



Some history and things to see

when you stay at the historic Best Western Route 66 Rail Haven

In April, 1926, a pivotal meeting was held in Springfield, Missouri between Cyrus Avery, an oilman from Tulsa, Oklahoma and Chairman of the Oklahoma Department of Highways, and B.M. Piepmeier, Chief Engineer of the Missouri State Highway Commission, among others, regarding the naming of a new east-west highway which was to run from Chicago, Illinois to Los Angeles, California.

There had been months of debate preceding this meeting about the naming of the new highway infrastructure that was proposed by the Joint Board on Interstate Highways and accepted by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in 1925. It had been decided that all east-west highways would carry an even number designation and all north-south highways an odd-number designation. Fouling up the naming of things was the fact that certain roads were already known by certain numbering, creating a conflict.

The Chicago to Los Angeles road that would become known as Route 66 was originally proposed to be named "60" or "62" - but those numbers had already been designated to routes originating in Virginia and Kentucky, one of which ironically runs through Springfield, MO. At this April, 1926 meeting, Avery & Piepmeier proposed that the new Los Angeles to Chicago highway be named "66." They wanted a prominent number that did not have any connection to any other route and which fell within the numbering guidelines for being an east-west highway. Research by the Chief Engineer of Missouri showed that the designation of "66" had not yet been used anywhere. A telegraph would be sent from their meeting at the Colonial Hotel in Springfield (which ironically was located on 66) to the Bureau of Public Roads in Washington D.C. on April 30 1926, stating: "Regarding Chicago to Los Angeles Road: If California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Illinois will accept sixty-six instead of sixty we are inclined to agree to this change. We prefer 66 to 62."

Avery & Piepmeier signed the telegraph. It would be August 11, 1926, before the state highway departments of the eight states that "66" runs through were officially notified that the designation of "66" was accepted by the Bureau of Public Roads. And it would be November 11, 1926, before the whole concept of the Federal Interstate Highway System would be approved by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, thus formally commissioning Route 66, a 2,448 mile highway linking Chicago to Los Angeles.

The idea behind Route 66 was originally to link the main streets of many small towns together to form this interstate highway. Hence, the coining of the nickname "Main Street of America" in 1927 when the U.S. Highway 66 Association was formed in Tulsa, Oklahoma - with Springfieldian John T. Woodruff as its first president. Woodruff was an enterprising local entrepreneur who built the famous Kentwood Arms Hotel (which opened in July, 1926) and the Woodruff Building - both along Route 66 in Springfield and still visible today as a testimony to the city's place in the birth of Route 66!

- Route 66 was extended from its original termination point in downtown Los Angeles to the now famous termination point with Highway 101 at the Santa Monica pier in 1935.
- Effective January 1, 1936, US Highway 66 in Missouri was re-routed over the Chain of Rocks Bridge in St. Louis, famous for its 24-degree bend in the center. The Chain of Rocks Bridge handled Route 66 traffic until 1970, when it closed permanently for repairs. In 1999, Gateway Trailnet, Inc. reopened the bridge as a recreational biking-hiking trail, linking Missouri & Illinois.
- It was 1938 before all 2,448 miles of Route 66 were under pavement. The last stretch to be paved was in Oldham County, Texas between Adrian & Glenrio.
- Amarillo, Texas held a huge celebration in August, 1938 to celebrate the completion of paving of US 66 - and the road was formally dedicated as the "Will Rogers Highway."
- John Steinbeck released "Grapes of Wrath" in 1939, followed by a movie of the same name in 1940. The story chronicles the flight of the Joads, a family of "Okies" fleeing the dustbowls of the Midwest in the 1930's via Route 66 to what they anticipate will be a better life in California. The book is now considered an American classic. Route 66 also earned the nickname "the Mother Road" from these Midwesterners traveling it west.
- In 1946, Bobby Troup releases a hit song, "Get Your Kicks on Route 66", which he dictated to his wife who wrote it on a cocktail napkin as they traveled from Chicago home to California, via 66. The song immortalizes 66, and remains to this day, one of the most consistently recorded and recognizable songs of all time.
- Also in 1946, the now famous Jack Rittenhouse book "A Guide Book to Highway 66" that describes gas stations, diners and things to see along 66 was published for the first time.
- In 1956, Congress passed the Federal Aid Highway Act that establishes the Interstate Highway System. Route 66 begins to be decommissioned in 1963, but the final stretch is not decommissioned until 1985.
- In 1960, the television show "Route 66" featuring the 66 travels of Buz and Tod hit the airwaves. The show lasted 116 episodes over the years of 1960 - 1964, and has a huge following both in the USA and abroad.
- In 1990, then Governor of Missouri John Ashcroft signed House Bill 1629, designating Old U.S. Highway 66 as a Historic Highway in Missouri and allowing the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) to post appropriate signs along the right-of-way in Missouri to mark the historic route - but no state funds could be used to pay for the signs.
- On July 3, 1991 the first Missouri Historic Route 66 sign was installed at the corner of Kearney and Glenstone Avenue in Springfield, Missouri. A joint project between the newly formed Route 66 Association of Missouri and MoDOT resulted in over 300 Historic Route markers being placed along 66 in Missouri.
- In 1999, HR66 passes in the 106th Congress. This bill is designed to preserve cultural resources along Route 66 and allow the Secretary of the Interior (National Park Service) to provide assistance. President Clinton signed the bill into law.
- Also in 1999, the Route 66 State Park at Eureka, Missouri opened to the public. The park sits on the site of the former City of Times Beach, a community that the Federal government bought out and cleaned up after it was discovered dioxincontaminated oil had been sprayed on the streets there to keep dust down.
- In 2001, after 75 years, Route 66 celebrated her Diamond Jubilee.
- In November 2005, Route 66 is declared a "Historic By-Way" in the state of Missouri, one more step in Route 66 becoming designated as a Federal Scenic By-Way. Work continues towards this designation in other states through which Route 66 travels.

The History of the Rail Haven Motel

Brothers Elwyn and Lawrence Lippman built the Best Western Route 66 Rail Haven motel in 1938 on what was their maternal grandfather's apple orchard. This location would become the crossroads of Missouri Highways 65 and 60 and US Highway 66 on the eastern city limits of Springfield. The family homestead had already been converted into a "tourist camp", so people were already accustomed to guests staying on the property.

Originally eight sandstone cottages were built with adjoining garages, and a rail fence was built around it. A Standard station and restaurant would soon open across the street. Between 1939 and the mid-1940's, the City would see several major businesses start here, and there would be an influx of people because of the O'Reilly Army Hospital. The Rail Haven would grow as well, boasting 28 rooms by 1946 and being rated "excellent" by AAA.

The Best Western chain of motels formed circa 1948 and by 1951 Lawrence Lippman was serving on Best Western's board of directors. This made the Rail Haven automatically part of the Best Western aggregate, a point the motel is proud of to this day. Very few original Route 66 motels were ever part of a national chain, and it is very rare to find one that retains that affiliation to present times. In 1961 the Rail Haven was sold to Ward Chrisman. He built a restaurant, the Sycamore Inn, on the grounds. This restaurant featured a terrazzo floor and was decorated with mosaic tile and light fixtures from Italy. The restaurant also had a huge dining hall in the basement that seated 125 people, and it became quite the place for people to gather for many years. It was torn down in the early 1980's.

The City of Springfield saw a lot of growth and change from the mid-1950's through the early 1970's. Rail Haven too, would see many upgrades at the same time and be extensively remodeled and updated from a cottage court to the strip hotel it is today.

As part of this process, the original cottages were continually remodeled. However, many of the rooms retain vestiges of the original cottages, hence the Rail Haven's special "cottage" rooms, rooms with narrow configurations, or some rooms with special beveled mirrors, for instance.

However, by the early 1990's, Rail Haven had started to fall on hard times. While it was never removed from the Best Western chain, it was noticeable that the place had slipped. Local CPA Gordon Elliott acquired the property in 1994.

Through Elliott's visionary ownership the hotel was renamed "Best Western Route 66 Rail Haven." It has been extensively remodeled yet retains a vintage flavor that delights it's guests. The property is decorated with vintage signs, gas pumps, and two 1950's automobiles. Rooms feature at-the-door parking and many have complimentary microwaves and refrigerators among other amenities unheard of in the early days of the hotel. An outdoor pool and hot tub are available in warm weather, and a complimentary continental breakfast is served every morning in our Route 66 decorated Sycamore Diner in the hotel's lobby.



To book your next stay at Best Western Route 66 Rail Haven, please contact us at 417-866-1963 or visit us on the web at www.bwrailhaven.com



Springfield, Missouri has been blessed with having Route 66 traverse her city limits twice. Route 66 came in to Springfield from Strafford, Missouri on the east via Kearney Street. Route 66 then traveled west on Kearney to Glenstone Ave. At Glenstone Avenue, the City Route 66 and the Truck Route 66 split. City Route 66 turned south on Glenstone at Kearney and followed Glenstone to St. Louis Street, where it turned west and traversed through the city square coming out on College Street. It ran the full course of College Street west until College Street curved around into Chestnut Expressway then out to the western edge of the city limits.

Truck Route 66 would continue west on Kearney from Glenstone to the West By-Pass. At the West By-Pass, the Truck Route 66 turned south and ran until it came to Chestnut Expressway. At the intersection of Chestnut Expressway and the West By-pass, the City Route and Truck Route joined back up and ran west out of Springfield towards the burghs of Halltown, Paris Springs, Spencer, Avilla, Carthage, Carterville, Webb City, Joplin and ultimately, the Missouri-Kansas state line. Today that path west out of Springfield is called Highway 266 until it reaches Highway 96 at Spencer and turns west towards Avilla. This arrangement of City Route and Truck Route 66 in Springfield allows a visitor to travel around the city in a giant square when traveling Route 66.

Things to see in Springfield along Route 66:

1. **Steak-N-Shake** - 1158 E. St. Louis.
2. **Kentwood Arms** - Now Kentwood Hall for MSU.
3. **Shrine Mosque** - 601 E. St. Louis.
4. **Taylor's Drive In** - World famous steakburgers since 1947. Lunch only, 10:30 - 2:30 weekdays. 139 Memorial Plaza.
5. **Discovery Center** - 438 E. St. Louis.
6. **Woodruff Building** - NW Corner of Jefferson & St. Louis St.
7. **Jewell Park** - Home of the Ozark Country Jubilee SE Corner Jefferson & St. Louis Streets.
8. **Former Site of the Colonial Hotel** - SW Corner of Jefferson & St. Louis Street - the Birthplace of Route 66!
9. **Gillioz Theater** - 325 Park Central East.
10. **Mosaic Wall Mural** on West College Street.
11. College Street Cafe -1622 W. College Street, in operation since 1930's.
12. **Shamrock Court** - West College Street.
13. **Melinda Court** - West College Street.
14. **Route 66 Cafe** - On West College Street on the site of the Rockwood Courts.
15. **Former Site of Red's Giant Hamburg** - Home of the first drive-up window for "fast food" takeout, immortalized on a Ramones album cover.
16. **Public Square** – This was the site of the first gunfight west of the Mississippi between Wild Bill Hickok and Dave Tutt. It was also Wild Bill's first documented gunfight. There are brass markers in the sidewalk denoting where they stood as they shot at each other. The fight was over Tutt wearing a watch he'd won off Hickok in a poker match the night before. Hickok told Tutt if he saw him wearing the watch in public, he'd shoot him dead - and he did!
17. **Danny's Service Center** (Gas Station) - on the West Bypass at Division Street.
18. **El Taco** (part of Mexican Villa) - 316 W. Kearney - see their neon sign at night.
19. **Baptist Bible College** - 628 E. Kearney - Site of the trailer park where many of the Ozarks Country Jubilee entertainers lived while performing in the show.
20. **Buckingham's** - 2415 N. Glenstone - Local BBQ Chain's premier location.
21. **Evangel University** - Originally the site of the O'Reilly General Army Hospital.
22. **Rest Haven Motel** - 2000 E. Kearney - The neon sign for this motel was the inspiration for both the early "Holiday Inn" motel chain and the "Cozy Cone" motel sign in the Disney movie "Cars."
23. **AMMO** - Air and Military Museum of the Ozarks - 2305 E. Kearney.
24. **Holiday Drive-In** - Site of former drive-in, on E. Kearney. Further to the east is a series of rock cottages. This was originally the Lurvey Court Motel.
25. **Wild Animal Safari** - This is 14 miles from the Best Western Rail Haven on Route 66 at 124 Jungle Lane in Strafford, MO. This is the site of the former community of Holman, MO, which hosted a Tourist Camp in the heyday of Route 66.
26. **Gay Parita** - See an original rock garage, restored vehicles and a reproduction gas station that is operated as a 66 visitor's center, about 25 miles west of Springfield.

Related attractions just off 66:

- (a) **Hammons Field**, on Trafficway, one block north of St. Louis & John Q. Hammons Parkway - State of the art home to the AA Cardinals from St. Louis!
- (b) **Jordan Valley Park** - Sits on Trafficway to the west of Hammons Field.

(c) **Jordan Valley Ice Park** - Sits at the west end of Jordan Valley Park. Anyone for ice-skating? Hockey?

(d) **Founder's Park** - Sits two blocks north of St. Louis and Jefferson. Has artwork detailing the history of Springfield.

(e) **History Museum** - At Boonville and Chestnut Expressway, about 4 blocks north of the city square.

(f) Springfield Hot Glass Studio, one block south of 66 on Campbell Avenue as you come out of the square. Owned by the former head glass blower at Silver-Dollar City, their art glass is not to miss!

(g) **Springfield Pottery Studios** -Where you can make your own clay creations.

• **The Moxie Theater** is found in the downtown area and it specializes in showing many unique art films.

• **The Landers Theater** - Another restored theater, home to Springfield Little Theater.

• **The Old City Calaboose (jail)** - one block west and one block south of Route 66 as you come out of the city square - near the new Jordan Valley Parking Garage.

• **Springfield Brewing Company** - Showcases the city's rich brewing history and local manufacturer Paul Mueller Company's microbrewery packages. And hey, the food and beverages aren't bad either!

• **Downtown** - There are many specialty stores, restaurants, and bars in the downtown area in the blocks surrounding the city square. Not to miss - Ernie Bigg's Piano Bar, Maria's Mexican Restaurant, and Bijan's (a known hangout of Springfieldian Brad Pitt when he's visiting home).

• **Hollywood Theaters** - Also not to miss downtown is the "Hollywood Theaters – College Station Stadium 14" recently opened on College Street/Route 66 one block west of the City Square. Listings for this state-of-the-art movie theater can be found at gohollywood.com.

• **The Train at Grant Beach Park** - About 8 blocks off Route 66, but will worth visiting on summertime weekends!

• **Fantastic Caverns** - This is about 4 miles or so off Route 66 but it is the only cave in North America that you ride through - well worth the visit!

• **Dickerson Park Zoo** - A world-class zoo that is a leader in elephant breeding and raptor (birds of prey) rehabilitation. It also has a state-of-the art animal nursery and a Missouri animals exhibit and a train. This is about 5 blocks or so north of Route 66, at Kansas Expressway and Norton Road.

• **Doling Park** - Home of the Doling Skating Rink Museum and cave - about 3 blocks off Route 66, north of Kearney St.

• **Crystal Caverns** - This is yet another cave to the north side of the city. It is about 3 miles north of Route 66, and is home to several very rare cave animals.

Other Springfield area attractions:

Andy's Frozen Custard

Askinosie Chocolates

Bass Pro Shops

Battlefield Mall

Candy House Chocolates

Grey-Campbell Homestead

Incredible Pizza

Japanese Stroll Gardens

Japanese Stroll Garden

Missouri Sports Hall of Fame

Nathaniel Boone Home

Nathaniel Greene Park

Oovvda Winery

Springfield Art Museum

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield

For additional Route 66 information:

Find the Route 66 Association of Missouri on the web at www.missouri66.org or call 417-865-1318

Highway Facts and Birthplace Information courtesy of the Rt. 66 Assoc. of Missouri, "Show Me 66" Magazine, Vol.12, No. 4 Fall 2001