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Make Pacific, MO your next stop on Route 66 – where history, hospitality, and fun meet!



Get event info here:



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Message from the editor

Leadership Publications, in partnership with the cities of Eureka, Pacific and Wildwood, invite you to check out our Historic Route 66 magazine celebrating the important role the old highway has played in our communities over the past 100 years.

We created the magazine to mark the Historic Route 66 centennial, which will be celebrated in 2026 around the state of Missouri, especially in the towns scattered along the old highway, like Eureka, Pacific and Wildwood.

A variety of activities, both educational and recreational, will be held in all three cities and at the Route 66 State Park in the Eureka area, including festivals, car shows, concerts, exhibits and other fun events.

The magazine also traces the history of "the Mother Road," from its inception in

1926 to the start of the Interstate Highway System in 1956 that took traffic away from Route 66, to the decommissioning of the route in 1985 and to the Route 66 Corridor Preservation program established in 1999.

Local officials say it's important to preserve the roadside towns and iconic landmarks along Route 66, which stretches more than 2,400 miles across eight states and provides a scenic route for people driving across the country to carry freight or see the sights.

Route 66 has not only shaped our towns, but also the people who have lived here, built businesses here and traveled here.

We hope you enjoy the magazine and continue to "Get Your Kicks on Route 66," exploring the old highway and the towns and attractions along the way.



Kim Robertson
Editor-in-Chief
Leader Publications

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ROUTE 66

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Nestled in the Ozark foothills, Wildwood has many historic, scenic, windy roads and hidden gems around every corner. Its 8-mile section of the original alignment (1926-1932) of Historic Route 66 makes a visit here like stepping back in time.



Turn north onto Hwy. 109 from I-44 toward Wildwood and start your day with a hike at Rockwoods Reservation or Al Foster Trail in Historic Glencoe. Then spend the afternoon shopping at the boutique shops in Historic Grover, eat dinner at Big Chief Roadhouse, which used to be the largest motor court in the area, and then go out for some evening entertainment at Stovall's Grove, home of country music and a popular place to learn some line dancing!

Visiting Wildwood cannot be appreciated in just a few hours. Plan to stay a while, consider making a reservation at The Wildwood Hotel or booking a campsite at Babler State Park. With 12 square miles of public land; Hidden Valley Ski Resort; Wabash, Frisco and Pacific Mini-Railroad; an all-inclusive playground; a luxury movie theater; "America's Most Dangerous Road" - Zombie Road; and 11 historic communities to explore, Wildwood has a little bit of everything.



Take the Virtual Tour of Wildwood's Route 66!



The City of Wildwood is proud of its place on the Main Street of America and is planning a series of events to commemorate the 100th Anniversary, including Route 66 concerts, cruises, movie events, scavenger hunts, trivia nights and much more!



Visit cityofwildwood.com/Route66Events to learn more!

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ON THE COVER:
This iconic 1955 Chevrolet 150 is owned by Bryan Browning of Hillsboro, Mo. Browning said he bought the car to drive and to show off at car shows. And yes, you might see this '55 Chevy motoring along Historic Route 66 in Wildwood, Eureka or Pacific. In the photo, the car is parked at the Red Cedar Inn Museum and Visitor's Center, 1047 E. Osage St., in Pacific, Mo. The historic Red Cedar Inn and restaurant opened in 1934 to serve travelers on Route 66, which reached Pacific around 1932. The city of Pacific bought the building in 2017, restored it and opened the visitor's center in 2023. // Photo by Patty Meyer

Historic Route 66
Wildwood, Eureka, Pacific, Missouri

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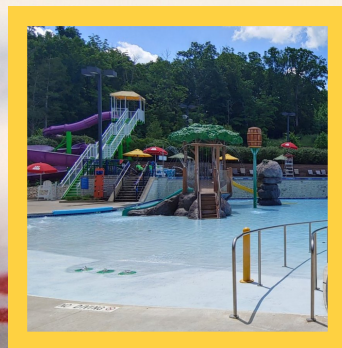
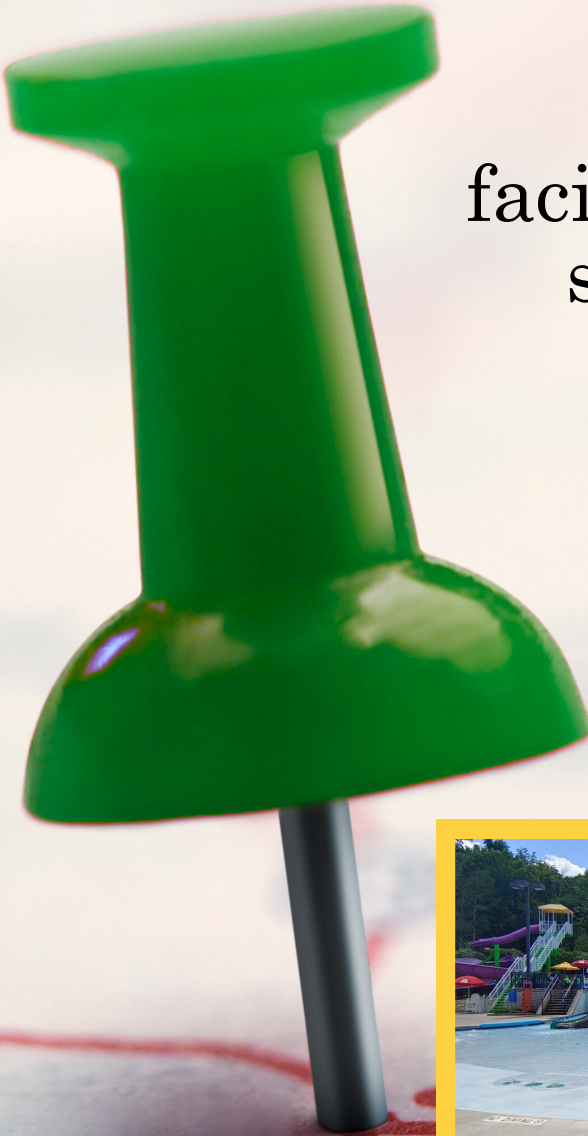
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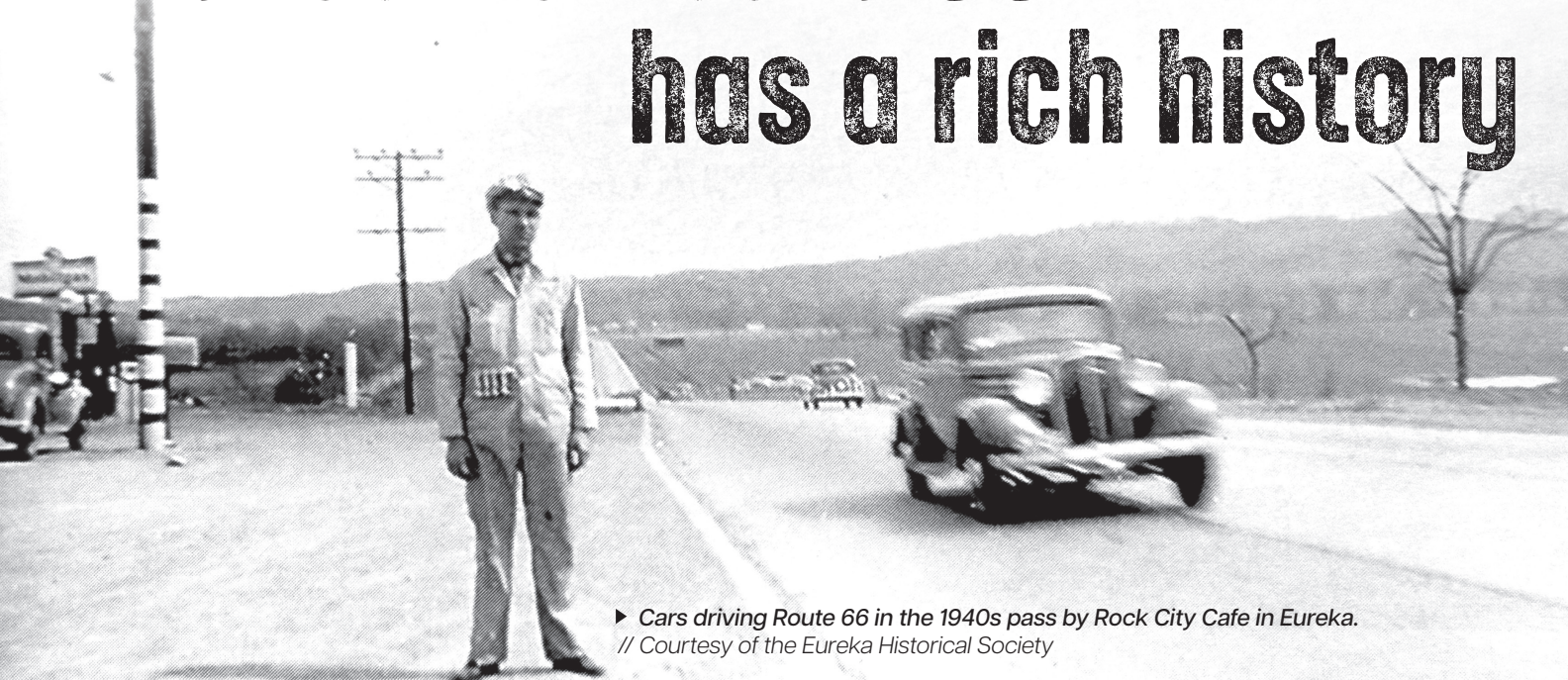
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EUREKA

PARKS & RECREATION

The iconic Route 66 has a rich history



► Cars driving Route 66 in the 1940s pass by Rock City Cafe in Eureka.
// Courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society

Before the interstate system, one highway helped carry people and freight across much of the country. U.S. Highway 66, known as Route 66, was created in 1926 and stretched 2,448 miles from Chicago, Ill., to Santa Monica, Calif. Though not the longest or oldest road, Route 66, arguably, became the most iconic.

Under the federal highway numbering plan of the mid-1920s, the corridor was first proposed as U.S. 60. After states argued over that number, an alternative of U.S. 62 was floated, but Oklahoma's highway leader Cyrus Avery and others thought the number "62" lacked punch. On Nov. 11, 1926, after much deliberation, the route officially was designated as U.S. Highway 66 because those deliberators thought the number "66" sounded catchier and had not already been assigned to any state. It wasn't long before the shorter name, Route 66, took hold, according to the National Park Services Route 66 overview.

Following a diagonal route from Chicago across Illinois, through Missouri and then a corner of Kansas, then on through Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, this old highway



► Workers construct Route 66 near Allenton in the 1930s. // Courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society

connected farm regions, oil fields and county seats to much larger cities. This highway allowed farmers to ship goods farther and made it possible for salesmen to reach more customers in less time. Route 66 also made cross-country travel more practical for the average American family.

The old highway became even more important during the late 1920s and through the 1930s, when the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl drove

families from the Southern Plains out west to California. Many took Route 66 west in search of jobs and a new start. By 1938, Route 66 was entirely paved, making travel along the cross-country road even easier.

It was 1939 when Route 66 earned the enduring nickname, the Mother Road. The phrase appeared in John Steinbeck's novel, "The Grapes of Wrath,"

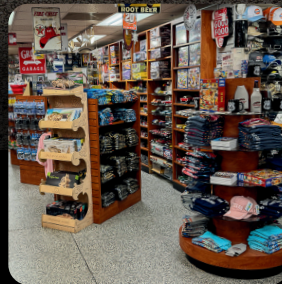
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about an Oklahoma family forced to migrate west. “66 is the mother road, the road of flight,” Steinbeck wrote.

That label captured the road’s role as a lifeline for thousands of Americans escaping hardship. The nickname stuck and reinforced Route 66’s image as both a physical route and a symbol of hope, resilience and movement.

A strong roadside economy sprang up alongside the route. In small towns and at crossroads, businesses opened to serve travelers by way of cafes, gas stations, garages and roadside motels. Business owners often displayed bright neon signs to catch the eye of passing drivers.

During World War II, Route 66 moved troops and equipment between military bases and defense plants. After the war, car ownership soared, and the Mother Road became the go-to path for family vacations, offering the comfort of knowing where to find fuel, food and a place to sleep, the National Park Services Route 66 historical timeline notes.

Popular culture helped keep the road in the public imagination.

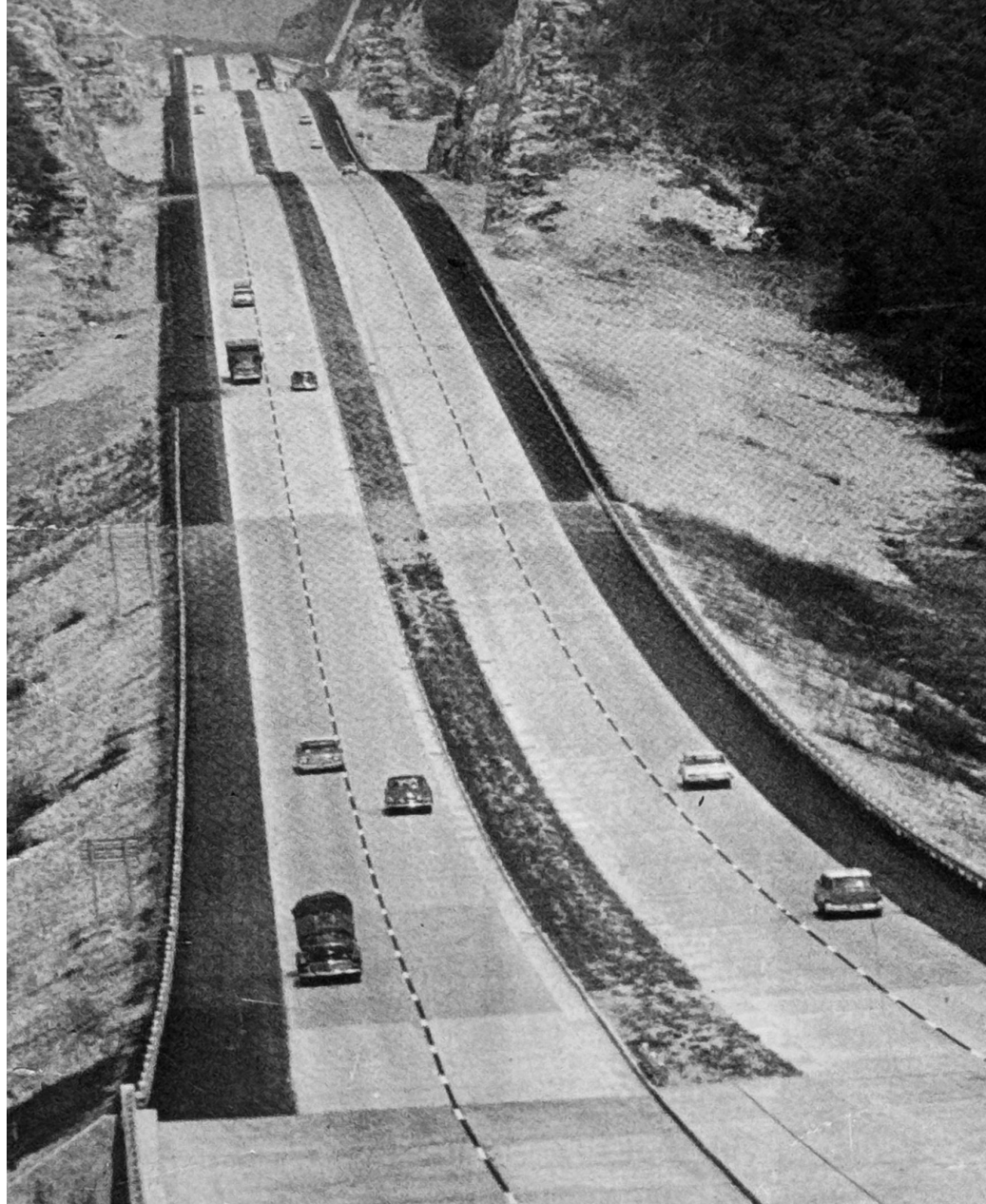
The 1946 song “(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66,” written by Bobby Troup and made famous by the Nat King Cole Trio, listed many of the towns along the route. The 1960s television show “Route 66” promoted the idea that hitting the road could lead to opportunity and self-discovery.

The fading of Route 66

The 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act launched the Interstate Highway System, a new network of wider roads built for higher speeds and fewer stops. Many of the interstates were built alongside or bypassed Route 66. Travelers shifted to the interstate’s bigger, faster lanes, and towns that relied on highway travelers saw business decline, the Federal Highway Administration historical records website indicates.

Route 66 officially was decommissioned on June 27, 1985. The road was removed from federal maps, and many of the iconic neon signs came down. But the highway’s legacy did not end.

Business owners, former travelers and local leaders began efforts to preserve the road’s history. State Route 66 associations formed. Towns restored old neon signs, hosted car cruises and



► *Interstate 44 was constructed in the 1950s following the Federal-Aid Highway Act.*
// Photo by the Missouri Highway Commission, courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society

opened small museums. In 1999, the National Park Service created the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program to support these projects, according to the agency’s website.

Why ‘The Main Street of America’ still matters

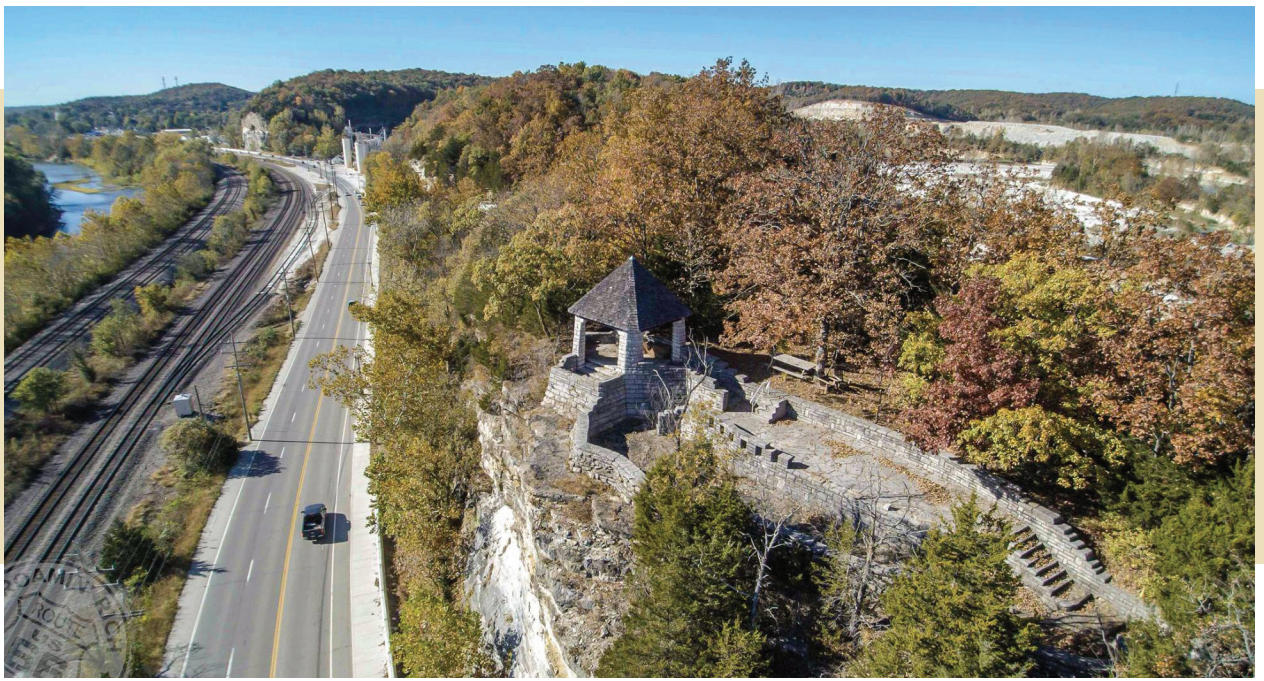
There is no denying that Route 66 shaped the communities it went through. Even today, many travelers choose to take Route 66 over the interstate. Restoring historic bridges, buildings and old pavement keeps the story alive and reminds us how Americans once built and used their highways.

Route 66 turns 100 years old in 2026.

Many communities along the corridor are planning celebrations, constructing exhibits, undertaking restorations and creating classroom activities to honor the historic highway. The centennial celebration offers a chance to reflect on what’s been lost, what remains and what can still be saved.

Route 66 was never just a highway. It was made by road crews, small business owners, immigrants, Dust Bowl refugees, returning soldiers and curious travelers.

Route 66 is uniquely American and a celebration of community and commerce. A century later, its 2,448 miles offers the same thing it always did: a reason to notice the people and places along the way.



► Jensen's Point Overlook in Pacific was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the late 1930s. // Public domain photo by Roamin Rich Dinkela

Missouri played key role in Route 66 development

When people imagine Route 66, they often think of motorists in classic cars driving along stretches of desert landscapes in New Mexico, Arizona and California. But before those western views came into the picture, travelers drove through Missouri.

The Show-Me State offered its own unique blend of scenery, engineering and small-town energy. That middle segment of the Mother Road might not get quite as much attention, but its contributions were essential to Route 66's growth, function and legacy.

As Route 66 pushed southwest from Chicago, it crossed the Mississippi River at St. Louis and exited the state near Joplin, covering just more than 300 miles in Missouri. According to the Missouri Department of Transportation, this section included both crowded city streets and deeply rural corridors, making it one of the most diverse legs of the journey.

A state of improvement

Missouri was quick to invest in improving its road infrastructure during the early decades of Route 66. According to the National Park Service, the state was among the first to fully pave its section, completing the work by 1931, well ahead of the national timeline.

Bridges played a big role in Missouri, too. According to Historic Highways of America, Missouri's early engineering upgrades served as models for other states looking to make the important shift from gravel to concrete.

With the rise of Route 66, small-town Missouri came to life. Cities like Rolla, Lebanon and Cuba were perfectly positioned along the route to adapt to meet the needs of hungry, weary travelers. According to Route 66 historian Susan Croce Kelly, the highway helped those towns "double as pit stops and post-

cards," offering not just food and fuel, but a dose of the local character.

Many of the businesses located along Route 66 became iconic landmarks, with some still open to this day, like Ted Drewes Frozen Custard, a sweet St. Louis staple. The Wagon Wheel Motel in Cuba opened in 1935 and is regarded as the oldest continuously operated motel along Route 66, according to its website. Nearly as old is the Boots Court Motel in Carthage, which opened in 1939, and has been restored to its former glory, the motel says on its website. These places didn't just serve tourists; they helped cement Missouri's legacy along the route.

A postwar boom; a slow decline

Missouri thrived in the post-World

Continued on Page 12 ►►

Steiny's Inn, Famous for Fine Food



Overlooking the Meramec, Highway 66, Eureka, Mo.

► The Bridgehead Inn was built in 1935. Brothers Edward "Ed" Steinberg and Dave Steinberg bought the inn in 1946 and renamed it to Steiny's Inn. After changing hands several more times over the years, the property now houses the Route 66 State Park Visitor Center. // Courtesy of Drew A. Walters and the Eureka Historical Society



War II road trip era. Family cars flooded onto Route 66 in the late 1940s and well into the 1950s. Drawn to the scenic routes and affordable lodging, not to mention the excitement of exploring, everyone reaped the benefits, tourists and businesses alike. But, the prosperity didn't last.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, the 1956 launch of the Interstate Highway System drew travelers toward bigger, faster and more direct roads, bypassing many of the small towns that once had depended on the traffic. As businesses shut down, the character of Route 66 began to fade, along with the neon signs.

By 1985, Route 66 officially was decommissioned. However, even though maps were redrawn, the road never disappeared. It simply became something else.

What Missouri remembers

In the decades since the Mother Road's decommissioning, Missouri has remained a national leader in preserving Route 66. According to the Missouri Route 66 Association, the Show-Me State is home to more than 100 historic sites tied to the historic highway, from steel truss bridges to vintage service stations.

Cities like Springfield and Carthage host festivals and exhibitions. Others have embraced walking tours, murals and museum exhibits to keep the story alive.

► This resort, which opened on June 5, 1910, stood across Route 66 from Times Beach and hosted outings for employees of the Famous-Barr department store in St. Louis. Today, the land is owned by Jefferson County as Vernon S. Beck Memorial Park, or Beck Park. // Photo courtesy of Drew A. Walters and the Eureka Historical Society

Eureka, Wildwood and Pacific also have been working to better take advantage of their connection to Route 66 and plan to celebrate its centennial with a slate of local activities. **(See pages 44-49)**

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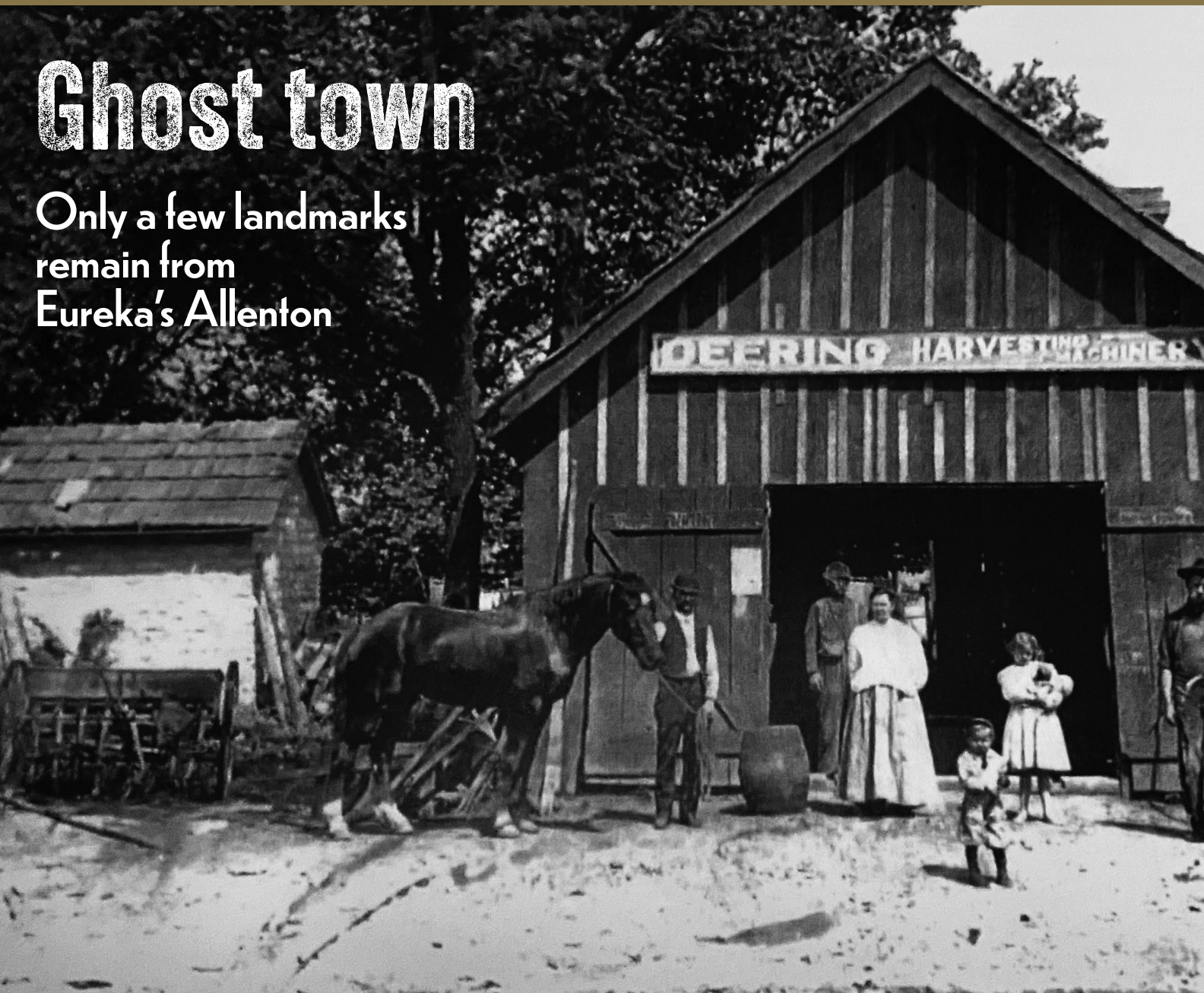
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Ghost town

Only a few landmarks remain from Eureka's Allenton



► *Deering Harvesting Machinery in Allenton. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society*

Allenton, a former railroad town that sat at the junction of rails and farm roads south of Eureka, predated Route 66. Unlike other towns along the famous Mother Road, Allenton never grew into a neon-lit stop, but it functioned for decades as a small community with a post office, school and church, along with a few businesses and a cluster of homes along Franklin Road and the Frisco line, according to information from the Eureka Historical Society.

When Missouri straightened the

Route 66 corridor in 1932, the main flow of travelers crossed the nearby Meramec River and continued through Eureka, leaving Allenton close to but outside the action. The highway businesses concentrated closer to Osage Street and the bridges, MoDOT alignment notes indicate.

Eventually, Allenton became a ghost town with just a few remnants left behind to remind people of its past. The best-known survivor is the Cloak House, built in 1870 at Wengler Road and Main Street. It's tied to John C. Cloak, a member of

the Inks Battalion who defended the Pacific area during the Civil War. The Cloak House remains one of the oldest homes in the Eureka area, Eureka Historical Society records show.

"It is one of the oldest homes in Eureka and should be preserved," historian Drew A. Walters of the Eureka Historical Society said.

Other landmarks now exist mostly on paper, like the Augustine Schoolhouse and the Augustine farmhouse.

Continued on Page 16 ►►



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“Both the Augustine School and Augustine Farmhouse are on land owned by Winter Brothers Material Co. and are abandoned,” Walters said.

Another landmark, the nearby Deep Springs Farm, later figured into the Holiday Inn on Six Flags Road, and local sources trace stonework there to materials salvaged from Augustine sites, according to the Eureka Historical Society.

Allenton faded gradually during the mid-century. By the 1970s, parts of the area were labeled “blighted,” and after

Eureka annexed Allenton in 1985, the city moved for a large mixed-use project. In 2006, houses were taken down and streets cleared through eminent domain to make way for redevelopment that never arrived, according to local news reports.

“The heart of the town was demolished about 20 years ago for a failed development project,” Walters said.

The result is a rare case on Missouri’s 66 corridor: a community that didn’t just decline after a highway realignment

but was largely erased by a single, unrealized project.

So, why does Allenton matter to the Route 66 narrative? It explains the spaces between the postcards. It shows how a town’s fate can turn not only on engineering but on real estate timing. And while Allenton never became a popular destination, its history helps clarify Eureka’s chapter of Route 66. In a corridor known for ornate neon signs and photogenic motels, Allenton asks us to notice what was erased.



► This home was built by Capt. Edward Augustine, a contractor and county supervisor of registration during the late 1860s. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society



► This house was built in 1870 by a local farmer, John C. Cloak, using stones quarried from Cap. Edward Augustine’s farm. In the early 1900s, William Klinger, who owned a blacksmith shop on the property, raised his grandson, who later became a major league pitcher. By the 2000s, the building housed the Word of Faith Fellowship Church’s youth center. // Photo by Drew A. Walters

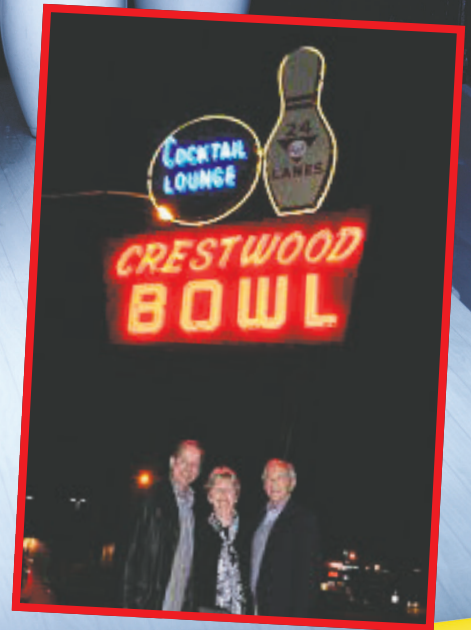
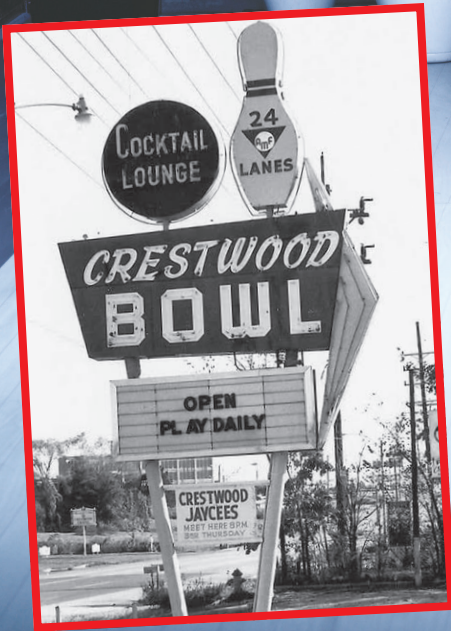
► Augustine School was built during the Civil War and named after Capt. Edward Augustine, whose farm was next to it. The entire town attended the school, especially the children of nearby farming families. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society



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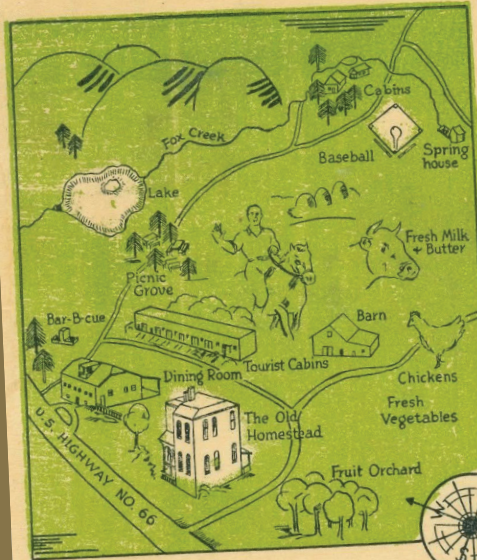
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► From left are Jesse Votaw, Ray Trower, Claude Devine, Joe Sheerin, Katie Devine Dailey and a Mr. Allen at Devine's Tavern on Route 66 in Allenton. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society



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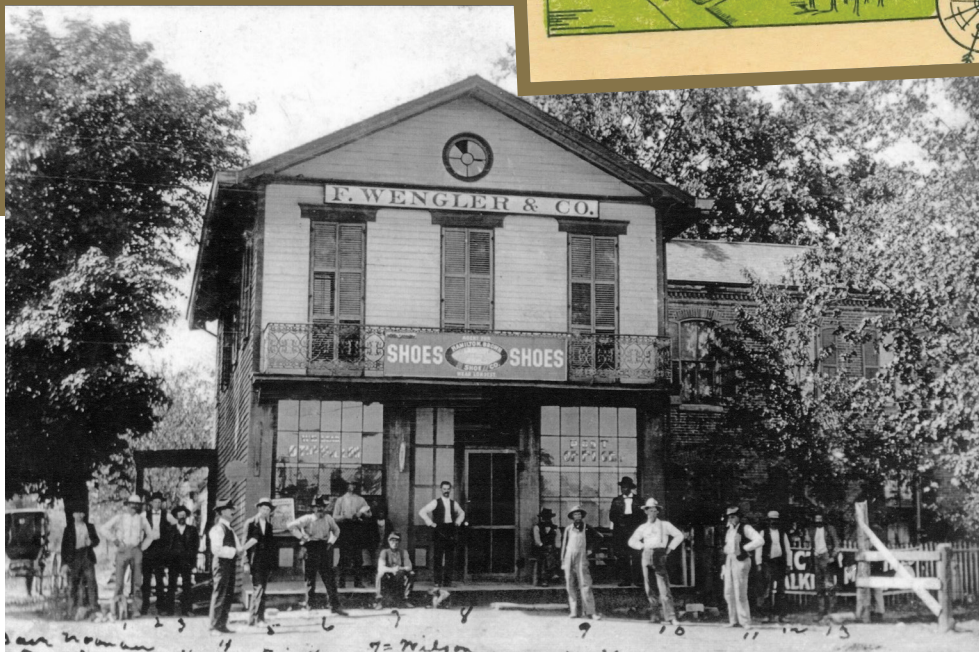
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► A postcard advertising Peck's Farms at Fox Creek. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society



► Frederick A. Wengler's general store at Main and Wengler. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society

GET YOUR PICKS ON 66



Get Your Picks on 66 is an eclectic, one-of-a-kind vendor mall featuring 88 booths (plus several larger showcase spaces) filled with everything from true vintage to modern retro style. You'll find trendy clothing, 90s nostalgia media, vinyl records, collectibles, jewelry, coins, furniture, linens, décor, and so much more.

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► A view of Six Flags St. Louis from across the train tracks in 2006. // Photo by Mark S. Abeln, courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society

► A view of Allenton Bridge in 2024. // Photo by Drew A. Walters



► Rock Spring Canning Company. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society

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The Malt Shop, located in Fenton, Missouri has provided the community with tasty, quality food and ice cream since 1973. The “Malt Shop Family” takes pride in serving both new and loyal customers the best real soft serve ice cream, malts and burgers around while having a blast as they do it. With its nostalgic walk-up window and ample outdoor seating surrounding the shop, this vintage ice cream spot invites guests to savor the charm of simpler times.

Everything is made-to-order and no matter how many times you visit, there’s always a new favorite waiting to be discovered. It is the perfect spot to unwind and enjoy a local classic.



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► Swimmers take a dip in the Meramec River at Times Beach in the 1920s. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society

Former Times Beach resort town memorialized at Route 66 State Park

For decades, Times Beach was a small, resort town drawing visitors to the stretch of Route 66 in the Eureka area. Today, the site is home to Route 66 State Park, where visitors may learn not only about the road itself, but also about the people and decisions that shaped the area's unusual history.

According to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Times Beach began in 1925 as a summer resort community marketed to St. Louis families looking for inexpensive weekend get-aways. The location along the Meramec River made it a popular escape from the

hustle and bustle of city life.

Plots were sold through a St. Louis Times promotion that bundled a six-month newspaper subscription with the purchase of a 20-by-100-foot lot for \$67.50 along the river. The development, named after the St. Louis Times, never grew into the resort the promoters envisioned, settling into a modest working-class community of roughly 2,000 residents, according to St. Louis Public Radio's website.

The construction of the 1932 Route 66 realignment brought the highway just north of town, drawing in more travelers.

Times Beach thrived for decades.

Disaster and decline

Then in the early 1970s, the town's dirt roads and horse tracks began being oiled to reduce excess dust. This seemed like an innocuous decision at the time, but it turned out that the oil used in the area contained a highly toxic substance called dioxin, according to "A Town, a Flood, and Superfund," an article on the Environmental Protection Agency's website.

Continued on Page 24 ►►



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► Marilyn Leistner, the last mayor of Times Beach, stands at the entrance to town in 1991. // Photo by James A. Finley, courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society

After a few years, residents began reporting health issues. Children and animals were falling mysteriously ill. Environmental concerns mounted, the EPA reports.

Then came the flood.

On Dec. 5, 1982, the Meramec River crested at nearly 43 feet in what was called a 500-year flood. The same month, the Centers for Disease Control confirmed the widespread dioxin contamination. The federal government stepped in, and Times Beach was evacuated in 1983. The EPA eventually bought out all remaining properties, disincorporated the town and removed contaminated soil in one of the largest environmental cleanups in U.S. history, according to "Remember Times Beach: The Dioxin Disaster, 30 Years Later," an article from St. Louis Magazine,

As Route 66 State Park superintendent Jeremiah Wallace put it, "The history of this site is unique – many towns along 66 saw a decline in the wake of inter-



► Paul Kurtz's junkyard on Route 66 & Elm Street in Times Beach. // Photo by Frank Purler II courtesy of Eureka Historical Society

states being built around and bypassing them, but none so rapid and dramatic as the ending of Times Beach."

Route 66 State Park opened in 1999 on the former town site. It covers more than 400 acres of restored land and offers a variety of trails, birding opportunities and picnic areas. But its most valu-

able function may be its role in keeping the memory of Times Beach alive.

"Our guests can check out our artifacts on display in our exhibit hall and read about or listen to the history of the highway and of the town that used to be

Continued on Page 28 ►►

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Over the years, parts of Route 66 have been rerouted and removed.

From 1926-1932, the road cut through Wildwood. Today, much of this route goes through Hwy. 100.

The historic route was rerouted through Pacific and Eureka. While sections of the road no longer exist in Eureka and to its east, travelers may drive through interstates 44 and 50.

- 1926-1932
- 1930 onward



Big Chief

Hwy. T

100



Pacific City Hall



Red Cedar Inn

3

5

6

44

7

To Rolla

Pacific

Meramec River



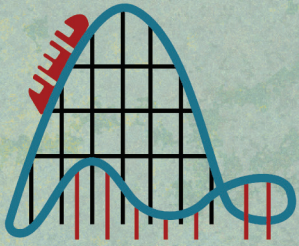
Pacific Station

Wildwood

To St. Louis

1. Big Chief Roadhouse
2. Wildwood City Hall
3. Pacific City Hall
4. Pacific Station Plaza/
Historic Pacific
5. Jensen Point Overlook
6. Red Cedar Inn Museum
and Visitor Center
7. Campbell's Service Route
66 Museum
8. Six Flags St. Louis
9. Eureka City Hall
10. Times Beach
11. Route 66 State Park
12. Old Meramec River Bridge/
State Park Visitor Center

Manchester Road



Six Flags

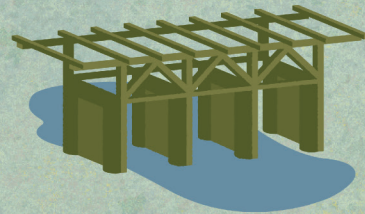
109



Route 66
State Park

To St. Louis

50



Old Meramec
River Bridge

Allenton

Eureka

Hwy. FF

State Road W



► *The Times Beach water tower pictured in the 1980s. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society*

here,” Wallace said. “Times Beach hasn’t been in the national news for many years, but it’s an important story that we want to keep alive.”

According to Wallace, the park’s visitor center occupies the former Bridgehead Inn, an old roadhouse that offered food and lodging to travelers on Route 66. Inside the repurposed building, guests may view historic signs, photographs and memorabilia from along the Missouri stretch of the highway. Exhibits also explore the history of dioxin contamination and the eventual cleanup of the site, according to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

A bridge between past and present

A defining feature of the park is the Route 66 Meramec River Bridge. While it was closed to vehicles in the early 2000s, the bridge remains a symbolic link to the past, as well as to the future, with work underway to reopen the bridge.

“If everything goes according to schedule, we will also be cutting the



► *Times Beach Board of Aldermen voting to disincorporate the town in 1985. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society*

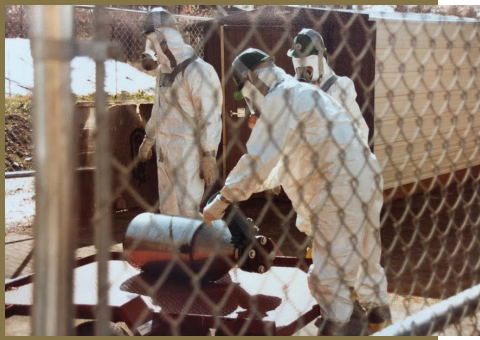
ribbon on a reopened Meramec River Bridge” as part of the 2026 Route 66 centennial, Wallace said.

Today, Route 66 State Park welcomes travelers who might be retracing the old highway, as well as local residents exploring the Meramec River valley.

“Most people who travel the route are already interested in its history,” Wal-

lace said. “We’re just excited to share our piece of that larger story.”

What makes this stretch memorable is not just the curves of the road or the artifacts in glass cases. It’s the incredibly layered history: a hopeful resort town, a tragic environmental failure, and a deliberate effort to remember and restore.



► Environmental Protection Agency workers clean up contamination in the 1980s. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society



► Elmore Simon owned 676 Drive-in on Route 66 in Times Beach, which had a tavern upstairs and an icecream shop and soda fountain downstairs. This picture was taken in 1949 or 1950. // Photo courtesy of Angela Richardson



► Children play in Times Beach on April 26, 1931. The picture includes siblings Carl Simon, second from left, and Lucille Simon, second from right. // Photo courtesy of Angela Richardson

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► This depot on the Missouri Pacific Railroad, now Union Pacific, was in nearby Allenton. // Photo courtesy of the Eureka Historical Society



Railway before highway

In Pacific, Route 66 followed path shaped by railroads

Pacific was an important railroad town long before it became a familiar stop on Route 66.

The community grew up around the tracks and depots that hauled people and freight through the Meramec Valley. The old highway eventually settled into a corridor the trains had already shaped.

Pacific originally was named Franklin in 1852, and the Pacific Railroad line reached the settlement the following year. The line later became part of the Missouri Pacific system, and in 1859, the town was renamed Pacific, honoring the original rail line, according to the city of Pacific's website.

Homes and businesses sprang up along the tracks as the town expanded from a small settlement into a regional shipping point. By the early 20th century, the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway, also known as the Frisco, as well as the Missouri Pacific line, were moving freight, such as livestock, silica sand, stone from quarries and manufactured goods through the valley, according to the State Historical Society of Missouri.

The rails did more than move cargo; they dictated where streets could cross, where depots could sit, and where roads like Route 66 could eventually be laid.

When U.S. 66 was commissioned in 1926, the main route through the

area followed what is now Hwy. 100 east of Gray Summit and did not yet pass through Pacific. In 1933, though, the highway was rerouted onto Osage Street, running along the north side of the Frisco tracks through downtown Pacific, according to the history section on the Missouri Department of Transportation's website.

The Hwy. 100 corridor carried trains, and Route 66 carried cars and trucks. For decades, it was common to see motorists fueling up or walking into storefronts while freight trains rolled past just a block away, as noted in Missouri Route

Continued on Page 31 ►►

66 guidebooks.

As Route 66 gained fame throughout America, the railroad remained central to Pacific's identity. The Frisco depot, built in 1868, served both passengers and freight. It acted as a hub for communication, mail and local gatherings. As passenger service declined in the later 20th century, the depot was abandoned and eventually demolished in the late 1970s, according to historical records.

Pacific is often described in tourism and heritage materials as a railroad town that Route 66 passed through, rather than a highway town that happened to build a train stop. That distinction helps explain the layout visitors see today: Osage Street and the old highway hugging the tracks; neighborhoods and businesses clustered near both rail and road.

The Mother Road in Pacific is forever tied to the tracks that still run just a block away. Those who travel that stretch are not only following a historic highway; they are moving through a town whose layout and economy were set by the railroad long before Route 66 signs were planted.

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► The Red Cedar Inn built a reputation for hearty meals and kind service. // Photo by Steven Robertson



Restaurant to museum

Pacific's Red Cedar Inn withstands test of time

Red Cedar Inn sits along East Osage Street in Pacific, where Route 66 once carried a steady stream of travelers through town. Built in 1934 and quickly established as a full-service roadside restaurant, the log building became one of the city's most recognizable stops on the Mother Road.

The story of Red Cedar Inn began just after Prohibition ended, when brothers James and Bill Smith, who had run liquor during the dry years, turned to legal hospitality. They built the establishment along the new highway corridor, using timbers from a family farm in Villa Ridge and finishing the exterior with white chinking for a frontier look that caught the eye of travelers, according to the city of Pacific's website.

The location on Route 66 helped the restaurant draw both town regulars and long-distance travelers. Early on Red Cedar Inn had gasoline pumps out front for one year but then focused fully on dining, according to the National Park Service.

Red Cedar Inn built a reputation for hearty meals and kind service. Its rustic dining rooms fit the expectations of motorists looking for a comfortable stop between St. Louis and the Ozarks. The roadside setting also reflected broader changes along Route 66, where improved paving and evolving alignments shifted car traffic and helped businesses like Red Cedar find steady trade on the new east-west route, according to state and federal Route 66 histories.

The building's architecture represents a style common to early highway hospitality, including low, horizontal massing; a prominent entrance; and materials chosen to signal "home-cooked" reliability from the road. That combination helped justify the property's listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003, according to the National Park Service.

Like many Route 66 businesses, Red Cedar Inn experienced good early years and weathered lean ones, too.

The building has remained all these years after operating as a restaurant for 71 years, until 2005. After that, it housed offices for a business for 12 years, and

Continued on Page 33 ►►

then the city of Pacific bought it in 2017 and eventually transformed it into a museum and visitor's center, said Kelly O'Malley, Pacific's tourism director.

The renovation was completed in 2023, and the Red Cedar Inn Museum & Visitor Center held a grand opening inside the restored building at 1047 E. Osage. The site now serves as Pacific's Route 66 welcome point, which includes a small museum and a gift shop and a children's museum, bringing travelers back to the same corner where the inn once served road-weary guests, the Pacific website says.

The rehabilitation has received preservation honors in Missouri, underscoring the building's enduring role in the town's identity, according to Missouri Preservation award announcements.

The Pacific Historical and Genealogy Society has been collecting oral histories from longtime residents and has invited more than 200 locals to participate and has recorded about 12 interviews, O'Malley said.

"They're posted on our YouTube channel in full," she said.

As Pacific looks ahead to the 2026 Route 66 Centennial, the city is planning multiple special events.

"We'll have our annual car show. We'll have a barbecue and bluegrass festival and a new event, a Route 66 Harvest and Boos Festival in October," O'Malley said.

A recently installed "giant 66 shield" out front of the Red Cedar Inn, co-sponsored by the Missouri Centennial Commission, already welcomes photo-seeking tourists. The Pacific Tourism department also helped fund the shield, she said.

Other plans include a Route 66 quilt trail on display for three months in summer 2026, she said.

Red Cedar Inn tells several stories at once. It's a reminder of how Route 66 businesses met the needs of early auto travel. It's an example of log-style roadside architecture that still survives. And, in its new use, it shows how a community can preserve a landmark while putting it back to work for residents and visitors alike.

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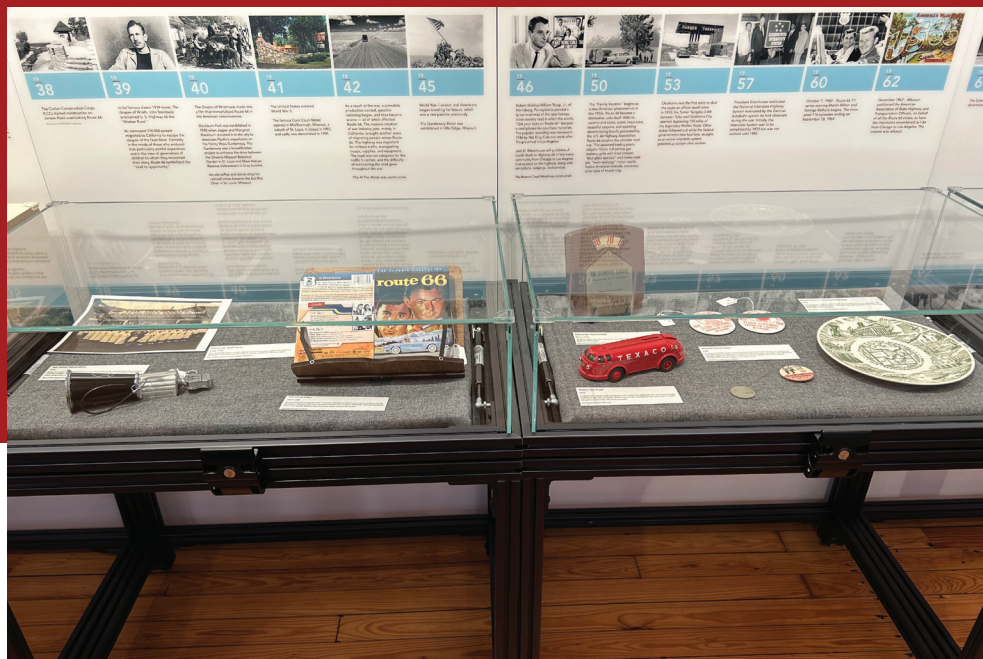
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► A sign welcomes tourists. // Photo by Steven Robertson



► The Red Cedar Inn is one of the most recognizable stops on Route 66. // Photo by Steven Robertson



► The Red Cedar Inn serves as Pacific's Route 66 welcome point with a small museum and gift shop. // Photo by Steven Robertson

The City of Wildwood Historic Preservation Commission salutes its nonprofit partner, the Wildwood Historical Society, a local treasure to the area!



The Society's Mission is:

Discover our history, Preserve & Protect our history, Display our history, and Educate about our history. On the Society's grounds are a Meeting Hall, Museum & Library Building, the Historic Hencken Home and other outbuildings.

On the south edge of the Society's property is the original path of the State of Missouri's Mandated "Mother Road," which ran from St. Louis to Missouri's capital, Jefferson City.

The Museum is open by appointment. Contact info@wildwoodhistoricalsociety.org for information or to make a request. You can also visit <https://wildwoodhistoricalsociety.org> for more information or to support its mission by becoming a member.



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► The St. Peter Sandstone bluffs sit along the path of Route 66. // Photo courtesy of the city of Pacific



Route 66 path through Pacific features nature, bluffs, scenic overlooks

In Pacific, the story of Route 66 is written in stone – sandstone, to be exact. Sandstone bluffs line the north side of town above Osage Street, the old highway corridor, according to the city of Pacific’s website. Views of the Meramec Valley remind travelers that this was a

road carved through real terrain, not just a line on a map.

Jensen Point Overlook

Visitors may take a 99-step climb

above Route 66 to Jensen Point Overlook, a stone-and-timber overlook that offers stunning view across the river valley. Built in 1939 by the Civilian Conservation Corps as part of the Henry Shaw Gardenway beautification effort, the site honors Lars Peter Jensen, the first president of the Gardenway Association and a leader at the Missouri Botanical Garden, according to Visit Missouri. The pavilion-style lookout is one of the best surviving pieces of that Gardenway project along this stretch, MoDOT’s roadside beautification report notes.



► Jensen Point Overlook was built in 1939. // Photo courtesy of the city of Pacific

Blackburn Park

On the east side of downtown Pacific, Blackburn Park sits high above old Route 66 with open views and a replica Civil War cannon, making it an interesting stop for travelers, according to the Visit Missouri website. Local travel accounts say the bluffs show scars from early silica mining, a reminder that Pacific’s landscape has long been shaped by both nature and industry.

Continued on Page 37 ►►



► Blackburn Park features a replica Civil War cannon. // Photo courtesy of the city of Pacific

Sandstone bluffs and the valley setting

From many points in Pacific, visitors may look up to the St. Peter Sandstone bluffs that face Route 66, a sight that has led countless motorists to slow down for a photo. Those cliffs, caves and cut faces tell a parallel story to the highway: The rock dictated where the old road could run, how wide it could be and where safe overlooks could be built.

Why do these places matter?

Pacific's overlooks and bluffs are not just beautiful to look at, but also help explain how the corridor took shape. Jensen Point Overlook reflects a 1930s push to make travel more than functional, as documented by MoDOT's history of roadside improvements.

Blackburn Park shows how communities turned high ground into public spaces to enjoy picnics and views as traffic grew. And the sandstone walls along Osage Street illustrate why Route 66 through Pacific looks and feels different than flatland sections elsewhere, according to the city of Pacific.

For travelers tracing the Mother Road today, the sites offer quick stops with context: a place to step out, look over the valley and see how geology, conservation work and a 1930s beautification vision still shape the drive.

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► The Kern Service Station building still stands in Wildwood. // Courtesy of the Wildwood Historical Society



Fueling the past

Wildwood's historic auto stations

Before GPS apps and interstate exits, travelers along Route 66 relied on local knowledge and modest roadside stations to help get them where they needed to go. The communities that now make up the city of Wildwood were home to a number of small service stations and garages along the Mother Road, according to the city of Wildwood website.

They weren't grand destinations, but they were essential. They offered gas, auto repairs, hot coffee and rich conversation. These stations provided the behind-the-scenes infrastructure that kept the old highway running.

Kern Service Station

The Kern station was located along Manchester Road and was a classic, early-era service stop. The small brick building sat close to the highway, with a drive-up footprint, simple canopy and compact workspace that mirrored hundreds of similar roadside businesses across Missouri in the early days of Route 66, the Wildwood website says.

"Kern Service Station's history began as many service stations did in the late 19th century and beginning of 20th century – as a blacksmith shop," said Jill

F. VonGruben, archivist for the Wildwood Historical Society. "John A. Kern bought the property on the northwest corner of Pond and Manchester roads in 1893. By 1930, his business at that location was Kern Service Station."

The structure still stands today. Old photos and maps show the station was a typical example of that motor-era architecture – modest, functional and fully integrated into the rhythm of daily highway life. The Kern station's location and scale illustrated how early motorists expected quick, curbside service without leaving

Continued on Page 39 ►►

the highway corridor. That changed when the 1932 Route 66 realignment shifted the old highway south, redirecting traffic and most long-haul travel.

Pond Texaco Station

Just west, the Pond Texaco station stood near the intersection of Manchester Road and Pond Road, in an area that served wagons long before cars. The corner became a logical site for a gas station in the early 20th century, with community and business development preceding Route 66's designation, according to the history pages on Wildwood's website.

The old station was built around 1900 and adapted over the years to suit changing transportation needs, eventually operating under the Texaco brand. Even after Route 66's main traffic was diverted in 1932, the Pond Texaco remained in use, serving travelers along Hwy. 100 and local residents alike. This continuity of service, through branding changes, road shifts and eventual incorporation into Wildwood, demonstrates how some stations became part of community identity rather than just roadside convenience, according to the overview of the Pond area on the Wildwood Historical Society's website.

The building that once housed that important oasis along the old highway, still stands today.



▶ A car is serviced at Pond Motors, which eventually became the Pond Texaco Station. Casper Kroenung leased the space in the 1960s and had such a good reputation that motorists as far away as Illinois would come to his shop. // Courtesy of the Wildwood Historical Society



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Continued on Page 40 ▶▶

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Fox Creek Garage

Farther west, the Fox Creek Garage originated in the 1910s as a local repair operation.

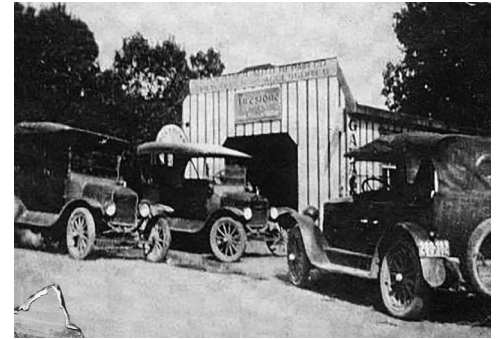
“Fox Creek Garage began as Henry Gaehe’s general repair shop on Hwy. 100, which he opened in 1917. In 1920, He sold the garage to his nephew Edward Schott. Mr. Schott obtained a franchise from General Motors to sell its first Pontiacs.

Edward added onto the building, and his new and used car business was named Fox Creek Garage,” VonGruben said.

Fox Creek Garage provided the kind of no-frills service typical of rural roadways, according to the State Historical Society of Missouri’s Route 66 interactive resources. Mechanics tackled tire changes, fan belt replacements and cooling-system repairs as needed. For motorists traveling between larger hubs

like St. Louis and Springfield, the shop filled a vital need along the more rural areas on the Mother Road.

These three stations – Kern, Pond and Fox Creek – illustrated how Route 66 wasn’t just about motels, diners and scenic vistas. It was about beacons of safety along the way. These stations offered dependability and reliability to many travelers on their journey through the unknown.



► Anna Poertner and her father, Henry, were owners and operators of Poertner’s General Store in Hollow. The business included a gas station and picnic area. // Courtesy of the Wildwood Historical Society



► The Frazier family in their car. // Courtesy of the Wildwood Historical Society

► Edward Schott sold new and used cars from Fox Creek Garage on Manchester Road. // Courtesy of the Wildwood Historical Society





► The Big Chief Roadhouse opened in 1928 along Manchester Road in the unincorporated community of Pond as Big Chief Highway Hotel. // Photo by Steven Robertson

Visit to Big Chief Roadhouse offers a look into the past

The Big Chief Roadhouse is one of Wildwood's most recognizable surviving businesses from Route 66's early days.

According to the establishment's website, it opened in 1928 along Manchester Road in the unincorporated com-

munity of Pond (now incorporated into Wildwood) as Big Chief Highway Hotel. It was a large tourist camp serving motorists on the brand new cross-country highway. Today it operates as a restaurant and bar in the original main building.

When Route 66 began bringing

steady traffic west of St. Louis, plans for Big Chief took shape. It was designed in the Mission Revival style, with stucco walls, a tile roof and a wide carport. Architect Walter H. Petring is credited for

Continued on Page 42 ►►



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► This was the main building of the Big Chief Hotel in Pond, pictured in 1929. // Courtesy of the Wildwood Historical Society

the design on historic documents, and the early footprint included a full-service dining room and extensive grounds, according to the National Register of Historic Places documentation.

Beyond the restaurant, Big Chief functioned as a full tourist court. According to the National Park Service, roughly 62 cabins spread across the grounds, many with small garages attached, allowing families to park at their doors. It was an impressive and unusually large court for the time. Big Chief emphasized recreation space and on-site services geared toward motorists making multi-day drives.

The sheer scale of the complex is one reason preservationists point to Big Chief as a defining example of Missouri's early auto-tourism, the National Park Service reported.

In 1932, Missouri realigned Route 66 to a straighter, safer corridor south of Manchester Road to improve travel times. According to Missouri Department of Transportation records, that move pulled most traffic away from Pond and deeply cut into the Big Chief's steady stream of overnight guests. Big Chief struggled and, according to the National Park Service, became Mike Aceto's Cafe 66 in 1946. By 1949, the restaurant was closed. Though the main building continued in



► A billboard advertises the Big Chief Hotel in Pond. // Courtesy of the Wildwood Historical Society

various roles, the cabins fell into disrepair and were torn down in the 1970s.

New life for Big Chief

By the early 1990s, the main structure was restored for restaurant service,

returning the property to the kind of hospitality it offered when Route 66 was new. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003, according to the National Park Service.

Continued on Page 43 ►►



SURVIVORS OF BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN (1876)
 AT REUNION IN BLACK HILLS OF SOUTH DAKOTA, SEPTEMBER 2, 1948
 LITTLE WARRIOR PEMMIGAN LITTLE SOLDIER DEWEY BEARD JOHN SITTILING BULL HIGH EAGLE IRON HAWK COMES AGAIN

► Big Chief is decorated with historical pictures and items. The plaque above reads: "Survivors of Battle of the Little Big Horn (1876) at reunion in Black Hills of South Dakota, September 2, 1948." Pictured, from left, are Little Warrior, Pemmigan, Little Soldier, Dewey Beard, John Sittling Bull, High Eagle, Iron Hawk and Comes Again. Photo by Bill Groethe. // Photos by Steven Robertson



The Big Chief's exterior, with its low, stucco facade and tile rooflines still reads "roadhouse," and the porte cochere out front hints at the days when cars rolled up for a hot meal and a map check before pressing on. Inside, the dining rooms have been updated for modern operations, but the proportions and layout reflect the establishment's original purpose: welcoming visitors, seating them quickly and moving automobiles efficiently on and off the property. The National Park Service describes Big Chief as one of the few surviving full-service restaurants associated with Route 66 in Missouri, a claim that underscores how much roadside fabric has been cut away elsewhere.

Big Chief also illustrates how engineering updates reshaped the Mother Road and the communities along it. Realignments like the 1932 shift could drain customer traffic from one block and deliver it to another a few miles away. Businesses that survived did so by finding new audiences, new uses or both.

In Big Chief's case, the restaurant outlasted the court. The cabins are long gone, but the main building remains,

which is often the surest form of preservation. To honor the early years of the Big Chief Roadhouse, a speakeasy has been set up above the dining room. It reflects Prohibition-era style, and guests enter through a vintage phone booth on the first floor and climb to an upstairs lounge that has whiskeys and classic cocktails, according to the establishment's website.

As Route 66 approaches its centennial in 2026, local partners have discussed adding signage along Manchester Road to help visitors understand the early alignment through what is now Wildwood. City work-program notes and community heritage discussions have referenced interest in historic markers and corridor banners that would tie the Big Chief to other surviving sites on the old route. They say those efforts would not change what makes the place special, but instead would make it easier for travelers to connect the building they see with the highway story that runs through it.

A stop at Big Chief Roadhouse offers

more than just a good meal; it is a chance to visit an original Route 66 complex that welcomed motorists when the highway was young and has managed to weather the realignment and the postwar shift to interstates. Ultimately, it's the chance to experience a small, yet important piece of Route 66 history.



Big cities, big celebrations

St. Louis and Springfield to celebrate Route 66 in 2026

Missouri's major cities along Route 66 are planning to celebrate the historic highway's 100-year anniversary in 2026 with festivals, exhibits and other events. They also will shine a national media spotlight on the Mother Road in hopes of pulling travelers off the interstate and onto the stretch of the old highway that runs through their cities. Plans are still evolving, but Springfield will host the official national kickoff, while St. Louis will hold a citywide celebration that ties museums, neighborhoods, and classic stretches of the road together.

Springfield has been selected as the host city for the Route 66 Centennial National Kickoff, according to the City of Springfield and the Route 66 Centennial Commission. The celebration will frame a year of activities in the "Birthplace of Route 66," building on the city's long-running annual Birthplace of Route 66 Festival. According to the city's website, a kickoff concert featuring A-list entertainment will be held in the Historic Shrine Mosque on April 30. The concert will be livestreamed around the world with cut-ins from Route 66 cities across the United States.

April 30 marks the anniversary of the telegram that was sent in 1926 from Springfield to Washington, D.C., request-

ing that the road be named Route 66.

St. Louis will offer its own slate of centennial celebrations on April 30. The Missouri History Museum plans to hold a multi-day "Route 66 100th Anniversary" festival, featuring talks, screenings and family activities highlighting the road's culture and its complicated history, according to Explore St. Louis' event listing. Tourism planners will highlight the city's Route 66 corridor, which stretches from the Chain of Rocks area through north St. Louis and onto the area around Watson/Chippewa, as part of their year of regional spotlight events.

The Missouri's Route 66 Centennial Commission has opened grant and sponsorship programs to help communities fund interpretive stops, signage and improvements that will be ready for visitors in 2026. Nationally, the Route 66 Centennial Commission is coordinating the April 30 kickoff and promoting a year-long calendar of events planned across all eight states that lie along Route 66, according to the commission's updates.

What will visitors experience during those celebrations?

In Springfield, look for a mix of downtown activities, car culture and in-

► *The Old Chain of Rocks Bridge is open to pedestrian traffic and spans the Mississippi River. // Photo by Mark Hermes with Explore St. Louis*

terpretive storytelling connected to the city's role in the old highway's creation, according to festival organizers and the city's tourism bureau.

In St. Louis, expect museum-led events, neighborhood tours and heritage activities that call attention to both preservation victories and places where the history is being stitched back together, according to Missouri History Museum and tourism listings. More events, like bike rides, car shows and temporary exhibits, are anticipated across Missouri's Route 66 corridor as local groups finalize plans.

With Springfield welcoming the national kickoff and St. Louis drawing museum crowds, smaller communities along the Missouri stretch of Route 66, such as Eureka, Wildwood and Pacific, can tap into the enthusiasm and interest by pointing visitors to restored landmarks, trail connections and state-park programming in their communities. The idea is simple: Let the big-city stages shine, and then help travelers connect those marquee moments to main streets, bridges and historic sites just down the road.

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Pacific will celebrate Route 66 in 2026

Pacific is leaning into the Route 66 centennial with a full slate of events and exhibits meant to pull travelers off I-44 and onto Osage Street. The approach is straightforward: build the celebration around the Red Cedar Inn Museum & Visitor Center, add visible markers people can't miss and layer in programming that highlights local stories throughout 2026.

At the center is the Red Cedar Inn, which reopened as a museum in 2023. Beyond exhibits, it's become the launch point for centennial activities.

"We'll have our annual car show at the Red Cedar Inn, a barbecue and bluegrass festival, and a Route 66 quilt trail on display for three months in summer 2026," said Pacific tourism director Kelly O'Malley.

She said a giant Route 66 shield sign was installed at the museum in 2025, partially funded by the Missouri Route 66 Centennial Commission, to make Pacific a must-stop photo spot ahead of the anniversary celebration.

Pacific City Hall has paired those museum initiatives with municipal projects aimed at making the corridor easier to find and follow. Meeting materials from the city's tourism and economic development boards outline activities like a Route 66 BBQ & Bluegrass Festival and expanded events surrounding car culture.

A brand new event will be held in the city – the Route 66 Harvest and Boos Festival set for Oct 16-17 and cosponsored by the Pacific Tourism Department and the Pacific Area Chamber of Commerce.

Last August the city posted a "Terrific Pacific" video and song on the city's Facebook page, and that video and song will be played during big city events, including those commemorating the Route 66 centennial.

Banners have been put up around the city celebrating hometown heroes, O'Malley added.

In addition, Route 66 signs and markers will be placed around town, providing people with plenty of photo

opportunities, she said.

The centennial will also emphasize firsthand accounts from people who lived during the Route 66 heyday. The Pacific Historical and Genealogy Society launched a community oral-history effort in 2023, recording longtime residents talking about growing up in the area.

That project continues into 2026 to capture memories tied to local businesses, railroad activities, floods and the highway years.

▶ Tourists like posing in front of this giant sign outside Red Cedar Inn in Pacific. // Photo by Steven Robertson



▶ **Saturday, Feb. 21 | 5 p.m.**

SINGO (Bingo + Karaoke)

This fun twist on bingo and karaoke features Route 66 and travel-themed songs. Players mark their bingo cards as songs are played, and the first to complete a card wins. Proceeds will support Pacific's Route 66 centennial celebration.

*Location: Tri-County Senior Center
Tickets required*

▶ **Friday-Sunday, May 29–31**

Route 66 BBQ Battle & Bluegrass Festival

This festival brings together award-winning barbecue teams, live bluegrass and country music, local vendors and nonstop family fun in the heart of historic Route 66. Guests can enjoy great food, a large kids' zone, family-friendly competitions and a lively festival atmosphere.

*Location: Liberty Field
Free to attend*

▶ **Saturday, June 27 |
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

24th Annual Downtown Pacific Car Show & Block Party

*Enjoy the annual car show celebrating classic cars, community and summer fun. Stay after the show for a block party until 10 p.m. and fireworks.
Free to attend*

▶ **Saturday, July 4 | 9 a.m.**

America's 250th Anniversary & Fourth of July Parade

A special one-time parade celebrating both Independence Day and America's 250th anniversary.

Location: Downtown Pacific

▶ **Thursday, Sept. 17**

Concert

Music by Doc Ben and the Backstreet Cruisers

Location: Scenic Regional Library - Pacific

▶ **Friday-Saturday, Oct. 16-17**

Route 66 Harvest and Boos Festival

Join us for a weekend of festive fall fun for all ages. Explore the Kid Zone, take your pick from the pumpkin patch, enjoy live music, participate in costume contests, taste treats from food trucks and shop from local artisans and businesses. This two-day celebration is in partnership with the Pacific Tourism Department.

Location: Liberty Field

▶ **Saturday, Dec. 12 | 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

Christmas on 66

A fun, family-friendly holiday celebration. The event features visits with Santa and other holiday characters, kid-friendly activities and crafts, and a festive marketplace filled with local crafters.

Location: Red Cedar Inn Museum & Visitor Center

Free to attend



► There are plans to restore and reopen the Meramec River Bridge, which once carried Route 66 across the river. // Photo courtesy of Route 66 State Park

Eureka plans Route 66 centennial activities

Eureka plans to greet the Route 66 centennial with a mix of on-the-ground improvements and public events that point visitors toward the river corridor, the old highway and the stories that tie them together.

The anchor is Route 66 State Park, where staff members are preparing a full slate of centennial activities tied to the site's history and the broader Missouri corridor, according to Route 66 State Park superintendent Jeremiah Wallace.

"We will be hosting a celebration in the park the first Saturday of November," Wallace said.

If the construction schedule holds, that day will also feature a ribbon-cutting for a reopened Meramec River Bridge that once carried Route 66 across the river beside the former town of Times Beach. He said the park will also host a traveling centennial exhibit from the State Historical Society of Missouri and Missouri History Museum in October and early November to frame the local story within the statewide picture.

Day to day, the park is positioning

Continued on Page 48 ►►

► **Saturday, April 25** |
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Big Truck and Safety Day

Bring the family out to explore different modes of transportation while learning about all aspects of safety with the Eureka Police Department.

Location: Eureka High School Parking Lot, 4525 Hwy. 109

Free to attend

► **Friday, June 12** | 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Concert on Central

Embrace the community feel of Old Towne Eureka with a concert in the street! Bring friends, neighbors and chairs and find the best spot to watch a great band and enjoy time together. Food and beverages will be available for purchase from local businesses along Central Avenue.

Location: South Central Avenue

► **Saturday, July 4** | 6-10 p.m.

Independence Day Celebration

Join the Eureka Parks and Recreation Department in celebrating our country's 250th birthday. Enjoy a high energy concert, grab a snack from local food vendors and watch a sparkling fireworks display at 9:15 p.m.

Location: Central Avenue Spur, 394 South Central Avenue

► **Friday, Aug. 14** | 8-11 p.m.

Movie in the Park

Join us for a fun evening under the stars as we watch "Cars" on the big screen. Bring blankets and lawn chairs and claim a spot. Then stop at the activity tables to do a craft and activity. Popcorn and a treat will be available before the movie starts at 8:45 p.m.

Location: Legion Park, 333 Bald Hill Road

► **Friday-Sunday, Sept. 25-27**

Eureka Days

Join the Eureka Parks and Recreation Department in celebrating Eureka Days: Red, White & Route 66! Enjoy carnival rides, food and craft vendors, a bar and beer garden, live music and so much more. Festivities run from 5-11 p.m. Friday; noon to 11 p.m. Saturday; and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday. The parade will cruise down Central Avenue at 11 a.m. on Saturday. Sunday will feature an all-you-can-ride-wristband day for carnival rides and vendors, plus activities just for the littles at Kid's Korner.

Location: Eureka, MO

► **Saturday, Nov. 21** | 5-8 p.m.

Holiday Tree Lighting

Welcome Santa Claus to town with a celebration kicking off the holiday season. Grab a cup of hot cocoa, do a fun craft and meet with two of Santa's reindeer while enjoying live entertainment on the stage. Don't forget to bring a camera for a picture with the big man himself!

Location: Central Avenue Spur, 394 South Central Avenue

Free with a nonperishable food item donation



► **The Visitor Center is the former Bridgehead Inn.** // Photo courtesy of the city of Eureka

itself as a first stop for centennial travelers. Inside the Visitor Center, guests may view original roadside signs and period photos from along Missouri's stretch of Route 66, along with exhibits that explain Times Beach's rise as a 1920s resort town and its downfall from the 1982 flood and the dioxin cleanup, followed by the site's rebirth as public land in 1999, according to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Beyond the park, Eureka's centennial

celebration will highlight links between the old road and the local street grid. City and state materials point visitors to surviving segments that parallel I-44; historic bridges and approaches along the Meramec River; and downtown blocks where highway-era businesses once clustered. The intent is to make it easier to connect interpretive stops, trailheads, and small museums into a short itinerary that can be completed in an afternoon, according to the Missouri Division of

Tourism's website.

The park staff is coordinating with the Route 66 Centennial Commission on grants and promotional support and is working with traveling exhibit partners to offer programming in fall 2026 that features both local storytelling and state-wide context under one roof, according to the commission's updates and park communications.

Members of volunteer groups and historical societies continue to supply photographs, oral histories and route-finding tips to help visitors trace the 1932 alignment through town and understand earlier approaches, like Antire and Blakey roads that fed traffic into Eureka before the realignment, according to MoDOT's website.

The centennial is a chance to put clear wayfinding in front of first-time travelers to show how the Meramec crossings shaped the road and to connect park exhibits with places people can still see along the corridor.

As Wallace said, "most people who travel the route are already interested in its history; we're just excited to share our piece of that larger story."

Wildwood has big plans for Route 66 centennial celebration

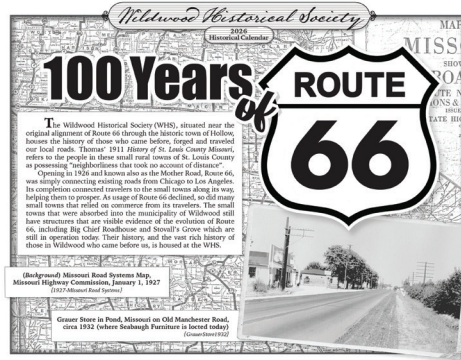
Wildwood plans to meet Route 66's centennial in 2026 with visible upgrades along the corridor and a year of public events designed to get people walking, driving and talking along Old Manchester Road, city planner Robyn Keefe said.

A few projects will be hard to miss. A Route 66 historic marker is slated for installation at Big Chief Roadhouse; Route 66 banners will line Old Manchester Road in Town Center; and a new set of signs will be placed along the corridor, according to the Wildwood's website.

"We're pairing interpretation with corridors people already walk and bike," Keefe said, noting that the city's approach is to highlight history at places residents and visitors already use.

The celebration will run throughout 2026 as Wildwood is assembling a slate of Route 66-themed events, including a cruise, a movie night, a scavenger hunt, a concert and additional activities meant to pull people from one stop to the next on the old alignment, the city reported.

The city has also launched Wildwood 66 T-shirts and pointed residents to a 2026 Route 66 calendar produced by the Wildwood Historical Society to keep



► The historical society produced a calendar commemorating the history of Route 66 in Wildwood. // Photo courtesy of the Wildwood Historical Society

the corridor at the top of people's minds.

Preservation also is part of the plan. A Route 66 grant program is in development to help corridor property owners maintain and improve historic buildings.

"The Historic Preservation Commission considers preserving the city's Route 66 Historic Corridor a top priority," Keefe said, pointing to the City's Historic Preservation Plan, which has been underway since 2024 and sets milestones; reviews the status of commercial and residential historic properties; and outlines strategies to make it easier for future travelers to find their way along the old highway.

Keefe said city officials would like to see more "small-scale, road-friendly" uses for Old Manchester; think bed-

and-breakfasts; general stores; soda or candy shops; bookstores; antique shops; boutiques and places for family entertainment. These places would add foot traffic and keep the historic character active day and night.

In recent years, businesses like the Big Chief Roadhouse, J+B Wellness, The Porch, Three French Hens, Adler's Dry Goods, Good News Brewing, Stovall's Grove and Lucky Dog Central have helped sustain that feel along the corridor, Keefe said.

"The historic communities of Pond, Grover, Hollow, Glencoe and Fox Creek are still part of everyday language here," said Jill F. VonGruben, archivist for the Wildwood Historical Society. That continuity helps explain why modest service stations and corner buildings still resonate: they were part of local life before and during the Route 66 years, and they remain landmarks as the city looks to 2026 and beyond.

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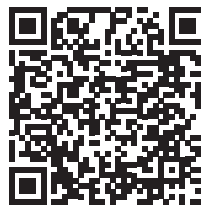
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