road-building in the century and a half since the federal government got into this field by improving the National Pike between Cumberland, Maryland, and Wheeling, West Virginia—it was the biggest peacetime construction project of any description ever undertaken by the United States or any other country.[14]

The innovation was palpable and the potential was huge. It was claimed to "make

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[12] On the broad motivations for enacting the legislation, see especially Art Gómez, *Quest for the Golden Circle: The Four Corners and the Metropolitan West, 1945-1970* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), chapter IV, but especially 110-111, and Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1991), 553. On the more narrowly defined politics of the legislation, see Mark Rose, *Interstate Express Highway Politics 1941-1956* (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), 83-94. "The key to success," according to Rose (p89), "was providing something for everyone without imposing high taxes on truckers."

[13] "Biggest Public Works in History: Now—A Guaranteed Zoom in Road Building," *Business Week*, June 2, 1956, 31.

[14] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change: 1953-1956*

the federal government for the first time the biggest single factor in road building," it would be complete by 1969 by which time a 40,000 mile superhighway interstate network would be in place, it would include a trust fund paid into by use, excise, and gasoline taxes, it would shift the 60/40 federal/state financial burden to 90/10. The only thing missing, it seemed, was itself ready to go: "Plans for spending these highway billions will get underway immediately."[15] That detail notwithstanding, the government's and the nation's business outlook for the new road system remained bright and rosy. *Nation's Business* offered a catalog of the advantages of the new interstate network:

- "The long distance motorist will find that he can bypass or traverse at 40 to 50 miles an hour cities he once crept through at an exasperating stop and start ten to 20 miles an hour."
- The system of controlled access will make the highways both safer and faster.
- "Owners or tenants of property bordering the new highways will be barred from direct access. Restaurants, gas stations, motels or other services will be barred from the right of way and will be available only on so-called service or feeder roads."
- "Some [businessmen] can expect to benefit from swifter and cheaper transportation of raw and finished materials. Some will even relocate their factories or warehouses near one of the new roads."
- "many industries—auto, truck and bus manufacturers, gasoline companies,

(Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963), 548.
[15] "Biggest Public Works in History: Now—A Guaranteed Zoom in Road Building," 31.

tire makers, to name a few—are expected to feel a profitable backwash from the increased travel the interstate system will cause."

- "one by-product of the new interstate system is likely to be a boom in land values near the new highways."
- "The highway program will bring boom times to road-building contractors."
- "Trucking is expected to grow faster as the new interstate system emerges."
- The new weight and size restrictions on the trucks using the network "do not apply in states which already have in effect more lenient ceilings, and they are at least as liberal as the restrictions now in effect in most states."
- Despite the opposition of farm groups, like the Farm Bureau Federation, to the new system, "almost 90 per cent of all farm products now reach their markets via highways" and that statistic indicates "the importance to farmers of fast, safe roads."
- "Many experts see the new highway program as a life-giving transfusion to cities."

The conclusion was even an understatement: "To the motorist, the interstate system will be a dream come true."[16] On the other hand, the downside of the new system occupied much less attention than the benefits it would bring. As to the businesses alongside the road who fought the new system and feared for their future, who found in the system a nightmare instead of a dream, "Federal officials admit that some people will get hurt. But, they add emphatically, the damage will be much less than anticipated and

[16] Charles B. Seib, "New Roads: Changed Business Pattern Ahead," *Nation's Business*, 44 (July 1956), 32-33, 92-95.

will be much more than outweighed in any given community or area by the spur to business the new highways will provide."

Part of the problem was that some businesses would, in fact, "get hurt." Another part of the problem, however, was that this road network would reshape not just business opportunities along Highway 66 but reshape the fabric of the nation. And this was possibly something that could have been learned from a close examination of the history of U.S. 66. The much more systematic and devastating criticism of the replacement highway system came not so much from the mom and pop stores and stations as from the broader historical view of those like social critic and historian Lewis Mumford who bitterly opposed the new highway system:

> When the American people, through their Congress, voted a little while ago (1957) for a twenty-six-billion-dollar highway program, the most charitable thing to assume about this action is that they hadn't the faintest notion of what they were doing. Within the next fifteen years they will doubtless find out; but by that time it will be too late to correct all the damage to our cities and our countryside, not least to the efficient organization of industry and transportation, that this ill-conceived and preposterously unbalanced program will have wrought.

The superhighways, Mumford argued, tended to channel transportation, to concentrate it into specific corridors, a process which had multiple consequences, including the overcrowding of the arteries that are supposed to alleviate overcrowded arteries, the depopulation and economic undermining of the areas not served by the highway, to congest the cities supposedly served by the highways (he called it "pyramid building with a vengeance: a tomb of concrete roads and ramps covering the dead corpse of a city"), destruction of the environment, and "choking off the natural routes of circulation" and creating "inevitable clots of congestion, which effectively cancel out such speed as they achieve in approaching these bottlenecks."[17] In its place Mumford proposed an integrated system of transportation with separate and mutually supportive roles to be performed by rails, roads, and water instead of making the roads the single dominant form. Mumford's criticism was often nuanced, frequently caustic, and generally derived from a sophisticated understanding of history. He could say with characteristic intensity that "highway engineers, if one is to judge by their usual performance, lack both historic insight and social memory: accordingly, they have been repeating, with the audacity of confident ignorance, all the mistakes in urban planning committed by their predecessors who designed our railroads." The irony was that Mumford could possible have drawn as easily upon the lessons learned from the history of U.S. Highway 66 to make his case against the interstates as upon the history of the railroads.

iii. "Look at Route 66 quickly, for tomorrow it will be gone . . ."

As eloquent and sophisticated as were Lewis Mumford's lambasting of the new road program and its builders, that criticism probably paled in the poignance of Richard L. Strout, writing as TRB in *The New Republic*. In 1956, after the passage of the new interstate system, Strout wrote simply: "Look at Route 66 quickly, for tomorrow it will be gone; in no time it will be all streamlined super-highway straight and impersonal as the New Jersey turnpike. Already it is in violent transition, long stretches are divided and on

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[17] Lewis Mumford, *The Highway and the City* (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), 244-256.

others bulldozers scar the landscape's flesh for the wonder roads of day-after-tomorrow."[18]

No one missed the significance of what was going on. No one doubted that Route 66 was starting to fade like a desert highway mirage as it came nearer. The construction of the new highway began in earnest with the first contract for the new system let in Missouri when a bypass was built around Lebanon and bit-by-bit, piece-by-piece, mile-by-mile the Interstate Highways, five of them between Chicago and Santa Monica, emerged alongside Route 66.

The actual replacement of Highway 66 was not immediate. In fact, the proposed thirteen year schedule of constructing the interstate highway system stretched out more and more, and the last piece of Route 66 that yielded to the new controlled access roadway—outside Williams, Arizona—opened in 1984, nearly three decades after the act authorizing the construction of the interstates. What that meant, like the building of the turnpikes to replace 66 in Oklahoma before the interstate system, was that the issue once again was local and personal as towns and businesses along the highway tried to salvage what they had built.

After 1956 at the latest, it is clear that the advocates and promoters of Route 66 were fighting a rearguard action, not following a vision of the future, but trying to hold on to what they had. Much of that battle focused on making business loops through the towns that were being bypassed so that there would be some hope for those businesses. Of course, the business loops would generally follow the existing main street paths of Route 66. Especially in the 1960s and into the 1970s the challenges faced those towns

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[18] TRB, "Washington Wire," *The New Republic*, 135 (August 6, 1856), 2.

when the interstate construction crews undertook their work.

The results were unmistakable. In Missouri, Becky L. Snider and Debbie Sheals note that, "As each new section of the Interstate was completed, one more section of U.S. 66 was decommissioned and hundreds of roadside businesses were bypassed."[19] In Kansas, not only the local businesses and not only the towns were bypassed, but the new Interstate 44 that followed the diagonal from St. Louis to Oklahoma City completely bypassed the state. In Oklahoma the Turner Turnpike already connected Oklahoma City and Tulsa, and in 1957 a second turnpike—the Will Rogers Turnpike—connected Tulsa with Joplin on the same I-44; and I-40 stretched west from Oklahoma City across the Texas panhandle, into New Mexico. In that state, according to David Kammer, "where Interstate 40 replaced Route 66, the process by which the new, limited-access highway was ultimately completed required some 25 years. With the exception of Albuquerque, through which the interstate system was completed by 1962, the interstate was generally completed first through rural areas."[20] In Arizona, the new interstate was 359 miles long, compared to the 376 miles of Route 66 which it replaced—a savings of 17 miles.[21] U.S. Highway 66 was being replaced gradually, but inexorably, by this new four-lane divided, controlled-access highway often within sight of the road that had summoned the traffic

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[19] Becky L. Snider and Debbie Sheals, and others, *Route 66 in Missouri: Survey and National Register Project* (2003), published on the world wide web at http://www.cr.nps.gov/rt66/HistSig/MissouriContext.htm.

[20] David Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico*, (Santa Fe: New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office, 1992), 95-96; David Kammer, *Route 66 Through new Mexico: Re-survey Report* (Santa Fe: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 2003), 17.

[21] Terri A. Cleeland, Historic U.S. Route 66 in Arizona Multiple Property Nomination, E-8.

that brought the new road into existence.

In another sense, however, Route 66 was under siege enough without the turnpikes and interstates. Replacing the locally owned motels and diners along the road and taking the place of the sometimes funky and sometimes elaborate service stations were the buildings dictated by franchise plans so that the Holiday Inns in Arizona and Texas and Missouri looked like the Holiday Inns in Ohio and so that the Howard Johnsons along Route 66 looked like the Howard Johnsons along I-95 outside Washington, D.C. Moreover, the rooms in the motels would be the same, and so would the meals on the menus be the same. Where an earlier generation of communities and businesses along Route 66 had sought to bring the nation's traveling public into their local orbit, by the 1960s it was plain enough that the reverse had happened; the communities and businesses now operated to the standards of a national system. Where travelers could now leave home without ever really leaving home because of the sameness of their accommodations on the road, so too did they have less and less of a home distinguishable from anyone else's.

Not even a national television show based on the road and titled explicitly "Route 66" could save the highway or even respect its social and cultural identity. Starring George Maharis (who was subsequently replaced by Glenn Corbett) and Martin Milner, the television show focused on two young men and a Corvette traveling the road. But "Route 66" aired from 1960 to 1964, and took some major detours through the rest of the nation with only a small number of the shows featuring Route 66 or communities along that highway; even when it did situate there, Route 66 was incidental to plot and storyline. Symbolically appropriate, given the cultural changes underway in the nation, Route 66 had been absorbed into the homogenous culture of television broadcasting; the show was not about a specific road and specific places. It was about the universally familiar. In an ironic twist that was assuredly uncalculated, this lack of spatial identity with the places Route 66 actually touched somehow suggested that the already legendary road belonged not only to the people who lived and worked there, and not even just to the people who drove it in trips that they would remember all their lives. Instead, the meaning of the television show could well be that the road belonged to the nation, that the road *was* America.

At the same time that residents along Route 66 could turn on their televisions to watch "Route 66" featuring a story about incidents far from the road, they watched construction of the interstates often with the same apprehension as a sick person watching the construction of a coffin. Maybe the larger towns could negotiate a business loop to save their merchants, but the multitude of small operators along the road outside the towns could not even grasp that hope. These are the people that interviewers of Route 66 survivors have especially drawn upon to great effect.

Because the replacement of Route 66 was a gradual, prolonged, and undramatic moment that stretched across three decades, it does not follow that the process of change was painless or gentle. Pat Stein's study of Route 66 in Arizona notes the vividness of the moment in the recollections of residents and business-owners when the new road replaced the old: "So devastating were the effects of the interstates on local economies that business owners came to recall not only the year but also the date and time of day when the ribbon was cut that opened the interstate near their towns."[22] Susan Croce

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[22] Pat Stein, "Historic Route 66 in Arizona," Amended Submission, Multiple Property

Kelly likewise notes that "the business owners remembered the day and often the hour that the ribbon was cut."[23] The cutting of the ribbon opening the new highway was, it seems, also the cutting of the life-support system for those along the old. Susan Croce Kelly quotes Lester Dill, owner of the Meramec Caverns: "the interstate took all of us guys and ruined us."[24]

The ruination that Dill mentioned involved more than turning off the lights and moving on. Each place has its own story and the story of the end of the road is usually one of the most dramatic parts of its operation. Leon Little and his wife Ann, with their operation at Hinton Junction, in Oklahoma, watched the progress of the roads in the east and then in the west with trepidation. Little explained to Quinta Scott that he saw the turnpike in eastern Oklahoma as "the tip of the iceberg" and that "We were up at that old station until 1961. They didn't move the traffic till 1962, but we knew this was coming, of course, and so I came down to Hinton and took the postmaster job, and Ann managed the business out there until the traffic moved in 1962. And, of course, the day the traffic moved, well that was it."[25]

Others continued to hold on. Lucille Hamons, with the gas station and motel near Hydro, Oklahoma on Route 66 recalled, "They told me they were trying to get little places like this off the highway; that's one reason I stayed. The interstate hurt my

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Listing, National Register Nomination (1996), E-11-12.

[23] Susan Croce Kelly and Quinta Scott, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 188.

[24] Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 188.

[25] Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 182.

gasoline business, but I've been here so long I know people from miles around. Of course, I had to start selling beer when my youngest daughter went to college."[26] She also closed the motel, but the particularly galling part of her experience was that she was still right next to the interstate which ran parallel to Route 66; a fence separated her from her customers. "That fence is terrible. People get in trouble, run out of gas, you should see them trying to climb that fence. In Oklahoma, you can't sue the state for loss of business, but, believe me, there has been a lot of good businesses close up because of this." The next year, a short ways down the road in Weatherford, Juanita and Laverne Snow's restaurant faced a similar situation: "We just never thought they'd come along three years later and put up that fence . . . ."[27]

At its beginning U.S. 66 held forth the promise of bringing people together and eroding the isolation that had plagued their lives and communities. At its end, however, when Route 66 left them, it left them more isolated than they had ever been.

iv. A Highway to the Past

The construction of the interstates and the bypassing of communities and business for whom Route 66 had been the commercial lifeblood obviously undermined much of the infrastructure that had developed along the road and many saw the change in both personal and structural terms as the end of a period, even the end of a way of life. Yet the

[26] Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 183.

[27] Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 183.

replacement and decommissioning of the highway did not mean that the road went away or was reclaimed by nature. It continued to be used, to be celebrated, and often to be preserved along with the structures along its long path across the nation. Route 66 did not die. A road that was never frozen in time, a road that had evolved dramatically from its birth in the 1920s, through the Depression, through World War II, through the heyday of the post-war tourist boom, and then through the struggle with the interstates that sought to replace it, it entered a new phase of its existence. And that new phase turned out to be different, but it also turned out to be robust.

The Route 66 Association that Jack Cutberth had led, the organization that had promoted the highway, that had fought the interstates, that had struggled to have business loops created that would essentially continue to provide commerce along the path of old Route 66 in towns and cities, that organization continued to survive and to be vocal, but it dissolved in 1979, a year after Cutberth died—a reflection of the important role that this one man had played in keeping the organization alive, motivated, and coordinated, but also a reflection of the pressures on the road and the difficulty roadside businesses and communities were having holding their own as the highway lifeblood drained away from them. Plus, as Gladys Cutberth explained to Tom Teague, many of the business owners were themselves reaching retirement age.[28] It seemed that the highway was reaching a dead end for several reasons. But it was also around the same time that others on the highway, people whose businesses had now been bypassed, sometimes long-time owners and operators, sometimes a new generation of Route 66 merchants, began to organize and

[28] Tom Teague, *Searching for 66* (Springfield, Illinois: Samizdat House, 1991; 1996), 116.

mobilize, not to make the highway once again the main street of America, and not to fight the interstates, but to preserve something of the economy, culture, and memory of Highway 66.

Within a decade Angel Delgadillo, who had been a barber on 66 in Seligman, and whose father had been a barber before him, and Jerry Richard, from Kingman, brought others together to form the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona in 1987.[29] About the same time others were also mobilizing and forming their own state organizations. In New Mexico, in Oklahoma, in California, in Missouri, and in Texas new organizations also emerged. By the middle of the 1990s the National Historic Route 66 Federation had emerged to coordinate and focus activity. The new Route 66 advocates were joined by a growing number of motorists who found traveling the legendary road to be a meaningful experience, either on their own or vicariously recreating the experience of the multitudes who had driven 66 in the previous decades, or sometimes just because it was a more satisfying experience than traveling the interstate highways.

The convergence of these various constituencies proved to be powerful, and worked to generate sentiment for preserving the roadway and the institutions and structures along it in ways that reached beyond nostalgic reveries and curio-collecting. This popular pressure then increased when the State Historic Preservation Offices along the way and sometimes the state highway departments also began to scrutinize the roadway, considering the resources as cultural and historic resources. By the 1990s, some of the states had conducted surveys of properties along Route 66 that were potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and also prepared multiple-property

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[29] Teague, *Searching for 66*, 250.

nominations for some of those properties. Increasingly, the private associations in each state through which Route 66 passed promoted Route 66 preservation and recognition in conjunction with the state historic preservation offices, working together to identify and preserve resources from imminent destruction.

In 1990 the U.S. Congress enacted a measure calling upon the National Park Service to conduct a study of methods appropriate for commemorating Route 66. That Special Resource Study was completed in 1995 and following its recommendations, Congress in 1999 created the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program which was placed within the National Park Service's National Trails System Office in Santa Fe, New Mexico. With an ambitious charge, a unique resource, and a growing public interest, this office has as its central mission, to

> [collaborate] with private property owners; non-profit organizations; and local, state, federal, and tribal governments to identify, prioritize, and address Route 66 preservation needs. It provides cost-share grants to successful applicants for the preservation and restoration of the most significant and representative properties dating from the route's period of outstanding historical significance, 1926 through 1970. These properties include the familiar "gas, eat, sleep"-related businesses, cultural landscapes, and the all-important road segments themselves. Cost-share grants are also provided for research, planning, oral history, interpretation, and education/outreach projects related to Route 66. The program serves as a clearinghouse of preservation information, and provides limited technical assistance.[30]

The cost-share grant program has been especially significant with its results readily apparent to travelers of modern Route 66. Between 2001 and 2004 this program participated in nearly fifty projects that ranged from surveys and nominations of historic properties to the National Register, to replacing roofs on endangered properties, to

[30] Program Description, National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program,

rehabilitating neon signs, to sponsoring a major oral history program gathering data that will be of incomparable value to future students of the road. The cost-share grants have gone to communities, state agencies, private owners, university programs, and Route 66 preservation groups. In addition to the cost-share program, though, the essential clearinghouse function of the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program has facilitated not only broad and diverse partnerships but also a coordination of efforts among the states and between the states and the multiple private and community organizations sharing the same fundamental interest of preserving and recognizing Route 66.

The result of these various efforts has been a profound resurgence and preservation of Route 66 institutions and buildings, the roadway and associated features, and also popular interest and awareness of the highway's legacy in the nation. A national magazine publicizes the highway. A national organization, also with its own magazine, focuses on preservation issues along Route 66. Museums focusing on Route 66 can be found in truck stops, in I-40 and I-44 rest stops, in formal state-sponsored institutions, and in separate sections of countless stores along the legendary road. Published guides, sometimes mile-by-mile, to the various alignments of Highway 66 exist for each state. A veritable cottage industry of Route 66 memorabilia, calendars, photographs, books, and videos has emerged so that the appetite of the curious traveler can be sometimes satisfied but almost always increased. Those appetites are not restricted to the people who live near the roadway. Just as Highway 66 did in its prime, the Route 66 experience attracts people from all across the nation, and all over the world. One of the first stories that a Route 66 merchant or inhabitant of a historic property will likely tell an inquirer usually

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http://www.cr.nps.gov/rt66/prgrm/index.htm.

has to do with the busloads of travelers from a country whose language he or she could not fathom. And they do come by the carload, by the busload. And sometimes by motorcycles rented in Chicago for the excursion.

There is another result of this interest too. Just as with the original highway, a symbiotic relationship developed so that as businesses increased along the road, so too would motorists be more likely to travel it; and the more motorists traveled the road, the more the commercial infrastructure. In the current re-enactment of that process, however, the commercial infrastructure not only represents some new businesses, but the continuation or revival of old businesses, the perpetuation of businesses that would have faded completely had they not been able to stay commercially viable with the heritage tourism traffic. Moreover, as opposed to the chain stores that cluster at the entrance and exit ramps of the interstates, these Route 66 businesses tend to be the mom and pop kinds, and instead of simply providing commercial and logistic transactions for the weary travelers, they are themselves points of destination. In a curious way, and in a poignant irony, the businesses along Route 66 that are and have been associated with Route 66 have become museums in themselves, attracting people not just because of their services and products for sale, but for their ability to help people touch a part of the past that often seems not only valuable, not only special, but even preferable to the present. In that sense Route 66 remains alive, fulfilling its original promise of bringing people together and taking them to their dreams. Where once those dreams were of future hopes and opportunities, of escape from fears and privation, and of exploration and discovery and release, the Highway 66 dreams now tend to focus on the past, not the future.

Chapter VII

Route 66 in Retrospect

In 1923, *The Literary Digest* encouraged its readers to travel one or two of the four great "highways" that stretched across the continent. Those highways, of course, were such only in name, they were largely unpaved, and they required weeks, work, and imagination to follow to their end. Despite those drawbacks, such a trip would be worthwhile, the magazine said, since "a trip across the continent is an education and a lesson in geography that will last throughout the remainder of your life."[1] It was also, by common assent, a remarkable lesson in history, and the names of the various highways themselves seemed to provide the first of many excursions into the past as they brought to mind associations with Abraham Lincoln, the land of Dixie, the National Road, the Spanish Trails, the "Custer Battlefield," and other features identified with past national events, achievements, personalities, landscapes, and regional / cultural developments.

Written three years before the designation of U.S. Highway 66, the same admonition can still be taken to heart eight decades later and two decades after the last section of Route 66 was decommissioned. And now the highways themselves provide the focus. As one drives Highway 66 today, it is possible to gain a closer appreciation of the country's geography, but more importantly the nation's history can be understood in ways that are fundamental to calculating how the United States arrived at the particular point where it is at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The highway itself, although sometimes submerged in a sea of clichés, concealed in the mists of nostalgia, and trivialized by a landscape of commercial iconography, and often buried in a vague national mythology that blends westward expansion with technological and economic progress, carries an enormous potential for understanding, insight, and perspective.

To explore the highway as it crossed the bulk of the nation in time and in space is to draw upon a remarkable set of resources that can reveal the processes of cultural and social change, processes that have a wider application than a mere chronicle of the road's history. Route 66 traversed a time that both connects and bridges the twentieth century's main contours. It links a rural nation to the modern; it carries the nation through the twenties, into the depths of economic depression, and then into prosperity again; it carries the United States through peace and war; it is the route by which Americans moved from the farm to the city, and from the Midwest to the Pacific Coast, sometimes with all the cheer of a funeral procession; it provided an avenue of escape from misery when times were terrible and provided an avenue of escape to fantasies when times were good. It provided hopes for mom and pop to set up their own business with little capital and strong neighborhood connections in a time when small businesses were the backbone of the economy and society; it also unleashed the forces that saw that independence, those hopes and dreams, undermined and then shattered. The road traveled from a time when buildings possessed distinctive characteristics, identities, and personalities to the time when they became one more standardized component of corporate branding. The relics of all these, not just the shells of buildings and abandoned stretches of pavement are left waiting to be explored and understood. Highway 66 provides an opportunity not just to

[1] "Four Great Highways from Sea to Sea," *The Literary Digest*, May 26, 1923, p. 62.

learn more *about* history, but to learn more *from* history.[2]

What one learns from a drive down Route 66 today falls into two categories. One is an appreciation of the buildings and highway features that once dominated not just the roadside but much of the landscape elsewhere, but that since have become anachronisms, telltale antiquities, and even just oddities. The other approach involves a focused understanding of the historical forces that these artifacts reveal on the road to the present.

First, consider the buildings themselves. Whether in Pontiac, Illinois, Carthage, Missouri, Clinton, Oklahoma, Vega, Texas, Santa Rosa, New Mexico, Seligman, Arizona, or Victorville, California, the buildings of the highway increasingly attract attention because they no longer conform to the prevailing mode of design, materials, or even function of structures. They appear as relics of the past, or even like artifacts left from another culture, which, in a sense, they are. Their discovery by the passerby can be left at that, so that they remain just oddities or antiques, or they can be used as keys to the past. To stop and explore the old buildings thoughtfully is to peer into an earlier time with a form of social organization that differs from what is often taken today as inevitable or superior.

Pull the car into the extraordinary two-story building that appears like a castle to the motorist going south and west from Clinton, Oklahoma. The Y Service Station at one time represented a precious, if idiosyncratic blend of Art Moderne architecture and Mission Revival design. But it was more than that. It also reflected the pattern of many successful service stations of the post-World War II period with its uniformed attendants servicing the cars, a car-wash bay, and, of course a restaurant in the same building. The

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[2] On the larger question of historical purpose and audience, see Michael Cassity, "History

third element, a motel which no longer exists in the vacant land south of the building, was the clincher for the success of the operation. Dig into the records a little and one quickly finds that the highway made it possible for this independent operation to be a success, located as it was on an important curve, near a park where the steady stream of cross-country travelers would often stop to rest. Dig a little deeper into the records and the other side of that coin shows too; when the interstate highway took the traffic away, the station, the café, and the motel languished.

Y Service Station and Café, Clinton, Oklahoma (1937) now a used-car dealership. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

Y Service Station and Café, undated photo courtesy of Oklahoma Route 66 Museum, Clinton, Oklahoma.

Stop at other buildings commonly identified as quaint and each time the past opens up. Stop at Teepee Curios in Tucumcari and step into the swelling tourist trade after World War II that used building designs to pull people off the roadway who had no material need for stopping. Pause at El Vado, the splendid motel on the west side of Albuquerque and consider how the road, as soon the highway changed course from its north-south route to east-west along Central, propelled the city's growth in that direction; but also ponder the open garage spaces between motel units, and what they represent: a different scale for different cars, a distinct convenience for motorists, and a use of space that would not be tolerated

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and the Public Purpose," *Journal of American History*, 81 (December 1994), 969-976.


Garages at West Winds Court, Erick, Oklahoma (1947). Photo: Michael Cassity, 2003.

in modern lodging construction. Go to the Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, the West Winds Court in Erick, Oklahoma, the Riviera Courts in Miami, Oklahoma, or any one of the diminishing number of these tourist courts along the highway and see the pattern that once prevailed.

But it's not just motels, gas stations, and cafés that hold the key to the past. Go to the bridge across the Colorado River at Topock, Arizona and admire the tremendous arch spanning the river like a rainbow, supporting the long road across. Then reflect on the significance of being able to cross that bridge for the early travelers who knew the road then as the National Old Trails Road, before Highway 66 was born. Then ponder the migration across that bridge of Okies and Arkies who used the highway as their escape route from perdition. Or cross the ordinary-looking, concrete deck bridge over the Big Piney River near Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, but then step away, far enough away that the piers and intervening arches under the bridge become visible, and the feeling of beauty and permanence and pride that the bridge evokes is unmistakable. But pause long enough also to inquire why it was built at the time that it was, why this stretch of road was built as four-lane highway, and the exigencies of World War II come into relief, and their intersection with U.S. Highway 66 becomes precise. The two-lane highway through steep, winding country, in time of war, would not do. This new road and bridge—and huge cut in the hill above—were the result.

Keep driving Route 66. Drive it from Chicago to Los Angeles and back again. Throughout its 2400 mile length, with major exceptions in the urban areas where often development has swallowed the signs of the past wholesale, U.S. 66 is a transcontinental corridor of artifacts of architectural and engineering triumph, of designs once common, of vernacular construction techniques pursued with vigor and personality, a veritable museum—albeit outdoors and untended, lacking interpretation—of American life in the past century. The relics of success and failure, of pride and despair, of hopes and nightmares, of the elaborate and the humble, of the tasteful and the garish—they are all there along Highway 66. While other roads sometimes present an exhibit of the past along the right-of-way, Route 66 excels in its ability to reveal social processes that date from the named roads through the emergence of a national system of highways, and through that system to the emergence of a system of superhighways. Perhaps other highways also offer their own collections of roadside historic artifacts; the studies of most of those highways and their resources, unfortunately, are yet to emerge. Certainly the Lincoln Highway, which has been studied, offers a comparable opportunity. Even that road, however, is limited in comparison with Route 66 in two ways. First, the period of significance for the Lincoln Highway ends in 1956, a point at which use of 66 was still increasing, thus cutting short an important period in the development of the built environment. Plus, as a recent National Park Service study indicates, "what was historically known and understood as the Lincoln Highway is not easily or neatly defined"[3]—a striking contrast with Highway 66, and its multiple alignments. The

[3] National Park Service, *Lincoln Highway: Special Resource Study Environmental Assessment* (n.p.: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, May 2004), 30. This study is available in pdf format on the World Wide Web at

corridor of buildings, of bridges, of landscapes, the 2400-mile-long museum of structures associated with Route 66 awaits the traveler with the eyes to see America's past.

There is a second approach to these resources too, one which often overlaps the focus on the buildings themselves, but then attempts to take a few more steps. Go anywhere along Route 66 and the past awaits, beckons, and also informs, in the sense that it provides a different perspective on the buildings and structure along the nation's roads at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The second way to learn from the resources along Route 66 runs deeper into an understanding of how modern America came into being, and that potential involves more than identifying the category into which a design fits.

Go to Canute, Oklahoma. Go to Budville, New Mexico. Go to Two Guns, Arizona. Go to Amboy, California. Ranging from ruins to bare subsistence, these communities once thrived. That they no longer do so, or that they have settled into a much more quiet existence than they once knew, is not a result of old age. It is the result of historical forces, forces associated with Highway 66. To put it another way, Route 66 not only symbolizes the vast array of changes in the nation during the twentieth century; Route 66 also helped generate those changes. The relics are along the highway not just by coincidence.

The starting point for understanding that larger historical significance of the highway is to acknowledge that the road itself was ever changing, evolving in its path, in its materials, in its design. By some accounts, it was also evolving in its purpose. The road began as lines on paper superimposed on the existing roadways of the nation. In

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http://www.nps.gov/mwro/lincolnhighway/.

turn, those roads had served a variety of needs, especially as farm to market roads, or they existed as part of a network and web of transportation, and some parts of the new Highway 66 had even formed a part of the National Old Trails Road, a rarity as a connecting route between distant points. This origin represents something of a metaphor of the road's history for the nation then proceeded to superimpose a variety of meanings and assumptions on the road. Just as the U.S. highway system itself was imposed on the existing trails and roads connecting the communities of the nation, so too did different interests impose their own purposes on the highway and proceeded to shape it to meet their own ends.

When Highway 66 was formally designated, it came to life, nurtured by the energies of its promoters and fortified by the dreams of the small town merchants along its path. The road, whether paved or not, merged with the increasingly available automobiles to create the possibility of greater mobility in the nation than ever before. The result of this was two fold. All along the highway institutions emerged that were designed specifically to serve the needs of the nation on wheels that passed by. Gasoline filling stations located at strategic points. Tourist camps, and then tourist courts, provided opportunities for these people to spend the night without having to find the local hotel, previously a formal operation next to the railroad depot. And restaurants that served a short-order menu for people on the go likewise emerged in the shape of lunchrooms, cafés, and even drug stores. The critical formulation was that the better the service on the road and the easier it was to travel, the more traffic there would be. And the flip side was that the more traffic there was, the greater opportunities there were for businesses along the road.

These twin forces fed each other in a dynamic spiral that produced changes in the road and along the road. More traffic thereby produced changes in the substance and alignment of the road as dirt and gravel were taken over by concrete and asphalt, as sharp curves were smoothed out, and as meandering loops through neighboring towns were replaced by much more direct and shorter cutoffs. When these forces took hold, Route 66 had not only come to life but had taken on a life of its own, a life independent of its promoters, and it began to follow a logic of change that would grow in power and velocity.

In the 1920s motorists who would spend weeks on the road crossing the nation followed the path of Highway 66 initially, and they augmented the local traffic, but more and more the road carried people out for purposes that reached beyond sightseeing tours. Within a few years of the creation of U.S. 66, hundreds of thousand of migrants began to fill the roadway. Independent truckers began to pick up the slack in carrying freight the railroads declined when they cut back on service during the Depression. Neither of these developments were in the plans formulated for the highway at its beginning. Moreover, along with the migration and the spectacle of America's dispossessed yeomanry fleeing their plowed-under sharecropping homes or their foreclosed farms or their shut-down businesses in the small towns, the highway gained the face and the status of an element of the nation's culture as one novel, and then the movie based on the book, *The Grapes of Wrath*, brought it a searing, universal, and indelible profile in the nation's consciousness. Route 66 had become, unlike any other roadway, not just a transportation route, but a cultural icon. Route 66 was no longer just a road. Route 66 was America on the move.

The migration also fed the businesses along the road and created the ironic situation of hard times generating business opportunity. In fact, one of the distinct social and economic features of Highway 66 was the abundance of small businesses that it produced. The volume of traffic assured a steady stream of customers for the basic services, but what was notable was that only a minimum of capital was required to set up a filling station with a couple of pumps, or to build a motel with three or four units, or maybe even eight, or to build a sandwich shop with eight stools at the counter. At a time when many people possessed basic building skills, the construction could often be done by the owner—and some family and friends if needed. Likewise, the owner's family would often operate the business, albeit generally reinforcing prevailing gender roles in ways that distributed effort and rewards in different proportions.

But what is significant about this proliferation of individual and family entrepreneurs along Route 66 is both the reality and the symbolism of opportunity, a circumstance in which all that was required for success was hard work. That formulation had limits, of course, and the opportunity was not open to a person without resources sufficient to own or lease a parcel of land along the road, or to invest in even a modest business, and the Depression increased the number of people in that have-not category. Moreover, the hard-work mantra often conceals the huge government subsidy through road construction and maintenance that made a given business profitable, as compared with another location a few miles, or a few blocks, away. Even so, the flourishing of small business represents an undeniable feature associated with Route 66, and it was a feature that was undaunted by the economic despair all around. And, it is important to note, finally, that many of the buildings along Highway 66, and often just their ruins, bear silent testimony to the dreams and opportunities of those entrepreneurs.

One hidden complication of this new opportunity is also evident along the road. Not only were people going into business who had previously pursued other callings, often as farmers, but existing businesses were changing too. Those already operating, if situated favorably in regard to the highway, could expand. If situated elsewhere, away from the road, they could move to the highway, and many did. Or they could perish, and some did that too. Thus at an early time, it was not just the changing alignment that negatively impacted businesses and communities so that they were no longer served by the highway. It was also the draining of businesses from the villages and towns at a modest distance from the road, so that when businesses moved from, say, Colony, Oklahoma, to Clinton, as did the Mohawk Lodge Trading Post, a new business did not emerge to replace the old, and the town lost people and commerce. Or, when a business moved a short distance to be on the highway, still within the same community, it could alter the dynamics not just of business but of community life. When the main store in Narcissa, Oklahoma, next to the railroad, moved a quarter mile east to be on the highway in 1934, and when the road was paved in the 1937, it shifted the center of gravity in the town so that the old business district withered and was replaced by a small strip of businesses—the store and filling station, a garage, and a tourist court—on the highway.

Narcissa D-X Service Station, Narcissa, Oklahoma.
Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

Yet another unseen aspect of the Highway 66 business was its difference from its community predecessors. Where the village and town businesses had been integrated into the structure of the community in social as well as economic ways, the roadside businesses and their specialization made them dependent upon the highway traffic, almost completely independent of the local economy. That dependence carried an implication, and the volatility of those businesses to external forces, if not already evident, became apparent during World War II. The war changed the dynamics of transportation in the nation along Route 66 as automobile manufacturing ceased, as tires and gasoline were rationed, as the speed limit was reduced to thirty-five miles per hour, and as tourism slowed to a trickle, and migration faded after a spike at the beginning of the war. At the same time, the economic and military mobilization for war itself provided a counterbalance to those drags on traffic and commerce, at least in some places and sections of the highway. While specific local economies prospered from the location of defense plants and military bases nearby, and while those plants and bases appear to have been placed there *because* of access via Route 66, it is less clear how the economic benefits of that prosperity were locally distributed and how they impacted the operators of the roadside businesses nearby. It is much more clear that in some parts of Route 66 a great exception was made to the general decline in road construction as the highway was widened and realigned to accommodate the transportation needs of the defense effort.

If the war ended the Depression, it was only after the war ended that the prosperity could take on a civilian face. An important aspect of that transformation was turning the highway's mobility into both a popular and a pleasurable part of life instead of one reflecting dire compulsion. And so Route 66, in reality and in popular culture, became synonymous with vacations and "kicks" and speed and new lands to explore, at least if the motorist was white. And with that, an unprecedented volume of traffic filled the highway and once again brought to life the businesses along its corridor, and brought new businesses into existence. The tourist business, what Thomas Arthur Repp terms "the empires of amusement," multiplied and the real and fake trading posts appeared virtually everywhere. And the mom and pop operation remained the main form of business, especially in the small tourist attractions and in the cafés and motels, but there was change here too.

The power of chains, evident among the gasoline stations, that had become increasingly service stations instead of filling stations by this point, increased and as they did so the individual operators declined. At first the decline could be measured only in market share as the total number of independent operations remained high; then, however, the market share of the chains made the number of independents irrelevant in the large picture, just of importance to the people involved, and those people, like the mom and pop businesses they represented, were left behind.

By the mid-1950s the independent businesses that had been associated with the highway were yielding to the standardized chains of motels, fast-food emporiums, and gas stations. Major theme parks built with huge investments and based on elaborate marketing plans were replacing the snake pits and displays of two-headed calves that relied on a steady stream of customers to pass by. And the road itself was changing. Loaded with tourist traffic and with a trucking industry that had supplanted the railroads and channeled into the main routes of the nation, the narrow ribbon of pavement with two lanes was insufficient for the traffic that it had generated. Pressures to widen the road and to move it so that it no longer wound its way through towns and business districts—so that it no longer converged with America's Main Street—resulted in the replacement of the road with turnpikes, bypasses, and finally with an entire new system of roadways in the Interstate Highway System enacted in 1956.

The actual replacement of the highway came slowly, sometimes agonizingly slow and sometimes mercifully slow, but the process was as inexorable as it was thorough. When the new highway replaced the old, however, it brought a revolutionary change with it: the condition of controlled, or limited, access. With a new purpose of "mov[ing] groups of people and goods from area to area," anything that slowed down traffic was an obstacle to be removed. That included the communities along its path, which were therefore bypassed, and the businesses that had drawn upon the highway traffic for their sustenance, which were shut out. Thus towns that had seen the highway as their salvation, the businesses that had placed themselves confidently alongside the Main Street of America, and had then become dependent upon the traffic it carried, found themselves on the other side of the limited access equation, generally with an extremely limited access to the market they needed. Where the road had once brought striking opportunities to such businesses, now the road just as summarily took them away. Communities that had become defined by their relationship to the highway withered when it went away and businesses closed their doors when they lost the traffic. The progress of this replacement was uneven, but by 1984 the last segment of Route 66, near Williams, Arizona, was replaced and Route 66, the Main Street of America, the Will Rogers Highway, the last-resort road of migrants, and the highway that was "my way, . . . the highway that's the best," that highway came to a dead end.

Some parts of the highway continue to be used as state highways or as local, county roads. Long stretches of abandoned Highway 66 remain, in all conditions, from dirt and gravel to four-lane. The highway's buildings sometimes remain too, seldom carrying on the same business as originally, sometimes put to different uses and thus busy and preserved, but often the buildings are deserted, quiet as a grave. The ghost signs poignantly haunt the roadway and the specter of the past always beckons the traveler on the highway.

The remnants of Route 66 are left. So too is the legacy of the highway. There are two fundamental components of that legacy that the cultural resources of the highway reflect. The first is that the road, itself the product of forces of change and modernization, unleashed additional forces with incredible power to change the social, cultural, and economic landscape of the area through which it was built. Moreover, those forces would be so powerful that they would ultimately bring about the demise of the road itself. Secondly, there is the irony that continually dogs the path of Route 66 that, like many another road and many another technological advance, it was designed to bring people closer together, but wound up separating them more and more from each other. Whether separating poor from rich, migrants from residents, merchant from farmer, villager from city-dweller, or the "amateur" motel operator from the "professional," the road divided society instead of uniting it. In this regard the highway may only have been like many other highways and technological changes; indeed, one could say the same thing of the telephone as it generated changes in people's lives at the same time.[4] In the

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[4] See for example the discussion of the impact of telephones on life in the 1920s by Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd in *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1929), 274-275.

sheer physical power of Highway 66 and in the immediacy of its impact on the people who lived and worked near it, this highway, a vital corridor across the continent that carried enormous traffic and thereby brought life to small towns in that corridor, could also reorganize the relationships of life in the communities it touched.

Whatever else Highway 66 may have meant to the many people who traveled it and who lived and worked along its path, the highway is best understood as a road through time connecting not so much Chicago and Los Angeles as connecting the past and the present. When it is approached in this way the legion of historic resources along that highway—the shells of gas stations, and the bones of old motel units, the archaic bridges, the narrow roadways—hold a deeper meaning and serve as links that connect modern society to its origins in a world in which the pace, organization, priorities, and opportunities were vastly different and in which isolation was more physical than social, a world that beckons to us today because it was what we are not. Approached from that perspective, those historic resources reveal not only the route that the United States took during the twentieth century, but the more fundamental meanings of where it went and from whence it came.

Chapter VIII

Documenting Route 66 Resources on the National Register of Historic Places

In the effort to acknowledge and document the significance of particular historic resources associated with U.S. Highway 66 it is important to both broaden the view to consider how other historic highways are treated within the framework of the National Register and to narrow the focus to specific property types to facilitate their nomination to the National Register.

i. Historic Highways

While some historic roads are currently included in the national park system and are thereby managed and sometimes owned by the National Park Service, other roads are also historic, some of them possessing national historic significance, but are not included in that system, except in those portions that coincidentally extend through specific existing National Park Service properties. If the focus is narrowed to the U.S. Highway system—i.e., the network of numbered public highways that emerged in November, 1926—one can think of various highways that invite scrutiny, such as Highway 1 from Florida to Maine along the east coast, U.S. 60 from Virginia Beach to Los Angeles, and

Highway 101 along the west coast from Olympia, Washington to Los Angeles. It is to be hoped that more roads will be studied for their historic resources, but one conclusion is clear already: while they all represent part of the evolution of the public transportation network in the United States, these roads each have different histories, developed distinct identities, and generated discrete legacies to be addressed within the framework of the National Register.

An example of the diversity within the highways of the nation can be seen in two of the major highways that have been studied, the Lincoln Highway and Route 66. Vastly different roads in their origins and purposes—one a named highway and the other part of the new system of U.S. public highways—the two did overlap in their periods of significance, and both represented important east-west thoroughfares of national importance. Moreover, both the Lincoln Highway and U.S. 66 were developed not for their scenic or aesthetic qualities but for service as public transportation routes across the country and they thereby stand apart from roads like the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia or the Going-to-the-Sun Road in Montana and bear a greater commonality with historic transportation routes like the Oregon-California-Mormon Trails or the Santa Fe Trail. Indeed, that conceptualization suggests both the broad historical significance of the highways and the treatment of the resources associated with these important twentieth-century routes within the National Register framework; they have more in common with their nineteenth century predecessors than with roads that are products of landscape architectural design in the national park system. In fact, a cursory comparison of the two most prominent roads that have been studied, the Lincoln Highway and U.S. Highway 66, suggests first, that an evolutionary, historical framework is essential to understanding them (and presumably others as well), and secondly that the two highways are best understood as parts of different systems and kinds of roads, not as rivals in an ahistorical competition where time is frozen, where all highways hold the same purpose and consequence, and where their significance and their differences are reduced to statistical assessment.

The Lincoln Highway and Highway 66 intersected at a point in Plainfield, Illinois, not far from the Chicago terminus of 66, but their historical intersection has been more pervasive as the two storied roads are both frequently compared and contrasted and, predictably, each highway has its adherents and aficionados who seek to embellish the history of one and detract from the history of the other—an effort with also predictably partisan results. The two roads, both outstanding icons of twentieth-century American social and transportation history, both crossed the bulk of the continent—the Lincoln truly transcontinental going from Atlantic to Pacific, from New York to San Francisco, and 66 beginning in the interior, reaching from Chicago to Los Angeles—and both were actively promoted by private organizations whose members hoped to gain from the increased traffic on each road, and their period of significance overlaps substantially—the Lincoln Highway from 1913 to 1956 and Route 66 from 1926 to 1970. Yet, without detracting from the legacy of either, the two have fundamentally different histories and they made substantially different contributions to the history of the American people in the twentieth century. Instead of using the comparison of the two as a way to diminish the importance of either of the roads, that comparison can constructively be employed to develop a closer appreciation of each. Both are outstanding, both are significant, both contributed to the nation, but they were and did so in different ways, for different reasons.

The two highways were born of dramatically different circumstances. The Lincoln Highway had its origins as the plan of people associated with the automobile industry who did not even have a clear idea of the path of the route they hoped to promote. The communities along the way and the travelers who would use the road never figured prominently in the Lincoln Highway Association except as targets for their promotional efforts.[1] While the Lincoln Highway Association represented possibly the longest road and the most ambitious private road association, even those distinctions can be argued with the National Old Trails Road and its sponsoring organization making similar claims. During the years of its existence as an institutional, if not exactly official public, road, the Lincoln Highway existed independently, apart from a national network of roads and, in fact, when the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads in 1926 created such a network of roads forming a grid across the nation, each one to be numbered in a system that would convey an idea of the general location and direction of the roads, much as city streets would do in communities, the Lincoln Highway Association protested the change, its road signs were removed from the side of the highway, and the association soon withered and ceased to operate. Drake Hokanson captures the poignance of the moment precisely:

> By the end of 1927, the old trail markers were coming down as fast

[1] Drake Hokanson, in his study of the Lincoln Highway, makes clear that the Lincoln Highway Association was a top-down organization more important for the money it raised in the automobile and highway industries, than for the following it held in the towns along the way; those towns were important in the designs of the association, in providing volunteers for road work and pressing state legislatures for funding. Not coincidentally, his study focuses on the national leadership of the organization which formulated strategy without significant input from the communities and merchants along the Lincoln Highway. Drake Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street across America* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, revised edition, 1999), 17-18.

> as the new federal shields were going up. The painted bands on telephone poles were fading, and travelers were beginning to forget the names of the old roads as the easier-to-use numbers came into use. Although the American Association of State Highway Officials had banned the maintenance and erection of signs or markers for named roads, the Lincoln highway Association petitioned and was granted permission to mark the highway. It won the approval based on the idea that it wasn't planning to mark the highway as a road, as a route from one place to another, but as a memorial to Abraham Lincoln. And rather than banding telephone poles or painting gaudy signs that might distract the motorist, the association proposed small concrete posts to be set some distance from the roadway.[2]

After 1928, as Hokanson notes, the Lincoln Highway "remained in the public mind as a symbol of freedom, patriotism, and the American wandering spirit."[3] The Lincoln Highway itself was rendered, in the eyes of its promoters, virtually unrecognizable, even "obliterated" and the highway was now part of a variety of U.S. routes. Henry Joy, the longtime leader of the organization lamented the fate of his beloved highway: "The Lincoln Highway, a memorial to the martyred Lincoln, now known by the grace of God and the authority of the Government of the United States as Federal Route 1, Federal Route 30, Federal Route 30N, Federal Route 30S, Federal Route 530, Federal Route 40 and Federal Route 50."[4] After 1927, the Lincoln Highway existed in an after-life, not as a named road, but more as a memory to some, and as a cultural entity and marketing construct to others. It seems to be the cultural identity that the National Park Service has in mind especially in the recognition of the Lincoln Highway since the recent NPS study of the Lincoln Highway begins the period of significance for the Lincoln Highway in 1913, when the Lincoln Highway Association was founded, and

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[2] Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway*, 110.

[3] Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway*, 112.

ends it with 1956 when the Interstate Highway System was written into law—neither date marked by physical changes in the road, on the ground.[5]

In contrast, U.S. Highway 66 was created by the very forces that brought an end to the Lincoln Highway as an institutional entity and single highway. Part of the new national network of roads, U.S. 66, however, did not neatly fit into the grid that otherwise prevailed, since it actually formed a diagonal that cut across the horizontal and vertical lines of the grid; thus while an integral part of the new system of U.S. highways, 66 also from the very first had its own claim to distinction. Moreover, while the new system of highways chopped up the Lincoln Highway into so many pieces now designated with different highway numbers, U.S. 66 actually represented the merging and unification of multiple separate routes previously identified with named-road segments—the National Old Trails Road, the Ozark Trails, and the Pontiac Trail. The institutional and structural apparatus that provided the milieu for the named roads had been largely supplanted by a system of public design, public routing, public coordination, and public financing. While the Lincoln Highway in its origins and in its institutional formulation belonged to the system of independent named roads that was in declension after 1926, Highway 66 belongs to the ascendancy of public roads that would prevail in the middle of the twentieth century.

In the years following 1926, both roads served the nation well. The Lincoln

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[4] Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway*, 112.

[5] National Park Service, *Lincoln Highway: Special Resource Study Environmental Assessment* (n.p.: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, May 2004), 29. This study is available in pdf format on the World Wide Web at http://www.nps.gov/mwro/lincolnhighway/.

Highway continued with a distinctive "cultural identity," in the words of the NPS Special Resource Study and Environmental Assessment of that road, "for a considerable time beyond the dissolution of the LHA."[6] The study also, with some eloquence and sophistication, notes that "because of its transcontinental nature and its complex evolution in the states through which it passes, what was historically known and understood as the Lincoln Highway is not easily or neatly defined."[7] It is no doubt true that the highway continued with a distinctive identity and it is also important to recognize the fragmented history of the road once it was broken into multiple highways, but this is also reflective of the fact that the years after 1926 represented a period of decline for the Lincoln Highway itself. The NPS study refers to "the highway's gradual and regionally varied decline as a regionally important representative of early named highways." And equally important, during that same period, U.S. 66 was rising in use and in fame and it developed its own cultural identity, not as a result of earlier marketing efforts by parts of the automobile industry that then provided a convenient focus for businesses along the road. It was marketed by a supporting organization, but the various Route 66 organizations drew their strength from the merchants the road served. And its identity especially derived from its prominence in critical elements of popular culture ranging from literature, to motion pictures, to popular music. The ascension of Route 66, moreover, did not end with the enactment of the 1956 legislation, but continued at each point along the road until it was replaced with the interstates, and often with vigorous resistance to the physical replacement of 66 with new interstate routes. Even then, even

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[6] NPS, *Lincoln Highway: Special Resource Study Environmental Assessment*, 29.

[7] NPS, *Lincoln Highway: Special Resource Study Environmental Assessment*, 30.

after each mile was replaced with interstate highway, the Route 66 cultural identity and use persisted in America in the same fashion that the Lincoln Highway had after 1927. In that way, both highways hold an important significance in the nation's history, but the significance is special for each and the two, instead of competing with each other in the historical perspective, instead of duplicating each other, actually represent complementary parts of a larger whole.

ii. Associated Property Types

Property types associated with the historic context for Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 include the roadbed itself, road-essential features such as bridges, and also the various gasoline / service stations, garages, restaurants / diners, motels / tourist courts, recreation travel stops / destinations, and roadside parks / markers which lined its route from Chicago to Los Angeles and Santa Monica. The road that was designated or built as U.S. Highway 66, including its ever-changing course and realignments, remains today sometimes as state and county roads and municipal thoroughfares and sometimes as abandoned segments in the towns and in the countryside for the approximately 2400 miles of its main route, although the sections of the highway that were subsequently replaced and bypassed increase that distance considerably. Along this route, with uneven consistency, remnants of the road and of the public and commercial infrastructure that emerged to serve motorists who traveled Route 66 still can be identified and evaluated for their eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of

Historic Places.

Associated Property Types

1. Roadbeds
2. Road Bridges
3. Gasoline / Service Stations
4. Garages / Dealerships
5. Restaurants / Diners
6. Motels / Tourist Courts
7. Recreation / Travel Stops / Destinations
8. Roadside Parks / Picnic Areas / Markers

Property Type: Roadbeds

Description

When U.S. Highway 66 was designated in 1926, the highway simply drew upon existing roads, only small portions of which were paved. Some had already been parts of private highway systems and networks, most notably the National Old Trails Road in the section from Las Vegas, New Mexico to Los Angeles, the Postal Road (which had previously been known as the Beale Road) through New Mexico to Oklahoma City, the

Pre-1926 alignment, part of Ozark Trails road network, including also Docie Creek Bridge near Stroud, Oklahoma. The bridge, unfortunately, was destroyed in the summer, 2004. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Ozark Trails from Oklahoma City to Tulsa and into Kansas and Missouri where the highway followed the Wire Road to St. Louis, and then connected with SBI 4 to Chicago. These roads were often not highways in a modern sense of paved thoroughfares, and they rested on different philosophies and purposes. The National Old Trails Road purportedly provided a throughway across the country following even earlier roads including the Camino Real de Tierra Adendro in New Mexico (which had carried commerce for three centuries earlier) and the old National Road east of Illinois dating to the early nineteenth century. The Ozark Trails system was, in contrast, a network of roads that dispersed traffic into the small towns instead of channeling it between metropolitan areas. While the previous roads were often built, or at least occasionally maintained, with public funds at the county level, the primary institutional support lay in the private organizations that promoted the roads. After its designation as a federal highway in 1926 the road became a public responsibility and subject to national standards, requirements, and coordination.

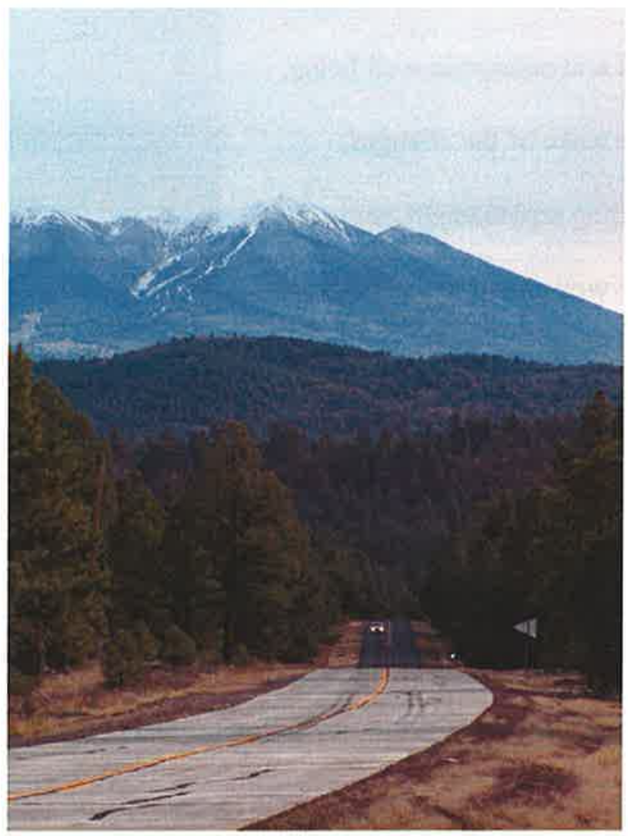
Hooker Cut, near Lebanon, Missouri (1943). Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

In the period of around half a century in which Route 66 served the nation, that route evolved so that the roadbed itself changed dramatically in construction and in location. As the roadbed was improved through various engineering stages meeting different standards for heavier and faster traffic, the road often shifted in alignment, often to reduce the curves and corners necessary to follow it, and as a consequence also bypassed some of the communities, settlements, and commercial operations that had come to depend on its traffic. The process of roadbed revision ultimately brought not only wider roads, straighter roads, and even divided roads, but also replacement roads as the same forces that had made Route 66 so important even brought about turnpikes and interstate highways with controlled access and that no longer coursed through the small towns and large cities that had seen the road as vital to their social and economic well being. In the wake of the changes, including replacement, remnants of the well-traveled road were left behind, sometimes inaccessible and unusable, sometimes carrying limited local traffic, and sometimes as principal service roads and urban streets. In some instances the road continues to be used as a highway or service road that even runs along side the interstate that replaced it. By following the evolution of the roadbed, thus, one gains a closer appreciation of not only the technology of highway construction and transportation engineering, but also the social implications of both.

Four-lane Highway 66 looking west into New Mexico, Glenrio. Representative road segment indicating widening of road in towns. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Significance

Road segments that remain from the period of historic significance are valuable artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these road segments reflect on the one hand new and changing technologies and the evolution of pavement design and traffic engineering, and on the other hand the social and economic circumstances that forced and shaped the roadway's course or alteration. The road both reflected and generated changing patterns of social interaction. Thus the changes in road segments often reveal both material technology and the social and economic variables that generated pavement upgrades and replacement. Those changes in the road may have been related not only to an *increase* in traffic (due to the migration of the 1930s, for example, or result from the increase in tourism at the end of the war), but also sometimes probably reflects also the *decline* in traffic (and commerce) nearby on the replaced segment, or the *change* in traffic from local patterns to long distance transportation, from automobile to trucks, and so on. It is important to remember that the roadbed is more than a piece of



Roadbed near Flagstaff, Arizona. Photo: Credit, National Park Service, Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2003.

concrete or asphalt, that it is a linkage in human relationships and when that link is formed or broken, there are dramatic consequences for the people who live and work near it. When the road changed and brought commerce to one place, it often took it away from another, and vice versa.

Roadbed segments meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce depending on the particular segment and its association with Route 66. They may also meet Criterion C if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. The end of the period of significance for Route 66 properties is the point at which the property was no longer used as part of Route 66 or 1970, at the latest, and those road segments associated with Highway 66 after 1955 and until 1970 meet the "exceptional significance" consideration for properties under fifty years old.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce requires that a road segment show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of a distinct road type or style in its design, materials, or workmanship as it once appeared as part of Route 66.

In order to qualify, the sections must have been a part of Route 66 between 1926 and the time at which that segment of the highway was replaced or decommissioned as U.S. 66, or 1970 at the latest. Segments built prior to 1926 qualify only if they subsequently became part of official Route 66. Historical data, such as engineering plans, old maps, or photographs should verify that sections of the roadbed were associated with Route 66. The property must retain the essential features that identify it as a highway either within a town center or in a rural setting. These features include the original cross-section template (comprised of a roadbed in the city; comprised of cut banks, fill slopes, roadbed, grade, and so forth in rural settings), original alignment or later realignment, and associated features like culverts and bridges, although it is recognized that a number of these features may have been modified or replaced. Segments which have been widened after the end of the period of significance may be included if they link other significant sections of the route. Pavement is an inherently fragile feature of highways and is routinely covered over and replaced. Some early segments of Route 66 were never paved. Therefore, original pavement is not a registration requirement.

Nominated segments of Route 66 in urban and rural settings should be sufficiently long to preserve the feeling and setting of a continuous road. Short segments which have few remaining associated properties or a large number of properties constructed after the period of significance should be included only if the area serves to link significant sections of other eligible portions of the route. Segments of the route which have significant associated properties should be included.

Road Bridges

Description

Without bridges to cross rivers, streams, and gullies, the best highway would be useless and would fail in its mission of connecting different points for the motorized traveler. Bridges thus form integral portions of Highway 66 and also serve as distinct architectural and structural features associated with the road. Along Route 66 these bridges underwent an engineering change that introduced new elements of technology, materials, and designs, ranging from the timber bridges that once existed along Route 66 to the steel girder bridges on concrete pile foundations or piers in the 1930s, to the multi-span reinforced-concrete arch bridges, to the reinforced-concrete slab bridges over smaller streams, and the steel truss bridges of various types. In fact, Route 66 contains some spectacular examples of bridgework like the modest but graceful rainbow bridge in

Bridge over Padre Canyon (1914), near Twin Arrows, Arizona. Photo: Credit, National Park Service, Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2003.

Timber Bridge west of Endee, New Mexico. Photo: Credit, National Park Service, Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2003.

Kansas, the unique Chain of Rocks Bridge at St. Louis, and the old arch bridge over the Colorado River at Topock, Arizona. A multitude of less well-known bridges punctuate the roadway along its course and are often eligible for the National Register in their own right, but many others gain significance from their association with U.S. Highway 66.

Significance

By examining the bridges along Route 66, one can gain an understanding of the society that produced them, not just in the technology and materials available, but in their specific features, such as pedestrian walkways, and in their dimensions (the width often indicating the pace and amount of traffic for which each was constructed). In this way the bridges that remain from the period of significance along Route 66 are crucial artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these bridges reflect the circumstances that gave rise to the particular structure, whether its origins were in the increase in traffic associated with route designation or new pavement, with accelerating migration, or with the surge of traffic and road construction at the end of the war, and they also reflect the

Bridge over the Colorado River at Topock, Arizona (1916), a three hinged steel arch bridge, that served the National Old Trails Road before it became an important Highway 66 bridge. No longer carrying vehicular traffic, its use is restricted to supporting a pipeline. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

social dislocations that may have caused the bridges to be neglected or even abandoned, such as a decline in traffic resulting from a change in road alignment, depression, war, or even the construction of an alternate available route connecting the same points served by the former road. Those bridges also reflect the changing technical and social standards employed in their construction, standards that themselves reflected the greater specialization and centralization in social organization.

Bridges on Route 66 meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation. They may also meet Criterion C if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. The end of the period of significance for Route 66 properties is the point at which the property was no longer used as part of Route 66 or 1970, at the latest, and those bridges associated with Highway 66 after 1955 and until 1970 meet the "exceptional significance" consideration for properties under fifty years old.

Lake Overholser Bridge, Oklahoma City (1924-1925) replaced a ferry across the North Canadian River. The bridge is a combination of camelback Warren pony trusses on each end and four Parker through-trusses between. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2003.

Registration Requirements

In most instances a bridge would be included as part of the roadbed with which it is associated. In addition, however, a bridge may be eligible if the roadbed with which it was associated is not eligible and if that bridge was bypassed and abandoned. A bridge may be individually eligible for its engineering significance or for its historical significance if research indicates a clear association with the history of Route 66. Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation requires that a bridge show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an engineering type or style in its design, materials, or workmanship as it once appeared on Route 66.

To be eligible for the National Register as part of the Route 66 multiple property listing, road bridges may be located on any section of road which was designated officially as Route 66. If the bridge was constructed before Route 66 was designated in 1926, the bridge must have been in service for a significant period of time as part of Route 66. Those properties eligible for engineering significance should be considered even if alterations to form and materials exist so long as the significant engineering design is prominent and intact. In those instances in which a bridge is eligible, additional attention should be given the approaches to the bridge—the vital linkage between the roadbed and the bridge—as contributing properties.

Property Type: Gasoline / Service Stations

Description

Because of the length and the dates of the period of significance for Route 66, it is possible to identify along Route 66 major contours of the evolution of the commercial operations at which travelers would purchase gasoline, and later the full gamut of fuels, lubricants, tires, batteries, and other supplies and repairs for their vehicles. This evolution has been best chronicled by John Jakle and Keith Sculle in their study, *The Gas Station in America*. Although the architectural types of stations do not always fit neatly into the categories identified by Jakle and Sculle, the primary forms include the early curbside station that simply dispensed gasoline, and then the shed, the house or cottage type, the house with canopy, the house with bays, and the oblong box. While illustrating the architectural change in the service station industry, these types also importantly reveal the changing functionality of the station.

Super 66 Station, Alanreed, Texas (1930). This is an example of an independent station, in general a house with canopy station, but bearing the distinctive markings of the individual who built it. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Although the filling station initially offered only the sale of gasoline (and no or few additional services or repairs or supplies) at a store that retailed a variety of consumer goods, it subsequently became separated from broader retail functions and dedicated its efforts to serving the automobile trade. Then the stations became larger to serve that automobile trade in more ways, stressing the service and then also the repair functions that drivers could expect. In that activity the gas stations joined an existing array of businesses already servicing automobiles, the garages and the automobile dealers, and the three significantly overlapped in their service functions and were each important in serving the Route 66 travelers. By the end of the period, however, the course of change had gone almost full circle with gas stations becoming reduced again to a function of convenience stores that offered no service and sold a variety of other products much as had the earliest incarnations of the gasoline station so that repairs and exchanges had to be made in the garages and dealerships, businesses that likewise had become centralized and transformed.

Conoco station (date unknown), Winslow, Arizona. Conforming to Conoco building requirements, this building is characterized by steeply pitched roofs, high, louvered vertical vent, and corbeled eave corners. The building has been modified, with the service garage apparently added later, but is especially notable for retaining its wooden doors in the service bay. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Significance

Gas stations and service stations that remain from the period of significance along Route 66 are crucial artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these stations reflect the circumstances that gave rise to the particular building, whether that was the increase in traffic associated with designation or with new pavement, with a wave of migration, or with the surge in tourism at the end of the war. The history of the station may also reflect more of those social dynamics, even the dislocations that closed the station or caused it to change in its operation. These stations were sensitive barometers to alterations in road alignment, to the cycles of depression and war and often reveal the larger pattern of consolidation in the industry. The construction of an alternate available route connecting the same points served by the former road frequently meant death to stations who had come to depend on the traffic of Route 66. Those stations usually reflect their status as either an independent operation or one that was constructed as an affiliate of a major petroleum company and then they also reflect the changes that occurred as companies shifted the appearance of their stations for marketing purposes.

The Soulsby Shell Service Station, in Mount Olive, Illinois, (1926) is a popular icon associated with the Highway 66 and has been carefully maintained. The road it faced did not become part of the Route 66 alignment until 1940. The changing highway alignments require careful attention to determination of the period of significance. This station was associated with Highway 66 from 1940 to 1977 (when this section was decommissioned). Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Gas stations and service stations meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce depending on the particular business and its association with Route 66. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. In order to qualify, the sections must have been a part of Route 66 between 1926 and the time at which that segment of the highway was replaced or decommissioned as U.S. 66, or 1970 at the latest. Those gas stations and service stations associated with Highway 66 after 1955 and until 1970 meet the "exceptional significance" consideration for properties under fifty years old.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce requires that a gas station or service station show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66. Physically, the gas station must be located adjacent to, or near and obviously accessible from, Route 66 and must retain its appearance from the period of historic significance. The specific character defining aspects center on the ability of the business to serve automobile traffic. Thus a building must include a drive for automobile entrance and exit, and, if a service station, at least one lane where the automobile could pull next to gasoline pumps. While some of the early stations and some of the more recent were designed only to sell gasoline, many of the stations along Route 66 included service bays. Thus, unless a gas station was designed with the more minimalist function in mind, and such stations do continue to exist and are important structures, both an office / sales area and bays must remain. Because of the environmental and public safety issues associated with gasoline storage tanks and dispensing pumps, and the consequent wholesale removal of such features, those pumps are not essential requirements. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an architectural type or style in its design, materials, or workmanship as

Potapov's Station and Tourist Court (Bill's Service) between Helendale and Oro Grande, California (1943). Ruins. A popular attraction because of its rock construction, it is especially significant because it was built during World War II, when many gasoline stations were closing—an indicator of the heavy military traffic in this area. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

it once appeared on Route 66.

The gas stations along Route 66 often are vacant or are no longer used as gas stations; while some dealerships continue to operate, often they have been converted to other uses. These structures need to be examined to determine the degree that they still reveal their historic function. If the structure has not been modified so as to compromise its integrity, that building will be determined eligible. Sometimes the integrity remains, but the condition of the building is poor, a factor that will be of greater negative impact for those properties considered under Criterion C than under Criterion A.

In some instances the cultural resources along U.S. 66 have either deteriorated significantly, so that only ruins remain, or were originally ephemeral, temporary features, such as campsites. These resources, although often lacking structural integrity, can still provide information relating to the evolution of Highway 66 and its impact on the nation through the study of in-situ contemporary archeological deposits. The methods of historic archeology can sometimes be employed in conjunction with professional historical research to document and evaluate such historic properties. These sites must possess especially integrity of location and association. The nominations for these sites must specifically demonstrate what kinds of data are contained in the site and explain how that information might be used to answer specific research questions. The importance of the information to be gained should be established by discussing the site or district as its relates to the current knowledge of Route 66's history and associated social issues. For sites consisting largely of buried deposits, demonstration of potential to yield important information may involve subsurface testing. The necessity for, and scope of, subsurface testing must be decided on a property specific basis.

Property Type: Garages / Dealerships

Description

A necessary part of the support structure for traveling across the country on Route 66, or any highway, was the auto mechanic who could service the car to provide regular maintenance and repair it when it failed to operate properly. There is no standard history of garages as there is with gas stations, diners, and motels, but they were as important, and often, in an emergency, more important to the interstate traffic. The general contours of this business can be sketched. The automobiles and trucks did not require the elaborate and sophisticated computerized equipment of vehicles at the end of the twentieth century, a circumstance which meant that it was often possible for a person with minimal capital investment to set up shop to repair cars and trucks. In the early years of the century the automobile service garage came from a frequent conversion from blacksmith and livery operations, businesses that were small, individually-owned, and with few employees. These independent garages increased as the automobile multiplied and during the 1930s, in particular, there was a proliferation of small garages that would

Pike Titus Garage, Stroud, Oklahoma (1931). Although much care went into the creation of this garage (note the clipped gable roof), this, like most small garages, was built to be functional, not pretty. Note the gasoline station adjacent to the left (1925) a common association in the roadside business. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

service the vehicles bound for the West Coast. The migrants using that road, with their generally less than optimal means of transportation, depended on these garages. The *Business Week* description of those vehicles as "mostly in a condition immediately preceding complete collapse" is doubtless accurate and that was a circumstance that often meant that travelers would undertake what repairs they could on their own, but it also meant that for major work, which was always just a few quarts of oil away, they could not afford to turn to the established dealer for repairs. The independent mechanic found a ready market. Given the modest facilities that would typically house the one-person garage, commonly a wood frame or metal garage in which engines were serviced, and given that their trade was increasingly taken over by larger gasoline service stations and automobile dealers, only a few of the independent garages associated with Highway 66 remain.

At the other end of the spectrum was the dealer. To the dealer, repairs came easily as part of their original function. In the early days of automobiles, the dealers even assembled automobiles shipped to them in parts. And the repair business remained a constant feature of the dealership. Because of the structure of the automobile retailing business, an important part of the revenues of local dealers depended on their ability to provide service to their customers and these dealers included extensive repair facilities in their buildings. Especially after World War II, dealers counted more and more on their garages as an essential part of their business, often staying open twenty-four hours a day every day to assist motorists in need—something that the independent mechanic could not do.

In between the two were the service stations—filling stations that expanded by adding service bays and repair functions. Sometimes the filling stations, if they did a steady business, would expand without additional construction so that they could provide battery charging and tire repair, both open-air activities. In the 1930s, however, especially with the chain gasoline stations, the companies decided that service was a primary revenue enhancement and built larger stations to accommodate those activities. These service functions helped them survive the trials of World War II, compared to the filling station owner who depended on gasoline sales, which were not only rationed, but in limited demand because of restrictions on travel. After World War II, they expanded more and established their positions firmly, at least until the traffic left their doorstep with new alignments and replacements of Route 66.

Beard Motor Company [Chrysler, Plymouth dealer], Bristow, Oklahoma (1947). The garage and dealership in this Art Moderne building reflected the surge in traffic after World War II and the loss of traffic to the new Turner Turnpike in 1953 when it closed. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Significance

The garages along Route 66 are important indicators of changes in the society and economy generated by the highway. The size, the materials, the design, the locations, and the activities associated with the building reflect the circumstances surrounding the operation of the business, and this may include the designation of the highway, the paving of the roadbed, the changes in alignment, and the conditions of both the national and the local economy as impacted by depression and war and postwar prosperity. The building can also reveal fundamental shifts in automobile technology and the structure of the economy as large operations (dealerships and stations) expanded and small, individually-owned garages declined in number, and as individually-owned businesses of all kinds along the road declined generally and certainly could not make the adjustment to traffic on the new interstate highway system that made access to those garages less convenient.

Garages and dealerships with garages meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce depending on the particular business and its association with Route 66. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture and design if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. The end of the period of significance for Route 66 properties is the point at which the property was no longer used as part of Route 66 or 1970, at the latest, and those garages and dealerships associated with Highway 66 after 1955 and until 1970 meet the "exceptional significance" consideration for properties under fifty years old.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce requires that a garage show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Highway 66. Physically, the garage must be located adjacent to, or near and obviously accessible from, Route 66 and must retain its appearance from the period of historic significance. The specific character defining aspects center on the ability of the business to serve automobile traffic.

In garages, the wide diversity of facilities, from the corporate-designed structures of dealers and service stations, to the shacks and sheds employed by small operators, and the adaptive reuse of existing buildings that had previously served other purposes (at least one stately church was so modified, in Erick, Oklahoma) by small independent, mom-and-pop operations, makes uniform features only the most general and functional in description. In those operations, however, a service area, which may even be outdoors in some of the earliest businesses, must exist. If outdoors, this may be service ramp situated over a pit or even a hydraulic lift; the remnant of the core cylinder of the lift can help establish the nature and location of the operation. Of course, when those garages were also service stations, the garage may qualify on that basis alone. In the common situation where automobile repairs were undertaken indoors, the building needs to retain the bays. Likewise with the automobile dealerships, which also provided important maintenance functions for vehicles along Route 66: service entrances for vehicles must remain. In addition, unless research in historical documents indicates that the dealer did not have a showroom, a showroom—with substantial windows of some sort—is a requirement for a dealership.

Property Type: Restaurants / Diners

Description

As an institution along the roadside, the café serving the travelers of Route 66 has a history distinguished for much of the period of significance by its independent ownership, unregimented appearance, and frequently casual approach to business. Often ephemeral operations that came and went in almost cyclical fashion, the cafés that emerged to serve the traveling public tended toward low-capital investments that were heavily freighted with gender roles. Requiring less substantial structures than either gas stations with their specialized pumps and storage facilities or motels with their greater size, the roadside café sometimes took on extremely modest dimensions and location, often as an attachment to a gas station. Increasingly, in the 1930s, these cafés also became associated with motels and the allure of an operation that offered all three—food, lodging, and fuel—provided a significant competitive advantage, and one that was sometimes within reach of a family-sized business. These businesses did not follow a standard architectural typology except that they often began as lunchrooms, commonly held a counter and stools as well as tables and chairs (and later, booths), and were separated from the cooking area by a service window, although this separation was sometimes dispensed with in smaller operations.

Highway Diner, Winslow, Arizona. Date unknown. Usually identified as a Valentine Diner because of the small box shape, some degree of portability, seating for 8-10 people, and able to operated by one or two people. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

At the same time in the 1930s, as John Jakle and Keith Sculle observe in their standard history of *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age*, those restaurants, especially in towns and cities, began to modernize their appearance with brighter, glassier façades and bigger signs. While the cafés in the 1940s became more substantial businesses—and less defined by family roles and size—the emerging trend was toward franchises and standardization; as mechanization took on a larger role in the kitchen, uniformity on the menu provided greater predictability for travelers unfamiliar with the home-grown culinary delights a community might offer. The proliferation of roadside cafés in the 1940s and 1950s finally yielded to the expansion of the chains, sometimes associated with motels, that left behind the independents as smaller, less up-to-date, and more provincial in their offerings. One result was the effort of small operations to capitalize on their faster service than the larger restaurant and to specialize on hamburgers, or ice cream foods rather than full meals, which sometimes had not been their forte anyway. Even that specialized realm became target of the fast food empires though and the independents that survived on Route 66 usually did so by filling a particular niche in the local community rather than depending on interstate traffic. Architecturally, by the end of the period those independent operations with their vernacular designs remain as


Abandoned café, Glenrio, Texas (1930). Suffering from the deterioration common to buildings no longer in active use, this café was at one time a gasoline station and also a trading post for curios, a common occurrence reflecting changing times and traffic on Route 66. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

distinct from the chain restaurants as the chains are from each other.

It also should be noted that sometimes the dining facilities along the highway were included in other businesses. Sometimes they were inside a motel (especially in the later years), and sometimes they were associated with recreational facilities, both of which are otherwise addressed as associated properties. Sometimes, however, they were located inside the ubiquitous drug stores of small towns and medium-sized cities. As Bernard DeVoto wrote in 1940, "The drugstore is likely to be the best store in any small town and it is certain to serve better lunches than the local restaurant. In fact, throughout rural America the craft of making sandwiches—and it is a skilled craft—is confined almost exclusively to soda fountains. . . . Certainly this tourist has nothing but praise for the transcontinental soda fountain. . . . It has an honorable place in the American cuisine; an essential and progressive part of our culture."[8] In this way, if another business, such as a drugstore with a soda fountain, can be demonstrated to have served the function of cafés and diners and restaurants along Route 66, that building may also meet the eligibility requirements for the property type.

Significance

As with the service stations, the cafés that remain from the period of significance along Route 66 are crucial artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these diners reflect the circumstances and aspirations that gave purpose and life to the particular

[8] Bernard DeVoto, "Notes from a Wayside Inn," *Harpers*, 181 (September 1940), 448.

building, whether the increase in traffic associated with designation of the highway or new pavement on it, the wave of migration on the road, or the surge in tourism at the end of the war. The history of the building also reveals the social dislocations that may have closed the restaurants such as a decline in traffic resulting from a change in road alignment, the hard times of the Depression, the diminished traffic of war, or the skewing of the customer base to military needs during the war, and, of course, the expansion of franchising—either of that business or the entry of a nearby competing franchise into the same market—or the construction of an alternate available route connecting the same points served by the former road.

Restaurants meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce depending on the particular business and its association with Route 66. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. In order to qualify, the sections of road with which they are associated must have been a part of Route 66 between 1926 and the time at which that segment of the highway was replaced or decommissioned as U.S. 66, or 1970 at the latest. The end of the period of significance for Route 66 properties is the point at which the property was no longer used as part of Route 66 or 1970, at the latest, and those restaurants and cafés associated with Highway 66 after 1955 and until 1970 meet the "exceptional significance" consideration for properties under fifty years old.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation and commerce requires that a diner or café or restaurant show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66. Physically, the café must be located adjacent to, or near and obviously accessible from, Route 66 and must retain its appearance from the period of historic significance. The specific character defining aspects of the café ordinarily could be found more on the interior of the building than the exterior, with lunch counters and stools and cases for displaying desserts or other specialties being prominent features. Since those interiors have seldom managed to weather the storms of use and reuse, the character defining features of the exterior are much more useful in identifying eligible café properties and these features center on the ability of the business to serve automobile traffic. Thus available parking is a consideration, and even if parking in that area is no longer possible, the relationship of the parking area to the café must be clear.

With some exceptions, these buildings attempted to make themselves more inviting by a use of windows to enable potential customers to imagine themselves inside enjoying the food served by the establishment, and such fenestration, however creative or unaesthetic the design, must exist. The post-World War II instances often display these features—set back from the road to allow for parking, and wide, streamlined windows to make the interior especially inviting to the traveling stranger. These features also apply to the more modest group of cafés that served more limited menus, like the hamburger and ice cream stands that dotted the road. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an architectural type or style in its design, materials, and workmanship as it once appeared on Route 66.

Some of the cafés along Route 66 still conduct a restaurant business and even represent popular gathering places for people interested in the highway. Too many instances of this once ubiquitous form of business establishment, however, now stand vacant or are no longer used as diners; indeed a great many highway businesses of all kinds are no longer used for their original purpose. These structures need to be examined to determine the degree that they still reveal their historic function. If the building has not been modified so as to compromise its integrity, that building will be determined eligible. Sometimes the integrity remains, but the condition of the building will be poor, a factor that will be of greater negative impact for those properties considered under Criterion C than under Criterion A.

In some instances the cultural resources along U.S. 66 have either deteriorated significantly, so that only ruins remain, or were originally ephemeral, temporary features, such as campsites. These resources, although often lacking structural integrity, can still provide information relating to the evolution of Highway 66 and its impact on the nation through the study of in-situ contemporary archeological deposits. The methods of historic archeology can sometimes be employed in conjunction with professional historical research to document and evaluate such historic properties. These sites must possess especially integrity of location and association. The nominations for these sites must specifically demonstrate what kinds of data are contained in the site and explain how that information might be used to answer specific research questions. The importance of the information to be gained should be established by discussing the site or district as its relates to the current knowledge of Route 66's history and associated social issues. For sites consisting largely of buried deposits, demonstration of potential to yield important information may involve subsurface testing. The necessity for, and scope of, subsurface testing must be decided on a property specific basis.

Property Type: Motels / Tourist Courts

Description

As with restaurants and gas stations, the twentieth-century history of the motel is intimately connected to Route 66 as both a singular roadway and reflective of broader transportation and social patterns in the nation; and the changes over time in the nature and number of accommodations available form a significant part of the social transformation generated along that road. The need for overnight lodging was a concomitant development of the rise in automobile travel, although various kinds of roadhouses had traditionally served the needs of travelers, even across the continent, as early as the 1850s. But the growth in automobile travel, especially in the 1920s, stressed the prevailing system as more and more people, known often as "auto-campers," pitched a tent where they happened to stop. As the number of such campers increased, communities sometimes created campgrounds to encourage them, welcoming them and

El Vado Motel in Albuquerque (1937); section showing garages separating rooms. In addition to its pueblo revival architecture, this tourist court reflects the realignment of Route 66 from its north-south route on 4th Street to east-west on Central in 1937. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2003.

their business. This stream of campers soon merged, however, with other campers who were on the road to find a job. Especially this was true in rural America, where, as a result of the decline in farm prices and the increase in farming costs in the 1920s, an agricultural system tied to tenant farming and sharecropping emptied the lands of those previously tied to it, and in the 1930s circumstances of drought exacerbated the already severe hardships. An early separation of the well-to-do tourist from the "wagoneers" in search of employment came when enterprising landowners began to charge for campsites. As the conveniences at those sites increased, it became less a matter of camping than of lodging, although the facilities remained primitive.

The tourist camp became an increasingly common institution along the road and it was popular not only with the traveler but with the family who sought to augment their income from a farm or store. It was a low-capital business and most of the tourist courts were probably built by the owners themselves and the entire family worked the operation, usually in stringently defined gender roles. The evolution of architectural formats of these businesses followed a pattern identified by John Jakle, Keith Sculle, and Jefferson Rogers, that moved from auto camp or tourist home (in which private homes would take in overnight guests), to the cabin camp, to the cottage court, the motor court and in more recent years

Wigwam Village No. 6, Holbrook, Arizona (1950). An example of a dramatic deviation from the normal tourist court tops, at least in the configuration of the individual units and drawing upon a western-related marketing theme in the postwar period along Route 66. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

the motor inn and highway hotel. Independent, idiosyncratic in design and decoration, and with minimal advantage to consolidation, these tourist camps, and then tourist courts, remained popular entry-level business opportunities reaching their peak in the post-World War II period and early 1950s.

At that point, however, the motel environment changed as greater capitalization became necessary, as group affiliation held a competitive advantage, and as the tax code provided a lucrative opportunity for investing and then soon selling to invest in different properties to reap more tax advantages. The result was the rise to dominance of the modern corporate motel chain characterized by uniformity within each chain and far removed from the independently owned operations that flourished along U.S. Highway 66.

Significance

The motels that survive—including tourist courts and camps—alongside Route 66 are often curious relics, as if from an ancient civilization, that help to date a culture. They may be very simple and quite humble, amounting to a few cabins

Wagon Wheel Motel, Cuba, Missouri (1934). Yet another variation of the tourist court with multiple separate units, each of the Wagon Wheel lodges contain six units. The complex included a restaurant and gasoline station in addition to the motel. Photograph: Credit, National Park Service, Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2001.

arranged in a crescent near the road or they may be elaborate, integrated operations with garages or carports separating the motel units, either one possibly indicating a pre-World War II origin and related expectations of the clientele being served. That these buildings remain at all is of some significance since, according to Sculle, Jakle and Rogers (*The Motel in America*) in 1960 the average life span of a motel building was calculated to be only nine years. As with the other structures on Route 66, the motels help the historian understand the social forces associated with Route 66. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these lodgings reflect the circumstances and aspirations that gave life to the particular business. Sometimes that was the increase in traffic associated with highway's original designation or new pavement, the wave of 1930s migration, or the surge of tourism at the end of the war, for example, but the history of the business also reveals the social dislocations that may have closed or altered the motels, such as a decline in traffic resulting from a change in road alignment, the downswing of the Depression, the reduced travel of war, or the consolidation in the industry. The construction of an interstate that took business away would often be a variable with terminal consequences. Those motels commonly reflect at a glance the decline of independent "mom and pop" businesses in a world turning to chains and franchises as the

Vega Motel, Vega, Texas (1940). A common pattern was for the motel owner to start with about eight units and later expand by building units in a U-shape with a courtyard in the center, such as at this motel. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

norm in lodging.

Motels meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. The end of the period of significance for Route 66 properties is the point at which the property was no longer used as part of Route 66 or 1970, at the latest, and those motels associated with Highway 66 after 1955 and until 1970 meet the "exceptional significance" consideration for properties under fifty years old..

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation and commerce requires that a motel show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66. Physically, the facility must be located adjacent to, or near and obviously accessible from, Route 66 and must retain its appearance from the period of historic significance. Besides physical integrity, it is important that the pattern and layout of the cabin groups or motel units be clear. Some operations, scattered along the roadway, like the Wigwam Motel in Holbrook, the Blue Swallow in Tucumcari, and the Wagon Wheel Motel in Cuba, Missouri, have been preserved almost as museum pieces because they were not excessively modernized nor were they adapted to different uses, but these are the exceptions. Most of the motels that remain have been modified in some way. The elimination or modification of some buildings within the complex would not be sufficient to eliminate a property from eligibility if the overall pattern is discernible. A common adaptive reuse of motels is as rental apartments, and in some of those cases they may retain eligibility because the appearance remains very much the same despite minor updating and changes in function.

Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an architectural type or style in its design, materials, or workmanship as it once appeared on Route 66.

The motels along Route 66 often are vacant or are no longer used as motels. These structures need to be examined to determine the degree that they still reveal their historic function. If the structure has not been modified so as to compromise its integrity, that building will be determined eligible. Sometimes the integrity remains, but the condition of the building will be poor, a factor that will be of greater negative impact for those properties considered under Criterion C than under Criterion A.

In some instances the cultural resources along U.S. 66 have either deteriorated significantly, so that only ruins remain, or were originally ephemeral, temporary features, such as campsites. These resources, although often lacking structural integrity, can still provide information relating to the evolution of Highway 66 and its impact on the nation through the study of in-situ contemporary archeological deposits. The methods of historic archeology can sometimes be employed in conjunction with professional historical research to document and evaluate such historic properties. These sites must possess especially integrity of location and association. The nominations for these sites must specifically demonstrate what kinds of data are contained in the site and explain how that information might be used to answer specific research questions. The importance of the information to be gained should be established by discussing the site or district as its relates to the current knowledge of Route 66's history and associated social issues. For sites consisting largely of buried deposits, demonstration of potential to yield important information may involve subsurface testing. The necessity for, and scope of, subsurface testing must be decided on a property specific basis.

Recreation / Travel Stops / Destinations

Description

While it is unlikely that there ever has been an American travel / transportation route completely lacking tourist attractions—in the 1850s some merchants along the Oregon – California Trail posted signs inviting emigrants to visit their stores to see grizzly bears in chains—the earliest attractions along Route 66 were often natural or were related, authentically or artificially, to the indigenous cultures. Sometimes an organized marketing effort emerged to take advantage of those features, such as the Petrified Forest and Painted Desert of Arizona and the famous Inter Tribal Ceremonial at Gallup and the Native American powwow of Flagstaff. These were replicated, imitated, and repeated at countless places across the region and became increasingly commercial and utilized marketing efforts to draw tourists from the highway—something less essential for the businesses that provided necessary lodging for travelers. This also includes the

Totem Pole Park, near Foyil, Oklahoma (1932-1962). This 90-foot tall "totem pole" is the centerpiece of a nine-acre park built to draw tourists several miles away from Route 66. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

countless stores advertising "curios" and Native American jewelry and other merchandise. While exceptions abound, it was mainly during the post World War II period and especially in the 1950s, that a new form of tourist attraction emerged, one that appealed to the curiosity about the different and exotic, one that drew upon new technology, and one that focused increasingly on Americans in their automobiles. Thus a plethora of tourist attractions, even tourist traps, emerged trying to pull past their turnstiles more and more of the traveling public. Sometimes, when grand enough, these attractions even prided themselves on being not just a travel stop, but a travel destination and a fine line separated the authentic scientific, cultural, and natural attractions from those where authenticity did not make it to the portals. When Route 66 traffic left the roadway, most of these tourist-operations left with them and the ruins are the primary relics of the many zoos and snake pits that once flourished along the highway.

In a similar vein and on a smaller scale, the drive-in theaters, which nudged aside other outdoor recreational opportunities, represented an offshoot of this vehicular focus to selling entertainment; while the degree to which these theaters depended upon local audiences instead of Highway 66 traffic may be argued, the common location of those drive-ins adjacent to Route 66 is of more than coincidental significance.

Significance

The travel stops and destinations that remain from the period of significance along Route 66 are crucial artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66. The history of these attractions reflect the circumstances that gave rise to the particular building, their birth often being traced to the increase in traffic resulting from the designation of the highway or new pavement it received, and also its cycle of prosperity and growth can be associated with the 1930s wave of migration, or with the expansion of tourism at the end of the war. The attraction's history will also reflect the social dislocations that may have closed the business, such as the decline in traffic resulting from a change in road alignment, or, if an early such operation, the consequences of the Depression and war, particular changes in the industry (like the rise of Disneyland and other heavily-capitalized theme parks in the 1950s), and cultural changes (including the growth of television as a form of entertainment) or even the construction of an alternate available route connecting the same points served by the former road. While these operations were less prone to franchising and consolidation because their singularity was part of their draw (a chain of reptile villages, for example, being an unlikely investment attraction, although one individual owned several) than were the food, fuel, and lodging businesses, these buildings and structures and objects indicate the transformation of the nation to an automobile culture that provided a ready market for curiosities and automobile-oriented consumption; they also raise questions about the ultimate fate of that automobile culture in mass culture and electronic media.

Painted Desert Inn, near Holbrook, Arizona (1924; 1937-1940). A National Historic Landmark, this has lone been one of the high-end attractions of Route 66. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

Travel stops and destinations meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation, commerce, and also entertainment / recreation depending on the particular building /

business and its association with Route 66. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. Travel stops and destinations must have been a part of Route 66 between 1926 and the time at which that segment of the highway was replaced or decommissioned as U.S. 66, or 1970 at the latest. Those travel stops and destinations associated with Highway 66 after 1955 and until 1970 meet the "exceptional significance" consideration for properties under fifty years old.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the areas of transportation, commerce, and entertainment / recreation requires that a travel stop or destination show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66. By their very nature, it is important to note, these stops were not necessarily located alongside the main road. While some operations were able to take advantage of a close proximity, others demonstrated their marketing prowess by being able to pull people unexpected distances from the main road, either as a positive feature suggesting peace and quiet, or possibly through misleading directions indicating that an attraction was closer than it really was. The central feature essential for eligibility is the particular attraction associated with the development and the buildings themselves, although alterations are allowed. Given the wide variety of tourist stops which do not follow a set pattern of commercial or architectural design, and given their distance, and sometimes less than obvious physical relationship with Route 66, research in historic documents will often be critical in establishing eligibility. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an architectural type or style in its design, materials, and workmanship as it once appeared on Route 66.

The tourist stops along Route 66 often are vacant or are no longer used as such attractions. Indeed, in an ironic twist appropriate to Highway 66, the ruins and relics of these businesses have sometimes come to be attractions unto themselves, not for the enticements they once boasted, but because of the phenomenon they represented. These structures need to be examined to determine the degree that they still reveal their historic function. If the structure has not been modified so as to compromise its integrity, that building will be determined eligible. Sometimes the integrity remains, but the condition of the building will be poor, a factor that will be of greater negative impact for those properties considered under Criterion C than under Criterion A.

In some instances the cultural resources along U.S. 66 have either deteriorated significantly, so that only ruins remain, or were originally ephemeral, temporary features, such as campsites. These resources, although often lacking structural integrity, can still provide information relating to the evolution of Highway 66 and its impact on the nation through the study of in-situ contemporary archeological deposits. The methods of historic archeology can sometimes be employed in conjunction with professional historical research to document and evaluate such historic properties. These sites must possess especially integrity of location and association. The nominations for these sites must specifically demonstrate what kinds of data are contained in the site and explain how that information might be used to answer specific research questions. The importance of the information to be gained should be established by discussing the site or district as its relates to the current knowledge of Route 66's history and associated social issues. For sites consisting largely of buried deposits, demonstration of potential to yield important information may involve subsurface testing. The necessity for, and scope of, subsurface testing must be decided on a property specific basis.

Roadside Parks / Picnic Areas / Markers

Description

Of declining importance over time in the history of Route 66, and thus also often neglected in documenting the history of the road, are the small wayside features placed there explicitly to serve the traveling public. These features, however, not only marked the road and provided an opportunity for resting or lunching, and possibly even camping, for early travelers but they also mark a different period in time when travelers would stop by the side of the road to unwrap a sandwich instead of journeying on to the next fast food franchise. They are so simple and once were so ever-present, they are often overlooked. Ordinarily provided at public expense as a service, these roadside features, which generally included a picnic table and some kind of fire pit, also sometimes included monuments as signs with directions and distance as route markers. As other developments—directly associated with road construction and marking—increased and as the private infrastructure serving traffic also increased, these markers and rest stops became less important to the traveler.

Significance

Those parks and picnic areas that remain from the period of significance along Route 66 stand out as survivors of an earlier time distinguished by slower travel, shorter travel distances during a day, and more modest expectations of accommodations. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these markers and facilities reflect the circumstances of travel on Route 66 when the journey was more than moving from point A to point B.

Gazebo, Sayre, Oklahoma, City Park and Camp Ground (1940). The park was located directly next to Highway 66 as it left the town of Sayre and included a swimming pool, bathhouse, and picnic area developed by WPA workers. In addition, the park included a camping area and welcomed travelers to spend the night well before the WPA structures were built. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2003.

Roadside parks and markers meet Criterion A in the area of transportation. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. While it would be unusual to find such a structure built after 1954, some continued to be used in that period. The end of the period of significance for Route 66 properties is the point at which the property was no longer used as part of Route 66 or 1970, at the latest, and those parks and picnic areas associated with Highway 66 after 1955 and until 1970 meet the "exceptional significance" consideration for properties under fifty years old.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation requires that a roadside park or marker show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66. The central character defining features of roadside parks are the physical facilities for sitting and resting and eating—modest features that often consisted of little more than picnic tables and occasionally fire pits—and some vegetation, which often amounted to some grass, although occasionally some shrubbery created the illusion of separation of sites. Trees were often present, although these too vary dramatically and are not necessary features. But the combination of picnic facilities and some form of vegetation would have been recognizable and identification enough for the weary traveler to pull over.

Ozark Trails Association monument, near Stroud, Oklahoma (1919, 1937). Although this 20-foot tall obelisk once marked the Ozark Trails intersection, it subsequently marked where U.S. 66 turned. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2002.

Time and social change have not been kind to these parks and markers and their obsolescence has been assured by changing routes and changing modes of travel, and their demise has been encouraged by widened roads and diminished priorities in maintenance budgets. To attempt to locate roadside parks indicated on topographic maps even from the 1970s is an exercise in frustration. If the roadside park retains picnic facilities that are characteristic of the period of historic significance and also some vegetation, even if that vegetation has changed over time, then it will meet the requirements for eligibility. Road markers are even scarcer since it was necessary to change them as the road changed. Such markers that remain will be eligible if their markings clearly indicate their association with a particular alignment of Route 66 and its associated structures, or if research in historic documents can establish that relationship. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an architectural type or style in its design, materials, or workmanship as it once appeared on Route 66.

In some instances the cultural resources along U.S. 66 have either deteriorated significantly, so that only ruins remain, or were originally ephemeral, temporary features, such as campsites. These resources, although often lacking structural integrity, can still provide information relating to the evolution of Highway 66 and its impact on the nation through the study of in-situ contemporary archeological deposits. The methods of historic archeology can sometimes be employed in conjunction with professional historical research to document and evaluate such historic properties. These sites must possess especially integrity of location and association. The nominations for these sites must specifically demonstrate what kinds of data are contained in the site and explain how that information might be used to answer specific research questions. The importance of the information to be gained should be established by discussing the site or district as its relates to the current knowledge of Route 66's history and associated social issues. For sites consisting largely of buried deposits, demonstration of potential to yield important information may involve subsurface testing. The necessity for, and scope of, subsurface testing must be decided on a property specific basis.

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Index