JOURNEYS ON THE MOTHER ROAD:

INTERPRETING THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF U.S. ROUTE 66

PETER BRIGHAM DEDEK

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Arts

May, 2002

JOURNEYS ON THE MOTHER ROAD:
INTERPRETING THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF U.S. ROUTE 66

Approved:

D. Lorne McWatters, Major Professor

Rebecca Conard, Reader

Susan Myers-Shirk, Reader

Thaddeus M. Smith, Reader

Janice O. Hayes, Reader Department of Education

Thaddeus M. Smith, Department Chair

Donald L. Curry, Dean, College of Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

JOURNEYS ON THE MOTHER ROAD:

INTERPRETING THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF U.S. ROUTE 66

Peter Brigham Dedek

Route 66 has two histories, one as a mode of transportation, and another as a symbol of the Southwest and twentieth-century automobile culture. While not the longest, or the first, American highway, Route 66 became the most famous highway in America. This dissertation studies the factors that made Route 66 an American icon and an object of nostalgia, analyzes the perceptions of contemporary Route 66 enthusiasts, and discusses the preservation and interpretation of historic structures and "cultural landscapes" along Route 66 for the enjoyment and meaningful education of contemporary travelers and students.

While studying the historical basis for Route 66's popularity, this dissertation examines imagery created by railroads in the late nineteenth century to exploit southwestern myths such as "wild" Indians, "wholesome" cowboys, "lost" civilizations, "fiery" Mexicans, and the "forbidding" desert, to promote tourism in the region. The dissertation then analyzes similar promotional material

created by Route 66 boosters after 1927 and literature by contemporary Route 66 enthusiasts. This study compares the ideas expressed by today's enthusiasts to the perceptions of Route 66 travelers between 1927 to 1970, as taken from letters on postcards, to determine if current notions about Route 66 are accurate recollections or merely nostalgia.

The research uses historic Route 66 architecture, discussions with individuals familiar with Route 66, historical advertisements, period postcards, motoring periodicals, academic and trade journals, and literature by contemporary Route 66 enthusiasts to support its findings.

The study concluded that much of Route 66's present fame resulted from railroad advertisements about the Southwest, marketing by Route 66 businesses, and promotion by contemporary Route 66 enthusiasts. Literature, such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath,* Bobby Troupe's song "Route 66," and the CBS television show *Route 66,* also contributed to Route 66's popularity. The research found that recent enthusiasm for Route 66 vernacular roadside environments is, in part, a popular reaction against the monotony of interstate highways. Since many view historic Route 66 as a powerful symbol and may have misconceptions about its actual historical significance, those interpreting the highway or using it in education should carefully discern the road's actual history from myth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Andrew Gulliford, who started me down this dusty road, and equally, Dr. D. Lorne McWatters, who guided me to its conclusion.

Also, I thank Sharon Vaughan for her help during our three-week trip down Route 66 in 1998 and through the lengthy and arduous process of completing this dissertation.

In addition, I thank the members of my committee, Dr. Rebecca Conard, Dr. Susan Myers-Shirk, Dr. Thaddeus M. Smith, and Dr. Janice O. Hayes, for their guidance and dedication. A special thanks goes out to Dr. Smith, whose role in the final phases of work went far above and beyond the call of duty for a committee member!

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Route 66 is America's most famous highway. To many in the United States and around the world, the road embodies the experience of American auto travel and auto-related architecture in the period between 1927 and 1970.[1] Although the highway is over 2,400 miles long, Route 66 represents only a small part of the development of the vernacular American roadside. However, the route enjoys a unique place in American popular culture because, unlike most other long distance pre-interstate U.S. highways, it has earned a distinct, popular identity. Since its official closure in 1985, historic U.S. 66 has become the focus of romantic nostalgia and intense marketing.

Much of the fame of Route 66 derives from myths of "wild Indians," of the "Wild West," and of the freedom and romance of the open road. Developed by the railroads in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and perpetuated

---

[1]U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service, *Special Study--Route 66* (Washington, D.C., 1995), 2.

by roadside merchants in the early and mid twentieth century, the myth of the Southwest became associated with Route 66.

Soon after its designation in 1927, Route 66 became the primary auto and truck route between Chicago and Los Angeles. Because Route 66 took travelers to California through the Southwest, a region already made popular by the railroads (Figure 1), the highway attracted a large number of tourists. Many of these motorists drove Route 66 from Chicago and other northern cities to the Southwest because they saw the region as a "land of enchantment" that offered breath-taking scenery and exotic cultures. Decades of postcards, tourist advertisements, newspaper stories, and features in popular periodicals promoted images of the Southwest, including natural wonders such as the Grand Canyon, the Painted Desert, and the Petrified Forest, and cultural resources such as Anasazi ruins, Hopi pueblos, and Indian-crafted artifacts (Figure 2).

The realities that tourists saw along Route 66 often differed from the images promoted in travel literature.

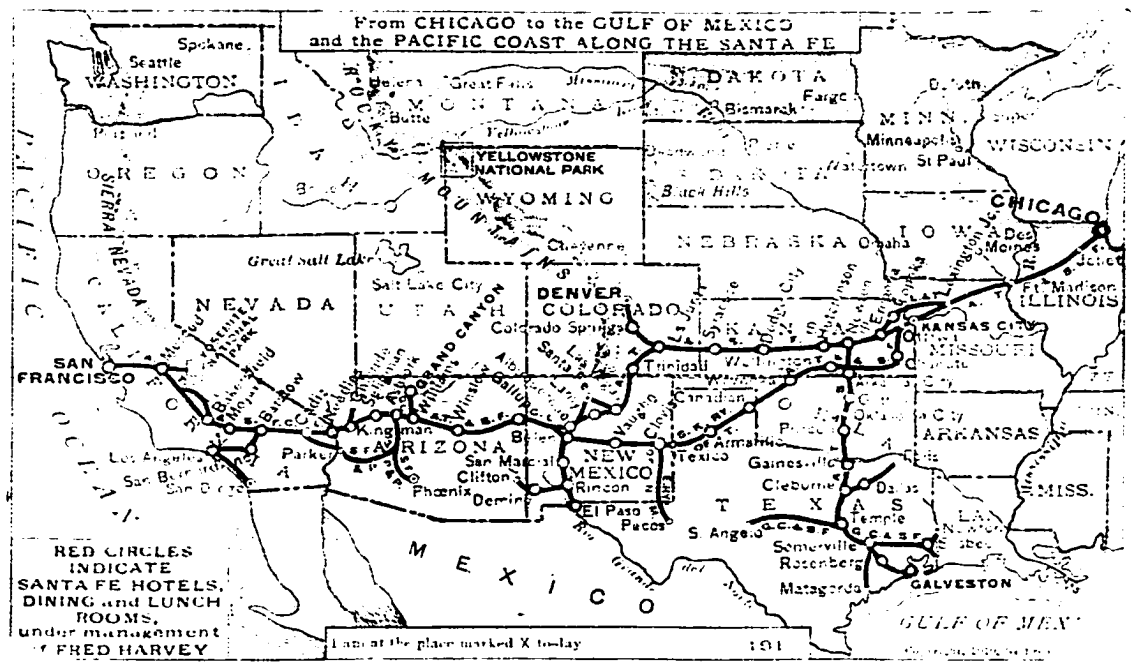

Figure 1. Map of Santa Fe lines, ca. 1910. Historic postcard, author's collection

Figure 2. Map of Route 66, ca. 1950. Historic postcard, author's collection.

Instead of experiencing authentic Native American cultures and the wilderness of the Wild West, motorists encountered faux-adobe motels reminiscent of ancient pueblos, vernacular cafés, art deco gas stations, concrete wigwams, billboards featuring portraits of "Wild" Indians in feathered head dresses, and depictions of cowboys in ten gallon hats twirling lassos. Tourists also came across "Indian" trading posts, mock saloons, and large neon signs in the shape of people or animals, and Longhorn ranches and other elements of Hollywood's "Wild West." Businesses used a popular version of southwestern themes to draw tourists, exploiting Indian motifs and icons of the Old West to sell products such as figurines, lodging, and gasoline to motorists. These images helped to popularize Route 66 as a symbol of the western experience, even though retailers had invented much of this experience.

Once new interstate highways completely bypassed Route 66 in 1984, residents and road enthusiasts began to form organizations to preserve the remnants of the old road. By this time, Route 66 had come to represent the eras in which it was active, particularly the 1930s through the 1960s,

and to symbolize concepts such as the Old West, flight from adversity, and the power and freedom of the automobile. The architectural and natural richness of the landscapes along Route 66 contributed to the highway's cultural significance.

One of the reasons people feel nostalgia for Route 66 may be that interstate highways had a far more generic character than Route 66. Interstates also divided motorists from the landscape. Cars passed at high speeds on highways that blasted a straight path through the contours of the land. In contrast, Route 66 followed the curves of the landscape and brought motorists close to historic structures and natural monuments. Motorists could stop at any wayside attraction or roadside business at will. Highway engineers limited stops on interstates to exits and designated rest areas.

Today, the remaining alignments of Route 66, which make up the majority of the historic highway, offer an intimate view of transportation and regional history. Traveling historic Route 66 allows motorists direct access to vernacular roadside architecture, historic sites from

before and during the automobile era, remote towns, historic cityscapes, and diverse natural areas.

Route 66 enjoyed about thirty years of dominance as a primary auto and truck route from 1927 to around 1956, and a subsequent period of continued heavy use and decline that lasted until about 1970. In those years, the highway became forever fixed in the history and lore of the United States, particularly the West. Popular culture, such as John Steinbeck's 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, Bobby Troupe's 1946 lyrics "Get Your Kicks on Route 66," and the 1960-1964 television show, *Route 66*, immortalized the highway. With names such as the "Mother Road," the "Main Street of America," and the "Will Rogers Highway," Route 66 became the most famous road in America.

During its period of significance (1927-1970), Route 66 was only one of several important transcontinental U.S. highways, including U.S. 40 from Atlantic City to San Francisco, U.S. 30 (the Lincoln Highway) from New York City

to San Francisco, California, and U.S. 1 from Fort Kent, Maine to Key West, Florida.[2]

The first long-distance automobile road in America was the Lincoln Highway, started in 1914. The Dixie Highway, a north-to-south route from Michigan to Florida, began in 1918. Route 66 did not appear until 1926, when the federal government assigned numbers to U.S. highways to replace a confusing web of over 250 named routes. After 1926, the Lincoln Highway became U.S. 30, the National Road became U.S. 40, and the Old Trails Highway became part of Route 66.

Federal highway officials created U.S. 40 in 1926 out the National Road and several other old roads. U.S. 40 served a similar function to Route 66, primarily carrying tourist and commercial travel with some heavy local use near larger cities.[3] U.S. 40 is the subject of three important books, George R. Stewart's *U.S. 40* (1953), Thomas

---

[2]Andrew H. Malcolm, *U.S. 1, America's Original Mainstreet* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

[3]Thomas R. Vale and Geraldine R. Vale, *U.S. 40 Today: Thirty Years of Landscape Change in America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 4-5.

and Geraldine Vale's *U.S. 40 Today* (1983), and Thomas J. Schlereth's *U.S. 40: A Roadscape of the American Experience* (1985).[4] All three works are of an academic nature and do not have the popular appeal of most volumes written about U.S. 66. These authors examine Route 40 as a serious topic in American history, but little academic literature exists concerning Route 66. While U.S. 40 and U.S. 30 have a scholarly body of literature and research associated with them,[5] professional historians have largely neglected Route 66. Novelists, songwriters, and television producers popularized the road,[6] with academic history acting as a tangential influence. The reasons Route 66 represents pre-

---

[4]Rita A. Puzo, Route 66: "A Ghost Road Geography" (Master's thesis, California State University, 1988), 4-7.

[5] Andrew H. Malcom and Mark McGarrity, *Route 1: The First Super Highway* (Chester, CT: Globe Press, 1980); Drake Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street of America,* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988); and The Lincoln Highway Association, *The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway* (Sacramento, CA: Pleides Press, 1984). This is facsimile reprint of the 1916 edition are among the books that discuss the Lincoln Highway.

[6]The most influential novel involving Route 66 was John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940). The song was Bobby Troupe's "Route 66" (1946), and the television show was the series *Route 66* (1960-64).

Interstate America lie in the realms of cultural myth, association, and image.

While a great deal of literature has been written about Route 66, very little of it examines or analyzes the cultural significance of Route 66 or studies the issues that surround the preservation of historic resources associated with the highway. The best-known study of the history and fame of Route 66 is *Route 66: The Mother Road* by Michael Wallis, which functions as visionary, inspirational literature augmented with sound historical research.[7] Wallis provides a brief history of Route 66, describes the highway through the eyes of people who remember it, and offers a state-by-state description of sites along the road. *Route 66: The Mother Road* describes the cultural significance of Route 66 in a romantic fashion: "*Route 66*. It conjures up all kinds of images. *Route 66*. An artery linking much of the nation. *Route 66*. An inspiration to literature, music, drama, and a nation of

---

[7]Michael Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

dreamers."[8] Wallis does not analyze this significance. *Route 66: The Mother Road* does not examine the current nostalgia for Route 66 or discuss preservation issues.

Another important work is Susan Croce Kelly's *Route 66 the Highway and Its People*.[9] Kelly documents the history of the highway, relying heavily on interviews of Route 66 personalities. Discussing the book, Kelly writes, "It began as a study of highway architecture, but it quickly became a study of the broader effects that building the highway had on people and places between Chicago . . . and Santa Monica . . . and the hold that this particular highway has on the American traveling public."[10] *Route 66 the Highway and Its People* provides a history of Route 66 and describes the "hype" that helped create "the larger-than-life mythology of Route 66" during its period of use.[11] The book also contains Quinta Scott's photographic essay of people and

---

[8]Ibid., 1.

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

[10]Ibid., xiii.

[11]Ibid., xiii.

architecture along the entire length of Route 66. Kelly's main thesis is simple: the highway is important in twentieth-century American History and culture. While the work offers a thorough history of Route 66 based on primary sources and provides some historical context for the route, it does not evaluate or analyze the meaning of Route 66 imagery or discuss the reasons for nostalgia about the highway.

Because of the growing interest in Route 66, the U.S. Congress passed the Route 66 Study Act of 1990 that directed the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a special resource study of Route 66, which it completed in 1995. The summary of the study states, "Congress knew that although the road was decommissioned in 1985, it still occupies a special place in the American consciousness. Route 66, through the popular culture of songs, films, books, and television, became the symbol of mobile, free, fast-moving America."[12] The purpose of the *Special Resource Study* was to outline management and preservation options

---

[12]U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, *Special Study*, 2.

for Route 66. The authors discuss five management options. These are: the NPS preserving resources along the highway through direct purchase and management, Congress designating Route 66 as a National Historic Trail, the federal government taking no action, Congress redesignating Route 66 as a national commemorative highway, and Congress designating the Route 66 corridor as a National Heritage Highway.

The study also includes a statement of historical significance, a short history of Route 66, a description of the "visitor experience," a brief discussion of preservation issues, and an overview of groups active along the highway. In addition, the study provides a detailed description of historic property types, such as bridges, motels, gas stations, and eating establishments but offers little interpretation of Route 66 sites. The document does not attempt to analyze the cultural meaning of the highway or examine contemporary nostalgia for the Route. The study does acknowledge that much of the historical significance of Route 66 resulted from promotions: "From the beginning Route 66 was promoted in the popular media as a kind of

conceptual national main street. This has continued through the present and is responsible to some degree for raising the highway in the consciousness of America."[13]

Continued public interest in Route 66 prompted the United States Congress to pass the Route 66 Corridor Act in 1999, which designated Route 66 as a National Heritage Highway (essentially selecting alternative five from the 1995 *Special Resource Study)*. The Act created a partnership between the Secretary of the Interior (represented by the National Park Service), state and local governments, and citizens to preserve the "Route 66 corridor." The act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to facilitate the development of guidelines and a program of technical assistance and grants that will set priorities for the preservation of the Route 66 corridor. The act also authorizes the appropriation of ten million dollars in matching grants for Route 66 projects for fiscal years 2000 through 2009. The act does not define what constitute significant elements of Route 66 nor does it define the exact historical or cultural meaning of the Route 66

---

[13]Ibid., 21.

corridor. This act demonstrates the growing base of support that historic Route 66 enjoys and the historic highway's perceived significance to heritage tourism efforts in the regions through which it passes.

This dissertation discusses the marketing and perceptions that made Route 66 popular, examines the wave of nostalgia for the highway among contemporary Route 66 enthusiasts, and outlines methods to preserve and interpret the remnants of the historic highway. Route 66 was not the longest, or the first, American highway, yet it became the symbol of several eras of transportation and popular culture in the United States from 1927 to 1970. The existing literature on Route 66 generally assumes that Route 66 is significant in twentieth century American culture, but does not analyze the reasons for this significance or place Route 66 within the context of American culture during or after the highway's period of significance. Authors identify Route 66 with icons of the American West such as Indians, cowboys, and pioneers, but never discuss how these associations formed. This study analyzes Route 66 as a widely marketed cultural icon and

examines the reasons why this particular highway grew famous and became the object of widespread nostalgia after the route was decommissioned in the 1980s.

Historic highways such as Route 66, the Dixie Highway, the Lincoln Highway, and the National Road (U.S. Route 40) have sparked interest in the hundreds of towns, cities and rural areas through which they pass.[14] Many of those familiar with Route 66 currently belong to preservation and promotional organizations for the highway, and these associations also include people who do not reside on or near the road. Each of the eight Route 66 states has a grassroots preservation organization dedicated to saving and interpreting the highway. There is a national *Route 66 Magazine,* hundreds of Route 66 internet sites, a National Route 66 Federation, at least three international Route 66 organizations in Europe, numerous museums dedicated to Route 66 (two of which are in rival towns in Oklahoma, Elk City and Clinton, only thirty miles apart). Guided bus

---

[14]Carol Ahlgren, "The Lincoln Highway," *Cultural Resource Management* 19, no. 9 (1996): 16-17.

tours, drive-a-thons, expositions, and convoys of vintage recreational vehicles occur regularly along the route.

In addition to being an object of nostalgia and a tourist destination, Route 66 has become a product. All over the United States and in other regions of the world, retailers market theme items such as reproduced sheet-metal Route 66 shields, Route 66 license plates, and a set of old-fashioned Route 66 gas-pump salt-and-pepper shakers molded in plastic. Recently, the K-Mart Corporation introduced a "Route 66" line of blue jeans. As one Arizona merchant recently said, "If it has the shield on it, it will sell."[15] The shield icon has become so valuable that there is currently an extended court battle over who owns the copyright in Europe.[16]

Recent media attention has fueled renewed interest in Route 66. American and European magazines, including *National Geographic*, *Newsweek*, and *Der Spiegel*, and television producers such as the Travel Channel and Public

---

[15]Route 66 merchant, Discussion with author, Arizona, 4 October 1998.

[16]Route 66 Expo, event and lectures held in Amarillo, Texas on 1-3 October 1998 was attended by author.

Broadcasting System have produced stories on Route 66 within the last decade.[17]

Why is it that foreigners, especially Germans, Swiss, and Japanese, come to remote sites in Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma to tour Route 66? One German tourist said he came to see the "real America." By this, he meant the America of western literature and John Steinbeck, not the America of Best Western Motels and Burger Kings. Another German visitor to Seligman, Arizona explained succinctly, "If you build a McDonalds here, we will stop coming."[18]

The road also has deep significance for Americans who have spent their lives driving it. A Route 66 enthusiast in Illinois, who has lived and worked on Route 66 for over fifty years, describes the highway as "an adventure."[19] A

---

[17]Route 66 visitor center volunteer, Oklahoma 28 September 1998. *Great Drives: A cross-country trek from Chicago, Illinois, to Santa Monica, California*, prod. and dir. Robert Townsend, 50 min. Public Broadcasting System. 1996. Set of five videocassettes. David Lamb, "Route 66: Romancing The Road," *National Geographic*, September 1997, 47-64. Malcolm Jones, Jr., "The Highway That's the Best." *Newsweek*, 16 November 1992, 92-95.

[18]Anonymous German tourists, Seligman, Arizona, 4 October 1998.

[19]Route 66 merchant, Illinois, 25 September 1998.

long-time gas station operator on the highway in central Illinois refers to Route 66 as "our history."[20] Others, such as author Michael Wallis, characterize Route 66 as "a metaphor for the way the United States used to be--real family values without the buzz words."[21] On Route 66, tourists and reporters come to meet and interview formerly obscure people, giving them individual fame because of their association with the road.

Much of the appeal of Route 66 lies in its sense of authenticity and place. While the symbols of the road, such as the shield, have been widely marketed, the road itself has yet to be packaged. One can still travel the often-lonely stretches of road and walk among the ruins, meet genuine Route 66 celebrities, stay in the same motels, and eat at the same restaurants, sometimes run by the same families, as the original tourists. Route 66 represents a linear community truly for, by, and of the people. The surviving segments comprise an American ruin. Europe has

---

[20]Gas station operator, Illinois, 26 September 1998.

[21]Michael Wallis, Route 66 Expo. Lecture, Shamrock, Texas, 2 October 1998.

castles and Roman aqueducts, while the United States has the ruins of tourist courts, gas stations, and early viaducts.

Historic Route 66 presents visitors with a jumble of popular cultural images and icons, many involving the automobile and the Southwest, which developed over more than a century. The mix of cultural references associated with Route 66 has helped give the historic highway its recent appeal. While traveling the route, the contemporary traveler experiences architecture from various periods, images, and ruins that reflect multiple layers of memory, history, and myth.

In spite of their allure, the eclectic structures and buildings along the highway are endangered, because the very neglect that is part of their attractiveness has allowed structures and old stretches of pavement (former alignments) to crumble. Can these remnants be preserved while maintaining the corridor's free and open character? Would a high level of protection, such as making Route 66 into a highly regulated linear park, remove all sense of authenticity? While the focus of historic preservation has

shifted in recent decades to include vernacular architecture and modern structures, road-related buildings such as cafés and motels continue to disappear at an alarming rate, and interpretation of sites on Route 66 for visitors is sporadic.

Many people who maintain visitor centers on Route 66, actually remember the road when it was a primary transportation route. Unfortunately, most people who can recall the effects of major events on Route 66, such as the Dust Bowl and the Second World War, have become elderly. This raises several questions: what can replace their direct memory, and can public historians fill this void? How can we interpret the history of a myth and chronicle nostalgia for realities that may never have existed?

When the elders who remember the road retire, public historians will have to interpret the road, but they must do so in a fashion that does not destroy the authenticity of the route. For example, guide books and periodic guided tours seem preferable to making the road into a gigantic park full of signs and rules, yet the structures and historic alignments must be stabilized and interpreted.

This dissertation provides a historical background for Route 66, using primary sources such as guidebooks, period magazines, historic postcards, and tourist pamphlets, and secondary sources such as popular and scholarly literature available on Route 66. Discussions between the author and individuals associated with Route 66 in 1998 constitute a source of information for this study. Historic postcards and period promotional publications about Route 66 are major primary sources.

Chapter 2 is a discussion of the popular images of Route 66 and the Southwest, particularly of efforts by railroads and other regional boosters in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to create unique and alluring perceptions of the Southwest and its cultures to attract tourists. Between 1927 and the 1970s, boosters and merchants along Route 66 used the same images to increase highway tourism.

Chapter 3 provides a context for Route 66 within the history of automobile roads and road-related landscapes in America. The chapter describes the development of long-distance auto highways in the early twentieth century and

traces their use as tour routes. The chapter outlines the evolution of auto-related architecture such as motels, diners, and gas stations, and examines the wide assortment of cultural images associated with them. The chapter also discusses the evolution of the pre-interstate highway road-related landscape.

Chapter 4 discusses the early evolution of the Route 66 corridor from a series of trails, to a railroad corridor, to a highway. The chapter includes an outline of Route 66's rise to fame between 1927 and the 1960s, and a description of its physical decline after 1970 as interstate highways replaced sections of the old highway. Since Route 66's fame resulted from powerful images involving the Southwest and the automobile, Chapter 4 also discusses the evolution of southwestern imagery from the railroad period to the automobile era.

Chapter 5 documents and analyzes the rediscovery of Route 66 as an historic highway. The chapter describes current manifestations of imagery and myth associated with the Southwest and Route 66, and how they inspire contemporary but still nostalgic efforts to preserve the

highway. Current ideas about Route 66 are compared to impressions of motorists who traveled Route 66 during its period of significance and business people who served them. Chapter 5 also describes the rebirth of Route 66 as a cultural phenomenon in the 1980s and 1990s. Once a number of efficient but monotonous interstate highways replaced Route 66, many observers began looking back on the historic highway as an experience.

Chapter 6 contains a brief statement of historical significance and discusses methods of preserving and protecting Route 66 as an historic corridor. The chapter addresses cultural landscapes, road-related National Register and local historic districts, federal preservation regulations, issues in the preservation of road-related vernacular architecture (such as motels and restaurants) and the potential for development and promotion of heritage tourism on Route 66. In addition, the chapter examines methods of interpreting the highway that would help visitors to understand the history of Route 66 and its context within the history of the American West. Hopefully,

such interpretation will inspire further preservation efforts.

Chapter 7 outlines and evaluates ways in which Route 66 and associated historic resources can be used as tools for higher education. Route 66 provides settings for field trips and academic research in a variety of fields. Professors can inspire students by using Route 66 to illustrate America's automobile history and to provide a focus and context for teaching subjects in historic preservation and American history. Historic subjects include the history of the Southwest, the Dust Bowl, the vast post-World War II migrations of the late 1940s, and the development of highways, automobiles and roadside architecture between 1927 and 1970. The historic highway can function as an effective learning tool for students of all learning styles and ethnic backgrounds.

Route 66 continues to serve as a symbol of the American West and auto travel. While the highway's cultural significance appears to have been unclear to many of those who traveled Route 66 prior to its closure in 1985, the route has come to represent life along all American

highways before the interstates. Today, with only segments remaining intact, historic Route 66 survives more as a symbol and as a marketing tool than as a highway. Even so, the road represents a significant American cultural phenomenon rooted in the nineteenth century that continues to thrive as a popular tourist attraction and as a widespread focus of nostalgia.

CHAPTER 2

"WILD" LANDS AND "TAMED" INDIANS: ROMANTICISM, RAILROADS, AND THE IMAGERY OF TOURISM IN THE SOUTHWEST, 1869-1930

The lore and imagery of US 66 derives from a tradition of promoting the Southwest that dates from the railroad era of the late nineteenth century. Without its associations with southwestern icons such as Native Americans, cowboys and the Grand Canyon, Route 66 would probably not have achieved the notoriety that it did.

Many of the specific images used in Route 66 brochures, signage, and architecture, such as the feathered Indian chief and the rustic Pueblo outpost, derived from deeply ingrained preconceptions about the Southwest. Many of these images had developed from racist stereotypes and the commodification of the Southwest and its native peoples.

Before the creation of Route 66, the American Southwest had already achieved a reputation as a "land of

enchantment."[1] For decades, the American Southwest had drawn tourists seeking breathtaking scenery, mysterious Indians, romantic Hispanics, and wholesome cowboys.

Until railroads came to the Southwest in the 1870s, many Anglo Americans who ventured into the region, including novelist Washington Irving, used words such as "desolate," "barren," "wild," and "dreary" to describe the desert Southwest.[2] Before railroads popularized Southwestern Indian art and pottery, the region and its material culture were perceived as having little economic value.

In the 1890s, Victorian writers, artists, railroad officials and other regional boosters, almost exclusively Euro-American, gained economic, political, and cultural hegemony over the West and set about converting southwestern scenery and indigenous cultures into commodities to market to affluent eastern tourists and settlers. Boosters transformed the dubious reputation of

---

[1]New Mexico State Highway Department, "New Mexico Official Road Map" (Santa Fe: New Mexico State Highway Department, 1954). "The Land of Enchantment" is the state of New Mexico's slogan.

[2]Lloyd E. Hudman, "Tourism and the West," *Journal of the West* (July, 1994): 68.

the Arizona and New Mexico Territories as strange, foreign provinces into an asset. As they worked to commodify southwestern cultures and landscapes, businessmen altered and often threatened the cultures and the natural environments they tried to glorify.[3]

Promotion by railroads, dime novels with western themes, and acts such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show provided Easterners with a highly romanticized and often fictional perspective on the formerly "wild" but recently tamed Indians living in the still "untamed" southwestern landscape. Regional boosters emphasized nationalism, Anglo-Saxon ethnic pride, and an opportunity to visit segments of America that remained undeveloped. During the railroad era, many whites believed Anglo-Saxons to be innately superior to peoples of color, and held that the white race had fulfilled its "manifest destiny" by taking the West.[4] While Anglo settlers tended to look down on Mexicans as

---

[3]Martin Padget, "Travel, Exoticism, and the Writing of Region: Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Creation of the Southwest," *Journal of the Southwest* (Autumn, 1995): 422-423.

[4]Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 48-52.

"mongrels," they often had mixed feelings about the Native Americans, especially the Pueblo Indians.

Native Americans had fascinated Anglos since first contact, and during the Romantic Movement philosophers created the idea of the Indian as a "noble savage." Romanticism, which emphasized emotion over reason, originated in western Europe in the mid-eighteenth century and persisted as the dominant intellectual ideology of western society into the 1830s. Rugged, dramatic scenery, peasants, lunatics, children, and "savages" fascinated the Romantics. The movement emerged at the beginning of the industrial revolution, as a reaction against the developing mechanized industrial civilization and the dispassionate rationalism of the Enlightenment, which had emphasized thought and logic. Critical of the western notion of progress, the Romantics created a cult of "illusioned naturalism" and called for a return to nature.[5]

American Indians appeared to manifest the ideal of the natural man uncorrupted by western civilization because, to

---

[5]Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism* (New York: Russel & Russel, 1961), 15-20.

the Romantics, they represented the antithesis of the Protestant work ethic, affected manners, and social regimentation. Romantic thinkers such as philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, who coined the term "noble savage," used the idea of noble savages as a means of critiquing European and European-American society. In his "Discourse on Inequality," Rousseau described primitive man as an animal little different from any other. However, when people began to form families, they became elevated in sensitivity. Rousseau wrote, "This period of expansion of the human faculties, keeping a just mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activities of our own egoism, must have been the happiest and most durable of epochs. . . . This is precisely the state reached by most of the savage nations known to us."[6] In other words, the noble savage represented the perfect balance between primitive ignorance and civilized decadence.

---

[6]Ibid., 8-10

According to historian Julie Scimmel, the Romantic concept of native peoples was not entirely complimentary, because it contained elements of a patronizing admiration. Romantics created idealized notions of tribal peoples that had little relation to reality or a true understanding of their cultures. Sitting in European salons, Romantics speculated about Native Americans and pretended that they existed in a mythic state of perfection. Individuals influenced by Romanticism who actually did come into contact with Indians often portrayed them as mythic figures in a pastoral fantasy. Paintings by Karl Bodmer, George Catlin, and Alfred Jacob Miller from the 1830s portrayed Indians as innocents, separate from the corrupting influences of Anglo civilization.[7]

After traveling through the American West to capture images of plains Indians in the 1830s, artist George Catlin portrayed Indians as "noble" but fading spectacles being rapidly corrupted by civilization. He found Native Americans fascinating, but also believed they were easily

---

[7]Julie Scimmel, "Inventing the Indian," in *The West as America, Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier*, ed. William H. Truettner (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1991), 151.

corruptible and would never coexist with civilization.[8] Catlin wrote that nature had "nowhere presented more beautiful and lovely scenes than those of the vast prairies of the West" and that the "noble specimens who inhabit them--the Indian and the buffalo" were the "joint and original tenants of the soil, and fugitives together from the epoch of civilized man." Catlin described the Indian and buffalo as being "under an equal doom," having "taken up their last abode, where their race will expire, and their bones will bleach together." In his writings, he concisely outlined the contradiction of the Romantic view of tribal peoples, deeming them "noble" but also "weak and ignorant."[9] Because of this "ignorance" Indians were doomed to sell their only livelihood, the buffalo, for a few quarts of whiskey. In Catlin's words, the Native Americans

---

[8]Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 123.

[9]George Catlin, *North American Indians: Being Letters and Notes on Their Manners, Customs, and Conditions, Written During Eight Years' Travel Amongst the Wildest Tribes in North America, 1832-1839*, 2 vols. (London: George Catlin, 1880), I:293.

then "lay drunk and crying."[10] Catlin had a tremendous influence on subsequent American views and visual perceptions of Native Americans and the West. He wrote a series of popular books and took his collection of paintings of Indians, sometimes bringing along living "specimens" on a tour of the United States and Europe.[11]

Forty years later, railroad tour brochures warned would-be travelers to see the West soon to catch a last glimpse of native cultures before they vanished. Cultural anthropologist Renato Rosaldo refers to the desire by members of a dominant group to see the cultures and landscapes their civilization was destroying as "imperialist nostalgia." This sentiment assumes that, although the culture being visited is doomed because of inevitable technological and social progress, native cultures are worthy spectacles that should be witnessed and documented.[12]

---

[10]Ibid., 292.

[11]Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 185.

[12]Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), vii. Rosaldo is a professor of cultural and social anthropology at

A southwestern ideal began to congeal in the late nineteenth century when Anglos who had the free time and sophistication to appreciate the area's aesthetic qualities began to travel through the region. Before the Civil War, when railroads had not yet reached the Arizona or New Mexico Territories, Europe remained the focus of American tourism for the leisure class. The Southwest was still difficult to access, and only rugged pioneers made the arduous journey from the East, usually to go on to California. A small number of Anglos came to prospect, conduct business, explore, or otherwise find adventure, but never to take a relaxed holiday. Pioneers began writing about the Southwest for an Eastern audience, and word of its "wonders" spread eastward.

After the discovery of the Yosemite Valley and the Sierra redwoods in 1851, a small number of tourists were drawn to these areas. Horace Greeley described the Yosemite

---

Stanford University and is a former director of the Stanford University Center for Chicano Research.

Valley in an 1859 article for the New York Times as, "the most unique and majestic of nature's marvels."[13] In the mid-nineteenth century, writers often compared wilderness areas in the American West to European landscapes, especially the Alps.[14] Until railroads cut into the deserts of the Southwest, the American public still knew relatively little about the area, and few easterners felt motivated to make the difficult journey by stagecoach to see the region.

In 1869 a new transcontinental line became the primary mode of transportation to the West. Larger numbers of elite easterners began traveling west for their holidays instead of going to Europe. As railways continued to spread, railroad companies such as the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe began to promote tourism on their new lines, targeting wealthy urbanites who could afford riding in Pullman cars and staying at new luxurious railroad hotels.[15] At first, most Santa Fe riders came to the region because

---

[13]Horace Greeley, "Tourism and the West," in *Tourism, A Shrinking World*, ed. Lloyd E. Hudman (March, 1990), 69.

[14]Billy M. Jones, *Health Seekers in the Southwest 1817-1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 90-91.

[15]Alfred Runte, "Promoting the Golden West: Advertising and the Railroad," *California History* (Spring, 1991): 63.

they believed southwestern air and mineral water cured illnesses and generally aided health.[16] Once they arrived in the Southwest and traversed the exotic landscape, saw Indian ruins, and visited pueblos, they often became more interested in the places they visited than the cures they had come to receive.[17]

In an effort to attract tourists to the West, business people and conservationists worked for the creation of national parks such as Yellowstone (1872) and Yosemite (1890). The Southern Pacific Railroad actively lobbied for the establishment of Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks. John Muir, who addressed the 1895 Sierra Club annual meeting, said, "Even the soulless Southern Pacific R.R. Co., never counted on for anything good, helped nobly in pushing the bill for this park through Congress."[18] While the California and Wyoming national parks drew more tourists to the West, the popularization of Indian cultures and ancient ruins of Arizona and New Mexico allowed the

---

[16]Jones, *Health Seekers in the Southwest*, 88-95.

[17]Marta Wiegle and Peter White, *The Lore of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 22.

[18]Runte, "Promoting the Golden West," 63.

Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railroad (ATSF) and its partner, The Fred Harvey Company, to build an empire based on themed tourism. The impact of Harvey's tours and railroad hotels became so great that Harvey earned the title "civilizer of the West."[19]

The ATSF and other train companies flooded the East with posters, calendars, postcards, and guidebooks featuring southwestern scenes. The railroads commissioned art and advertising materials calling up images such as exotic arid scenery and primitive native cultures, to evoke the sensations of mystery, adventure, and innocent romance among potential railroad travelers.[20] By the late 1870s, there were already over twenty-five travel guidebooks to the West, all of which championed rail travel. The guidebooks and promotions worked. In 1875 alone, over 75,000 passengers rode the Union Pacific from Omaha, Nebraska to San Francisco. By the end of the century, over 100,000 people rode trains to the West annually.[21]

---

[19]Wiegel and White, *The Lore of New Mexico*, 53.

[20]Runte, "Promoting the Golden West," 63.

[21]Hudman, "Tourism and the West," 69.

The Santa Fe Railroad did not include Indians in its advertising until the late 1890s, in part because the railroad had continued to equip trains with Winchester rifles against Indian raids well into the 1880s.[22] Several groups of Apaches staged "breakouts" from reservations and returned to their homelands, often raiding ranches and attacking United States soldiers. From 1881 to 1883, Geronimo and a group of about seventy Chiricahua Apache warriors raided both sides of the Mexican boarder. Geronimo surrendered in 1883 and returned to the White Mountain Reservation for about a year, but staged a final breakout in 1885 because he and about forty fellow Apaches found the rules and restrictions on the reservation intolerable. By this time, thousands of settlers occupied the traditional Apache homelands, and the transcontinental Southern Pacific Railroad ran through the area. However, Geronimo's small group managed to spend almost a year in the mountains, pursued by a large force of nearly five thousand soldiers

---

[22]Wiegel and White, *The Lore of New Mexico*, 57. A depiction of Indian art appeared in a 1903 ATSF advertisement for the "California Limited" in 1903, and a line drawing of an Indian woman appeared in an advertisement in the December, 1906, edition of *Harper's Magazine*.

and hired Apache scouts. Geronimo surrendered in March of 1886, ending the final chapter in the Indian wars in the southwest and opening the image of the "wild" Indian to commodification.[23]

Once Anglos had pacified the Indians through military force and imposed poverty, many began to consider Native Americans a potent symbol of backward, child-like freedom as the Romantics had. The intrusion of industrial commerce into the Southwest offered a point of contrast with the artifacts of aboriginal cultures. Tourism reinforced the assumption of many Anglo visitors that the decayed state of local Indian ruins proved that modern solutions were more effective.[24]

With the region relatively safe for travel by Anglos, the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railroad began to popularize the area by helping to create and distribute Southwestern images. In 1892 the railroad commissioned the

---

[23]Michael Lieder and Jake Page, *Wild Justice: The People of Geronimo vs. the United States* (New York: Random House, 1997), 22-27.

[24]Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts, The American National Monuments* (Normal: University of Illinois Press, 1989) 58.

renowned painter, Thomas Moran, to paint the Grand Canyon. In 1895 the ATSF's managers decided to intensify their efforts to promote tourism and set about hiring artists, photographers and ethnographers to depict Indian life and natural scenery in the region, and planning the construction of large hotels.[25] In 1898 the Southern Pacific Railroad began publishing a promotional tourism periodical, *Sunset*, to increase ridership along its lines.[26]

The Native Americans that urbane railroad tourists encountered during the railroad era had succumbed to a fate similar to what George Catlin had predicted decades earlier. As long as southwestern Indians remained independent and a military force, it was impossible for them to be viewed by well-to-do Easterners on their holidays. Now that the tribes were confined to reservations and were dispirited, they could be presented as a spectacle for Anglos, commodities in a human safari. After 1905, Indians and Indian art and architecture increasingly appeared in ATSF and Southern Pacific advertisements. A

---

[25]Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, 63.

[26]Runte, "Promoting the Golden West," 63.

December 1910 layout artfully depicts an encounter between an Anglo woman tourist and a passive but aloof Native American woman who is selling artifacts (Figure 3). A similar 1912 promotion shows three Indians wrapped in blankets and standing in front of a pueblo seen through a contemplative female tourist's train window (Figure 4).[27]

At this time, Santa Fe and the Fred Harvey Company sponsored articles, pamphlets, and artwork that flooded the popular media with images of a wild and sensational West, and exotic landscape where a safe version of the American frontier environment could still be experienced.[28] William H. Simpson, who headed the ATSF's advertising department from 1900 to 1933, assembled a collection of over six hundred paintings, mostly of Pueblo and Navajo scenes, and used them to illustrate brightly-colored ATSF calendars,

---

[27]"Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railroad," *Harper's Magazine*, December, 1903; November, 1910; June, 1912; and "Southern Pacific Railroad," *Harper's Magazine*, June, 1907.

[28]Kerwin L. Klein, "Frontier Products: Tourism, Consumerism, and the Southwestern Public Lands, 1890-1990," *Pacific Historical Review*, (February, 1993): 45.

Figure 3. Railroad imagery created an allure by portraying Native Americans as exotic others. Santa Fe advertisement, in *Harper's Magazine,* 1910.

Figure 4. The strange world outside this tourist's window included Pueblo architecture. Santa Fe advertisement in *Harper's Magazine*, 1912.

which reached as many as 300,000 offices, houses, and schools a year.[29]

Railroad publications focused on attractions in Arizona and New Mexico and featured natural wonders such as the Painted Desert and Petrified Forest, Indian ruins, portraits of Native Americans, occupied pueblos, ATSF trains puffing through the desert, Indian-made artifacts, and even recently built picturesque Harvey hotels. The stylized, dignified, and aloof image of a southwestern Indian became the logo of the ATSF and the company gave its trains such names as "The Navajo," "The Chief," (Figure 5) and "The Super Chief."[30] ATSF brochures even spoke of the "Santa Fe Indian" and the "Santa Fe Southwest."[31]

---

[29]Wilson, *Myth of Santa Fe*, 91.

[30]Taken from Santa Fe Railroad advertisements in *Harper's Magazine,* June, 1921, and November, 1926. The 1926 promotion for the "Chief" utilizes the Indian warrior in feathered headdress image so often used by subsequent Route 66 roadside businesses.

[31]Wilson, *Myth of Santa Fe*, 90.

Figure 5. Names such as "the Chief" helped to establish imagery of Native Americans that would later appear along Route 66. Santa Fe advertisement in *Harper's Magazine*, 1928.

The Fred Harvey Company sought to create an aura, a sense of authenticity, for the images they marketed. For example, at its Mexican and Indian House in Albuquerque, the company's designers choreographed the tourist experience to create demand for their merchandise and increase sales. First, guides took tourists through a museum of genuine antique Native American and Hispanic artifacts to inspire a sense of wonder and then led them through a gift shop of similar but recently made objects that were for sale.[32]

Ironically, marketing by corporations degraded authenticity of southwestern art, pottery, and jewelry, because traders organized Indian artisans and encouraged them to design their wares to suit Anglo tastes rather than making them for tribal use. This provided needed income for tribes and irreversibly altered their way of life. The Pueblo Indians had been drawn into the market economy and their artifacts (such as pottery and jewelry) and

---

[32]Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1996), 85.

spectacles of their traditional cultures (such as the Snake Dance) had become commodities on the tourist market with the Fred Harvey Company acting as retailer. Artisans ceased making functional artifacts, such as large water jars, and crafted small ornamental pottery instead.[33]

Heritage tourism, a means of converting exotic Indian culture and scenery into profits for local businessmen and America's first giant corporations, the railroads, had come to the Southwest. Writing for a 1902 ATSF booklet, Harriet Monroe proclaimed that once tourists arrived at the Fred Harvey hotel, El Tovar, on the rim of the Grand Canyon, they could be "exploring the wilderness with the pioneers" in a matter of minutes.[34] Promotions of this type brought thousands of tourists westward, but their presence and the services they required began to alter the pristine environment they had come to see. Tourism helped to integrate the remote territories of the Southwest into the United States. Until statehood came to New Mexico and

---

[33]Edwin L. Wade, "The Ethnic Market in the Southwest," in *Objects and Others: Essays on Material Culture*, ed., George W. Stocking Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 169.

[34]Klein, "Frontier Products," 45.

Arizona in 1912, the United States federal government administered them as territories that functioned essentially as colonies.[35] Many Anglos in other states actively opposed admitting these two territories as states because they believed the Southwest to be populated by peoples they considered to be "inferior mongrels," not suited to be citizens of the Republic.[36] By creating territorial governments, the United States established political hegemony over the Mexican Americans and Native Americans.

Southwestern tourism expressed political and cultural dominance because it reduced natives to images and stereotypes. A 1910 *National Geographic* article described the western national parks and national monuments, which often featured ancient Indian ruins, as "national playgrounds," "workshops," "natural wonderlands," and "fields to the tourist."[37] These descriptions proclaimed

---

[35]Howard Roberts Lamar, *The Far Southwest 1846-1912: A Territorial History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 458-480.

[36]Wilson, *Myth of Santa Fe*, 73.

[37]Guy Elliot Mitchell, "A New National Park," *National Geographic Magazine,* 21 March 1910, 215.

European-American victory over the wilderness, once hostile and terrifying, now reduced to a "playground."

A 1916 article by Gilbert H. Grosvenor, boosting United States tourism, "The Land of the Best," described the Indians as "Redskins upon our own Western [sic] plains and in our own cliff dwellings [who] reveal stories of the past as strange as any we know, and constitute a race more magnificent in physique than any that can be found in other parts of the world."[38] A similar 1910 article described an evening a tourist might spend "at home" with "bright and cheerful Zuni men and women," and noted the "picturesque" nature of Hopi ceremonies, as if these friendly, so called good Indians, were eager for tourists to routinely invade their privacy and look into their homes, lives, and cultures like museum visitors.[39] Railroad promotions, such as a 1930 Union Pacific brochure advertising passenger trains through Arizona, featured Maynard Dixon's romanticized painting of an Apache man, depicting Indians

---

[38]Gilbert H. Grosvenor, "The Land of the Best," *National Geographic Magazine,* 24 April 1916, 328.

[39]N.H. Darton, "The Southwest, Its Splendid Natural Resources, Agricultural Wealth, and Scenic Beauty," *National Geographic Magazine,* 21 August 1910, 643-644.

as a picturesque "lost race," the scattered remains of which were now available for viewing by rail-tourists.[40]

The railroads touted Anasazi sites, built by a civilization that mysteriously perished before the arrival of Europeans. For example, the Navajo National Monument in Arizona commemorated the Anasazi but not the Navajo.[41] Railroad promoters tended to memorialize ancient Native Americans rather than those recently displaced or subjugated and who were dealing with the harsh realities of poverty and disease. Major R. Hunter Clarkson of the Santa Fe Railway took an archeological approach when he proclaimed in 1925 that, "there is more of historic, prehistoric, human and scenic interest in the Southwest than in any similar area in the world, not excepting India, Egypt, Europe or Asia."[42]

The more popular and accessible prehistoric and historic areas became, the more pothunters looted them.

---

[40]Runte, "Promoting the Golden West," 65.

[41]David Glassberg, "Monuments and Memories," *American Quarterly* 43 (March 1991): 149.

[42]Marta Weigle, "Southwest Lures: Innocents Detoured, Incensed Determined," *Journal of the Southwest* (Winter, 1990): 501.

Widespread looting caused passage of the 1906 Antiquities Act, which made it illegal to take artifacts from ruins located on government property, but the 1906 Act carried light penalties and was difficult to enforce. Increasing tourism encouraged the railroads to build more rail lines, better roads to get tourists to sites, and additional hotels and other visitor services. By the 1920s, the railroad had become so integrated into the New Mexico and Arizona landscape that a number of tourists asked their guides why the Indians had built their pueblos so far from the tracks.[43]

The ATSF made such a significant impact on the landscape because it built and operated an extensive system of hotels throughout the Southwest. The ATSF contracted the Fred Harvey Company to manage them. These hotels included the Casteñeda in Las Vegas, New Mexico, built in 1899, the Alvarado in Albuquerque built in 1902, and the El Tovar beside the Grand Canyon, built in 1905.[44] The ATSF

---

[43]Wiegel and White, *Lore of New Mexico*, 64.

[44]Dilworth, *Imagining Indians*, 81.

encouraged the Hopi and Navajo to sell jewelry to tourists at El Tovar. The railroad also built a museum next door, called the "Hopi House," to display local Native American artifacts to visitors, and the hotel paid Hopi dancers to perform for their guests in the evening.[45] The ATSF and the Fred Harvey Company organized elaborate shows and displays at major national and international expositions visited by millions of people. Exhibitions with ATSF representation included the World's Colombian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exhibition in St. Louis, and the Panama-California Exposition and Panama-Pacific International Exhibition, both held in California in 1915.[46] The primary motivation for these displays was to give potential railroad tourists a tantalizing peek at Southwestern images and provoke them to take a train trip west. While touring the Colombian Exposition, ATSF executives gained inspiration from the California Building built in the Mission style and began building Mission style depots from Kansas to California. The Southern Pacific and

---

[45]Hudman, "Tourism and the West," 69.

[46]Dilworth, *Imagining Indians*, 91.

Union Pacific soon followed the Santa Fe's architectural lead.[47]

Railroads and Fred Harvey were not the only Anglo organizations that worked to remake and promote the Southwest. The Museum of New Mexico's board of directors included Charles Lummis, a Harvard-educated journalist and major booster of the Southwest credited with coining the term "Southwest" and the phrase "visit America first," and Edgar Lee Hewitt. The directors sought to preserve the historic buildings of Santa Fe and pushed for a new style (the Pueblo revival) based on the region's vernacular (Indian and Spanish) traditions. Members of the museum's board exerted great influence on Santa Fe's city government and, after 1912, the city's architecture became standardized in the Pueblo revival style, primarily to encourage tourism (Figures 6 and 7).

Anglo anthropologists, architects, artists, and administrators developed the Santa Fe style based on Pueblo

---

[47]Wilson, *Myth of Santa Fe*, 90.

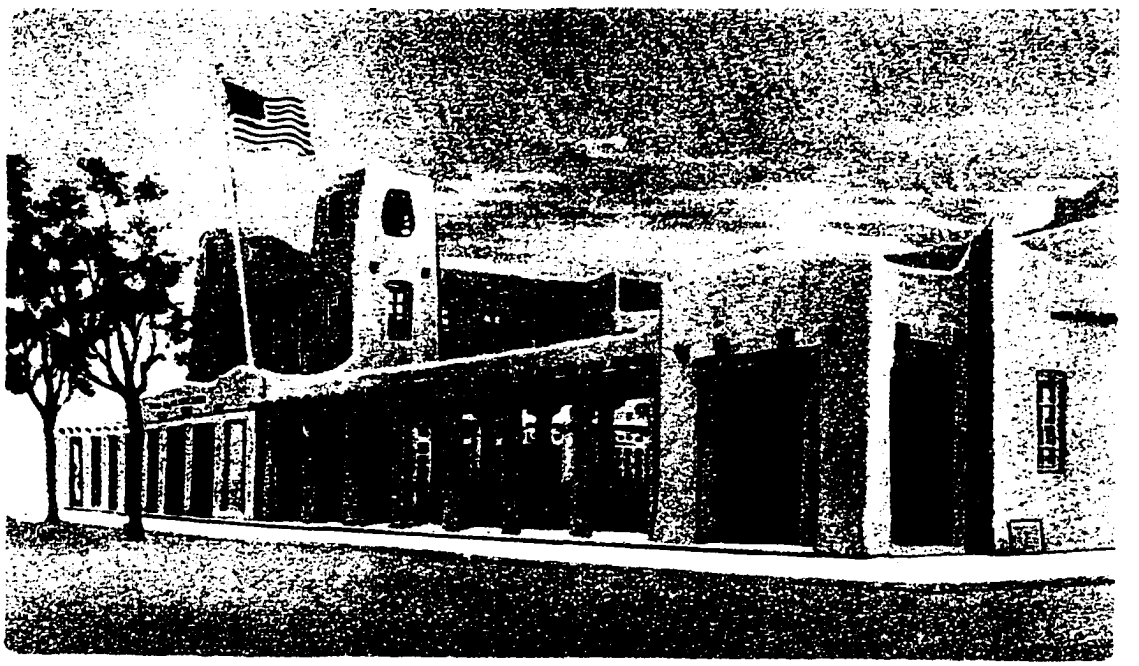

Figure 6, U.S. post office and federal building, Santa Fe, New Mexico, ca. 1930. Tourists often confused Pueblo architecture such as this with the real thing. Historic postcard, author's collection.

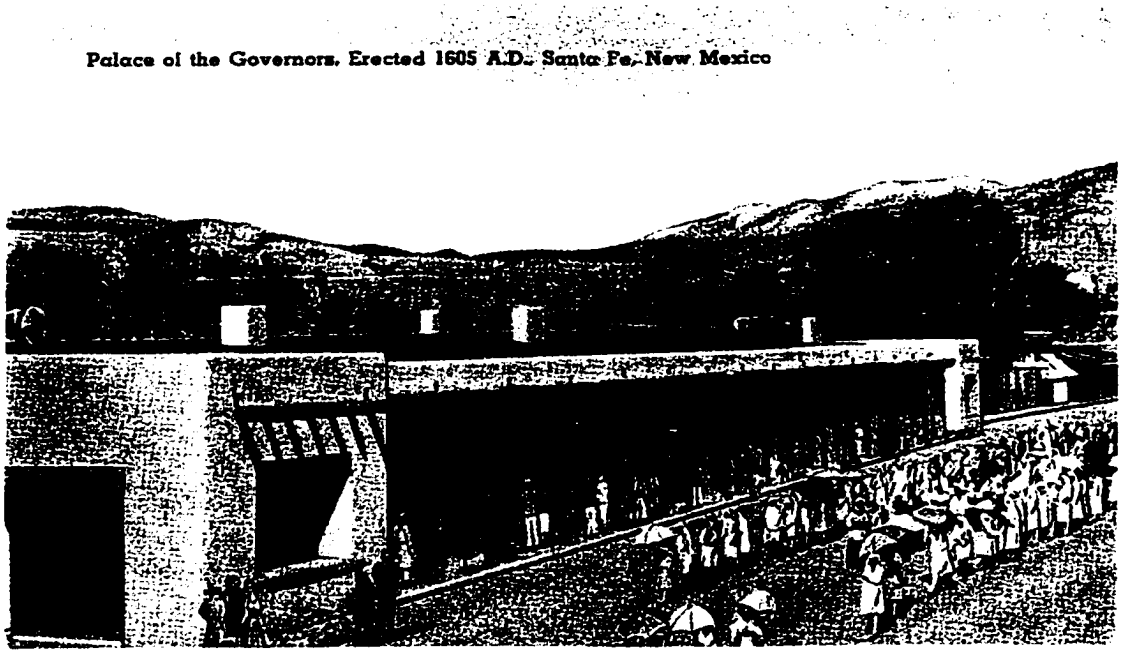

Figure 7. Palace of the Governors, Santa Fe New Mexico, ca. 1940. Built in 1605, this structure was completely rehabilitated and rationalized in the twentieth century. Historic postcard, author's collection.

and Spanish Mission motifs. However, when designing new buildings such as the New Mexico State Museum on the Plaza in Santa Fe, they "corrected" the old forms by spacing beams evenly and centering doorways. The new buildings caused confusion because tourists often mistook them for originals. Anglo developers also remodeled historic buildings such as the Palace of the Governors to conform to their rationalized version of Pueblo and Spanish architecture. These architectural revivals came to represent the Southwest's unique character in the minds of most Americans.[48]

Architect Mary Jane Colter emerged as a major innovator of the southwestern style. She began working for the Fred Harvey Company in 1902, having been hired to design the interior of the Alvarado Indian-Mexican building in Albuquerque. Her architecture and interiors borrowed forms from Native American and Mexican-Spanish examples found throughout the Southwest, such as Anasazi watchtowers

---

[48]Abigail A. Van Slyck, "Racial Stereotypes and the Southwest's Vernacular Architecture," in *Gender, Class, and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Elizabeth C. Crowley and Carter L. Hudgins, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 60.

and Navajo pueblos. Her designs created a "fiction in three dimensions," because they exaggerated and condensed regional motifs with the purpose of creating an artificial aura of regional character and authenticity for tourists.[49]

Colter antiqued many of her buildings to give them a false patina, the illusion of history. She blackened fireplace stones to make them look long-used, and incorporated genuine Anasazi petroglyphs into the stone surfaces of her buildings. She even designed false doorways filled with loose stones to appear, as she wrote, "as if done in haste in the fear of the attack of an enemy."[50] In her more than forty years working for the Fred Harvey Company, Colter designed several major hotels, museums and monuments. These included the El Navajo in Gallup, New Mexico, built in 1918 and expanded in 1923, where she incorporated Hopi sand paintings in the lobby. Colter designed the Hopi House at the Grand Canyon (1905) to look

---

[49]Claire Shepard-Lanier, "Trading on Tradition: Mary Jane Colter and the Romantic Appeal of Harvey House Architecture," *Journal of the Southwest* (Summer, 1996): 165.

[50]Arnold Berke, "Drawing from the Desert, Architect Mary Colter Told Stories in Stone," *Preservation* (July/August 1997): 42.

like "an authentic pueblo dwelling." To give the Indian Watchtower at the Grand Canyon a sense of authenticity she built a "re-creation of towers built by prehistoric Anasazi people."[51] Five of her buildings, including the Indian Watchtower, are currently National Historic Landmarks.[52]

In addition to creating historicized architecture, the railroads placed their stations and hotels in prominent positions near the tracks, often at the centers of southwestern towns, to advertise the exotic and alluring "native" images they promoted. An important example of this architecture is the La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, built in 1920. The Santa Fe Railroad bought the hotel in 1925 and leased it to the Fred Harvey Company in 1926. Fred Harvey extensively remodeled the building to make it resemble the Taos and Acoma Pueblos. This "inn at the end of the trail" became a significant example of reworked regional architectural interior decoration (designed by Mary Colter). La Fonda acted as a venue to merchandise Indian crafts, sell regional food, and showcase local residents.

---

[51]Michael S, Durham, "Landmarks on the Rim," *American Heritage* (April 1996): 137-144.

[52]Berke, "Drawing from the Desert," 39.

While the style of La Fonda's exterior was Pueblo revival, a style designed to mimic Native American architecture, the interior had a Mexican theme.[53]

The Pueblo revival style manifested many of the biases and bigotries of its creators. One bias was the preference given to Pueblo culture over Mexican-American culture by elites, such as the directors of the New Mexico Museum. Many revivalists de-emphasized Spanish contributions and influences. In the nineteenth century, Anglo visitors and settlers created a standardized ambivalent image of Hispanics and Mexican Americans, one that persists to this day. On the one hand, Anglos viewed Mexican-Americans, or "Spaniards" as they were sometimes called, as colorful and festive *dons* and beautiful *señoritas* who took life at a refreshingly slow pace.[54] On the other hand, Anglos often viewed Mexicans as decadent and lazy people who wasted time and resources.[55]

---

[53]Marta Weigle, "Southwest Lures: Innocents Detoured, Incensed Determined," *Journal of the Southwest* (Winter 1990): 526.

[54]Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*, 240.

[55]Wiegle, "Southwest Lures," 528. Two years prior to writing *The Mast*, a popular book about his travels in 1934,

Charles F. Lummis wrote *The Land of Poco Tiempo* in 1893, during the railroading era. In that book he described Hispanic New Mexico as "the land of *Poco Tiempo*-the home of pretty soon. . . . The pretty soon of New Spain is better than the Now! Now! of the haggard states. The opiate sun soothes to rest, the adobe is made to lean against, the hush of daylong noon would not be broken. Let us not hasten, *mañana* will do."[56] Although this passage reads like travel literature, it includes the clichéd image of the lazy Mexican American slumped against an adobe wall, one that has appeared in many places, including sites on Route 66, ever since. Lummis' less-than-complimentary view of native New Mexicans comes later in his book describes them

---

Richard Henry Dana Californios (Hispanics living in California) as festive and colorful but also inefficient and wasteful. He believed that the Californios inhabited a country (California), which could be developed and "properly utilized" by a more industrious race, such as the Anglo-Saxons. He concludes, "in the hands of an enterprising people, what a country this might be."

[56]Charles F. Lummis, *The Land of Poco Tiempo* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913; reprint New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893, 3 (page citations are from the reprint edition).

as the "in-bred and isolation-shrunken descendants of the Castilian world."[57]

The Fred Harvey Company consistently paid less attention to Mexican Americans than to Native Americans. One of the company's promotional souvenir books, *The Camera of the Southwest,* included pictures of bull fights, burros, and begging Hispanics, but dismissed Spanish influence by stating that it "never took hearty root in this land," and that the influence had "failed." The small amount of marketing that Mexicans did receive in company publications and postcards diminished over time.[58] Although the railroads and later, auto-oriented boosters rarely glorified Mexican Americans as they did Pueblo Indians, tired burros, parked carts, sleeping peasants, flamboyant matadors, and fiery *señoritas* continued to appear on postcards and advertisements throughout the Route 66 era (1927 to 1970). The purpose of southwestern travel literature was to make

---

[57]Van Slyck, "Racial Stereotypes and the Southwest," 97.

[58]Dilworth, *Imagining Indians*, 101.

the region seem unusual and foreign. When images of Hispanics suited that purpose, they were used. A major application of the Southwest's Spanish heritage was to give hotels and other businesses Spanish names, such as Fred Harvey's El Tovar Hotel, Hotel El Rancho in Gallup, New Mexico, and the La Siesta Motel in Winslow, Arizona. These names coincided with the public conception of the Wild West of Zane Grey novels and western movies where Hispanic culture usually provided a backdrop for the adventures of Anglo cowboy heroes.

Like Pueblo Indians and Mexican Americans, cowboys became a lasting symbol of the "Old West." During the heyday of the cowboy, between approximately 1865 and 1890, the public actually viewed cowboys with suspicion. Cowpunchers enjoyed little status because they were essentially itinerant, unskilled workers who had to endure months of physical strain and boredom and often became drunk and rowdy.[59] The cowboy first became a marketable commodity in 1884 when William F. Cody introduced William

---

[59]William W. Savage Jr., *Cowboy Life: Reconstructing An American Myth* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 7.

Levi Taylor, a Texas cowpuncher, to the audiences of his Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show as "Buck Taylor, King of the Cowboys." Cody carefully molded Taylor into an entertainer who portrayed himself as a "wistful soul who seemed to be longing for a return to the bucolic environs of the Great Plains." In 1887, with the publication of *Buck Taylor: King of the Cowboys; or The Raiders and the Rangers: A Story of the Wild and Thrilling Life of William L. Taylor*, Taylor became the first cowboy hero in fiction.[60]

Although Eastern newspapers had eagerly covered events such as the "true adventures of Billy the Kid" and the shootout at the O.K. Corral, pulp fiction made the cowboy famous.[61] The life and image of the cowboy became legend in books such as Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) and Zane Grey's *The Heritage of the Desert* (1910). Western fiction writers quickly abandoned dull but truthful accounts of cowboy life such as Andy Adam's *The Log of a Cowboy* (1903) and began to build a heroic figure.

---

[60]Ibid., 8.

[61]Kevin S. Blake, "Zane Grey and Images of the American West," *The Geographic Review* (April, 1995): 202-213.

Once the West had been "civilized" by Fred Harvey and the frontier declared closed by Frederick Jackson Turner, the cowboy became a symbol of a lost "golden era" of "frontier culture" where honor, justified violence, freedom, and democracy ruled. Theodore Roosevelt espoused this concept of the "democratic life of the cowboy" in his 1913 *Autobiography*. Roosevelt saw cowboys as independent Anglo-Saxons uncontaminated by "the poison of labor unionism." Roosevelt described cowpunchers as "hardy and self-reliant as any man who ever breathed--with bronzed, set faces and keen eyes that look all the world in the face without flinching as they flash out from under the broad-rimmed hats."[62] Roosevelt idealized cowboys as leading the masculine "strenuous life," which he prescribed for the ills of an increasingly industrial and sedentary society.[63]

Although Owen Wister made a brief visit to the West, he wrote *The Virginian* as "a Pennsylvanian who sat in South Carolina to write a book about a Virginian living in

---

[62]Cited in Ben Yagoda, *Will Rogers, A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 96.

[63]Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation, The Myth of the Frontier in the Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), 29-39.

Wyoming."[64] The fact that a Philadelphia blue blood wrote *The Virginian* did not prevent this pioneering work of the Western fiction genre from selling over 100,000 copies in its first year. Wister's book was made into a silent movie in 1914 and a talkie in 1929 starring Gary Cooper.[65] The story pitted cowboys against rustlers and initiated the customary Main Street shootout. The book was nearly pure fancy. Wister never depicted cowboys herding cattle in *The Virginian*. Authors such as Wister and Zane Grey blurred the distinction between cowboys and gun fighters, and the image of the heroic individualist hero in a ten gallon hat wearing a six gun and a bandana, riding a horse with ropes over his saddle became popular.

Like Roosevelt, Wister was ardently xenophobic. He and many of his successors saw the cowboy as the last cavalier. In 1895 he wrote, "to survive in clean cattle country requires spirit of adventure, courage, and self-sufficiency; you will not find many Poles or Huns or

---

[64]M.T. Marsden, "The Popular Western Novel as a Cultural Artifact," *Arizona and the West* (Spring: 1978): 207.

[65]John Lukacs, "From Camelot to Abilene," *American Heritage* (February, 1981): 55.

Russian Jews in that district. The Anglo-Saxon is still forever homesick for the out-of-doors."[66] Wister saw the cowboy as an incarnation of a mythic, rugged Anglo-Saxon racial heritage.

His notion of cowboy demographics could not have been further from the truth. In fact, in the early 1880s, at the height of the great cattle drives, one-in-three western cowboys were black or Mexican.[67] Although cowboys were consistently around 25 percent black and 12 percent Mexican, the African-American and Mexican-American cowboy did not suit the racial preconceptions of most writers and were therefore ignored.[68] White racism played an underlying role in the Western for decades as Anglo literary and movie heroes continually patronized, harassed, or shot Mexicans, Indians, and other people of color.

---

[66]Owen Wister, quoted in John Lukacs, "From Camelot to Abilene," 56.

[67]Ibid., 57.

[68]Kenneth W. Porter, "African Americans in the Cattle Industry, 1860s-1880s," in *Peoples of Color in the American West*, ed. Sucheng Chan, Douglas Daniels, Mario T. Garcia, and Terry P. Wilson, (Toronto: Heath and Company, 1994), 159.

Zane Grey also played a pivotal role in permanently fixing western concepts and imagery in the minds of the public. In the course of his writing career, which lasted from 1910 to 1932, he wrote fifty-five novels and sold over twelve million books by 1936. Read by millions of Americans, Grey's books made Bookman's top ten best-seller list every year between 1917 and 1924. By 1956 Grey had sold 68 million books worldwide, and 130 million had been printed by 1984. Over a hundred Western movies based on his novels multiplied the impact of his work. Grey's stories, which glorified the cowboy and stereotyped Indians, were set all over the Western United States, although he concentrated his settings in northern Arizona and southern Utah.[69] His settings were not as consistent as the ethnicity of his heroes.

In reality, even some cowboy celebrities were not Anglo-Saxon. Will Rogers, proudly part Cherokee, did much to publicize the cowboy image. Born in 1879 near Claremore, Oklahoma, Will Rogers began his career in 1902 as a lasso

---

[69]Blake, "Zane Grey and Images," 204.

twirler for Texas Jack's Wild West Circus. For the next decade, Will toured the nation and the world on the vaudeville circuit as a "fancy lasso artist and roughrider." In the spring of 1905, Rogers performed at Madison Square Garden on his trick pony, named "Teddy" after Theodore Roosevelt. During the show, a steer broke loose, jumped the guardrail into the crowd, and charged up onto the grandstand. Police tried to stop him, but failed, and Rogers took his lasso, ran up the bleachers, roped the animal, and brought it back into the arena to the cheers of the crowd.

Rogers projected the heroic cowboy image, wearing a "ten-gallon hat, a snug flaming red flannel shirt, fancy vest, knotted red bandanna and trousers tucked into high-heeled, gleaming boots with jingling spurs."[70] In the 1910s, he starred in fifty silent movies and became a world-famous radio and newspaper commentator by the 1920s. Rogers traveled the world, making the cowboy and his home state of

---

[70]Peggy Robbins, "Will Rogers: The Immortal Cherokee Kid," *American History Illustrated* (July 1974), 6.

Oklahoma famous.[71] His boyhood home was located near Claremore, Oklahoma, a Route 66 city, and after his tragic death in an air crash in 1935, Route 66 became known as the Will Rogers Highway. The Will Rogers Hotel overlooked Route 66 in Claremore, as did the Will Rogers Motor Court in Tulsa with a cowboy and a lasso incorporated into its sign. Tourists who traveled Route 66 through Oklahoma often came to see "Will Rogers Country," the land of the heroic cowboy. The images of Indians, Mexicans, and cowboys, developed in railroad brochures, western novels, and western movies, formed the foundation for much of the fame of Route 66. In fact, Route 66 became the primary autoroute to Hollywood, the center of filmmaking. Southern California became a node of "cowboy culture" because of the popularity of the western genre of motion picture. After 1909, the annual routine of many actual cowboys involved three seasons: the spring rodeo circuit, the fall cattle roundup, and a winter stop in southern California where they would congregate in Hollywood bars hoping to be selected by film

---

[71]Reba Neighbors Collins, "Just Plain Will," *The Quill* (May 1990): 44-47.

production crews as stunt men and extras.[72] This nexus among real cowboys such as Will Rogers, faux Indians, and stereotyped Mexicans with the California film industry helped create the western myth upon which Route 66 thrived.

As the popularity of southwestern images grew, the nature of transportation in the United States changed. By the late 1920s, railroads came into intense competition with the automobile. Although passenger lines held a substantial portion of market until after the Second World War, they slowly lost customers to autos after 1915. To compete with the automobile, the railroads increased services. In 1926 the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway and the Fred Harvey Company launched a tour service called the Harveycar "Indian Detours." The purpose was to provide chauffeured, guided auto trips from train stations to scenic areas and Indian sites, which would encourage people to take the train rather than bring their own cars, by providing access to areas remote from the tracks. An April, 1926 publicity folder for the Harveycar Tour states, "It is the purpose of the Indian Detour to

---

[72]Yagoda, *Will Rogers*, 174.

take you through the very heart of all this, to make you feel the lure of the Southwest that lies beyond the pinched horizons of your train window."[73]

By the 1930s, more Eastern tourists visited the West than traveled to Europe.[74] With the establishment of a numbered national highway system in 1926, auto tourists began to outnumber rail tourists. The images the railroads had used to lure American tourists to the West had been successful, and businessmen who stood to gain from auto tourism used many of the same images and stereotypes. Although not as affluent as their predecessors, these new visitors were attracted to the Southwest by the same icons, expectations, and lore that had brought rail tourists.

The social and environmental impact of rail tourism and early auto-tourism was dramatic. A 1929 Harveycar promotional ad states, "Those who are passing on into the setting sun made the Southwest safe. The railroad made its gateways accessible. It needed only the automobile, dragging better roads behind it, to let down the last

---

[73]Wiegel and White, *Lore of New Mexico*, 50.

[74]Hudman, "Tourism and the West," 71.

barriers of time and distance, discomfort and inconvenience, that for so long barred the Southwest to any but the pioneer."[75] When Harvey promoters wrote this passage, Route 66 was two years old. Gradual and seamless, the transition from trains to automobiles helped open the region to a greater number of tourists who would remember traveling on Route 66 as an integral part of their southwestern experience.

As the focus of domestic tourism shifted from trains to automobiles, many Americans took to the roads to explore the vast continent. The natural and cultural wonders they found inspired a rush of interest and myth that even the railroad promoters could not have imagined. Automobile tourism began as a spontaneous activity called auto-camping or "gypsying."[76] Between 1900 and 1920, at a time when railroads and railroad hotels still dominated passenger travel in the United States, a small but growing number of mostly middle-class Americans began spending their

---

[75]Wiegel and White, *Lore of the West*, 49.

[76]Warren James Belasco "Commercialized Nostalgia, the Origins of the Roadside Strip," in *The Automobile and American Culture*, ed. David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1983), 107.

vacations driving their cars across vast expanses of the country, particularly in the West and South. Auto-camping originally appealed to a small number of affluent but unconventional families who wanted to explore the countryside without having to endure the formalities and etiquette required by railroads. They drove where and when they pleased and discovered the unexpected, along America's mostly dirt roads.

As these early auto pioneers ventured into the countryside and found adventure, they began recording their experiences in travel diaries, sporting magazine columns, and travel literature.[77] Auto gypsies became identified as legendary non-conformists, free and rugged individualists who refused to be tied down. Motor gypsying seemed to liberate the human will from the tyranny of the hotels and timetables of the high iron. Numerous etiquette books instructed Americans who traveled the railroad how to conduct themselves on the train and at hotels. For the majority of Americans, riding an express train raised them

---

[77]Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road, From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945,* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979), 9.

into an environment above their accustomed social class. For this reason, advisors on manners had begun counseling the uninitiated as early as the 1880s, and their advice changed little over the following decades. Etiquette books recommended what clothes to wear, what cosmetics to bring, how to direct a Pullman porter, and how men and women must arrange themselves at dining car tables.[78]

The back-to-nature rebelliousness of auto gypsying represented part of a larger revolt against late Victorian culture and genteel standards of conduct expected by the railroad companies and railroad hotels. Following Theodore Roosevelt's call for a "strenuous life," and his friend Charles Lummis' plea to "see America first," auto gypsies took to the road and headed West. Many auto gypsies and their allies supported the establishment of national parks, pushed for an aggressive foreign policy, idolized cowboys, and began to move to suburban homesteads.[79] Early auto travel was slow, arduous, and closer to nature than train

---

[78]John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor, Railroads and the American Scene,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 70.

[79]Belasco, "Commercialized Nostalgia, 108.

travel. Auto-camping revived the leisurely pace, freedom of movement, simplicity, and family solidarity of the bygone times of wagon travel while increasing range and speed.[80] Gypsying expressed the American tradition of rugged individualism. As one contemporary freelance journalist wrote, "You were your own master, the road is ahead; you eat as you please, cooking your meals over an open fire; sleeping when you will under the stars, waking at dawn; swim in a mountain lake when you will, and always the road ahead. Thoreau at 29 cents a gallon."[81] Ironically, these pioneers of the early twentieth century who took their cars into nature on their vacations to pursue a more primitive existence initiated modern mass-tourism based on the mass-production of the automobile.

The auto-related landscapes and tourist propaganda of Route 66 evolved out of the imagery created by the railroads and early boosters such as Charles Lummis. The Fred Harvey Company became the first widespread hotel and

---

[80]John A. Jakle, *The Tourist, Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 154.

[81]Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 8.

restaurant chain in the West, perhaps in the world and helped create the precedent for forms and the fictional image of the Southwest that shaped the roadside architecture and imagery of Route 66.

Many early railroad communities later became Route 66 towns, and roadside business and local chambers of commerce adopted the icons that the railroads used to promote tourism on Route 66. The myth of the Southwest became so powerful in the twentieth century that it helped transform the region when newcomers and businesses altered the landscape through architecture, especially the Pueblo Revival, to suit the imagery (Figure 8).

The Pueblo revival and Mission revival hostelry did not disappear when rail tourism declined, but was adapted by the tourist court and motel industry in the Southwest and elsewhere. As the twentieth century progressed, the Pueblo revival style passed from the realm of the high style, academic architecture of Mary Colter into the

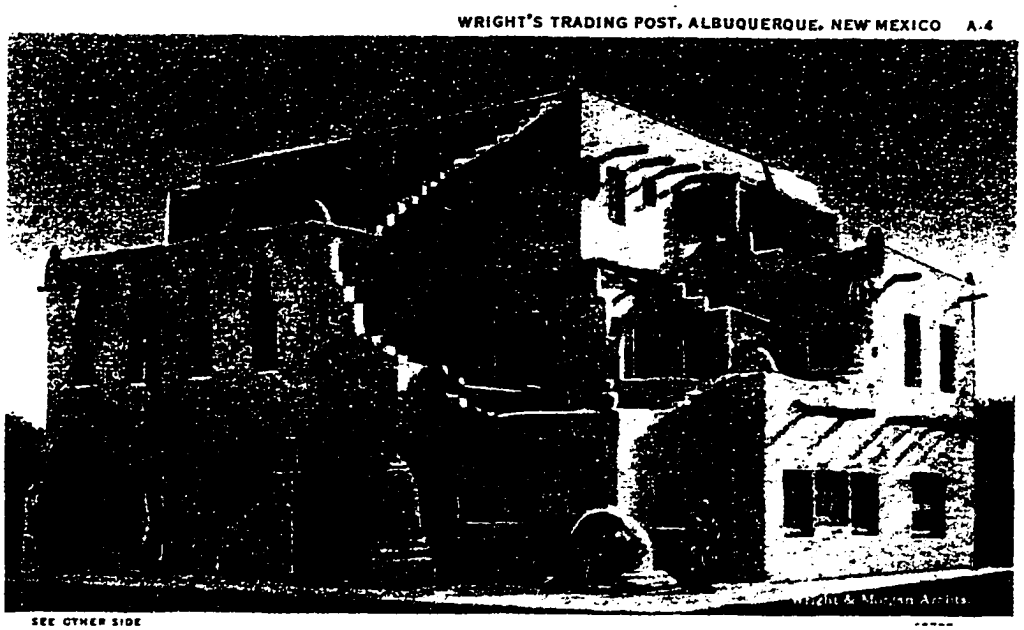

Figure 8. Taos Pueblo (above) and Wright's Trading Post, Albuquerque, NM, Circa. 1930, Wright and Morgan Architects. Historic Postcards, author's collection.

popular, commercial architecture of the highway.[82] From the 1920s to the 1970s, motel developers built Pueblo style buildings up and down Route 66 and on other highways in places as disparate as Florida, Nevada, and Missouri. Several noteworthy examples built on Route 66 are the El Vado Motel in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the Park Plaza Motel chain in St. Louis, Tulsa, Amarillo, and Flagstaff.[83]

Images of cowboys, Indians, and scenes of the Wild West appeared in twentieth century advertisements and on signs along Route 66. Builders even incorporated these myths directly into tourism architecture, such as the concrete teepees of the Wigwam Village Motels located in places as diverse as Cave City, Kentucky on U.S. Route 31W and Holbrook, Arizona on U.S. Route 66.

The designers of the tourist architecture of Route 66 often chose the uniquely southwestern Pueblo revival style and the Spanish Colonial revival style for their motels, trading posts and cafes. These styles helped to meet

---

[82]Alan Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Cultural Expression* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 452.

[83]Vintage Postcard circa 1940, in author's collection.

tourists' expectations and drew their attention as they drove along the highway. The Fred Harvey Company had used Pueblo revival style and the Spanish Colonial revival style in many of its hotels.[84]

The Harvey Houses and Santa Fe Stations had a direct impact on Route 66 travelers and merchants because the ATSF lines paralleled and often crossed the Route 66 corridor. Fred Harvey's El Navajo Hotel in Gallup, New Mexico was adjacent to and in plain view of Highway 66 (Figure 9). In fact, most of the El Navajo was demolished to make way for a widening of Route 66 in 1957.[85]

The myths of the West helped to mold the vernacular architecture of roadside America, especially on the western portions of Route 66. Other highways, such as the Lincoln

---

[84]Examples of tourist related architecture on Route 66 in the Pueblo revival style include the Zia Lodge, the Zuni Lodge, the Canyon Lodge, the El Jardon Lodge and the El Vado Court, all in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Route 66 motels in the Spanish Colonial revival style include the chain of Park Plaza Motels with locations on Route 66 in St. Louis, Missouri, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Amarillo, Texas, and Flagstaff, Arizona; the Mayflower Motel in Albuquerque, New Mexico; the Tulsa Motel in Tulsa, Oklahoma; and the Mayo Motel in Loa Angeles, California. Source, historic postcards, author's collection.

[85]Shepard-Lanier, "Trading on Tradition," 190.

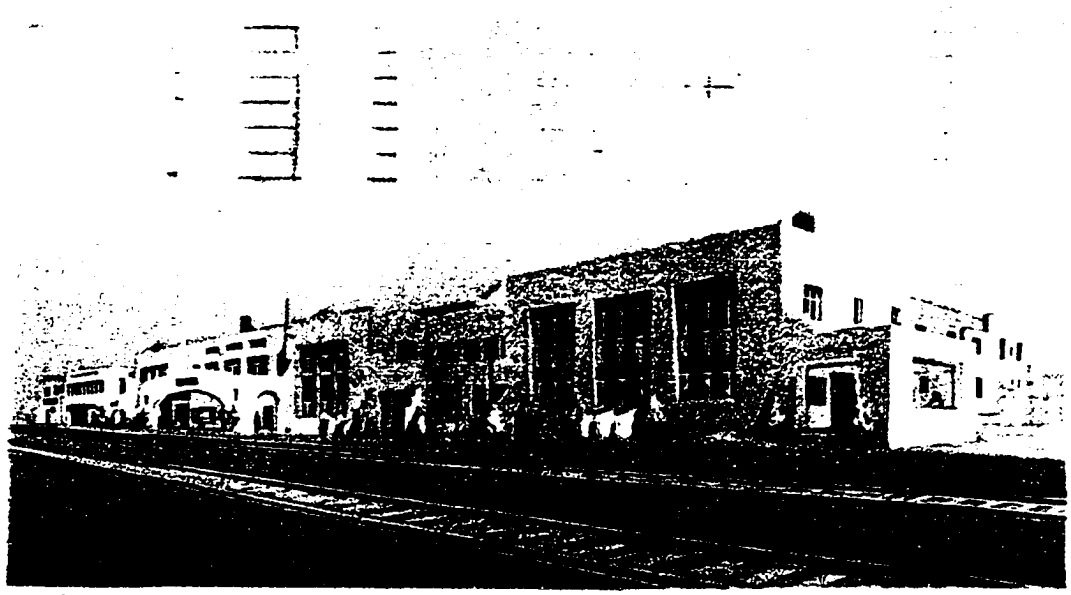

Figure 9. El Navajo Fred Harvey Hotel in Gallup, New Mexico, 1942. Built to serve railroad tourists, this hotel also faced Route 66 (foreground). Historic Postcard, author's collection.

Highway (U.S. 30) and U.S. Route 40, became long-distance tour routes, but never achieved the fame of Route 66. Route 66 was the major route through New Mexico and Arizona, the states at the center of the southwestern myth.

By the end of the first half of the twentieth century, automobiles overtook passenger trains as the primary mode of transportation in the United States. This created new challenges for marketing the Southwest. A wide range of small, private, vernacular marketing efforts replaced the controlled, centralized, corporate railroad publicity programs. Roadside businesses created a roadside marketplace using much of the same imagery as the railroads, but with more eccentric and colorful forms.

As the automobile evolved from a novelty item for the rich in the first decade of the twentieth century to America's primary form of transportation by mid century, vast roadside landscapes evolved to serve motorists. Highways, served by motels, cafes, and tourist shops gradually developed and became more sophisticated.

CHAPTER 3

BOUND FOR GREEN WONDERLANDS:

THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE VERNACULAR ROADSIDE, 1912-1956

By the 1950s, Route 66 represented the essence of roadside America before the interstates. From the twisting dirt wagon roads that crisscrossed the nation in 1900, Route 66 became a paved, two-lane long distance highway with stretches of four-lane road served by large classic motels, specialized roadside cafes, colorful souvenir shops, chains of gas stations, and numerous other services. This chapter explores the process by which the vernacular roadside landscape came about.

The automobile began to compete with rail travel as the preferred mode of transportation in the United States in the 1910s. Over the next three decades, automobiles gradually came to dominate tourism in all parts of the nation, including the Southwest. The focus shifted from the regulated travel experience provided by Fred Harvey to the relative chaos of private automobile tourism. Instead of being carefully led by Fred Harvey's tour guides, motorists

encountered signs and billboards that advertised competing tourist attractions and road-related businesses.

The widespread use of the automobile and a corresponding boom in the construction of roads and highways allowed ever-larger numbers of auto tourists to take to the road. The rise of the automobile was robust. In 1905 Americans registered approximately 78,000 vehicles, but by 1910 that number was 458,500. In 1921 alone, Americans purchased over 1.6 million cars, and by the late 1920s had registered a total of over 23 million vehicles.[1]

Automobiles became so numerous in such a short time because producers such as Henry Ford responded quickly to public demand with large numbers of comparatively inexpensive vehicles. Before 1912, cars were luxuries that only the affluent could afford, and they had little practical use because a viable road system had not yet been constructed. The Ford Motor Company changed this in 1912 when it introduced the assembly-line produced Model T, a car that Ford claimed was built for "every man," and which

---

[1]Mark H. Rose, *Interstate, Express Highway Politics, 1941-1956* (Lawrence, Ks: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), 2.

cost only $650 (approximately $11,000 in 1999 dollars).[2] Other companies soon followed Ford's lead, and the pool of automobilists quickly expanded among middle-class Americans.[3]

The explosion in automobile production and use caused an increasing demand for roads, and in 1915 a diverse group of citizens and business people began campaigning for new and better roads. The coalition of road boosters included millions of car owners, auto makers, petroleum companies, brick and asphalt producers, and even the railroads. This confederacy of road enthusiasts made up the Good Roads Movement.

Good Roads associations usually formed to promote a specific long-distance route. The first such organization

---

[2]American Society of Accountants, "Consumer Price Index CPI Inflation Calculator," Internet. Available from www.jsc.nasa.gov/bu2/inflatecpi.htm; accessed 30 November 1999. This site allows anyone to calculate any dollar amount to find its relative value in any year between 1913 and 1998. The exact figure for $650 in 1913 dollars was $10,702 in 1998 dollars.

[3]Dorothy R. L. Seratt and Terri Ryburn-Lamont, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through Illinois*, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1997) National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form.

was the Lincoln Highway Association, begun in 1912 when Carl Graham Fisher, a well-known promoter of Florida real estate and founder of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, proposed creating the first coast-to-coast highway.[4] At this time, the United States had no long-distance paved roads, and no coast-to-coast motor routes of any kind. Existing roads twisted across the countryside, often leading drivers in indirect or even circular routes. Before 1920, nearly all roads in North America had a dirt surface. These roads became dusty in dry weather, nearly impassable in wet weather, and pocked with large bumps and potholes that slowed travel to a crawl. Even roads within villages and cities usually remained unpaved, and "improved" roads generally had only a gravel surface.

Fisher originally called his highway concept the "Coast to Coast Rock Highway" because he proposed that the entire route be surfaced with gravel. He estimated that an intercoastal gravel highway would cost ten million 1912 dollars to build, and hoped he could raise the money

---

[4]Joe McCathy, "The Lincoln Highway," *American Heritage* (June, 1974): 32-38.

quickly enough to complete construction by the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. The Coast to Coast Rock Highway proposed by Fisher would run from New York City to San Francisco and hopefully provide a means of driving west to see the exposition. To finance the project, Fisher solicited donations from auto companies and the public, who could become members of his new highway organization for five dollars.

Although Henry Ford did not support the project, Henry Joy, the president of the Packard Motor Car Company, took an active role in promoting the highway concept. Joy, who decided to name the highway after Abraham Lincoln, became the primary spokesman for the project. The Lincoln Highway Association formally incorporated in 1913 and began laying out the route. Planning the path of the new highway turned out to be a difficult task. As the Association designated the route, conflict arose because citizens of nearly every town and city between San Francisco and New York wanted to be included.[5]

---

[5]Ibid., 35.

Once the Association hammered out a final corridor linking as many important settlements as possible, it went to work raising money. However, by 1914, the association had raised only half of the required ten million dollars and very little construction had taken place. Because of the lack of progress, Joy, now president of the Association, decided to promote the development of a concrete highway instead of a gravel route. To do this, he proposed building "seeding miles" near communities to promote public enthusiasm for "hard roads." Seeding miles would act as a type of free sample to hook potential customers on this new product. If the concrete road segments pleased motorists, Association members reasoned, then these impressed consumers would lobby state and local governments for funds to complete a concrete transcontinental highway. The strategy worked, and communities went to work building stretches of the Lincoln Highway that eventually linked every community on the corridor over the next decade.

The Lincoln Highway Association became the first of a series of highway organizations formed to promote and

construct specific, named highways. These included the Dixie Highway Association, founded in 1915 to promote a highway from Chicago, Illinois through Chattanooga, Tennessee to Miami, Florida. As with the Lincoln Highway, Carl Fisher formulated the idea for the Dixie Highway.[6] And like the Lincoln Highway, the Dixie Highway encountered conflicts over what towns and cities the proposed route would include. In this case, the competition became so intense among communities that the Association decided to break the north-south highway into east and west corridors with several east-west connectors. The Dixie Highway became a web of highways rather than a single path. This split may have contributed to the Dixie Highway's eventual decline, because the divided route lacked a clear focus and identity.

Additional highway associations sprang up in the second decade of the twentieth century to promote routes such as the Lee Highway, a route from Canada to New Orleans, the Meridian Highway from Canada to South Texas,

---

[6]Carroll Van West and others, eds., *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture* (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, 1998).

and the Old Spanish Trail, a rudimentary highway along the Gulf Coast.[7] Although private contributions funded early construction of long-distance roads, state and federal funds would be required to build highways on a large scale.

The federal government began funding road construction in response to the explosion in automobile production and political pressure from highway associations, which often had influential members. In 1916, the United States Congress passed the Federal Aid Road Act (the Shackleford Bill), which appropriated $75 million for road building to be distributed to the states over five years. Congress allocated the money for the construction of dirt and gravel rural roads in less affluent states and for paved highways in urban areas.[8] This legislation made the federal

---

[7]George Stewart, *U.S. 40: A Cross Section of the United States of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 5.

[8]Although the Meridian Highway was short-lived, the concept turned out to be well ahead of its time. In 2001, Federal Highway Administration plans to construct a new highway, Interstate 69, a "North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) highway" along a route to the east of the Meridian Route. This highway will allow trucks to transport goods to and from Canada and Mexico on a direct interstate.

government an active partner in the building of roads, a role that it has played ever since.[9]

The federal government expanded its role in highway building in 1921, and money for highways became an annual appropriation in 1926. In 1926, the federal government replaced the confusing web of over 250 individually and privately marked and named highways that had sprung up since 1912 by developing a rational system of numbered routes.[10] Highway building left the private realm.

In the 1920s and 1930s, states and the federal government spent large sums of money on road improvement. Between 1921 and 1940, state departments of transportation and the federal government allocated a total of $34.6 billion for road construction and repair. During the 1920s, road costs became the second largest area of governmental expense. Engineers constructed 418,000 miles of new road in

---

[9]David J. Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1993), National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 25.

[10]Stewart, *U.S. 40: A Cross Section*, 12.

the 1920s, boosting the national total of paved and dirt roads to over three million miles.[11]

As roads improved, motorists drove faster and traveled more miles per day. The distance that a motorist could drive increased steadily: a touring vacationer's car traveled an average of 125 miles a day in 1916, 170 in 1920, 200 in 1925, 240 in 1928, 300 in 1931, and 400 by 1936.[12] With automobiles moving at increasing speeds, business operators began to build more noticeable buildings and to erect flashy signs to entice drivers to stop at their establishments. The developers of gas stations took the lead in roadside advertising, designing unusual buildings, bright logos, and easily recognizable signs, foreshadowing the corporate images that would emerge after World War II.[13]

---

[11]Rose, *Interstate, Express Highway Politics*, 4.

[12]Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road, From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945*(Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1979), 89.

[13]John A. Jackle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994). This book provides a comprehensive study of

Because of their relatively large scale and vast numbers, cabin courts, later called tourist courts or motels, had a significant impact on the early tourist roadside landscape. Road-related accommodation evolved over a period of forty years, starting as free campgrounds where motor tourists could find a patch of earth beside the highway to spend the night before continuing their trip. Like many great commercial and cultural revolutions, the motel had humble beginnings. The evolution of the motel began with the practice of auto "gypsying" in the decade after 1900.

When automobiles first came into use, motorists or "auto Gypsies" had little trouble finding free land for camping along the road, but as their numbers grew, landowners began to resent them.[14] Many auto-campers were careless, and left their campsites littered, stole farmers' crops, and trespassed on private property away from the roadside. In addition, no sanitary facilities existed where

---

advertising and of the imagery used by early and mid-twentieth century gasoline and oil companies.

[14]Paul Lancaster, "The Great American Motel," *American Heritage* (June/July, 1982): 102.

auto gypsies pitched their tents, causing landowners and state health officials to worry about sanitation and the possible spread of disease.[15] Many landowners erected "no camping" signs along their road frontage.

However, a number of communities recognized the profit potential of having auto-campers seek accommodation in their vicinity. The chambers of commerce and city governments of communities from tiny villages to major cities started to designate certain fields and city parks as auto campgrounds, which they offered free of charge. In the early 1920s, most auto-campers were still fairly well to do, and if a town, village, or city could attract enough of these vacationers, its businesses stood to earn tourist dollars.

By the early 1920s, auto-campers rarely camped along roads. The majority of motorists found a designated campsite at one of 3,000 to 6,000 free auto-camps that had

---

[15]Warren James Belasco, "Commercialized Nostalgia, The Origins of the Roadside Strip," in *The Automobile and American Culture*, ed. David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 113.

sprung up across the United States.[16] When motorists met at gas stations, roadside attractions, and camps, they often exchanged information about towns that had pleasant campgrounds with modern conveniences such as electric lights, running water, and flush toilets.[17] Attempts to improve their reputations among motorists led to competition among towns. Some municipalities began installing amenities at the camps, such as hot showers, laundry facilities, and restaurants to attract tourists. Communities often advertised their campground as being "up-to-date." Municipal auto-camps helped to soften the primitive nature of gypsying with a few creature comforts, greater security, and more opportunity for socialization with fellow campers.[18]

Most auto-camps were small, although others, such as Denver's Overland Park, were gigantic. Established in 1915, this "motor city" spread over 160 acres along the Platte

---

[16]Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 71.

[17]Belasco, "Commercialized Nostalgia," 113.

[18]John A. Jakle, *The Tourist, Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 155.

River and contained 800 campsites that allowed the park to accommodate up to 2,000 campers each night. The facility offered a three-story central clubhouse, a grocery store, a restaurant, flush toilets, hot showers, a barbershop, and a laundry room. By 1923, nearly every village and city in America offered a free auto-camp of some kind.[19]

Although the free auto-camp was immensely popular, it was short-lived. High use actually contributed to the demise of this type of lodging. By the mid-1920s, used cars were relatively cheap, and staying at free campgrounds made travel inexpensive. Because of this, large numbers of working-class people and a growing number of rootless itinerants began using the municipal camps. A number of auto-campers even chose to make the road and the municipal camps their transient home as they traveled from town to town seeking odd jobs, cheap provisions, and charity. Once manual workers and itinerants arrived, many of the better-off departed. As the 1920s progressed, the free camps

---

[19]Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 72.

attracted increasing numbers of "migrant workers, peddlers, and even real gypsies and tramps."[20]

In 1927, Frank Brimmer, a commentator for *The Magazine of Business,* wrote of auto-campers, "These white gypsies, foraging farmer's crops like real gypsies, have placed an odium upon many otherwise wholesome camps. The out of work workers, the gasoline bums, the pay as you go fellows, the hard-luck kids, and a small but troublesome proportion of downright criminals, have all but ruined some fine camps."[21]

Towns discovered that the best way to discourage vagrancy at their camps was to charge a small camping fee, usually between twenty-five and fifty cents. Charging fees helped screen out the poor and raised money to maintain the campground. The idea was to discourage migrants and leave camps open for the middle and upper-middle-class vacationers.

Although camping fees did not save the public camps, they did allow entrepreneurs to compete with municipal

---

[20]Belasco, "Commercialized Nostalgia," 116.

[21]Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street To Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 118.

camps by establishing private campgrounds that also charged a fee.[22] In "The Great American Motel," Paul Lancaster describes how a small grocery store and gas station near Dodge City, Kansas, which one early entrepreneur bought in 1919, evolved into an early motel. In the summer season, automobilists began camping on the vacant lot he owned adjacent to his business, and he soon discovered that these campers usually bought gasoline and groceries from him while staying there. Soon he posted a sign that read "Free Auto Camp Ground, Welcome." Soon, eight to ten carloads stopped each night. He built picnic tables, ran water pipes into the field, lit the area with a few electric lights on poles, and nailed up a new sign that read, "U-Smile Auto Camp, $.25 Per Day."[23] By the middle 1920s, the businessman had erected tourist cabins costing a dollar a night and was well on his way to becoming an early motel operator. This entrepreneur provided a place where motorists, tired from a day's travel over rough roads in cars that frequently had flat tires and breakdowns, could park and sleep with a

---

[22]Belasco, "Commercialized Nostalgia," 116.

[23]Lancaster, "The Great American Motel," 102.

minimum of trouble and expense. Road-related camps and cabin courts became popular because most weary motorists were not willing to pay the price required, or be forced to go through the formalities demanded at a downtown hotel.

Auto-camps evolved throughout the 1920s as more families took to the road for long-distance vacations. The development of privately owned and operated camps eliminated the democratic access previously provided by free municipal auto-camps. When coming into most towns, a motorist might see several private camps instead of one central camp. Despite their rustic qualities, some private camps developed into large businesses. For example, Camp Grande in El Paso, Texas served more than 172,000 campers in 1926 and had amenities such as ready-to-occupy tents, a grocery store, a bakery, and a barber shop.[24]

Camp operators modernized throughout the late 1920s. Many camp owners built small and crude cabins that provided shelter and made it unnecessary to pitch a tent. The cabin camps evolved into cabin courts that provided each party with its own private suburban mini-home where travelers

---

[24]Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 173.

could relax with little interference. Because tourist cabins brought a higher rent and drew more motorists than campgrounds, competition among camp owners increased. Camp operators hoped that providing more sturdy cabins and more modern amenities would entice travelers to stay with them instead of at other camps or at downtown hotels.

Auto-camping became increasingly associated with the poorer classes, causing more affluent motorists to choose to stay in cabins. Entrepreneurs dropped the term "camp" because of its associations with hobos and "tin can tourists," and adopted the term "court," "cottages," or "lodge," words which connoted a respectable, tourist-only enclave.[25] The dollar-a-night cabin was a key invention of late 1920s roadside accommodation. Dollar cabins usually had electricity, inner spring mattresses, running water, and sometimes, steam heat, hot water, and indoor toilets.[26] The strategy of building sturdier cottages and installing amenities worked. Although the Great Depression hurt the hotel industry and nearly every other type of business, the

---

[25]Ibid., 175.

[26]Belasco, "Commercialized Nostalgia," 118.

burgeoning "tourist cottage," "cabin court," "tourist court," "auto court," "autel," and finally "motel" industry flourished throughout the Depression because people continued to take inexpensive vacations by car or travel the highways to seek employment.[27]

Auto travel exploded in the 1920s and 1930s. The December 1933 issue of *Architectural Record* estimated that more than 400,000 tourist court cabins had been constructed in the Depression years since 1929, representing a total investment of over sixty million dollars.[28] Other road-related businesses also expanded. In the decade after World War I, the nation had experienced a massive increase in the number of roadside restaurants, with the total number jumping over 40 percent between 1910 and 1927. In the early 1920s contractors built gas stations at a rate of more than 1,200 a year.[29]

---

[27]Mary Anne Beecher, "The Motel in Builder's Literature and Architectural Publications," in *Roadside America, The Automobile in Design and Culture,* ed. Jan Jennings (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 116.

[28]Lancaster, "The Great American Motel," 116.

[29]Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 196.

In addition to long vacations, motorists often took day trips. Robert and Helen Lynd's 1929 *Middletown* study discovered that residents of Muncie, Indiana often took recreational drives in the late-1920s. "Middletown has taken to the road. Memorial Day and Labor Day are likewise shorn of their earlier glory," wrote the Lynds, and "the automobile has revolutionized leisure."[30] A newspaper advertisement cited in *Middletown* urged its readers, "On some sunny Sunday very soon just drive an Overland up to your door--tell the family to hurry the packing and get aboard--and be off with smiles down the nearest road--free loose, and happy--bound for green wonderlands."[31]

As Americans took their cars on day trips and vacations, they purchased gasoline, food, lodging, and souvenirs. Businesses erected signs along highways and on their buildings to attract this new class of pleasure seekers. An example of the potency of roadside signs to sell products was the Burma Shave Company. Burma Shave, a

---

[30]Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown, A Study in Modern American Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1929), 260.

[31]Ibid., 259.

shaving soap, did not sell well until 1925 when Allan Odell, the eldest son of the product's inventor, decided to erect clusters of sequential signs. Odell's signs presented clever jingles in a serial effect, such as "THE ANSWER TO/A MAIDEN'S/PRAYER/IS NOT A CHIN/OF STUBBY HAIR/BURMA SHAVE."[32] Soon the company sold thousands of units and expanded until sets of Burma Shave signs could be found from coast to coast. The signs' effectiveness relied on motorists' speed and their boredom while driving.

Another example of the economic value of roadside advertising was the phenomenon of Wall Drug of Wall, South Dakota. In 1936, during the Great Depression, Dorothy Hustead decided that she and her husband's struggling drug store needed a more effective marketing strategy. To entice motorists to stop at Wall, she erected signs on a nearby U.S. route saying "FREE ICE WATER AT WALL DRUG." People soon began to arrive.[33] Soon signs offering a free glass of

---

[32]Frank Rowsome Jr., "The Verse by the Side of the Road," *American Heritage* (January 1965): 102.

[33]William T. Anderson, "Wall Drug: South Dakota's Tourist Emporium," *American West* (August/September 1985): 66.

water and other delights at Wall Drug extended hundreds of miles in all directions. Within a few years, signs advertising Wall Drug, which promised the wayfarer every imaginable marvel that Mid-America could offer, towered over the prairie landscape as far as 450 miles away. The massive, colorful billboards announced that a "real 80-foot dinosaur," jackalopes, and other surreal wonders waited ahead with the free ice water. After hours of monotonous driving through the Great Plains, anticipation must have mounted with each sign.[34] The business has prospered to this day. One can find Wall Drug signs as far away as Paris, France.[35]

In the late 1920s, the designs of many road-related buildings and signs began to express a fantastical version of the region in which they were located. Others represented a literal exaggeration of the product being sold, such as a 1926 lemonade stand building in California

---

[34]Karal Ann Marling, *The Colossus of Roads, Myth and Symbol Along the American Highway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 72.

[35]Anderson, "Wall Drug," 76.

constructed in the shape of a giant lemon.[36] Signs often became integrated with the design of the buildings themselves. The merging of advertising and architecture was exemplified by the 1930s shell-shaped Shell Oil gas stations. The design expanded Shell's two-dimensional trademark into a three-dimensional building-sign-sculpture.[37] Easily visible from a speeding car, the business needed no sign because of the building itself.

Sculptural commercial architecture took various forms, many of which evolved from two-dimensional images and logos on signs. In September 1921, the nation's first drive-in restaurant, the Pig Stand, opened in Dallas, Texas.[38] The first Pig Stand building was merely a square, board and batten structure set back on a corner lot, designated by a simple, square sign. The architectural image of the Pig Stand evolved quickly. By 1922 Pig Stand introduced a neon-silhouetted pig in a "natural position, head down with the

---

[36]Marling, *The Colossus Roads*, 77.

[37]Ibid., 74.

[38]Dwayne Jones, "What's New with the Pig Stands--Not the Pig Sandwich!" *Cultural Resource Management* 19 no. 9 (1996): 18.

words 'pig sandwich' extending from shoulder to hind leg."[39] The company registered this "sign of the Pig," which it erected freestanding beside the street or integrated into the roof of the building. In 1927 Pig Stand architecture consisted of a uniform stucco building with a tile roof and advertising covering the three facades visible from the road. In the mid 1930s "neon, generously displayed on facades and signs, completely replaced the earlier globe lights."[40] At the close of the 1930s, uniform buildings covered in lighted advertising became the icon of the Pig Stand company.

This progression occurred in many other companies as well, such as Pure Oil, which developed a corporate image with English cottage service stations, found along many United States highways in the early 1930s. Another example of vernacular road-related architecture as both sign and entertainment was the Alamo Plaza Hotel Court chain of the 1930s and 1940s located in Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma.

---

[39]Ibid., 18.

[40]Ibid., 19.

Alamo Court buildings, roughly shaped like the Alamo, functioned as stucco-clad architectural advertisements.[41]

Sign-building sculptures had a physical, economic, and psychological function. Promotional architecture such as giant shells and wigwams not only provided shelter for businesses such as gas stations and motels, but more importantly expressed the fantasy of travel in a new technological age. Business operators reinterpreted and enlarged common popular icons to engage the public in a spectacle at once familiar and unusual. The huge neon signs, glitzy buildings, and colossal roadside sculptures were an extension of the growing entertainment industry of the era. As radio programs and movies became increasingly available, fantasy became more accessible. Operators of travel services strove to sell motorists the regional experiences that they had expected when they set out. Developers of road-related businesses followed the lead of

[41]Historic postcards dated 1937 and 1939 in author's collection.

railroads such as the Santa Fe, which had choreographed tourist expectations and experiences decades earlier.[42]

In the late 1930s, tourist courts, diners and gas stations became more substantial and the signs advertising them grew more elaborate. Investments in motels in the United States increased throughout the 1930s. A 1939 article in *Tourist Court Journal* estimated that the current average investment in a new twenty-unit court was $1,000 per-unit. The average per-unit investment had been only $100 in 1925.[43] Increased investments and competition prompted road-related businesses to erect large neon signs to make their establishments stand out. Examples include the Hammer Motel on Route 30 in Kearney, Nebraska (Figure 10), which had a sign in the shape of a colossal hammer, and the Murfreesboro Motel in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, which still proudly displays its huge neon-lit Tennessee walking horse sign.[44] Other examples include the gigantic three dimensional pink flamingo motel sign in Marshalltown,

---

[42]Kammer, *Historical and Architectural Resources*, 20.

[43]Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 169.

[44]Historic postcard in author's collection.

Iowa, and a gigantic, neon candy cane "Kanes Motel" marker in Bellevue, Washington.[45] Many more of these signs can still be seen along the historic U.S. routes. However, many examples of this unique road-related architecture have been lost to development.

Motels and other roadside businesses, which often sold similar products and services, needed to grab customers' attention by projecting a unique image that appealed to the American taste for giant spectacles. Attention-getting signs helped motels and diners cultivate a flamboyant identity while combating the popular notion that road-related establishments were dreary and disreputable. The first rule of success in highway business was to attract attention.[46] Using steel, stucco, and glass, roadside entrepreneurs constructed eccentric, often sculptural

---

[45]Phil Patton, "America's Home Away from Home is Still a Motel," *Smithsonian* (March, 1986), 135; John Margolies, *The End of the Road* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 111.

[46]Susan Croce Kelly, *Route 66 The Highway and Its People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 170.

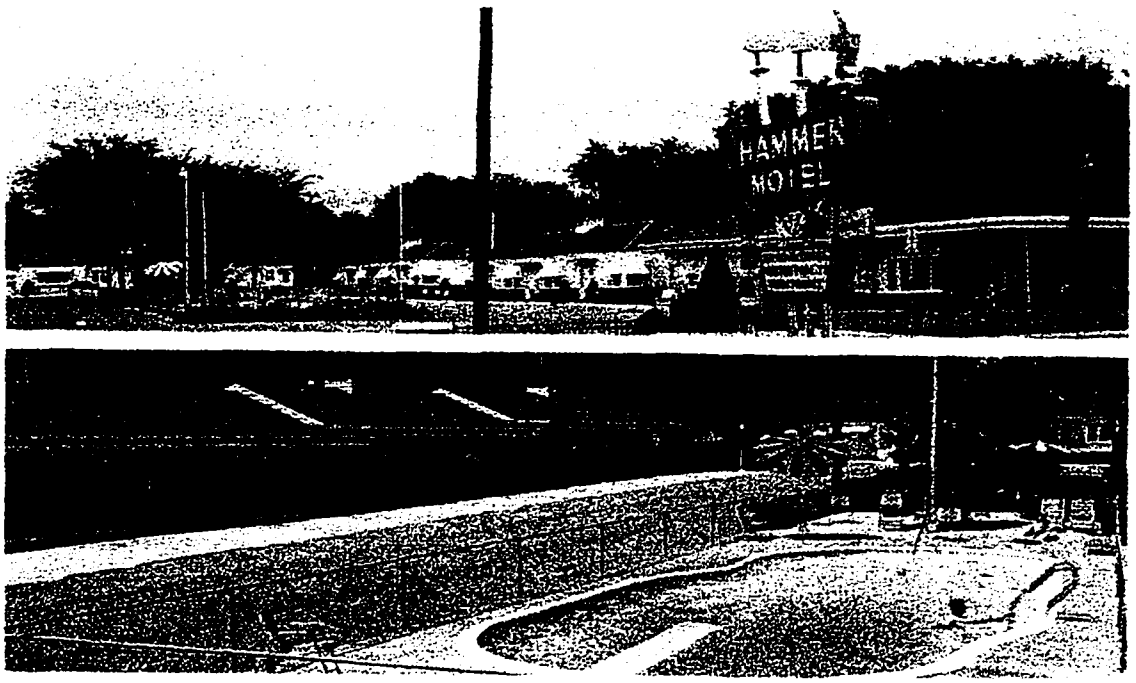

Figure 10. Hammer Motel, Kearney, Nebraska, ca. 1950. Motel operators used catchy and humorous sign to entice motorists. Historic postcard, author's collection.

signs, unique buildings, drive-up restaurants and drive-in movie theaters that made up a unique vernacular landscape along American highways that will forever be associated with the twentieth century.

The American tendency to build and patronize roadside fantasies may have its origins in an urban tradition that author Barbara Rubin calls the "midway landscape." In her paper, "Aesthetic Ideology and Urban design," Rubin traces the evolution of the "Midway Plaisance" in amusement zones that surrounded international expositions after the 1893 Colombian Exposition. Sophisticated exposition architects, often trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, designed high-style monuments of classical taste in the majority of the grounds, but the midway was an area of restaurants and souvenir shops designed to a more popular taste. Midway concessionaires migrated with the expositions that went to cities such as San Francisco, Dallas, Chicago, and New York, seeking to profit from the spectacle.[47]

---

[47]Barbara Rubin, "Aesthetic Ideology and Urban Design," in *Common Places, Readings in American Vernacular*

In *Colossus of Roads*, Karal Ann Marling theorizes that in addition to the Midway Plaisance, the sheer scale and vastness of the American continent prompted Americans to build colossal forms to mark the landscape. Lacking historic monuments such as castles and Roman ruins, Americans felt compelled to punctuate the overwhelmingly vast expanses with colossal commercial images. Inspired by popular legends such as Paul Bunyan, and eager to make money, entrepreneurs dotted the roadside, particularly in the Midwest and West, with giant cultural icons. Marling wrote, "Colossi are advertisements that point to commodities for sale" and provide "an opportunity to escape from the gritty tedium of the highway into an amusing, diverting storybook legend."[48] By the 1930s, the popular view of "roadside America as a tawdry bazaar had become well-established."[49]

Architecture, eds., Dell Upton and Michael Ulach (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 491-3.

[48]Marling, *The Colossus of the Roads*, 67.

[49]Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 90.

The designs of many tourist courts of the 1930s and 1940s expressed an exaggerated version of the region in which they were located. In the South, cabins often took on a tropical or an old-South theme. Each cabin at a white-painted tourist court outside Natchez, Mississippi featured Doric columns and a Greek-style pediment.[50] The Mount Vernon Court & Dining Room in Fayetteville, North Carolina provided a vernacular interpretation of George Washington's estate by the same name.[51] Many of the tourist cabins of Tennessee, Missouri, and Kentucky resembled log cabins.

In the Southwest, builders often finished tourist cabins with stucco and false beams to suggest adobe Pueblos or Spanish missions. The Pueblo Court in Roswell, New Mexico and White's City, a gigantic complex near Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico both resembled the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe. In New England, builders often fitted cabins with colonial cottage styling. English Village West, a cabin court in Franconia Notch, New

---

[50]Patton, "Americas Home Away from Home," 129.

[51]Historic postcard in author's collection.

Hampshire sported row upon row of white clapboard colonial cottages with quaint red brick chimneys and flower boxes.[52]

In some instances, regional references strayed out of the region they were interpreting. The St. Francis Hotel Courts in Mobile, Alabama resembled the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, as did the Grand Plaza Motel in Lake Charles, Louisiana. On the other hand, the Alamo Court and Davy Crockett Restaurant in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas was clad in red brick and looked like an International style strip shopping plaza. One entrepreneur went as far as to build an adobe motel on U.S. 11 in Wytheville, in southwestern Virginia. The purpose of vernacular road-related America was not historical or geographic accuracy, but simply to use any means necessary to fascinate motorists into stopping and spending money.

A number of cabins, such as Frank Redford's famous 1935 Horse Cave, Kentucky motel called the "Wigwam Village" where each cabin resembled a large free-standing teepee,

---

[52]Historic postcards in author's collection.

took unique, vernacular shapes (Figure 11).[53] Eventually, seven Wigwam Villages were built in places as diverse as Holbrook, Arizona (Figure 12) and New Orleans, Louisiana. The teepees measured thirty feet high, twenty feet in diameter, and were made of reinforced concrete.

Several of the complexes, including the one in Cave City, Kentucky, had at the center, a sixty-foot tall giant teepee that served as the office and gift shop. The large, neon teepee-shaped sign beside the highway that read, "Eat and Sleep in a Wigwam" was redundant. The Wigwam Village in Cave City and the village in Holbrook on Route 66 still operate as motels.[54]

Before the Second World War, motel operators tended not to favor the modern, streamlined architecture that gas stations and diners had begun to adopt in the late 1930s. Early motorists continued to favor the nostalgic pre-

---

[53]Keith A. Sculle, "Frank Redford's Wigwam Village Chain," in *Roadside America, The Automobile in Design and Culture*, ed. Jan Jennings (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 125.

[54]J. J. C. Andrews, *The Well-Built Elephant and Other Road Attractions, A Tribute to American Eccentricity* (New York: Congdon & Weed Inc., 1984), 96.

Figure 11. Redford's Wigwam Village in Cave City, Kentucky. Photo by author, December, 1997.

Figure 12. A Wigwam motel on Route 66 in Holbrook, Arizona. Photo by Sharon Vaughan, October, 1998.

industrial image of rustic cottages in a park-like setting, making a large investment in a glitzy modern structure unwarranted.[55] Carpenters and contractors, not architects, designed and built the vast majority of cabins. Some mail-order house catalogs, such as the Aladdin catalog from Michigan, sold square, one room, 7'x 12' pre-cut "tourist cottage" kits to motor court operators.[56] Articles in magazines such as *American Builder* advised contractors and owner-builders on how to design and build sturdy, effective cabins.

In "The Motel in Builder's Literature and Architectural Publications," Mary Anne Beecher surveyed 1930s trade magazines and devised six basic vernacular "aesthetic systems," which early motor-court designers commonly used. These included the "Rustic," which had log or sawn-board siding, porches, and gable roofs; "Colonial," which looked like tiny houses with light-colored clapboard

---

[55]Belasco, "Commercialized Nostalgia," 118.

[56]Robert Schweitzer and Michael W. R. Davis, *America's Favorite Homes, Mail-Order Catalogues as a Guide to Popular Early 20th Century Houses* (Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 78.

siding, and divided-light windows with shutters; "Southwestern," with stucco siding, tile roofs, and smooth simple walls; "Western," with wide overhangs, stucco walls, and profuse landscaping; "Modern," with strip windows, flat roofs, clean horizontal lines and little ornament; and the "Bungalow" variety, which was an imitation of a small bungalow residence with shingle siding, picture windows, window boxes, and exposed rafter ends.[57]

The July 1935 issue of *Popular Mechanics* featured an article with plans and instructions for would-be court operators on how to build a "tourist cabin that gets the business." The design was a small cottage with clapboard siding, a simple gable roof, and a tiny front porch.[58] The article recommended organizing cabins in a large "U" or "L" shape, or a crescent. Sometimes tourist court designers laid cabins out in neat rows parallel to the road. Wherever possible, builders designed tourist courts to have an optimal visual impact on passing motorists.[59]

---

[57]Beecher, "The Motel in Builders' Literature," 118.

[58]Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 172.

[59]Ibid, 175.

Between 1930 and 1950, tourist cabins evolved into more substantial structures, and their signs became increasingly elaborate. Investment in motels had gone up throughout the 1930s, and the cost of building an up-to-date establishment continued to grow. In 1935, the United States had 9,848 motels and tourist courts, which earned gross receipts of $24.3 million. In 1948, 23,316 motels and tourist courts existed in the United States providing gross receipts of $850.4 million. In 1935 motels comprised 25.5 percent of all American public lodging, but by 1948 that percentage had grown to 44.4.[60] The ratio of motels to hotels had increased from one in four to nearly one in two in only thirteen years.

The post-World War II "classic motel," with its joined units under one large roof, generally consisted of a standardized building with large signs and fancy names designed to connote the same regional, exotic or domestic imagery that many of the earlier tourist courts had tried

---

[60]Howard E. Morgan, *The Motel Industry in the United States: Small Business in Transition* (Tucson: The Bureau of Business and Public Research, The University of Arizona, 1964), 187.

to communicate with architecture (Figure 13). Names evocative of Florida or California, such as "The Palms," Flamingo," or "Ranchero Seaside" appeared in places such as New York and Ohio. One motel along U.S. Route 1 in New Jersey, called the "Hollywood," was decorated with full-scale plastic palm trees.[61]

Images of the tourist court and motel, like those featured in movies such as Frank Capra's 1934 film, *It Happened One Night*, described by writers such as Vladimir Nabokov in his 1955 novel, *Lolita,* and portrayed in Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film, *Psycho,* have influenced twentieth century American culture. Since the first roadside camps, the motel has enjoyed a mixed reputation. While many Americans viewed the motel as a suitable place for families to stay while traveling, others saw these roadside retreats as venues for licentious activities. *It Happened One Night* portrayed the tourist camp as a place where a man and a woman had to go to great lengths to avoid impropriety.

---

[61]Patton, "America's Home Away from Home," 132.

Figure 13. State Line Hotel, Wendover, Nevada ca. 1950. The back of the postcard reads: "This friendly cowhand stands sixty-four feet high and weighs approximately nine tons. A symbolic figure of the Big West - on the spot where the West begins." Historic postcard, author's collection.

Nabokov's middle-aged protagonist, Humbert Humbert, used motels to house his illicit affair with fourteen-year-old Lolita, and *Psycho* turned the rural family-run Bates Motel into a legendary venue for terror.

In *Lolita,* Nabokov wrote, "To any other type of tourist accommodation I soon grew to prefer the Functional Motel-clean, neat, safe nooks, ideal places for sleep, argument, reconciliation, insatiable illicit love. I would take a bed-and-cot or twin bed cabin, a prison cell of paradise, with yellow window shades pulled down to create a morning illusion of Venice and sunshine when actually, it was Pennsylvania and rain."[62] Although Nabokov was not born an American, this passage from *Lolita* clearly describes why Americans liked tourist camps and motels, but also shows why people dreaded them as havens of sin and criminal activity.

Portrayals of the darker side of motels have persisted. In the 1987 movie *Near Dark,* a group of wandering homicidal vampires takes refuge in a cabin at an

---

[62]Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (New York: Putnam, 1955), 89.

old tourist court in western Texas. The court is still operating, but only marginally. One of the leading vampires rents the room from a rickety old owner-operator who recognizes him from fifty years before. When questioned, the vampire, who had not aged at all, tells the surprised court operator that he passes through the area "every fifty years or so." The following morning, the police surround the cabin in which the vampires are sleeping, and a massive shoot-out follows in which the beams of sunlight coming through bullet holes in the cabin's flimsy walls are more danger to the vampires than the bullets.

This campy movie illustrates several of the more seedy icons of the old vernacular tourist court as viewed by American popular culture. The grumpy, gnarly-old half-retired manager, the tourist court cabin as a place for criminals and deviants to hole up, and the eerie, remote site all demonstrate the popular conception of aging tourist courts and early motels as havens for destructive and illicit behavior.

In real life, outlaws such as Bonnie and Clyde did take refuge in tourist courts and motels because of their

anonymity and often remote locations. Because of use by these and other outlaws, the motel earned a tarnished reputation. In 1940, J. Edgar Hoover wrote an article entitled "Camps of Crime" for the *American Magazine*. Although he supplied little anecdotal or statistical evidence, Hoover charged that the majority of tourist courts were "dens of vice and corruption" frequented by prostitutes, wandering criminals, white slavers, adulterers, and promiscuous college students.[63] Hoover's charges simply reinforced the widely held suspicion that motels were disreputable. In response to this attack on their reputation, many motel operators tightened registration and screening, and continued the perpetual battle to fight the image of the "no-tell motel." Signs that read "tourists only" or "no locals" became a common sight. Ambitious motel operators used bright, often sculptural signs, fresh paint and cute or exotic, vacation-like names to promote the family image, although most motels quietly continued to rent to local couples who

---

[63]Belasco, *Americans on the Road,* 168.

wanted a room for activities other than vacationing, because this "couples trade" was profitable.[64]

Motels also enjoyed a more reputable image. At least one children's book, a 1943 edition of *Homer Price,* portrayed the tourist court as a family business and a suitable place for an upstanding child to grow up and help out. The author wrote, "About two miles outside Centerburg, where Route 56 meets Route 56A, there lives a boy named Homer. Homer's father owns a tourist camp. His mother cooks fried chicken and hamburgers in the lunchroom and takes care of the tourist cabins while his father takes care of the filling station. Homer does odd jobs about the place."[65] Both reputations, as family haven and as a place of illicit or at least questionable activities, have increased the motel's influence on twentieth-century American culture.

As culture and technology changed, motels quickly evolved. Motel builders completely abandoned the cabin design in the late 1940s in favor of connected units.

---

[64]Belasco, *Americans on the Road,* 169.

[65]Robert McCloskey, *Homer Price* (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1973), 8.

"Classic motels" were more economical to build, more durable, and allowed motel operators to better monitor their guests. By this time, the majority of the motel industry was beginning to target the "hotel-class" customer.[66] Many of the more adventurous or Bohemian tourists who had once auto-camped no longer stayed at motels, but rather bought camper trailers or tents and backpacks and camped at private campgrounds or at state and national parks. Auto travel and roadside accommodations no longer represented a rugged, strenuous life close to nature. The primary focus of a motel room had become the big comfortable double, queen, or king-sized bed with a radio and, by the 1950s, a television.

In the 1950s, architects took notice of the enormous level of motel construction and began designing large motels to fill an ever-increasing demand for rooms convenient to highways.[67] In 1958, motels comprised 58.6 percent of all types of public lodging in the United

---

[66]Belasco, "Commercialized Nostalgia," 168.

[67]Harry Holand, *Traveler's Architecture* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1971), 28.

States.[68] As Nabokov described in Humbert's second and final road trip with Lolita in the early 1950s, "I noticed that commercial fashion was changing. There was a tendency for cabins to fuse and gradually form the caravansary, and a second story was added, and a lobby grew in, cars were removed to a communal garage."[69]

Large motel chains, such as California's Travelodge, began to appear during World War II. However, national motel chains did not flourish until after 1956 when the federal government funded the Interstate Highway System.[70] Wilson Kemmons opened the first Holiday Inn in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1952, but the chain did not become large until it became associated with interstate exits. New chains signaled the decline of the vernacular, family-owned motel in favor of the massive operations that dominate the motel industry today.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the former vernacular roadside "wonderland" fantasy became increasingly standardized,

---

[68]Morgan, *The Motel Industry in the United States*, 187.

[69]Nabokov, *Lolita*, 212.

[70]Belasco, "Commercialized Nostalgia," 121.

regulated, and uniform throughout the nation because the franchise system had become widespread. By the late 1960s, architects and professional graphic designers created corporate images such as McDonald's Golden Arches, eclipsing the dominance of entrepreneurs such as Dorothy Hustead of Wall Drug along American highways. Large corporations did not require eccentric signs and folk sculptures to attract customers. They utilized abstract signature logos designed primarily for recognition.[71] Buildings such as McDonald's mansard roofed restaurants from the 1970s act as advertisements, but provide no entertainment. Large, lighted signs have become so commonplace and tastefully designed that motorists hardly notice them unless they are searching for a gas station, a restaurant, or a motel. The blocky and familiar yellow-and-black Waffle House sign is often a welcome sight to hungry travelers, but is certainly not fascinating or vernacular.

---

[71]Barbara Rubin, "Aesthetic Ideology and Urban Design," in *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 498.

Building designs and logos for businesses, such as the Comfort Inn, Motel 6, and Burger King have no regional or ethnic connotations.

Vernacular road-related landscapes represent a unique period in American popular culture, dating from the era between the dominance of railroad corporations and the proliferation of modern restaurant, motel, and gas station chains and their monolithic corporate images. The vernacular roadside epitomizes individualistic entrepreneurs who exploited motorist's preconceptions, stereotypes, and expectations to vie for business. The signage and architecture erected by these business people attempted to dazzle and provoke interest, to create a fantasy of the road.

The roadside landscape was highly developed on Route 66, mainly because of the southwestern images and references that businesses used in their architecture, signage, and promotion. Route 66 was not the first transcontinental auto route, nor was it the longest; however, unlike most early U.S. highways, Route 66 enjoyed

a distinctive identity from the beginning and quickly gained fame like a rising Hollywood star.

CHAPTER 4

THE RISE TO FAME: A HISTORY OF ROUTE 66

Many of the remnants still visible in landscapes along Route 66 date from the pre-automobile era. These features, such as the natural landscape, the Native-American architecture, traces of nineteenth-century Westward migration, and railroad architecture, all contributed to the popularity and imagery of Route 66. This chapter describes the history of the Route 66 corridor from its time as a series of footpaths before 1900 until it became a series of decommissioned highway segments in 1985.

The northeastern leg of the Route 66 corridor from Chicago, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri dates at least to the 1673 portage trail that Pere Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet blazed on their exploration of the upper Mississippi River. This trail followed earlier paths created by Native Americans.[1] The second leg followed an

---

[1]Thomas Pew Jr., "Route 66," *American Heritage* (July, 1977), 26.

Osage Indian trail to the southwest of the Marquette and Joliet trail extending from St. Louis across Missouri to Fort Smith, Arkansas. The next leg of Route 66 traced the Santa Fe Trail, which Pedro Vial had marked in the 1770s.[2]

In the 1850s, the first telegraph to cross the Southwest followed essentially the same path, and travelers came to know it as the "Wire Road." In 1849 Captain Randolph Marcey and Lieutenant James Simpson led a surveying expedition to create the Wire Road southwest of Fort Smith, Arkansas across Oklahoma, through the Texas panhandle and on to Santa Fe following portions of the old Santa Fe Trail.[3]

In 1857 the United States Congress voted to send Lieutenant Edward Beale and his survey crew to use camels imported from Egypt to plot a course west from Santa Fe, along the 35th parallel, and across the Colorado River into the deserts of eastern California. The purpose of this endeavor was to improve military and civilian

---

[2]Leon C. Metz, *Roadside History of Texas* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing, 1994), 390.

[3]Pew Jr., "Route 66," 26.

transportation across the southwestern frontier. This section connected with the Marcey-Simpson Route to link Fort Smith near the Arkansas River to California. This western-most segment became known as Beale's Road.[4]

Beale's road was the first passable wagon road along the western section of the approximate route that U.S. Highway 66 would eventually take. Beale predicted the future importance of the corridor when he said that the path he had surveyed would "inevitably become the great emigrant road to California."[5] His prediction came true in the following decades, and later emigrants to California during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s helped give Route 66 a place in American history and culture.

Decades before the Federal Highway Administration designated Route 66 in 1926, railroads traced the same general path that Beale had blazed across the Southwest. During the second half of the nineteenth century, rail travel rapidly superseded stagecoaches. In less than sixty

---

[4]U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service, *Special Study--Route 66* (Washington, D.C., 1995), 5.

[5]Pew Jr., "Route 66," 26.

years, railroads transformed the Southwest from a rugged wilderness to a tourist destination with luxurious amenities.[6] Railroads had a direct impact on the cultural landscapes of the Route 66 corridor by establishing the locations, basic plans, and early architecture of towns. The Santa Fe and Southern Pacific Railroads dominated passenger travel in the Southwest between 1870 and 1930.

Railroad-owned land companies platted towns on tracts granted by the federal government and state legislatures. These new communities became locations for railroad locomotive repair shops, freight and passenger stations, and hotels to provide passengers a comfortable place to eat and sleep during long train journeys. Railroad towns also acted as centers for other types of economic activity, such as mining and lumbering. A great deal of railroad activity took place along the Route 66 corridor.

From its designation in 1926, Route 66 was a vehicular link between established railroad towns. Cities and villages along the route such as Lincoln, Illinois; Rolla,

---

[6]Claire Shepherd-Lanier, "Trading on Tradition: Mary Jane Colter and the Romantic Appeal of Harvey House Architecture," *Journal of the Southwest* (Summer 1996): 163.

Missouri; Gallup, New Mexico; and Kingman, Arizona, developed in the late nineteenth century as railroad settlements.[7] Being oriented toward the tracks gave the business districts of railroad towns an easily recognizable configuration that defined many of the main streets through which Route 66 passed. From Chicago to Los Angeles, the various alignments of Route 66 almost never left the shadow of the tracks (Figure 14).

Much of the older architecture along the early alignments of Route 66 originally served the railroad and was later converted to serve motorists. When automobiles and trucks took to the dusty roads after the turn of the century, their drivers found a railroad landscape with a few traces of the preceding stagecoach and wagon era. In New Mexico, road builders even paved Route 66 with cinders because of its proximity to the railroad.[8]

---

[7]Bob Moore and Patrick Grauwels, *Route 66, The Illustrated Guidebook to the Mother Road* (Williams, AZ: Roadbook International, 1998), 33, 87, and 76.

[8]Lillian Redman, owner of Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, New Mexico, interview by Andy Wood, Internet. Available from http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu.; accessed 27 September 1997.

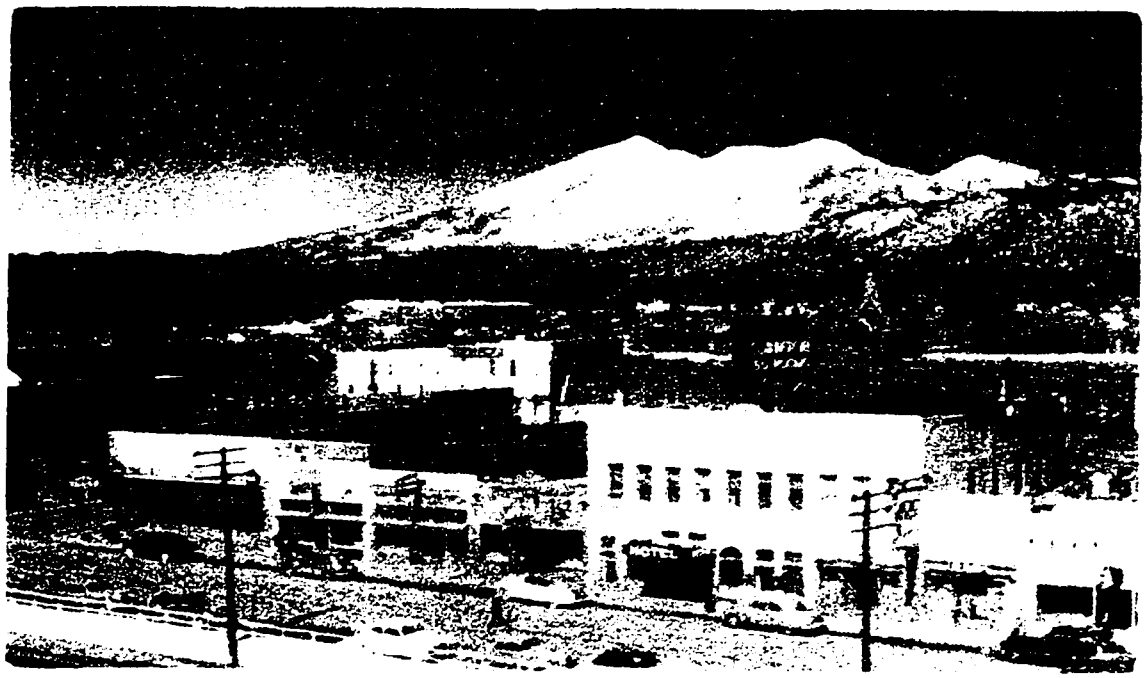

Figure 14. Route 66 in Flagstaff, Arizona, ca. 1955. Route 66 passed right in front of these railroad era buildings. Note the tracks just visible in the lower left corner. Historic postcard, author's collection.

In the 1910s, roads began to regain the importance they had enjoyed in the pre-railroad era, and by the 1930s the majority of United States tourists traveled by car rather than train. When engineers laid out the predecessors of Route 66, such as Illinois Route 4, they simply built the highway parallel to the tracks, and sometimes traced the old wagon roads that the tracks had followed when they were built.

Building alongside the tracks allowed road contractors to utilize the gentler grades and smoother curves that railroad designers needed to make the tracks usable by trains. Following railroad rights-of-way gave road engineers "easy grades and easy curves" by using "the other guy's knowledge," according to Rufous Carter, a design engineer for the New Mexico Highway Department in the 1920s.[9]

In most towns, Route 66 passed false-front buildings facing the tracks to advertise the town's existence. These facades also showed that the community offered services to

---

[9]David J. Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 Through New Mexico, Auto Tourism across New*

passengers who changed trains or elected to stop and spend the night.[10] When auto tourists began coming to these communities, businesses simply added motorists as clients. As the number of motorists steadily increased and the number of railroad passengers declined along the corridor, the commercial orientation of new businesses shifted toward the highway. However, most of the railroad-era buildings remained, and businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and shops functioned alongside newer, road-related diners and tourist courts. An example of the transition from serving railroad passengers to motorists was the Domingo Trading Post in New Mexico. The business already served local customers and railroad travelers who stopped to visit the nearby Santo Domingo Pueblo. When automobiles arrived, this curio shop began serving auto tourists with the same enthusiasm directed at railroad customers.[11]

Mexico 1926-1956 (National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination, 1993), 14.

[10]Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1985),8.

[11]Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 45.

The transition from railroad to highway involved some conflict. A number of merchants feared that long-distance highways would benefit only garages, motels, and gas stations located directly on the highway, and that the concentration of business along the roadside might weaken other downtown retailers and hotels. Members of some rural communities worried that their local economy would become too dependent on the road. An editorial in the December 30, 1926, *The Tucumcari News* (of New Mexico) stated, "cross-state highways are good for the garages and for hotels," but they "would weaken other Tucumcari businesses."[12]

By the 1920s these fears had some foundation in truth. In that decade, the automobile suburbs of American cities grew much faster than city centers, prompting one Georgia merchant to comment in 1926, "The place of trade is where the automobiles go. . . . A central location is no longer a good one."[13] To counter these concerns, road boosters and

---

[12]Ibid., 50.

[13]Joseph Interrante, "The Road to Autopia," in *The Automobile and American Culture*, ed. David L. Lewis and Lawrence Goldstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 94-95.

highway associations actively promoted long-distance roads. In the mid-1920s, the proprietors of many businesses that had previously served wagons and stagecoaches, such as livery stables and trading posts, converted their establishments into filling stations and roadside attractions. These modified businesses served increasing numbers of motorists who moved across the Great Plains west to California and north to Chicago.

Business people and road boosters facilitated the gradual transition from wagon road and railroad to highway. As with the Lincoln Highway and other named highways, a good roads association helped to create the named predecessors to Route 66. In 1912, good roads boosters conceived a "National Old Trails Road" from Washington, D.C., to San Diego, California. Shortly thereafter, the National Old Trails Road Association formed to promote a coast-to-coast highway concept that followed railroad alignments and roughly paralleled a series of old wagon roads, including Beale's Road. The "National Old Trails Road" followed the old Cumberland Road from Washington, D.C. to St. Louis, and from there traced the old Santa Fe

Trail southwest to Albuquerque up to Santa Fe. After leaving Santa Fe, the highway followed the approximate path of the Santa Fe Railroad tracks into southern California. Another named highway that traced a portion of future Route 66 was the Panhandle Pacific Highway that crossed the panhandle of Texas and entered New Mexico, passing through Tucumcari, Santa Rosa, and Vaughn. Another ancestor of Route 66 in New Mexico was the western branch of the Ozark Trails Highway, known in the early 1920s as the Old Postal Highway.[14]

The first motorway between St. Louis and Chicago was the Pontiac Trail, established in 1915. The state of Illinois later designated this road as Illinois Route 4 and financed the construction of eighteen foot-wide paved segments that Route 66 would soon incorporate. Highway builders graded and surfaced the roadway with horse teams and surplus World War I trucks. Contractors often excavated fill from nearby borrow pits, and many of these pits later filled with water and became fish ponds that can still be

---

[14]Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 32.

seen along historic Route 66.[15] Although the Illinois section of future Route 66 (Illinois Route 4) between Chicago and St. Louis was nearly paved by 1924, the Old Trails Highway to the West remained a series of dirt tracks for years thereafter.

One of the most influential promoters of the Federal Highway Act of 1921, which provided funding for the construction of a web of national motorways, was Cyrus Avery, whose primary motivation was to create a major interstate route through his home state of Oklahoma. In 1921 members of the Associated Highways Association, an umbrella group for forty-two individual good roads organizations such as the Dixie Highway and Old Trails Highway Associations, elected Avery as its president. Avery also led the American Association of State Highway Officials, which called for a "comprehensive system of through interstate routes and a uniform scheme for designating such routes." Responding to this request, the

---

[15] Dorothy Seratt and Terri Ryburn-Lamont, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 Through Illinois, Transportation Across Illinois 1926-1956* National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination, 1997, 12.

United States Congress passed a comprehensive highway bill in 1925 and directed the Secretary of Agriculture to appoint a twenty-one member committee to negotiate with state highway departments to "devise a uniform scheme" of highways.[16]

This committee, which included Avery, decided to assign numbers to 96,626 miles of major highways to avoid the confusion created by the large number of intertwined, named highways. The group systematically assigned the primary north-south "trunk" routes with numbers ending in "1" or "5," and gave the primary east-west roads numbers ending in "0." The committee assigned northern highways low numbers, such as Route 10, and gave each major road to the south a successively higher number. Route 90 crossed Florida and continued west through the Deep South along the Gulf Coast, then traversed central Texas before terminating just above the Mexican border in El Paso.[17] The committee also adopted new black-and-white shield signs to mark the

---

[16]Michael Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 7.

[17]Seratt and Ryburn-Lamont, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66,* 13.

newly designated federal highways. Avery, who acted as a consulting highway specialist to this group, used his influence to advocate routing a major east-west highway through his home city of Tulsa, Oklahoma and Oklahoma City.[18]

Avery and his allies asked the federal committee to designate this Chicago to Los Angeles route as Route 60, but highway officials from Virginia objected because they were planning their own Route 60 from Newport News to Springfield, Missouri. Avery's road planners even printed thousands of maps showing a "Route 60" passing through Oklahoma. However, the Upper-South group would not relent and finally forced Avery's faction to pick "66" as their highway's official number. On November 11, 1926, Congress approved the new highway numbering system, including "Route 66," making a great arc from Chicago to Los Angeles. Ironically, the number "66," Avery's second choice, quickly became popular because the double sixes proved to be catchy. Once highway enthusiasts received the new maps and

---

[18]Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road*, 7.

noticed the diagonal arc that Route 66 made across the western half of North America, they used the highway's unusual alignment as a marketing tool, often featuring colorful maps of Route 66 on postcards and brochures (Figure 15).[19]

Once the federal government had formally designated and marked Route 66, the highway went through five distinct periods in which its character and uses changed. From 1927 to 1932, the road functioned as a newly opened tour route and early trunk highway, and was still in a rugged state. Between 1932 and 1940, Route 66 became the "road of flight" for hundreds of thousands of economic refugees from Oklahoma and surrounding states. Army convoys frequented the road from 1940 to 1945, and the highway was also the site of POW camps and mock battles. After 1945, Route 66 became a heavily traveled tour route and the primary transportation corridor between Chicago and Los Angeles. Finally, from 1956 through 1977, segments of new, divided,

---

[19]Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 9.

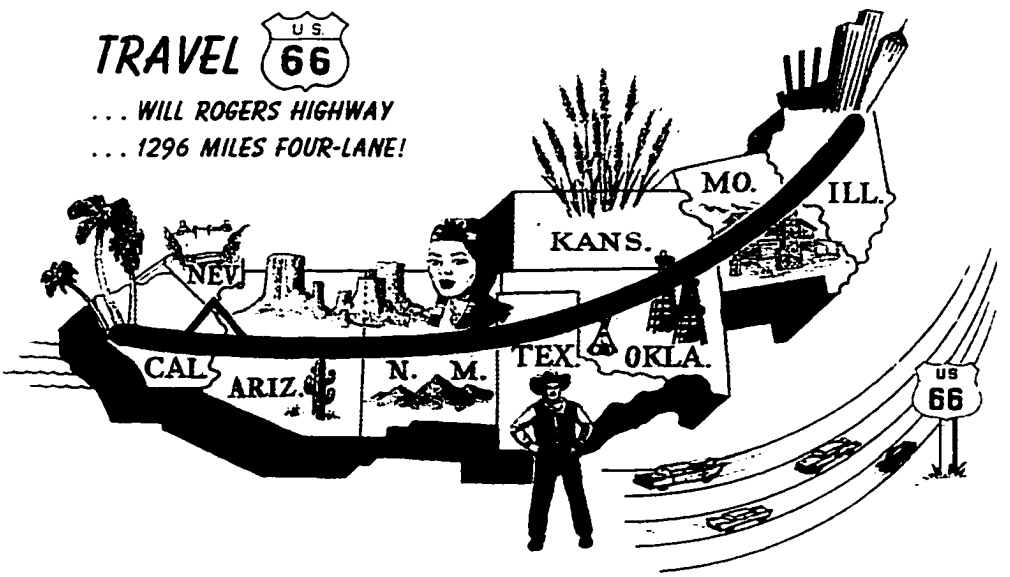

Figure 15. This postcard, produced by U.S. 66 National Highway Association in the 1950s, used the highway's arched route as an attractive graphic. Note the regional imagery. Historic postcard, author's collection.

limited access interstate highways gradually replaced a highway in decline. Segments remained in service as part of the primary route until 1984, when Interstate Highway 40 bypassed the last section of Route 66 through Williams, Arizona.[20] The federal government officially decommissioned Route 66 in 1985.

In 1927 Cyrus Avery and John T. Woodruff met with delegates from five of the highway's eight states and formed the U.S. 66 Highway Association to promote Route 66. The Association worked to increase tourism by actively publicizing the highway, which they dubbed "The Main Street of America." The organization issued guidebooks, maps, and postcards to entice tourists to travel west or east on Route 66 instead of taking alternate routes such as U.S. 30 (the Lincoln Highway) and U.S. 40. In cooperation with Route 66 businesses, the Association organized and promoted "Indian Shows," athletic events, rodeos, regional fairs, and tours to keep Route 66 in the minds of as many people

---

[20]Michael Wallis, author of *Route 66 the Mother Road*, lecture, Amarillo, Texas, October 1998.

as possible.[21] In 1927 Association leaders traveled along the highway in a Pickwick bus "fitted up like a Pullman Sleeper," and met with local community boosters in Springfield, Missouri; Amarillo, Texas; and Albuquerque, New Mexico to coordinate promotional efforts.[22]

Perhaps the most sensational of the Route 66 Association's early publicity efforts was the Great Transcontinental Foot Race. C.C. Pyle, known as the "P.T. Barnum of professional sports," promoted a pedestrian race from Los Angeles to New York. The racecourse covered the entire 2,448-mile length of Route 66 and then continued east from Chicago to New York. Pyle's "bunion derby" began in the spring of 1928, when 275 runners paid a $100 entrance fee and set out from Los Angeles for New York, hoping to collect the $25,000 grand prize[23] and smaller

---

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

[22]Seratt and Ryburn-Lamont, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66,* 17.

[23]NASA. "Consumer Price Index CPI Inflation Calculator," Internet. Available from site, www.jsc.nasa.gov/bu2/inflatecpi.htm; accessed 2 January 2000. This site allows an inquirer to calculate any dollar

prizes for second through tenth place. Amazingly, fifty runners managed to cross the finish line in New York in eighty-seven days or longer after they began in Los Angeles. Andy Payne, a farm boy from Oklahoma who was part Cherokee, won the race, finishing ahead of many seasoned marathoners. Although C.C., now known as "Corn and Callus" Pyle, lost money on the project, the foot race became a significant event on Route 66's path to fame.[24]

After the race, the Route 66 Association continued to promote the highway as a tourist route. The Association placed its first advertisement in a national magazine, in the July 16, 1932 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*. The ad, which covered a full column, invited Americans to travel the "Great Diagonal Highway" to the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Within a week, the U.S. 66 Highway Association office in Tulsa, Oklahoma received hundreds of requests for information.[25]

---

amount to find its relative value in any year between 1913 and 1998. The exact figure for $25,000 in 1928 dollars was $238,400 in 1998 dollars.

[24]Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road,* 13-17.

[25]Kelly, *Route 66, The Highway and Its People,* 36.

The U.S. 66 Highway Association was not the only entity to promote southwestern attractions in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The railroads, which had marketed southwestern attractions and Indian art for decades, continued these publicity campaigns into the 1950s. Western Route 66 chambers of commerce and roadside merchants also recruited tourists to the region by marketing local cultures, Hollywood myths about the West, and natural beauty as commodities.

Several events in the 1920s helped popularize Indian art. In 1922 the Gallup, New Mexico Chamber of Commerce organized the first Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial to attract tourists to the region. The Ceremonial, which became an annual event, involved days of exhibitions, cultural displays, and craft shows by tribes. The show emphasized quality Native American crafts over dancing. Once Route 66 was designated, more auto tourists came, and reports of the event helped to promote additional auto and rail tourism.

In 1925, New Mexico established an Indian Arts fund to create more demand for Indian-made art. In the late 1920s,

Indian schools in the Southwest began to encourage their students to learn and produce traditional crafts. Selling to railroad tourists and automobilists on Route 66 provided isolated and perpetually cash-poor tribes and local merchants with a needed source of hard currency.[26]

In 1925 the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer counted an average of only 207 cars passing each day between Albuquerque and Gallup.[27] Once Route 66 was commissioned in 1927, the volume of traffic steadily increased west of St. Louis, though much of the highway remained unpaved. In 1929 a Texaco road report listed the Illinois segment as completely paved. However, the same document reported the road as being only sixty-six percent paved in Missouri, twenty-five percent in Oklahoma, and completely unpaved from the Texas Panhandle to the urban centers of California. Traffic along the western segments remained limited until the early 1930s.[28] Much of the initial increase in tourism was due to the promotional

---

[26]Ibid., 48.

[27]National Park Service, Resource Study-Route 66, 8.

[28]Ibid., 11.

efforts of booster organizations such as the U.S. 66 Highway Association and the migrations caused by the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl.[29]

Road-related businesses, such as tourist camps, souvenir shops, and cafes that catered to tourists, truckers, business travelers, and refugees flourished along Route 66 in the late 1920s. Businesses along major roads, including Route 66, created roadside landscapes. Many small towns along Route 66, such as Chenoa, Illinois, developed intensive service strips, often called "gasoline alleys." In Chenoa, six stations opened along Morehead Street. As in hundreds of similar strips, gas station operators erected large signs and offered amenities such as seating areas, restrooms, "full service" oil checks, and windshield washing to attract customers in an increasingly competitive market.[30] Some gas stations expanded into full-service truck stops with restaurants and gift shops.

---

[29]Seratt and Ryburn-Lamont, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66,* 17.

[30]Ibid., 15.

The Shirley Oil Company, opened in 1923 in Shirley, Illinois, moved to McLean in 1928 and changed its name to the Dixie Trucker's Home, a large, all-night establishment where truckers and motorists could buy fuel, eat, spend the night, and have their cars or trucks serviced. This famous Route 66 business prospered and later expanded into a regional chain.[31]

Another 1920s Route 66 establishment that grew into an institution along the highway was a gas station in central New Mexico called Clines Corners. This business, which started as a small roadside outpost, grew throughout the Route 66 period into a sprawling complex with a vast souvenir shop, an extensive cafe, and lines of fuel pumps. Clines Corners (Figure 16) developed facilities for automobilists, truckers, and recreation vehicle operators. Like the Dixie Trucker's Home, Clines Corners has out-lived Route 66 and flourishes today.[32]

---

[31]Michael Karl Witzel, *Route 66 Remembered* (Osceola, WI: Motorbooks International, 1996), 95.

[32]Moore and Grauwels, *Route 66, The Illustrated Guidebook to the Mother Road*, 39.

Figure 16. Clines Corners in the 1950s. Historic postcard, author's collection.

By 1930 the trucking industry began to rival the railroads in freight. Truckers favored Route 66 because it provided a route from Chicago to the Pacific, often more passable in winter than more northern transcontinental highways such as U.S. 30 and U.S. 40.[33] Tourists and increasing numbers of migrants favored automobile travel on Route 66 because the route provided a direct and interesting trip to southern California and offered flexibility, freedom to stop anywhere along the way, and lower costs.

If waning years of the "roaring 20s" laid the foundation for Route 66's rise to fame, the Depression years of the 1930s made the highway a cultural icon. In the 1930s Route 66 became the migratory route for thousands of economic refugees from the southern Great Plains during the seven years of drought and four years of severe dust storms that became known as the Dust Bowl of 1934-1937. The plight of the Dust Bowl migrants helped to establish the fame of Route 66, partly because many used the highway, but

---

[33]National Park Service, *Special Resource Study—Route 66*, 10.

primarily because John Steinbeck emphasized Route 66 as being their "road of flight" to California in *The Grapes of Wrath*.[34]

Between 1930 and 1936 more than 200,000 refugees fled the southern Great Plains for California, following Route 66 to a territory that had offered real land and opportunity only sixty years earlier. By the 1930s California was fully settled, and the migrants found no sanctuary and little opportunity there. In a sense, the American myth that there would always be more land to the west died when the "Okies" discovered that there was no place for them in California. Many of the former Okies interviewed by Thomas W. Pew Jr. in 1976 reported that they identified with early pioneers such as "Marcy, Simpson and Beale," who had also "traveled the route and survived."[35]

The migrants were victims of economic and environmental events. High crop prices during World War I encouraged farmers in the Great Plains to break vast tracts

---

[34]John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: Viking Press, 1939), 128.

[35]Pew Jr., "Route 66," 32.

of new lands, but wheat and cotton prices began to decline in the mid-1920s. Cotton prices fell from $22.33 a bale in 1924, to $8.71 a bale in 1930, to $5.06 a bale in 1931, and prices continued to drop through 1935.[36] Between 1900 and 1929, often using tractors, farmers broke over 32 million acres of sod, and plowed in straight rows, which exposed the soil to wind erosion. Until 1931, rain had been sufficient to hold the soils in place, but a severe drought that year caused a chain reaction of dust storms. Great Plains farmers began to trickle west in the 1920s, due to crop failures, bank foreclosures, and farm consolidations, but the Dust Bowl transformed the trickle into a torrent.[37] Federal New Deal subsidies to land owners for taking land out of production in order to raise prices also contributed to tenant farmers being expelled from their land. These programs usually benefited landowners who used the

---

[36]R. Douglas Hurt, *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), 98.

[37]R. Douglas Hurt, "Dust," *American Heritage: The Magazine of History* (July, 1977), 30-31.

subsidies to consolidate their holdings and buy tractors, reducing the demand for sharecroppers.[38]

Fewer than eight percent of the Dust Bowl migrants remained in California more than a few months or a year.[39] For the first time in American history, economic conditions and resistance from residents forced significant numbers of westbound pioneers back east. According to a western Oklahoma gas station and motel operator, the vast majority of migrants on Route 66 who passed her gas station were white people from Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri. When asked why she thought so few African Americans migrated west along Route 66, she said "maybe it was because the blacks were too broke to even leave town."[40] Many African Americans may not have had enough money to travel during the Dust Bowl, and the Great Migration of blacks from the South to the North and West Coast slowed during the

---

[38]Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl, The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 58.

[39]National Park Service, *Special Resource Study--Route 66,* 15.

[40]Route 66 merchant, comment to author, 30 September 1998.

Depression years.[41] Also, the Great Plains, the area hardest hit, did not have a large black population.

John Steinbeck's 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath,* and John Ford's 1940 movie of the same name, forever linked the plight of the "Okies" with the "Mother Road." Steinbeck wrote, "Highway 66 is the main migrant road. 66--the long concrete path across the country, waving gently up and down on the map . . . 66 is the path of people in flight, refugees from dust and shrinking land, from the thunder of tractors and shrinking ownership . . . 66 is the mother road, the road of flight."[42]

Images, such as Dorthea Lange's famous portrait of Dust Bowl refugee Florence Thompson's prematurely aged eyes gazing into hopelessness, flanked by the hidden faces of her young children, also helped to memorialize the tragedy. Lange's photographs depicted the Dust Bowl migrants in the

---

[41]Helen Hornbeck Tanner, eds., *The Settling of North America, The Atlas of the Great Migrations into North America from the Ice Age to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1995), 150.

[42]Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*, 128.

dusty western landscapes of Route 66 and helped to place their plight in the American consciousness.[43]

A less-documented migration also took place during the Great Depression on Route 66. Many rural families from east of Oklahoma City did not go to California, but migrated north to Chicago in search of work. The operator of a roadside Restaurant in Illinois on Route 66 in the 1930s, described Route 66 during the Depression as "the gateway to the North. During the Depression people went north to Springfield, Detroit, and Chicago looking for work." He described some of these migrants as Mexican Americans traveling to work in the beet fields and cherry orchards of Michigan and other north Midwestern states.[44] In addition, some of the "Okies" who made a portion of their journey on Route 66 were not from the Great Plains, but from the Appalachian Mountains of Tennessee, Kentucky, and West

---

[43]Bill Ganzel, *Dust Bowl Descent* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 30.

[44]Retired Route 66 restaurant owner, 29 September 1998.

Virginia. Nearly a third of the population of these states moved into Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and California during the Depression years.[45]

Displaced tenant farmers comprised only a portion of those who migrated on Route 66. Some were veterans traveling east, such as a group from the "Bonus Army" of World War I veterans who, in 1932, stayed at a Gallup camp operated by a veteran on their way to Washington, D.C.[46] Factory workers and miners also traveled the road in search of employment. Strikers and strikebreakers traveled in both directions.

Although the U.S. economy remained generally stagnant during the Great Depression, Route 66 acted as an engine of economic activity and growth during these years. A significant reason the highway remained active was that road improvements became a central goal of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's public works programs. For example, the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 provided

---

[45]Tanner, *The Settling of North America*, 150.

[46]Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 60.

almost six million dollars for road construction in New Mexico alone.[47] Government efforts to stimulate the economy by providing jobs involved road-building projects, and the entire length of Route 66 was paved by 1937. With failing crops and deflated food prices, road jobs often kept many western farmers from becoming migrants in search of work.

Many New Deal road projects addressed safety issues on the highway. As cars went faster and traffic increased, the alignments of the route became dangerous, and accidents increased. Federal money helped to straighten segments of the highway, taking out sharp turns and providing grade separation at railroad crossings. Many at-grade crossings existed on roads intersecting with Route 66 and across the highway itself because the majority of Route 66 paralleled railroad tracks. These crossings caused many fatal accidents, such as one in 1930 near Isleta Pueblo, New Mexico where a mail train collided with a Pickwick-Greyhound bus, killing twenty passengers.[48]

---

[47]Ibid., 54.

[48]Ibid., 53.

During the 1930s, highway builders added new alignments along the route to bypass narrow, dangerous, and obsolete segments. Highway contractors created new alignments as better road construction technology and federal funds became available. Traffic continued to increase on Route 66 throughout the Depression years. The Illinois Division of Highways announced in 1936 that the segment of Route 66 in Illinois represented the most-traveled long-distance highway in the state.[49] In 1931, 1,500 trucks passed through St. Louis on Route 66. By 1941 that number had increased to 7,500.[50]

New Deal workers not only built roads but also constructed road-related amenities that enhanced the roadside landscape, such as picnic areas, municipal parks, swimming pools, and bridges. Local residents, migrants, and tourists used these facilities, and many New Deal era structures and designed landscapes can still be seen along American highways, including Route 66. New Deal projects

---

[49]Seratt and Ryburn-Lamot, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 19.

[50]National Park Service, *Special Resource Study--Route 66*, 11.

such as Five Mile Park west of Tucumcari, New Mexico and the Santa Rosa City Park benefited Route 66 travelers.[51]

Driving west offered a relatively inexpensive vacation during hard times. While thousands of Americans traveled to look for work, others retained their jobs and had enough money to motor west, sustaining the boom in auto tourism during the 1930s. Traffic counts on the Texas-New Mexico border steadily increased throughout the 1930s. Average daily traffic rose from 211 in 1928, to 300 in 1936-37, to 970 in 1941. In addition, the percentage of out-of-state cars increased.[52] Vacationers and migrants had to purchase supplies, and both groups helped support Route 66 businesses.

Many road-related businesses, such as drive-in restaurants, prospered during the Great Depression. An example is the Steak'n Shake Restaurant that opened in 1934 in Normal, Illinois at a small gas station. Steak'n Shake soon introduced curb-side service, allowing Route 66

---

[51]Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 57.

[52]Ibid., 60.

tourists and locals to eat side by side inside their cars. The business continues to operate today as a major restaurant chain.[53]

Many residents of rural areas along Route 66 found that the only way they could remain on their land was to take a risk and invest money, often all they had, to start a road-related business. As contractors constructed new alignments, businesses along the bypassed sections had to relocate. New segments of road offered opportunities for new entrepreneurs to buy land and start service stations, motels, and cafes. Entire towns, such as Moriety, New Mexico gravitated toward the new segments of highway. Larger settlements such as Gallup began to develop auto service strips that extended away from town along the highway. Widespread use of the automobile was altering the compact configurations of old railroad towns.[54]

---

[53]Seratt and Ryburn-Lamot, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 23.

[54]Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1985), 27-33.

In the 1930s individual states continued to promote Highway 66 as a tourist route to attract motorists. For example, the New Mexican state government actively sought auto tourists by advertising in at least twenty-three nationally distributed periodicals in the 1930s, and by setting up visitor centers staffed with trained personnel where major highways entered its borders. Like the railroads, the state of New Mexico distributed postcards and brochures throughout the United States. Beginning in 1931, New Mexico issued a free state road map to tourists. By the late 1930s, these maps had color illustrations depicting spectacular scenery, cowboys, and Native Americans. New Mexico began placing historical markers beside its highways in 1937.[55]

State governments and other promoters such as the U.S. Highway 66 Association worked to associate Route 66 with the lore of the Southwest. In 1938 the Association worked to add the title, "The Will Rogers Highway," to Route 66 to identify the road with the famous cowboy and promote the

---

[55]Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 18-20.

highway as a tourist route. A late 1930s linen postcard of the Laguna Pueblo issued by the Southwest Post Card Company featured a colorful, idealized drawing of two Pueblo women carrying large pots on their heads. A caption on the reverse reads, "Laguna is one of the very picturesque Indian villages on Route 66--the Ocean to Ocean [sic] route . . . the women make pottery of a very attractive design." Another postcard of the same period depicted the modern, paved highway winding through New Mexico mountains and described Route 66 as "the highway [that] winds through the scenic Sandia Mountains . . . Picturesque little Spanish villages dot the landscape at frequent intervals adding interest to the scene" (Figure 17).[56]

The United States economy gradually recovered in the late 1930s as auto tourism increased, and the economy came to life with the nation's entry into World War II in late 1941. The booming war economy actually suppressed tourism because most people either went to war or were busy working, and the U.S. government rationed many resources,

---

[56]Historic 1930s postcards, in author's collection.

Figure 17. Laguna Indian Pueblo, ca. 1930. Historic postcard, author's collection.

including gasoline and tires. National concentration on the war effort temporarily halted promotions of Route 66, and the highway took on a utilitarian and strategic role. Sporadic investment in Route 66 and other highways continued because businessmen and officials realized that having all-weather, long-distance roads with amenities such as gas stations and motels was important for the war effort. However, Route 66 deteriorated during the war years. Studies by the Public Roads Administration during 1941, 1942, and 1943 indicated that more than fifty percent of all defense materials were shipped by truck instead of rail, and these trucks usually exceeded pre-war weight limits.[57] Military convoys transporting arms and troops westward jammed Highway 66.

Trucks carrying military supplies were exempt from rationing and took to the roads in great numbers. The trucking industry used patriotism to pressure states to overlook truck weight limits. With fewer motorists paying the gasoline taxes required to build and maintain highways, and with increasing numbers of heavy trucks and convoys

---

[57]National Park Service, *Special Study--Route 66,* 16.

traveling the highway, Route 66 deteriorated. Ruts formed in pavement that contractors had often laid thin in the 1930s in an effort to quickly pave the entire route. Several stretches of Route 66 in Illinois became so broken up they were nearly impassable. In 1943, the federal government allocated money to build new, twenty-four foot-wide concrete sections alongside the existing roadway, leaving a sod median. This allowed motorists to continue using the original pavement during construction. These segments formed parts of a proposed divided highway from Chicago to St. Louis, authorized by the Defense Highway Act of 1941.[58] The retired operator of an Illinois Route 66 restaurant describes Route 66 during this time as "the military highway that they made four-lane all through Illinois."[59] These wartime alignments are still visible and

---

[58]Seratt and Ryburn-Lamont, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route*, 25.

[59]Retired Route 66 restaurant operator, 29 September 1998.

partly in use today, although they have been bypassed by Interstate 55.[60]

Between 1941 and 1945, the United States invested over $70 billion in war-related capital projects in California. This created jobs for over 500,000 men and women in the Golden State.[61] The Okies' inflated expectations of prosperity in California became reality fewer than six years after the Dust Bowl ended. Most of the millions of workers who flocked to industrial centers in the West and Midwest migrated in their private automobiles on Route 66 and other long-distance highways.

Although automobile production dropped from about 3.8 million in 1941 to just 650 in 1942, and the federal government rationed gasoline, tires, replacement parts and oil, motorists continued to use Route 66, but not for tourism. One Route 66 gas station in Oklahoma fixed

---

[60]Jack Rittenhouse, *A Guide to Highway 66* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1946), facsimile 1989, 9.

[61]National Park Service, *Special Study--Route 66*, 16.

motorists' cars with parts salvaged from disabled cars, which Dust Bowl migrants had abandoned only a few years earlier.[62]

When the war ended in 1945, Route 66 sat in a state of disrepair. Within months of the war's end, the road sprang back to life as people migrating west clogged the damaged road. Recent veterans traveled the highway seeking employment in California, and others took to the road for long-awaited family vacations. People who had migrated to California from Oklahoma and neighboring states either returned to Oklahoma after they had made money working in the defense industries in California, or continued to live and work in California and other western states and traveled Route 66 east to visit relatives.[63] Although road crews rushed out to repair the highway, years passed before the highway was free of the damage caused by war-related traffic.

---

[62]Retired Route 66 gas station operator, 29 September 1998.

[63]Ibid.

In the years immediately following World War II, more than eight million Americans migrated to the West, and 3.5 million of them settled in California.[64] Traffic counts near Tucumcari, New Mexico steadily increased after a severe dip during the War, and the percentage of out-of-state cars continued to increase. In 1941 an average of 1,359 vehicles passed on Route 66 each day, with 54 percent from out-of-state. In 1944 that figure was 874, with 54 percent from out-of-state; the figures for 1950 were 2,137 and 70 percent, and 3,308 and 73 percent in 1955.[65]

Route 66 achieved its greatest fame in the decade following the Second World War. In 1946 Jack D. Rittenhouse traveled its entire length in a 1939 American Bantam coupe to write a "mile by mile complete handbook" of Route 66. Rittenhouse captured the spirit of post-war Route 66 when he wrote, "Well, you're on your way--over two thousand miles of fascinating highway ahead of you. One of life's

---

[64]Kelly, *Route 66, The Highway and Its People*, 38.

[65]Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 72.

biggest thrills is the realization that we're on our way."[66] Rittenhouse's book included mileage between Route 66 towns, and the locations of natural and historic attractions, tourist courts, restaurants, souvenir shops, and gasoline stations. The book included small maps and featured a series of miniature pen illustrations with regional themes such as sky-scrapers for Chicago, a tractor for Funk's Grove, Illinois, Will Rogers and his lasso for Clairmore, Oklahoma, a cowboy riding a horse for the Texas Panhandle, an Indian smoking a pipe for San Fidel, New Mexico, and the Grand Canyon for Arizona.[67] The pictures took readers on a journey of regional motifs from the plains of Illinois to Los Angeles. These symbols represented the regions that Route 66 crossed and expressed tourist expectations as they anticipated traveling the highway.

In that same year, 1946, songwriter Bobby Troupe set out on Route 66 for a ten-day trip to California. Although he called Route 66 "possibly the worst road I've ever taken

---

[66]Rittenhouse, *A Guide to Highway 66*, 9.

[67]Ibid., 14, 43, 64, 85, and 103.

in my life," he enjoyed traveling on 66.[68] While he and his first wife, Cynthia were staying at a tourist court on Route 66 in California, she suggested the title for a new song, "get your kicks on Route 66," and he wrote the tune. The song was a "lyrical travelogue of the road" that soon became the theme song of the highway.[69]

Road-related businesses that had survived the war prospered and new enterprises sprang up along the ever-expanding roadside strips near cities and towns. These new businesses were often family-owned and similar in management and relationship to the road as pre-war businesses, although the number of businesses increased dramatically. A government survey of tourist camps showed that New Mexico had 213 tourist camps in 1935, all of which were owner-operated. A similar survey in 1948 counted 537 motels, of which 527 were owner-operated. Most pre-1950 courts and motels had between seven and twenty units.[70]

---

[68]Seratt and Ryburn-Lamont, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route*, 27.

[69]Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road*, 23.

[70]Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 74.

With the exception of the often-standardized designs of franchise gas stations, most road-related buildings were still vernacular and unique. Many roadside entrepreneurs acted as their own contractors and designed their own buildings along the growing automobile strips.[71] This cultural landscape, created by rows of unmatched commercial buildings and whimsical, often figural thematic signs along the highway, inspires nostalgia among contemporary Route 66 enthusiasts.

In the decade following the end of the War, the numbers of figural signs and road-related buildings increased as promoters went back to work espousing the wonders of Route 66, especially in the Southwest. A postcard (Figure 18) dated 1954 continued the effort begun in the 1930s to link Route 66 to the Southwest's image as a "land of enchantment" and exploit the region's exotic history. The face of the postcard showed Albuquerque's Central Avenue including the facade of the Alvarado Hotel

[71]Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 60.

Figure 18. Central Avenue Albuquerque (Route 66), New Mexico, 1954, showing Alavarado Hotel (far right). Historic postcard, author's collection.

(a Harvey House on Route 66). The card's caption reads:

> U.S. Highway 66 [is] one of the finest highways in the nation. It is certainly one of the most historic roads in all of America for possibly at this very point the Conquistadors may have passed on their way to Santa Fe, the wagon trains of early settlers, Indian raiding parties or the protecting troops of soldiers, all may have played their small part in the eventual creation of the Central Avenue of today.[72]

This caption is highly reminiscent of the railroad promotions of the early twentieth-century, and demonstrates the relationship between marketing strategies for railroads and Route 66.

A significant component of the Route 66 landscape of the 1950s were the billboards that advertised road-related businesses. Although many localities had zoned against billboards in previous decades, business people built them anyway and officials often let them stand because they brought more business into town. Certain establishments, such as the Club Cafe in Santa Rosa, New Mexico, and the Cliff Dwelling Trading Post on the Arizona-New Mexico border, posted billboards for miles along the highway in each direction. The Club Cafe used the "fat man" as a logo,

---

[72]Historic 1954 postcard, in author's collection.

and the Cliff Dwelling Trading Post utilized derivatives of stereotyped Native Americans developed in the pre-automobile era. Ron Chavez, owner-operator of the Club Cafe and inventor of the fat man logo, fought an extended court battle with the federal government to keep his billboards on Route 66 after the Johnson Administration passed the Highway Beautification Act in the late 1960s.[73]

Billboards highlighted businesses that motorists might otherwise miss. Isolated establishments that sold gas, food, souvenirs, and sometimes a room for the night depended on billboards to announce their presence ahead. Sometimes the billboards promised a sensational exhibit, such as a two-headed cow or a pit of rattlesnakes, to fascinate vacationers into stopping. The Foutz Grocery between Laguna and Albuquerque featured a tame bear that would remove the cap of sodas with its teeth.[74] Businesses often advertised "real Indian crafts," Navajo rugs, and sometimes, "real Indians."

---

[73]Tom Teague, Bob Waldmire, and Lon Haldeman, *Searching for 66* (Springfield, IL.: Samizdat House, 1991), 147.

[74]Kammer, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66*, 76.

The themes that road-related businesses used to draw visitors echoed those used by the railroads. Stereotypical images of Native Americans proliferated along Route 66 (Figure 19). In Two Guns, Arizona tourists stopped to see the site of an alleged 1878 battle between Navajos and Apaches in which a Navajo war party supposedly pinned a group of about forty Apaches in a cave and later killed them.[75] Two Guns became a tourist trap where predominately white tourists visited the "Apache Death Cave," saw "mountain lions, Gila Monsters, an Indian Cliff Dwelling, and Eagles," and could purchase "Navajo Rugs" and other souvenirs of the West.

In nearby Winslow, Arizona, tourists stopped under a twenty-foot-tall painted Indian to buy "Indian Jewelry, Moccasins, and Western Curios" at Joseph Joe's Big Indian Store. In a direct copy of Fred Harvey promotions, Ray Meany built his "fabulous" Hopi House just ten miles west of Winslow. Meany constructed his building of adobe, and it featured flat roofs and exposed roof timber ends (vigas). Meany's Hopi House offered "Curios, a Motel, Rugs, Mineral

---

[75]Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road*, 192.

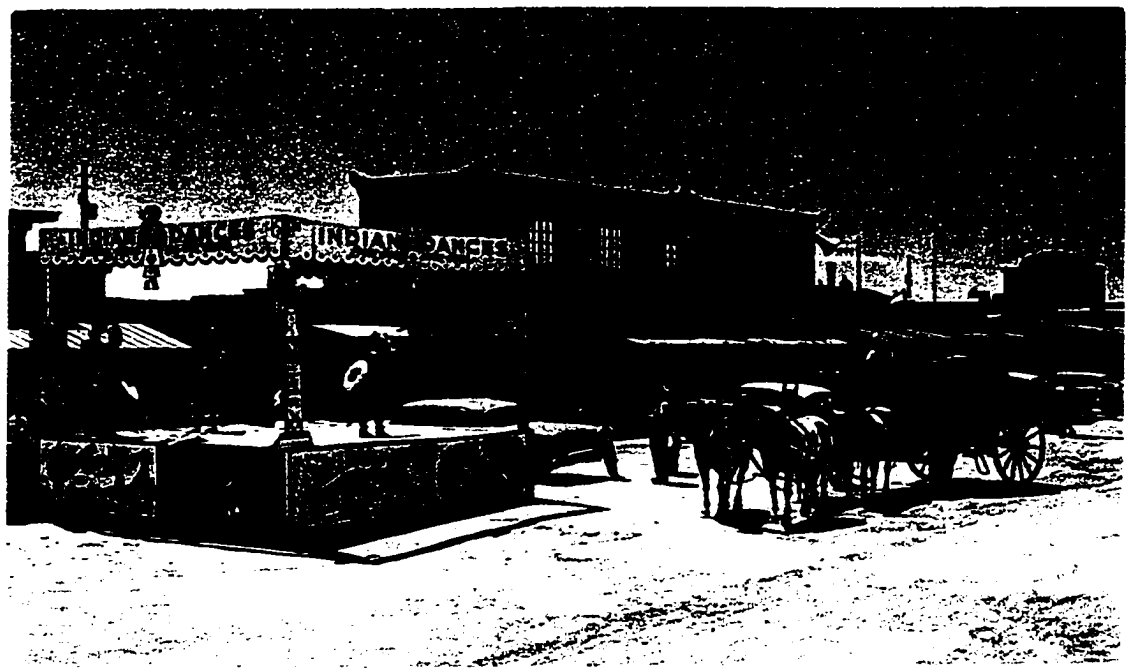

Figure 19. Indians Dancing at Longhorn Ranch and Museum Forty Miles East of Albuquerque on Route 66, Circa. 1966. Historic Postcard in Author's Collection.

Rocks, Beer & Wine, a Cafe, a Texaco station, and an Indian Trading Post."[76]

The U.S. Highway 66 Association utilized the same imagery and clichéd icons to promote the highway. In 1947 Ralph Jones, a New Mexico Motel owner, addressed the postwar reorganization meeting of the U.S. Highway 66 Association in Oklahoma City. Speaking of Native Americans and cowboys as a draw for tourism on Route 66, he said, "my friends, just because you live here among them all, do not lose sight of the fact that there are literally thousands of travelers who have never seen an Indian. Indians have tremendous pulling power. And don't forget the value of the cowboy, either."[77]

The efforts of the governments of Route 66 states to promote auto tourism often relied heavily on historic sites and Native American cultures. A 1954 official New Mexico road map featured a drawing of a conquistador in armor riding a horse, sketches of Indians and Indian-made

---

[76]Witzel, *Route 66 Remembered*, 11-32.

[77]Teague, *Searching for 66*, 113.

artifacts, three photographs of Indian ruins, and several pictures of Spanish missions along with a Route 66 shield. The map's cover depicted three Native American dancers in full regalia.

The 1958 official highway map of Oklahoma featured depictions of traditional Indians next to cowboys and flattering portraits of modern highways. In a message printed on the map, then Oklahoma governor Raymond Gary wrote, "You will find our people friendly and eager to please. You will also find historic Indian settlements, cowboy lore, and the reality of the Old West, as well as the more modern vacation pleasures." The map also states proudly, "Oklahoma is doing its part in connecting the nation with the new super interstate Highways."[78] State promoters attempted to portray their states as offering auto tourists a genuine historical experience, while at the same time showing their modern state. Officials wanted their states to appear interesting, but not backward. In the future-oriented 1950s, having a rich history was not enough.

---

[78]1954 Official Map of New Mexico, author's collection.

While southwestern states focused on heritage tourism, most Route 66 businesses relied on abstractions of the region's cultural icons. Route 66 had two Wigwam Motels, one in Holbrook, Arizona and another in Rialto, California (Figure 20). Many Pueblo revival style motor courts appeared in Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. These hostelries usually had culturally suggestive names such as the Zuni Motor Lodge, the El Vado Motel, the El Don Motel, the Pueblo Bonito Court, the Zia Lodge, and the El Sueno Motor Court, all of which were on U.S. 66 (Figure 21). The Zuni Motor Lodge was a mock pueblo complete with wooden ladders and a lookout tower (Figure 22). This elaborate motel claimed to be "one of the finest and most unique lodges in the Southwest. Of the Spanish-Indian architecture offering every comfort and service to the seasoned traveler,"[79] language similar to that used by promoters to describe the nearby Fred Harvey railroad hotels.

A postcard issued in the same decade by Fred Harvey describes the Franciscan Hotel as a "structure typical of

---

[79]Historic 1953 postcard, in author's collection.

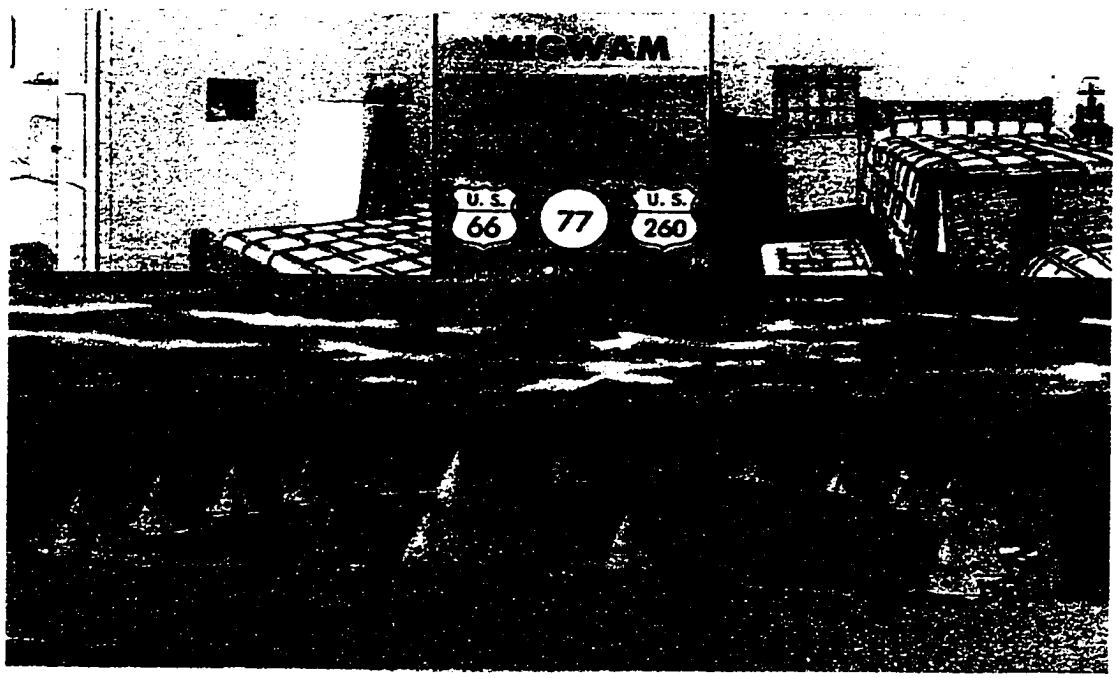

Figure 20. Wigwam Village No., Holbrook, AZ, Circa 1950. Historic Postcard, author's collection.

Figure 21. El Sueno Motor Court, Claremore, OK, Circa. 1950. Historic Postcard, author's collection.

Figure 22, Zuni motor lodge, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1953. Historic postcard, author's collection.

the architecture brought to the Southwest by the early settlers." The caption read, "Every attention is paid to the comfort of cross country tourists, whose prolonged stay in Albuquerque is desirable to all of Albuquerque."[80] Marketing through Spanish and Indian architecture was not confined to the Far West. The Park Plaza Motel (Figure 20), a Spanish Colonial Revival motel, which belonged to an early chain, was located on Route 66 in St. Louis. Other Park Plaza Motels could be found on Route 66 in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Amarillo, Texas.[81]

In the 1950s, themes along Route 66 became increasingly fantastic, abstract, and divorced from reality. Contact with Indian crafts and actual Native Americans gave way to symbolism such as Twin Arrows, Arizona, a trading post that used two bright-red, thirty-foot-tall arrows beside Highway 66 to entice tourists to stop, eat, and buy souvenirs (Figure 23). The Cristensen's

---

[80]Historic 1950s postcard, in author's collection.

[81]Historic postcards in author's collection.

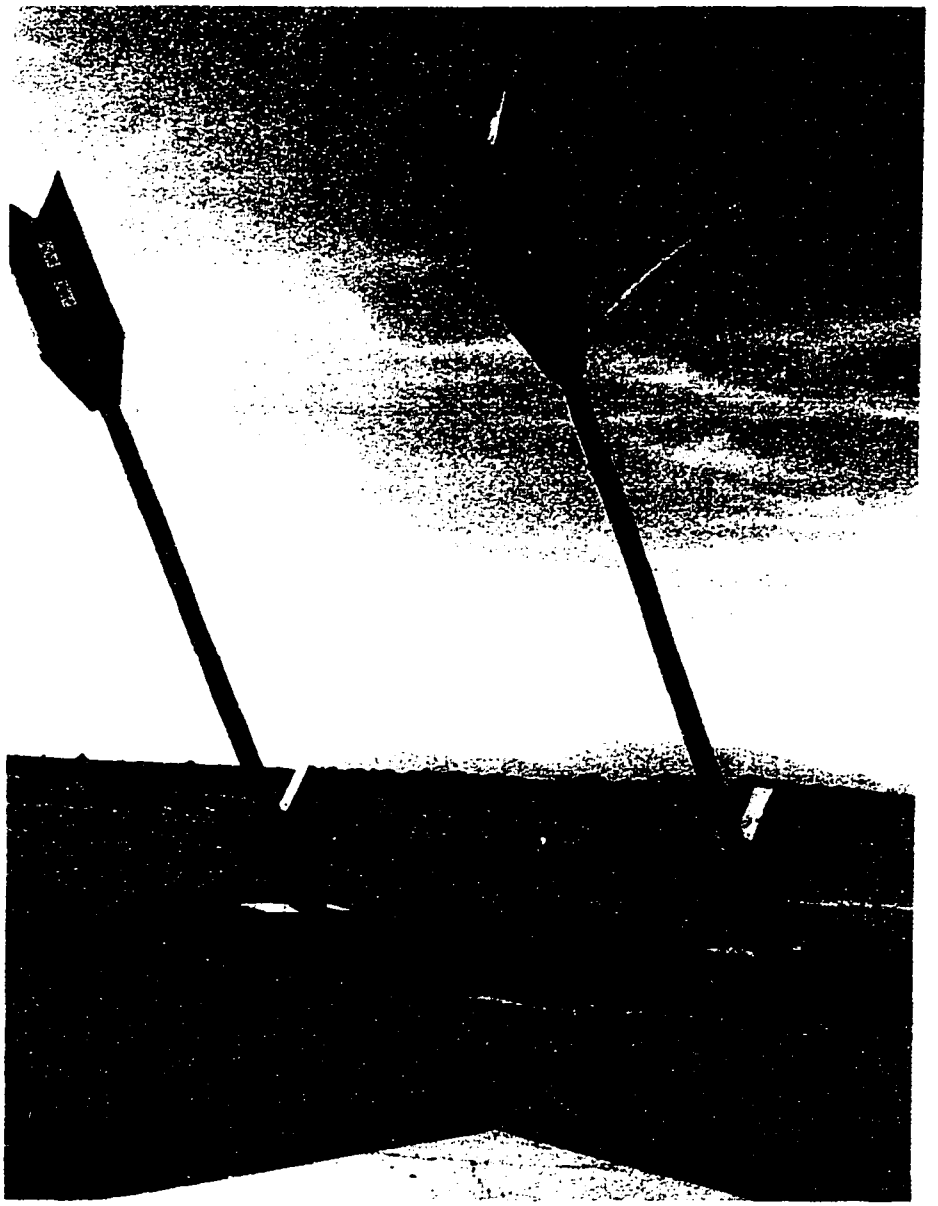

Figure 23. Twin Arrows, Arizona. The symbols along Route 66 became increasingly abstract. Photo by author, October, 1998.

Cliff Dwellings Trading post in Lookout Point, New Mexico was called the Lookout Point Trading Post until the owners changed the name in 1953. The cliff dwellings for which the business was named were actually built as a movie set for the film *Ace in the Hole*.[82] The symbolic themes of middle and late 1950s roadside promotion extended to the Southwest's Spanish and Mexican heritage as well. In Albuquerque, the El Sombrero Restaurant took the form of a giant sombrero which customers entered through the rim.[83]

In addition to Native Americans and Latinos, the "Old" or "Wild West theme" proliferated along Route 66 in the 1950s. The cowboy icon appeared on numerous signs on Route 66 west of Missouri. In Tucumcari, New Mexico, the Palomino Motel had a snorting bucking bronco as its sign. The Rio Pecos Ranch Truck Terminal in Santa Rosa had on its sign a smiling cowboy driving a truck. In Amarillo, Texas a giant sign in the shape of a cowboy in a ten-gallon hat announced that motorists had arrived at the Big Texan Steak Ranch. A neon sign in the shape of cowboy boot identified the Silver

---

[82]Kelly, *Route 66 the Highway and Its People*, 174.

[83]Witzel, *Route 66 Remembered*, 108.

Spur Motel in East Amarillo, and a post card for The Will Rogers Motor Court in Tulsa, Oklahoma depicts Rogers on a rearing horse (Figure 24). In Claremore, Oklahoma, a neon cowboy blowing rings of smoke with his cigar and kneeling on a tall sign for the Round Up Motel.[84]

Like the Cliff Dwellings Trading Post, the cowboy theme was based more on Hollywood than on history. In addition to signs and business logos, several theme parks featuring the "Old West" emerged along the road. One such establishment was Frontier City, U.S.A. Located on Route 66 in Oklahoma, this tourist attraction was a mock "western" town complete with a marshal's office, jail, saloon, and the Frontier City & Santa Fe train, which took "a visitor on an exciting ride through this rough-and-ready town of the 'Old West.' There is always the danger of a train robbery by outlaws in the area."[85]

---

[84]Witzel, *Route 66 Remembered*, 42-140.

[85]Historic 1950s postcard, in author's collection.

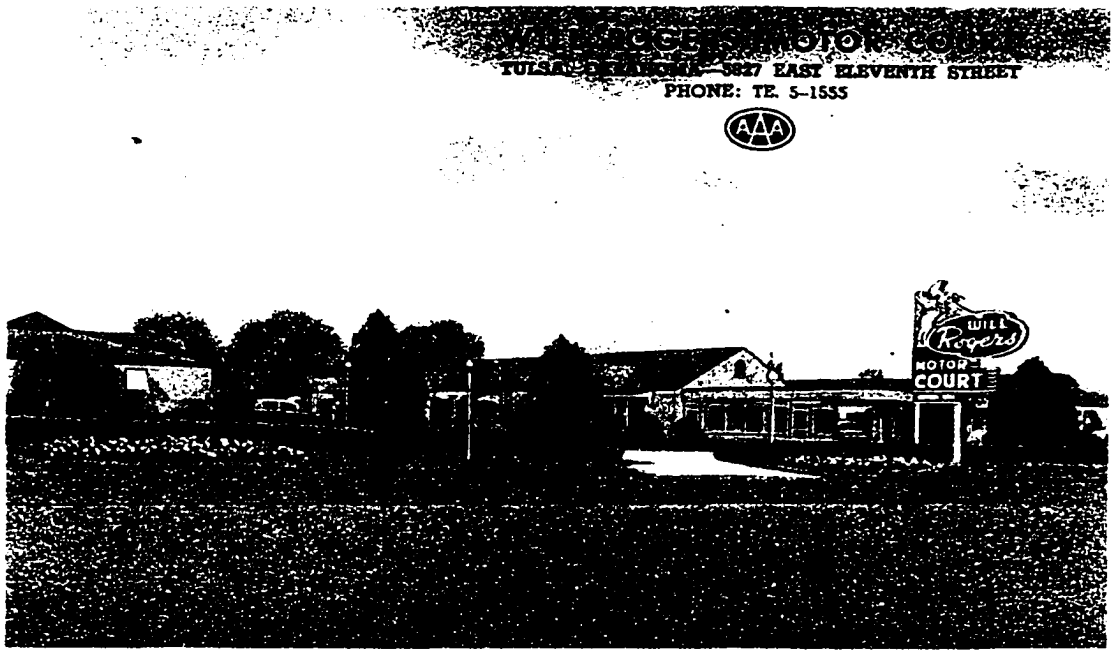

Figure 24. Will Rogers Motor Court, Tulsa, Oklahoma, ca. 1950. Historic postcard, author's collection.

A Frontier City, U.S.A. postcard depicted a mock battle among robbers, train engineers, and marshals around a bright red tourist train with a miniature steam engine and open cars with red and white striped canopies to shade visitors (Figure 25). Another postcard showed Frontier City marshals subduing an "outlaw" in front of the marshal's office. At Frontier City, tourists could enter the movie set of their favorite western and watch a drama unfold in person.

Farther west, Route 66 auto tourists could find the privately operated New Mexico Museum of the Old West located near Moriety, forty-five miles east of Albuquerque. The New Mexico Museum of the Old West was essentially a venue to buy "Indian crafts" and other trinkets with western themes at the "Indian Trading Post," to have a beverage at the "1860 Saloon" and to ogle fifteen foot totem poles. During their stop, tourists could ride a "genuine stage coach" with "real horses," see "authentic Longhorn cattle," and watch Indians dance on a decorated outdoor stage. A 1950s postcard (Figure 26) claimed that weary travelers who took a break from their trip could see,

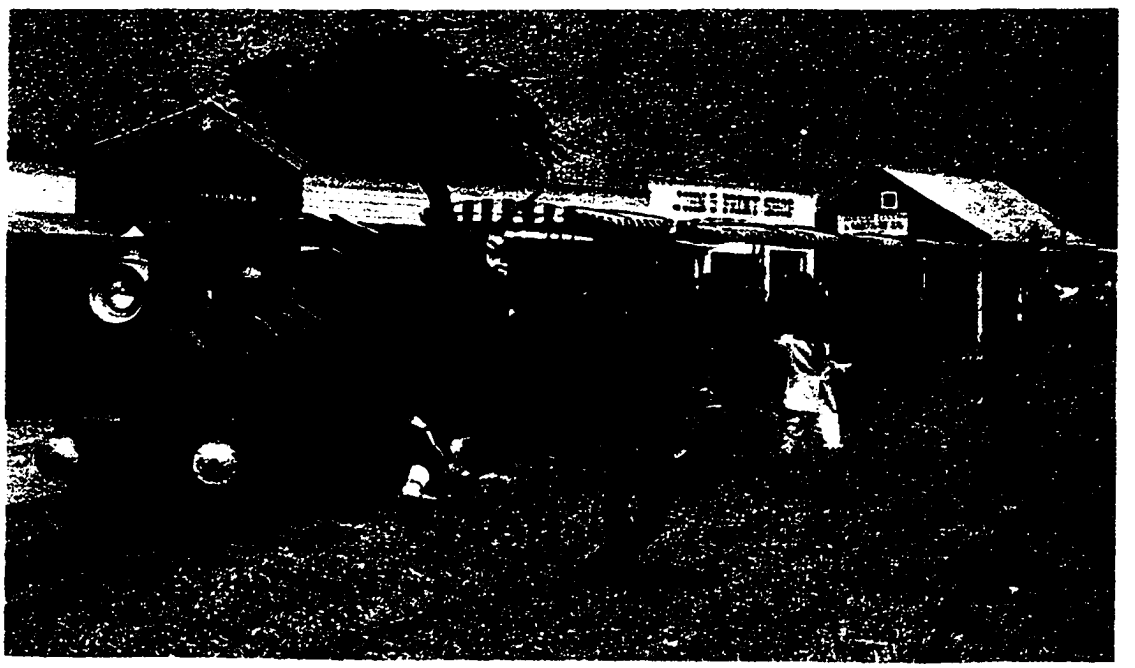

Figure 25. Reenacted Train Robbery at Frontier City, U.S.A. Theme Park in Oklahoma, Circa. 1960. Historic Postcard in Author's Collection.

Figure 26. 1950s postcard from the New Mexico Museum of the Old West, Moriarty, New Mexico. Historic postcard, author's collection.

"The largest longhorn steer alive with horns measuring 6 feet tip to tip shown in native corral." The reverse side of the same card urged tourists to make the trip soon because, "There are only a few of these hardy critters left--and they soon may become extinct."[86] The promoters of New Mexico Museum of the Old West and similar sites portrayed the longhorn, the buffalo, and the Indian as features of Route 66 that were exotic, wonderful, and doomed.

The longhorn, the buffalo, and the Indian outlived Route 66 (Figure 27). With the passage of the Interstate Highway Act of 1956, the fate of the narrow, overcrowded highway was sealed. The vernacular, road-related strip arranged in a linear corridor beside the travel lanes proved to be inefficient and dangerous. "Bloody 66," as people sometimes called the highway, could not handle the volume of traffic. A woman, who has sold souvenirs on Route 66 in Illinois since the late 1940s, described traffic on the highway in the 1950s and 1960s as,

---

[86]Historic 1950s postcard, in author's collection.

Figure 27, the Lasso Motel on Route 66.
Photo by author, September, 1998.

"Not like the limited access highways of today, not safe, people had to make left turns into our place, and there was heavy traffic all the time. We had some terrible accidents."[87] The vernacular commercial strips had many intersections that endangered travelers and increased driving time between cities.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the majority of travelers rejoiced as highway builders bypassed segment after segment of old Route 66 with modern four-lane divided roadway. The large numbers of trucks, farm machinery and slow, local drivers made long-distance travel on the two-lane sections of Route 66 slow and treacherous. The transition from a two-lane, regular-access highway to a four-lane, limited-access road was gradual. Often highway builders constructed a new road alongside the two-lane highway and then opened both sides as a four-lane road.

Many of the motels and road-related attractions were aging in the 1960s and had lost their charm for visitors who saw them as run down, even sleazy. Motorists of the 1960s wanted efficient and standardized amenities. Slick

---

[87]Retired Route 66 merchant, 29 September 1998.

chain restaurants, motels, and gas stations clustered conveniently at exits soon filled this demand.

Ironically, during the 1960s when Route 66 was in decline, the highway enjoyed its greatest notoriety. One of the highway's greatest sources of publicity was the television series, *Route 66*. The popular CBS television show, which aired from 1960 to 1964, featured George Maharis and Martin Milner as Tod and Buz, a pair of clean-cut highway adventurers who drove a new Corvette across the West, doing good deeds and teaching moral lessons to locals.[88] The "Route 66 Game," a spin-off of the show, promised that players would "travel the highway to adventure with Tod and Buz." The game featured car-shaped pieces, colorful play money, and a board depicting a stretch of Route 66.[89]

Other manufacturers utilized the name "Route 66" to sell products. An example was "Route 66 Premium Table Grapes" sold in cans by Suma Fruit International.

---

[88]Jim Datsko, "The Classic Route 66 Series," *Route 66 Magazine* (Winter: 1995/96), 40.

[89]Witzel, *Route 66 Remembered*, 45.

Manufactured in the early 1960s, the can's label pictured a colorful Route 66 shield crowned with a stem of red grapes and the word "Route" written in stylized chrome lettering. Behind the shield and the lettering, the label portrayed a road lined by lushly fruited grape arbors.[90] Presumably, the grapes of Route 66 were no longer grapes of wrath.

Despite the highway's fame, only the owner-operators of Route 66 businesses and the U.S. Highway 66 Association seemed to mourn the loss of the "Main Street of America." Many businesses moved to the interstate, or at least put signs along it directing motorists to their establishments.

The U.S. Highway 66 Association staged an all out effort to associate the name "Route 66" with the new highways (IH 55, IH 44, IH 40, IH 15 and IH 10) that gradually replaced the historic road. At first, the Association tried to convince the Federal Highway Administration to assign the new interstates with the designation "Interstate Highway 66." The FHWA refused because the designation did not conform to its national

---

[90]Circa. 1960 canned grape label, Suma Fruit international, Cadiz Valley, California in author's collection.

numbering system. Once the Association lost that battle, they published pamphlets, guidebooks, and postcards that used both "U.S. 66" and the interstate numbers together. These publications touted Route 66 as the connecting theme of a new interstate route west.[91]

In the 1960s, Route 66 promoters published a fold-out postcard called "Here We Are Along Route 66," featuring twelve colorful scenes "along the way." The cover of this publication portrayed a happy young couple driving a red sedan. Around 1970, the same company issued an almost identical fan postcard titled "Here We Are Along U.S. Route 66--Interstate 40," complete with "17 colorful scenes along the way." This card pictured a stagecoach pulled by four horses on its cover with the caption, "A Cowboy Cadillac." Inside, both publications featured familiar Route 66 themes: southwestern scenery (Grand Canyon, Painted Desert, Palo Duro Canyon), Indian Pueblos, Western Indian craftsmen, and dancers (including "Little Nonnie--Indian Dancer," a boy of about four in full regalia), Will Rogers,

---

[91]Main Street of America Association, *US 66, Main Street of America* (Clinton, OK: Main Street of America Association, 1971) 1-15.

Longhorn cattle, and the Continental Divide. Both cards contain the same text including this paragraph:

> Traveling Route 66 in either direction Between Los Angeles and Chicago is like taking the high road to adventure. For Route 66 takes you to everything that is romantic and colorful in the Southwest and the Middle west. The sights and scenery are marvelous. . . . in New Mexico there are many tribes of colorful Indians. The prairies of Texas, the great longhorn cattle. Oklahoma, the home of Will Rogers.[92]

By 1971, the U.S. Highway 66 Association had changed its name to the Main Street of America Association. In that year the Association published a magazine-like booklet promoting the rapidly disappearing highway. The book exploited every name and promotional gimmick that had been used since 1927 to popularize the road. The Association appeared to be using a form of public relations cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to jolt the highway back to life. The busy cover exclaims,

> [US Route 66, SHORTEST and FASTEST] [YEAR ROUND. 2,200 MILES OF 4 LANE HIGHWAY - DISCOVER AMERICA BY CAR - MAIN STREET OF AMERICA -- *BEST* ACROSS THE SCENIC WEST - *'See the U.S.A. the 66 Way!'* THE WILL ROGERS HIGHWAY -- THE GRAND CANYON ROUTE].

---

[92]Circa. 1965 and ca. 1970 fan postcards (San Francisco, CA: H.S. Cocker Co.) in author's collection.

The five red, white, and blue shields of the interstates that had replaced Route 66 appear at the bottom of the cover.[93]

The Association touted Route 66 as the "Main Street of America" when most of the new route had already bypassed nearly every main street through which Route 66 had passed. Inside, the Association booklet offered a pictorial guide for each state, featuring Indians, cowboys, ghost towns, historic sites, and national parks. The book also included a list of Route 66 associated businesses and booster groups. The 1971 booklet worked to promote the new interstates while exploiting the fame of Route 66. The back page reads, "U.S. 66 is one of the best known highways in the United States. Movies were made along it and books have been written about it. It brings the traveler within easy access of world-famous scenery, National Parks and National Monuments that attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year."[94]

---

[93]*US 66, Main Street of America,* front cover.

[94]Main Street of America Association, back cover.

In spite of promotions, traffic along the bypassed stretches of Route 66 decreased dramatically. A Route 66 merchant described this reduction, "When the interstate came the traffic just stopped, like that."[95] Many merchants campaigned to get interstate highway exits near their businesses. Only businesses that had signs visible from the interstate continued to attract tourist customers.

The Federal Highway Administration worked to make Route 66 extinct. Route 66 existed alongside the interstates, until the FHWA finally decommissioned the route in 1985. Once this occurred, many observers pronounced the famous highway dead. The final segment of Route 66 to be bypassed was the main street through Williams, Arizona in 1984.

Route 66 officially existed from 1927, when the federal government designated the route, until 1985, a period of just fifty-eight years, although the highway reigned as the premier auto route between Chicago and Los Angles for about thirty years between 1927 and 1956. After 1956, portion after portion was bypassed by interstates. As

---

[95]Route 66 merchant, 29 September 1998.

a proprietor of an antique shop on historic Route 66 in Missouri explained, "when the interstates came everybody wanted nothing more than to get rid of Route 66, but ever since they finally did get rid of it, they've been trying to bring it back."[96]

The eight state departments of transportation and the FHWA attempted to ignore the memory of Route 66, the great road they had created themselves only fifty years earlier. This proved impossible, because Route 66 had become ingrained in America's memory and identity. Already celebrated in literature, song, and television, Route 66 developed into an idea that would spawn a major magazine, attract thousands of members to Route 66 organizations, and prompt the U.S. Congress to pass two pieces of legislation to preserve the highway.[97] Soon after people pronounced

---

[96]Route 66 merchant, informal conversation with author, September, 1998.

[97]Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939); Bobby Troupe, "Route 66,"(1948); the television program, *Route 66* (1960-1964); *Route 66 Magazine;* the *Route 66 Corridor Study Act of 1990;* and the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act of 1999.

Route 66 dead at Williams, Arizona in 1984, its ghost began to rise from the rubble. Part of the reason Route 66 did not die is that the remaining landscapes continue to reflect the rich history of the Midwest from Chicago through St Louis, and of the Southwest from Missouri to California. Route 66 is a very beaten path.

CHAPTER 5

NOSTALGIA, REINTERPRETATION, AND MARKETING ON THE MOTHER ROAD

Route 66 has run out of kicks
Cracks so wide you can feel it inside
The sign said go west but we ran out of road

We all rolled in like a tumblin' weed
Old Harleys broken down on one knee
I never thought it could be me . . .

We had a dream but they shot the king
Flag on the ass of my old blue jeans
Tell me tell me
What it all means . . .[1]

These lyrics, taken from the pop group Devonsquare's 1992 song "Bye Bye Route 66" on their CD *Industrial Twilight,* express the lost glory and faded youth that many people associate with historic Route 66. Devonsquare's song touches on the nostalgia for the lost Highway 66 that pervades most current Route 66 literature. The lyrics refer to the West (tumbleweed), Harley Davidson motorcycles, and

[1]Alana MacDonald, Tom Dean, and Herb Ludwig, *Bye Bye Route 66,* "Industrial Twilight," popular song, 1992. Internet. Available from www.ine.net/devon2/index.htm; accessed 10 July 1998.

the hippie movement (flag on the ass). Route 66 enthusiasts associate these and a wide variety of other potent images and ideas with Route 66.

This chapter details the current wave of fascination for Route 66 and the reasons why Route 66 enjoys more national and international attention than any other historic American highway. Since its closure in 1985, Route 66 has come to represent American road and automobile culture as a whole between the 1920s and the 1960s. The chapter also examines the nostalgic ideas and symbols that Route 66 enthusiasts and historians associate with the Mother Road and describes recent efforts to promote and market the road. The Route 66 movement includes conservative nostalgia for the "good old days" of the 1950s, but also involves glorification of the social strife and rebellion of the 1930s and the 1960s. Route 66 enjoys two types of historical significance; first, as the primary highway between Chicago and Los Angeles; and, second as a symbol of American auto culture. This chapter examines the role Route 66 plays today in American popular culture.

The Route 66 movement began to take shape just after the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) decommissioned

the route in 1985, about a decade after Route 66 ceased to function as the primary auto and truck route between Chicago and Los Angeles, although the road had become significant in popular culture by the time the interstate highways bypassed it. This significance resulted primarily from three events: the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), which described the highway as the primary route of the Dust Bowl migration; the release of Bobby Troupe's popular song "Route 66," in 1946; and the airing of the television program, *Route 66,* from 1960 to 1964. The publicity produced by these three creative works of literature (novel, song lyrics, and television script) fixed Route 66 in the minds of the American people and established the cultural backdrop for the current Route 66 movement. Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* sold millions of copies. Bobby Troupe's "Route 66" song proved so popular that, between 1950 and 1990, it was recorded by many other musicians, including Nat King Cole, Bing Crosby, Bob Dylan, Chuck Berry, Woe Betide, Depeche Mode, and Asleep at the Wheel.[1] The television show proved popular enough to remain

---

[1]"Bob Dole Could Learn a Thing or Two From Route 66," *The Economist Newspaper,* 27 July 27 1996, 5.

on the air for four seasons. Most Route 66 literature refers to each of these three cultural texts.[2]

Route 66 gradually ceased to function as a primary auto and truck route as the FHWA replaced section after section with new Interstate highway between the early 1960s and the early 1980s. State departments of transportation often built portions of Interstate directly over segments of old Route 66. In 1976, the distinctive black-and-white shields that marked Route 66 for nearly fifty years began to come down. State sign hanger John Chesniak helped remove the final Route 66 sign in Illinois; it was bolted to a street light pole at the terminus of the highway in Chicago on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Jackson Boulevard. A crowd of highway engineers watched, and a group of press reporters covering the story proclaimed "the end of Route 66." Once Chesniak unbolted the sign and slowly lowered it,

---

[2]Michael Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); *Route 66 Magazine, in Memory of Bobby Troup,* collector's edition, summer, 1999; Jerry Richard, ed., "Well Known Song Added to Popularity of Route 66," *Route 66 News, Magazine and Newsletter for the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona,* April, 1990, 1; Jerry Richard, ed., "Route 66 in legend, Song, Film, TV Series, and History" *Route 66 News, Magazine and Newsletter for the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona,* April, 1990, 21.

the linear corridor of Route 66 began to degrade into a dissociated collection of abandoned or little-used sections of deteriorating pavement.[3]

Why did Route 66 die while other transcontinental routes such as U.S 40 and U.S. 30 remain relatively intact? Since Route 66 traced the shortest route between Chicago and Los Angeles, the corridor became the logical path for a series of new interstate highways authorized by the Interstate Highway Act of 1956. Predictably, the longest intact segments of historic Route 66 that exist today, such as the 130-mile stretch that passes to the north of the Interstate through Seligman, Arizona, were sections that deviated from the most efficient route. Most of Highway 66 ended up running adjacent to, or beneath, one of the five Interstates that replaced it. Route 66 fell victim to its own popularity with motorists.

Soon after the Interstate Highway Act authorized the construction of 41,000 miles of divided, limited-access highway, construction began on a vast scale. A large pool

---

[3]Tom Teague, Bob Waldmire, and Lon Haldeman. *Searching for Route 66,* 3d ed. (Springfield, IL: Samizdat House, 1996), 1-2.

of federal money covered 90 percent of construction costs, with the states financing the remaining ten percent of the cost of Interstates within their borders. The original budget estimated that completing the system would cost about $24.8 billion dollars. A 1968 act added 1,500 miles of road at an additional cost of over $2.5 billion dollars. By 1970, the Interstate system cost the federal government and the states over $70 billion dollars. Between 1958 and 1989, the federal government spent a total of $213 billion dollars on Interstate highways.[4]

Congress designed the original 1956 highway act based on a projection of ninety million registered vehicles by 1975. The system reached this number by 1965.[5] As states, with federal help, constructed more highways, demand for cars rose, which in turn increased the demand for additional highways. This spiraling effect caused the numbers of cars and miles of new highways to explode. Construction crews widened existing interstates

---

[4]Constance E. Beaumont, *How Superstore Sprawl Can Harm Communities and What Citizens Can Do About It* (Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1994), 3.

[5]John Robinson, *Highways and Our Environment* (New York: McGraw Books, 1971), 58.

periodically through and around major cities as suburbs appeared and commuter traffic increased. Some urban stretches became twelve lanes wide or wider. Increasing numbers of vehicles jammed historic Route 66, making the unlimited access, two-lane portions of the highway obsolete by the 1960s.

In order to accommodate tanks, military convoys, and even intercontinental ballistic missiles on truck trailers, highway engineers made interstates four lanes or wider with the traffic directions always divided by a median. These massive roads have no at-grade intersections, and curves sweep with long sight distances. Engineers designed interstates to standards that allowed them to be traveled at seventy miles per hour.[6]

The interstate system, with 42,500 miles of highway, thousands of exits, overpasses, and rest areas, makes up the largest single artifact ever created by humanity. Even if the system had no traffic, billboards, or other services connected with it, the interstate would have made a tremendous impact on the American landscape. Each mile of

---

[6]Ibid., 60.

interstate covers about twenty-four acres of land, the average interchange consuming about eighty.[7]

The extensive land requirements of highways, such as width, shallow grades, and long visibility lines, made a great deal of mountain blasting and valley fill-ins necessary. The design of interstates was far more intrusive on the landscape than historic highways such as Route 66. Interstates relate to the landscape differently than earlier highways. They tend to cut through the contours of the land, while most portions of Route 66 followed them. Interstates also divide motorists from landscape features with wide shoulders, uniform clear zones, and limited-access entrances and exits. During the 1970s, the vast majority of Americans viewed the interstates as a blessing and Route 66 as an obsolete, dangerous, and inefficient highway.

In 1984, the Arizona Department of Transportation completed the final bypass of old Route 66 by blasting a broad path around Williams, Arizona, the last remaining stretch of Route 66 still in use as the primary highway. A

---

[7]Charlton Obburn, "The Motorcar Vs. America," *American Heritage* (April, 1969), 107.

group of celebrities, including Bobby Troupe, gathered in downtown Williams to pronounce the highway dead in a funeral-like ceremony. Troupe sang "Route 66," the popular song he had written nearly four decades earlier. During this ceremony, a state highway official whispered to Dennis Lund, the Kaibab National Forest Recreation Officer, "I don't know why everyone's making such a fuss. Route 66 is like an old can of tuna--once you've used it up, you throw it away."[8]

Like this official, most people expected Route 66 to quickly fade from memory. In 1984, Route 66 existed only as a series of mostly disused strips of eroding pavement stretching from Chicago to Los Angeles, lined by intermittent clusters of associated commercial structures, often crumbling into ruin. Without signs to direct would-be tourists, Route 66 comprised only a confusing jumble of local, sometimes dead-end roads.

Once the FHWA formally decommissioned U.S. Highway 66 in 1985, most travelers eagerly took to the new, efficient

---

[8]Teri A. Cleeland, "Route 66 Revisited," *Cultural Resource Management* 2 (1993): 15.

and safer Interstates. However, after an initial thrill at being able to drive far and fast, a small but growing number of motorists began to long for the "slower pace" of travel on old Route 66.[9] In retrospect, the often-crowded, narrow highway with its motley collection of vernacular roadside businesses (most of which had already gone out of business due to a lack of traffic by 1985) may have seemed quaint and humanizing compared to the massive, efficient, and impersonal Interstates. Motorists found that, on an Interstate, a family could travel from Chicago to Los Angeles and experience very little of the territory through which it passed. The American interstate system is a highly standardized environment that offers only glimpses of the places through which it passes.

In the decade subsequent to its retirement as a primary highway, Route 66 quickly evolved into an object of twentieth-century nostalgia. Since 1985, the highway has come to represent the eras in which it was active, particularly the 1930s and 1950s. Route 66 also signifies concepts such as flight, freedom, the delights of travel,

---

[9]Michael Wallis, lecture, Route 66 Expo, Shamrock, Texas, September, 1998.

coming of age, and other potent American archetypes such as a family vacation in the family automobile. Enthusiasts, who began working to keep the memory of the road alive, often cited references to these ideas and images.[10]

Hundreds of people belong to preservation and promotional Route 66 organizations, including many who do not reside near the road. Foreigners, mainly from western Europe and Japan, also have an interest in 66 (Figure 28). As of 1999, enthusiasts in Belgium, Canada, France, Japan, and the Netherlands had formed organizations dedicated to Route 66. Of the 530 reported visitors who stopped at Angel Delgadillo's visitor center in Seligman, Arizona in early

---

[10]Jayne Clark, "A golden road's unlimited devotion" *USA TODAY* (Washington D.C.) 29 October 2001, Internet. Available from www.usatoday.com/life/travel/leisure/2001/2001-06-29-route66.htm. Accessed December 21, 2001. Shawn Shepherd, "The Legacy of Route 66: Highways always have an economic impact, positive and negative. The Mother Road transformed New Mexico," *New Mexico Business Journal*, Internet. Available from www.nmbiz.com/issues/01/Sep%2001. Accessed December 21, 2001. The Route 66 International Association Website, Internet. Available from www.rt66.com/~chs/help.html. Accessed December 21, 2001.

Figure 28. Many foreign publications on Route 66 came out in the 1980s and 1990s. Photo by author, September 1998.

1999, 208 came from foreign countries.[11] Bill Graves, author of an article in *Trailer Life,* reported meeting two motorcycle riders from France who had air shipped their "hogs" (motorcycles) to the United States to ride them on Route 66. They "spoke of a huge interest in Europe in America's 'Mother Road.'"[12] When he formed the French Route 66 Association in November, 1989, Jean Michel of Paris wrote, "FRENCH ROUTE 66 Association, is a club of young people, who have two passions in life; the old cars and the road. The Route 66 [sic] is like a dream, it represents the road on which we want to drive our old cars."[13] Naonori Kohira of Japan, who helped create a Japanese version of the movie *The Grapes of Wrath* and produced a feature story on Route 66 for a Japanese magazine in 1990, described the reason for Japanese interest in Route 66 as follows: "The

---

[11]*Route 66 News, The Quarterly Newsletter of the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona,* (Winter, 1999), 3. Of the 208 foreign visitors reported, 58 came from Germany and 38 from the United Kingdom.

[12]Bill Graves, "On Route 66 in Amboy, California," *Trailer Life,* August, 1998, 118.

[13]Jean Michel, "Welcome French Route 66 Association," *Route 66 News: Magazine and Newsletter for the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona,* February, 1990, 1.

Japanese traveler wants to come to the U.S.A. and do something different besides go to Disneyland. They want to see and travel old America--the best way to do that, is on old Route 66."[14] In addition to foreign interest, every state through which the road passes has a preservation organization dedicated to saving and interpreting the highway, and there is a National Route 66 Federation that claims to be a nation-wide Route 66 preservation advocacy organization.[15]

Renewed interest in Route 66 that flowered in the 1990s began as a series of unrelated articles and personal experiences in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1977, Thomas W. Pew Jr. published an article about Route 66 in *American Heritage* magazine. Pew's piece outlined the history of the

---

[14]Naonori Kohira, "Japan an Interest in Route 66," *Route 66 News: Magazine and Newsletter for the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona,* March, 1990, 22.

[15]Estimated membership of a selection of Route 66 associations include The National Route 66 Federation: 1,700 members; the California Historic Route 66 Association: 300 members; Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona: 800 members; New Mexico Route 66 Association: 320 members; Old Route 66 Association of Texas: 143 members; Canadian Route 66 Association: 166 members; Norwegian Route 66 Association: 190 members. These estimates were collected through a direct Internet query to the organizations made by the author, 5 September 2000.

highway, focusing on interviews of former Dust Bowl migrants conducted by Pew and Terrence Moore. He ended his 1977 article with the following paragraph:

> No more home-made apple pies, real milk shakes, real coffee; no more place to skinny dip in the Colorado on a hot afternoon, farms with fruit stands run by the youngest kid in the family, advertisements reading 'Chew Mail Pouch' on the sides of barns; no more Burma Shave rhymes, Giant Snake [sic] farms, Teepee motels and 'rooms for rent.' Route 66, the Osage Trail, the Wire Road, the mail route, the emigrant road, the Main Street of America, has vanished almost without a trace. The mother road is a ghost road.[16]

Three years later, in 1980, Pew published an article entitled "Tucumcari Tonight! Requiem for the Last Holdout on Interstate 40," in the *American West Magazine*. Pew's title did not include the term, Route 66, but cited Interstate 40 instead.[17] In 1984 he wrote another epitaph for Route 66 for *American West* called "Good-bye to Main Street 66, No More Homemade Apple Pie." No matter how many times Pew and others attempted to pronounce the highway

---

[16]Pew, "Route 66, a Ghost Road," *American Heritage* Spring, 1977, 26-32.

[17]Thomas W. Pew Jr., "Tucumcari Tonight! Requiem for the Last Holdout on Interstate 40," *The American West Magazine*, January/February, 1980, 35, 62-63.

dead, interest in Route 66 did not subside. The 1984 article ended with: "Route 66 isn't just a part of America, it is America. . . It's a good road that 66. This traveler, for one, is going to miss her, imperfections and all."[18] These sentiments foreshadowed the renewed popularity that Route 66 would enjoy in the 1990s.

The Route 66 preservation movement grew through the 1980s with the quiet activities of individuals and scattered organizations. Tom Teague, a prominent Illinois Route 66 advocate and author of *Searching for Route 66,* began exploring Route 66 in 1986. He gave up a promotion to take a leave of absence from his job in order to explore and document the people and places of the entire length of Route 66.[19]

Interest in Route 66 began to develop into a popular movement. Fifteen residents of Arizona, inspired by Angel Delgadillo, a local barber and Route 66 enthusiast, formed the first historic Route 66 preservation organization, the

---

[18]Thomas W. Pew Jr., "Good-bye to Main Street 66, No More Homemade Apple Pie," *American West Magazine,* September/October, 1984, 47-51.

[19]Teague, Waldmire and Haldeman, *Searching for 66,* 3.

Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona in February, 1987.[20] This organization remains one of the most active Route 66 groups in the country. In 1988 the Kaibab National Forest in Williams, Arizona began a systematic inventory of remnants of Route 66 within its boundaries and placed seven alignments and structures in the National Register of Historic Places. The University of New Mexico republished Jack Rittenhouse's 1946 *A Guide to Highway 66* in 1989, and travelers began to use the book to find traces of the motels, cafes, gas stations, and natural sites that Rittenhouse had described decades earlier. In that same year, the Route 66 of Illinois and Oklahoma Route 66 Association were formed.

In 1990, Congress passed the Route 66 Study Act, which authorized the National Park Service to complete a comprehensive study of the entire length of the historic highway and its associated properties.[21] Also in 1990 Michael Wallis published *Route 66 The Mother Road,* considered to be the most widely read book published to

---

[20]As of late in 1999, the Arizona group had a membership of over 800.

[21]Cleeland, "Route 66 Revisited," 16.

date on Route 66. In 1993, *Route 66 Magazine* began publication, and in 1994, David Knudson founded the National Route 66 Federation after driving the entire length of the road earlier that same year.[22] In the following year, the Victorville (California) Property Owners Association founded the California Route 66 Museum in Victorville. This museum includes a historic exhibition, a research library, a Route 66 traveler's information center, and a gift shop.[23]

In the late 1990s, interest in Route 66 seemed to strengthen. In 1995, the National Park Service published the *Special Resources Study of Route 66,* which had been authorized under the 1990 Route 66 Study Act.[24] On August 10, 1999, Congress followed up on the previous act by passing Public Law 106-45. This law creates partnerships among the Secretary of the Interior and "persons or

---

[22]David Knudson, Route 66 Expo. Amarillo, Texas, lecture, 3 October 1998.

[23]Old Town Victorville Property Owners Association, "Presenting Historic and Contemporary Route 66," pamphlet, 1998.

[24]U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service, *Special Study--Route 66* (Washington, D.C., 1995), 12.

entities that are willing to participate in the programs authorized under [the] Act" to preserve the Route 66 corridor. The Act authorizes the Secretary "in collaboration with the entities described in subsection (c), to facilitate the development of guidelines and a program of technical assistance and grants that will set priorities for the preservation of the Route 66 corridor." To this end, the Act authorized the appropriation of ten million dollars in potential matching grants for Route 66 related projects for fiscal years 2000 through 2009. The act itself does not state why Route 66 is historically significant, but it references the 1995 NPS *Special Resources Study of Route 66,* which contains a brief statement of significance.[25]

On February 24-25, 2000, members of Route 66 organizations met with representatives from the state historic preservation offices (SHPOS) of all of the states that historic Route 66 passes through, except for Kansas

---

[25]U.S. Congress. Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act, Public Law 106-45, Historic Preservation 16 U.S. Code Vol. 461, H.R. 66 1999.

and Arizona. One tribal historic preservation officer, representatives from the National Park Service, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation also attended. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the ramifications and implementation of the ten-year, ten million dollar federal initiative. The participants discussed how best to implement the Act.

While most of the professional preservationists focused on performing a comprehensive survey of alignments and related structures, enthusiasts tended to favor preservation through local efforts to promote tourism, economic development, and the preservation of specific Route 66 landmarks. Route 66 enthusiasts "proposed incentives to entice more people onto Route 66, including better maps, bigger signs, more museums, and more welcome signs."[26]

The representatives of Route 66 Associations promoted tourism as the best method of preserving the highway, rather than the more scholarly approach that professional

---

[26]Greg Smith, "Route 66 Revisited: Preserving the Mother Road," *Society for Commercial Archeology News* (Winter 1999-2000): 3.

preservationists tended to favor. Those who operate Route 66 sites clearly had an economic interest in increased tourism. However, most representatives of Route 66 associations and Route 66 fan clubs seem to favor tourism because of the manner in which they view the highway. Enthusiasts tend to see the highway as a cultural icon, whereas professional preservationists view the highway as a corridor containing related historic landscapes and structures in need of cataloging and systematic preservation.[27] Enthusiasts associate Route 66 with ideas that the highway has come to symbolize. To many enthusiasts, the highway's symbolic meaning stands above and beyond the actual historic resources that lie along the remnants of the highway.

Both enthusiasts who are intimately familiar with Route 66, and those who have only a vague notion of Route 66, associate Route 66 with an idea. Route 66 exists to most enthusiasts as a symbol of America's recent past. Route 66 represents an experience, sometimes imagined, often involving vintage cars and the open road. The

---

[27]Ibid., 5.

following passage from a 1995 article published in *Esquire* expresses this popular sentiment:

> You find yourself lumbering along a red-dirt road in a totally cherry '55 Cadillac and gazing dreamlike, trancelike [sic], out the thick glass windows. Route 66 is way behind you, and the sunset is melting into the car's huge, glossy hood. . . . The desert flatness and its cedar and sage give way to dramatic red buttes and cliffs.[28]

A 1998 tour book, called *Route 66 Mainstreet of America,* proclaims,

> The ride from Glenrio is as beautiful and vibrant as a Mexican tapestry--where copper colored cliffs and majestic mesas rise in brilliant contrast to clear desert skies. The roadside communities in this 'Land of Enchantment' are steeped in desert culture, from souvenir shops peddling turquoise and silver trinkets, to ancient Indian Ruins, and lost cities.

This language could have come from a Fred Harvey promotional written seventy years earlier.[29]

In addition to representing an idealized experience, Route 66 also acts as a focus of childhood memories. Virtually every issue of *Route 66 Magazine* features

---

[28]Martha Sherrill, "'55 Cadillac on Route 66: Tour Guide to Tad Pierson's America Dream Safari," *Esquire,* August 1995, 36.

[29]D. Jeanene Tiner, *Route 66 Mainstreet of America* (Mesa, AZ: Terrell Publishing 1998), 17.

accounts of remembered experiences of Route 66. Several themes repeat throughout these accounts. Most articles involve recollections of a decade (usually the 1950s) that the authors consider to have been a simpler "lost era," a more honest and innocent time. The consensus among most authors is that the 1950s represent an age when life in America was pleasantly free of the complexities brought forth by the 1960s. These authors tend to downplay or completely ignore the undercurrents of the Cold War (including the shooting war in Korea), McCarthyism, racism, and labor strife that characterized life in the 1950s along with benign aspects such as drive-in restaurants and a low divorce rate.

In a *Route 66 Magazine* article entitled "Fifties Memories," writer Bob Moore recalls, "We were respectful of our teachers and tried hard to understand the value of "X" or the Monroe Doctrine." Moore touches lightly on racial relationships during the 1950s when he writes, "A baseball cap was worn with the bill in front--why in the world would you want to turn it around?" "Fifties Memories" also suggests that people were more innocent then: "our drugs consisted of St. Joseph Aspirin . . . and cough syrup for a

sore throat." The piece ends with a grand finale of unbridled nostalgia: "People had time for themselves and each other and our lives were not consumed with "stuff." Bad guys went to jail, always, and good guys got ahead. Everyone respected the President, even if we didn't agree with him. It was a comfortable time in America and some of us miss it very much."[30] Moore chose the word "comfortable" to describe the 1950s. This may be the ideal term to describe his white, male, middle-class recollection of the decade before the civil rights movement reached its climax, the Vietnam War began, and the woman's liberation movement entered mainstream America.

A major theme of Route 66 nostalgia literature is that Route 66 symbolizes an era of innocence. This concept implies that in the 1950s Americans had a strong, conservative morality and a wholesome nationalism that most have since lost. In an article called "The Summer of '54," Jim Cook describes his experiences as part of a group of teenage male friends living in Flagstaff, Arizona, who called themselves "the Joy Boys." Cook describes a "golden

---

[30]Bob Moore, "Fifties Memories," *Route 66 Magazine,* (fall 1998), 50-51.

summer" of working in garages and hanging around town. One might expect such boys to get into trouble, but not these fellows. Throughout the article, the author reassures his readers that while he and his friends longed to hitch a ride to California, and ogled tourist girls, their exploits were innocent. Cook writes, "Mark's girlfriend Lynn and her divorced mother Madeline shared an apartment with us. Madeline was something of a party girl, but she also was a steady moral compass for young guys on the loose." Several paragraphs later, Cook describes a relationship he had with a California girl, once again assuring us of his innocence: "We held hands, and necked at drive-in movies, and stumbled around a dance floor or two. We not only didn't get to first base, but weren't sure where the ballpark was."[31]

Jim Datsko, a regular columnist in *Route 66 Magazine*, takes the supposed innocence of life on the Route 66 during the late 1950s and early '60s to a more generalized, political level. His general thesis is that the television series, *Route 66*, which aired from 1960 to 1964, represented a wholesome pro-family America that the

---

[31]Jim Cook, "The Summer of '54," *Route 66 Magazine*, Winter, 1995/96, 18-19.

cultural changes in the late 1960s, including "drugs, free sex, race riots, and Viet Nam war [sic] riots" destroyed. The author equates the "death" of Route 66 with the end of "values" in America. The article begins, "Growing up in the late 60s was tough. Not only was Route 66 being cut off and left to die a slow death, it seemed as if everything else good in our country was under assault." Datsko continues, "At the same time Route 66 was being 'decommissioned' established traditional values that had developed over millenniums [sic], including respect for law and order, were torn down." The article goes on to describe the television series in which Tod and Buz, two "clean-cut heroes," travel the countryside encountering beautiful women and solving "moral dilemmas" for the troubled people they meet.[32]

Very little of the series actually took place on Route 66 but in the mind of Jim Datsko, the highway and the television show represent a lost morality. The connection

---

[32]Jim Datsko, "The Spirit of Route 66, The Classic Route 66 TV Series," *Route 66 Magazine,* winter, 1995/96, 40-42.

between traditional values and Route 66 in the narrative reaches the surreal when the author asks, "Is it mere coincidence that the Bible has 66 books? Or that the tribe of Israel, God's chosen people numbered exactly 66 when entering Egypt?" Datsko equates Route 66 and the television program by the same name with morality, and contends that this innocence and a virtually crime-free and peacefully moral America was torn down by the same faceless intellectual elites that doomed the old road by creating the interstates. He speculates that those days are not forgotten, and might even be resurrected if we would preserve the memory of Route 66 and bring Tod and Buz back to the screen. He writes: "Many of us believe the current deterioration of the values that made America great would be reversed by airing this great series."[33]

Cultural historian Karal Ann Marling expresses an alternate view of the 1950s in her study of that decade, *As Seen on TV*. Unlike nostalgia writer Bob Moore, who asserts that people were less materialistic in the 1950s, Marling describes the era as one obsessed with consumer goods. She

---

[33]Ibid 40-42.

argues that Americans in the 1950s became fascinated with "shiny new kitchens with pass-throughs from which the TV set could always be glimpsed."[34] American culture in the 1950s centered on seeing and using the new products available in the post-war industrial boom. Marling argues that the 1950s represent a period in which Americans aspired to a "densely material world." The 1950s marked the first period of material abundance and prosperity since 1929. This prosperity, combined with advancing technology, provided a standard of living that few Americans had known previously.

Marling's portrait of the decade did not focus on the experiences of many segments of American society, such as African Americans, Latinos, and the Beat writers, but her analysis provides a thorough description of the dominant American consumer culture. Marling's work indicates that people in the 1950s were probably at least as interested in material gain as people are today.

---

[34]Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV, The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 5.

While the media did not often deal with racism, addiction to consumer goods, and sexuality, those issues clearly existed under the surface. In *Homeward Bound,* historian Elaine Tyler May describes the post-war period in the United States as a time of insecurity and "international and domestic containment." May writes, "Prosperity had returned, but would there be another postwar slump . . . Woman had proved themselves competent during the war . . . but what would happen to their families if they continued to work? Science had discovered atomic energy, but would it ultimately serve humanity or destroy it?"[35] Using statistical data from the Kelly Longitudinal Study, May documented the underlying fears, sexual repression, and motivations of family life in the 1950s that most Route 66 enthusiasts seem to have forgotten. The families that took their vacations down Route 66 in the 1950s clearly did not lead carefree lives in an innocent and conflict-free America.[36]

---

[35]Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era,* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 11.

[36]Ibid.

Although Route 66 enthusiasts appear to be overwhelmingly white and middle class, they come from virtually every political and economic background. Consequently, some nostalgia writers offer alternative interpretations of the meanings of Route 66 and the decade of the 1950s. An article in *Route 66 Magazine* by Lou Delina places Route 66 from a less conservative political point of view, namely the defiant hoboism and restless travel of Jack Kerouac. Delina argues that the original Tod and Buz were actually Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady as Sal Paradise and his friend Dean Moriarty from Kerouac's novel *On the Road*.

Delena places both the highway and the television series in a more leftist, counter-cultural context than other *Route 66 Magazine* authors. *On the Road* and "the spirit of Route 66," in Delina's view, "led to a revolution, a parting of the ways between the old guard and the new progressives, the so-called 'free thinkers.' This movement would manifest itself in the late 1960s." While admitting that the television show "eliminated some of the roguish aspects of Kerouac and Cassady," the "*raison d' être*, the search for kicks, remains the same." Here,

instead of representing traditional values, Route 66 acted as a pathway for the Beat Generation, eventually leading to the cultural revolution of the late 1960s that Dansko and many other *Route 66 Magazine* contributors clearly despise.[37]

Although Delina argues that Kerouac and Cassady "were motivated by Route 66,"[38] *On the Road* only mentions Route 66 in passing. Kerouac originally intended to take U.S. Route 6 from New York State west across the country, but ended up hitchhiking over a series of highways. In one of the few mentions of Route 66 in *On the Road,* Kerouac described many of the eccentric characters that he encountered in the Los Angeles of the post-war 1940s. "Wild Negroes with bop caps and goatees came laughing by; then long-haired broken down hipsters straight off Route 66 from New York; then old desert rats, carrying packs and heading for a park bench at the Plaza."[39]

---

[37]Lou Delina, "Kerouac & Cassady, Were These Free Spirits the Original Buz & Tod?" *Route 66 Magazine,* Winter, 1995/96, 42-44.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Jack Kerouac, *On the Road,* (New York: The Viking Press, 1955). 86.

In 1947, Route 66 was only one of several famous U.S. highways to Kerouac and virtually everyone else in the United States, but this has not prevented Delina and many Route 66 enthusiasts from asserting that Route 66 represents nearly every aspect of pre-interstate America. Some observers in the 1950s, such as architect Frank Lloyd Wright, viewed Route 66 with a hint of disdain. Wright wrote, "Route 66 is a giant chute down which everything loose in this country is sliding into Southern California."[40]

Route 66 enthusiasts and promoters have romanticized Route 66, helping to transform what was once a major highway into a focus for nostalgia and a marketing tool. Other aspects of American history, such as the Old West and the Civil War, have also been widely marketed in recent decades. In his paper, "Remembering Memory," historian John Gillis states that, "At the end of the twentieth-century, memory has become such big business that what is being remembered is overshadowed, becoming less memorable than

---

[40]Frank Lloyd Wright, quoted in Bob Lundy, "The Good Life," *Tourism Today, The Quarterly Publication of the San Bernadino County Tourism Development Council* (Spring, 1990), 1.

the commemorations themselves."[41] This can certainly be said of Route 66, a highway that has become more of a symbol than a road. Gillis continues, "Today, people shop for memories as they shop for anything else."[42] In *The Mystic Chords of Memory*, Michael Kammen writes: "an entrepreneurial mode of selective memory has achieved amazing commercial success, though the price for selective memory has been indiscriminate amnesia."[43] This amnesia is apparent in the methods merchants and Route 66 associations use to focus on Route 66 as a marketing tool.

The symbols and name of Route 66 have become products marketed by merchants located on historic Route 66 and also by those who have little or no association with the highway. Kmart is an example of a retailer that utilizes the romanticized meaning and appeal of Route 66 for a product that has nothing to do with the highway. In 1998,

---

[41]John R. Gillis, "Remembering Memory: A Challenge for Public Historians in a Post-National Era," *The Public Historian* 14 (Fall, 1992): 91.

[42]Ibid., 98.

[43]Michael Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 535.

Kmart introduced its "Route 66 house brand of jeans." In doing so, writes Bob Garfield for *Advertising Age*, "Kmart opted to associate itself with an icon conveniently pre-imbued with a sense of romantic independence."[44]

When the Route 66 line of clothes first came out, Kmart aired two television commercials that used the Route 66 image, both entitled "Tales from Route 66." One commercial, using saturated colors and styles from the 1960s, portrays the urban legend about a cement truck driver who sees a new convertible parked in his driveway and spots a handsome young man in the kitchen talking to his wife. A voice-over tells viewers, "So, he backs up his truck, full load of wet cement mix right down the chute," and the audience knows that cement has filled the car. Then the wife and the young man walk outside, "Honey," she says, "this is the car dealer. He just dropped off your birthday present. Surprise!" Then the audio plays "Get your kicks on Route 66, and a title card reads, "Route 66 Jeans. Clothes. It's not Main Street."[45]

---

[44]Bob Garfild, "Air of Authenticity Drives Route 66 Line," *Advertising Age*, 10 August 1998, 29.

[45]Ibid., 29.

Another 1998 Route 66 Jeans commercial portrays a date (in a vintage car) between a boy and a girl who later turns out to have died years earlier. The Kmart ads exploit Route 66 as a symbol of nostalgia that vaguely relates to old cars and vintage films such as *Psycho*. Like the 1960s television show *Route 66,* Route 66 Jeans really have little to do with Route 66 as a historic highway, but the commercials exploit Route 66 as an abstract concept symbolizing roadside America and twentieth century auto culture. The Kmart writers even play on the term associated with Route 66, "the Main Street of America," reversing it to suggest that, unlike main street, the jeans have distinction.

Later Route 66 Jeans commercials dealt more directly with the historic highway. A summer, 2000 Route 66 Jeans television commercial shows a group of teenagers riding in a convertible along historic Route 66. The car soon runs out of gasoline and the passengers have to push the car, providing an ideal opportunity to show that the slim teenagers are wearing Route 66 Jeans. They arrive at a gas

station, but discover that it is defunct. A gas tanker goes by and the young people try to flag it down, but the driver passes them, leaving them stranded on a little-used highway marked with a Route 66 shield. This advertisement plays on the fact that Route 66 is half-abandoned, and utilizes the ghost road imagery that plays such a pivotal role in Route 66 nostalgia.

Kmart's Route 66 Jeans had a precedent. In 1990, a Japanese television crew used Route 66 as the location for Japanese commercials for Edwin Jeans, a brand popular in Japan. The producers picked downtown Kingman, Arizona, to film the Route 66 commercial. John Elmore, a Los Angeles producer, cited two reasons for using Route 66 as a marketing tool for the jeans: "Japanese fascination with American culture--in this case Route 66--and a trend in Japanese advertising toward faster--moving American style, television commercials."[46]

---

[46]John Elmore and Anne E. Smith, "Japanese Use Downtown Kingman for Blue Jean Commercial Filming on Route 66," *Route 66 News Magazine and Newsletter for the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona,* November, 1990, 16.

The focus of most Route 66 marketing, including Route 66 Jeans, is the shield, developed in 1926 to designate all U.S. Highways.[47] The black-and-white shield has become associated primarily with Route 66. Within the last ten years, the shield has been used to designate many products, most of which are not travel-related. These products include watches, tote bags, plastic gas-pump salt and peppershakers, tee shirts, silver jewelry, area rugs, phone cards, and belt buckles. A variety of businesses have also used the shield and "Route 66" as a logo or name. These include an Internet company in New Mexico that has the motto: "Get Your Clicks on Internet 66" (Figure 29). Other businesses include banks, the Great Plains Regional Medical Center in Elk City, Oklahoma; the Route 66 Antique Mall, also in Elk City; a "Route 66" miniature golf course; "66 Bowl" in Oklahoma City; Historic Route 66 Central Oklahoma Long Distance; the Route 66 Music and Pawn Shop in Wilson,

[47]Kmart designed a copyrighted red and tan shield as a trademark for Route 66 jeans.

Figure 29. Sign for a " dot com" on Route 66 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Photo by author, October 1998.

Oklahoma.[48] In 1988, Yamaha released a motorcycle called the "XV250 Route 66" in an attempt to associate its product with the Route 66 legacy.[49]

Route 66 is also promoted in books, periodicals, promotional brochures, home pages on the Internet, and at Route 66 events such as drive-a-thons and fairs.[50] The ideas used to promote Route 66 and products associated with the historic highway can be placed into several categories. They are Route 66 as a symbol of a lost America (the "good old days"); as a ghost road of hearty pioneers, "the people," meaning working folk; as representing a lost time in which driving was fun and the highway was an amusement park through the "frontier" (usually contrasted with the "monotony" of the Interstates); as a symbol of freedom and

---

[48]Oklahoma Route 66 Association, "Official Oklahoma Route 66 Association Trip Guide," Oklahoma Native Council and the Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation, 1999, 1-98.

[49]Editor of product review, *Cycle*, September, 1988, 33-38.

[50]An Internet Search on the Google search engine conducted by the author on December 21, 2001, using the words "Historic Route 66" resulted in 8,620 hits.

rootlessness; and as a focus of selective national and local heritage.

One of the most common associations with the highway is the idea that the road represents a lost, generally happier era in American history. This is the point of view expressed by the writers for *Route 66 Magazine* discussed earlier in this chapter. Activists such as David Knudson, the executive director of the National Historic Route 66 Federation, characterize the highway as being a living remnant of a bygone America. Knudson described Route 66 as "transportation to excitement, to remembrance--2,400 miles of Williamsburg, but living and breathing."[51]

Michael Wallis, author of *Route 66, The Mother Road,* sees the highway as "a symbol of the way the United States used to be." Wallis also describes Route 66 as "real family values without the buzz words."[52] In his book, Wallis writes, "Route 66 means a time before America became generic . . . America seemed more innocent. Billboards on

---

[51]David Knudson, Route 66 Expo. Amarillo, Texas, lecture, 3 October 1998.

[52]Michael Wallis, Route 66 Expo. Amarillo, Texas, lecture, 2 October 1998.

the highways were legal; hitchhiking was safe. Nobody knew about cholesterol."[53] A long-time barber and merchant on Route 66 in Arizona reflects this nostalgia when he describes Route 66 as "happy people--daily, an opportunity to relive how it was, how we were."[54]

Another common theme associated with Route 66 is that the highway represents the lives of "real," "common" or "true Americans." The "Route 66 Tour Guide," a brochure published by the Route 66 Association of Illinois, describes Route 66 as a "blue collar, mom-and-pop highway . . . (where) the prized American qualities of hardy individualism and grassroots community spirit found a perfect blend. More than just a highway, Route 66 became a touchstone, showing us not only who we were as a country, but who we could be."[55] The Illinois Association represents Route 66 as an inspiration for plain folks to become

---

[53]Michael Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 2.

[54]Arizona Route 66 merchant, 4 October, 1998.

[55]Route 66 Association of Illinois, in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs Bureau of Tourism, *Historic Route 66*, pamphlet (Springfield, 1998), 2.

independent business people and live an American dream. Why ascribe this level of significance to Route 66 and not to U.S 30 or U.S. 40 or any other heavily traveled pre-Interstate highway? The brochure does not address this issue. Certainly, independent business people flourished on other busy U.S. highways as well. Other highways also functioned as routes for migrating workers.

The Holbrook, Arizona Chamber of Commerce web site describes Route 66 this way: "In the 1930s through the 1950s, the 'frontiersmen' were travelers on Route 66. . . . This narrow strip of asphalt was a symbol of hope for farmers fleeing the dust bowl and soldiers starting a new life after World War II. The highway was served as a symbol of adventure for tourists answering the call of the West."[56] By associating historic Route 66 motorists with frontiersmen, the Holbrook web site seems to glorify these travelers and associate Route 66 with the wagon trails that preceded it. Greg Harrison, writing for the *American Motorcyclist,* states that "Route 66 was a part of the

---

[56]Holbrook, Arizona Chamber of Commerce, Internet. Available from www.arizonaguide.com/cities/holbrook/route66.html;_accessed 27 April 2000.

American Dream. It represented freedom and adventure. Truckers, motorcyclists and even a couple guys in a Corvette convertible on TV took 'the highway that is the best.'"[57] Harrison confuses fact with fiction when he equates actual Route 66 travelers with the fictional Buz and Tod from television. The web site of the Route 66 International Association expresses a similar sentiment, "For thousands of returning servicemen and their families, Route 66 represented more than a highway. 'It became,' according to one admirer, 'an icon of free-spirited independence linking the United States across the Rocky Mountain divide to the Pacific Ocean.'"[58]

To many enthusiasts, Route 66 represents a lost era in which driving was fun and the highway an amusement park through the Old West or "frontier," which they usually contrast with the "monotony" of the Interstates. Arizona

---

[57]Greg Harrison, "Rediscovering Route 66," *American Motorcyclist: Journal of the American Motorcycle Association,* Internet. Available from www.hhjm.com/66/static/highway1.htm; accessed 27 April 2000.

[58]Route 66 International Association, Internet. Available from www.route66usa.com/info.html; accessed 27 April 2000.

Route 66 enthusiast Angel Deladillo's Internet site, republished in an article by Ted Anthony from the Spokane, Washington *Spokesman-Review,* describes Route 66 as "the ultimate road trip." Anthony writes, "Not so long ago, journey mattered as much as destination. Between 1926 and the 1960s, Route 66 was the 'ultimate road trip' through the essence of pioneer spirit-the American frontier."[59]

Route 66: Mainstreet of America states in its introduction, "Route 66 was a means of going someplace-with the emphasis on the 'going' as opposed to the 'someplace.' For the first time, travelers embraced the idea that the joy of traveling was not so much in the destination, but in the journey itself."[60] In *Travel Holiday* Steve Wilson, a travel writer, expresses a similar idea; "The drive was half the fun in those days, and highways like Route 66 had the flavor of amusement parks."[61]

---

[59]Ted Anthony, "History of the Mother Road" *The Spokesman-Review,* Spokane, WA, 30 November 30 1997. Internet. Available from http://route66giftshop.com/links/happenins.html; accessed 25 February 2000.

[60]Tiner, *Route 66 Mainstreet of America,* 1.

[61]Steve Wilson, "Two-Lane Vacation: Highway Trip Along What is Left of Route 66 in New Mexico and Arizona Reveals A Bygone Era," *Travel-Holiday,* April 1998, 54.

Wilson and others ignore the hundreds of miles of barren, arid countryside and congested work-a-day towns between the attractions of this linear "amusement park." Angel's Barbershop's Route 66 web site portrays Route 66 as meandering through "adventureland's undulating hills."[62] As with many ideas expressed about Route 66, these sentiments are over-simplified. Most people who traveled Route 66 used the highway because traveling it provided the cheapest, fastest way to get to their destination. If they ended up enjoying the trip, this was usually incidental.

To a merchant on Route 66 in Arizona, Route 66 symbolizes "freedom." Route 66 publications, advertisements and testimonials often repeat the theme that Route 66 gave travelers an opportunity to taste the freedom of the road, of forever "going somewhere." As writer Michael Wallis states, Route 66 is "the free road."[63] To a long-time merchant on Route 66 in Illinois who has operated for over fifty years, the highway symbolizes "adventure."[64]

---

[62]Angel Delgadillo, "History of Route 66," Internet. Available from http://route66giftshop.com/links.html; 25 February 2000.

[63]Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road*, 1-2.

[64]Illinois Route 66 merchant, 29 September, 1998.

To others, Route 66 is a monument to twentieth-century national and local history. Peter Fish writes in *Sunset,* "There are paths that run not just across the American landscape but across the American mind, and Route 66 is among the most resonant of these." He continues, "It became the symbol of American momentum. Everyone's family traveled it."[65] Tom Snyder, founder and former director of the California Route 66 Association, describes the significance of Route 66 in his *Route 66 Traveler's Guide and Roadside Companion:* "US 66 became much more than a highway. For millions who traveled her (and millions more who still want to), the road was transformed from a concrete thoroughfare into a national symbol: a vital life-sign for us all."[66]

Martin Mathis, a Swiss tourist, characterizes Route 66 on his web page as, "Everything from hamburgers, motels, Coca-Cola ads, Elvis and James Dean to the wide open land and the straight highways that disappear on the horizon, is

---

[65]Peter Fish, "Canyons, Cozy Dogs, and The Meaning of The West," *Sunset,* December 1998, 18.

[66]Tom Snyder, *Route 66 Traveler's Guide and Roadside Companion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), advance proofs, xvii.

in it. Route 66 is like Americana in a nutshell."[67] An elderly volunteer at a history museum on Route 66 in Kansas, says that the Route represents "our heritage." A motel operator who spent over fifty-seven years on Route 66 describes the highway as a "road of memories."[68]

While contemporary commentary on Route 66 ascribes great historical and cultural significance to Route 66, to many motorists of the time the route was simply another highway, the most convenient path to a destination. The notes written on a sample of Route 66 associated postcards indicate that during the highway's period of significance, between 1927 and around 1970, motorists tended to be more interested in the weather, the natural landscape, and how many miles they covered that day than in Route 66 itself. A few praised the motel at which they were staying, or a specific tourist attraction such as the Painted Desert or the Grand Canyon. The most commonly expressed interest was in the weather.

---

[67]Martin Mathis, "Road Trips Revisited--A Route 66 Essay," (January 1995), Internet. Available from www.lastbandit.com/rte66pix.html; accessed 25 April 2000.

[68]Anonymous Route 66 merchants, 30 September 1998.

A motorist wrote in 1940 on the back of a postcard, "Left Gallup, New Mexico this morning, staying in Needles, CA tonight + by tomorrow night be at the end of our route. Was plenty warm today." From Joliet, Illinois a Texan wrote in 1944, "Are O.K. at 1:45 PM - had a nice trip. It is nice and cool here + raining." In 1954 another Texas motorist wrote from Albuquerque, "It is much cooler here."[69] A Missouri motorist wrote on a Broncho Lodge, Amarillo, Texas postcard in 1964, "Having a grand trip . . . . We have had rain on the desert both going out and coming back." Another motorist, from Lanoner Hills, Maryland sent this note on a "US 66 Texas" postcard from Shamrock, Texas in 1967, "We got to Texas about 6:00 AM today. All has gone well so far. It is raining very hard now . . . . We will follow Route 66 through New Mexico + Arizona to Las Vegas. The land here + through Okla. is very flat. Try it sometime."[70]

While Route 66 motorists enjoyed the scenery they discovered along the way, they usually took the vernacular

---

[69]Historic postcard in author's collection.

[70]Ibid.

landscape for granted. There were, after all, no interstates (until after 1956), and no massive corporate restaurant and motel chains for comparison. Then, as now, people tended to notice features that they found unusual, primarily the scenery. "On our way home + staying here tonight. Weather on chilly side 50 (degrees). We saw Petrified Forest, which is very interesting and Painted Desert today. Had a dust storm -thunder showers + rainbow today, and some fine roads," a motorist wrote from the Painted Desert to New York in 1961.[71]

This note on a 1953 "Highway 66 Rolla MO" [sic] postcard sent to New York state seems to express many of the issues that Route 66 vacationers noted, "At Merimac Caverns marvelous + several miles deep. Have good weather + car is perfect. Expect to arrive in Tulsa, Okla. before night. Ozarks are beautiful. Stayed in double cabin west of St. Louis last night. Good driving weather. Cloudy but no rain. Girls are fine and enjoying trip. G. is flexing camera. good roads. Best vacation we've ever taken."[72]

---

[71]Ibid.

[72]Historic postcard in author's collection.

The writer was clearly interested in natural wonders, weather, good roads, and finding a good cabin to spend the night, but these concerns do little to reflect the symbolism discussed by many contemporary Route 66 enthusiasts. At least one traveler, who stayed at the Pine Tree Lodge in Gallup in 1957, did not even like the scenery. She wrote, "I'm not much on traveling and this New Mexico and Arizona I don't like."[73]

People living in these "simpler times" seem to have had more worries about events such as breakdowns and flat tires than have contemporary motorists. A 1962 traveler expressed, "We are on our way again this AM it is 40 degrees here @ 530 AM. We have had a good time + no trouble. Visited City in the Sky--Petrified Forest + Painted Desert yesterday," on a postcard written at the Forest Motel in Holbrook, Arizona. One stranded couple wrote from Kansas, "slept in car--had bearing trouble with U-Haul." A motorist wrote in 1937 from the Sinclair Pennant Hotel in Rolla, "Dear Verna, We have rain sleet & snow

---

[73]Jerry McClanahan, "Wish You Were Here," *Route 66 Magazine,* Summer, 1999, reproduction of 1957 postcard, 33.

today. E.J. got sick so we stopped at 684 miles."[74] The notes, written in the present tense by the Route 66 vacationers, cite specific concerns rather than discussing Route 66 as an entity or as an integrated experience. Motorists traveling west often took a series of highways, with few riding Route 66 the entire way.[75]

On postcards, many motorists bragged how far they had traveled in a day or two. A motorist wrote to an address in South Carolina, "Stopping here tonight. Drove 537 miles today. Good roads most of the way . . . nice people nice weather so far," from the Bell Motel in Kingman, Arizona in 1953. Driving so fast and far on pre-interstate highways often tired motorists, such as the one who wrote, "Joplin, MO . . . we are here ready to retire made fine time--leave

for Tulsa in the morning Joplin, MO, 1958."[76]

One motorist from Pennsylvania bragged in 1959, "Made 866 (miles) today. Was slowed down by a bad rain storm and

---

[74]Ibid., 33.

[75]Historic postcard in author's collection.
[76]Ibid.

I mean rain."[77] From the Ko Ko Motel in Joplin, Missouri in 1959, another motorist noted how many miles he/she hoped to cover on the following day: "Got to Joplin at 3:30 PM. Pretty tired so just got a room. We will make it a little past Springfield (350 mi) tomorrow. Feel OK. so far." "This is our first real stop--the mid-point . . . we left? at 8:30 Tue night took 23 hours to here. Changed our plans for Las Vegas--we all wanted to get home. Hope to make it by fri." a motorist wrote while staying at the Clock Inn Motel, Oklahoma City in 1963.[78]

Another common concern expressed on postcards was the quality of motel one would find. Without the uniformity of chain management, the quality of motels varied greatly, and people appreciated a good one. "Staying here tonight--cottage 5--nicer than a Hotel. It has been like spring all day," came from Koronado Kourts, Joplin, Missouri in 1941. Another traveler was happy with his/her accommodations in Springfield, Illinois: "Greetings from a nice trip. Following Duncan Hines led to this beautiful hotel. Had

---

[77]McClanahan, "Wish You Were Here," 33.

[78]Historic postcards in author's collection.

dinner in the crystal room--ah so nice! Kentwood Arms Hotel, 1946."[79]

Once four-lane sections of highway and Interstates began to replace portions of the historic two-lane highway, many motorists celebrated in their notes on postcards. Mina, a motorist from 1954 drove to Needles through "75 miles of 104 temperature from Kingman here--but on new 4-lane highway." A 1960s driver wrote "Highway 66 is a freeway most of the way!"[80]

Never did any motorist express any particular reverence for Route 66 itself in their notes in this sample of postcards. No one wrote "finally seeing Route 66," or "here I am traveling the quintessential American highway." References to Route 66 are few, and usually just to identify which way the vacationers went. The symbolism and ideals associated with Route seem to be recent inventions created since the highway ceased to exist.

However, during the highway's period of significance, some observers saw Route 66 as more than just another

---

[79]Ibid.

[80]McClanahan, "Wish You Were Here," 34.

highway. One obvious example was John Steinbeck when he wrote *The Grapes of Wrath* in the late 1930s. Another writer working for the 1941 Work Progress Administration (WPA) *Guide to Oklahoma,* took his/her lead from Steinbeck: "Known for many things, Grapes of Wrath families, 'Cash and Carry; Pyle's Bunion Derby, its popular local titles, 'Main Street of America' and the Will Rogers Highway of America,' US 66 runs the gamut of hot and cold, mountains and prairies, beauty and sordid ugliness."[81]

The seeds for the late-twentieth-century Route 66 revival exist in these sentiments, but most motorists at the time do not appear to have seen Route 66 as being particularly significant. When asked what they thought Route 66 symbolized, many people intimately familiar with old Route 66 did not view Route 66 as a symbol or an ideal. An Illinois restaurant operator simply said that, to him, the highway represented "a living."[82]

---

[81]Work Progress Administration Writer's Program, *Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State,* (Washington, D.C.: WPA, 1941). Internet. Available from http://members.aol.com; accessed on 4 May 2000.

[82]Route 66 merchant, 30 September, 1998.

An Illinois merchant describes the highway as "bloody 66" because of the numerous accidents that she witnessed.[83] A 1990 edition of the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona newsletter featured Famed Hobo "The Man Called John. He says Hobo's [sic] like to travel Route 66 because of its closeness to the railroad tracks and 66 caries [sic] a lot of history they enjoy."[84] Even today, many old Route 66 personalities have difficulty ascribing symbolic meaning to the highway; it simply remains an interesting road.

The primary motivation for Route 66 promoters appears to be nostalgia. Contemporary Route 66 enthusiasts, many of whom had little if any experience with the historic highway during its period of significance, associate the historic highway with a cluster of images and ideas. Many of these stemmed from notions about the Southwest developed and promoted by railroads and early Route 66 merchants.

The differences between the ideas and associations expressed by many contemporary Route 66 promoters and the

---

[83]Route 66 merchant, 29 September, 1998.

[84]Jerry Richard, ed., *Route 66 News, Magazine and Newsletter for the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona*, March, 1990, 21.

impressions of travelers during the highway's period of use illustrate the contrasts between historic experiences and public memory of those experiences. Widespread nostalgia for the decades from the 1930s through the 1950s, when Route 66 was in active use, is an example of how Americans tend to, as Michael Frisch put it, "shrink away from a serious reckoning with their past."[85] Instead of examining the economic injustice of the 1930s or the undercurrents of racism and social unrest in the United States during the 1950s and early 1960s, many, such as a number of contributors to *Route 66 Magazine,* view the period as a golden era of innocence and simplicity. Frisch describes the past as being sealed away from the present in the minds of many Americans, causing the present "to float in time . . . unconstrained and uninstructed by what made it come to be."[86] Much of the current nostalgia for Route 66 seems to reflect this tendency, because it emphasizes nostalgia over history.

---

[85]Michael Frish, *Working-Class America: Essays on Labor, Community, and American Society* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press), 6.

[86]Ibid., 8.

According to David Lowenthal, the difference between the study of history and memory is that memory is a personal recollection, while history is a collective effort to study past events "based on empirical sources." He writes, "We accept memory as a premise of knowledge; we infer history from evidence that includes other people's memories."[87] If myths and cultural bias influence the memories of Route 66 enthusiasts, what data can we find to compare personal recollections with the highway's history in relation to greater historical trends? We have to use the work of academic historians to place the individual memories into a general historical context.

Lowenthal writes that history is not a flawless standard with which to compare personal memories, and that academic history is both "less than the past," and "more than the past."[88] History is less than the past because "no historical account ever corresponds precisely with any actual past." He cites three factors that limit history. The first is the "immensity of the past itself," which

---

[87]David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (New York: The Cambridge Press, 1985), 212.

[88]Ibid., 215.

forces historians to write accounts based on knowledge about a tiny fraction of any event; the second is that any account of the past is made up of words that signify only events, not the events themselves; and the third factor is the inevitability of bias on the part of the historian. Lowenthal concludes that "historical narrative is not a portrait of what happened but a story about what happened."[89] These limitations reduce the study of history to a rough approximation, which can have no pretense to claiming absolute accuracy. Despite this, historical studies based on primary research can place personal memories and associations about Route 66 in context and help those who interpret the historic highway to discern between what actually happened and what is nostalgia. Much of the study done on Route 66 has been motivated by enthusiasm for the road, the automobile, and the highway's decades of significance. This bias may have diminished the historical accuracy of much that has been written about the route.

---

[89]Ibid., 215.

David Lowenthal also asserts that history is "more than the past," because historians are able to piece together chains of events. With hindsight as their ally, historians can make connections between past events and individuals which people at the time could never have made themselves. Historians can articulate broad concepts, such as "the Renaissance" and the "the Great Depression," which were unclear during the periods themselves. As historian Norman Cantor points out in *Inventing the Middle Ages*, a group of twentieth-century academic historians actually created the concept of what we consider "medieval." Without an extensive knowledge of Rome and no hint at a coming "Renaissance," people who lived in those times could never have considered themselves participants in the Middle Ages.[90] In a similar manner, travelers on Route 66 during the 1940s and 1950s could not compare their experiences to driving on a limited access interstate highway, or see themselves as helping to create the Baby Boom. Only in

---

[90]Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991).

retrospect can historians interpret the larger context of the events that they study.

Lowenthal's general thesis asserts that the past "is a foreign country whose features are shaped by today's predilections."[91] Postmodern thinkers such as Lowenthal do not preclude all historical study, but question absolutist notions of a "grand narrative" or impartial, truth-telling historical texts. Postmodern history, states Daniel Goodman, "involves a shift from a sense of the past as an 'untold story' to a reaffirmation that historians too are storytellers."[92]

Route 66 provides a good example of how the past can be examined from different points of view that yield differing interpretations. Without an understanding of the character of the highway during its period of significance, interpretation of the remaining historic resources can be misleading. Route 66 nostalgia literature often describes the highway as the "open road," a place where motorists could drive without worry or hindrance. The many vacant

---

[91]Ibid., xvii.

[92]David Goodman, "Postmodernism and History," *American Studies International* (February, 1993): 21.

motels, struggling roadside cafés, and roadside ruins that exist today provide a feeling of a vacant, sometimes eerie openness. However, in most instances, that sense of isolation did not exist when the highway was in use, when motorists and truckers jammed the highway and filled the restaurants and motels. What seems like "the open road" today often had "bumper--to--bumper" traffic with all of the associated stresses and hardships when Route 66 was active.[93]

To attempt to understand the character of Route 66 historically by visiting the road today would be similar to trying to interpret what Manhattan is like during rush hour by visiting it on Sunday morning. An observer might talk about having a sense of freedom on the "open streets" of the city and the freedom of being able to drive wherever one chooses without congestion. Author and humorist David Macaulay illustrates a similar mistake in his 1979 parody of the discovery of Tutankhamon's tomb. In *Motel of the Mysteries,* archaeologist Howard Carson uncovers the

---

[93]Several Route 66 business people described early Route as being crowded in the 1950s. Traffic counts cited in chapter three of this dissertation also supports this assertion.

greatest mystery of the twenty-third century, the ancient culture of "Usa," buried in the land mass once known as North America. What Carson thinks he has discovered is a tomb with a "great altar" and a "sacred fountain," but what he has actually found is a buried motel room with a television and a toilet.[94] If historians and archaeologists look only at artifacts and sites without understanding their historical context, they can make serious mistakes as they interpret them.

The Cadillac Ranch along Route 66 near Amarillo is an example of the various ways in which observers have interpreted the meaning of Route 66 (Figure 30). In 1974, Doug Michaels and Hudson Marquez, members of a group of San Francisco architects who called themselves the "Ant Farm" because of their "underground" concepts about architecture, built the "ranch." The Cadillac Ranch consists of ten vintage Cadillacs pointed nose down in a Texas Panhandle

---

[94]David Macaulay, *Motel of the Mysteries* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979), 1-140.

Figure 30. Cadillac Ranch, Amarillo, Texas, a monument to the many interpretations of Route 66. Photo by author, September 1998.

wheat field. The autombiles' tail fins symbolize a bygone era. The designers saw vintage Cadillacs as the ultimate American automobile and Route 66 as the quintessential American highway. In 1994, Suzanne Gamboa, a reporter for the *Austin American Statesman,* wrote, "To a Yankee, it's a symbol of Texas excess. For Texans, it gives them license to brag about the state's independent streak. Advertisers have used it to symbolize the downturn in the American auto industry. Pop philosophers see it as a graveyard for what they call the American folly of forsaking function for design."[95] The Cadillac Ranch abstractly symbolizes the role of the automobile and highways in American culture, but this symbol has been seen in differing ways.

The experience of Route 66 has always been one of symbolism and interpretation. On Route 66 historically, few motorists believed that the Pueblo-like souvenir stands were actually historic Indian dwellings or that they were even actually constructed of adobe, nor did most believe that a real cowboy would occupy the next room at the Will

---

[95]Suzanne Gamboa, "Cadillac Ranch, Only Buried Halfway, Cars' Meaning Goes Much Deeper," *The Austin American Statesmen,* 16 May 1994, sec. 1A, p 2.

Rogers Motel. The image, the reference was enough. Many of the sites along Route 66 of the 1940s and 1950s, from "Indian" trading posts, to "adobe" motels, to longhorn ranches, relied on the motorists to create their own interpretation of what they saw. These interpretations were usually based on the motorists' expectations and prejudices, many of which derived from lore about the Southwest promoted by railroads in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and from cowboy literature.

As one travels west through New Mexico and Arizona on the remaining sections of historic Highway 66 today, it becomes increasingly clear that Route 66 remains a popular nostalgic symbol. One encounters shop windows filled with Route 66 merchandise and roadside visitor centers offering maps and Route 66 merchandise. Entire towns such as Seligman, Arizona are dedicated to the old highway (Figure 31) and host daily busloads of German and Japanese tourists who have come to see a "true" America, unlike the America they found in Los Angeles and Miami.

In recent decades, Route 66 has come to represent a form of cultural opposition to the modern postindustrial

Figure 31. 1950s mock-up, Seligman, Arizona. In Seligman, mannequins act out the nostalgic fantasies of twentieth-century auto culture for contemporary tourists. Photo by author, October 1998.

world, with its standardized interstate highways and uniform corporate landscapes. Nostalgic individuals associate the old highway with Harley Davidsons, 1950s hot rods, all-night diners, leather jackets, and highway drifters of all sorts. For the most part, Route 66's fame is not the result of its association with specific historic events, but with the ideas that the highway has come to symbolize. A recently--built monument to Route 66 in Tucumcari, New Mexico (Figure 32) illustrates the importance of abstract imagery in how people perceive Route 66.

To some, Route 66 represents a popular challenge to the corporate hegemony of restaurant and motel chains, and to federal regulation as represented by the Interstate highway system. To Route 66 enthusiasts such as Michael Wallis and Angel Delgadillo, the highway symbolizes freedom from the corporate monotony of interstate exchanges, and from standardization, control, and regimentation in general. Wallis writes that Route 66 is "Truly a road of phantoms and dreams, 66 is the romance of traveling the

Figure 32. 1990s Route 66 monument, Tucumcari, New Mexico. Recent Route 66 imagery continues the abstraction of auto and western themes that began in the 1950s. Photo by author, October 1998.

open highway. It's the free road."[96] The resurgence of Route 66 was, in part, driven by the memory of a time when (it is believed) that travel was not so restricted and regulated, when people could wander freely from spectacle to spectacle without physical or psychological hindrance. As enthusiasts discuss Route 66, they constantly compare it to the interstates, as an idea that expresses the antithesis of the monotonous highways, an alternative that was more humanized and genuine.

An Internet advertisement for the Route 66 Museum in Rancho Cucamonga, California describes Route 66 as "far more interesting and visually stimulating than following Interstate Highway 40, with its 'superhighway monotony.'"[97] Martin Mathis, a Swiss-born Route 66 enthusiast, called Interstate 40 "the evil road (of) corporate fast food and motel chains" and avoided it on his numerous Route 66

---

[96]Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road,* 2.

[97]CitiVU, Route 66 Museum and Rancho Cucamonga Visitor's Center, Internet. Available from www.citivu.com/rc/rte66; accessed on 25 September 1997.

trips.[98] Michael Wallis writes, "As one of the old highway's aficionados put it, the opening of the Interstates made it possible to drive all the way from Chicago to the Pacific without stopping. The Government called that progress. Thank God, not everyone agreed."[99]

Although the historic and cultural significance of Route 66 is partly fictional, the highway currently functions as a humanized corridor stretching across a large swath of America where otherwise obscure people have achieved fame and recognition. Often in old age, Route 66 personalities have achieved notoriety at a time in life when many people relish telling stories of the past. The formerly unknown became famous because of their association with Route 66. The operators of decaying tourist courts, souvenir salesmen, hermits, and diner owners are routinely interviewed as American pundits by magazines such as *National Geographic* and *Newsweek*, and by European and Japanese television. On Historic Route 66, the usual social

---

[98]Martin Mathis, "Route 66 Road Trip," Internet. Available from www.lastbandit.com/rte66pix.html; accessed 27 April 2000.

[99]Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road*, 26.

order has often become reversed-the rich and famous come to visit with and interview common people and listen to *their* stories.

On Route 66 in the late 1990s, one could still visit funky vernacular visitor centers operated by eccentrics such as Bob Waldmeir, a Bohemian loner whose father invented the corn dog on Route 66 in Illinois, and patronize unique family-owned businesses such as the Pop Hicks Restaurant in Clinton, Oklahoma. Many Route 66 tourists may believe that they are seeing America as it was, but of course this is not true. They are seeing the quiet shadow of travel in America before the Interstate highway (Figure 33).

As Route 66 garners increasing attention, professional historic preservationists have taken an interest in the road as well. With the recent passage of federal legislation to identify and protect historic Route 66 resources, enthusiasts and preservationists are devising strategies to prevent unsympathetic new development and neglect from destroying the remaining traces of Route 66.

Figure 33. Thirteen Pony bridge on Route 66 in Oklahoma photographed in 1998. This bridge has very little traffic today, and one is free to walk around and enjoy the historic structure. However, before the Interstates bypassed it, standing here would have been very hazardous. Photo by author, October 1998.

CHAPTER 6

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES: ROUTE 66 PRESERVATION AND CONTEMPORARY HERITAGE TOURISM

Although most contemporary Route 66 literature is inspired by nostalgia, the highway holds a significant place in twentieth-century American history, both as the primary automobile route between Chicago and Los Angeles and as a popular symbol of American automobile culture and tourism before the interstate highways. In addition to its significance as a motorway, the historic Route 66 corridor includes artifacts, structures, and cultural landscapes that show the evolution of transportation in the United States from foot trail, to wagon road, to railroad, to highway. If appropriately preserved and interpreted, roadside structures and landscapes along the Route can serve as a linear monument to transportation and culture in America.

Route 66 was a popular highway. Hundreds of thousands of Dust Bowl refugees migrated over Route 66 in the 1930s and millions traveled the highway as they relocated from the East and the Midwest to southern California in the 1940s and 1950s. To many motorists on Route 66, the highway evolved into a nostalgic symbol of American mobility, hope, and freedom.

Known as the "Main Street of America," the "Mother Road," and the "Will Rogers Highway," Route 66 presents many challenges to those who wish to preserve and interpret this historic transportation corridor. The most significant of these is that many historic resources along the route are endangered due to neglect or demolition. Coordinating preservation professionals, enthusiasts and members of communities along the historic 2,400-mile corridor, which passes through eight states, presents another preservation problem. In addition, Route 66 possesses strong cultural meanings, making accurate historical interpretation problematic.

Route 66 enthusiasts and preservationists will have to set priorities for saving the highway, and public historians will have to formulate methods to present this

highly symbolic historic highway to tourists and local residents. This chapter describes many of the challenges faced by preservationists and historians and offers methods to help overcome these problems. Suggested strategies include saving roadside buildings from decay and disuse, coordinating preservationists and enthusiasts, developing effective heritage tourism programs, to creating accurate and engaging interpretive materials.

In recent years, many significant Route 66 landmarks, such as the Club Café in Santa Rosa, New Mexico (Figure 34) and the Coral Court Motel (a property that was listed in the National Register) near St. Louis, Missouri, have been demolished. Most historic Route 66 motels have fallen on hard times due to interstate highways and competition from chain operations. In addition, road-related businesses often occupy large lots that make ideal sites for industrial parks, big box retail stores, or new chain motels (Figure 35).

Because of highway bypasses and competition from chains, cafés and restaurants often fall victim to new development. Many historic gas stations have been lost because they existed on prime corner locations or because

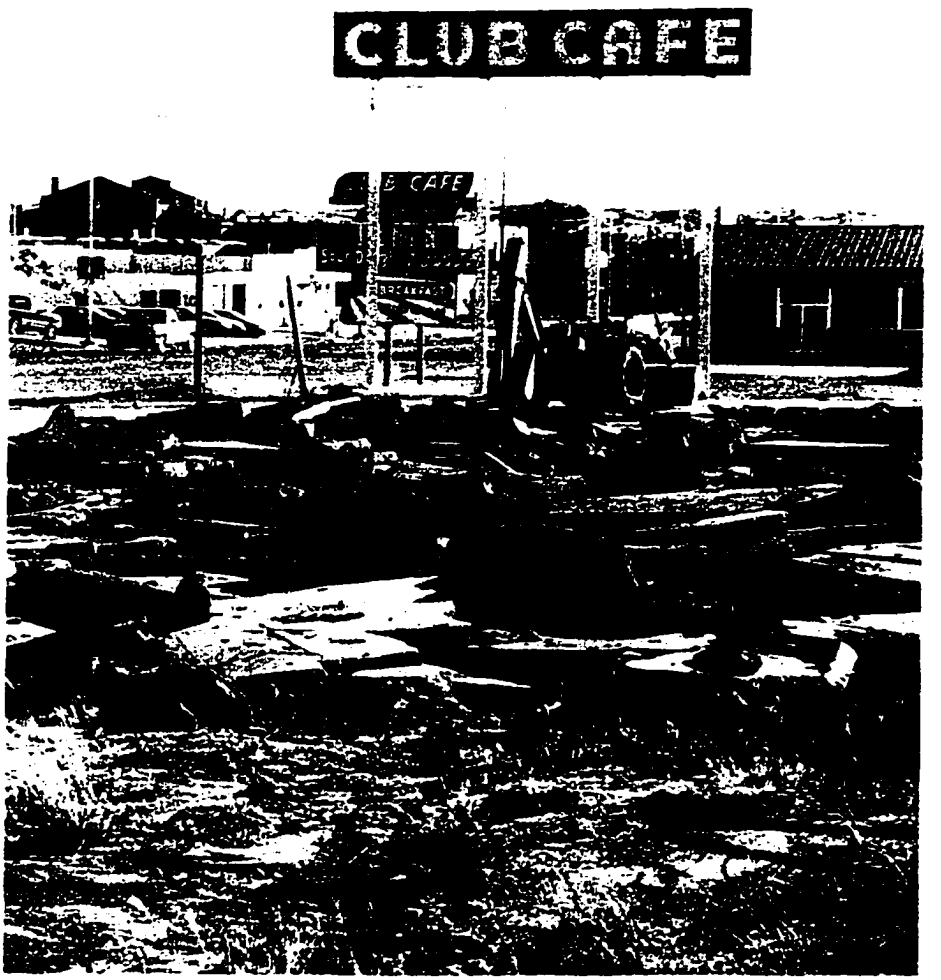

Figure 34. Ruins of the famous Club Café demolished in 1998. Photo by author, October 1998.

Figure 35. Many Route 66 landmarks near the larger cities, such as the Bel Al Drive In near St. Louis, have fallen victim to development pressure. Photo by Author, September 1998.

strict environmental regulations require expensive equipment that small operators could not afford. Preserving road-related architecture is a difficult pursuit, and efforts to date have often been insufficient.

A good first step in any effort to preserve road-related architecture is to perform a historic resource survey. Significant resource types along the highway include tourist courts and motels, cafes, gas stations, tourist attractions, Native American sites, and segments of the road itself. Systematic identification and documentation of these historic resource types allow preservationists to determine the most rare and significant properties and to target them for protection and restoration. Undertaking a historic resource survey helps a community create a preservation plan that will help them recognize historic resources have value and should be reused as functional parts of modern life.[1] The historic

---

[1]Anne Derry, H. Ward Jandi, Carol D. Shull, and Jan Thorman, Revised by Patricia L. Parker, 1985. *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning, National Register Bulletin 24,* (Washington, D.C.: U.S Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1977), 3.

structure surveys carried out by consultants and architectural historians for National Register of Historic Places nominations and Section 106 compliance can serve as models for cultural resource surveys on Route 66. The Texas Historical Commission, in cooperation with the National Park Service, plans to undertake an effort of this type in 2002. The project includes historical research into Route 66 sites, and a complete survey of Route 66-related structures in Texas, which will result a National Register multiple property nomination for historic Route 66 in Texas.[2]

Intact remnant segments of the Route 66 corridor should be surveyed and protected in a holistic manner that includes historic structures, original highway alignments, significant natural features, and prominent viewsheds. Those who complete the surveys need to pay careful attention to cultural landscapes, because the essential

---

[2]Greg Smith, the National Register coordinator at the Texas Historical Commission, and the author of this dissertation developed this plan in July 2001. The Texas Historical Commission is the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of Texas.

character and essence of Route 66 exists not only in individual structures such as gas stations and motels, but also in how these structures relate to each other, to the historic road, and to natural landscapes. The commonly seen sight of an old brick or stone building with a nineteenth century human scale, surrounded by gigantic parking lots or cinder block warehouses, is testament that preserving specific structures without regard to their contexts does not retain their integrity or feeling.

Without at least some of its original open landscape, a historic motel or historic roadside trading post is only a sad reminder of a lost and dead past. The surrounding context allows visitors and neighbors to appreciate a historic building's worth more fully and to better understand the value of preserving the property.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatments of Cultural Landscapes defines a cultural landscape as "a geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein), associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.

There are four general types of cultural landscapes, not mutually exclusive: historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, and ethnographic landscapes."[3] Essentially, a cultural landscape is a geographic area, sometimes a linear corridor, where human activities have left identifiable and related traces on the natural terrain. Route 66 is a linear cultural landscape in which remnants of the many activities related to traveling by vehicle can be observed and experienced. Highway activities include servicing automobiles and trucks, spending a night, buying fuel, eating meals, buying souvenirs, and visiting natural attractions and cultural sites. The resulting structures such as service stations, motels, cafés, souvenir shops, and parks, can be found in the countryside and in towns and cities along the historic highway.

---

[3]Charles A. Birnbaum and Christine Capella Peters, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatments of Cultural Landscapes,* National Park Service Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships Heritage Preservation Services Historic Landscape Initiative (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior 1995), 4.

Although natural conservation and historic preservation have been regarded traditionally as separate pursuits, the built and natural environments are never separate, and both are needed for meaningful, functioning cultural landscapes to exist. Unfortunately, many preservation agencies, such as state historic preservation offices and local review boards, continue to focus on individual structures and relatively small historic districts, not on cultural landscapes and the preservation of the historic and natural resources together.

An example of the close relationship between historic significance and the natural landscape can be seen in the rocks at Cozier Canyon on Route 66 in Arizona. In the last few years, a stone company has been quarrying the walls of the canyon. Although a natural formation, the canyon walls functioned as a landmark in the experience of driving old Route 66 through the area.[4]

---

[4]David Knudson, "Director's Notes," *Route 66 Federation News*, Summer 1998, 2.

Route 66 enthusiasts in Arizona oppose the quarrying, even though much of the rock will probably be used in environmentally friendly, water saving landscaping projects designed to replace chemical and water-consuming lawns throughout arid Arizona. Historian and Route 66 advocate Alfred Runte considers the removal of the rock an "abomination." "There are rocks all over the place," Runte said, "You don't have to use these rocks. This place should have been made a park years ago."[5] In addition, the quarrying played a role in Route 66 enthusiast Bob Waldmire's decision in 1998 to close his nearby Route 66 visitor center. "I can't handle living between two new rock quarry operations," said Waldmire, son of the inventor of the Cozy Dog, the first corn dog on a stick, developed on Route 66 in Springfield, Illinois in 1949.[6] Although the quarrying impacts a natural feature, the destruction of the

---

[5]Alfred Runte, quoted in "Canyons, Cozy Dogs, and the Meaning of the West," by Peter Fish, *Sunset,* 19 December 1998.

[6]Bob Waldmire, quoted in "Canyons, Cozy Dogs, and the Meaning of the West," by Peter Fish, *Sunset,* 19 December 1998.

canyon is threatening the historic integrity of the Route 66 cultural landscape in the Hackberry, Arizona area.

The natural features, highway pavement and associated property types of Route 66 functioned as a system that allowed motorists passage through the landscape and provided services and entertainment. The remains of this system can still be seen at many locations along the historic highway. To interpret Route 66 in a meaningful way, the landscapes that evolved along Route 66, including natural and manmade elements need to be preserved as a whole. If too much demolition or incompatible construction occurs, what remains of old Route 66 will have lost its context and will lose the magic that draws so many tourists from all over the world to the highway. Comprehensive historical surveys help document cultural landscapes so that activists can promote their preservation.

In addition to historic resource surveys, an important tool for the protection of the cultural landscapes of Route 66 is listing individual historic sites, districts, and landscapes in the National Register of Historic Places. Listing in the National Register provides formal recognition that a property is historic and assures that

the history and historical significance of the property has been researched and documented. This recognition and recordation is particularly important for early twentieth-century gas stations, motels, and restaurants, because the historical significance of these structures has not yet been widely accepted.

National Register listing also offers a property limited protection from federal undertakings under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.[7] Section 106 regulations define federal undertakings as activities funded in whole or in part by the federal government and those requiring a federal license or permit. Most road projects use a percentage of federal highway money, and even state-funded projects become federal undertakings if they involve work on a bridge that passes over "waters of the United States," which include all navigable waterways and many smaller streams, because such

---

[7]Although properties deemed eligible for listing in the National Register by a State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) receive the same protection as listed properties, listing removes any doubt that the property will be considered historic.

work requires a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers. Since one of the greatest threats to roadside architecture is road widening, listing sites in the National Register, or at least determining them eligible for listing, will provide a measure of protection.[8]

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that any federal agency funding or permitting an undertaking, or its designee, "take into account" the comments of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation if the Council becomes involved. The SHPO determines what effect a given undertaking will have on any properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register that fall within the project's area of potential effect (APE). The undertaking may have "no effect," "no adverse effect," or an "adverse effect." If the SHPO finds that a project will have an "adverse effect," the agency negotiates methods to mitigate the adverse effect with the

---

[8]Advisory Council for Historic Preservation, "Complete explanation of Section 106 process," Internet. Available from www.achp.gov; accessed 25 April, 2000.

SHPO and sometimes the Advisory Council. Mitigation measures range from taking photographs of a doomed structure for archival purposes to halting work on the project altogether.

Section 106 often reduces the adverse impact of federal projects on historic properties, but rarely stops a project completely. While Section 106 can act as a useful tool to force an agency to negotiate, preservationists can not rely on the regulation alone to save historic resources. In many instances where a resource stands directly in the path of a project, mitigation ends up as no more than photographic documentation, and the resource is still lost.[9]

A stronger law designed to protect historic sites from transportation related federal undertakings is Section 4(f) of the National Transportation Act. This provision requires an agency (usually a state highway department using federal transportation funds) to explore all "feasible and prudent"

---

[9]This statement is based on the author's experience working closely with Section 106 in Texas as an employee of the Texas Department of Transportation and at the Texas Historical Commission.

options to "minimize harm" to a historic property. As with Section 106, 4(f) defines a historic property as one listed or eligible for listing in the National Register. While Section 106 is essentially advisory, 4(f) directs the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or any other federal transportation agency (such as the Federal Aviation Administration) to prepare a meaningful discussion of alternatives for any project that will "take" land from a historic property.[10] In this case, to "take" means that land is actually condemned or otherwise acquired for direct use by the project.

Another form of "taking" a historic property under Section 4(f) is called "constructive use," which means that a project adversely impacts a property to the point that it cannot be used for its historic or intended purpose. An example of constructive use is an elevated highway that passes so close to a historic garden that the highway's shadow would not allow flowers or bushes to grow. Another example is a highway's cutting off access to a historic

---

[10]Section 4(f) also applies to parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

hotel so that tourists would have no clear access to the site. If the Federal Highway Administration determines that a project will harm historic resources, the agency must make all "prudent and feasible" efforts to change the project's design in order to avoid the adverse effect.

Listing on the National Register has benefits in addition to Section 106 and Section 4(f). Designation and listing on the Register makes owners of commercial properties eligible for a twenty percent federal tax credit if they rehabilitate their building in a historically sensitive manner. In many instances, the tax credit can make the difference between a profitable project and one that does not make money for investors.[11] National Register listing also makes road-related buildings owned by non-profits, municipalities, and other government entities eligible for enhancement funding under TEA 21 (which replaced a former law called the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, or ISTEA). This program allocates federal highway monies for the rehabilitation of

---

[11]Olivia Fagerberg, Tax Credit coordinator, Texas Historical Commission, discussion with author, May, 2000.

historic structures that are associated with transportation. At least one Route 66 building, the U-Drop Inn in Shamrock, Texas has been awarded enhancement money.[12]

Another benefit of National Register listing is that it simplifies the creation of local historic districts. Municipalities can pass ordinances that designate any National Register districts within their jurisdiction as local historic districts.[13] Municipal governments pass ordinances to create local historic districts in order to protect all historic or "contributing" properties within the district's borders from destructive public or private undertakings. Local historic districts provide much broader protection than National Register districts, because private owners must receive a permit or "certificate of appropriateness" to make significant exterior changes to

---

[12]Mary Alice Robbins, "Area Towns Get in Proposal for Improvements," *Amarillo Globe-News*, 26 January 26 2000, Internet. Available from www.amarillonet.com; accessed on September 21, 2000. Shamrock received $1,746,864 in federal funds to rehabilitate the tower station.

[13]The city of San Antonio, Texas has such an ordinance. The only shortcoming is that there has been opposition to the creation of new National Register districts by property owners, resulting in fewer districts in that city.

their building or structure, or to its immediate landscape. For this reason, local districts are an important element in protecting historic properties because National Register listing does not restrict private activities.

Regulations such as Section 106 and 4(f) demonstrate the importance of designating historic structures and historic landscapes along Route 66 as National Register properties. Many historic Route 66 properties, such as the U-Drop Inn Café in Shamrock, Texas, are listed in the National Register, and cities such as Amarillo, Texas, and Williams, Arizona have established National Register districts along strips where Route 66 passes through town.[14] In addition, several abandoned alignments of old Route 66 that pass through the Kaibab National Forest near Williams, Arizona have also been listed in the National Register. The National Register nomination includes only the original highway right-of-way, including historic pavement (where it exists), bridges, culverts, cuts, and gullies. The listed

---

[14]ARCHITEXAS, Architecture, Planning, and Historic Preservation, Inc. *Tower Station and U-Drop Inn, Shamrock, Texas: Historic Structure Report & Restoration Master Plan,* (Dallas: ARCHITEXAS, 2000), 2.

sections retain their feeling and setting as parts of the historic highway.[15]

More properties and landscapes associated with historic Route 66 should be listed in the National Register. Large sections of other historic highways have been listed, specifically the Columbia River Scenic Highway in Oregon. This highway, completed in 1922, cuts through the Columbia River Gorge and has many pedestrian overlooks, walkways, and wayside stops. As of 1985, over fifty-five miles of the original highway had been listed in the National Register. The listing includes "seventeen bridges, seven viaducts, three tunnels, long stretches of masonry retaining walls, and rustic pebble parapet walls."[16] Nominations of this type could be completed for Route 66 along relatively intact sections. Such nominations on Route 66 would include associated property types (historic road-related businesses and attractions) that occur along the

---

[15]Teri A. Cleeland, "Route 66 Revisited," *Cultural Resource Management* 16 (1993): 15-18.

[16]Gary Wilburn, "Routes of History: Recreational Use and Preservation of Historic Transportation Corridors," *Information,* (National Trust for Historic Preservation, Information Series No. 38, 1985), 12-13.

way. As of 1996, Beth Savage reports, over 2,200 historic highway-associated properties across the nation, such as "roads and bridges, tourist cabins and motels, gas stations and garages, shopping centers and restaurants, and tourist attractions and recreational facilities" designed to cater to motorists had been listed in the National Register.[17] As of January 2001, at least sixty-seven individual properties and districts directly associated with Route 66 were listed in the National Register.[18]

Several Route 66 states, including New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Illinois, have completed National Register Multiple Property Listings for their segments of Route 66, and as mentioned previously, Texas was in the process of performing a Route 66 survey and multiple property

---

[17]Beth L. Savage, "Road-related Resources Listed in the National Register," *Cultural Resource Management* 19, no. 9, (1996): 13.

[18]An Internet search revealed that 67 sites associated with Route 66 have been individually listed in the National Register. Of these eight were in Arizona, one in Illinois, thirty-four in New Mexico, twenty-three in Oklahoma, and one in Texas. Property types listed included motels, gas stations, cafes, trading posts, auto dealerships, highway segments, bridges, a tire store, and bakery. Internet. Available from www.amarillonet.com; accessed 10 January 2001.

nomination at the time of this writing.[19] These lengthy nominations provide historic contexts for associated property types (such as motels, cafés, and gas stations) and cultural landscapes along the stretches of Route 66 within those states. Multiple property listings help to provide documentation of the historical significance of road-related properties and landscapes, making individual listing of related properties easier and aiding research efforts.

The most important goal in preserving Route 66 is to insure that the remaining portions of the highway and associated structures continue to be recognizable in the landscape. If a traveler from the highway's historic period of significance (1927-1970) were to travel the same stretch today, ideally, he or she should be able to identify significant features in the landscape, both natural and man-made. To accomplish this, historic preservationists and Route 66 enthusiasts must work together to identify and

---

[19]Copies of these are available upon request from the respective State Historic Preservation Offices. They contain a statement of historic contexts and describe associated property types along Route 66 in detail.

stabilize historic structures and to prevent new intrusions, such as urban sprawl retail centers, from obliterating cultural landscapes along the highway.

Many old roadside structures could be left as ruins rather than rehabilitated (Figure 36). So long as ruins are not vandalized and efforts are made to stabilize them, they can last for generations, especially in arid regions. While the majority of historic Route 66 resources should be cataloged and preserved, there is no need to make every motel functional again, or to turn every old gas station into a visitor center. In fact, to do so would destroy the vacant, eerie quality that many Route 66 visitors come to see and enjoy.

To retain their historical significance, properties and landscapes along Route 66 must retain their historical "integrity." Historical integrity means that the significant features, such as prominent porches, original windows, and stylistic ornament, of a building or structure remain, allowing it to retain its character. Examples of

Figure 36. Route 66 Ruin in New Mexico. Many contemporary tourists travel Route 66 to experience its eerie, vacant quality. Photograph by Author, October 1998.

significant features include historic porches, windows, siding, and settings. Historical integrity allows architectural historians and anyone with an interest to identify the historic use, design, and character of a structure, district, or landscape. Preserving historical integrity requires that rehabilitation of historic road-related buildings should not unnecessarily remove historic features that make the structure significant. Nor should owners or others remove key features of the Route 66 landscape, such as historic pavement, abandoned alignments, or associated historic structures.

Retaining historical integrity also means not adding distracting non-historic or speculative features to historic structures. An example of creating a false historic image on a Route 66 structure would be to remodel a simple roadside café by adding decorative elements that make it look like a classic northeastern diner. Few, if any stainless steel, streamlined diners existed along Route 66, and to build them now, without clearly identifying them as of a recent vintage, creates a false history and degrades the authenticity of the experience of those who tour the highway.

A number of prudent preservation projects have been undertaken on Route 66, including a federal initiative to designate Route 66 as the nation's first National Historic Highway. The U.S. Congress passed the Route 66 Corridor Act of 1999, which calls for collaboration among Route 66 enthusiasts, the SHPOs, and the National Park Service to work toward the designation and preservation of the Route 66 corridor. The act defines the Route 66 corridor as "lands owned by the Federal Government and lands owned by State or local government within the immediate vicinity of those portions of the highway formerly designated as United States Route 66, and private land within the immediate vicinity that is owned by persons or entities that are willing to participate in the programs authorized by this Act."[20] This definition assures that private property rights will not be affected, reflecting the political climate in Washington at the time the act was passed, which emphasized individual property rights.

---

[20]U.S. Congress. Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act. Public Law 106-45, Historic Preservation 16 USC 461, H.R. 66 1999.

The Corridor Act authorized the National Park Service to perform the following actions: 1) enter into cooperative agreements for planning preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration related to the Route 66 corridor; 2) accept donations of funds, equipment, and supplies; 3) provide federal cost-share grants not to exceed fifty percent of the project cost; 4) provide technical assistance; and 5) coordinate, promote, and stimulate research on the Route 66 corridor. The act cites the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation as the basis for all authorized rehabilitation work and offers federal assistance for local efforts.[21] For the Corridor Act to work, local citizens and governments must take the lead.

On February 24-25, 2000, representatives from the National Park Service (NPS), SHPO staff from states along the route, one Tribal Preservation Officer, representatives of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and delegates from numerous Route 66 organizations met in Oklahoma City. The meeting focused on sharing ideas on how to implement the recently passed Corridor Act and

---

[21]Ibid.

determining the roles of government preservation professionals, community members, and Route 66 enthusiasts. A key discussion at the meeting was how to identify and preserve the most significant resources for preservation and also how to interpret them. Participants also debated methods of keeping the program operating after its ten-year funding cycle of ten million dollars expires in 2009.[22]

According to Greg Smith, a representative of the Texas SHPO's History Programs Division who attended the meeting, the participants often disagreed, especially on the level of government involvement, although nearly everyone welcomed the federal funding included in the act. Many residents of Route 66 communities and Route 66 enthusiasts thought that the funds should be focused on specific sites along the highway. Enthusiasts tended to emphasize tourism, while the preservation professionals focused on cataloging and preserving historic properties.

---

[22]Gregory Smith and Carol Ahlgren, "Route 66 Revisited: Preserving the Mother Road," *SCA News*, Winter, 1999/2000, 3.

Route 66 associations often express the view that tourism is of utmost importance. The National Route 66 Federation web site states, "We believe that the only way the Mother Road can be saved is by increasing tourist traffic."[23] "Debate concerned how to best serve the road," Smith and Ahlgren write. The participants raised issues such as, should the federal government provide seed money for local projects and/or Route 66 icons? Or should the money be used for a comprehensive survey of alignments and buildings? "Some proposed preservation through economic development and visa-versa," Smith and Ahlgren write, "or proposed incentives to entice more people onto Route 66." Several participants supported the idea of establishing a National Park Service Route 66 Corridor as the best solution.[24]

Participants in the February 2000 meeting did not reach a consensus on how to accomplish the goal of preserving Route 66, and finding a common strategy for

---

[23]Route 66 Federation, Internet. Available from www.kaiwan.com/-natl66/about.html; accessed 3 February 1998.

[24]Smith and Ahlgren, "Route 66 Revisited," 3.

saving the route remains an important issue. Route 66 is the first historic transcontinental motor route officially identified and funded by the federal government as a historic highway. Because Route 66 has the widest public support and the largest pool of enthusiasts of any American highway, the preservation of Route 66 will have a significant influence on efforts to save other historic, long-distance American highways.

A combination of professionalism and enthusiasm will be required to successfully preserve and interpret Route 66. Tourism without strong preservation measures may facilitate the road's success as a tourist route by increasing traffic, but without legal protection, this may encourage new development and a resulting destruction of the highway's historic resources. Increased traffic may bring increased pressure to build tourist attractions, glitzy diners, and non-historic streamlined gas stations designed to mimic historic buildings. The "Route 66 Diner," a faux historic diner built in 1987 on historic Route 66 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, stands as an example of non-historic intrusions that reduce the integrity of Route 66 landscapes. The historic Union Bus Depot in Lebanon,

Missouri, was unsympathetically rehabilitated and reused as a furniture store (Figure 37).[25] While the building was recycled, this sort of rehabilitation removes so many historic features that the building is nearly unrecognizable. While carefully designed and marketed new businesses can enhance historic Route 66, care must be taken to ensure that people do not confuse these recent additions with historic sites and that the buildings retain enough historical integrity to be recognizable.

Without strong historical zoning, increased traffic may also be an impetus for state departments of transportation to widen existing historic alignments and remove aging, narrow bridges, thus destroying characteristics that make the highway historic. Recently, this occurred on a stretch of historic Route 66 in Oklahoma. In September 1999, the Oklahoma Transportation Commission accepted a bid from a contractor to build a four-lane highway north of Hinton. The project proposed to wipe out about two miles of historic Route 66 pavement. Oklahoma state transportation development spokesman Nico

---

[25]Historic postcard in author's collection.

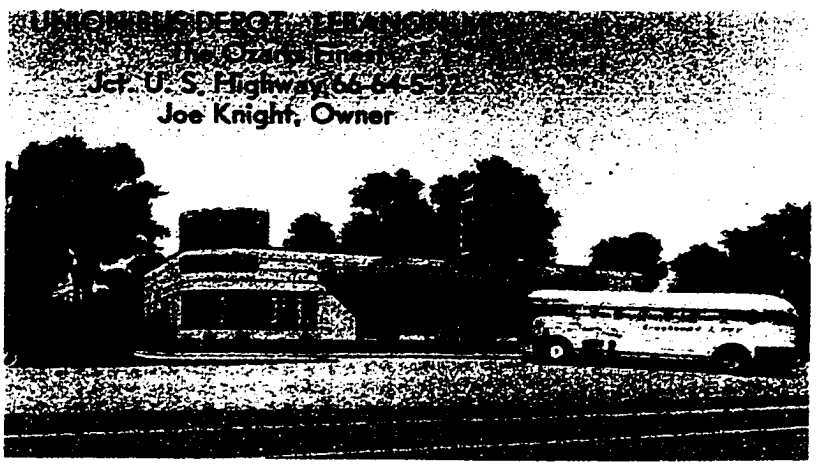

Figure 37. The Union Bus Depot in Lebanon, Missouri has lost the characteristics that make it a recognizable historic building. Top photo by author, September 1998. Historic image from postcard in author's collection.

Gomez stated that the old pavement had to be removed because it "didn't meet the existing design standards," and the historic segment was replaced.[26] A significant increase in traffic often raises safety issues on aging roads, and without specific protections for historic roads, safety usually prevails.[27]

Although cultural tourism can have negative impacts on historic resources, effective preservation would be difficult without visitors to enjoy the sites. Interest in Route 66 drives preservation efforts, and some of that interest arises because merchants in Route 66 communities view the road as a potential source of revenue from tourists. Without an economic incentive, many property owners might view historic regulations as merely an annoyance, and may choose to circumvent the law in order to make a return on their property. In addition, visitor

---

[26]Ron Jackson, "Route 66 Lovers Fear Replacement of Original Road," *The Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), 8 September 1999, sec. A. p. 6.

[27]This observation is based on the author's experiences working as an architectural historian for the Texas Department of Transportation.

enthusiasm for Route 66 may help to generate local interest in the highway and its historic resources. In order to channel tourism so that visitation aids preservation rather than hurting it, communities need to develop comprehensive preservation plans. Statewide plans and an overall preservation management plan for Route 66 are also needed.

Scenic America, a private, non-profit organization dedicated to preserving American cultural landscapes, recommends developing preservation management plans that contain a combination of tools for protecting historic "scenic byways." The organization defines scenic byways as, "secondary roads having significant cultural, historic, scenic, geological or natural features." Scenic byways often include vistas, rest areas, and interpretive sites. Thirty-four state governments have designated over 35,000 miles of scenic highways throughout the United States.[28] Certainly, large segments of Route 66, such as the 130-mile segment in Arizona that deviates from interstate 40 and passes through Seligman, would qualify as historic scenic

---

[28]Scenic America, *Scenic Byways: Preserving a Part of America's Heritage*, pamphlet, p. 1-2.

byways. This stretch in Arizona has already been designated as a scenic route.[29]

Scenic America recommends that individuals and groups develop corridor management plans when protecting scenic byways. A corridor management plan sets out the limits of the scenic byway and defines the essential features of the byway that require protection. According to Scenic America, the management plan should strive to balance the use and conservation of the corridor's intrinsic qualities, manage and improve the visual quality and context of historic and natural resources, increase the appreciation of the resources by the public, and set out specific objectives and funding sources to achieve the preservation goals defined by the plan.[30]

In addition to a management plan, Scenic America recommends five measures for protecting scenic byways. The first recommendation is to establish a program to protect

---

[29]Rand McNally & Company. *State Farm Road Atlas, United States, Canada, Mexico,* (Skokie IL: Rand McNally & Company, 2001), 8.

[30]Scenic America, *Corridor Management Plans: Developing Plans for Scenic Byways*, pamphlet, p. 1-4.

significant trees and plantings from routine removal by highway maintenance crews of the state highway department and other entities. The second measure would limit outdoor advertising.[31] The third recommendation is to create a framework for scenic easements and a process by which landowners can sell or donate scenic easements to state governments or private non-profit organizations to protect landscapes. The fourth measure would encourage strong local participation and coordination with relevant governmental agencies, and the fifth would develop special operations and maintenance standards for the highway. These special standards would cover activities such as road widening, straightening, guardrail alterations, and changes in road grade that may threaten the characteristics of the highway that make it historic and scenic.[32] Highway enthusiasts and

---

[31]Municipalities and state legislators have the power to limit or prohibit billboards. Such laws should be encouraged on Route 66, not for vernacular billboards directing motorists to Route 66 attractions, but for the large, generic billboards that corporate advertisers place along highways to promote such products as new cars and cigarettes.

[32]Scenic America, *Scenic Byways: Preserving a Part of America's Heritage*, pamphlet, p. 2.

local governments should work with state departments of transportation and state historic preservation offices to develop special safety and maintenance guidelines for historic segments of Route 66.

Preservation of Route 66 and its immediate vicinity can help further several important goals. One is to retain open, plant-filled spaces in and near Route 66 communities. Massive strip mall development destroys the character of cultural landscapes, and if community efforts to preserve the road are implemented through local zoning, many of these developments can be prevented, scaled down, or relocated. Historic highways function as a total environment, with many aspects such as scenery, historic structures, and the road alignments themselves combining to create an associative landscape.

Preserving the corridor should be undertaken with Route 66 acting as the link and justification for a plethora of local efforts, with guidance and support from the SHPOs and the NPS. Many towns along Route 66 could adopt the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program to assist local business owners in economic revitalization and historic preservation of commercial

buildings.[33] Combined efforts by individuals and local communities to save historic roads, such as those being undertaken along Route 66 by at least two national and five statewide associations, promise to save many historic highway-related landscapes from wholesale destruction. Additional tourism on Route 66 may also increase visitation to sites, such as Palo Duro Canyon in Texas, that are within fifty or so miles of the highway, but not directly on the road.

Another goal of historic road designation is to strengthen regional and local identities. Interest in Route 66 can bring communities together by providing a common theme and shared history as well as a physical transportation link. Revitalizing Route 66 would spur community pride and historical awareness in little-known places such as Rolla, Missouri; Galena, Kansas; and Vega, Texas, helping both residents and tourists find new value and pride in these communities. Learning the transportation

---

[33]Peter H. Brink, "Livable Communities and Historic Transportation Corridors," *Cultural Resource Management,* 16, no. 11, (1993): 52-53.

history of their town would help residents understand its linkages to the broader currents of American history, and hopefully inspire further preservation efforts.

Saving and revitalizing Route 66 may also provide the backbone and focus for regional heritage tourism efforts. Historic roads such as Route 66 have an inherent advantage over thematic "heritage areas," such as routes developed by many states. Examples include Pennsylvania's "Industrial Heritage Route" (the Path of Progress), and the "Civil War Heritage Trail" in Tennessee. Historic highways enjoy an advantage over such heritage areas and corridors because Route 66 and other historic highways are historic in *themselves* and act naturally as a powerful and authentic unifying theme. The phrase "get your kicks on Route 66" has a wide appeal that "drive the Path of Progress" (or any other invented heritage route) could never obtain. Creating well-publicized and clearly marked tour routes along traditional transportation routes is an effective way to interpret historic resources and their contexts. Tour routes increase public appreciation and heighten concern for historic structures and sites, as long as historic

preservation regulations are in effect to protect historic structures and landscapes from incompatible development.

Designating historic Route 66 as a tour route complete with viewsheds, vernacular roadside architecture, and original alignments will utilize the automobile and its history as an agent of environmental preservation rather than a harbinger of environmental degradation. Adaptive use and interpretation of Route 66 should include multi-use, non-motorized trails along little-used or abandoned segments of historic highway, and self-guided auto tour-routes along active historic highway. Any historic tour route should be designed to engage as many people as possible.

Adaptive use of Route 66's associated structures often involves converting historic gas stations or cafés into visitor centers. A gas station in Hackberry, Arizona currently operates as a visitor center, and a group of local citizens, in cooperation with the City of Shamrock, Texas plan to use the restored Tower Station and U-Drop Inn

building, a stunning architectural landmark built in 1936, as a visitor and community center.[34]

Visitor centers can be an excellent re-use for historic road-related buildings. However, the need for visitor centers is limited, and alternative uses should be found. An interesting adaptive-use of a Route 66 structure is the rehabilitation of the abandoned 1929 Chain of Rocks Bridge across the Mississippi River into a pedestrian and bikeway, which opened in 1999.[35] Another good example of re-use is the Will Rogers Hotel, a historic multi-story hotel on Route 66 in Claremore, Oklahoma, rehabilitated in 1998 as affordable elderly housing using federal investment tax credits. In addition, many commercial structures along Claremore's Main Street have been converted into antique stores, creating an extensive antique shopping district.[36]

---

[34]ARCHITEXAS, *Architecture, Planning, and Historic Preservation,* 3.

[35]Gateway Trailnet, Internet. Available from www.cruisin66.com/stl/cor.html; accessed on 24 April 2002. This is a non-profit organization with 800 members that formed to in 1996 preserve the historic bridge.

[36]Site visit by author, 1998.

Amarillo, Texas has also converted its Route 66 historic district into a shopping area for antiques and specialty items.

Many towns in regions such as central New Mexico and eastern Arizona are in need of economic revitalization. The fact that a famous road links them may be their best chance to tap into the tourist industry. Route 66 brings tourists to remote communities that they would probably never visit otherwise.

Other re-use possibilities exist, such as converting historic tourist courts into small hotels, or bed-and-breakfast inns. An example is the San José Motel on South Congress Avenue in Austin, Texas. Although the San José is not on Route 66, the motel serves as a possible model for similar establishments on 66. The San José is an old tourist court recently converted into an upscale motel-hotel. The San José model may work in large and more affluent Route 66 communities such as Flagstaff, Arizona, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Other uses for historic motels

include affordable housing, small commercial malls, and even flea markets.[37]

Many historic motels, hotels, and cafés on Route 66 continue to be used for their historic purpose. Some, such as the El Rancho Hotel in Gallup, New Mexico, have been in constant use since construction. Motels such as this have been maintained and modified over the years, but never rehabilitated. The Ariston Café in Litchfield, Illinois, is an example of a historic restaurant on Route 66 that is still intact and in operation. Other examples include the Wigwam Motel in Holbrook, Arizona, and Roy's Café & Motel in Amboy, California, and the Historic Route 66 (formerly Hull's) Motel in Williams, Arizona (Figure 38).

Continued occupation of historic structures by local businesses, adaptive-use projects, historic zoning, and historic districts are effective tools to protect historic structures. Local ordinances actually control land use by both private and public entities.

---

[37]Brenda Colladay, informal conversation in 1998 with author. Colladay reported seeing a large historic motel in Lawrence, Kansas, that was being used as a year-round flea market, with each vendor occupying a room.

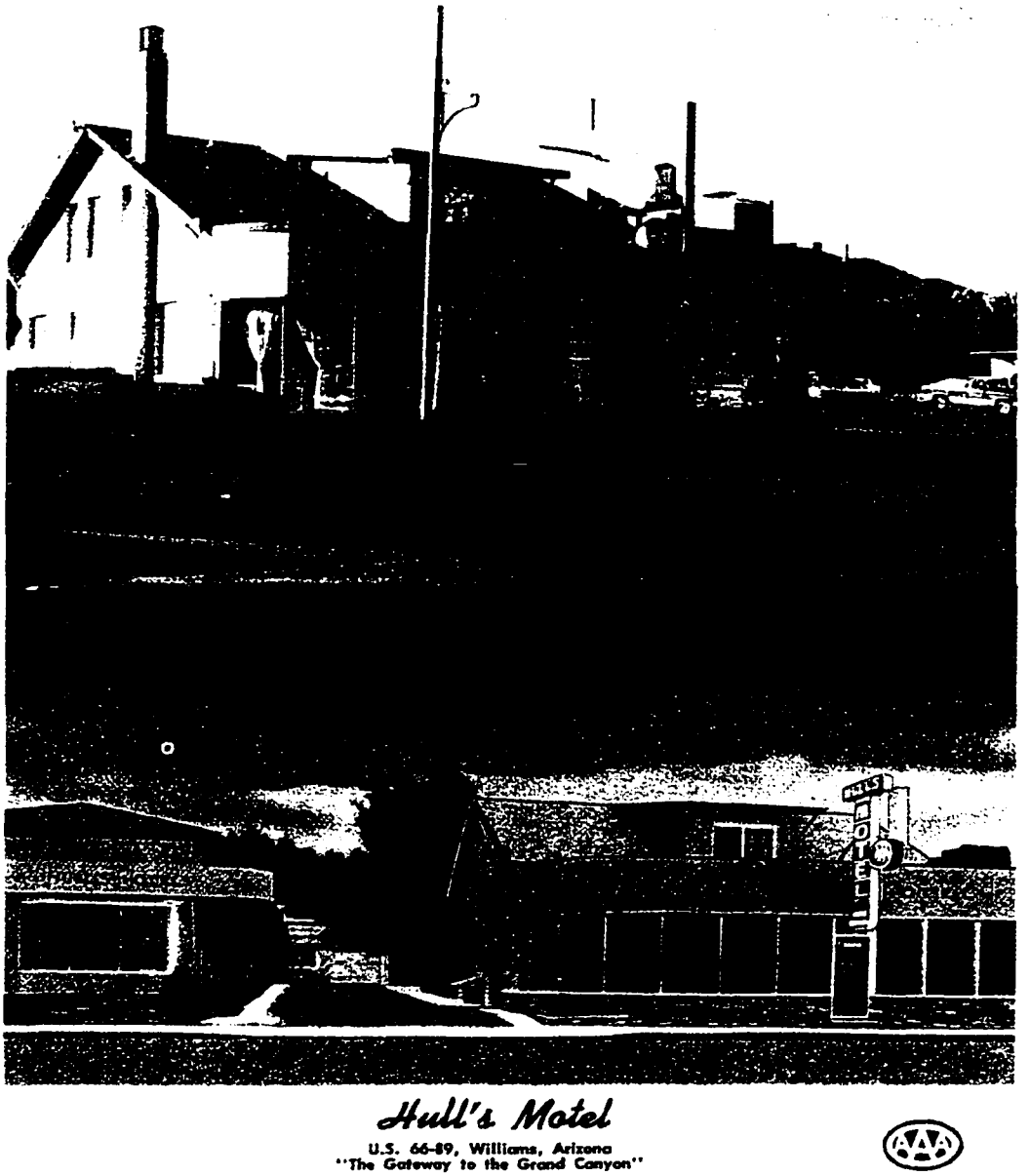

Figure 38. Hull's Motel (ca. 1950) still functions as the Historic Route 66 Motel in Williams, Arizona. This is an example of effective preservation on Route 66. Photo by author, October, 1998. Historic image, postcard in author's collection.

To preserve historic resources effectively, two things must occur: first, people must discover and appreciate their community's history and the significance of its structures and landscapes; and, second, enough people in a city, town, or county must work together to enact local historic zoning ordinances to prevent those who do not appreciate history and a livable environment from destroying significant areas of the landscape. Ultimately, the key to historic preservation lies not with the National Park Service and other federal or state agencies, but with the communities themselves.

The scope of historic preservation is changing gradually, and preservation initiatives such as the federal Route 66 Corridor Act of 1999 reflect this shift toward a greater appreciation of the recent past. Preservationists now understand the value of saving the unique architecture and cultural landscapes of the early and mid twentieth century. In *The American Mosaic,* Robert Stipe writes, "Now by 1987, the time span of preservation interest has been compressed and the subject matter broadened. The time period has been foreshortened to 40 years or less. The subject matter now includes things such as designed and

cultural landscapes . . . buildings and structures illustrative of our recent commercial and industrial growth."[38] This broadening of scope makes it possible for preservationists to view historic automobile corridors as valuable cultural resources.

An example of an effective cooperative effort between local groups and the federal government is the preservation of Columbia River Highway. Former National Trust for Historic Preservation attorney Gary Wilburn writes, "The state's commitment to preserve the highway is due largely to the efforts of local preservationists. The Historic Preservation League of Oregon and the Oregon Historical Society lobbied for the National Register nomination and assisted in its preparation."[39] Addressing Route 66, David Gaines, chief of the National Park Service Branch of Long Distance Trails, writes that "Cooperative partnerships offer the greatest potential for effectively dealing with

---

[38]Robert E. Stipe, "The Next Twenty Years," *The American Mosaic, Preserving a Nation's Heritage* (Washington, D.C.: US/ICOMOS, 1987), 275.

[39]Wilburn, "Routes of History," 13.

the myriad complexities of managing the diverse resources of Route 66."[40]

The federal government can preserve an array of specific sites and help guide preservation and interpretation efforts, but its powers are limited. For example, the National Trails Act has been in existence since 1968, but the Act has designated mainly trails that already existed when the law was passed, such as the Appalachian Trail and the Natchez Trace.[41] Public historians and private grassroots organizations, such as the Lincoln Highway Association and the Route 66 Federation, must inspire Americans to an appreciation of their historic road-related landscapes.[42]

Private preservation organizations and enthusiast groups will form the nucleus of future collaborations among communities, historians, and government. Rural communities,

---

[40]David Gaines and Art Gomez, "Perspectives on Route 66," *Cultural Resource Management* 16, no. 11, (1993): 23.

[41]Steve Elkinton, "CRM and the National Trails System," *Cultural Resource Management*, 20, no. 1, (1997): 3.

[42]Michael Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 231.

many of which are experiencing economic hardships, have much to gain from creating and maintaining historic roads. Heritage routes can promote economic development through little-used areas and, most important, these routes can give locals and visitors a more accurate sense of an exciting aspect of their history. The federal role should be to assist local efforts in the preservation and interpretation of historic landscapes. The Route 66 Corridor Act of 1999 reflects this approach.

Such a process is already unfolding on the American Discovery Trail (ADT), a non-motorized recreation route from Delaware to California proposed by the American Hiking Society.[43] Frank Murkowski of the *Christian Science Monitor* writes:

> Well before the National Park Service became involved, more than 100 organizations along the trail's 6,000 miles supported the effort, with an active ADT coordinating committee established in each state along the route. This strong grassroots effort, together with financial support from *Backpacker Magazine*, the *Trails Illustrated* Division of *National Geographic*,

---

[43]National Park Service, Denver Service Center, *American Discovery Trail, National Trail Feasibility Study*. (Denver, CO: National Park Service, 1995), 23.

> the Coleman Company, *Ecco*, and others helped take the ADT from dream to reality.[44]

In December 1997, the United States Congress considered adding the ADT to the National Trails System. This model, one in which people take the lead while receiving state and federal guidance, should serve as a template for the preservation of Route 66.

Preserving and reusing historic highways as tour routes should be an integrated effort to re-link communities, cultural landscapes, and layers of historic events into one inclusive, historically accurate, exciting, and comprehensive story. Auto tours can be engaging and effective tools for heritage education that promote meaningful leisure. To achieve these, public historians should interpret the history of Route 66 from a wide base of sources and interpret the points of view of a broad variety of participants.

---

[44]Frank H. Murkowski, "The Rte. 66 of American Recreation," *The Christian Science Monitor,* 9 December 1997, 18.

Many of the individuals who currently operate visitor centers and museums along Route 66 can remember the road and interpret its history firsthand. However, many of these people will stop their activities within the next decade, making it necessary for a new generation of historians and preservationists to step in and develop methods of interpreting Route 66 without the benefit of direct memory.

In the case of Route 66, historical realities and historical myths should not be confused. Interpretation should relate what travelers on Route 66 actually experienced and not merely how nostalgic enthusiasts view historic Route 66. This means developing broad historical contexts within American history for historic sites and landscapes, and placing individual memories and artifacts within those contexts.

As historians interpret Route 66, they should keep in mind that most early auto routes, including Route 66, represent layers of transportation and regional history through different periods. For example, a section of Route 66 parallels "Beal's Road," the 1857 wagon road that

followed the 35th parallel from Fort Defiance near the Arizona-New Mexico border to the Colorado River.[45] Any interpretation of Route 66 should include information about the railroad era when most Route 66 towns formed. In addition, interpretive materials should discuss the pre-highway origins of the cultural and ethnographic imagery associated with the Southwest and later used on Route 66.

Although the focus should be on Route 66, the Route 66 Historic Highway should interpret the corridor's many periods of history, helping contemporary motorists read the entire historic and natural landscape as they move along the corridor (Figures 39 and 40).

Methods of interpretation include Route 66 museums, directional signs, wayside exhibits, guide books, guided tours, pamphlets about individual sites, annotated maps, and media presentations such as films, tapes, and radio broadcasts. Any interpretive materials should result from extensive historical research aided by eyewitness

---

[45]National Park Service, *Special Resource Study--Route 66*, 6.

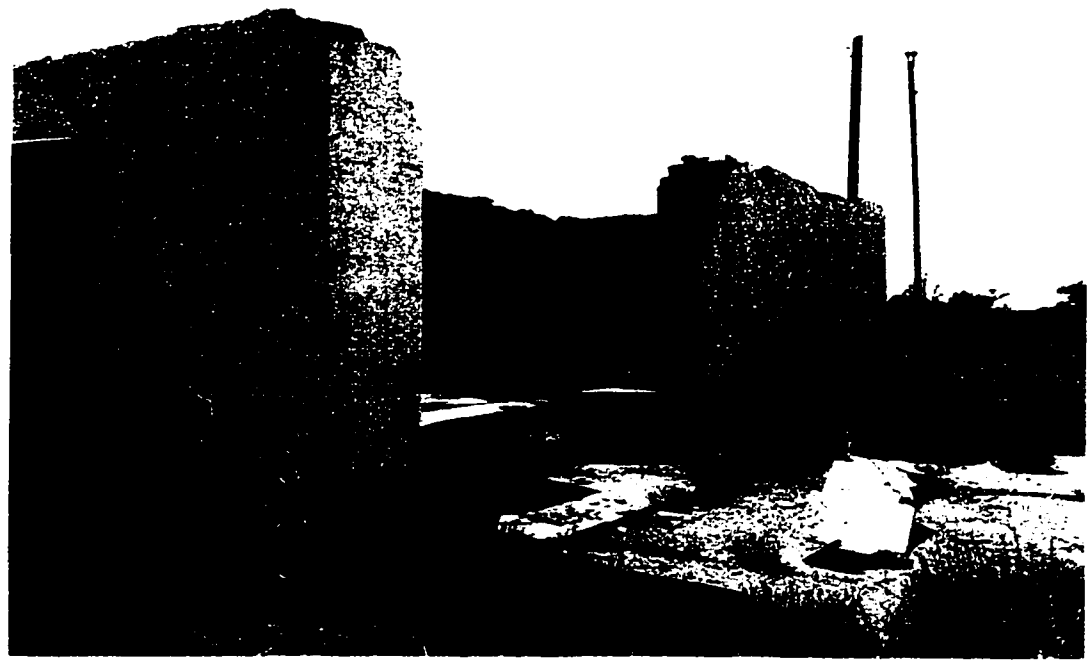

Figure 39. Vacant 1920s gas station in rural New Mexico. Ruins of the American roadside such as this contribute to rich cultural landscapes. Photo by author, October 1998.

Figure 40. Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, New Mexico. Route 66 landscapes often consist of strips of varied road-related buildings. Photo by author, October 1998.

accounts of Americans who have used and continue to use the corridor. Interpretation should include the development of the Southwest through westward migration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the transition from wagon road, to railroad, to highway; the history and significance of cultural imagery used by railroads and roadside merchants along the corridor; and the history of the automobile and road-related cultural landscapes in America.

Reusing historic Route 66 will allow today's travelers to rediscover the remote American landscapes that many of their parents and grandparents discovered on their auto trips. A comprehensive tour-route over historic pathways can provide an authentic alternative to artificial, static environments such as Disney World in Florida or even historic Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. The communities along Route 66 are living, changing places where layers of history from pre-historic Indian occupations to the present can be countered and enjoyed. Heritage corridors increase the quality of life not only for tourists, but also for people who reside near them by providing a context from which to experience historic structures and the landscape.

Members of Route 66 communities and public historians should collaborate on preservation efforts and interpretive programs for historic Route 66 sites to accurately relate their historical significance. If done thoughtfully, this can be accomplished without diminishing the allure that Route 66 has for so many people. The highway functions both as a historic artifact and a living symbol of the Southwest and American auto culture in the mid twentieth century. The story of both the documented history and the lore of Route 66 should be told to visitors in a manner that is both interesting and accurate.

The historic Route 66 National Heritage Highway will provide both entertainment and education for residents and tourists, and may help to revitalize this once flourishing corridor. Route 66 has a tremendous educational value, not only for tourists, but also for students from first grade through graduate school. The following chapter will examine some of the potential applications of Route 66 in the classroom.

CHAPTER 7

TEACHING HISTORIC ROUTE 66 IN THE CLASSROOM AND ON THE ROAD

Historic Route 66 could serve as an effective tool for education in history, geography, and social studies for students at all levels.[1] However, this chapter focuses on using Route 66 as a theme to educate undergraduate or graduate college students in American history by utilizing the highway as an "advance organizer" and focus of interest.

The recorded history of the Route 66 corridor spans several centuries, from the Spanish exploration of the Southwest in the sixteenth century to the present, and this story includes cultures as diverse as Native Americans and Dust Bowl refugees of the Great Depression. This rich

---

[1]Web66: A K12 World Wide Web Project, Internet. Available from http://web66.coled.umn.edu/; accessed on January 11, 2001. This site discusses using Route 66 in education for grades K-12 provided by the University of Minnesota College of Education & Human Development.

history makes the historic highway an ideal theme for educators to use to introduce students to the complex human interactions that have taken place in the American Southwest. In addition, major historical events, such as the westward migration of European and African Americans and railroad development in the nineteenth century, the Dust Bowl migration during the Great Depression, and the mass migrations to California after World War II, all took place along the Route 66 corridor. Historic structures and cultural landscapes, such as Indian Pueblos and historic motels, located along the highway offer a special advantage of using Route 66 in higher education, because these historic resources can serve as ideal sites for field trips, research, and heritage education.

This chapter describes educational tools that guide the organization of courses, generate interest in subject material, and reach students with different learning styles, including those from different ethnic groups. The chapter also outlines ways that instructors can use Route 66 as a focus of instruction and as an educational theme and includes several brief case studies that demonstrate how site visits, living history, music, and the National

Register of Historic Places can be used in conjunction with Route 66 to increase teaching effectiveness. In addition, the chapter provides a syllabus-like guide for a history course entitled "Route 66: American Automobile and Highway Culture in the Twentieth Century."

One goal of effective teaching is to organize individual courses around a central subject, or thematic design, since the structure of a course can help motivate students. Teachers use "advance organizers" to group subjects and ideas into conceptual clusters. For example, when teaching about Route 66, one might organize early twentieth century gas stations, motels, and cafes into the concept "pre-interstate road-related architecture." An advance organizer, such as this, helps students remember both concepts and facts, and assists their understanding interrelationships and relevance.[2] Teachers could use Route 66 as a theme for presenting subjects as diverse as transportation history, the Great Depression, and the interaction between Native Americans and European-American

---

[2]Jan Hayes, FOED 756, "Seminar in College Teaching," (Murfressboro, TN: Middle Tennessee State University), class material, spring 1998.

settlers in the American West. As material for a class, Route 66 cultural landscapes and structures include paths blazed by Native Americans, wagon and stagecoach roads, railroad towns, and of course, roads and services associated with automobiles and trucks. Using Route 66's historic resources would generate enthusiasm in teachers and students, similar to the fascination shown in recent years by thousands of Route 66 fans and promoters.[3]

The feeling, or "affect," such as appreciation and curiosity, that students have for a subject act as important motivating factors. Instructors can promote affect by using creative and diverse teaching methods, such as visual materials, auditory information, and kinesthetic experiences. Media that influence affect include slides, music, and actual or simulated field trips, all of which are pertinent to Route 66.

Diverse educational experiences help instructors reach a greater number of students because student response teaching methods shows considerable variation. In fact,

---

[3]Each state that Route 66 passes through has an active Route 66 association. The National Route 66 Federation has over 1,700 members, and international Route 66 groups exist in Canada, western Europe, and Japan.

educational psychologists Rita and Kenneth Dunn have identified four distinct learning styles: auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and mixed.[4] Each learning preference will be explained below and related to the study of Route 66.

Auditory learners prefer listening or reading. They tend to be academically oriented, studious, argumentative, and prefer to study alone. The traditional lecture works fairly well for auditory learners, as do reading assignments. Using Route 66 as a focus, a professor could lecture on the pre-automobile history of the Route 66 corridor and also on the highway's role in twentieth century American history. The instructor might also play Bobby Troupe's song, "Route 66," and other Route 66 and road-related popular music to present the highway's social significance in an audio format.

Visual learners learn best from pictures, charts, printed information, and other graphic media. They are

---

[4]Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn, Internet. Available from www.Stgeorgesschool.nz.org; accessed on January 11, 2001. Rita Dunn is a professor in the Division of Administration and Institutional Leadership and is director of the Center for Study of Learning and Teaching Styles at St. John's University in New York. Kenneth Dunn is a professor of education in the Department of Education at Queen's College of the City University of New York.

usually confident and dedicated, but tend to be somewhat rigid in their thinking. Slides, overheads, and computer screens (such as transparencies) work well with visual learners. Using maps of Route 66, slides of historic structures, and graphs that show information such as traffic counts on Route 66 in different decades, a professor would easily engage visual learners in a history class that uses Route 66 as an advance organizer and motivational tool. Visual learners could view photographs of road-related architecture and natural features along Route 66 and observe the road on historic and contemporary maps.

Kinesthetic learners tend to learn best by seeing active demonstrations and by doing things themselves. They usually prefer to work in groups and tend to be socially oriented. Kinesthetic learners like to participate actively in learning, rather than observing. Group projects, role-playing, and field trips work especially well for kinesthetic learners. If a class takes place at an institution near historic Route 66, field visits to Route 66 sites and communities would engage kinesthetic learners. Visits to Route 66 sites such as Funk's Grove, Illinois

where Gladia Funk has sold maple syrup since the Second World War, or Lucile's Route 66 Visitors' Center in Hydro, Oklahoma, a gas station that has operated since the Great Depression would enrich any course. Route 66 also offers opportunities for students to visit natural sites, such as the Petrified Forest and the Mojave Desert, that played a role in historic Route 66 tourism. For a class located far from Route 66, the class would take field trips to local road-related sites along other U.S. highways. Projects involving direct access to Route 66, such as group research assignments, would also engage kinesthetic learners.

Mixed learners benefit from a variety of learning methods and may be equally at home in different types of classrooms. Mixed learners tend to be creative and assertive, but also opinionated and competitive. They like group work, especially enjoying group discussions, but also learn well through lectures and visual media.[5] Mixed learners would benefit from the multi-media opportunities that Route 66 presents, such as Route-66-related images, movies, music, and narratives.

---

[5]Jan Hayes, FOED 756.

While most students fit into one of the four basic learning styles, people from different ethnic and racial groups also tend to display different learning preferences. For example, African Americans, Asians, and Native Americans often enjoy working in groups, while Anglos usually favor individual projects. Native Americans and Asians generally prefer working in small groups. Whites and Asians tend to be competitive, while others, such as Native Americans and African Americans, usually work more cooperatively with others.[6]

In addition to employing advance organizers and recognizing diverse learning styles, instructors can use specific pedagogical tools to increase student affect and enrich understanding of the subject matter. One such method is taking students on structured site visits to famous Route 66 sites, such as Angel's barbershop and Route 66 visitor center in Seligman, Arizona, the historic souvenir shop at Meteor City, Arizona, or the twin Route 66 museums in Clinton and Elk City, Oklahoma.

---

[6]Dunn, Rita and Shirley A. Griggs, *Multiculturalism and Learning Style: Teaching and Counseling Adolescents*. (Urbana: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 1995), 37-79.

In his article, "Field Trip to Gettysburg: A model experience," History teacher Mark S. Olcott outlines how he uses field trips to the Gettysburg Battlefield as a tool to teach history. Noting that "the most successful field trips are the ones the teacher has taken the time to fit into the curriculum in a meaningful way,"[7] Olcott observes that, unless field trips are well conceived, students do not always learn much from them. To eliminate such limitations, Olcott identifies five steps. The first, "Pre-teaching" introduces students to the basic context and events associated with the site before taking the trip. "Identifying problems" raises specific issues related to the history and significance of the site to ponder and study. "Memorizing" requires that students learn the major events and people associated with the site before they arrive. "Before, during and after" examines any encroachment, if any, into the site by recent real estate development. The final step, which Olcott calls "problem-solving and projects," assigns special questions about

---

[7]Mark S. Olcott, "Field Trip to Gettysburg: A model experience," *The History Teacher* (August, 1987): 487-496.

particular events that took place at the site or were related to it.[8]

A teacher could use Olcott's methods effectively in a course with a Route 66 theme. The "Pre-teaching" step would require that students read a history of Route 66, such as Chapter 3 of this dissertation, and view slides describing the development of road-related architecture in the first half of the twentieth century. "Memorizing" might include a lecture about the history of Route 66 in the context of western migration, transportation history, and the development of roadside architecture. "The written word" component could involve students reading John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* as an introduction to the social history of Route 66 and the Great Depression. Students might also read first-hand accounts from diaries, or collections of interviews of Dust Bowl survivors. "Before, during and after" could involve students in discussions about the destruction and decay of road-related structures and historic stretches of pavement and about the encroachment on historic Route 66 by modern development and

---

[8]Ibid., 496.

urban sprawl. The final step, "Problem-solving and projects," could include a class discussion on why the Federal Highway Administration replaced Route 66 with a system of interstate highways and why, after the highway vanished, so many people are still interested in the route. The discussion might also examine the cultural significance and symbolism that Route 66 has obtained in recent decades. Related projects could include writing a report on a specific Route 66 landmark or photo-documenting it.

Olcott's approach makes field trips genuine educational experiences by providing students with a rich context in which to place the sites and artifacts they encounter during the site visit. Placing Route 66 sites into a historical context transforms the corridor into an outdoor classroom and laboratory.

To take learning history beyond the classroom, the class could visit a historic re-enactment such as one of the many vintage auto "drive-a-thons" that occur on Route 66 every year. Ronald H. Pahl of California State University at Fullerton, for example, takes his Renaissance fair. Taking students to this event is what Pahl calls "history immersion," whereby, he hopes not only to interest

history classes to the annual Renaissance Pleasure Faire, a re-creation of a sixteenth-century Elizabethan outdoor students in history, but also to allow them to "fully participate" in history for a day.

Pahl uses history immersion to stimulate student interest and to help them understand life in the past experientially. Pahl writes that living history is "participant-oriented," while the traditional history approach is often "content focused," with students focusing primarily on learning facts. The Renaissance Pleasure Faire provides a dramatic combination of sights, sounds, verbal interpretation, and context for students with differing learning styles.[9]

Route 66 presents many living history opportunities. A drive down an intact stretch of the highway, accompanied by a stop at an operating historic trading post or café, would provide a living history experience for students. Students could visit the old Route 66 strip in Tucumcari, New Mexico. The strip includes numerous original Route 66 motels, such as the Blue Swallow Motel, still in operation.

---

[9]Ibid., 24.

Students could have lunch at one of several historic cafés located on the strip.

The TePee Trading Post in Tucumcari sells the same types of Southwest themed souvenirs as when Route 66 was active. On such a trip, students might even have the opportunity to talk with people who remember aspects of the historic highway during its period of significance (1927 to 1970).

Living history can increase student interest and provide instruction that relates to all of the learning styles. Immersion, however, should be combined with other teaching methods, such as lecture and group discussion, to enrich the students' understanding of the period and the pre-interstate roadside environment.

The broad appeal of Route 66 in popular culture can be an asset to history teachers who seek to inspire interest in historical subjects. Route 66 has strong associations with the auto culture of the 1950s and the development of American rock music. Mitch Yamisaki, a professor at Chaminade University of Honolulu, brings history alive for students by focusing on the evolution of rock'n roll music. Yamisaki states that "most students come into my survey

courses hating history. They think it is boring and has nothing to do with their lives. But," he points out, "almost all students, from the hip kids to the nerds, feel that rock'n roll is important to their lives."[10] Like rock'n roll, Route 66 provides an opportunity to connect wider events in American history while using a subject that students are eager to learn. Yamisaki carefully places the history of rock'n roll in the context of such themes as African-American history, the Cold War, the civil rights movement, and twentieth-century regionalism.

Teaching history with popular culture is an effective way to combine political, material, cultural, and social history. Using historic sites on Route 66 as a teaching tool also explains how natural, historic, and cultural resources are interrelated in cultural landscapes.[11] Some educators already include roadside architecture in their

---

[10]Mitch Yamisaki, "Using Rock'n Roll to Teach the History of Post-World War II America," The *History Teacher* (February, 1996): 179.

[11]Gary Wilburn, "The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Routes of History: Recreational Use and Preservation of Historic Transportation Corridors" (Washington D.C.: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1985) 9.

teaching. The National Park Service and the National Trust for Historic Preservation cooperated in 1993 to design a curriculum using historic roadside attractions in teaching. The program draws from the over 72,000 historic resources and districts of local, state, and national significance that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.[12] Most National Register files contain a short history of the property, a statement of its significance to local, state, or national history, maps, and photographs that document the site.

The "Teaching with Historic Places" curriculum combines related National Register files to create themes (advance organizers) such as "San Antonio Missions," "When Rice was King," and "Roadside Attractions."[13] A computer program called the National Register Information System

---

[12]National Register, Internet. Available from www.amarillonet.com; accessed 10 January 2001. The Internet search revealed that sixty-seven sites associated with Route 66 have been individually listed in the National Register. Property types listed included motels, gas stations, cafés, trading posts, auto dealerships, highway segments, bridges, a tire store, and a bakery.

[13]Beth M. Boland, "Teaching With Historic Places: Where Did History Happen?" *Cultural Resource Management,* 16, no. 2, 1993): 2-3.

makes it possible for curriculum writers to quickly select listed historic places by location, function, period of significance, important people, architects or builders, and cultural affiliation.[14]

"Teaching with Historic Places" could easily be adapted to feature historic resources located along Route 66. Materials for students in the "Roadside Attractions" curriculum include readings about the origins of seven examples of vernacular, road-related sites and photographs of the sites. The objectives for students include explaining the impact of the automobile on businesses and communities, listing the changes that auto culture brought to the students' own communities, defining and explaining the motivation and use of literalism in 1920s and 1930s advertising, identifying local "novelty" architecture, and explaining ways in which advertising and packaging promote stereotypical and oversimplified images of people of different ethnic, racial, and cultural groups in the United

---

[14]Carol D. Shull, "Creating a Partnership," *Cultural Resource Management,* 16, no. 2, (1993): 4-5.

States.[15] Using the more than sixty-two National Register sites on Route 66, undergraduate college teachers could bring American history to students in a cohesive and interesting way.

An upper division or graduate course in American history that focuses on transportation could use Route 66 as an educational tool and theme might be entitled "Route 66: American Automobile and Highway Culture in the Twentieth Century." Designed as a fifteen-week course, its purpose is to use the history of Route 66 as a case study in the evolution of twentieth-century automobile and highway culture in America, especially the Southwest. Using Route 66 as an advance organizer, as a focus of interest to generate affect for students, and as a way to engage all of the four learning styles, the course would emphasize the historical and social context of the highway's development. Studies of railroad history in the Southwest, the early development named auto routes that made up Route 66, and the highway's history from 1927 to 1985 might be included in the course.

---

[15]Fay Metcalf, "Teaching With Historic Places: Roadside Attractions," *Social Education* (March, 1993): 144-156.

The following week-by-week guide describes the content of a themed Route 66 course. The guide does not include breaks that may occur in a semester. A class with ready access to Route 66 or another early long-distance highway, such as the Lincoln Highway, U.S. 40, or the Dixie Highway, could make more site visits than a class taught at a location without such access. The content of the class is intended as a general guide, applicable to various situations. The course could begin with an overview of the United States in 1900, just before the automobile was invented, and could meet once a week for a three-hour class.

Required texts: *Metropolitan Corridor Railroads and the American Scene*, by John Stilgoe; *America and the Automobile: Technology, Reform, and Social Change, 1893-1923* by Peter J. Ling; *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*, by Chester Liebs; *Americans on the Road*, by Warren James Belasco; *Route 66 the Mother Road*, by Michael Wallis; *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck; *Special Route 66 Resource Study*, by the National Park Service; *As Seen on TV*, by Karal Ann Marling; *On the Road*, by Jack Kerouac; *New Mexico Route 66 Multiple*

Property National Register Nomination, by David J Kammer; and *How Superstore Sprawl can Harm Communities and What Citizens can do About it,* by Constance E. Beaumont. Students would not be required to read these texts in their entirety, but would be required to write a term paper on a subject related to U.S. transportation history after 1850, due at the end of the semester.

Week 1: "Travel before the Mother Road."

Goals and objectives: the students gain an understanding of travel customs and technology during the decades immediately preceding the introduction of the automobile.

Subject: travel in the United States before the automobile. In the first week, students examine travel, lodging, railroad travel etiquette, food on trains and at hotels, and attitudes about travel based on gender, race, and class. The lecture would describe efforts by the Fred Harvey Corporation and the Santa Fe Railroad to entice tourists to visit sites along the future Route 66 corridor.

Readings: this dissertation, Chapter 2; John Stilgoe, *The Metropolitan Corridor Railroads and the American Scene.*[16]

Discussion: How did Victorian society view travel and how does that differ from how we view it today (even on a train)? Visuals might include slides of historic passenger train cars, railroad stations, and railroad hotels. The week might also include a visit to a local railroad station museum (many American communities have them).

Week 2: "America Takes to the Road: the Development of the Automobile and Early Highways."

Goals and objectives: the students learn how the technology and social role of the automobile developed in the first three decades after its introduction.

Subject: how the use of the automobile evolved and how the rise of the automobile influenced American society.

Reading: Peter J. Ling, *America and the Automobile: Technology, Reform, and Social Change, 1893-1923*. Visuals might include survey of historic photographs depicting

---

[16]John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor, Railroads and the American Scene*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983).

early automobiles in everyday American life and photographs of early auto camps.

Field trip: students visit a local automobile museum.

Discussion: the students discuss early development of the automobile and how technological advances transformed the automobile from an expensive toy in 1903 to a major and growing force in American society by 1915. The lecture may also describe how the automobile changed American society before the Route 66 era.

Week 3: "A Place to Drive the Auto: the Development of Early Roads."

Goals and objectives: the students lean how the demand for automobiles translated into a political force for road development between 1912 and 1926.

Subject: The Good Roads movement and changing attitudes about the automobile, 1912-1926. The lecture would focus on the Old Trails Highway (most of which would become part of Route 66 in 1927).

Readings: this dissertation, Chapter 3. Chester Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture,* pages 1-39.

Discussion: the development and impact of highways on America before 1926. Visuals include slides of early roads and period images of the communities through which they passed. An activity could be to drive a segment of twisty, dirt road to experience what early auto travel was like.

Week 4: "The Evolution of Auto Tourism."

Goals and objectives: the students learn how the American roadside landscape evolved.

Subject: the evolution of the roadside environments that sprang up to serve motorists. Once roadside accommodations evolved from early auto gypsying to auto-camping and roadside auto-camps, motorists began to look to the roadside establishments for entertainment. Lecture describes the development of tourism and "tourist traps" along Route 66 such as Two Guns, Arizona, and Frontier City, Oklahoma.

Readings: Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road,* pages 1-105; Selected passages and images from Michael Witzel, *Route 66 Remembered,* handed out in class.

Discussion: what images do members of the class associate with the West, and why are they appealing? Also, how do these images and stereotypes differ from the

realities of the old West? Visuals include historic images of roadside businesses from the period. An activity might involve having students bring in a souvenir once bought from a roadside shop.

Week 5: "Development of the U.S. Route System."

Goals and objectives: the students will study the political and economic realities that lead to the development of the U.S. Route system in 1926.

Subject: how individuals and organizations promoted the creation of long-distance highways. Lecture about the invention of Route 66 through the Oklahoma boosterism of Cyrus Avery and others. Once Route 66 had been designated, boosters employed stunts such as C. C. Pyle's "Trans-Continental Foot Race" in 1928 to popularize the highway.

Readings: Michael Wallis, *Route 66 the Mother Road,* pages 1-19; David J Kammer, "Historic and Architectural Resources through New Mexico", pages 30-45. Tom Teague, *Searching for 66,* 88-93, 102-107 (handout).

Discussion: in what ways did marketing help to make Route 66 famous? Also, students describe what U.S. highways, such as U.S. 11, U.S. 41, or U.S. 30, that have

meaning in their own lives. Visuals include images from C.C. Pyle's foot race.

Week 6: "Evolution of the Motel."

Goals and objectives: the students will understand the process, economic, social, and technological, that led to the modern motel.

Subject: how roadside accommodation evolved. Lecture covers the evolution of the motel from the Cabin Camp to the Tourist Court to the Classic motel of the 1950s, using slides of historic Route 66 motels taken from postcards and historic photographs as examples. The lecture features images of the evolution of the motels along Central Avenue in Albuquerque between the late 1920s and the late 1960s and the history and eventual destruction of the famous Coral Court Motel in St. Louis as case studies.

Reading: Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road,*[17] pages 129-175.

Discussion: students relate experiences at motels while traveling with family.

---

[17]Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road, From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979).

Week 7: "Development of the American Roadside, 1926-1941."

Goals and objectives: the students will understand the architectural and urban development of the pre interstate roadside cultural landscape.

Subject: how roadside strips changed in the pre World War II era. Using Central Avenue in Albuquerque and Sixth Avenue in Amarillo, Texas, as case studies, the lecture describes and shows through visuals how the American roadside developed as an interconnected and visually readable cultural landscape that included service structures such as motels, gas stations, cafes, the highway itself, and advertising signs.

Readings: Chester Liebs, *From Main Street to Miracle Mile,*[18] pages 39-193.

Discussion: How did the spatial relationships created by the American automobile change the nature of communities? Visuals consist of slides of historic postcards depicting cabin camps, tourist courts, and

---

[18]Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street To Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

motels. An activity could be visiting a local roadside strip that dates from the pre interstate era and observing how the area evolved by finding remnant structures from different times.

Week 8: "The Great Depression and Automobile Migration: the Dust Bowl Migration on Route 66."

Goals and objectives: the students will learn the economic, environmental, and social causes of the Dust Bowl and the mass migrations of farmers from the Great Plains to California during the Great Depression and the historical implications of this tragic event.

Subject: the history of Route 66. Lecture describes the causes and the effects of the Dust Bowl Migration on the communities along Route 66 and includes an analysis of Steinbeck's assertions about the plight of the Okies and compares them to views of academic historians about the Dust Bowl.

Readings: John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath; WPA Guide* excerpts (handout).

Discussion: putting the *Grapes of Wrath* into a historical context. Was the Dust Bowl migration the true end of the American frontier? The activity and visual would

involve the students watching the 1940 movie the *Grapes of Wrath* and noting how Route 66 acts as central theme of the film.

Week 9: "World War II and its Aftermath Transforms Route 66."

Goals and objectives: the students will learn how World War II impacted Route 66 and the American Southwest.

Subject: how World War II and its aftermath affected American society at home. During World War II, millions of soldiers and war production workers used Route 66. After the war, the automobile emerged as the dominant form of transportation and millions more took to Route 66 as tourists.

Readings: Michael Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road,* pages 19-27;[19] National Park Service, *Special Route 66 Resource Study.*[20]

Discussion: have students relate stories collected from older relatives and acquaintances who remember travel

---

[19]Michael Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

[20]U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service, *Special Study--Route 66* (Washington, D.C., 1995).

during World War II and the post war period (1945-1950). A class activity would be to play various versions of Bobbie Troupe's 1946 song, "Route 66," performed by various musicians such as Nat King Cole, The Rolling Stones, and Depeche Mode and observing how the popularity of the road had endured and often been associated with alternative, rockin' roll culture.

Week 10: "The 1950s, Era of the Automobile, the Bomb, and the Baby Boom."

Goals and objectives: the students will gain a greater understanding of the social climate of the 1950s and its impact on highway transportation and tourism.

Subject: American society and consumerism in the 1950s. Using Route 66 as a focus, the lecture shows how the post-war migrations, new technologies, and changing culture of the 1950s transformed America. The glut of motorists that hit the road in the 1950s made the road famous but also sealed its fate because many called for more efficient highways to handle the traffic.

Readings: Karol Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV,*[21] Jack Kerouac, *On the Road,* pages 1-37.

Discussion: was the prim and proper 1950s image the only reality in 1950s society? Discuss the Beat generation and the early Civil Rights Movement as it relates to transportation and the Great Migration. Also, show an episode of the 1960-1964 television show *Route 66* in class and discuss the messages it relates. Students bring in and discuss products made in the 1950s (if they can find no objects, they can research advertisements in 1950s magazines).

Week 11: "The Cultural Images of America's Most Famous Highway."

Goals and objectives: the students will study the cultural and ethnic meaning of images and stereotypes associated with Route 66 and the Southwest.

Subject: how images and stereotypes from popular culture influenced the travel experience on Route 66 and other highways. The lecture addresses the cultures and

---

[21]Karal Ann Marling. *As Seen on TV, The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

attractions of Route 66 and the images they produced, such as the cowboy ranch and the Indian trading post that often stereotyped peoples of the West. The lecture includes slides of figural signs and thematic architecture along Route 66. Specific examples include pictures and descriptions of the Will Rogers Motel in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Tepee Curios in Tucumcari, New Mexico, and the Wigwam Village Motel in Holbrook, Arizona.

Readings: *Route 66 The Mother Road,* pages 27-240; chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Discussion: was the Route 66 roadside racist, and if so, how? Students would be assigned to look through pre 1960 travel magazines to find stereotypical images of peoples and regions to examine and analyze their often racist content.

<u>Week 12: "Site visit to Route 66" in Albuquerque or Shamrock and Amarillo, or another site near the college where the course is being taught.</u>

Goals and objectives: the students will experience a genuine pre interstate roadside environment.

Subject: experiencing pre-interstate roadside environments. If the course is not located near Route 66, a

similar roadside motel strip from the 1950s era could be substituted. Sites to visit on Route 66 might include areas where a high concentration of old buildings exist, such as Seligman, Arizona; Holbrook, Arizona; Central Avenue in Albuquerque, New Mexico (the Zia Lodge and the El Vado Motel); Sixth Avenue in Amarillo, Texas; downtown Claremore, Oklahoma; the Route 66 strip in Springfield, Illinois; and Funks Grove, Illinois.

Readings: David J. Kammer, *New Mexico Route 66 Multiple Property National Register Nomination for Route 66,*[22] Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Discussion: students describe sites visited noting styles of structures; periods and methods of construction; and how the roadside functioned, and in some cases, continues to function as an associated cultural landscape.

Week 13: "The Death of Route 66?"

Goals and objectives: the students learn how the ultimate triumph of the automobile and long-distance truck

---

[22]David J. Kammer. *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 across New Mexico 1926-1956* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1993).

doomed Route 66 by causing a demand for the more efficient interstates.

Subject: the story of how changes in transportation and American demographics doomed the U.S. routes to be replaced by interstates. Route 66 lives on even after the interstates replaced the highway between 1960 and 1985, when the route was decommissioned. Why do people seek to keep the memory of Route 66 alive? Lecture examines the reasons Route 66 died and how the highway became an object of nostalgia in the Interstate Era.

Readings: *Searching for Route 66,*[23] pages 1-3 (handout); Chapter 5 of this Dissertation; articles in *Route 66 Magazine*.

Discussion: students, in groups of four to six, perform internet searches on historic Route 66 and describe what they find in a short presentation. Visuals would include slides that allow students to compare Route 66 to the interstates. An activity would have students interview people about the aesthetics of interstate highways compared

---

[23]Tom Teague, Bob Waldmire, and Lon Haldeman. *Searching for Route 66,* 2d ed. (Springfield, IL: Samizdat House, 1996).

to that of old U.S. highways, such as Route 66, to find out which they prefer and why.

Week 14: "The Automobile: A Promoter of Urban Sprawl."

Goals and objectives: the students will gain an understanding of the environmental and social effects of urban sprawl.

Subject: how changes in technology, business practice, demographics, and American culture since the 1970s have promoted urban sprawl. Sprawl has become a problem in Route 66 cities such as Albuquerque and St. Louis. For example, the Coral Courts Motel, listed in the National Register, was lost to development in St. Louis. Sprawl threatens other Route 66 landmarks. Lecture will include specific lost and threatened Route 66 sites. Visuals include aerial photographs that show how roads and parking lots dominate American suburbs.

Readings: *How Superstore Sprawl can Harm Communities and what citizens can do about it;*[24] "The Motorcar Vs. America," *American Heritage Magazine*[25] (handout).

---

[24]Constance E. Beaumont. *How Superstore Sprawl Can Harm Communities and what citizens can do about it* (Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1994).

Discussion: how can we reconcile economic development and historic preservation? How can development patterns be redesigned to reduce sprawl? An assigned activity would have students attend a city zoning review board meeting that discusses new developments and keep record of the location (in relation to the town center) where those new developments are proposed to determine where most development is taking place and what issues concern people effected.

Week 15: "Final Exam."

Goals and objectives: assess the student's knowledge of course materials.

Subject: students take a final exam that tests their understanding of railroad culture before the automobile, the history of automobile transportation prior to Route 66, the history and context of Route 66, types of historic resources along Route 66, the current wave of nostalgia for Route 66, and how to contain urban sprawl and preserve the historic highway. Students also turn in a term paper on a subject of their choosing relating to Route 66.

---

[25]Charlton Ogburn. "The Motorcar Vs. America," *American Heritage Magazine* (April 1969): 104-110.

Term papers address such topics as: the role of Native Americans on Route 66 between 1927 and 1960, and how that role evolved; a study of a specific town, such as Santa Rosa, New Mexico, and how the transition from dependence on the railroads to dependence on Route 66 changed its culture and architecture in the early 1900s; how Mexicans and their culture influenced the experience of white and African American tourists on Route 66 in the 1950s; the influence of popular western movies on tourist expectations in the 1950s; the interpretation and exploitation of Native American and Spanish Colonial architectural forms in the design of Route 66 roadside businesses between 1927 and 1970; the role of Route 66 in the migration of African Americans and others to southern California from 1945 to 1970; and the reasons, social, technological, and economic, that the federal government replaced Route 66 with interstate highways between 1956 and 1984.

This chapter has shown that offering students a variety of educational experiences can often increase their ability to learn. The road also offers rich educational opportunities, such as site visits to historic places, opportunities for archival research, and a great deal of

oral history. In addition, when students are interested in a subject, they tend to learn more. Not only does Route 66 have a rich history, the highway has the potential to capture student interest. The corridor has the potential to act as a classroom and laboratory for American educators.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

After the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific Railroads began carrying tourists to the Southwest around 1900, they developed exotic images of the region designed to entice potential tourists. Many of these images depicted stereotyped Native Americans, cowboys, and Mexican Americans and clichéd representations of their culture and architecture. After the creation of Route 66 in 1927, the automobile became the dominant mode of tourist travel to the region. As the pre-interstate highway landscape evolved from dirt roads and crude auto-camps to paved highways and slick motels, operators of road-related businesses adopted many of the same regional stereotypes, using signs, postcards, advertisements, and architecture to draw motorists to their establishments. Because Route 66 was the primary automobile route through the Southwest, regional imagery became associated with the highway itself.

Because of its popular associations with the cultures and landscapes of the Southwest, Route 66 became famous. Marketing, literature, songs, and television reinforced this identity. Over the decades, more images and concepts became linked to Route 66. These included the plight of the Dust Bowl migrants, the idea of American freedom and mobility, the innocence of youth, and nostalgia for a "lost" America.

Even after the interstates bypassed Route 66 and the highway disappeared physically, the route gained a new, nostalgic significance in the 1980s and 1990s to many Americans, Europeans, and Asians. Nostalgia is the primary motivation behind the current Route 66 movement. The highway has thousands of fans, many of whom belong to local, statewide, national, and international Route 66 associations that help generate millions of tourist dollars for Route 66 communities. This recent enthusiasm has also resulted in the publication of *Route 66 Magazine,* a popular periodical, and the passage of a major federal historic preservation initiative, the Route 66 Corridor Act of 1999.

To some contemporary enthusiasts, Route 66 is a symbol and remnant for the "good old days" of the 1950s, a

supposedly moral and upstanding period of American history. For others, the highway represents the beginnings of the freewheeling road culture of individuals such as Jack Kerouac, who helped spawn the cultural changes of the 1960s. Others see Route 66 as the road of migration and "flight" of the Okies, and later, of GIs returning from the Second World War looking for a new life in California. To most Americans, Route 66 represents the quintessential American highway, the route to the Southwest, a highway through exotic landscapes where the Old West lives on.

Intellectual and social trends influence how people ascribe significance to historic sites. If the memories of Route 66 enthusiasts are the products of myth and cultural bias, these distortions had their origins in the broader movements of western popular culture. Contemporary nostalgia for Route 66 may have resulted, at least in part, from the influence of postmodernism on the culture in which the enthusiasts live. Exploring the influence of postmodernism on the Route 66 movement presents an exciting opportunity for future research on the cultural significance of Route 66.

Postmodernism is rooted in the modern movement of the early and mid-twentieth century. Primarily a movement in art and literature, modernism aimed to capture the essence of the industrial way of life.[1] Modernism attempted to create a new purity of thought and aesthetics based on the advance of technology and new modes of analysis provided by science and manifested in new technologies. While modernism involved a progressive search for unity, postmodernism rejected unity, progress, and the existence of an absolute, knowable reality. Where modernism taught a disruption of tradition based on the discovery of universal, technological principles that were supposed to transcend style and fashion, postmodernism emphasizes a collage of forms and styles, a fascination for copies and repetition, a rejection of commitment in favor of irony, "pleasure in a play of surfaces."[2] Postmodern theory abandons the modern

---

[1]Joyce Appleby, *Telling the Truth About History*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 201.

[2]Todd Gitlin, "Postmodernism: Roots and Politics, What are They Talking About?" *Dissent* (Winter, 1989): 100.

ideals of the rational and unified in favor of plurality and fragmentation.[3]

Postmodernism originated primarily in architecture and literary criticism. Architecture best illustrates the movement, because postmodern design creates rich and complicated visual imagery that is in direct contrast to efficient, austere, and rational modern design precepts. Postmodernism in architecture does not simply copy the past; it alludes to it by making references to the architect's interpretation of the past.

In *Learning from Las Vegas,* pioneer postmodern architect Robert Venturi used vernacular architecture from the American roadside of the late 1960s as a metaphor and model for creating a greater role for popular symbolism in the design of architecture in general. Venturi wanted the profession of architecture to move away from the sober

---

[3]Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations,* (New York: The Gulford Press, 1991, 4-5.

rationality of modernism to embrace popular culture and embody popular icons.[4]

Instead of turning to technology for the solution to architectural and social problems as the modernists had, postmodern architects such as Robert Venturi, Philip Johnson, and Michael Graves reused and reinterpreted traditional forms. Postmodernism in architecture is not, as it is in some fields, a more sophisticated and comprehensive exploration of the formal discoveries of modernism. Rather, it is a reaction against those very discoveries and their rejection of traditional architectural styles and forms. Unlike many postmodern writers, postmodern architects ordinarily accept the cannons of pre-Modernist humanism: representation, figuration, content, and meaning.[5] Venturi held out the vernacular garishness of Las Vegas and the commercial strip

---

[4]Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977).

[5]Stanley Trachtenberg, *The Postmodern Movement A Handbook of Contemporary Innovation in The Arts* (London: Greenwood Press, 1985), 24.

as examples for academic architecture.[6] The type of imagery he championed in Las Vegas can also be found at historic cafes, motels, and tourist traps along Route 66.

Architect Charles Jencks describes postmodern "double coding," in which the first code of meaning is incorporated into a building's design to be understood by the "people." The second code is made up of intricate architectural, structural, and classical references meant for architects and other educated observers. This double coding is meant to expand the meaning of architecture to the public as well as to architects and architectural historians. Philip Johnson's ATT building's Chippendale top, and Venturi's residential designs, such as the Lieb House, exhibit double coding. In some cases, this strategy has proven to be at least as confusing to the public as the obscure metaphorical objectives of modern architects had been.[7]

---

[6]Robert Venturi, lecture at Association for Preservation Technology annual conference, Philadelphia, PA, October 2000.

[7]Peter Brigham Dedek, "Post Occupancy Evaluation of a Modern Low and Middle Income Housing Project to Assess the Perceptions of Specific Design Features as Viewed by its Architects, Managers, and Residents" (Master's Thesis, Cornell University, 1993), 1-130.

In 1977, Charles Jencks published an important book on the newly emerging postmodern movement in architecture entitled *The Language of Post Modern Architecture,* which heralded the death of modern architecture and the formation of a new movement in architectural design based on historical references. Jencks wrote, "Modern architecture has suffered from elitism. Post modern architecture is trying to get over that elitism, not by dropping it, but rather by extending the language of architecture in many ways--into the vernacular, towards the tradition and the commercial slang of the street."[8] This paralleled Venturi's ideas. In *From Bauhaus to Our House* Tom Wolfe writes: "Venturi seemed to be saying it was time to remove architecture from the elite world of the universities, from the compounds, and make it once more familiar to ordinary people. It was for this reason people were so baffled by Venturi's buildings themselves."[9]

Postmodern architecture shares the uncertainty and irony of postmodernism in other academic fields. In

---

[8]Charles A. Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli Publishers, 1977), 8.

architecture, postmodernism rejects the absolute tenets of modern design such as the "honesty" in the use of materials, and replaces it with illusion, with stucco looking like adobe, steel like marble, and marble veneers mimicking marble blocks. This approach matches the situation that had existed since the 1920s on Route 66 where builders used materials such as plywood covered with stucco or sheet metal to mimic historic architectural materials such as adobe and stone. This does not mean that Route 66 was postmodern, but it reveals that sites along the corridor possessed elements of mass culture and popular metaphors that would later be used in postmodern architecture, as Venturi argues Las Vegas did. The popular images and faux surfaces found on Route 66 appealed to postmodernists.

When Route 66 was at it peak (the late 1940s and 1950s), modernism was also at its height, and when Route 66 perished in 1977, modernism was in the process of fading as the dominant paradigm of architecture and intellectual thought in western society. Postmodernism superceded

---

[9]Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1981), 104.

modernism in the early 1980s. Ironically, the modern, rationalized, efficient Interstate highway system (implemented in the ultra-Modern 1950s) replaced Route 66, a varied vernacular corridor already rich in the type of cultural and historical references and vernacular whimsy that Postmodernists such as Venturi admired.

Looking back, many people living in the postmodern 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s and driving on the Interstates (products of the Modern mentality) probably relished the concept of traveling on Route 66, which, in retrospect, appeared appealingly postmodern to them. The rise of Route 66 as the most popular historic highway in America may reflect the postmodern era in which the highway landscape became valued as an experience in itself. This is not to say that most Route 66 enthusiasts are postmodernist intellectuals who consciously view the highway from a postmodern perspective. However, one could argue that postmodernism has so influenced the culture, through popular media such as television commercials and movies, that the movement has altered the way everyone, including many Route 66 enthusiasts, see the world.

The monolithic, efficient, and rational Interstate Highway System resulted from a modernist design mentality. The interstates were unadorned, divorced from the past, efficient, and highly regulated. Although Route 66 preceded the interstates, its complexity and cultural iconography anticipated postmodern sensibilities. Those who remember and praise Route 66 may do so partly because the highway offers unregulated and non-uniform experiences in a setting rich with historical and cultural references. In a sense, Route 66 enthusiasts are observers in a postmodern era who are stuck with a modernist transportation system (the interstates) looking back with nostalgia at a quirky highway (Route 66) that better suits their sensibilities.

Although this dissertation does not claim to prove the forging hypothesis concerning the connection between the current Route 66 movement and postmodernism, it does suggest that future research into postmodernism may reveal more information about why Route 66 became popular. A deeper understanding of why Route 66 is so famous may help efforts to interpret the corridor for contemporary tourists.

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine Route 66 as an object of nostalgia based on the highway's associations with invented images of the Southwest and popular notions about American automobile culture and to discuss methods of preserving and interpreting the historic Route. Route 66 gained fame because it came to represent a host of alluring American concepts such as the Wild West, the wild Indian, and the open road. Even the Route 66 shield has become an icon that represents notions of American nostalgia, freedom, and patriotism.

Although Route 66 survives today more as a symbol than as a highway, thousands of historic sites survive along the various alignments of old Route 66. A number of these resources, such as the U-Drop Inn and the Will Rogers Hotel, are successful preservation efforts, while many others, such as the Coral Courts Motel and the Club Cafe, have vanished. Many structures and landscapes along the corridor are endangered.

To effectively preserve and interpret Route 66, communities must develop local preservation plans in coordination with state and federal historic preservation professionals. Tools such as local historic districts and

the National Register can be employed along the highway's remaining segments to prevent demolition and raise public awareness of these fragile road-related resources.

Route 66 communities can use Route 66's fame and lore to generate the interest and money needed to save historic resources along the highway. To assist with tourism, which generates income for often economically depressed Route 66 towns, historic Route 66 signage, wayside exhibits, and tour guidebooks can accurately interpret the highway and direct tourists to its many points of interest.

Even after its official closure, the highway remains as a linear community from Chicago to Los Angeles, a path that leads travelers to the fascinating cultural landscapes of the Midwest, upper South, Great Plains, and Southwest. If preserved and protected, Route 66 will function as a living cultural artifact that can act as an educational tool both inside and outside the classroom. The highway also provides opportunities to study American culture during the period the highway was in use and up to the present day because historic Route 66 is an exciting artifact rich with cultural references and meaning.

APPENDIX I

NOTE ON METHODS

Oral history research. The author engaged in a number of informal discussions as an element of the research needed to write this dissertation. The purpose of these conversations was to determine why Route 66 is significant to people who operate or have formerly operated businesses on Historic Route 66 and to people who belong to organizations dedicated to preserving Route 66.

The individual identities of the respondents are of little significance because the goal was to understand the impressions of Route 66 enthusiasts and business owners in general, not to record individual case studies. Therefore, the names of those with whom the author spoke have been kept anonymous and their locations referred to only by state.

The discussions took place during a three-week tour of Route 66 in October, 1998 at locations open to the public, and often in the presence of customers and passing tourists.

WORKS CITED

Advisory Council for Historic Preservation. *Complete explanation of Section 106 process*. Available from www.achp.gov. Internet. Accessed 25 April 2000.

Ahlgren, Carol. "The Lincoln Highway." *Cultural Resource Management* 19, no. 9 (1996): 16-17.

American Society of Accountants. "Consumer Price Index CPI Inflation Calculator." Available from www.jsc.nasa.gov/bu2/inflatecpi.htm. Internet. Accessed 30 November 1999.

Anderson, William T. Anderson. "Wall Drug-South Dakota's Tourist Emporium." *American West* (August/September 1985): 72-76.

Andrews, J. J. C. *The Well-Built Elephant and other Road Attractions, A Tribute to American Eccentricity*. New York: Congdon and Weed Inc., 1984.

Anthony, Ted. "History of the Mother Road." *The Spokesman-Review*, Spokane, WA, 30 November 1997. Available from http://route66giftshop.com/links/happenins.html. Internet. Accessed 25 February 2000.

Appleby, Joyce. *Telling the Truth About History*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1994.

ARCHITEXAS, Architecture, Planning, and Historic Preservation, Inc. *Tower Station and U-Drop Inn, Shamrock, Texas: Historic Structure Report & Restoration Master Plan*. Dallas: ARCHITEXAS, 2000.

Arizona Chamber of Commerce. Internet. Available from www.arizonaguide.com/cities/holbrook/route66.html Accessed 27 April 2000.

Beaumont, Constance E. *How Superstore Sprawl can Harm Communities and What Citizens can do about it.* Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1994.

Beecher, Mary Anne. "The Motel in Builder's Literature and Architectural Publications." In *Roadside America, The Automobile in Design and Culture.* Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990.

Belasco, Warren James. *Americans on the Road, From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979.

_____. "Commercialized Nostalgia, the Origins of the Roadside strip." *The Automobile and American Culture.* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1983.

Berke, Arnold. "Drawing from the Desert, Architect Mary Colter Told Stories in Stone." *Preservation* (Summer 1997): 39-42.

Best, Steven and Douglas Kellner. *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations.* New York: The Gulford Press, 1991.

Birnbaum, Charles A. and Christine Capella Peters. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatments of Cultural Landscapes.* National Park Service Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships Heritage Preservation Services Historic Landscape Initiative. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, 1995.

Blake, Kevin S. "Zane Grey and Images of the American West." *The Geographic Review* (April 1995): 202-213.

Boland, Beth M. "Teaching With Historic Places: Where Did History Happen?" *Cultural Resource Management* 16, no. 2 (1993): 2-3.

Brink, Peter H. "Livable Communities and Historic Transportation Corridors." *Cultural Resource Management* 16, no. 11 (1993): 52-53.

Cantor, Norman F. *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century*. New York: W. Morrow, 1991.

Catlin, George. *North American Indians: Being Letters and Notes on their Manners, Customs, and Conditions, Written During Eight Years' Travel Amongst the Wildest Tribes of North America, 1832-1839*. London: George Catlin, 1880.

CitiVU. "Route 66 Museum and Rancho Cucamonga Visitor's Center." Available from www.citivu.com/rc/rte66. Internet. Accessed on 25 September 1997.

Clark, Jayne. "A golden road's unlimited devotion" *USA TODAY* (Washington D.C.) 29 October 2001, Available from www.usatoday.com/life/travel/leisure/2001/2001-06-29-route66.htm. Internet. Accessed 21 December 2001.

Cleeland, Teri A. "Route 66 Revisited." *Cultural Resource Management* 16, no. 11 (1993): 15-18.

Collins, Reba Neighbors. "Just Plain Will." *The Quill* (May 1990): 44-47.

Cook, Richard. "The Summer of '54." *Route 66 Magazine*, Winter, 1995/96, 18-19.

Darton, N. H. "The Southwest, Its Splendid Natural Resources, Agricultural Wealth, and Scenic Beauty." *National Geographic Magazine* 21 (August 1910): 643-644.

Datsko, Jim. "The Spirit of Route 66, The Classic Route 66 Series." *Route 66 Magazine*, Winter 1995/96, 40-42.

Delgadillo, Angel. "History of Route 66." Available from http://route66giftshop.com/links.html. Internet. Accessed 25 February 2000.

Delina, Lou. "Kerouac & Cassady, Were These Free Spirits The Original Buz & Tod?" *Route 66 Magazine,* Winter 1995/96, 42-44.

Dedek, Peter Brigham. "Post Occupancy Evaluation of a Modern Low and Middle Income Housing Project to Assess the Perceptions of Specific Design Features as Viewed by its Architects, Managers, and Residents." MA Thesis, Cornell University, 1993.

Derry, Anne, Ward H. Jandi, Carol D.Shull, Jan Thorman, Revised by Patricia L. Parker, 1985. "Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning: National Register Bulletin 24." Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1977.

Dilworth, Leah. *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1996.

Dunn, Rita and Kenneth Dunn. *Educational Psychology*. Available from www.Stgeorgesschool.nz.org. Internet. Accessed on January 11, 2001.

Dunn, Rita and Shirley A. Griggs. *Multiculturalism and Learning Style: Teaching and Counseling Adolescents*. Urbana: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 1995.

Durham, Michael S. "Landmarks on the Rim." *American Heritage* (April 1996): 137-144.

Economist Newspaper, The. "Bob Dole Could Learn a Thing or Two From Route 66." 27 July 1996.

Elkinton, Steve. "CRM and the National Trails System." *Cultural Resource Management* 20, no. 11 (1997): 3-5.

Elmore, John and Anne E Smith. "Japanese Use Downtown Kingman for Blue Jean Commercial Filming on Route 66." *Route 66 News Magazine and Newsletter for the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona*, November 1990, 16.

Fairchild, Hoxie Neale. *The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism*. New York: Russel and Russel, 1961.

Fish, Peter. "Canyons, Cozy Dogs, and the Meaning of the West." *Sunset*, December 1998, 18-20.

Frish, Michael. *Working-Class America: Essays on Labor, Community, and American Society*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

Gaines, David and Art Gomez. "Perspectives on Route 66." *Cultural Resource Management* 16, no. 11 (1993): 21-23.

Gamboa, Suzanne. "Cadillac Ranch: Only Buried Halfway, Cars' Meaning Goes Much Deeper." *The Austin American Statesmen* 16 May 1994.

Gateway Trail Net. Available from http//home.stlnet.com; Internet. Accessed on 12 January 2001.

Ganzel, Bill. *Dust Bowl Descent*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.

Garfild, Bob. "Air of authenticity drives Route 66 line." *Advertising Age* (August 10, 1998): 29.

Gillis, John R. "Remembering Memory: A Challenge for Public Historians in a Post-National Era." *The Public Historian* 14 (Fall 1992): 91.

Gitlin, Todd. "Postmodernism: Roots and Politics, What are They Talking About?" *Dissent* (Winter 1989): 100-105.

Glassberg, David. "Monuments and Memories." *American Quarterly* 43 (March 1991): 149

Goodman, David. "Postmodernism and History." *American Studies International* 45 (February 1993): 21-29.

Gowans, Alan. *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Cultural Expression.* New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

Graves, Bill. "On Route 66 in Amboy, California." *Trailer Life,* August 1998, 118-119.

Greeley, Horace. In Lloyd E. Hudman, "Tourism and the West." *Tourism: A Shrinking World,* March 1990, 69-75.

Grosvenor, Gilbert H. "The Land of the Best." *National Geographic Magazine* 24 (April 1916): 328-335.

Harrison, Greg. "Rediscovering Route 66." *American Motorcyclist: Journal of the American Motorcycle Association*. Available from www.hhjm.com/66/static/highway1.html. Internet. Accessed 27 April 2000.

Hayes, Jan. FOED 756: "Seminar in College Teaching." (Murfressboro, TN: Middle Tennessee State University) class material, spring 1998.

Historic Postcards depicting sites on Route 66 and other historic highways, 1910-1970, in author's collection.

Historic Route 66 Association. "Visitors." *Route 66 News, The Quarterly Newsletter of the Arizona Route 66 Association,* Winter 1999, 3.

Hokanson, Drake. *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street of America*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988.

Holand Harry. *Traveler's Architecture*. London: George G. Harrap and Co., 1971.

Holbrook, Arizona Chamber of Commerce. Available from www.arizonaguide.com/cities/holbrook/route66.html; Internet. Accessed 27 April 2000.

Hudman, Lloyd E. "Tourism and the West." *Journal of the West* (July 1994): 67-76.

Hurt, R. Douglas. "Dust." *American Heritage* 26 (July, 1977): 30-31.

_____. *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981.

Interrrante, Joseph. "The Road to Autopia." In *The Automobile and American Culture*. Eds. David L. Lewis and Lawrence Goldstein, 94-105. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983.

Jackson, Ron. "Route 66 Lovers Fear Replacement of Original Road." *The Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City). 8 September 1999.

Jakle, John A. *The Tourist, Travel in Twentieth-Century North America*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.

_____. and Keith Sculle. *The Gas Station in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Jencks, Charles A. *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli Publishers, 1977.

Jones, Billy M. *Health Seekers in the Southwest, 1817-1900*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967.

Jones, Dwayne. "What's New With the Pig Stands—Not the Pig Sandwich!" *Cultural Resource Management* 19, no. 9 (1996): 18-20.

Kammen, Michael. *The Mystic Chords of Memory*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

Kammer, David J. *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 across New Mexico 1926-1956*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1993.

Kelly, Susan Croce and Quinta Scott. *Route 66: The Highway and its People*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988.

Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*. New York: The Viking Press, 1955.

Klein, Kerwin L. "Frontier Products: Tourism, Consumerism, and the Southwestern Public Lands, 1890-1990." *Pacific Historical Review* 62 (February 1993): 45-48.

Knudson, David. "Director's Notes." *Route 66 Federation News*, Summer 1998, 2.

_____. Lecture, Route 66 Exposition, Amarillo, Texas, 3 October 1998.

Kohira, Nanori. "Japan an Interest in Route 66." *Route 66 News and Newsletter of Arizona*, March 1990, 22.

Lamar, Howard Roberts. *The Far Southwest 1846-1912: A Territorial History*. London: Yale University Press, 1966.

Lancaster, Paul. "The Great American Motel." *American Heritage* 33 (June/July 1982): 101-108.

Liebs, Chester H. *Main Street to Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Lieder, Michael and Jake Page. *Wild Justice: The People of Geronimo vs. the United States*. New York: Random House, 1997.

Limerick, Patricia Nelson. *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1987.

Lincoln Highway Association. *The Complete Official Road Guide to the Lincoln Highway*. Sacramento: Pleides Press, 1984.

Lowenthal, David. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. New York: Cambridge Press, 1985.

Lummis, Charles F. *The Land of Poco Tiempo*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893. Reprint, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.

Lukacs, John. "From Camelot to Abilene." *American Heritage* 32 (February, 1981): 55-57.

Lundy, Bob. "The Good Life." *Tourism Today, The Quarterly Publication of the San Bernadino County Tourism Development Council,* Spring 1990, 1.

Lynd, Robert and Helen Lynd. *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1929.

Macaulay, David. *Motel of the Mysteries*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979.

MacDonald, Alana, Tom Dean and Heb Ludwig. *Bye Bye Route 66*. "Industrial Twilight." Popular Song, 1992, Available from www.ine.net/devon2/index.htm. Internet. Accessed on 10 July 1998.

McCathy, Joe. "The Lincoln Highway." *American Heritage* 23 (June 1974): 32-38.

McClanahan, Jerry. "Wish You Were Here." *Route 66 Magazine,* Summer 1999, 32-34, 38.

McCloskey, Robert. *Homer Price*. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1973.

Main Street of America Association. *US 66, Main Street of America*. Clinton, OK: Main Street of America Association, 1971.

Malcolm, Andrew S. and Mark McGarrity. *U.S. 1, America's Original Main Street*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.

Margolies, John. *The End of the Road*. New York: Viking Press, 1981.

Marling, Karal Ann. *As Seen on TV, The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

_____. *The Colossus of Roads, Myth and Symbol Along the American Highway*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Marsden, M. T. "The Popular Western Novel as a Cultural Artifact." *Arizona and the West,* Spring: 1978, 205-210.

Mathis, Martin. "Road Trips Revisited--A Route 66 Essay." Available from www.lastbandit.com/rte66pix.html. Internet. Accessed 25 April 2000.

May, Elaine Tyler. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. New York: Basic Books, 1988.

Metcalf, Fay. "Teaching With Historic Places: Roadside Attractions." *Social Education* 10 (March, 1993): 144-156.

Metz, Leon C. *Roadside History of Texas*. Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1994.

Michel, Jean. "Welcome French Route 66 Association." *Route 66 News, The Quarterly Newsletter of Arizona,* February 1990, 1-3.

Mitchell, Guy Elliot. "A New National Park." *National Geographic Magazine* 21 (March 1910), 215-224.

Moore, Bob and Patrick Grauwels. *Route 66, the Illustrated Guidebook to the Mother Road*. Williams, AZ: Roadbook International, 1998.

Moore, Bob. "Fifties Memories." *Route 66 Magazine,* Fall 1998, 50-51.

Morgan, Howard E. *The Motel Industry in the United States: Small Business in Transition*. Tucson: The Bureau of Business and Public Research, The University of Arizona, 1964.

Murkowski, Frank H. "The Rte. 66 of American Recreation." *The Christian Science Monitor*. 9 December 1997, 18.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lolita*. New York: Putnam, 1955.

National Park Service: Denver Service Center. *American Discovery Trail, National Trail Feasibility Study*. Denver, CO: National Park Service, 1995.

National Register of Historic Places, United States Department of the Interior. Available from www.amarillonet.com. Internet. Accessed 10 January 2001.

New Mexico State Highway Department. *New Mexico Official Road Map*. Santa Fe: New Mexico State Highway Department, 1954.

Obburn, Charlton. "The Motorcar Vs. America." *American Heritage* 20 (April 1969): 104-110.

Oklahoma Route 66 Association. *Official Oklahoma Route 66 Association Trip Guide*. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Native Council and the Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation, 1999.

Mark S. Olcott, "Field Trip to Gettysburg: A model experience." *The History Teacher*, August, 1987, 487-496.

Old Town Victorville Property Owners Association. *Presenting Historic and Contemporary Route 66*. Pamphlet 1998.

Padget, Martin. "Travel, Exoticism, and the writing of Region: Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Creation of the Southwest." *Journal of the Southwest* 37 (Autumn 1995): 422-433.

Patton, Phil. "America's Home Away from Home is Still a Good Motel." *Smithsonian* 16 (March 1986): 126-137.

Pew, Thomas W. Jr. "Tucumcari Tonight: Requiem for the Last Holdout on Interstate 40." *The American West: The Magazine of Western History* 27 (January-February 1980): 62-63.

_____. "Good-bye to Main Street 66, No More Homemade Apple Pie." *American West* 21 (September/October 1984): 47-51.

_____. "Route 66, A Ghost Road." *American Heritage* 28 (July 1977): 26-32.

Porter, Kenneth W. "African Americans in the Cattle Industry, 1860s-1880s." in *Peoples of Color in the American West*. Eds. Sucheng Chan, Douglas Daniels, Mario T. Garcia, and Terry P. Wilson. Toronto: Heath and Company, 1994.

Preston, Howard Lawrence. *Dirt Roads to Dixie: Accessibility and Modernization in the South 1885-1935*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991.

Puzo, Rita A. "Route 66: A Ghost Road Geography." MA thesis, California State University, 1988.

Rand McNally & Company. *State Farm Road Atlas, United States, Canada, Mexico*. Skokie IL: Rand McNally & Company, 2001.

Redman, Lillian. Interview by Andy Wood on 27 September 1997. Available from http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu. Internet. Accessed on 30 January 1999.

Richard, Jerry. "Well Known Song Added to Popularity of Route 66." *Route 66 News, Magazine and Newsletter for the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona*, April 1990, 21.

_____. "Route 66 in legend, Song, Film, TV Series, and History." *Route 66 News, Magazine and Newsletter for*

the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona, April 1990, 21.

Rittenhouse, Jack. *A Guide to Highway 66*. Los Angeles: J. D. Rittenhouse, 1946. Reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989.

Robbins, Mary Alice. "Area Towns Get in Proposal for Improvements." *Amarillo Globe-News*, 26 January 26 2000. Available from www.amarillonet.com. Internet. Accessed on September 21, 2000.

Robbins, Peggy. "Will Rogers: The Immortal Cherokee Kid." *American History Illustrated* 9 (July 1974): 6.

Robinson, John. *Highways and Our Environment*. New York: McGraw Books, 1971.

Rosaldo, Renato. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Rose, Mark H. *Interstate, Express Highway Politics, 1941-1956*. Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979.

Rothman, Hal. *Preserving Different Pasts, The American National Monuments*. Normal: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *Discourse on Inequality*, In *The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism*. London: Hoxie Neale Fairchild, 1794. Reprint, New York: Russel & Russel, 1961.

Route 66 Association of Arizona. *Route 66 News, The Quarterly Newsletter of the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona*, Winter 1999, 3.

Route 66 Association of Illinois, in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs Bureau of Tourism. *Historic Route 66*. Pamphlet. Springfield: Route 66 Association of Illinois, 1998.

Route 66 International Association. Official Web Site. Available from www.route66usa.com/info.html. Internet. Accessed 27 April 2000.

Route 66 enthusiasts, merchants and tourists. Informal discussions with author during a tour of historic Route 66 between 20 September and 7 October 1998.

Rowsome, Frank Jr. "The Verse by the Side of the Road." *American Heritage* 16 (January 1965): 102-104.

Rubin, Barbara. "Aesthetic Ideology and Urban Design." In *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, eds. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Runte, Alfred. "Promoting the Golden West: Advertising and the Railroad." *California History*, Spring, 1991, 63-75.

Savage, Beth L. "Road-related Resources Listed in the National Register." *Cultural Resource Management* 19, no. 9 (1996): 13.

Savage William W. Jr. *Cowboy Life: Reconstructing an American Myth*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975.

Scenic America. *Scenic Byways: Preserving a Part of America's Heritage*. Pamphlet.

_____. *Corridor Management Plans: Developing Plans for Scenic Byways*. Pamphlet.

Schweitzer, Robert and Michael W. R. Davis. *America's Favorite Homes, Mail-Order Catalogues as a Guide to Popular Early 20th Century Houses*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990.

Sculle, Keith A. "Frank Redford's Wigwam Village Chain." In *Roadside America, The Automobile in Design and Culture*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990.

Scimmel, Julie. *Inventing the Indian: The West as America, Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier.* Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1991.

Seratt, Dorothy R. L. and Terri Ryburn-Lamont. *Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through Illinois.* National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination. Washington, D. C.: National Park Service, 1997.

Shepherd, Shawn. "The Legacy of Route 66: Highways always have an economic impact, positive and negative. The Mother Road transformed New Mexico." Available from www.nmbiz.com/issues/01/Sep%2001. Internet. Accessed December 21, 2001.

Shepard-Lanier, Claire. "Trading on Tradition: Mary Jane Colter and the Romantic Appeal of Harvey House Architecture." *Journal of the Southwest* 38 (Summer 1996): 165-170.

Sherrill, Martha. "'55 Cadillac on Route 66: Tour Guide to Tad Pierson's America Dream Safari." *Esquire,* August 1995, 36-37.

Shull, Carol D. "Creating a Partnership." *Cultural Resource Management* 16, no. 2 (1993): 4-5.

Slotkin,Richard. *Gunfighter Nation, The Myth of the Frontier in the Twentieth-Century America.* New York: Harper Perennial, 1992.

Smith, Greg. "Route 66 Revisited: Preserving the Mother Road." *Society for Commercial Archeology News,* Winter 1999-2000, 3-5.

Snyder, Tom. *Route 66 Traveler's Guide and Roadside Companion.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990. Advance proofs.

Stewart, George. *U.S. 40: A Cross Section of the United States of America.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953.

Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1939. Reprint. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

Stilgoe R. John. *Metropolitan Corridor, Railroads and the American Scene*. New London, CT: Yale University Press, 1983.

Stipe, Robert E. "The Next Twenty Years." *The American Mosaic, Preserving a Nation's Heritage*. Washington, D.C.: US/ICOMOS, 1987.

Summa Fruit International. Canned Grape Label for "Route 66 Table Grapes." Ca. 1960. In author's collection.

Tanner, Helen Hornbeck. *The Settling of North America, The Atlas of the Great Migrations into North America from the Ice Age to the Present*. New York: Macmillan, 1995.

Teague, Tom, Bob Waldmire, and Lon Haldeman. *Searching for Route 66*. 2d ed. Springfield, IL: Samizdat House, 1996.

Tiner, Jeanne D. *Route 66 Mainstreet of America*. Mesa, AZ: Terrell Publishing, 1998.

Todd, Gitlin. "Postmodernism: Roots and Politics, What are They Talking About?" *Dissent* 15 (Winter, 1989): 152-160.

Trachtenberg, Stanley. *The Postmodern Movement A Handbook of Contemporary Innovation in the Arts*. London: Greenwood Press, 1985.

Vale, Thomas R. and Geraldine R. Vale. *U.S. 40 Today: Thirty Years of Landscape Change in America*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.

Van Slyck, Abigail A. "Racial Stereotypes and the Southwest's Vernacular Architecture." In *Gender, Class, and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, eds. V.* Elizabeth C. Crowley and Carter

L. Hudgins. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.

Venturi, Robert, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour. *Learning from Las Vegas*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977.

_____. Lecture at Association for Preservation Technology annual conference. Philadelphia: October 2000.

U.S. Congress. Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act. Public Law 106-45, Historic Preservation 16 U.S. Code Vol. 461, H.R. 66 1999.

U.S. Department of Interior. *Special Study: Route 66*. Washington, D. C.: National Park Service, 1995.

Wade, Edwin L. "The Ethnic Market in the Southwest." In *Objects and Others: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. George W. Stocking Jr. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

Wallace, Michael. *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

Wallis, Michael. *Route 66: The Mother Road*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

_____. Lecture, Route 66 Exposition. Amarillo, Texas 1 October 1998.

_____. Lecture, Route 66 Exposition. Shamrock, Texas 2 October 1998.

Web66. "A K12 World Wide Web Project." Available from http://web66.coled.umn.edu/; Internet. Accessed on January 11, 2001.

West, Carroll Van. editor. *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*. Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, 1998.

Wiegle, Marta and Peter White. *The Lore of New Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988.

_____. "Southwest Lures: Innocents Detoured, Incensed Determined." *Journal of the Southwest* 32 (Winter 1990): 499-540.

Wilburn, Gary. "Routes of History: Recreational Use and Preservation of Historic Transportation Corridors." *Information,* Series No. 38. Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1985.

Wilson, Chris. *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

Wilson, Steve "Two-Lane Vacation: Highway Trip Along What is Left of Route 66 in New Mexico and Arizona Reveals a bygone era." *Travel-Holiday,* April 1998, 23-25.

Witzel, Michael Karl. *Route 66 Remembered*. Osceola, WI: Motorbooks International, 1996.

Wolfe, Tom. *From Bauhaus to Our House*. Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1981.

Work Progress Administration Writer's Program. *Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State*. (Washington, D.C.: WPA, 1941). Available from http://members.aol.com. Internet. Accessed on 4 May 2000.

Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl, The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Yagoda, Ben. *Will Rogers, A Biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

Yamisaki, Mitch. "Using Rock'n Roll to Teach the History of Post-World War II America." *The History Teacher,* February 1996, 179.