The Bulb Horn

Volume 89 Number 6 November-December 2026

THE VINTAGE MOTOR CAR CLUB OF AMERICA

The Touring Club

www.VMCCA.org



THE PURPOSE OF THE VMCCA IS TO PROMOTE TOURING AND ENJOYMENT OF VINTAGE VEHICLES THROUGH THE ACQUISITION, PRESERVATION, AND EXHIBITION OF ALL VINTAGE AND HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT VEHICLES AND ASSOCIATED MATERIALS.

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Front and back covers: A scene from historic New Castle, Delaware—gives a preview of the upcoming article about the 2026 Revival AAA Glidden Tour® based out of Dover, Delaware. On the front cover is the rear end of VMCCA President Mark and Sandy Hamlin's 1910 Buick Model 17 and on the back cover is Glen and Margie Jugenheimer's 1936 Ford Fordor Sedan. Glen and Margie are AACA members. (Photo by Tracy Lesher)
Inside front cover: Dick and Bobbi Bettle in their 1930 Ford Model A Sport Coupe during the 2025 Revival AAA Glidden Tour® in Owensboro, Kentucky. (Photo by Tracy Lesher)
Inside Back cover: A 1952 Ethyl Corporation ad that appeared in The Saturday Evening Post. (Image courtesy of Tracy Lesher)

Route 66 Turns 100 Years Old

By Carl Worstell



United States Highway Route 66, often called the "Main Street of America, “The Mother Road,” or sometimes the “Will Rogers Highway” will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary. It was originally proposed on April 30, 1926, as part of the United States’ first numbered highway system, and was officially adopted on November 11, 1926. The route connected Chicago and Los Angeles, linking a series of existing city, county and state roads into a continuous transcontinental highway. This now-famous American icon helped forge the history of the automobile in the United States, served as a major corridor for migration and helped define the American road trip and automobile culture.

The “Mother Road” highway began on the shores of Lake Michigan in Chicago, Illinois, and traversed through the skyscrapers of Chicago, the plains of central Illinois, Missouri and Kansas, the oil fields of Oklahoma and Texas, the mountains of New Mexico, and the deserts of Arizona, before finally ending on the shores of the Pacific Ocean in Los Angeles, California.

The original eastern start of Route 66 was at the Art Institute of Chicago's southwest corner—the intersection of Jackson Boulevard and Michigan Avenue. Today, the “Historic Route 66 Begin Sign” is on Adams Street near Michigan Avenue, across from the Art Institute. The highway then started its journey before ending in Los Angeles, California.



Top to bottom: The U.S. Route 66 starting street sign near the Art Institute of Chicago. A Route 66 mural in Wilmington, Illinois. (Images courtesy of the Library of Congress)

Santa Monica, California, on January 1, 1936, became the permanent end to Route 66. (The highway would cover 2,448 miles at its completion.) As Los Angeles grew, the original end point was extended from downtown L.A. to the corner of Lincoln and Olympic Boulevards in Santa Monica just a few blocks from the lesser known but also famous, Santa Monica Pier. The pier has long been celebrated as the "traditional" or "spiritual" end of Route 66 and in 2009, the California Historic Route 66 Association installed an "End of the Trail" for Route 66's 83rd birthday.

The now-famous roadway greatly contributed to the economic development of cities and states along its way. During the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, Route 66 became a major route for westward migration. Hundreds of thousands of Depression-era people traveled Route 66 from the southern Great Plains to California in search of work. This migration was later depicted in magazines and books such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939. Increased traffic along the route contributed to the growth of service industries in communities along the highway, including filling stations and restaurants, and giving birth to the concept of motor courts or motels—modern roadside conveniences.







Clockwise from the top right: Library of Congress Photographer Carol Highsmith captured this image in Hackleberry, Arizona. The Route 66 "End of the Trail" sign in Santa Monica. And another Highsmith photograph taken near Truxton, Arizona.

Above: Carol Highsmith took this photo of the Wigwam Hotel with antique cars parked in front of tepees in Holbrook, Arizona.
Below: A vintage San Bernardino postcard.

Sadly, but necessarily, Route 66 faced a decline in the mid-20th Century. The Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, commonly known as the Interstate Highway System, diverted traffic. After being largely replaced by the Interstate Highway system, Route 66 was officially removed from the United States Highway System in 1985. Although Route 66 no longer remains as a continuous route, parts of this iconic road still survive and have been preserved as “Historic Route 66,” a National Scenic Byway. Most of the still-existing Route 66 has been incorporated into city, county and state streets, and highways.



In several states, portions of the former route retain the "66" designation as part of state highway systems. Other segments are marked as "Historic Route 66" and maintained for tourism and preservation purposes. Some municipal roads along the old route have also retained the "66" number.

My personal introduction to Route 66 was in 1957. The following newspaper article was first published in the *San Bernardino Sun* on Monday, October 13, 1997, written after attending, the 1997 “San Bernardino Route 66 Rendezvous” in my 1966 Pontiac GTO.

A Personal Reflection:
A Journey on Route 66 Serves as Rite of Passage

On July 30, 1957, at the age of 12, I arrived in San Bernardino, California, with my mother and two older brothers. We had left the corn fields of Iowa to enter a strange land of blazing sun, surfing, little rain, big cities, and mountains at our back door.

Our 1949 Dodge caught up with Route 66 in Springfield, Missouri, and followed the Burma Shave and "Last chance for gas" signs on this now famous highway right into Southern California. Along the way, we made many stops at roadside attractions.

We spent the night in Will Rogers' hometown of Claremore, Oklahoma, and paused for the "biggest this" and the "biggest that" in Texas. We skipped the side tour to Roswell, New Mexico (we didn't know it was going to get its 15 minutes of fame), but had lessons in geology at the petrified National Forest and astronomy at Meteor Crater. After taking a side trip to the Grand Canyon, we finally hit the sweltering heat of the California desert.

When we rolled into San Bernardino on that afternoon in late July, we began watching for someplace to spend the night. Conveniently, we happened to rent a motel room on Route 66 (Mount Vernon Avenue). After registering, we ventured forth to find something to eat. Not knowing the layout of our new hometown, we drove around in what must have appeared to be a random cruise. However, the gods controlling American icons knew better. Destiny directed us to eat our first meal in San Bernardino at the original McDonald's hamburger stand on E Street and to spend our first night cradled in the protective arms of the Mother Road. I left San Bernardino after ten years to seek my fortune. Only occasionally have I returned to visit, and then, only for a few days at a time. Other members of my family and friends left sooner, later, or not at all.



In Springfield, Missouri.



A 1949 Dodge similar to one my family used to drive on Route 66 in 1957.



The first McDonald's hamburger stand in San Bernardino, California.

About 20 years ago, I began to realize that for me, moving to San Bernardino was not simply a change in scenery. I realized that, at age 12, I entered a world so different from what I was accustomed to. I became a part of the rock 'n roll, surfer, hot rod, tract home, student revolution, anti-war, congested city, smog-filled culture that California has often been identified with. These experiences helped to form my personal rite of passage into adulthood.

Forty years have passed since I first went swimming in Perris Hill pool, attended my first classes at Highland Junior High and stole an orange from a grove on Base Line. After other (although shorter) trips on the most famous auto enthusiasts' highway and many more visits to the Golden Arches in just about every state and a few foreign countries, returning to Route 66 and eating a McDonald's hamburger in San Bernardino makes me feel like the prodigal son.

I have been on parts of Old Route 66 many times in the past few years. I went on a Route 66 road trip beginning in Seligman and ending in Kingman at the Arizona Route 66 Museum. Seligman is sometimes called the "Birthplace of Historic Route 66." Along the town's streets one can find many relics from Route 66's golden age and signs urge travelers to pull over and spend their money. Old-fashioned diners and drive-ins serve up classic '50s and '60s food and vintage cars are parked all along the streets. Driving this route, and especially the route from Kingman to Oatman, brought back memories of the 1957 trip as I remembered much of the winding road from my first Route 66 trip.



The Burma-Shave sign near Seligman, Arizona, photographed by Carol Highsmith.

Left to right: Prolific Route 66 photographer Carol Highsmith. A Route 66 mural in Needles, California.







Our 1966 Chevrolet Impala Convertible.

Touring with the Vintage Motor Car Club of America has enabled me to visit Route 66 again. In May 2010 I attended the Muscle Car Tour in Flagstaff, Arizona. Like all VMCCA tours this was very enjoyable, particularly because I was awarded a prize for our 1966 Impala, a car that Jimmy Buffett would "Most Likely Ride In."

The Chrome Glidden Tour in Stillwater, Oklahoma, in June 2016, brought me back to Route 66 once again. Of course, it was an enjoyable tour (What VMCCA tour has not been enjoyable?) especially when the late Bill Sullivan and I took a side trip to visit the famous blue whale, a 20-foot-tall, 80-foot-long roadside attraction on Route 66. Built in 1972 as a whimsical gift; it is now an historic Route 66 landmark.

I certainly hope that I will tour some more on Route 66, but whether or not I do, please join me in lifting up your glass to toast the 100th birthday of this grand lady.

(Photos courtesy of Tracy Lesher and Carl Worstell)



Carol Highsmith captured the Big Blue Whale, in Catoosa, Oklahoma.

Did you know that when a VMCCA member sells a car, the buyer receives a free year of VMCCA membership? If you sell your car, be sure to pass along the buyer's name to VMCCA National Secretary Andrew Shepherd 8310 Garden Rd. Maumee, OH 43537 567-396-0618 This way your car can stay active in the club and its new owner can tour with the VMCCA!





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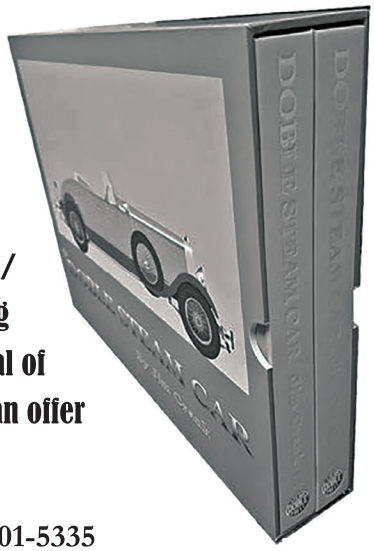
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