

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

*Cover
64500829*

 New Submission XX Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Transportation on Route 66 in Oklahoma (1926-1970)

Commerce on Route 66 in Oklahoma (1926-1970)

C. Form Prepared by


name/title Michael J. Cassity, Ph.D

street & number 304 West Albuquerque telephone (918) 451-8378

city or town Broken Arrow state OK zip code 74011

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 1-21-03
Signature and title of certifying official Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

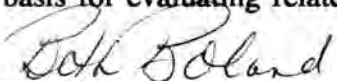
 3/6/03
Signature of the Keeper Date

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

E. Statement of Historical Context

Introduction	2
Oklahoma, Isolation, and Commerce before Route 66	4
National Forces and Local Social Change in the 1920s and early 1930s	11
Dust Bowl, Depression, Demographics, and Route 66	21
The Road to the Future: Changes during and after World War II	38
The End of the Road: Modernization, Homogenization, and Economic Growth in the 1950s and 1960s	52

F. Associated Property Types	61
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I. Major Bibliographical References	78
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 2

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

E. Historical Context

Introduction

As an artery of transportation, as an agent of social transformation, and as a remnant of America's past that stretches across two-thirds of the continent, from the Art Institute of Chicago next to Lake Michigan to the piers of the Pacific at Santa Monica, Route 66, and the buildings associated with it, like a road-cut or drilling core sample for the geologist, reveals the process of historical change that transformed the lives of people and communities from the time that the highway was first officially designated in 1926 until the highway was replaced, at its last points in western Oklahoma, in 1970. Along its route, including its multiple alignments and realignments over the years, the road connected not only the East and the West, but the past and the present. While all roads, by their nature, link different points to each other to facilitate movement between them, the nature of the connections made by U.S. Highway 66, and the dynamics stimulated by those connections are equal to, or perhaps more powerful than, the changes unleashed by the Oregon - California Trail, the Lincoln Highway, and perhaps, when considered locally and state-wide within Oklahoma, those changes probably rival the significance of any other transformative agent in the twentieth century.

The current project is intended to revise the Multiple Property nomination of resources associated with Route 66 in Oklahoma to the National Register of Historic Places and especially to broaden both the period of significance beyond that currently listed (1926-1944) and also to expand the conceptual coverage to include broader changes in community, in migration, in transportation networks, in recreation, and in other areas related to the patterns of history associated with Route 66. It follows that the identification and documentation of eligible properties will also broaden to include more types, and more actual structures, than the specific representative resources previously listed.

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 3

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

Route 66 is intimately related and to the significance of which the road contributed enormously. Indeed, as the automobile industry recognized early on, the automobile and the highway were but different parts of the same package, each dependent on the other; together they held forth the promise of a better life. The Lincoln Highway Association, the first and most important of the early road promotional organizations, was based on this nugget of truth that focused on the "community of interest" between automobile manufacturer and road builder, and they articulated the potential of that alliance in 1935, before Route 66 was completely paved through Oklahoma:

The automobile is worthless without the improved road and the road is of limited value without the automobile. Together, they have lengthened the span of average life appreciably. They have reduced the amount of time we must spend in travel. They have emancipated man from provincialism. They have given him quick and easy means of direct contact with distant communities. They have opened up to him, for business or enjoyment, thousands of square miles of country, educated him to the healthfulness of outdoor travel and recreation, enabled him to live amid more healthful surroundings at no sacrifice of convenience.

They have knit the many detached groups of the American people into a compact and homogenous nation. They have unified interests, brought rural communities into contact with governmental and educational centers, helped the farmer get more for his products and given the manufacturer a wider market. They have both reduced and increased congestion in the cities.¹

Bold words, these, and the potential of the highway seemed unlimited. Every feature enumerated in the list of changes to follow in the wake of highway construction, except that of urban congestion, seemed rich with reward. Even so, the early promoters of highway construction and travel possibly underestimated the ultimate impact of the roads on the life of the nation. The example of Oklahoma and Route 66 shows that each of these changes would also prove equally disrupting in their impact as the highway generated and encouraged social dislocation within and beyond the state's borders, and facilitated transfers of advantage and disadvantage between rural and urban. As it

¹ Lincoln Highway Association, *The Lincoln Highway: The Story of a Crusade that Made Transportation History* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1935), vii..

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 4

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

ushered in these changes it sounded the death knell for some businesses as quickly as it announced the birth of others, nourished the forces of centralization, standardization, and conformity while undermining local identity and relationships, and provided the basis of a new dependency on the anonymous traffic of the road that replaced earlier dependencies on neighbors and communities. The result was the demise of both businesses and communities who had tied their fates completely to the new road that represented the forces of change when those forces brought newer, bigger, and more heavily traveled roads to replace Route 66. In this way, Route 66 in Oklahoma transformed not just the lives of people along its path but the very social structure of the state.

Oklahoma, Isolation, and Commerce Before Route 66

As a state, Oklahoma in the 1920s was less than two decades old and the development of social, economic, and political institutions within its borders reflected the absence of a mature, self-sufficient, integrated system of transportation and communication. Oklahoma depended on the railroad. In 1926, the state board of Agriculture in attempting to attract settlers to develop farms in the state optimistically proclaimed that:

Oklahoma is traversed in every direction and through every county by more than 6,000 miles of railroads. A night's ride carries one from Oklahoma to St. Louis on the north, or to the Gulf on the south. There is corresponding fast freight service to these and other big markets.²

While railroads served many Oklahoma communities, that transportation system held real limits because of its established and inflexible routes, because of its cost, and because of its private ownership which mitigated against community service in favor of the most profitable tariff and traffic schedules. Moreover, the advantage held by the main population concentrations in cities like Tulsa and Oklahoma City was reinforced by the role of the railroads, and the dependence of commerce on them. In a partial

² T. M. Jeffords, *Oklahoma; Its Unparalleled Growth, The Present Status and the Basis for Future Development* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma, State Board of Agriculture, [1927]), 11.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 5

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

acknowledgment of the limits of the prevailing system, the same Agricultural Board document noted almost as a pained afterthought: "The state is building highways to connect the larger markets and county seat towns just as other states are doing." It was building highways, but those highways were not yet to be counted on, and those under construction would connect the commercial centers, not the villages and rural areas.

The truth is, though, that there were some roads, loosely termed highways, that attempted to serve as commercial thoroughfares in Oklahoma in the 1920s. These roads, moreover, usually came into being as the result of private promotional activities that built on successes elsewhere. In the nation, the most visible and most focused effort had been that of the Lincoln Highway, reaching across from New York City to San Francisco—an example important because it would soon be emulated by the promoters of Route 66 in Oklahoma. As early as 1913, a group of people representing automobile and automobile parts manufacturers, road builders, and providers of road materials organized and sketched a line across the country that they hoped would launch not just the construction of additional roads, but envisioned a system of main thoroughfares that would provide an integrated network of transportation throughout the nation. Although the Lincoln Highway itself was the direct focus of the efforts of the organization, other consequences of their actions held greater, national, implications. Three particular aspects of this promotional campaign would bear relevance for future efforts. One was the idea that roads should be national in scope and their development should look beyond the borders of any state; for that matter, they saw their opposition as those who would build roads simply to connect their own homes and business to others, an effort that was bound to dilute road building resources, favoring the local over the national. Another principle of the Lincoln Highway promoters was to demarcate a highway that used existing roads, no matter their condition, in hopes that official or unofficial designation as a specific highway would attract further support to that road. A third element was the focus on the federal government as both an instrument of coordination, to assure that the roads in the various states along the way would connect with those in neighboring states, and as an instrument of providing the money to finance the bold dream of interstate highway travel. The Lincoln Highway Association, thus, not only paved the road, but also paved the way for other promoters after them, throughout the nation, to build more roads that would link together in a national network.

The Lincoln Highway Association also bore large responsibility for the enactment by Congress of the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, "the first of many that eventually would see the highways of America built at public expense," as the organization retrospectively boasted. That legislation indeed generated substantial road construction

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 6

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

by virtue of its willingness to subsidize up to half the costs of road improvements for designated highways—Federal Aid Roads— through an appropriation of \$75 million, but of equal significance the act made such assistance contingent upon the state organizing a highway commission.³ A second piece of legislation in 1921 underscored and deepened the pattern that would shape the future as the federal money went beyond fifty percent and the requirement of interstate coordination was made more compelling by the necessity of designating up to seven per cent of its non urban road mileage as primary roads, thus requiring a prioritization of roads to receive aid.⁴

By the 1920s, there was a new impetus to highway expansion in the United States. One obscure change, in fact, that revealed the broader process at work, was the expanding role of the petroleum industry in the nation, and that industry became an effective partner of the automobile manufacturer and the road builders in urging the construction of roads. Historians of the gasoline station in America John Jakle and Keith Sculle observed in their history of gasoline stations that “gasoline consumption soared from 25% of the petroleum market in 1909 to 85 percent only ten years later,” and this statistic reflected social organization more than it did commerce.⁵ The new market for petroleum products was less that of the family lighting a lamp at dusk than it was the traveler in the automobile. One implication of that statistic, moreover, was that the isolation of the family in the countryside who used coal oil for illumination would soon erode as the small villages came into closer relationship to what was known in Oklahoma as the “electric light towns.”

The young Oklahoma Highway Commission—founded in 1911 as a result of pressure brought especially by the business community for good roads in the state⁶ —

³ John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 49.

⁴ John B. Rae, *The American Automobile: A Brief History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 89.

⁵ Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 50.

⁶ William P. Corbett, “Oklahoma’s Highways: Indian Trails to Urban Expressways,” Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1982, chapter VII; Corbett, “Men, Mud, and Mules: The Good Roads Movement in Oklahoma 1900-1920,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 58 (Summer 1980), 133-149.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 7

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

reported on the status of the roads in 1925 with considerable pride, listing all the highways in the state. In an obscure, but lengthy, publication the highway authority described the road system of Oklahoma.⁷ In that description, the roads had names as well as numbers, and the numbers were those of the state system, not a federal system. Moreover, the roads themselves had come about not from the efforts of the state but from the efforts of private organizations, organizations of businesspeople which then labeled the roads with the name of their organization. Thus in 1925 there was the Albert Pike Highway (State Road Number 1) that ran from Fort Smith through Muskogee and Tulsa to Stillwater and Enid and on west to Alva. The Albert Pike Highway Association which ushered the road into existence had been organized as early as 1917. The Meridian Highway, following the 98th meridian, "practically follows the route traversed by the historic wilderness road known as the Chisholm Trail." The Postal Highway ("among the first organized highway associations in the State of Oklahoma") went from Fort Smith, Arkansas to Oklahoma City and then to Yukon, El Reno, Calumet, Geary, Bridgeport, Hydro, Weatherford, Clinton, Foss, Canute, Elk City, Sayre, Erick and Texola. The T-K-O Road (Highway No. 4), named for Texas, Kansas, and Oklahoma, connected Wichita and Fort Worth, and was created by an association "organized in Ardmore, Oklahoma, in the early part of 1922." The Lee and Bankhead Highway (Number 5) skimmed along the Texas border north of the Red River and represented part of a road that reached from New York to San Francisco. According to the highway brochure, the Lee and Bankhead Associations "are among the pioneers in highway organizations of the United States." Highway No. 6, the Jefferson Road, ran north-south along the eastern third of the state. Highway No. 7, the K.C., Ft. Scott, and Tulsa Short Line, obviously followed the railroad of the same name reaching into Oklahoma from Kansas through Picher to Cardin, to Commerce, to Miami, Afton, Vinita, Chelsea, Claremore, Catoosa, Tulsa, Sapulpa, Kelleyville, Bristow, Depew, Stroud, Davenport, Chandler, Wellston, Luther, Arcadia, Edmond, and Oklahoma City and then southwest to Altus and thence straight west to Texas. Substantial portions of this road were also known as the Ozark Trail, and probably had the most active organization of any. "The White River Trail" Highway No. 11, coursed along the northern edge of the state, from Siloam Springs, Arkansas, to Ponca City and then west even into and through the panhandle, and into New Mexico.

⁷ "Oklahoma Offers Many Picturesque Views to the Traveler," printed brochure in "Maps and Early Travel Guides" file, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Collections, Route 66 files, box 4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 8

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

It was a lattice-work of roads, often thin and delicate, sometimes boggy and muddy to the point of being impassable, that in retrospect by simply looking at the map could be taken as a grid of commerce, but that would be to misread the graphics. The roads were there, but those roads were tenuous lines drawn between places, sometimes indicating trails that people followed, more often by horse and wagon than by automobile or truck, when traveling short distances to market. Bridges were sparse and, when available, primitive. The roadbed was appropriate to both the volume and the nature of the traffic. The poetry of the names of the roads and of the towns they connected is a slow cadence that matched the rhythm of social interaction and commerce between the villages along the various paths, and a future generation would take some of the names and put them to music with an upbeat tempo far removed from 1925. To refer to these roads as highways was technically true since any thoroughfare that connected towns was a highway regardless of means and speed. Informative as it remains, the Highway Commission document describing the road system failed to tally the miles of road paved, or in gravel, but it is clear that pavement was not to be assumed. Another Highway Commission report announced, "All State Highways are under patrol maintenance by the State Highway Department. This is true, not only of improved highways, but includes all dirt roads that are a part of the State Highway System, but as yet unimproved."⁸ The highway commission report for the following year—1926—counted the miles. More than three thousand miles of official state routes were dirt or "improved dirt," two thousand of them lacking any such "improvement." Nine hundred seventy-five miles were gravel. Fewer than 640 miles of roads—less than twelve percent of the total 5500 miles—were concrete, asphalt on concrete, or rock asphalt on concrete.⁹ (Literally, the state had more miles of railroad than it did of roads, even dirt roads, in the state system.¹⁰) As for the patrolman, this referred not to an officer of the law traveling the

⁸ "State Patrol and Maintenance," unpagged section in untitled brochure "Oklahoma Offers Many Picturesque Views to the Traveler" in file, "Maps and Early Travel Guides," Route 66 files, Box 4, Oklahoma Historical Society.

⁹ Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1925 to 1926 inclusive* (Oklahoma City: 1927), 168.

¹⁰ The Oklahoma Agriculture Department, in a brochure distributed in 1926 to attract farmers to the state, noted that "Oklahoma is traversed in every direction and through every county by more than 6,000 miles of railroads. A night's ride carries one from Oklahoma to St. Louis on the north, or to the Gulf on the south. There is corresponding fast freight service to these and other big markets." It also went on to acknowledge about

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 9

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

roads to apprehend speeders or reckless drivers, but to the maintenance of the roads:

The organization of the department is simple and direct. There is a minimum of "overhead." The basis of our system is the patrolman. All the state highways are divided into sections or patrols. These sections vary in length from seven miles to twelve and fourteen miles each according to the type of road, the nature of the soil, extent or volume of traffic and the type of equipment used. On all dirt roads and nearly all gravel roads the patrolman employed furnishes four horses, a wagon and some small tools such as shovels, picks, etc. He is paid on a daily basis and works every day in the year except Sundays. On paved roads and on some gravel roads the patrols are lengthened to from twenty to thirty miles each and the patrolman is furnished a light inexpensive truck and given two helpers. As nearly all the maintenance on paved roads is hand work we have dispensed with steady team hire.¹¹

The road system of the state, not to mention the condition of the lesser roads weaving among the townships and enabling farmers to reach the county seat, not only revealed the isolation and distance of people from each other, at least in commercial transactions, but often even reinforced that isolation and separation. That was to change, and in Oklahoma the motive force for change came less from the automobile industry and the road building industry, at least initially, than it did from merchants who sought greater commerce for their businesses and their communities.

The commercial necessity of an improved highway system, in fact, motivated some of the individuals and organizations who had come together to promote those named roads. One such individual was Cyrus M. Avery of Tulsa. Avery had been active in real estate, in oil development, in farming, and in promoting commerce, especially that associated with road travel, and had built in 1919 The Old English Inn and Service

roads, though, as optimistically as possible, that "The state is building highways to connect the larger markets and county seat towns just as other states are doing." T. M. Jeffords, *Oklahoma; Its Unparalleled Growth, The Present Status and the Basis for Future Development* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture, [1927]), page 11 of the unpaginated brochure.

¹¹ Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1925 to 1926 inclusive*, 167.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 10

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

Station next to his farm on the far reaches of Tulsa's eastern outskirts, later to have a tourist camp with twenty-five cabins, a restaurant, and a service station—a huge and imposing operation for its time.¹² But his vision of the future impelled him into public activity to promote the construction of more and better roads. Thus around 1916 – 1917, according to Susan Croce Kelly, Avery

was a director of a local booster organization known as the Tulsa Commercial Club and a director of the Tulsa Automobile Club, among other civic endeavors. He worked closely with a new Road Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, which was organized to raise separate funds to support the building and maintaining of roads in eastern Oklahoma. Avery and his Chamber of Commerce associates were instrumental in the formation of Coin Harvey's Ozark Trails Association, which encouraged the maintaining and marking of a highway from Springfield, Missouri, through Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to Amarillo, Texas.¹³

About the same time that he promoted the Ozark Trails Association and Road, he also “helped organize” the Albert Pike Association with its Colorado destination. Moreover, he was able to attract the Ozark Trails Association to Tulsa for its annual meeting in 1919 and was elected vice president.¹⁴ An indefatigable organizer and promoter and entrepreneur, Avery served not only on local committees, but in 1921 was elected President of the Associated Highways of America, a confederation of highway organizations.¹⁵ In 1924 Avery was named to the Oklahoma Highway Commission, and soon became chairman. Moreover, in 1925, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Howard Gore appointed Avery to serve on a joint board associated with the Agriculture Department's Bureau of Public Roads to, as Avery said, “lay out and designate an interstate highway

¹² Susan Croce Kelly, and Quinta Scott, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 36.

¹³ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People*, 11-12.

¹⁴ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People*, 7, 12.

¹⁵ Ruth Sigler Avery, “Cyrus Stevens Avery,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XLV (Spring 1967), 87.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 11

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

system for all of the United States.” Subsequently Avery chaired the committee of five to number the roads so designated.¹⁶

The story of the designation of Route 66 is a familiar story, although its details are sometimes contested. The Department of Agriculture responded to pressures especially from the American Association of State Highway Officials for the development of a national network of roads by appointing a joint board to draw a map with such a network on it. Aside from giving certain roads that would be included in this system an advantage as federal interstate highways, this system would also, hopefully, put an end to the dilution of highway projects caused by each and every association promoting its own road. Much hinged on the outcome of the deliberations of this board, and finally they produced a map charting the arterial highways of the nation for the next generation. As a member of that board, Cyrus Avery saw that a road from Chicago to Los Angeles, making a diagonal across Illinois and Missouri and traversing the length of Oklahoma from northeast to southwest, then heading generally west through Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, was one of the roads. This road in Oklahoma was made up generally of the Ozark Trails from Baxter Springs to Oklahoma City and the Postal Highway from Oklahoma City west. When Avery chaired the group numbering the roads the challenges and politics were substantial and he encountered opposition because his own pet road went diagonally through a part of the country, not actually east-west, and certainly not north-south. Thus his proposal that the Oklahoma road be numbered 60 was rejected and an alternative was required. Ultimately the number 66 was settled upon and the road was born in October, 1926 and endorsed by the Oklahoma Highway Commission the next month.¹⁷

So the villages and towns and cities along this narrow corridor would be now connected not just by ambitious private organizations proclaiming a road and encouraging local governments to maintain it, but by a road sponsored by the United

¹⁶ Jim Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66* (Arcadia, Oklahoma: Ghost Town Press, 2001), 2; Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1925 to 1926 inclusive*, 8.

¹⁷ See especially Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 13-17, but also Richard F. Weingroff, “From Names to Numbers: The Origins of the U.S. Numbered Highway System,” *AASHTO Quarterly*, Spring 1997, and the section reprinted as “From Sixty to Sixty-Six: How and Why US Route 66 Got its Number,” at <http://www.us-highways.com/60to66.htm>.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 12

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

States government, connected to commercial and population centers in other states along the same traffic route, and also by a vision of the future that promised to end the isolation, the loneliness, the distance from markets, the lack of access to social opportunity, and a vision that promised to bring people closer together.

National Forces and Local Social Change in the 1920s and early 1930s

The official designation of Route 66 did not automatically create a modern highway. In November 1927, a year after the creation of Route 66, one state newspaper that offered weekly reports on the conditions of roads, described its condition thus:

Entering the state at Miami on U.S. highway No. 66, you have gravel or pavement to the town of Bristow, passing through Afton, Vinita, Claremore, Tulsa, Sapulpa, and intermediate points. Traffic to Oklahoma City should route from Tulsa to Oilton over state highway No. 1, as the highway from Bristow to Arcadia is under construction and very rough. From Oilton, highway 11 should be followed through Drumright, Cushing and Guthrie. The road from Drumright to Guthrie is dirt and is rough, much of it being under construction. The road from Tulsa to Bristow is good. Paved through Oklahoma City to Yukon in Canadian County; from El Reno, Calumet, Geary, Bridgeport, Weatherford, Clinton, Elk City, Sayre, Erick, Texola and west to Amarillo well-maintained dirt road. There is a ten mile detour between Yukon and El Reno, and some sand.¹⁸

Route 66 had miles to go before it could be objectively regarded as a significant highway.

What was not manifest in reality, however, was abundant in the vision for the future. That vision can be seen in many ways, including in the discussion surrounding the prospects of highways and their changes. One writer in an Oklahoma City newspaper described the future a few months before the creation of Route 66, as he remarked on how much had been accomplished in road construction: "The end is not yet—not by

¹⁸ *Daily Oklahoman*, November 6, 1927.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 13

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

many more miles of highway, the last more perfect than its predecessor—not by tens of thousands of miles of gleaming roads which will, in the not distant future, pierce hamlets now sleeping beside dust-laden, rut-ridden lanes, will push through mountain passes now somnolent, and echoing only the tumble of stream or the hoot of owl, will connect fertile lands with prosperous markets, will tie the whole of the nation in one strong and indissoluble chain of transportation facilities.”¹⁹ It was a grand future of society that seemed at hand.

The forces associated with the change grew apace and received nurturing from a new association that resembled the old road clubs that promoted travel. The Route 66 Association sprang into being almost from the start. In 1927 promoters of the highway—businesspeople along the road—convened in much the same spirit as their predecessors with the Ozark Trails Association and other road booster organizations and created the new body. Indeed, the first president of the Route 66 Association was none other than Cyrus Avery himself, and the headquarters for the group was located with Avery in Tulsa. But this was not just the alter ego of the Ozark Trails or any other group. The members of the Route 66 Association saw themselves on a grander mission than the earlier clubs which, in most cases, had sought to drum up support in the various communities for the road. At its first meeting Avery persuaded the group to call the road “The Main Street of America,” a name that merged the positive connotations of small town life with national bonds and linkages, truly an inspired motto that glossed over the potential to divide and the possible losses entailed with the new highway with a veneer of unity that suggested the potential for holding onto small town values and identities at the same time as claiming the advantages of national commerce.²⁰

In 1928, the organization raised the profile of the new road when it sponsored the idea of a business promoter—some would say huckster—for a road race from Los Angeles to New York, by way of Route 66 to Chicago. But this road race would, perhaps appropriately given the condition of the roads, be a footrace, not automobile race. More than two hundred runners entered the race and it did indeed garner national attention and publicity. Moreover, the winner of the race was nineteen-year old Andy Payne from Foyil, Oklahoma, a village through which Route 66 now passed. Payne’s victory may

¹⁹ William Ullman, “Enormous Roads Program Still Is Ahead of Country: Highways Are Injecting Life into America,” *Daily Oklahoman*, August 22, 1926.

²⁰ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 24; Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 14

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

have augured well for the road, for the state, and for the village, given the symbolism of the new developments associated with the race and the road, but this would also be the last such race.²¹ The future of the road would be shaped more by fundamental social pressures rather than by planned events like the great footrace.

One part of that future was the increased opportunity for travel, albeit an opportunity still largely restricted to those people who could afford the automobile and had the time and financial resources to embark upon such an adventure. Even as the automobile came within reach of more people in the 1920s, the tourist was the person, in the discreet words of historian Earl Pomeroy, who "continued to be (as he continued to be still later) of more than average wealth and income."²² Their numbers, however, increased, and sometimes increased dramatically. At a point one mile east of Chelsea, for instance, the official census of traffic (a daily average taken at multiple times in the fall) showed an increase from 547 vehicles in 1926 to 1338 in 1930; a point a mile north of the capitol in Oklahoma City saw an increase in the same period from 3362 to 7365; traffic over the South Canadian bridge at Bridgeport climbed from 428 to 1072; and at the Texas border, traffic went from 384 vehicles to 849 in that four year period. Equally important is the percentage of "foreign traffic" recorded, percentages that hovered above ten percent for the metropolitan areas but over twenty, and even thirty, percent in the smaller villages where local traffic was minimal.²³

This increased traffic, more importantly, generated new institutions and new patterns of relationships. One clear need was simply for a place to stay for the night, and the short distances traveled at a time underscored that need. When the usual daily range of travel nationally was about 200 miles in 1925 and 250 in 1930, the figure was lower for Oklahoma where less than a fourth of Route 66 was paved. The national response to that need was the auto camp. Indeed, the tourists were known more often as "auto-

²¹ See the brief summary of this race in Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 45-48.

²² Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 129.

²³ Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1919-1930 Inclusive*, (Oklahoma City, 1930), 165-166. Of course near state borders, the "foreign" traffic increased disproportionately, even above fifty percent, because of the nearby, but out-of-state, traffic.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 15

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

campers" than as anything else, although they also became known as well as "tin can tourists." Writer James Agee noted that "At night you could, in say 1922, see their campfires for miles, a flickering fringe to the trunk roads which led out of the Middle West into California, down into Florida."²⁴ In that year, even before the advent of Route 66 as a formal construct, one national map showed forty-five such auto-camps in Oklahoma.²⁵ And they increased in number. These campgrounds often had free facilities—generally fireplaces, some form of lighting, sometimes showers, various degrees of sanitary facilities, and, of course a place to pitch a tent.

Documentation of such campgrounds is understandably scant, but it is clear that they existed in Oklahoma along Route 66. La-Vere Shonefelt Anderson reported in *The Tulsa World* in 1932 that "although the city of Tulsa owns no big auto camp, a number of Oklahoma towns do conduct municipal free camps and they report that scarcely a night during the summer but finds the camps filled to capacity with tourists."²⁶ In one such town along Route 66 in western Oklahoma, according to Kent Ruth, "The local Geary Businessmen's Club had even built a free campground for travelers who came through that part of the state."²⁷ The contours of those camps varied from town to town. Again, the general description of Oklahoma's camps offered by La-Vere Shonefelt Anderson in the *Tulsa World*:

These camps vary widely; many offer free water, lights, shower baths and even a social hall. Cities for a night, they extend hospitality to cars bearing the licenses of as many as 30 different states in one evening. In return for their welcome, the occupants of these cars buy gasoline, tires, auto repairs, food, sometimes clothes, drugs, and numerous other commodities before they travel on the next morning . . . Other camps,

²⁴ [James Agee], "The Great American Roadside," *Fortune*, 10 (September 1934), 56.

²⁵ "Municipal Auto Camps," *Bartlesville Morning Examiner*, July 2, 1922. The map only indicated the total number in the state and did not indicate their distribution within Oklahoma.

²⁶ La-Vere Shoenfelt Anderson, "'Tin-Can Tourists' Celebrate Their Season," *Tulsa Daily World*, July 31, 1932.

²⁷ Kent Ruth, quoted in Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 28.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 16

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

less pretentious, play hosts to smaller groups, but perhaps offer them, in lieu of showers and social hall, an area of wooded ground and a small stream of water. Some times in small towns, the transient population in these gypsy communities equals or surpasses the number of permanent residents.²⁸

The impetus behind the free camp is not hard to find. As Agee said, "The automobile camp became a cash crop."²⁹ La-Vere Shonefelt Anderson noticed that in the Oklahoma camps "farmers go through camps with eggs, butter, milk and vegetables. The campers buy, for they must eat. It is a show that seems likely to have along run."³⁰ Thus it is no surprise that in Geary, in addition to the free camp, "Everybody had to work on the road," and if businesspeople could not work, they hired high schoolers to take their place.³¹ Other businesspeople in other locales pursued a more direct route to harvesting this cash crop of automobile travelers. Instead of selling them goods, they would rent them the space and the facilities for spending the night. Anderson described the phenomenon this way: "In addition to municipally owned camps, practically every Oklahoma town has what is known as 'pay camps' where for a small sum, generally 25 or 50 cents a night, tourists may find camping facilities and accommodations. Tulsa has a number of such camps, all widely used during the summer months."³² One of those, of course, was the camp that belonged to Cyrus Avery, a camp that had cabins instead of camp sites, but had a common cooking facility; in this transitional period, Avery's "cabin camp" required customers to furnish their own linens as well as their own utensils.³³

²⁸ Anderson, "'Tin-Can Tourists' Celebrate Their Season."

²⁹ [Agee], "The Great American Roadside," 56.

³⁰ Anderson, "'Tin-Can Tourists' Celebrate Their Season."

³¹ Kent Ruth, quoted in Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 28.

³² Anderson, "'Tin-Can Tourists' Celebrate Their Season."

³³ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 36. See also the discussion in John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 15: "Private entrepreneurs saw an opportunity to profit by upgrading facilities, often through the provisioning of rental cabins, and so the cabin court was born."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 17

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

Some, like the W. E. Auto Camp at the north edge of Sapulpa, were attracted to the new tourist traffic a year after its designation, and opened up in 1927 as a cabin camp with twenty-five cabins (and adjacent stalls for cars), a restaurant, and a service station.³⁴ The emergence of new businesses made it clear that change was in the air even at this early point in the history of Route 66.

And the organization launched a coordinated campaign to promote the paving of the road, an aspect that would make the road that much more attractive, and also to promote the use of the road. They distributed literature encouraging travel on the road, making the road more widely known, and fostering a national image for the highway. In 1932, hardly a propitious time to encourage people to spend their money on vacations, the association placed its first national advertisement in the *Saturday Evening Post*, urging people to use it to travel to Los Angeles to the Olympic games. Within a week, according to Susan Croce Kelly, the Tulsa office received more than seven hundred coupons from people seeking more information about the Main Street of America.³⁵ So more people climbed into their cars and took off on this road that was becoming a self-conscious legend even in its early years.

All along the road, as traffic increased, so too did business. That, after all, had been part of the forecast offered by promoters of Route 66. Much more adapted to the new mobility of travelers and requiring less formal and public interaction with hotel staff, tent camps and cabin camps on the outskirts of towns increased while hotels in the business centers declined. The store that had sold gasoline on the side was replaced by a new filling station where customers purchased gasoline for their cars as the primary business activity, and then that activity became modified, and enhanced, as the filling station became a service station, a place where repairs and maintenance and the purchase of tires, batteries, and accessories became a significant portion of the business. And the restaurants sometimes became cafes, places where short orders were prepared, quick meals for people on the move. Moreover, automobile dealerships took their place alongside the other new retail establishments. And these businesses multiplied. The small towns and the larger cities alike began to throb with a new rhythm of commerce. The irony was that the more business they took in, the more they generated. The easier it

³⁴ James W. Hubbard, "Sapulpa's First Motel," *Sapulpa Herald*, October 8, 1992.

³⁵ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 36.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 18

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

was to travel, the more people traveled; the more that people traveled, the more businesses there were to cater to their needs. All this was enhanced by the multiplication of automobiles on the roads in absolute numbers in the 1920s. It was as if a new dynamic, a new force, had been unleashed in the hinterland, and that force began to transform the communities along the road.

There was, however, another side to this social transformation. If one were to talk with the hotel operators or the livery stable owners, surely a different perspective on the changes abroad would have been articulated. From its beginnings, the new road system generated new social and economic relationships that replaced old patterns. Access to markets previously beyond reach meant that the local trading center declined and the farmer carried goods increasingly to the more distant markets. In 1929, Jennings J. Rhyne, a sociology professor at the University of Oklahoma, noticed the change in the Oklahoma countryside:

Everywhere there is evidence of the lessening importance of the village trading center in the economic and social life of the farmer. Formerly when roads were few and very poor and the farmer had to depend upon the wagon and mules to transport his commodities and farm products, it was distinctly to his advantage to do his marketing at the closest point available. Thus the village trading center which acted as a middle man in the transport of good [sic] to larger centers assumed an importance unquestioned by the rural farmer. To-day it has to a large extent lost that importance. The farmer comes to see the advantage of transporting his goods to a larger trading center and one more adequately equipped for handling goods. This transition from village trading center to the county seat or another larger and nearby town or city has been facilitated by improved road systems which give rise to the substitution of cars and trucks for the wagon and which also facilitates transportation by wagon when that method is used.³⁶

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

³⁶ Jennings J. Rhyne, *Social and Community Problems of Oklahoma* (Guthrie: Co-operative Publishing Co., 1929), 76-77.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 19

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

Rhyne:

There is no doubt that the country church is losing membership to the town and city church through the advent of the good roads and the automobile. . . . It is no longer necessary for the farmer to go to a church to hear a sermon. He can sit comfortably in his home and hear over his radio a sermon of a noted divine in a distant city which is far better prepared and more capably delivered than that being preached by the pastor at the little neighborhood church. . . . The increased mobility of rural population and the consequent tendency toward the breakdown of neighborhood and community life is having a telling effect on the country church. Increased facilities for transportation along with the desire to travel is taking many a farmer away from the church on Sunday who formerly went to church dutifully.³⁷

For better or worse, the advent of the new mobility not only presented new opportunities and possibilities, opened new doors, and broadened the distances by which people might travel in the course of making their living and healing their souls, but it also more fundamentally restructured the social relationships of the village and countryside. Moreover, those social relationships would continue to be restructured by the forces unleashed by that mobility.

Indeed, one other change indicated the subtlety of the process. People would also, by virtue of Route 66 and other roads, roam farther and farther seeking employment, not just taking the fruits of their labor to market, but their labor itself to market. And the rise of a second-hand market in automobiles contributed dramatically to what is often viewed as the democratization of the travel experience; even people down on their luck were drawing upon the automobile to meet their needs. The automobile, at the beginning of the decade largely the province of the well to do, by the end of the 1920s was available to many users.

One aspect of that change had to do with the institutions alongside the road. A class division separated the different people using the highway and its facilities. By simply charging a fee, a division widened. In 1928, after noting the dramatic increase in tourist camps in the Tulsa area in 1927 and 1928, the *Tulsa World* commented that

³⁷ Rhyne, *Social and Community Problems of Oklahoma*, 99.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 20

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

One feature of the new tourist camp is the almost entire absence of what is known as the auto tramp. This species is very numerous, especially on east and west routes. The tramp outfit consists of a dilapidated car and a large family. Generally the tramp family has left whatever home it had and has no other definitely in view. The charges are supposed to bar them from camps, and every camp owner will tell you he has nothing but the very best customers. The tramp element usually camps along streams and not near the established camps. . . . The only free grounds worth while are those donated to all comers by the filling station men.³⁸

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

Those who could afford the more comfortable quarters often moved up and stayed in cabins while those unable to do so continued to camp. As James Agee wrote in 1935, it was not just the person seeking employment who was kept out of the pricier facilities, but the employed working class families as well: "for already, today, the cabin camp is a luxury to the workman, and every bit good enough for the lower middle class."³⁹ In addition, a hidden point is unmistakable: the lodging facilities of an earlier time were waning, were being replaced by the new camp attracting people traveling in their cars. The hotels, located downtown, requiring sometimes leaving the highway, requiring more time to load and unload, requiring greater public contact between the traveler and the hotel staff, proved inappropriate to the new generation of travelers—whether comfortable middle class families on vacation, the traveling peddler with a suitcase full of wares, or people facing hard times who sought better opportunities elsewhere—and so they faded in the wake of exhaust fumes of the increasing numbers of automobiles on the roads.

The emergent cabin camp along Route 66 came about easily enough. Requiring minimal capital outlay, people who operated a store or service station could easily enhance their business by building a row of cabins for travelers to use. Or a farmer might build some cabins on land adjacent to the highway. Marshall Smith, writing in the *Tulsa World* in 1928 estimated that the cost to construct a cabin was \$250, not including the

³⁸ Marshall L. Smith, "Tourist Parks Spreading Fast," *Tulsa Daily World*, July 22, 1928.

³⁹ [Agee], "The Great American Roadside," 61.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 21

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

land.⁴⁰ So the number of tourist camps multiplied in the coming years and they attracted more and more traffic to the main highways, with U.S. 66 the prime example. These were the traditional "mom and pop" type operations, businesses run by a family where everybody in the family participated, though not necessarily in tasks and time of equal burdens.

The communities that benefited materially from this increased commerce, from the trade in fuel, food, and lodging and other goods stimulated by this traffic, included all of those served by the route. But at the same time that the road generated changes often associated with commercial progress, even if they did disrupt old relationships, the dependence on the traffic revealed a less obvious element of the new order. The traffic brought pavement and the pavement brought more traffic. But as state and federal officials moved to pave the road, they also changed its course. The road had often followed the section lines, sometimes following them straight as an arrow for mile after mile, but at other times the road winded and curved sharply at the section corners, zigzagging across the countryside. The highway engineers, with their penchant for wider roads and smoother curves and straighter lines, saw those deviations as impediments to travel and the small towns that the jogs and bends served began to be left behind. For them, business not only did not increase, but it followed the road elsewhere. In 1927, Route 66 wove its way through the small town of Wellston, between Chandler and Edmond, and in fact that road from Chandler had been paved in asphalt in 1928. Within just a few years, however, the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads required the road to take a more direct path, bypassing the community by over a mile and in 1933 Wellston was no longer on Route 66 and its business prospects suffered accordingly. As Jim Ross, chronicler of Route 66 alignments, notes, Wellston "became the first Oklahoma town removed from mainline traffic by a significant distance."⁴¹ It would not be the last.

A similar process was at work in the western section of Route 66. The original alignment had taken travelers north, after traveling west from El Reno, on a loop that passed through the community of Calumet, brushed the edge of Geary, and then turned south to cross the Canadian River at the town of Bridgeport before heading west again. In 1933 a new bridge made possible a bypass of the entire loop and the Route 66 traffic shifted away from the towns. While Geary and Calumet survived with the aid of north-south traffic along other routes, Bridgeport, a town that was founded in 1901 and grew to

⁴⁰ Smith, "Tourist Parks Spreading Fast."

⁴¹ Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 100-103.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 22

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

support multiple newspapers and banks, a town that, as Jim Ross notes, “progressed steadily and was the county’s premiere town until the proliferation of motor cars caused its demise,” was hit hard and the town withered to the point that some would refer to it before long as a ghost town. As Ross further observes, “ironically, the highway that brought so much promise to the little town on the Canadian was destined to be the cause of its starvation just seven years later.”⁴² The presence of Route 66 in a community could generate commerce, but the other side of that coin was that once the highway served a town, its removal could be more devastating than if it had never come through.

Dust Bowl, Depression, Government Change, and Route 66

The hard times that engulfed the small towns bypassed by the road were already familiar features in Oklahoma before the depression set in. Indeed, since around 1923 or 1924, agriculture in the nation, and especially in the rural areas of Oklahoma, which is to say all of Oklahoma except for a few urban concentrations, a downward spiral in crop prices intersected with an upward spiral in costs. The cost of loans taken out in more prosperous years when expansion seemed not only opportune but essential, the cost of machinery to work the larger holdings—these were innocent enough costs when incurred but now they were costs that had to be paid in times where income actually declined. The combination of increased costs and diminished income worked powerfully against the tillers of the soil who worked the land of others or who owned small parcels. Those small parcels were planted now in single crops for the market rather than in diversified patches for subsistence, and so the farmers were compressed in a vise of economic pressures that pushed them elsewhere seeking opportunities not just for a brighter future, but for a future in which they and their families survived intact. To these people, Route 66 beckoned in ways vastly different from what the promoters had in mind.

The contours of migration from the land include the dynamics of weather and climate, an unabated pattern of soil erosion, the matrix of class and property, and the hope of better circumstances elsewhere. The hopes focused on either jobs in the city or jobs in California, and sometimes one then the other, both within reach thanks to the

⁴² Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 135-150; Hinton Quest Club, “History of Bridgeport Oklahoma,” typescript in file, “Bridgeport and Hydro,” Route 66 files, box 3, Oklahoma Historical Society.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 23

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

automobile and the new avenue of commerce. The agricultural depression that had settled in after 1923 started the wheels of migration moving. The families who found themselves homeless and out of work used the same roads and descended upon the same tourist camps that attracted the travelers on vacation, sometimes using horse and wagon, sometimes using automobile. They were not always welcomed. In 1927 the *Daily Oklahoman*, in Oklahoma City, expressed its disgust with this new feature of the state's highways:

... The friendless, neighborless, businessless wagoneers is a lone band; one impoverished, unequipped, usually incompetent, man standing against the whole world. Such property as he owns, his creaky wagon with the tarpaper and lath-covered shack aboard, his half starved, ratty horses and his ignorant, unprivileged family, follows daily in his wake and all are outcasts, unknowns.

The tourists on any highway will run across these families and they will usually come to their notice when they have pulled into a blackjack fastness to camp for the night There the wagon stands, with a group of scraggly children playing around it, the horses wandering unhobbled through the copse and man and wife bent over a struggling campfire in which there are a half-dozen rusted, blackened, battered cooking pans and kettles.

The man began as a renter, a cropper, moving every season. Indolent, wasteful, slothful and careless, he agreed, either by written or parol contract, to farm a plot of ground for a season and to share with the owner the usufructs It was too wet in the spring for him to plow, too windy to cultivate, too hot to chop cotton. Consequently, most of his effort was devoted to a desultory sort of plowing and planting and then the forces of nature were called upon to do the rest.⁴³

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

⁴³ "Summer Brings 'Wagoneers,'" *Daily Oklahoman*, June 5, 1927.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 24

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

Within five years of this account, however, two factors had changed. One was that there were far more of these itinerants on the road and in the campsites. There may even have been enough of them in the land to suggest that not all found their hardship as a result of individual character flaws that suddenly surfaced. The other circumstance was that increasingly the horse and wagon was being replaced by a jalopy. In 1932 one correspondent described the uses of the tourist camps for finding work in urban centers like Tulsa with reference to photographs in the newspaper:

Center, above, is a family on the move. The trusty "tin-lizzie" is doing double duty with a trailer pulling the household effects of the group along behind "This is the life," say the children who take life easy under the shade of trees while father and mother seek work.

Below is another "camp tent" with the occupant and her son at the doorway of their home. At the lower right is another tourist's family. This man and his wife have camped near Tulsa for several weeks in search of work and during that time their automobile has been home.⁴⁴

A migration of sorts was underway. Increasingly, however, as it became evident that the opportunities in the city were as limited as on the farm, more and more of the seekers ventured onto the new highways, lured sometimes by tales and solicitations encouraging workers to find their paradise in the fields of California. The Woody Guthrie song expressed it poignantly: "We loaded our jalopies and piled our families in, / We rattled down the highway to never come back again." The stories are many of people who joined a growing migration to California, people like Hazel Johns of Oklahoma City, who described how she and her husband and two-year old son traveled Route 66 in 1935 to pick fruit in California. At Needles, California, she heard the expression, new to her, "Here come the Okies." Carrying the stigma of depression like a banner, they likewise did not find the paradise they hoped for: "Our wages on the lemon ranch . . . were 39 cents an hour for my husband and 33 cents for women."⁴⁵ Thousands upon thousands joined in this migration. Carey McWilliams estimated more than a hundred thousand from Oklahoma migrated to California in the second half of the decade alone, and noted

⁴⁴ Anderson, "Tin-Can Tourists' Celebrate Their Season."

⁴⁵ Max J. Nichols, "Stories, Legends of Route 66 Recalled," *Chickasha Daily Express*, December 23, 1992.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 25

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

the irony for Oklahoma where, shortly before, the territory and state with land runs and farms to be settled had represented the object of a dream, a place for a new start, a place to journey to and give up old lives and expectations: "Prior to 1935 Oklahoma was an area of population absorption; since then it has become an area of dispersion."⁴⁶ Historian Donald Worster includes those who left Oklahoma for contiguous states, such as Texas, and counted 309,000 Oklahomans departing between 1935 and 1940.⁴⁷

Nor were all these people booted off the land farmers and their families. The people who left Oklahoma on Route 66 included people from all walks of life, at least from all walks where the path had become impossible to follow. Again, Carey McWilliams reported:

The farm families, however, are by no means the only refugees who have taken to the road. The United Provident Association in Oklahoma City is the agency through which verification of residence of former Oklahomans is effected by welfare organizations outside the state. In 1940, the association analyzed 1000 such requests, 844 of which came, incidentally, from California. Farmers were the largest single group involved, with day laborers and WPA workers constituting the next largest groups. But it is interesting to note the wide variety of occupations represented in this group of former residents who had moved elsewhere. The list included butchers, barbers, bookkeepers, cab drivers, carpenters, cobblers, domestics, janitors, machinists, mechanics, miners, musicians, painters, policemen, printers, roustabouts, rug cleaners, salesmen, schoolteachers, truck drivers, waitresses—almost every imaginable occupation. The bulk of the exodus from Oklahoma has been, in fact, from the populous counties of the central part of the state. There are four areas from which the largest number of migrants have moved, namely, Oklahoma, Caddo, Muskogee, and Tulsa counties.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Carey McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land: Migrants and Migratory Labor in the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1942), 194, 196.

⁴⁷ Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 49.

⁴⁸ McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land*, 197.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 26

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

It is of more than casual note that Oklahoma County, Caddo County, and Tulsa County were each traversed by Route 66. The residents of Muskogee County, on the other hand, had to take another road thirty to fifty miles to Tulsa before they could join the Route 66 migration.

Route 66 was the main and best corridor to go to California, but it was by no means a one-way road. Photographer Dorothea Lange and her economist husband Paul Taylor published a book of photographs and essays about the migration called *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion*.⁴⁹ One photograph in that volume, dated June 6, 1938, and probably taken along Route 66 in the vicinity of El Reno, shows a man and family in their car with boxes tied to the sides and more gear on top, with the caption and quote from the subjects of the photograph: "Returning from California— 'People aren't friendly there like they are here, but they appreciate the cheap labor coming out. When there's a rush for work they're friendlier than at other times.'"⁵⁰ The next page showed a scene from Muskogee with the caption: "—Returned 'Whole families go to Los Angeles, Phoenix, Bakersfield. Half the people of this town and around here have gone out there.' —Said at the drug store Also many come back, like this family just home from California. Muskogee County, Oklahoma. August 10, 1938."⁵¹

Thus it was that Route 66 had become an American institution before John Steinbeck traveled the road through Oklahoma in 1937 doing research for his novel. And when Steinbeck described what he called "the mother road, the road of flight," and when he wrote that "66 is the path of a people in flight, refugees from dust and shrinking land, from the thunder of tractors and shrinking ownership, from the desert's slow northward invasion, from the floods that bring no richness to the land and steal what little richness is there," and when he followed the tracks of the Okie migrants to their roots, "From all these the people are in flight, and they come into 66 from the tributary side roads, from

⁴⁹ Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor, *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, Inc., 1939; new edition, Paris: Jean Michel Place, 1999).

⁵⁰ Lange and Taylor, *An American Exodus*, 60.

⁵¹ Lange and Taylor, *An American Exodus*, 61.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 27

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

the wagon tracks and the rutted country roads,"⁵² he was both uncovering a sociological fact, although there were many who denied that fact, and also becoming the poet of the migration, the troubadour of the downtrodden making the road, making Route 66 their own, their only possession. And indeed, with the help of John Steinbeck, Route 66 came to be not only the possession of the dispossessed who followed its narrow ribbon across the land, but it came also to be the possession of the American people. It had been socially and culturally transformed from a concrete ribbon stretching across the state traveled by vehicles and served by commercial operations along the way. Route 66 had become a social institution itself, an institution that held both the capacity to change other parts of society and to reflect the deep convulsions and trends in society.

There were some who lacked funds even to join the migration, even as they reached for Route 66 and had it within sight if not within grasp. In the case of Oklahoma City, these people were gathered up and placed into a different kind of camp from the tourist camp, the infamous Elk Grove Camp. Located on the banks of the North Canadian River, this sixty-five acre "camp" provided a temporary home for those without a home, for people trying to find work and for people trying to find a way to find work. After 1931 the camp had a population of between 1500 and 2000 people who paid five dollars a week for a campsite.

Elk Grove is known far and wide among Oklahoma migrant families. If they lack funds or courage to start out on Highway #66, they know that they are likely to be moved into the camp. For most of them it is "dead end"—the last degradation. They know, too, that once they land in the camp, they are apt to stay there a long time. Further down the river is the segregated Negro shacktown known as "Sand Town."⁵³

There was, however, in the set of social forces that surround Route 66, another irony in the migration. The increased volume of traffic on the road actually made it possible for others to remain in Oklahoma, to stay and operate businesses along Route 66 and to offer their services to the migrant army motoring down the road. Susan Croce Kelly quotes Leon Little who operated a service station and restaurant at Hinton Junction on Route 66 in western Oklahoma. Little and his wife contemplated moving along with

⁵² John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: Viking Books, 1939; reprint, Bantam edition, 1966), 128.

⁵³ McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land*, 205.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 28

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

others: "We thought mighty hard about it, . . . but we were eating regular, and we had a stoop over our head, and the people that worked for us, they weren't drawing that much money, but they were about as well off as we were. We were all living, see?"⁵⁴ In a curious anomaly, all along Route 66, while farmers left the unproductive or foreclosed land behind, while factories closed their doors and cast their workers into the huge pool of landless unemployed, and while merchants in small towns dependent on local business went bankrupt too, all along Route 66 motels, hamburger stands, and gas stations seemed to increase in number and in size.

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

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

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

⁵⁴ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 62.

⁵⁵ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 68.

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

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

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 29

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

These tourist courts were not only inexpensive to construct, but were also cheap to operate, circumstances that made them prime for the locally-owned, individualistic "mom and pop" nature of the business. James Agee commented on the decentralized structure in the motel industry, "Low overhead is the very essence of the industry and there is little that centralized management could contribute besides capital of dubious value."⁵⁹ While one advantage of this structure was the "sweat equity" or "self-exploitation" it permitted, as family members worked the motels without wages, there were costs that cut deeply into that arrangement. Within the "mom and pop" organization, the burdens tended to fall more heavily on mom than pop. Again, Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers: "... women clearly provided the preponderant amount of labor for these family businesses."⁶⁰ Even when they hired help to work cleaning the rooms, that help tended to be female and it tended to be cheap. Summaries of recollections from these people include this one at the Oklahoma Historical Society: "Mildred McBee Esbind of El Reno remembers her mother cleaning rooms at the old Eagle Tourist Court for 50 cents a day. Mildred used to help her mother dust and fold towels."⁶¹

This is not to suggest that the businesses always flourished, for often, given the needs of the traffic along Route 66, money simply was not to be had. Lucille Hamons, who in the 1930s operated a service station and motel on Route 66 near Hydro, recalled that "I used to rent cabins to those heading west. A dollar and a half a night. Everyone was going to California to get jobs, and they were broke. And if they were hungry I'd feed 'em a little."⁶² She also noted that "I've kept people in the rooms that couldn't pay their room rent. They've sold me all kinds of things for gas—clothes, cars, everything."⁶³ At Dixieland, just west of Sapulpa on Route 66, it was not uncommon for the owners "to

⁵⁹ [Agee], "The Great American Roadside," 61.

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

⁶¹ Max J. Nichols, "Stories, Legends of Route 66 Recalled," *Chickasha Daily Express*, December 23, 1992.

⁶² Hamons, quoted in Craig Wilson, "A Ride down Route 66: Exploring Life at the Legendary Crossroads," *USA Today*, July 9, 1992.

⁶³ Hamons, quoted in Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 59.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 30

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

accept chickens and various produce instead of money in exchange for gasoline, oil, or other park services Many a traveler on old Route 66, 'down on his luck' received a free handout at Dixieland," relates one account of the depression years at the park. "No one was ever refused or turned away, if he needed help."⁶⁴ The social organization still retained enough of its personal interaction, merchants knowing that they were perhaps a few steps away from needing help or moving down the road themselves, that neighbors still helped neighbors, even if that neighbor was a stranger.

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

Cottages were increasingly arranged geometrically around a central open space, or court. The width of U-shaped courts was dependent on the depth of the lot and the extent of highway frontage. Cottages were usually arrayed as individual units with open spaces between the units. Attached garages were popular after 1930, and it was not uncommon to find cottage-garage combinations linked wall to wall to form continuous facades, the integrity of each building preserved in individual roof lines, since the units were usually freestanding The typical cottage court contained an office building that usually included private apartment space for the motel manager and his family. Another building might contain a coffee shop. As in the case of the cabin camps, public space was primarily outdoors. Space not given to parking was often landscaped to give motels a more gentrified aspect. Architecturally, cottages were made to look like little suburban houses in order to enhance their appeal for the middle-class tourist and the traveling businessman. Cottages were furnished like suburban houses, with rugs, dressing tables and bureaus, radios, and the like. Sometimes they were provided with steam heat from central heating

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 31

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

plants Motor courts were structured like cottage courts except that room units were totally integrated under single rooflines usually as a single building.⁶⁵

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

As with the motels, so too with the gas stations of the period. Indeed, the gas stations were transformed into service stations, businesses that provided much more than a full tank of gasoline. John Margolies captures the expansion accurately: "The overbuilding of gas stations in the 1920s was exceeded only by the building boom of the 1930s. There were 143,000 retail outlets for gas in 1929, 170,000 by 1933, and this number ballooned to a staggering 231,000 in 1940."⁶⁶ These stations, however, were commonly affiliated, either as owned or leased businesses, with the major petroleum companies; when they were independently owned and operated businesses, they still relied on jobbers to supply them products from the same petroleum companies. Thus in an effort to attract customers to their stations, the companies used three devices, all evident along Route 66 in Oklahoma: one was to expand into new territories, even sparsely settled areas where the traffic might justify new stations and where existing supply lines (trucks supplying other stations) could be utilized; another was to broaden

⁶⁵ Jakle, Sculle, Rogers, *Motel in America*, 41.

⁶⁶ John Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance: Glory Days of the Gas Station* (Boston: Bullfinch Press, 1993), 58.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 32

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

the service they provided; and the other was to generate an identity through increasingly standard construction. Oklahoma's small towns, especially those strung along Route 66, provided some companies a prime target, particularly those companies with refineries in the state. Thus, as Sculle and Jakle offer the intriguing observation that "Skelly, Sinclair, and Continental's Conoco brand . . . heavily favored low-volume small-town dealers."⁶⁷

Moreover, the new stations took on a more modern appearance. Company stations looked alike within the company framework and thus looked different from all the others. Phillips 66 built its brick cottage stations complete with chimney, like the excellent example that remains in downtown Chandler, as early as the late 1920s, and built more in the 1930s. Other companies followed suit, using standard designs for easier consumer identification. Often they developed in Oklahoma a Mission Revival aspect with stucco and parapets as part of a southwestern motif. More stations also took on, with their corporate sponsors, some of the features of the Art Deco or Streamline Moderne style with the image of movement and change and progress. Mid-Continent Oil established the first oblong box station with a new building that featured huge panels of glass and polished black vitrolite in 1931 along Route 66 in Sapulpa.⁶⁸ Texaco and Socony introduced its oblong box station with rounded corners on the office section in what Sculle and Jakle termed "thoroughly functional, and thoroughly bland in its functionality."⁶⁹ Although nationally the canopy was in decline, in the Southwest more and more stations had canopies over the pumps, and those pumps were increasingly the industry standard Tokheim automatic pumps.

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

The large integrated corporations moved to broaden product and service mixes. Service bays were added to gasoline stations to handle increased repair work. Office spaces were enlarged to accommodate the sale of accessories—tires, batteries, and accessories comprising the so-called

⁶⁷ Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 62.

⁶⁸ Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 149.

⁶⁹ Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 146.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 33

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

TBA line. Emphasis was placed on service and the term "gasoline station" gave way to "service station." Some corporations built large complexes, dubbed "super service stations" with large repair, lubricating, and washing floors tied to sales offices.⁷⁰

Those stations, moreover, employed more people to provide these services, sometimes picking up on the tradition that had been observed locally. For example Marland Oil Company, an independent oil company based in Ponca City, ran the following advertisement:

No! Not a convention—just Regular Marland Service Here they come . . . one, two, three . . . sometimes four Marland Men. One is putting in water, another air and another wiping the dirt and grime from your windshield. Seems like you hardly had time to come to a full stop . . . in goes your gasoline and oil and before you can realize it you are waved a cheery good bye and asked to come again. Really nothing unusually about it after all . . . it is just regular Marland service rendered by Marland Men who realize the importance of your time and are glad to save you every moment possible. If you like this kind of service and like super quality motor products, always turn in at the sign of the Red Triangle.⁷¹

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

Friendly Service is Not "Out of Date"

It may be "modern" to render only the service that is absolutely necessary, but Conoco thinks otherwise. We believe that a Service Station should live up to its title, wholeheartedly. Of course, you go to a service station

⁷⁰ Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 66.

⁷¹ Undated newspaper advertisement clipping in "Gas / Fuel Companies," Route 66 files, box 4, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Collections.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 34

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

primarily for oil and gasoline, but isn't it pleasing . . . and fitting . . . to have your windshield cleaned, the radiator filled, the tires checked, without having to ask? Isn't it satisfying, too, to know that the service station affords clean, adequate rest-room accommodations; that the service men will check parcels for you, give you dependable road information and maps, and inform you fully concerning local hotels, camps and sports if you are traveling? All these free services and many more are standard at Conoco stations. Conoco men do these things in a friendly, courteous manner. They are chosen because of their willingness to serve you . . . and trained to render their service expertly. Whenever you want gasoline, motor oil . . . or service . . . drive to the nearest Conoco station. It's easily identified by the sign of the Conoco Red Triangle.

Every Conoco station is a branch of the Conoco travel bureau . . . a nationwide free service for motor travelers.⁷²

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

If the pattern of the social structure was toward centralization at the level of the oil companies themselves, as it had been in the case of Marland, that same pattern prevailed at the level of the gas station. In such an environment, the smaller station without services, equally dependent upon the majors for gasoline, could not compete and often faded from the scene. They faded, that is, unless it was possible to add a motel or a restaurant to the existing facilities, and those additions remain characteristic of the small stations that survived.

Where there was a gas station, and where there was a motel, there was increasingly likely to be a restaurant nearby, and in fact often it was a restaurant associated with the other two businesses. And where there was a small town, there would be a restaurant or two willing to provide some level of culinary competence to the hungry travelers. The short order cook became commonplace and probably came and went as often as the businesses that employed them; often the cook was, of course, the owner (or, again, the woman whose husband operated the gasoline station next door). Perhaps the

⁷² *Tulsa World*, August 9, 1932, pg. 4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 35

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

best description of these independent cafés, with low capital and home-grown food and labor, all of which looked different from the others but all somehow looking alike, was that provided by Steinbeck in a description that runs for pages and captures not only the flavors and fragrances of the establishments but also something of their social organization:

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

Minnie or Susy or Mae, middle-aging behind the counter, hair curled and rouge and powder on a sweating face. Taking orders in a soft low voice, calling them to the cook with a screech like a peacock. Mopping the counter with circular strokes, polishing the big shining coffee urns. The cook is Joe or Carl or Al, hot in a white coat and apron, beady sweat on white forehead, below the white cook's cap; moody, rarely speaking, looking up for a moment at each new entry.⁷³

The restaurants—more accurately cafés—were many and varied, some right downtown, some on the outskirts, but most were not built to last. Two quick food operations that survived the decades of rise and decline of Route 66. Pop Hicks' Restaurant in Clinton, next to the Glancy Hotel, was constructed in 1936 but it succumbed to fire at the end of the century. On the other hand, the Rock Cafe in Stroud, built in 1939, still operates. Neither of these businesses, however, could be characterized as typical roadside cafes in the depression. In the sense that none of them were franchises of restaurant chains, even the "typical" hamburger stands and cafés held their own individuality.

The depression did not just alter the existing businesses along Route 66. It even

⁷³ Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 166-167.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 36

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

introduced new businesses. The railroads, an important provider of transportation in Oklahoma, suffered cutbacks in business as a result of the depression and in turn initiated cuts in service, those cuts falling especially heavy on remote areas, on small towns, on regions where the traffic was both politically and economically expendable. As the railroads reduced their operations in Oklahoma, an infant trucking industry stepped up to fill the void.

Whit Lee had started a small passenger bus operation in western Oklahoma in the 1920s and after some structural changes and reorganization, in 1930 he had moved to Oklahoma City and operated LeeWay Stages, a bus line that carried passengers along Route 66 from Oklahoma City to Amarillo and on to New Mexico. Whit Lee's son Bob Lee reflected on those beginnings and noted: "The Depression saved us in the bus business. . . . People couldn't drive as much as they used to, so they rode the bus. The Depression kept us alive."⁷⁴ In 1934 Lee sold the bus company and bought several trucks. Susan Croce Kelly quotes son Bob Lee about the circumstances of this new trucking business:

The railroads would fight very bitterly when you applied for a certificate over routes that they served, but the trucking business really started because of lack of service from the railroads for small shipments. When we started, we would unload boxcars from Saint Louis at Oklahoma City, then take the contents to Amarillo, Albuquerque, and that part of the country. The rail service just wasn't very good from Oklahoma City to Amarillo. It was good from Wichita to Albuquerque, so we were the connecting link between the East and the Texas Panhandle.⁷⁵

Other trucking companies also emerged, like the Mistletoe Express, started by E. K. Gaylord, owner of the company that published the *Daily Oklahoman*, as a vehicle for delivering his newspapers to parts of the state where railroad service had been withdrawn.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 45-46.

⁷⁵ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 64.

⁷⁶ "Child of the Depression, Mistletoe Grows up to Mark its 25th Birthday," *Daily Oklahoman*, October 7, 1956.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 37

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

The significance of the rise of the trucking industry in Oklahoma is not so obvious as the expansion of service stations or motels, but it was nonetheless profound. In the first place it increased traffic along the routes that it served, thus generating additional business in those enterprises that served the traffic, whether the corner café or the service station. Secondly, it provided connections to places that had never been served by the railroads, and with each additional customer it made it that much more difficult for the railroads ever to regain their prominence as a conveyor of freight in Oklahoma, which, in turn, only increased the importance of highway arteries like Route 66 that much more. If the traffic along Route 66 were to some degree a self-perpetuating phenomenon, the trucking industry would be the purest example of the process as it supplied the businesses **that depended on the traffic and as the traffic increased with the load of the trucking industry and the need for more services also increased, those services then also to be** supplied by the truckers who used the road. In this way it shows some of the significance, and perhaps also some of the fragility, of this magic road across the state can be seen. So long as there was traffic there would be growth.

To facilitate that growth in traffic, communities undertook projects to build rest facilities for weary travelers. Sometimes constructed with WPA funds, roadside parks with tables made of concrete slabs resting on rock pedestals punctuated the highway's path across the state. Overlooked and undocumented by historians they have been ~~located~~ by public maintenance programs. When managed by municipal ~~authorities~~ places like McIain-Rogers Park

equally ~~many~~ departments these parks, sometimes remain in good condition. ~~in~~ Clinton, with its Art Deco entrance, and like Neptune Park on the south edge of the same town. In other places, like the roadside park at Deadman's Curve east of Afton, the facilities have been essentially vandalized by construction crews and others who have used the site as a dumping ground and by the intentional or default process of moldering ruins. These parks, once essential not only to the migrant who needed a place to pitch a camp for the night, but for all travelers who needed to stop and stretch and cool off the overheated engine in the shade of a cottonwood tree, are some of the rapidly vanishing elements of the Route 66 landscape.

At the same time that the Route 66 social and cultural landscape was changing, Route 66 itself, the highway, was changing. Dale Smith, a truck driver in western Oklahoma recalled the stretches in the road where pavement yielded to dirt or gravel: "Well, I just don't recall if it was paved east of Clinton. We hit some pavement east of there somewhere, but I don't think it was paved out of Clinton at that time. It might have

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 38

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

been, but to my recollection it wasn't."⁷⁷ Throughout the 1930s incremental progress was made in increasing the paved sections of Route 66. In 1927 Cyrus Avery led the celebration of the completion of paved road on Route 66 between Oklahoma City and Tulsa, an occasion that underscored "bring[ing] the two towns closer together."⁷⁸ After that, whenever small sections were completed, the locals would invariably celebrate because they knew what the road meant to the local economy. In Canute, Garland Lowry, a barber, recalled that "we had a street dance under the railroad trestle when they finished the pavement, the night before they opened it up to traffic. It took plum two or three years to get that road paved through town."⁷⁹ Rosetti Gephard, from Erick, remembered that "... they had a parade up through here when they cut the line between Texas and Oklahoma. Our club had a float on a flatbedded truck. We covered the truck with dirt and set out little bushes."⁸⁰ Finally, ten years after that first celebration that Cyrus Avery launched, Governor E. W. Marland dedicated the last section of pavement along Route 66. On September 13, 1937, Route 66 was completely paved for both lanes of traffic through Oklahoma when the governor snipped the ribbon dedicating the fourteen mile stretch between Afton and Miami that replaced the nine foot wide ribbon of pavement that earlier linked the two towns.⁸¹ The other side of that new pavement, and of the additional traffic that it generated, though, was additional pressure from engineers to straighten out the road to accommodate even more traffic and to yield to the prevailing impulse in the new pattern of travel: rapid travel without unnecessary stops, or, as James Agee put it in 1935, "motion with the least possible interruption."⁸² The small towns, the local businesses that depended on people to stop, to interrupt their travel, ultimately would pay the price of this new traffic that seemed initially to promise a glorious future.

⁷⁷ Dale Smith, interview by Rodger Harris, June 16, 1992, transcript in Oral History Department, Oklahoma Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division.

⁷⁸ "Tulsa Takes Lead for Highway Fete," *Tulsa Daily World*, September 6, 1927.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 29.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 29.

⁸¹ "U.S. Highway 66 Opening Monday Links Interesting State Areas," *Tulsa Tribune*, September 12, 1937.

⁸² [Agee], "The Great American Roadside," 56.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 39

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

The trends in social organization—with relationships becoming increasingly impersonal, the erosion of traditional local and parochial loyalties and identities, with more cosmopolitan and more specialized identities taking their place, with economic activities becoming more synchronized and specialized, and with social, political, and economic authority and power transferring from the local levels to increasingly centralized levels—were clear and they often held positive, beckoning images. The prospect of efficient transportation bringing new opportunities to the village and the small town, the grand hoopla generated with the opening of a stretch of pavement connecting the small town with a larger city, the availability of new brands with new buildings and services, the promise of new businesses, and the fluid mobility that disrupted a closed society—all of these features heralded a new day. Soon, it seemed, the problems of the past—isolation, separation, inequity, and hopeless futures—would be resolved to the benefit of the whole community.

And indeed, the signs of change were clear, even though they were not always in the headlines. The automobile—that agent of change and sign of the future—pervaded the life of communities where just a brief while before the horse and wagon prevailed. And the automobile was being manufactured and sold by fewer companies. The petroleum companies, since the age of Rockefeller and Standard Oil necessarily vertically integrated, were now becoming horizontally integrated so that fewer and larger companies dominated the production, refining, and distribution of oil and its products. The gas stations were correspondingly owned by fewer and fewer companies. Everywhere the indications of modernization surfaced. In 1936 a motel appeared in Oklahoma City that was different from the other mom and pop, independently owned and operated, businesses. The Alamo Plaza Court was the first unit in Oklahoma of a new chain based in Texas that began to reach into the hinterlands all around.⁸³ Likewise, Beverly Osborne, the owner of a group of restaurants in Oklahoma City, in the late 1930s began to sell, not franchises to his restaurant, but the rights to use the menu item that he conceived, an entrée called “chicken in the rough” which consisted of half a fried chicken served with French fries and honey; by no means a mom and pop corner café, Beverly’s Chicken was beginning to standardize the fare available not just on Route 66 but across the country.⁸⁴

⁸³ Sculle, Jakle, Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 107.

⁸⁴ Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 120-121.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 40

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

The other side of the coin of change was that the independent entrepreneur, not to mention self-sufficient farmer, was being left behind. And so too were the small communities that had looked forward to the connections with the outside world that Route 66 had initially promised.

The Road to the Future: Changes during and after World War II

The impact of World War II—and the events leading up to the war as well as those following the end of hostilities—on Route 66 remains dimly understood because of the complexity of the war itself. Indeed, the war affected different people, different businesses, and different communities in vastly different ways. Yet there remains a pattern of change and that pattern reflects a continuation of trends previously evident in the structure of society.

The most obvious way the war touched the road was in the decline of traffic. This was, perhaps, not so noticeable at the beginning of the war effort, when the government poured money into what was then called preparedness. Indeed, as half a million people now moved to California and additional numbers moved to other war industry locations, the new migration was termed by columnist Drew Pearson, “The Defense Grapes of Wrath.”⁸⁵ And some of those people just moved to Route 66 where the prospects looked brighter than in the benighted villages where they had struggled to make ends meet. In 1939, for example, Reese Kincaid, who had earlier operated a trading post in the small community of Colony, moved his business north to Route 66 and situated in Clinton in 1940.⁸⁶ The result of such shifting—from farm to city, from small towns to bigger towns, from Oklahoma to California or Texas—was a substantial redistribution of the nation’s demography, a continuation of the process that Oklahoma and Route 66 had known intimately for more than a decade already.⁸⁷ The problem was, though, that this

⁸⁵ Drew Pearson, “The Defense Grapes of Wrath,” syndicated column for February 21, 1941, as cited in McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land*, 346.

⁸⁶ Barbara Palmer, “Clinton’s Kicks,” *Oklahoma Today* (July 1992), 42-43.

⁸⁷ One contemporary student of both highways and the demographic shifts of the war period went so far as to suggest that “Social mobility rose to unprecedented heights during World War II,” and backed that statement up with the announcement of the Census Bureau that “Never before in the history of our country . . . has there been so

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 41

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

movement did not translate into greater use of the roads. Instead, traffic volume slid dramatically even from depression levels as a consequence of increased production and employment, the rationing of gasoline and of tires, and the halt in the production of automobiles. The statistical dimensions of the decline of traffic along Route 66 cannot be precisely measured, but some indication can be found in the larger tally of traffic levels for the state of Oklahoma. Considering only the paved roads in the state, the average number of vehicles traveling the paved roads, per mile, per day, dropped by around a third from 1940 to 1944, from 1460.6 vehicles to 974.5 vehicles.⁸⁸ With that reduction of traffic, businesses along the road, especially the smallest of them, the most marginal independent mom and pop operations, suffered dramatically. While the migration from farm to city and from Oklahoma to California had helped sustain some of these businesses in the years of the depression, without the steady stream of traffic, they now found themselves closing their doors and moving to larger cities to find jobs in war production or, indeed, moving to California where the war industries especially flourished. During the war Leon Little and his wife Ann, who had held on throughout the hard times of the 1930s, leased their business out to others.⁸⁹ When Lucille Hamons recalled the war years as "especially lean," many other businesses along the road that had depended on the traffic to slow down and spend money doubtless shared the judgment.⁹⁰

While the pressure on the family who operated a diner or a motel or a gas station, those people who depended on the market to bring customers their way, during the war was palpable, others managed to flourish through the expanded role of government in the economy. The trucking industry that had taken hold during the depression moved to a new level of prosperity during the war—or at least some of the trucking companies did. LeeWay was one of the businesses that did well. Susan Croce Kelly quotes Bob Lee on the impact of the war: "We had a tremendous increase in business . . . from hauling war

great a shuffling and redistribution of population in so short a time." Francis E. Merrill, "The Highway and Social Problems," in Jean Labutat and Wheaton J. Lane, *Highways in our National Life: A Symposium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 137.

⁸⁸ *Biennial Report of the Oklahoma State Highway Commission for the period ending June 30, 1946* (Oklahoma City, 1946), 24.

⁸⁹ Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 156-157.

⁹⁰ Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 154.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 42

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

supplies for government contractors, and in shipping engines to the West Coast, ammunition from McAlester, Oklahoma, ordnance from Kansas City and outside Saint Louis, and we'd bring empty steel shell casings there to be loaded and shipped out. The war really made LeeWay Motor Freight."⁹¹ Government contracts helped LeeWay, but there was more to their success than doing business with a customer much larger than any that might stop at the gas station and also get a burger. LeeWay had been part of a "pool" of trucking companies, presumably rotating the distribution of contracts among the members so that they would not sacrifice their freight business with private customers. Thus, after the war, Bob Lee explained, "There was a real shakeout in the trucking industry." Those companies that had not joined a pool and had become dependent on government contracts to the exclusion of their civilian customers disappeared in that shakeout.⁹² This was a sign of the times as centralization in the economy and society moved rapidly and with government support during the war years and afterwards.

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

For domestic consumption, gasoline was pooled and delivered from bulk plants to the nearest gasoline stations irrespective of brand or company linkages. Many bulk plants and over one-quarter of all gasoline stations were closed. Retail sales through the war years stood at less than 70 percent of 1941 levels, the result of strict gasoline rationing overseen by the Petroleum Industry War Council.⁹³

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

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

⁹¹ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 77.

⁹² Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 77.

⁹³ Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 67.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 43

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

The advent of World War II marked the end of a grand and glorious era in the history of the gas station. Indeed, it marked the end of an age of idealism and innocence in American culture. Never again would there be the fervor and zeal of the free-enterprise system so sumptuously and joyously expressed in commercial design. The new reality after the war would be more ascetic, economical, and practical, and what little joy remained in the commercial environment would be expressed in scaled-back imitations of the big-time hoopla of the "wonder years" from 1920 to 1940.⁹⁴

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

In March 1946, Jack D. Rittenhouse made a trip—certainly not his first—on Route 66, making careful notes as he went. His intention was to publish a guide for all those masses of people who would want to travel the same road but who would need information about the road, about places to visit, about where to stay, and how to find a good place to eat. "During World War II," Rittenhouse later wrote, "I realized that there might be a great postwar migration from the eastern states to California. Many young men and women had received their war training at the great bases in California, and once having seen that pleasant land they would want to return." So that year he published *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, a small book that he billed as "A mile-by-mile complete handbook on how to get the most fun from your trip. Full data on towns, historic spots, & highway facts: roads, hills, & garages."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance*, 62.

⁹⁵ Jack D. Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66* (Los Angeles: privately published, 1946; reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989, 2000); Rittenhouse's recollections are in the unpaginated prefatory sections of the reprint.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 44

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

As a snapshot in time, Rittenhouse's guide provides a clear view of Route 66 in Oklahoma a half year after the end of World War II that is an important document in the same way that travelers' guidebooks for emigrants on the Oregon - California Trail provide the basis for an understanding of the social dynamics of the landscape they crossed and how those routes changed over time. This guide is more than a mileage log. It is a social statement that conveys an image of the institutions and people along the way, of the expectations the traveler might have, and something of the values and rhythms of life they might encounter. He was careful to note the gasoline stations and cafes (In contrast to restaurants east of the Mississippi, he wrote, in the west "Many roadside 'cafes' serve only chili, sandwiches, pie, coffee, etc. Other establishments bearing a 'cafe' sign may be chiefly devoted to the sale of beer or liquor."), some of the motels ("In view of the unsettled condition in this immediate post-war period, any such detailed listing might change quickly."),⁹⁶ and the rest areas off the road. Thus he identified parks, like the one just north of Commerce: "At the curve is a roadside park . . . with tables and fireplaces."⁹⁷ And he described traffic conditions to expect near the larger cities and the smaller towns: "on week-ends the traffic is somewhat heavier near Oklahoma City. The road is good, but the shoulders are soggy in wet weather. In the smaller towns, brick streets are often bumpy."⁹⁸ He pointed out isolated lodging facilities for the equally isolated traveler; east of Kellyville, Rittenhouse noted: "Gas station here, with a few cabins. This part of the route enters a farming territory." Indeed, some of the accommodations that the traveler might seek remained undeveloped and even speculative. Ten miles west of Depew he wrote that "at this point you pass over a steel bridge. Just west is what appears to be a good campsite (R), but there is no indication as to whether camping is permitted here or not. There are several such spots along here."⁹⁹ Shortly after passing "several good tourist courts" in western Oklahoma City which he was quick to name ("Boyer, Deluxe, Rush, Carlyle, Major, Oklahoma, and Hutchison"), Rittenhouse notes that at Lake Overholser, "Many tourists pull over to the side of the road here for a short rest in the shade, while they watch the water."¹⁰⁰ On across the state

⁹⁶ Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 7, 5.

⁹⁷ Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 40.

⁹⁸ Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 47.

⁹⁹ Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 49.

¹⁰⁰ Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 55-56.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 45

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

he drove, taking willing readers as passengers in his 1939 American Bantam coupe, helping them see the town of Erick: "US 66 crosses the one main street of the town, which is the first town you encounter, going west, which has any of the true 'western' look, with its wide, sun-baked street, frequent horsemen, occasional sidewalk awnings, and similar touches" and driving on until he crossed the state line into Texas: "At once the road improves."¹⁰¹

What is so striking about Rittenhouse's guidebook becomes evident when one considers the changes underway in the following handful of years. Rittenhouse had, after all, provided a volume that helped the outsider move into the orbit of the local community, helped the traveler find local accommodations, a reasonable meal and convenient gas station, and even find an interesting historic site or pleasant rest area. Within a decade that frame of reference would itself be replaced along with many of the familiar businesses along the road. If Route 66 in the spring of 1946, before the first heavy travel season of the post-war period, coursed through a country where camping alongside the road was still common and where people might stop to watch the waters of a lake and where some of the locals still rode horses, that was all about to change. Unprecedented numbers of people took to the road and as a result, businesses along Route 66 expanded and flourished—and changed—in dramatic ways.

One indication of the change was the reference to the road in commercial culture. It had been less than a decade since Route 66's most common association was with *The Grapes of Wrath*. As a result of Steinbeck's novel and John Ford's movie, many people identified the road with the steady stream of Okies and Arkies heading west, looking for employment and new homes, and it was not a pretty picture. About the same time that Jack Rittenhouse made his post-war trip along Route 66, though, so did Bobby Troup. Troup, a songwriter with one substantial pre-war success, and his wife Cynthia went to California to try to make it big in the recording industry. On the way Cynthia suggested a song title and Bobby came up with lyrics and music. "Get Your Kicks on Route 66," was

¹⁰¹ Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 61. Rittenhouse even offered a brief homage to an earlier "guide" to the road when he recommended (p. 54) John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*: "The story of an Oklahoma farm family who lost their farm during the Dust Bowl days of the 30's and journeyed by car over US 66 to California. Their route over US 66 was approximately from Oklahoma City to Barstow, Calif., from whence they turned northwest. Many fine descriptions of scenes along US 66."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 46

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

the result and soon the radio airwaves were saturated with Nat King Cole's version of the upbeat melody that sang the praises of the towns along the way, and urged people to "get hip to this timely tip," and "travel my way, take the highway that's the best." The music and the words beckoned strongly for people to make the journey and get their kicks on Route 66.¹⁰²

And many people did exactly that. The statistical measures of traveling exuberance are revealing. In 1941, gas stations in the U.S. sold three and a half billion gallons of gasoline. During the war that number obviously declined, service stations closed their doors, gasoline was rationed, and travel dropped. But by 1951, the service stations in the nation sold over eight billion gallons.¹⁰³ Likewise, the number of registered motor vehicles, which had dropped during the war, by 1950 not only recovered to the pre-war level of around twenty-seven and a third million, but had grown dramatically in the last five years of the decade to more than forty million. By 1955 registrations had doubled, and by 1958 there were fifty-seven million cars registered in the United States.¹⁰⁴ However measured, Americans were taking to the road in ever expanding numbers in the years following World War II. Understandably, their experience would be different from that of their predecessors along the highway.

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

¹⁰² Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 148-150.

¹⁰³ Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance*, 84.

¹⁰⁴ John B. Rae, *The American Automobile: A Brief History*, 238; Sculle and Jakle, *The Gas Station in America*, 67. In Sculle, Jakle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 20, the authors count 24 million passenger cars registered in the United States in 1956 and 57 million in 1958, figures that are not only impossible to reconcile with the two year period of measurement, but that are also inconsistent with any others, including the work of the same authors.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 47

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

1950s.

They increased in number and they changed in appearance. The stations took on a sleeker, shinier appearance, often with plenty of aluminum and glass and the porcelain enamel that had been used to some degree since the 1930s continued into the 1950s. The Texaco stations with their finned porte cocheres still can be found commonly as examples of the streamlining pervading the architecture of the service station.¹⁰⁵ As they moved into the 1950s, canopies, once (and often still in the postwar years, because they endured so well) an important element of the structure of the station and a testimony to the transition of motoring from a fair weather activity to year round duty, returned. Indeed, says, John Margolies, "And canopies reappeared with a vengeance. The box designs of the 1930s and 1940s had eliminated canopies. They were a distraction from the flowing lines and contrasting colors of the station designs. The new canopies became longer and longer, and sometimes there were two canopies. Some of them swept upward like tail fins on 1950s automobiles, and there were so-called butterfly canopies used as devices to display huge advertising signs mounted on top of them. By the 1960s, there were even freestanding canopies."¹⁰⁶ Within a decade there would be abundant signs of these elaborate, gravity-defying canopies, sometimes termed a "populuxe" style.

On a different level, the stations were changing in their functionality. Dominated by large oil companies, the new stations of the 1950s were constructed in ways that stressed volume of sales as never before; they rested on huge storage tanks that increased their capacity for sales of larger quantities of gasoline. The companies themselves even made reciprocal agreements so that they could more efficiently (if less competitively) supply their stations by using each others' products. And the stations were becoming increasingly specialized, which also meant that they were increasingly separate from the motels and restaurants which just a few years earlier had enabled them to present a variety of services to the traveling motorists in a single package.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the presence of the combined operations of service station, motel, and diner increasingly became a mark of age, not a key to success.

¹⁰⁵ Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance*, 86, 99.

¹⁰⁶ Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance*, 90.

¹⁰⁷ Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance*, 68; Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 79.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 48

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

The motels similarly changed and so did the motel industry. The numbers of motels in the nation are subject to various estimates. In 1953, one discussion of the motel business in *The Saturday Evening Post* estimated that five years earlier there had been 18,000 motels in the nation and that number had increased in half a decade to 40,000.¹⁰⁸ As substantial as that growth would be, the estimate is probably not far off. Sculle and Jakle indicate that in 1953 the total was around 45,000 and that was double what it had been in 1946.¹⁰⁹ The rate of growth, at any rate is undeniable, and that is reflected in Oklahoma along Route 66. All along the highway new motels emerged to take advantage of the newly mobile public.

These motels, moreover, were becoming ever more modern—and expensive—in their construction. They remained, by and large, the same mom and pop operations that had always characterized the industry. One analysis indicated in 1948 that 98.2 per cent of the motels were such individually owned operations.¹¹⁰ The same analysts, however, go on to note “But they came to provide the least number of units as well as the least desired form of lodging after 1945.” Indeed, according to Warren Belasco, by 1953, a pivotal year in retrospect, the trade journal *Hotel Management* estimated that, “although only 10 percent of the country’s courts had twenty-five or more rooms, these leaders did 40 percent of the business, especially along the lucrative main routes.”¹¹¹ Route 66 was certainly one of those lucrative routes. What this indicated was a profound shift underway in the motel business. Up until then, motels beckoned not only to the tourists driving down the road but also to the person who wanted to start a small business and who did not have much capital. That was the way that it had always been in the motel business, whether they were called camps or courts. In 1945 the Small Business Administration prepared a guide to the motel business and the Veterans’ Administration paid for its distribution to soldiers and sailors encouraging them to enter that business, and in 1951 *Fortune Magazine*, as quoted by Jakle and Sculle, observed that “There was

¹⁰⁸ Evan M. Wylie, “Troubles of a Motel Keeper,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 226 (July 18, 1953), 69.

¹⁰⁹ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 82.

¹¹⁰ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 79.

¹¹¹ Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 170.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 49

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

a time when the sailor home from the sea went to chicken farming. Nowadays he buys a motel by the side of the road.”¹¹²

Along Route 66, as in the rest of the nation, the motels were undergoing the same specialization as the rest of the economy—like the service stations and restaurants that used to be their neighbors and associates. Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, in their study of *The Motel in America*, identified some of the forces involved in this. They note that even though the Small Business Administration “championed the mom-and-pop motel,” the SBA also advocated “management procedures that effectively pointed away from small operators.”¹¹³ The industry was much more demanding than it had been when simply providing a safe and reasonably adequate room was sufficient. Travel associations were not only evaluating and approving motels along the major routes but were rating them as well.¹¹⁴ Motels were becoming sometimes plush, but at any rate they had more amenities. Telephones in individual rooms, for example, was not a requirement at the end of the war, but each year meant additional pressure to install them. To build a new motel was no longer the simple task it had once been; in 1953 one motel owner explained the motel business to an aspiring couple and started by telling them that “You’ll need between fifty and a hundred thousand dollars.”¹¹⁵ The small businesses remained. The mom and pop motels lingered on, and they did so in large numbers. But they did so with marginal returns, with a declining share of the business, and without the funds essential for major investments to remodel or reconstruct.

Their replacements were emerging along Route 66. In 1949, only two motels in Oklahoma, both on Route 66, were members of the American Motel Association. This trade association sought to promote its members through publishing a guide listing approved member motels, and providing the hallmark of professional association and identity.¹¹⁶ Being an individual mom and pop operation along the side of the road was no

¹¹² Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 40.

¹¹³ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 74.

¹¹⁴ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 136.

¹¹⁵ Wylie, “Troubles of a Motel Keeper,” 70.

¹¹⁶ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 133.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 50

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

longer enough and more associations and more motels, especially the newer ones that could afford the additional expenses and the trade association membership, attached their identities not to the community but to the organization of like-minded operations. The next step was the referral chain. A 1951 map of Best Western motels—a chain of independently owned motels that referred customers to others in the chain—shows an arc from northeast to southwest through Oklahoma, tracing the path of Route 66, with between seven and nine properties in the state, and indeed, the only such motels in Oklahoma.¹¹⁷ What was happening was that the “amateurs”—the moms and pops—were being separated from the “professionals”—the companies that could afford the new dispensation, and what was happening more was that the smaller businesses were being left behind in the wake of the new inns associated with either a chain or a referral group. And what was happening further was that the national chains were building properties that were identical to their other properties in other states and the tendency toward conformity and standardization and even uniformity replaced the highly individualistic businesses that once dotted the path of Route 66 through Oklahoma.

The separation of the amateurs from the professionals, the separation of the small from the large, and the separation of the local from the national proceeded even faster and more relentlessly beginning in 1954. The federal income tax code enacted that year brought sweeping changes to investments in commercial construction, enabling investors to achieve significant tax benefits through accelerated depreciation of such properties. While this encouraged a wave of investment in new properties, it also foreshortened the life expectancy of such investments since there now became a distinct incentive to sell the property after eight or ten years, or even as soon as five years, when the tax benefits dwindled.¹¹⁸ The motel industry had moved quickly and rapidly from the world of the small business operated by a couple to provide a service to the travelers who drove past.

Route 66 was changing in other ways too. The parks that had provided a place for motorists to pull over and rest, maybe even to watch the water, were being replaced by more commercially-oriented attractions. And those early parks that operated as businesses found themselves outranked and out-glitzed by the newer recreation stops. There were places like Dixieland, a park just west of Sapulpa, that opened in 1928, just a year after the designation of Route 66. The owners dammed up a creek and created a

¹¹⁷ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 144, figure 5.17.

¹¹⁸ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, *The Motel in America*, 45-47, 54.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 51

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

substantial lake which they stocked with fish and they also built a swimming pool and bathhouse, as well as some tourist cottages, a restaurant, a gas station and service garage, and picnic tables and barbecue pits. Dixieland even had a miniature golf course and a roller skating rink. The park catered to locals, but it also served the burgeoning traffic along Route 66, and, in fact, it fit well with the general expectations and pace of the traffic on the highway, bringing the distant traveler into the social and economic world of the community.¹¹⁹ Where motels were designed to remind travelers of their homes, so too did the parks offer familiar forms of relaxation and recreation.

There were other parks and recreation centers, some built specifically to serve the travelers along the highway and some in town to provide an outdoor respite for anyone—migrants, traveling business people, tourists, townspeople. The prime example of such a town park would be McClain – Rogers Park in Clinton with its striking Art Deco gates. But these public parks receded like the old motels and gas stations in the wake of postwar social change along Route 66 as commercial operations tried to attract travelers and to persuade them to open their pocketbooks.

Susan Croce Kelly aptly captures the new wave of tourist stops along the road: “Especially after World War II, Route 66 was lined with establishments that seemed to wave their arms, whistle, blow bubbles, sing, dance, flash lights, and make outrageous promises just to get drivers to slow down and pull off the highway.”¹²⁰ The presence of such tourist traps along the highway is legendary and their number appears to have been substantial, although precise data are not available. There were enough, at any rate, to keep Lyman Riley busy. Riley, a promoter of Meramec Caverns, itself a significant tourist attraction along Route 66 in Missouri, became president of the Missouri section of the Route 66 Association after World War II, and in that capacity he was called on to keep the businesses “safe” in neighboring Oklahoma. When Susan Croce Kelly and Quinta Scott interviewed him, Riley explained that “The worst things along the highway was these zoos all through Oklahoma with signs advertising pythons. They have snakes and reptile gardens and free admission—anything to get you to stop—and then they’d get you in a bunco game. One whole year all I did was check them out.”¹²¹ The way the

¹¹⁹ James W. Hubbard, “Dixieland Was a Dream Realized,” *Sapulpa Herald*, October 18, 1992.

¹²⁰ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 170.

¹²¹ Kelly and Scott, *Route 66*, 168.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 52

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

system worked is captured in a memoir by writer Calvin Trillin, regarding his family's summer vacations from their home in Kansas City where his father and mother were grocers:

... even before the war our family had taken a couple of long automobile trips in the summer—one all the way to California—and the custom was revived as soon as gas rationing ended. In the years after the war, one of the gasoline companies, Conoco, began offering a large, spiral bound book of maps put together especially for an individual customer's automobile trip. A thick black line ran along the highway that Conoco's travel experts were suggesting as the best route. The book was called, I think, a Touraide. My father always ordered one. Except for one trip we took to the East Coast, the black line in our Touraide led west toward California.

... I spent a lot of time begging my father to stop at one of those roadside zoos on Highway 66 which advertised attractions like albino raccoons. When he finally did, the proprietor ended our tour by demonstrating a game that he said the Indians (or could it have been the cowboys?) played on Saturday nights—a game that was based on ten or twelve dice rolled out of a cup. The last couple of dice seemed to have barely stopped tumbling before he had called out the total and scooped everything back in the cup. In the demonstration, my father won small sums two or three times in a row. There was an opportunity to put his winnings toward a bet that sounded safe and potentially extremely profitable, but my father declined. I was outraged. “You were *winning!*” I kept saying as we climbed back in the car. My father drove on for a while, and then he said, “I wasn’t winning.” He had known that the preliminary wins were a come-on because, unlike about everyone else who might stop at the roadside zoo, he could actually add up the dice faster than the man could scoop them back into the cup.¹²²

¹²² Calvin Trillin, *Messages from My Father* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 61, 63-64; about their ability to add the dice totals so quickly, Trillin elsewhere (pages 14-15) explains that his mother and father, “products of the era when grocers totted the bill on the back of a paper sack rather than at a checkout cash register, could add a column of numbers so quickly that it might have qualified as a parlor trick if most of the other people in the parlor hadn’t themselves been grocers.”

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 53

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

Businesses, some legitimate and some less so, sprang up all along Route 66 offering tourists an opportunity to see something exotic perhaps, to experience the unfamiliar, and at any rate to stop and spend. From the Buffalo Ranch near Afton in eastern Oklahoma, which opened in 1953, to the Reptile Village west of Erick near the Texas panhandle that opened its doors in 1965, tourist attractions increased in number and became ever more elaborate in size. Some were trading posts, specializing in wares produced by Native Americans, both locally and also from the Southwest, like that opened by Reese and Wanda Queenan in 1948 near Elk City. As Jim Ross relates, their competition increased dramatically in the 1950s and, as a necessary attention-grabbing device, the Queenans erected two giant kachinas made from oil drums and steel pipe.¹²³ Some "trading posts" seemed to specialize in rubber tomahawks and trinkets, some in jewelry of varying degrees of authenticity, and some sought to communicate an element of authentic Native American culture. Other attractions were the result of a personal inspiration that may have seemed odd or idiosyncratic to others. Ed Galloway, in 1948, had completed the first phase of construction of his Totem Pole Park near Foyil, and began to draw tourists several miles off Route 66 to see his ninety-foot tall concrete totem pole with more than two hundred images of Native Americans painted on it as well his collection of three hundred fiddles and nearly a hundred inlaid wood pictures and tables. And then there was Grace's. Jim Ross captures the essence of the establishment: "When it came to attracting Mother Road tourists, there were few limits, evidenced by the two-headed calf and double-bodied lamb once displayed at Grace's in El Reno."¹²⁴

But it wasn't just the cultural appeal of native cultures, the exotic and strange, the sly and deceptive, the bizarre and the freaky, or the gaudy and the kitschy that pulled tourists off Route 66. In the mid-1950s, Jim Burge, the developer of Frontier City Amusement Park on the outskirts of Oklahoma City, had two considerations in the location of his new venture. It had to be on land that was included in the 1889 land run, and it had to be just off the westbound lane of Route 66.¹²⁵ The westbound focus appears to have derived from an association with frontier imagery and emigration but also was

¹²³ Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 176-177.

¹²⁴ Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66*, 131.

¹²⁵ Interview with Rodger Harris, oral historian, Oklahoma Historical Society, May 23, 2002. Harris gained this information in a separate interview with the developer.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 54

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

been based on the expectation that tourists would have more money heading west than upon returning east.

On a smaller scale, and less directed to tourists than to locals, but still oriented to those people who piled into their cars for a good time, the drive-in theaters appeared as part of the larger culture surrounding the automobile, and providing another recreational outlet. The first drive-in theater opened in New Jersey in 1933, and the institution slowly spread throughout the country, although the progress was seriously impeded by the circumstances of depression and war. By the beginning of World War II there were only fifty-two such theaters in the country, and that number remained low during the war. The American Association of State Highway Officials' Committee on Traffic, Subcommittee on Roadside Control, noted in 1949 that "Postwar years, however, brought a rapid increase in popularity, many new improvements in equipment and services, and a sudden and rapid rise in the number of drive-in theaters opened for operation." The group studying the drive-in concluded, "Apparently, America has accepted the drive-in theater and it is here to stay." A survey that year showed three such drive-ins in Oklahoma, all in Oklahoma City.¹²⁶ Within a few years drive-in theaters could be found in most towns along Route 66, and probably all over the state. Since the highway provided the only access to such movie-viewing, it generated even more traffic along the road. Outside towns like Weatherford and Vinita, and almost within sight of the place where Jack Rittenhouse had encouraged travelers to take a break near the refreshing waters of Lake Overholser, and not far from Dixieland outside Sapulpa, drive-in theaters became as familiar along Route 66 as the ubiquitous Burma Shave signs.

Thus it should be no surprise that Dixieland closed its doors in 1951. With its skating rink and picnic tables, with its swimming pool and shade trees, Dixieland had been passed by, not only by the motorists whizzing past on Route 66, but by a new generation of business that appealed to vastly different needs and held vastly different orientations. Where the early visionaries of highway travel saw the road as bringing them customers for their businesses, markets for the goods they grew and made, and a larger social outlet for their various energies, the modern network of commerce was more profoundly bringing new institutions and priorities and products to them, and integrating the local into the national. The orbit had changed as locals were now operating within

¹²⁶ American Association of State Highway Officials, Committee on Traffic, Subcommittee on Roadside Control, *Policy on Drive-In Theaters* (n.p.: 1949), 3; the survey is a separate document at the end of the report.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 55

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

the national commercial culture instead of bringing the nation's travelers into theirs.

The End of the Road: Modernization, Homogenization, and Economic Growth in the 1950s and 1960s

During World War II the Route 66 Association, which had also billed itself and its road as the Main Street of America, faded away. Perhaps it was the depression that caused both businesses along the road and the potential travelers of the road to dampen their enthusiasm as either purveyors or targets of travel promotion. Perhaps it was even the success of the effort; with the road now paved and crowded with people, who needed to solicit more travelers? Or maybe it was the specter of The Main Street of America filled with people living town. Or, during the war, what was the point of such promotional activity when the kinds of optional travel plans that could respond to enticement had yielded to other pressures? Whatever the cause, the association fell by the wayside, but after World War II, in the buoyant atmosphere and promising future of travel, the merchants along the road once again organized. In 1947 the group reorganized at a meeting of Road Boosters Clubs in Oklahoma City, calling itself the U.S. Highway 66 Association. Gladys Cutberth, who along with her husband Jack Cutberth, soon operated the business of the association out of their home in Clinton, explained that "Our purpose was twofold: To improve the road by paving and four-laning it, and to attract tourists. We advertised Route 66 as the fastest, safest and best all-year route from Chicago to L.A."¹²⁷

Ever since August 1935 when Will Rogers was killed in a plane crash and Oklahoma Congressman Wesley C. Disney introduced legislation to call Route 66 the Will Rogers Highway, the road had sometimes been referred to by the name of Oklahoma's favorite son from Claremore on Route 66. But at the 1947 meeting, the group abandoned that designation and "the association voted to readopt the route's former designation as the 'Main Street of America' . . ." and specifically to reject "The

¹²⁷ "A Legend's Eleventh Hour," [Phillips Petroleum Co.] *Shield*, VII (fourth quarter, 1982), 14-23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 56

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

Will Rogers Highway.”¹²⁸ Claremore’s representative fought hard against the change but contingents from California, Arizona, and New Mexico successfully sought the more universal, and older, slogan and they prevailed.

In five years, though, the road was officially named The Will Rogers Highway. The circumstances of that reversal indicate the new climate in which the group was working and in which the road was carrying traffic. In 1952 Warner Brothers Studios had filmed the movie, *The Will Rogers Story*, and as part of the pre-release publicity, they secured the cooperation of the Highway 66 Association—which evidently reasoned that the road would benefit from publicity as well—and placed markers proclaiming The Will Rogers Highway in Santa Monica and Saint Louis (neglecting the Illinois segment of the road). Then they sent a caravan down the Will Rogers Highway to generate more publicity. Cameras whirled and clicked as the caravan made its way with various publicity stops in Oklahoma. There was some confusion, however, and Warner Brothers issued a press release indicating that

There were some who misunderstood the purpose of this tour in that they thought that the tour would be the shooting of the actual picture of THE WILL ROGERS STORY. This is not the case at all. The picture, THE WILL ROGERS STORY has been completed and the showing of the picture by theaters will occur later during the fall months. It is emphasized that the only “shots” on this tour will be taken by Warner Bros. News Reel and will be released at theaters in advance of the showing of the actual picture. You may be caught in some of the newsreel shots on the tour and you may not.¹²⁹

The people who thought they were part of something bigger, who thought they might appear in a movie, were sorely disappointed. Instead, they would only appear, at best, in the promotion of a movie. Life had changed in the same way; the road was now really promoting the movie, not the movie promoting the road.

On the other front, however—turning the road into a four-lane highway that could

¹²⁸ Typescript of unidentified news article of Oct. 28, 1947, in file, “Press Releases,” in Route 66 files, Oklahoma Historical Society.

¹²⁹ Typescript of newsclipping from unidentified newspaper, June 26, 1952, in Route 66 files, Oklahoma Historical Society.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 57

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

carry even more traffic—the organization may have been more successful—if lamentably so—or it may have just converged with another impulse that would carry the day. The pressure for a four lane road wound up, once governmental bodies accepted the notion, focusing not on improving Route 66 but replacing it, and replacing it with a toll road. In 1949 the Oklahoma legislature debated the issue and representatives from the towns and counties along Route 66 led the opposition to a new turnpike that would bypass the communities between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. They predicted “dire consequences” for their communities if the main traffic corridor shifted away from their Mainstreets and did not even slow for their businesses. Boyd Cowden of Chandler asked why this new road was necessary and indicated the nature of the division in the state: “Why? Just because a few white-collared boys in Oklahoma City and Tulsa are just hell-bent upon getting somewhere. It will be right of way 300 yards wide with stud-horse high fence on each side of it.”¹³⁰ But the governor prevailed over what was widely viewed as a “reluctant” legislature, and construction began on the Turner Turnpike.

Promises had been made to communities, like Sapulpa, that the new road would, in fact, follow the route planned for a new, improved Route 66. When the engineers straightened out that route and moved it farther from town, a hot protest ensued, and finally the Turnpike Authority “chose a new straight-line route that skirts the northern edge of Sapulpa. The authority finally took this action after bond buyers warned no more money would be available unless the authority built the highway in the most economical manner possible.”¹³¹ The turnpike was finished and opened for business in 1953 with the promise that it would become free once the bonds were paid off in forty years.

Oklahoma journalist Kent Ruth announced the opening of the Turner Turnpike in the *New York Times* stressing the advantages of the new turnpike but also hinting at some of the darker meanings the new road held:

... Near-by U.S. 66, which has always carried most of the year-round traffic from the North and East to the Southwest, is narrow and over-crowded. Offering driving ease, safety and economy at a moderate cost, the Turner Turnpike is expected to siphon off a sizeable chunk of this

¹³⁰ Ray Parr, “After Six Years and \$38 Million, Turner Turnpike is Nearing Completion,” *Daily Oklahoman*, March 1, 1953.

¹³¹ Parr, “After Six Years and \$38 Million, Turner Turnpike is Nearing Completion.”

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 58

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

cross-country highway load. . . . At the maximum 70-mile-an hour speed [the driver] saves close to two hours in actual driving time between the oil capital of the world and the Oklahoma state capital Should an Easterner find the Phillips 66 service shield unfamiliar, he will at least recognize the ubiquitous Howard Johnson Company, to whom the Oklahoma-born Phillips Petroleum Company has sublet the food concessions By-passing scores of curves on U.S. 66 of from 40 to 90 degrees and several miles of 4 to 7 per cent grades, and eliminating stop-and-go driving in four towns, the through traveler can easily save the other 70 cents [the toll].¹³²

The stop and go driving that small retailers, the garages and the hamburger stands and the mom and pop motels, had depended on was being eliminated. The Howard Johnson restaurant reflected the integration of this route not just into the emerging national highway system but more deeply into the national commercial structure.

After this, the Route 66 communities were left even further behind and their voices were even more muffled. In 1957 the Will Rogers turnpike opened between Tulsa and Joplin, Missouri (and bypassing the Kansas segment of Route 66 and the Oklahoma towns connecting to it), replacing that section of Route 66 also. With the opening of the Will Rogers Turnpike, Route 66 lost the traffic and the impact it once had in eastern Oklahoma. Now the road served especially local traffic and the interstate traffic that deliberately sought it out as a free alternative to the toll road. It continued to survive, though, in western Oklahoma, at least until the new interstate, controlled access highway replaced it in the 1960s. Under the 1956 Interstate Highway Act, the federal government inaugurated not only new roads but a new *network* of roads throughout the nation and these roads would be four-lane divided highways, ninety percent paid for by the federal government. Where Oklahoma had moved in advance of that system to launch the replacement to Route 66 east of Oklahoma City, and had decided to charge motorists who used it, that turnpike system soon became Interstate 44. The interstate west of Oklahoma City would not be a turnpike but would represent a continuation west of Interstate 40 that in the eastern portion of the state connected Fort Smith with Oklahoma City.

At this point the advocates and promoters of Route 66 in Oklahoma were fighting a rearguard action, not following a vision of the future but trying to hold on to what they

¹³² Kent Ruth, "Oklahoma Opens a Turnpike," *New York Times*, May 24, 1953.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 59

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

had. Much of that battle focused on making business loops through the towns that were being bypassed so that there would be some hope for those businesses. Of course, the business loops would generally follow the existing Route 66. And this was what was achieved in western Oklahoma in towns like Weatherford, Clinton, Elk City, Sayre, and Canute—with varying degrees of success. For seventeen years after the 1953 opening of the Turner Turnpike the struggle went on. In another sense, however, Route 66 was being done in without the turnpikes and interstates. Replacing the locally owned motels and diners along the road and taking the place of the sometimes funky and sometimes elaborate service stations were the buildings dictated by franchise plans so that the Holiday Inns in Oklahoma looked like the Holiday Inns in Ohio and so that the Howard Johnsons along Route 66 looked like the Howard Johnsons along I-95 outside Washington, D.C. Moreover, the rooms in the motels would be the same, and so would the meals on the menus be the same. Where an earlier generation of communities and businesses along Route 66 had sought to bring the nation's traveling public into their local orbit, by the 1960s it was plain enough that the reverse had happened; the communities and businesses now operated to the standards of a national system. Where travelers could now leave home without ever really leaving home because of the sameness of their accommodations on the road, so too did they have less and less of a home distinguishable from anyone else's.

Not even a national television show based on the road and titled explicitly "Route 66" could save the road or even respect its social and cultural identity. Starring George Maharis (who was subsequently replaced by Glenn Corbett) and Martin Milner, the television show focused on two young men and a Corvette traveling the road. But "Route 66" aired from 1960 to 1964, and took some major detours through the rest of the nation with only a small number of the shows featuring Route 66; even then, Route 66 was incidental to plot and storyline. Symbolically appropriate, given the cultural changes underway in the nation, Route 66 had been absorbed into the homogenous culture of television broadcasting; it was not about a specific road and specific places. It was about the universally familiar.

At the same time that viewers along Route 66 in western Oklahoma could turn on their televisions to watch "Route 66" featuring a story about incidents far from the road and far from Oklahoma, they watched construction of Interstate 40 often with the same apprehension as a sick person watching the construction of a coffin. Maybe the larger towns could negotiate a business loop to save their merchants, but the multitude of small operators along the road outside the towns could not even grasp that hope. Leon Little and his wife Ann, with their operation at Hinton Junction, watched the progress of the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 60

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

roads in the east and then in the west with trepidation. Little explained to Quinta Scott that he saw the turnpike in eastern Oklahoma as "the tip of the iceberg" and that "We were up at that old station until 1961. They didn't move the traffic till 1962, but we knew this was coming, of course, and so I came down to Hinton and took the postmaster job, and Ann managed the business out there until the traffic moved in 1962. And, of course, the day the traffic moved, well that was it."¹³³ Others continued to hold on. Lucille Hamons, with the gas station and motel near Hydro on Route 66 recalled, "They told me they were trying to get little places like this off the highway; that's one reason I stayed. The interstate hurt my gasoline business, but I've been here so long I know people from miles around. Of course, I had to start selling beer when my youngest daughter went to college."¹³⁴ She also closed the motel, but the particularly galling part of her experience was that she was still right next to the interstate which ran parallel to Route 66; a fence separated her from her customers. "That fence is terrible. People get in trouble, run out of gas, you should see them trying to climb that fence. In Oklahoma, you can't sue the state for loss of business, but, believe me, there has been a lot of good businesses close up because of this." The next year, in Weatherford, Juanita and Laverne Snow's restaurant faced a similar situation: "We just never thought they'd come along three years later and put up that fence . . ."¹³⁵ The construction of the highway continued but was slowed only by an agreement in the 1950s with Governor Raymond Gary that assured Weatherford, Clinton, Elk City, Sayre, and Canute that no one of the towns would be disadvantaged by the new road's bypassing one before the others, so it was not until 1970, when all the bypasses were completed, that Interstate 40 finally replaced Route 66 and moved past these towns. In 1970 an alternate road, a major highway that was divided and carried substantially more traffic, a traveling corridor with its own gas stations, motels, and diners familiar everywhere, ran the full length of Oklahoma, bypassing the towns that had been served by Route 66, and separated from Route 66 by a fence. If the motorist had a full tank and the resolve, it was possible to drive entirely through the state, sometimes within sight of old Route 66, without stopping once.

Route 66, in the words of National Park Service historian Susan Calafate Boyle, "is an emblem of America's past and a reminder of how much our society has changed in

¹³³ Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 182.

¹³⁴ Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 183.

¹³⁵ Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 183.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section E Page 61

Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma, 1926-1970

[the twentieth] century.”¹³⁶ The symbolism that Boyle identifies, moreover, is rooted in experiences and institutions that are profound and that have shaped the nation in ways that are both subtle and obvious. If it can be reduced to its fundamentals there are two aspects that are especially noteworthy in assessing the historical significance of Route 66. The first is that the road, itself the product of forces of change and modernization, unleashed additional forces with incredible power to change the social, cultural, and economic landscape of the area through which it was built. Moreover, those forces would be so powerful that they would ultimately bring about the demise of the road itself. Secondly, there is the irony that continually dogs the path of Route 66 that, like many another road, it was designed to bring people closer together, but wound up separating them more and more from each other. Whether separating poor from rich, migrants from residents, merchant from farmer, villager from city-dweller, the “amateur” motel operator from the “professional,” or those who valued the lifeways of the past over the exigencies of the present from the prophets of future glories, the road divided society instead of uniting it. Together these social trends suggest that Route 66, whatever else it may have meant to the many people who traveled it and who lived and worked along its path, is above all a road through time connecting not so much point A and point B as connecting the past and the present. In this way the multitude of historic resources along that highway serve as links that connect modern society to its origins in a world in which the pace, organization, priorities, and opportunities were vastly different and in which isolation was more physical than social. Those resources thus indicate the importance of Route 66 as both an agent of social transformation and a reflection of social change.

¹³⁶ Susan Calafate Boyle, “The Route 66 Landscape and the Evolution of American Society during the 20th Century,” paper presented at Western History Association annual meeting, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 17, 1997.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 62

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

F. Associated Property Types

1. Roadbeds
2. Bridges
3. Gasoline / Service Stations
4. Restaurants / Diners
5. Motels / Tourist Courts
6. Recreation Travel Stops / Destinations
7. Roadside Parks / Markers

Introduction

Property types associated with the historic context for "Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 Through Oklahoma" include the roadbed itself, road-essential features such as bridges, and also the various gasoline / service stations, restaurants / diners, motels / tourist courts, recreation travel stops / destinations, and roadside parks / markers which lined its route through Oklahoma. The road that was designated or built as Route 66 in Oklahoma, including its ever-changing course and realignments, continues through the state under different names, usually as Oklahoma State 66 in the eastern part of the state and under other numbers in the western part of the state, and with a great variety of street names in the communities through which it passes. Along this route, with uneven consistency, remnants of the road and of the public and commercial infrastructure that emerged to serve travelers who traveled Route 66 still can be identified and evaluated for their eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

1. Roadbeds
Description

At its origin in 1926, Route 66 in Oklahoma consisted of a patchwork of existing roads and "highways," only small portions of which were paved. In the period of less than half a century in which Route 66 served the state, that route evolved so that the roadbed itself changed dramatically in construction and in location. As the roadbed was improved through various engineering stages meeting different standards for heavier and faster traffic, the road often shifted in alignment, often to reduce the curves and corners necessary to follow it, and as a consequence also bypassed some of the communities, settlements, and commercial operations that had come to depend on its traffic. The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F

Page 63

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

process of roadbed revision ultimately brought not only wider roads, straighter roads, and even divided roads, but also replacement roads as the same forces that had made Route 66 so important even brought about turnpikes and interstate highways with controlled access and that no longer coursed through the small towns and large cities that had seen the road as vital to their social and economic well being. In the wake of the changes, including replacement, remnants of the well-traveled road were left behind, sometimes inaccessible and unusable, sometimes carrying limited local traffic, and sometimes as principal service roads and urban streets. In some instances the road continues to be used as a state highway that even runs along side the interstate that replaced it. By following the evolution of the roadbed, thus, one gains a closer appreciation of not only the technology of highway construction and transportation engineering, but also the social implications of both.

Significance

Road segments that remain from the period of historic significance are valuable artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these road segments reflect on the one hand new and changing technologies and the evolution of pavement design and traffic engineering, and on the other hand the circumstances that gave rise to changing patterns of social interaction. In this way the changes in road segments reveal both material technology and also the social and economic variables that generated pavement upgrades and replacement, changes that were related not only to an increase in traffic associated with accelerating migration, with the end of the war, but also to the social dislocations that often converged with the alterations in the roadbed as a decline in traffic on that segment resulting from a change in road alignment, depression, war, consolidation in the economy, or even the construction of an alternate available route connecting the same points served by the former road.

Roadbed segments meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce depending on the particular segment and its association with Route 66. They may also meet Criterion C if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation and commerce requires that a road segment show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66 in Oklahoma. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of a distinct road type or style in its design, materials,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 64

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

workmanship, association, feeling, setting, and location as it once appeared as part of Route 66 in Oklahoma.

In order to qualify the sections must have been a part of Route 66 between 1926 and 1970. Segments built prior to 1926 qualify only if they became part of official Route 66. Historical data, such as engineering plans, old maps, or photographs should verify that sections of the roadbed were associated with Route 66. The property must retain the essential features that identify it as a highway either within a town center or in a rural setting. These features include the original cross-section template (comprised of a roadbed in the city; comprised of cut banks, fill slopes, roadbed, grade, and so forth in rural settings), original alignment or later realignment, and associated features like culverts and bridges, although it is recognized that a number of these features may have been modified or replaced. Segments which have been widened after the end of the period of significance may be included if they link significant sections of urban and rural portions of the route. Pavement is an inherently fragile feature of highways and is routinely covered over and replaced. Some early segments of Route 66 were never paved. Therefore, original pavement is not a registration requirement.

Nominated segments of Route 66 in urban and rural settings should be sufficiently long to preserve the feeling and setting of a continuous road. Short segments which have remaining associated properties or a large number of properties constructed after the period of significance should be included only if the area serves to link significant sections of urban and rural portions of the route (or rural and rural, or urban and urban sections). Segments of the route which have significant associated properties should be included.

2. Road Bridges on Route 66
Description

Without bridges to cross rivers, streams, and gullies, the best highway would be useless and would fail in its mission of connecting different points for the motorized traveler. Bridges thus form integral portions of Route 66 and also serve as distinct architectural and structural products associated with the road. Along Route 66 these bridges underwent an engineering change that introduced new elements of technology, materials, and designs, ranging from the timber bridges that once existed along Route 66 especially in western Oklahoma (but are no longer extant) to the steel girder bridges on concrete pile foundations or piers in the 1930s, to the multi-span reinforced-concrete arch bridges (like the Eleventh Street Bridge over the Arkansas River in Tulsa), to the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 65

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

reinforced-concrete slab bridges over smaller streams, and the steel truss bridges of various types.

Significance

By examining the bridges along Route 66, one can gain an understanding of the society that produced them, not just in the technology and materials available, but in the specific features, such as pedestrian walkways, and in the dimensions (the width often indicating the pace and amount of traffic for which each was constructed). In this way the bridges that remain from the period of significance along Route 66 in Oklahoma are crucial artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these bridges reflect the circumstances that gave rise to the particular structure, whether its origins were in the increase in traffic associated with route designation or new pavement, with accelerating migration, or with the surge of traffic and road construction at the end of the war, and they also reflect the social dislocations that may have caused the bridges to be neglected or even abandoned, such as a decline in traffic resulting from a change in road alignment, depression, war, or even the construction of an alternate available route connecting the same points served by the former road. Those bridges also reflect the changing technical and social standards employed in their construction, standards that themselves reflected the greater specialization and centralization in social organization.

Bridges on Route 66 meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce. They may also meet Criterion C if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction.

Registration Requirements

In most instances a bridge would be included as part of the roadbed with which it is associated. In addition, however, bridges may be eligible if the roadbed with which they were associated is not eligible and if those bridges were bypassed and abandoned. A bridge may be individually eligible for its engineering significance or for its historical significance if research indicates a clear association with the history of Route 66. Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation and commerce requires that a bridge show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66 in Oklahoma. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an engineering type or style in its design, materials, workmanship,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 66

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

association, feeling, setting, and location as it once appeared on Route 66 in Oklahoma.

To be eligible for the National Register as part of the Route 66 multiple property listing, road bridges may be located on any section of road which was designated officially as Route 66. The bridge must be an example of a bridge design that was associated with Route 66. If the bridge was constructed before Route 66 was designated in 1926, the bridge must have been in service for a significant period of time as part of Route 66. Bridges must retain integrity of location, design, materials, and association. Those properties eligible for engineering significance should be considered even if alterations to form and materials exist so long as the significant engineering design is prominent and intact. In those instances in which a bridge is eligible, additional attention should be given the approaches to the bridge—the vital linkage between the roadbed and the bridge—as contributing properties.

3. Gasoline / Service Stations / Garages
Description

Because of the length and the dates of the period of significance for Route 66, it is possible to identify along Route 66 major contours of the evolution of the commercial operations at which travelers would purchase gasoline, and later the full gamut of fuels, lubricants, tires, batteries, and other supplies and repairs for their vehicles. This evolution has been best chronicled by John Jakle and Keith Sculle in their study, *The Gas Station in America*. Although the architectural types of stations identified by Jakle and Sculle sometimes blur the lines, the primary forms include the early curbside station that simply dispensed gasoline, and then the shed, the house or cottage type, the house with canopy, the house with bays, and the oblong box. While illustrating the architectural change in the service station industry, these types also importantly reveal the changing functionality of the station. Although the filling station initially offered only the sale of gasoline (and no additional services or repairs or supplies) at a store that retailed a variety of consumer goods, it subsequently became separated from broader retail functions and dedicated its efforts to serving the automobile trade. Then the stations became larger to serve that automobile trade in more ways, stressing the service and then also the repair functions that drivers could expect. In that activity the gas stations joined an existing array of businesses already servicing automobiles, the garages and the automobile dealers, and the three significantly overlapped in their service functions and were each important in serving the Route 66 travelers. By the end of the period, however, the course of change had gone almost full circle with gas stations becoming reduced again to a function of convenience stores that offered no service and sold a variety of other

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 67

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

products much as had the earliest incarnations of the gasoline station so that repairs and exchanges had to be made in the garages and dealerships, businesses that likewise had become centralized and transformed.

Significance

Gas stations, service stations, garages, and automobile dealerships that remain from the period of significance along Route 66 in Oklahoma are crucial artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these stations reflect the circumstances that gave rise to the particular building, whether the increase in traffic associated with designation or new pavement, with accelerating migration, with the end of the war, but also with the social dislocations that may have closed the stations such as a decline in traffic resulting from a change in road alignment, depression, war, consolidation in the industry, or even the construction of an alternate available route connecting the same points served by the former road. Those stations also reflect status as an independent operation or one that was constructed as an affiliate of a major petroleum company and then the changes that occurred as companies shifted the appearance of their stations for marketing purposes.

Gas stations, service stations, garages, and automobile dealerships meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce depending on the particular business and its association with Route 66. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. These operations also meet Criterion Consideration G for properties under fifty years of age to 1970, the point at which the interstate highways completely bypassed the towns once served by Route 66.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation and commerce requires that a gas station, garage, or automobile dealership show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66 in Oklahoma. Physically, the gas station or garage must be located adjacent to, or near and obviously accessible from, Route 66 and must retain its appearance from the period of historic significance. The specific character defining aspects center on the ability of the business to serve automobile traffic. Thus a building must include a drive for automobile entrance and exit, and, if a service station, at least one lane where the automobile could pull next to gasoline pumps. While some of the early stations and some of the more recent were designed only to sell gasoline, probably a majority of the stations along Route 66 in Oklahoma included service bays. Thus, unless a gas station was designed with the more

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 68

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

minimalist function in mind, both an office / sales area and bays must remain. Because of the environmental and public safety issues associated with gasoline storage tanks and dispensing pumps, and the consequent wholesale removal of such features, those pumps are not essential requirements. In garages, the wide diversity of facilities, from the corporate-designed structures like that of the Firestone building in Sapulpa, to the adaptive reuse of existing buildings by small mom and pop operations, like the Elms Garage in Erick which even converted a former church to an automobile repair garage, makes uniform features only the most general. In those operations, however, a service area, which may even be outdoors in some of the earliest businesses, must exist. If outdoors, the service ramp, if situated over a pit, must exist; if a hydraulic lift, the remnant of the core cylinder must exist. (See the outdoor lift remnants embedded in concrete at the Commerce Marathon Service Station / Dairy King and the indoor lift at the Cities Service / Sunray D-X Station in Afton.) Of course, when those garages were also service stations, the garage may qualify on that basis alone. In the more common situation where automobile repairs were undertaken indoors, the building needs to retain the bays for entry and exit of the vehicles from the building. Likewise with the automobile dealerships, which also provided important maintenance functions for vehicles along Route 66: service entrances for vehicles must remain. In addition, unless research in historical documents indicates that the dealer did not have a showroom, a showroom—with substantial windows of some sort—is a requirement for a dealership. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an architectural type or style in its design, materials, workmanship, association, feeling, setting, and location as it once appeared on Route 66 in Oklahoma.

The gas stations and garages along Route 66 that have been evaluated for their eligibility often are vacant or are no longer used as gas stations; while some dealerships continue to operate, often they have been converted to other uses. These structures have been examined to determine the degree that they still reveal their historic function. If the structure has not been modified so as to compromise the integrity of the structure, that building will be determined eligible. Sometimes the integrity remains, but the condition of the building will be poor, a factor that will be of greater negative impact for those properties considered under Criterion C than under Criterion A.

4. Restaurants / Diners
Description

As an institution along the roadside, the café serving the travelers of Route 66 has a history distinguished for much of the period of significance by its independent

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F

Page 69

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

ownership, unregimented appearance, and frequently casual approach to business. Often ephemeral operations that came and went in almost cyclical fashion, the cafés that emerged to serve the traveling public tended toward low-capital investments that were heavily freighted with gender roles. Requiring less substantial structures than either gas stations with their specialized equipment or motels with their greater size, the roadside café sometimes took on extremely modest dimensions and location, often as an attachment to a gas station. Increasingly, in the 1930s, these cafés also became associated with motels and the allure of an operation that offered all three—food, lodging, and fuel—provided a significant competitive advantage, and one that was sometimes within reach of a family-sized business. These businesses did not follow a standard architectural typology except that they often began as lunchrooms, commonly held a counter and stools as well as tables and chairs (and later, booths), and were separated from the cooking area by a service window, although this separation was sometimes dispensed with in smaller operations. At the same time in the 1930s, as John Jakle and Keith Sculle observe in their standard history of *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age*, those restaurants, especially in towns and cities, began to modernize their appearance with brighter, glassier, facades and bigger signs. While the cafés in the 1940s became more substantial businesses—and less defined by family roles and size—the emerging trend was toward franchises and standardization; as mechanization took on a larger role in the kitchen, uniformity on the menu provided greater predictability for travelers unfamiliar with the home-grown culinary delights a community might offer. The proliferation of roadside cafés in the 1940s and 1950s finally yielded to the expansion of the chains, sometimes associated with motels, that left behind the independents as smaller, less up-to-date, and provincial in their offerings. One result was the effort of small operations to capitalize on their faster service than the larger restaurant and to specialize on hamburgers, or ice cream foods rather than full meals, which sometimes had not been their forte anyway. Even that specialized realm became target of the fast food empires though and the independents that survived on Route 66 usually did so by filling a particular niche in the local community rather than depending on interstate traffic. Architecturally, by the end of the period those independent operations with their vernacular designs remain as distinct from the chain restaurants as the chains are from each other.

Significance

As with the service stations, the cafés that remain from the period of significance along Route 66 in Oklahoma are crucial artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 70

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

diners reflect the circumstances that gave rise to the particular building, whether the increase in traffic associated with designation or new pavement, with accelerating migration, with the end of the war, but also the social dislocations that may have closed the restaurants such as a decline in traffic resulting from a change in road alignment, depression, war, franchising—either of that business or the entry of a nearby franchise into the same market—or the construction of an alternate available route connecting the same points served by the former road.

Restaurants meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce depending on the particular business and its association with Route 66. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. Restaurants also meet Criterion Consideration G for properties under fifty years of age to 1970, the point at which the interstate highways completely bypassed the towns once served by Route 66.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation and commerce requires that a diner show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66 in Oklahoma. Physically, the diner must be located adjacent to, or near and obviously accessible from, Route 66 and must retain its appearance from the period of historic significance. The specific character defining aspects of the café ordinarily could be found more on the interior of the building than the exterior, with lunch counters and stools and cases for displaying desserts or other specialties being prominent features. Since those interiors have seldom managed to weather the storms of use and reuse, the character defining features of the exterior are much more useful in identifying eligible café properties and these features center on the ability of the business to serve automobile traffic. Thus available parking is a consideration, and even if parking in that area is no longer possible, the relationship of the parking area to the café must be clear. With some exceptions, these buildings attempted to make themselves more inviting by a use of windows to enable potential customers to imagine themselves inside enjoying the food served by the establishment, and such fenestration, however creative or unaesthetic the design, must exist. The post-World War II examples of Jim's Restaurant in Vinita and Enze's Café at Hinton Junction, both display these features—set back from the road to allow for parking, and in these cases, wide, streamlined windows to make the interior especially inviting to the traveling stranger. These features also apply to the more modest group of cafés that served more limited menus, like the hamburger and ice cream stands that dotted the road. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an architectural type or style

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F

Page 71

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

in its design, materials, workmanship, association, feeling, setting, and location as it once appeared on Route 66 in Oklahoma.

The cafés along Route 66 that have been evaluated for their eligibility often are vacant or are no longer used as diners; indeed a great many are no longer so used. These structures have been examined to determine the degree that they still reveal their historic function. If the structure has not been modified so as to compromise the integrity of the structure, that building will be determined eligible. Sometimes the integrity remains, but the condition of the building will be poor, a factor that will be of greater negative impact for those properties considered under Criterion C than under Criterion A.

5. Motels / Tourist Courts
Description

As with restaurants and gas stations, the twentieth century history of the motel is intimately connected to Route 66 and the changes over time in the nature and number of accommodations available form a significant part of the social transformation generated along that road. The need for overnight lodging was a concomitant development of the rise in automobile travel, although various kinds of roadhouses had traditionally served the needs of travelers, even across the continent, as early as the 1850s. But the growth in automobile travel, especially in the 1920s, stressed the prevailing system as more and more people, known often as "auto-campers," pitched a tent where they happened to stop. As the number of such campers increased, communities sometimes created campgrounds to encourage them, welcoming them and their business. This stream of campers soon merged, however, with other campers who were on the road to find a job. Especially in Oklahoma where, as a result of the decline in farm prices and the increase in farming costs in the 1920s, an agricultural system tied to tenant farming and sharecropping emptied the lands of those previously tied to it, and in the 1930s circumstances of drought exacerbated the already severe hardships. An early separation of the well-to-do tourist from the "wagoneers" in search of employment came when enterprising landowners began to charge for campsites. As the conveniences at those sites increased, it became less a matter of camping than of lodging, although the facilities remained primitive.

The tourist camp became an increasingly common institution along the road and it was popular not only with the traveler but with the family who sought to augment their income from a farm or store. It was a low-capital business and most of the tourist courts were probably built by the owners themselves and the entire family worked the operation,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 72

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

usually in stringently defined gender roles. The evolution of architectural formats of these businesses followed a pattern identified by John Jakle, Keith Sculle, and Jefferson Rogers, that moved from auto camp or tourist home (in which private homes would take in overnight guests), to the cabin camp, to the cottage court, the motor court and in more recent years the motor inn and highway hotel. Independent, idiosyncratic in design and decoration, and with minimal advantage to consolidation, these tourist camps, and then tourist courts, remained popular entry-level business opportunities reaching their peak in the post-World War II period and early 1950s. At that point, however, the motel environment changed as greater capitalization became necessary, as group affiliation held a competitive advantage, and as the tax code provided a lucrative opportunity for investing and then soon selling to invest in different properties to reap more tax advantages. The result was the rise to dominance of the modern corporate motel chain characterized by uniformity within each chain and far removed from the independently owned operations that rose along the road through Oklahoma.

Significance

The motels that survive—including tourist courts and camps—alongside Route 66 in Oklahoma are sometimes like museum pieces that help to date a culture. They may be very simple and quite humble, amounting to a few cabins arranged in a crescent near the road or they may be fairly elaborate, integrated operations with garages or carports separating the motel units, either one possibly indicating a pre-World War II origin and the clientele being served. That these buildings remain at all is of some significance since, according to Sculle, Jakle and Rogers (*The Motel in America*) in 1960 the average life span of a motel building was calculated to be only nine years. As with the other structures on Route 66, the motels help the historian understand the social forces associated with Route 66. The materials, the designs, and the locations of these lodgings reflect the circumstances that gave rise to the particular business, whether the increase in traffic associated with designation or new pavement, with accelerating migration, with the end of the war, but also the social dislocations that may have closed the motels such as a decline in traffic resulting from a change in road alignment, depression, war, consolidation in the industry, or even the construction an interstate that took business away. Those motels commonly reflect at a glance the decline of independent “mom and pop” businesses in a world turning to chains and franchises as the norm in lodging.

Motels meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. Motels also meet Criterion Consideration G for properties under

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 73

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

fifty years of age to 1970, the point at which the interstate highways completely bypassed the towns once served by Route 66.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation and commerce requires that a motel show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66 in Oklahoma. Physically, the motel/tourist court must be located adjacent to, or near and obviously accessible from, Route 66 and must retain its appearance from the period of historic significance. Besides physical integrity, it is important that the pattern and layout of the cabin groups or motel units be clear. Some operations, like the Holiday Motel west of Miami, have been preserved almost as museum pieces because they were neither modernized nor adapted to different uses, but these are the exceptions. Most of the motels that remain have been modified in some way. The elimination or modification of some buildings within the complex would not be sufficient to eliminate a property from eligibility if the overall pattern is discernible. Thus, the Rio Siesta Motel east of Clinton retains eligibility despite the loss of two units because the remaining buildings retain their own materials, workmanship, design, setting, location, feeling, and association and because the pattern of the operation remains clear. Likewise, the Star Courts in El Reno, a motel that now serves as rental apartments, retains its eligibility because the appearance remains very much the same despite minor updating and changes in function. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an architectural type or style in its design, materials, workmanship, association, feeling, setting, and location as it once appeared on Route 66 in Oklahoma.

The motels along Route 66 that have been evaluated for their eligibility often are vacant or are no longer used as motels. These structures have been examined to determine the degree that they still reveal their historic function. If the structure has not been modified so as to compromise the integrity of the structure, that building will be determined eligible. Sometimes the integrity remains, but the condition of the building will be poor, a factor that will be of greater negative impact for those properties considered under Criterion C than under Criterion A.

6. Recreation / Travel Stops / Destinations Description

While it is unlikely that there ever has been an American route completely without tourist attractions—in the 1850s some merchants along the Oregon – California

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F

Page 74

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

Trail posted signs inviting emigrants to visit their stores to see grizzly bears in chains—the earliest attractions along Route 66 in Oklahoma were entirely natural or related to the indigenous cultures. Sometimes an organized marketing effort emerged to take advantage of those features, such as the “radium springs” in Claremore which offered reputed health benefits, but largely they consisted of seeing and swimming in a cool stream or visiting the dance grounds of Native Americans like that of the Creek and Euchee Indians west of Kellyville. The large operation known as Dixieland near Sapulpa proved an exception, and an important exception. Its attractions were picnicking, swimming, and skating, but they combined with gas, food, and lodging in the late 1920s and 1930s to attract travelers on Route 66 as well as locals. Pointedly, this early attraction provided, like the motels, some semblance of the homes that the travelers had left behind, and thus also some reassurance. It was only in the post World War II period and especially in the 1950s, that a new form of tourist attraction emerged, one that appealed to the curiosity about the different and exotic, one that drew upon new technology, and one that focused increasingly on Americans in their automobiles. Thus a plethora of tourist attractions, even tourist traps, emerged trying to pull past their turnstiles more and more of the traveling public. Sometimes, when grand enough, these attractions even prided themselves on being not just a travel stop, but a travel destination. Frontier City would be such a destination. On a smaller scale, the drive-in theaters, which nudged aside other outdoor recreational opportunities, represented an offshoot of this vehicular focus to selling entertainment.

Significance

The travel stops and destinations that remain from the period of significance along Route 66 in Oklahoma are crucial artifacts that serve to chart the changing social dynamics associated with Route 66. The rise (and often demise) of these attractions reflect the circumstances that gave rise to the particular building, whether the increase in traffic associated with designation or new pavement, with accelerating migration, with the end of the war, but also the social dislocations that may have closed the stations such as a decline in traffic resulting from a change in road alignment, depression, war, consolidation in the industry, or even the construction of an alternate available route connecting the same points served by the former road. While these operations were less prone to franchising and consolidation because their singularity was part of their draw (a chain of reptile villages, for example, being an unlikely investment attraction also) than were the food, fuel, and lodging businesses, these buildings and structures and objects indicate the transformation of the nation to an automobile culture that provided a ready market for curiosities and automobile-oriented consumption.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 75

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

Travel stops and destinations meet Criterion A in the areas of transportation, commerce, and also entertainment / recreation depending on the particular building and its association with Route 66. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. Travel stops and destinations also meet Criterion Consideration G for properties under fifty years of age to 1970, the point at which the interstate highways completely bypassed the towns once served by Route 66.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation, commerce, and entertainment / recreation requires that a travel stop or destination show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66 in Oklahoma. By their very nature, it is important to note, these stops were not necessarily located alongside the main road. While some operations were able to take advantage of a close proximity, others demonstrated their drawing power by being able to pull people unexpected distances from the main road, either as a positive feature suggesting peace and quiet, or possibly through misleading directions indicating that an attraction was closer than it really was. Totem Pole Park near Foyil appears to have been straightforward in its advertising and was able to attract tourists four miles away from Route 66. In contrast, the owners of the Buffalo Ranch near Afton deliberately studied the maps and travel data to find a location that would be impossible for a great number of travelers to miss. The central feature essential for eligibility is the particular attraction associated with the development and the buildings themselves, although alterations are allowed. In the case of Buffalo Ranch, for example, the commercial buildings themselves continue to exist and would be eligible, despite the fact that the buffalo and other wildlife that attracted the public are long gone. At Totem Pole Park, on the other hand, the structures themselves—pseudo totem poles and associated buildings—remain. At Reptile Village, west of Erick, very little remains of the once thriving business; not only the reptiles but nearly all of the buildings that housed them and that officed the business are gone, and with but a few other scattered remnants, all that survives is a portion of a large sign and some small service structures; thus Reptile Village would be eligible only as a site, not as a building, and historic documents thus play an important part in making it eligible. And, in fact, given the wide variety of tourist stops which do not follow a set pattern of commercial or architectural design, and given their distance, and sometimes less than obvious physical relationship with Route 66, research in historic documents will often be critical in establishing eligibility. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an architectural type or style in its design,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 76

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

materials, workmanship, association, feeling, setting, and location as it once appeared on Route 66 in Oklahoma.

The tourist stops along Route 66 that have been evaluated for their eligibility often are vacant or are no longer used as such attractions. These structures have been examined to determine the degree that they still reveal their historic function. If the structure has not been modified so as to compromise the integrity of the structure, that building will be determined eligible. Sometimes the integrity remains, but the condition of the building will be poor, a factor that will be of greater negative impact for those properties considered under Criterion C than under Criterion A.

7. Roadside Parks and Markers
Description

Of declining importance over time in the history of Route 66 in Oklahoma, and thus also often neglected in documenting the history of the road, are the small wayside features placed there explicitly to serve the traveling public. These features, however, not only marked the road and provided an opportunity for resting or lunching, and possibly even camping, for early travelers but they also mark a different period in time when travelers would stop by the side of the road to unwrap a sandwich instead of journeying on to the next fast food franchise. They are so simple and once were so ever-present, they are often overlooked. Ordinarily provided at public expense as a service, these roadside features, which generally included a picnic table and some kind of fire pit, also sometimes included monuments as signs with directions and distance as route markers. One such marker between Stroud and Davenport, a legacy of the Ozark Trails system which preceded Route 66, was the only way of discerning the actual course of the road; indeed this road was never paved and the route was subsequently moved, thus indicating even more clearly the fragility of the early road. As other developments—both directly associated with road construction and marking—increased and as the private infrastructure serving traffic also increased, these markers and rest stops became less important to the traveler.

Significance

Those parks and markers that remain from the period of significance along Route 66 in Oklahoma stand out as survivors of an earlier time distinguished by slower travel, shorter travel spans during a day, and more modest expectations of accommodations.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 77

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

The materials, the designs, and the locations of these markers and facilities reflect the circumstances of travel on Route 66 when the journey was more than moving from point A to point B.

Roadside parks and markers meet Criterion A in the area of transportation and entertainment / recreation depending on the particular site and its association with Route 66. They may also meet Criterion C for architecture if they are a good example of a type, style, or period of construction. While it would be unusual to find such a structure built after 1952, these facilities also meet Criterion Consideration G for properties under fifty years of age to 1970, the point at which the interstate highways completely bypassed the towns once served by Route 66.

Registration Requirements

Eligibility under Criterion A in the area of transportation requires that a roadside park or marker show a clear association with, and convey a feeling of, personal and commercial traffic along Route 66 in Oklahoma. The central character defining features of roadside parks are the physical facilities for sitting and resting and eating—modest features that often consisted of little more than picnic tables and occasionally fire pits—and some vegetation, which often amounted to some grass, although occasionally some shrubbery created the illusion of separation of sites. Trees were often present, although these too vary dramatically and are not necessary features. But the combination of picnic facilities and some form of vegetation would have been recognizable and identification enough for the weary traveler to pull over. Time and social change have not been kind to these parks and markers and their obsolescence has been assured by changing routes and changing modes of travel, and their demise has been encouraged by widened roads and diminished priorities in maintenance budgets. To attempt to locate roadside parks indicated on topographic maps even from the 1970s is an exercise in frustration. If the roadside park retains picnic facilities that are characteristic of the period of historic significance and also some vegetation, even if that vegetation has changed over time, then it will meet the requirements for eligibility. Road markers are even scarcer since it was necessary to change them as the road changed. Such markers that remain will be eligible if their markings clearly indicate their association with a particular alignment of Route 66 and its associated structures, or if research in historic documents can establish that relationship. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that it must be a good example of an architectural type or style in its design, materials, workmanship, association, feeling, setting, and location as it once appeared on Route 66 in Oklahoma.

The roadside parks and markers along Route 66 that have been evaluated for their

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 78

Oklahoma Route 66 Historic Resources, 1926-1970

eligibility often have been neglected and are seldom used for their original purpose. Only one (the city park and campground in Sayre) shows continuous use as a campground. These structures have been examined to determine the degree that they still reveal their historic function. If the facility has not been modified so as to compromise the integrity of the structure, that feature will be determined eligible. Sometimes the integrity remains, but the condition of the structure or object will be poor, a factor that will be of greater negative impact for those properties considered under Criterion C than under Criterion A.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section F Page 81

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section F Page 82

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section F Page 83

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: COVER; ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

MULTIPLE Route 66 and Associated Resources in Oklahoma, MPS
NAME:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 64500829

STATE & COUNTY: OKLAHOMA, Multiple Counties

DATE RECEIVED: 01/22/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 03/08/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: Y
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT___RETURN___REJECT___DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept
REVIEWER Boland DISCIPLINE Historia
TELEPHONE _____ DATE 3/6/03

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N