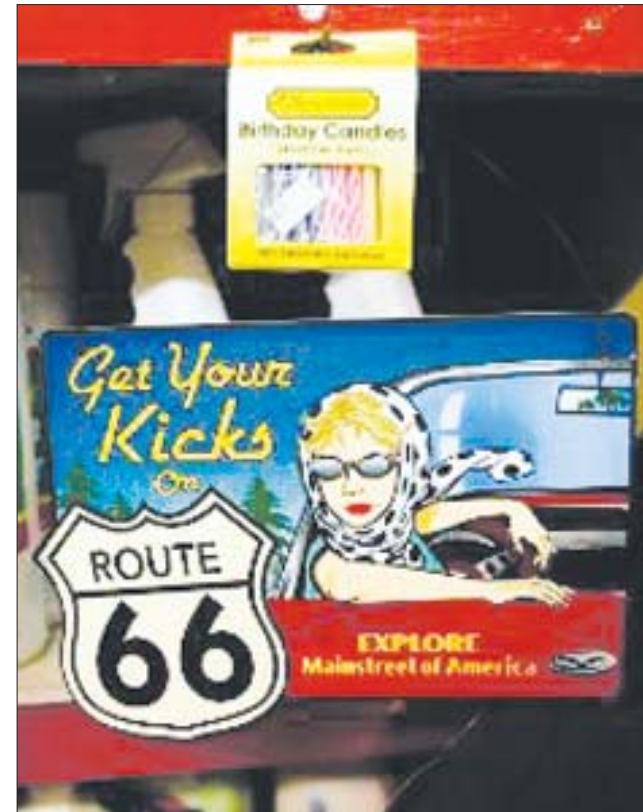


# Highway gets Hollywood's nod

From the Sunday, September 3, 2006 issue of The Capital-Journal, Topeka, Kansas

By Jan Biles  
The Capital-Journal



Jason Hunter/The Capital-Journal  
A box of candles shares a hook with a Route 66 sign at Eisler Bros. Old Riverton Store.

RIVERTON — Scott Nelson meets some interesting people while he stocks shelves and makes deli sandwiches at Eisler Bros. Old Riverton Store, an old-fashioned grocery on the north side of Route 66.

In the past few years, he's been rubbing elbows with some Hollywood types.

"The Disney people were here for the 'Cars' movie a couple of times," Nelson said.

The Disney/Pixar animated movie tells the story of Lightning McQueen, a NASCAR race car that takes a detour off the interstate highway and ends up in Radiator Springs, a fictional town on Route 66. The town has gone downhill since the interstate replaced the famous two-lane highway from Chicago to Santa Monica, Calif.

The producers of the movie wanted to understand the history and lives affected by Route 66, so they enlisted Michael Wallis, author of "Route 66: The Mother Road," to escort

them along the route, which included two stops at Eisler Bros. Old Riverton Store.

Wallis, of Tulsa, Okla., later voiced the character of Sheriff, a 1949 Mercury, in the movie.

The character of Mater the tow truck is a composite of Harley Russell, co-owner of the SandHills Curiosity Shop in Erick, Okla.; and Douglas "Mater" Keever, of North Carolina, a NASCAR

fan. There was an old wrecker in an empty lot by Route 66 in Galena, Kan.," Wallis told the New York Times when asked about the inspiration for Mater the tow truck. "Joe Ranft, the studio's head of story and a key member of the Pixar team, stopped and noticed it, and Mater was born."

Nelson said Disney officials gave him two tickets to the world premiere of "Cars" on May 26 at Lowe's Motor Speedway in Charlotte, N.C. An estimated 34,000 people were there.

Among the celebrities who voiced characters for the movie and attended the premiere were Owen Wilson, Larry the Cable Guy, Paul Newman, Tony Shalhoub, Bonnie Hunt and Cheech Marin.

"It was a lot of fun," Nelson said.

The G-rated movie has sparked a new interest in traveling Route 66 this summer, particularly among families.

"This year, with the gas prices, we thought we'd have fewer customers," said Amy Sanell, co-owner of Cafe on the Route in Baxter Springs, where a "Cars" movie poster is mounted to its storefront window. "But we've had more (families) this year than in the past two years."



## "Get your Kicks on Route 66" As said around the world

French: "Recevez vos Coups de pied sur le Trajet 66"

German: "Bekommen Sie Ihre Stöße auf dem Weg 66"

Spanish: "Consiga sus Patadas en Ruta 66"

Italian: "Ottieni il tuo Kicks sulla Route 66"

Norwegian: "Få din Benteknikk på Route 66"

Swedish: "Få din Kicks på Route 66"

# People still getting kicks on Route 66

From the Sunday, September 5, 2004 issue of The Capital-Journal, Topeka, Kansas

By Phil Anderson  
The Capital-Journal

RIVERTON — Route 66 has a presence in Kansas — 13.3 miles in the extreme southeast corner of the state, to be exact.

While other states can lay claim to far more Mother Road lore than Kansas, don't think for a minute that Route 66 aficionados overlook the Sunflower State.

Visitors from across the nation and around the world descend year-round upon Eisler Brothers, a mom-and-pop grocery store and gift shop along historic Route 66 in Riverton, which looks much as it did when the Mother Road was the nation's main east-west highway from the 1926 to 1960.

The heyday of Route 66 was during the Depression and Dust Bowl eras of the 1930s, when thousands of desperate people headed west in search of a better life.

Starting in Chicago and ending in Santa Monica, Calif., Route 66 is without question one of the world's most famous byways. Many of the towns it passed through had an almost lyrical sound to them: St. Louis; Oklahoma City; Tucumcari and Gallup, N.M.; Flagstaff and Winona, Ariz.; and Barstow and San Bernardino, Calif.

Much of the original Route 66 is no longer in existence, but some patches do remain — including portions of the road in Kansas.

Today, folks like Floyd Steele, 78, and his wife,

Kathryn, 76, are keeping the Kansas memories alive through membership in a historic Route 66 organization.

Decked out in trademark black-and-white Route 66 jackets and caps, the Steeles met me one recent afternoon at Eisler Brothers and reminisced about their lives, which have mostly been lived out near the highway.

"This seems to be the center of the tourist traffic right here," Floyd told me as he sat at a round plastic picnic area inside an enclosed area in front of the Eisler Brothers store. "This store right here has been here since the highway opened up, and it hasn't changed much."

Years ago, two gas pumps stood in front of the store. Now, a couple of weathered wooden carts brimming with colorful flowers adorn the store's front lawn.

Floyd said if bus tours or other large groups provide enough notice, a smorgasbord lunch will be prepared at the store.

Folks come to tiny Riverton for their Route 66 kicks from throughout the United States, as well as from France, Germany, England, Norway and Japan.

Floyd said he was born in

Joplin, Mo., another stop on Route 66, and later moved to the Kansas side. No doubt, getting married to Kathryn, a Baxter Springs girl who also had her roots in Joplin, had something to do with becoming a Jayhawker.

Just west of Riverton, the last of the Marsh Arch bridges still remains. It is a narrow, one-way bridge, and to get to it, you must leave the main state highway. Thankfully, Floyd and Kathryn led and I followed to the bridge. Getting out of my vehicle and standing on the original Route 66 sent a chill up my spine, as I imagined the millions of folks who had passed across this very blacktop with hopes and dreams of something better in their hearts as they headed west.

The road has had its share of famous people: Will Rogers, for example, whose museum is located today on historic Route 66 in Clairmore, Okla. Infamous characters also abounded, like Bonnie and Clyde.

Today, the heroes are folks like the Steeles, who give tirelessly of themselves to keep alive a 13.3-mile memory that is part of Americana.

### Deli Menu

Party Trays Made to Order for all Occasions

#### Homemade Sandwiches

Baked Ham	Pickle Loaf
Bologna	Pimento Cheese
Chopped Ham	Roast Beef
Cooked Salami	Smoked Salami
Liver Cheese	Smoked Turkey
Old Fasion Loaf	Turkey
All Sandwiches come with choice of Cheese:	Fixins'
American	White Bread
Smokey Sharp 35¢ extra	Wheat Bread
Cheddar	Rye Bred 15¢ extra
Provolone	Pumpnickel 15¢ extra
Hot Pepper	Sour Dough 15¢ extra
Muenster	Lettuce
Super Sharp 35¢ extra	Tomato
Swiss	Pickle
Marble Jack	Onion
Extras When available:	Relish
Baked Beans	Miracle Whip
Pasta Salad	Mustard
Cole Slaw	Barbecue Sauce
Potato Salad	Italian Dressing
	Catsup
	Butter

Daily Specials Phone ahead for faster service 620-848-3330



Established 1925  
Eisler Brothers  
Old Riverton Store



Established March 20, 1925      Historic Highway 66, Riverton, KS 66770      Phone: 620-848-3330      Volume 1

# National Parks Service visits and recognizes the area

On Thursday, July 12, 2007 Michael Taylor, program manager, and Kaisa Barthuli, deputy program manager, with the Route 66 Preservation Program a division of the National Parks Service visited the 13.2 miles of Route 66 in Kansas.

Route 66 has been recently listed on the World Monument's Fund 2008 Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites, among such others as the cultural sites of Iraq, Machu Picchu in Peru, and modern Shanghai in China.

Route 66 is the most famous highway in America, and perhaps the world. It was created in 1926 as part of the nation's first system of federal highways. It was popular as the shortest, all-weather route from Chicago to Santa Monica. It has become infamous through literature, Grapes of Wrath

(1939); film, Grapes of Wrath (1939); television, Rt. 66 with Buzz and Todd and the Corvette, although only about 5% of the show was actually filmed on Route 66; and song, "Get your kicks on Route 66" written by Mr. and Mrs. Rob Troop, sang originally by Nat King Cole, this song has been recorded by over 150 different artists over the years.

During the years of 1933-1945, the Depression Era, over 210,000 people traveled along Rt. 66. From 1946-1960's, the Golden Years, there was a growth in tourism, western migration, and commercial and suburban sprawl. Years 1960's-1985 saw the decline of Rt. 66, due to decreased traffic, faster automobiles, construction of the Eisenhower Interstate System. In 1985, Route 66 was decommissioned. Federal and state



Above: Scott Nelson (manager of Eisler Bros.) receiving the plaque on behalf of Eisler Bros. Old Riverton Store from Kaisa Barthuli (deputy program manager of the Preservation Program division of the National Parks Service).

agencies, private organizations, and numerous members of the public realized that remnants of the road were quickly disappearing, and that the remaining significant structures, features, and artifacts associated with the road should be preserved. In 1990, the Route 66 Study Act was passed. The act recognized that Route 66 "has become a symbol of the American people's heritage of travel and their legacy of seeking a better life." Which led to the creation of the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program.

Michael Taylor and Kaisa Barthuli came to this 13.2 mile stretch of Route 66 to present plaques to Eisler Brothers Store in Riverton and Rainbow Bridge, just

west of Riverton, both have projects that the program has funded through their grant program that requires matching funds. "The stretch of highway from the stateline to Main Street in Galena is really an incredible section of Route 66," Taylor said. The highway section in Galena is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Michael Taylor, manager of the NPS Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, said the program has provided federal funding of \$1,044,813 for 69 projects along the route. With matching funds of \$1,077,662, the total value to date is \$2,122,475. Of the 69 projects along the Route, four are in the 13.2 miles in Kansas.



Enjoy your trip on Route 66





# The History of Eisler Brothers Old Riverton Store

Following his return from World War I, Leo Williams and his wife Lora Leona Williams opened a small diner and garage on the eastern edge of Riverton, Kansas. Leo worked at the Empire District Electric Plant across the street, while Lora served lunches and sold groceries.

After a tornado destroyed that building in 1923, Leo built the current store on an adjacent lot. The new store opened on March 20, 1925 with a small apartment in the west half of the building for the Williams'. Three years later, Lora and Leo's only child, Jane, was born in the apartment on February 29, 1928.

The 1930 Sanborn Insurance map for Galena describes the property as a one-story masonry store with a composition roof. The map shows the main store with a dwelling unit on the west side, smaller one-story rooms on the north and east, and an open porch across the front. A single-car garage stood at the rear of the property. The Williamses leased the gasoline rights first to Texaco and later to Standard Oil. Signage on the building from this time reads, "Y Not Eat/Williams/Bar-B-Q" and "General Mer-

chandise."

The Williams' Store carried everything from groceries to general merchandise. Patrons could buy shoes and clothes, as well as food staples such as ice, milk, eggs, bread, fresh meat, canned goods, and penny candy. They also sold bulk foods such as lard, peanut butter, and vinegar. Lora continued to serve chili, and Leo barbecued beef and venison in a pit behind the store. Leo was also known for selling high-quality produce at the store. According to his daughter, Jane Williams Ball, Leo purchased produce every evening at the Joplin Market Square.

Like most businesses in the area, the Williams' Store catered primarily to local customers, although it also played an important role on Route 66. As current owner Isabelle Eisler wrote:

Travelers stopped to enjoy a slice of cold watermelon, to have a fairly famous sandwich...or to fill a thermos with coffee. It was a Pit Stop with a graveled parking area and, out back, a familiar white closet, with a half moon cutout in its door. Two closets, in fact. The store front had red and green

neon tube lighting to pierce the early darkness of a cold, snowy night and people in the store, owners, clerks, and customers, all served as veritable verbal Mapsco if you needed directions.

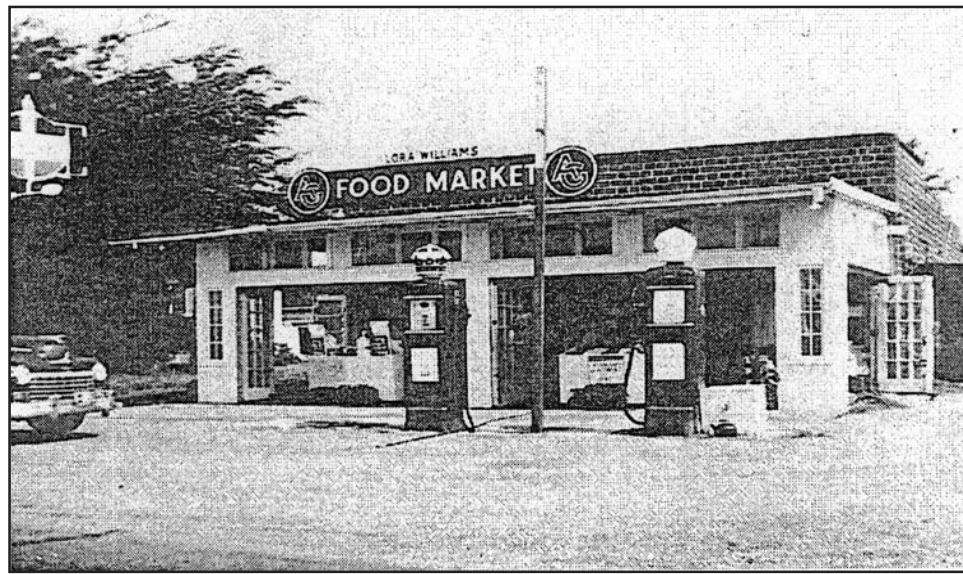
Over the course of their long ownership, the Williamses made a few modifications to the property. Around 1933, they enclosed the front store, creating a protected breezeway for produce and customers. In 1939, a few years before the family moved their residence to the house next door to the store, a small bathroom was in stilled in the apartment.

Leo also built a regulation croquet court in the open lot east of the store. Construction to standard specifications and with low walls surrounding the playing field, the court was lit for night games. It was an entertainment focal point for Riverton, drawing crowds for tournament play. When parking needs increased, the court was removed.

In 1945, after spending over twenty years in the grocery business, Leo Williams purchased a skating rink in Galena and leased the grocery to Lloyd Paxon. After Leo's death in the 1948, at the age of 56, Lora ran the Galena Roller Rink until Paxon's lease on the grocery expired. Lora returned to the store, operating it until about 1970. She affiliated with Associated Grocers (AG) out of Joplin, Missouri, an organization similar to the Independent Grocer's Association (IGA). The store became known as the "Lora Williams AG Food Market."

Lora retired around 1970 and lived in the house next to the store until her death in October 1977. Thelma Ball, her daughter Jane's mother-in-law, assumed responsibility for the store after Lora's retirement. In 1971, Lora transferred the property to her daughter Jane. Thelma Ball purchased the property from Jane in 1972.

The current owners, Joe and Isabelle Eisler, purchased the property from Thelma Ball in 1973. The Eislers erected the greenhouse, but have otherwise maintained the historic character of the property. The store continues to operate as



a grocery and deli run by their nephew Scott Nelson, President of the Kansas Route 66 Association. It remains an icon for Route 66.



**From the United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.**



# Photos from inside Eisler Bros. Old Riverton Store



**Thank You and Please visit us on your next trip on Route 66**

# The History of the Kansas Route 66 Historic District, East of Galena



The initial improvements to this segment of Route 66 were made during the peak of the mining boom in the Tri-State lead mining district, an area that extended from Galena east to Joplin and Carthage, Missouri, and south through Baxter Springs into northeastern Oklahoma. Mining in this area began in 1876 with the discovery of lead ore in Galena. Within thirty days, the population of this largely undeveloped area swelled to ten thousand as miners rushed in to capitalize on the potential wealth. By the turn of the twentieth century, the population of Galena had stabilized at around five thousand. The community boasted paved streets, sewers, city water, and both city and interurban electric streetcars. Running from Baxter Springs and Galena to Joplin and Carthage, Missouri, the streetcars connected area workers to jobs at mines throughout the Tri-State Mining District.

The initial road improvements were most likely financed by a special benefit district formed by the local mining companies. Kansas law provided adjacent property owners the ability to create such benefit districts to fund road improvements assuming the road was considered a "public utility." As early as 1903, the roads received a hard surface utilizing the tailings, or chat, produced by the local

mines. The ground up chat formed a hard concrete-like surface that withstood the heavy traffic the road received. Additional road improvements occurred in 1922 and 1923. In addition to the special benefit district, money Kansas received through the Federal Highway Act of 1921 funded the construction of the concrete structures, including the viaduct over the railroad tracks. Contemporary improvements along Route 66 also included the construction of the two Marsh Arch Bridges, one at Riverton (now demolished) and one at the Brush Creek Curve (listed on the National Register). Other than repaving, virtually no changes have been made to this section of road over the last 80 years.

The peaceful journey of travelers and truckers along this section of road was disrupted in June of 1935 during a strike at the Eagle-Picher lead smelter. Located north of the road, between the triple culvert and the 90-degree curve, this facility was among the leading processors of lead ore in the country during the first part of the 20th century. During the spring of 1935, leaders of the Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers called a strike to protest working conditions and asking the mine operators to recognize the union. On June 28, nearly two months into the strike, a violent attack broke out on Route

66 in front of the Eagle-Picher Smelter. Several hundred strikers gathered near the smelter, throwing rocks and threatening to shoot any scab workers attempting to enter or exit the plant. Automobiles were overturned, and all traffic on Route 66 was stopped. Twelve men were hurt. While the mines and processing facilities had returned to nearly normal production schedules by August, protests and sporadic violent incidents, such as dynamiting the gas lines feeding the smelter, continued for several years.

The setting of this stretch of road remains the most distinctive feature of Route 66 through Kansas. From its inception the road entered Kansas through an industrial wasteland created by nearly 50 years of mining. Both the 1937 WPA guidebook to Kansas and a 1946 guidebook to Route 66 comment on the distinctiveness of this particular landscape. The WPA writers noted, "Lying in all directions from the highway are man-made white mountains of chert, residue from the mines, topped occasionally with gaunt black mills and separated by dusty roads, railroad tracks, and patches of rock and cinder-covered wasteland." The guide calls the Galena Smelter, a great gray hulk surrounded by a maze of chat-covered roads and railroad tracks. "This ubiquitous detritus has unequivocally

"destroyed the original beauty of the country." A decade later, the Rittenhouse guide notes the "great piles of 'chert' or 'chat,' the waste from the lead and zinc mines," that dominates the landscape between Joplin and Galena. Today, most of the mines have played out, and while still harsh, efforts have been made to reclaim the damaged landscape. North of Route 66, buildings from the Eagle-Picher smelting facility still stand, although the hulking Galena Smelter is no longer extant. And, a reclamation project in the 1990s planted prairie grasses on the remaining chat piles south of 66 and sealed most of the remaining open mine shafts. Grasses aside, the landscape remains haunted and unnatural and is a striking element of one's journey through Kansas along this road.

**From the United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.**





# From Across the Seas...



An audience from a touring British bus, giving the "Keenagers" a big hand for their rendition of Route 66 at Eisler Bros. Old Riverton Store.



A motorcycle group from over seas poses in front of Eisler Bros. Old Riverton Store.

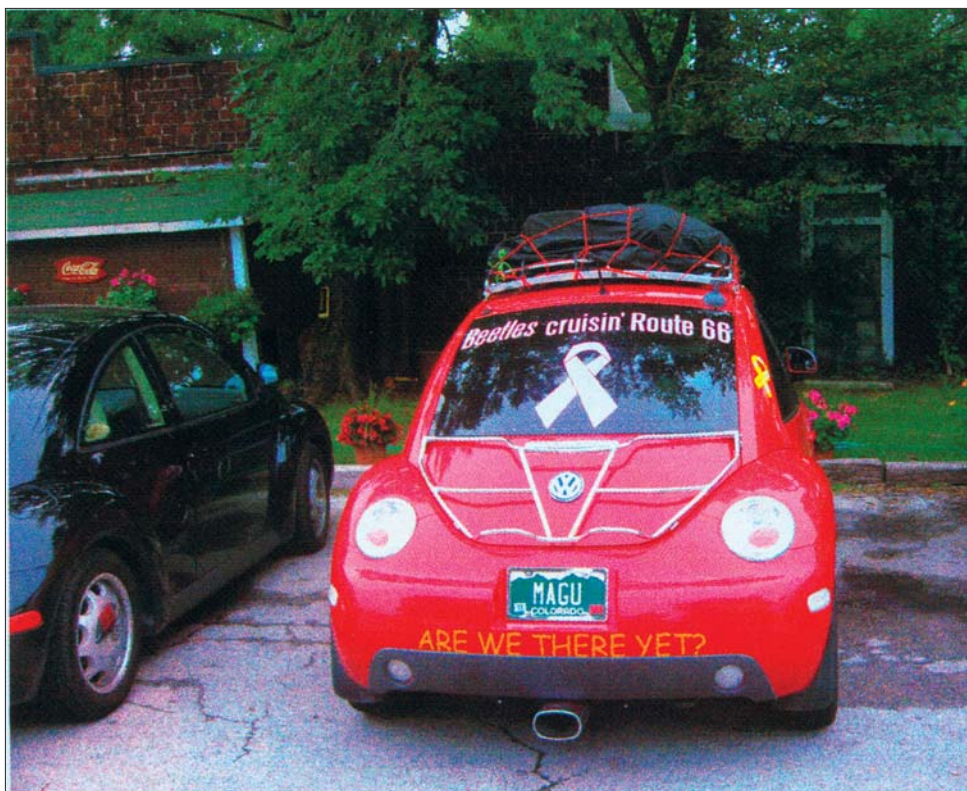


+ CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

# ...And Across the Land



Volkswagens from Texas, Canada, and all around hit Kansas last week for a visit at Eisler Bros. Old Riverton Store.



## Ham Radio Operators Broadcast from Eisler Bros. Old Riverton Store

Ham Radio Operators David Hargood (pictured on the left) and Roger Wilson spent a weekend at Eisler Bros. Old Riverton Store with their Ham Radios and talking to other from around the world about being on the "Mother Road." Eisler Bros. has been a regular hot spot for Ham Radio Operators with entire crews coming in the past and broadcasting for nearly a week. Ham is a slang term for amateurs which commercial operators used to call amateur radio operators when they were frustrated by picking up interference from amateur radio operators. The term Ham has been adopted by modern amateur radio operators, maybe without full knowledge of its derogatory meaning.

Riverton, Kansas

## Memory of Visionary Owner of Eisler Bros.



through this ancient reality, the Old Riverton Store, that remains busy and vibrant today.

Coming to Riverton over 34 years ago, both Joe and Isabell learned to love the people and the community even though they only lived here for about 3-4 years. Joe's position with Wolf Medical Instruments required their move to Allen, Tx. Isabell's desire was to keep it as nearly as possible in its original state. She never lost interest in the community and was always interested in the welfare of those who lived here. Her vision of the store has kept it in tack, and today Eisler Bros. is on the map throughout the world. Filmed and documented all over the globe.

The existing store originally had an open front porch, but the present closed in porch replaced that in 1933. The interior has changed little since 1925. A pressed metal ceiling is used throughout the building. The building was divided into two primary spaces, the



Once known as the "Williams Store", Eisler Brothers Old Riverton Store, located on HWY 66 in Riverton, Kansas, continues to attract visitors from all over the world

east section which was, and is, used as the commercial area and the west section consisting of three rooms which was the residence of Leo and Lora Williams and their daughter, Jane Marie.

In the 1940's the Williams moved their residence to the house next door to the store. Today the original living room, houses Route 66 merchandise and souvenirs.

There were gasoline pumps in front of the store

for many years, leased first to Texaco and later to Standard Oil. The store itself carried everything from groceries to general merchandise - shoes, clothes, milk, fresh meat, a wide variety of goods. Leo also barbecued beef and venison in a pit behind the store and served sandwiches to customers. Lora served her special recipe of chili.

Customers were mostly

local people, but the store played an important role on Route 66 as the traffic increased through the late 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's.

There were originally two outhouses back of the store. One now remains, painted white with a thin moon silhouette cut into the door. Leo and Lora Williams ran the store until 1945 when they leased the grocery to Lloyd Paxson. Leo

died in 1948, so when the Paxson lease expired, Lora returned to the store and operated it until about 1970, and currently the store continues under management of Isbell's nephew Scott Nelson.

Get your Kicks on 66

## Travelers from along Route 66



Bikers from Norway

The Galena part of Old Route 66 has the most complete section of road bed and also is the longest section in Kansas to retain its original design largely intact



Bikers from Norway



Eisler Bros. on Route 66 We were here before it Started... We helped it Grow!



Route 66 Memorabilia

Unique Gifts & Crafts

Stop for a Back in Time Experience

"Hand Crafted Sandwich" 620-848-3330

from our Full Service Deli full of fresh meats & Cheeses

KANSAS the HEART of 66

Hanging Baskets

Flowers you'll Brag About



Eisler Bros. on Route 66 Riverton, Ks. since 1925

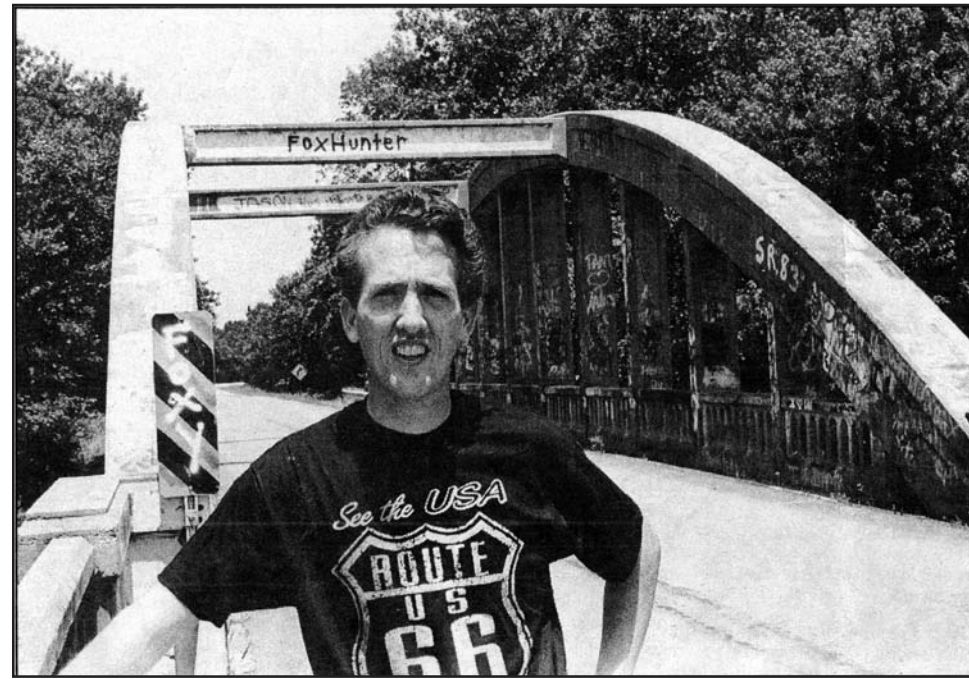


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# Historians scout sites on 'the mother road'

From the Joplin Globe, Thursday, June 25, 1992 By Wally Kennedy Globe Staff Writer



Scott Nelson saved Rainbow Bridge on Route 66 in Kansas from closure.

Unlike the cars that raced across America on Route 66 for half a century, the drive to preserve segments of John Steinbeck's "mother road" and the tourist stops that flank its roadbed has been anything but speedy.

But preservationists in Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma, like those in other states that are home to America's Main Street, are making inroads.

The task, in relation to the size of the project, is enormous, preservationists say. Route 66 is a 2,200-mile slab of running concrete that stretches across the heartland from Chicago to the Pacific Ocean.

Because of the national scope of the project, the federal government became involved when it passed the Route 66 Study Act of 1990. The National Park Service has been given authority to determine what, if anything, the federal government should do to preserve the decertified federal highway. The Park Service will issue a report on Route 66 in 1994.

Many of the mom-and-pop operations - the service stations, restaurants, tourist courts, motels, and garages - that made Route 66 such an experience have faded into memory and are now classified as archaeological sites.

Only seven segments of Route 66, located in Arizona, have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Efforts are under way in Missouri and Oklahoma to identify buildings, structures, and sites that are worthy of preservation.

In Kansas, a 13.2-mile segment of the highway runs from Galena to Baxter Springs. Preservationists, led by Scott Nelson, who operates a general store in Riverton and serves as president of the Kansas Route 66 Association, achieved a major triumph this year when a compromise was reached with the Cherokee County Commission that maintains the historic character of Rainbow Bridge, a concrete arch bridge on Route 66 north of Baxter Springs.

The bridge, which was placed on the National Register by the Kansas Department of Transportation, will be used for westbound traffic only, instead of being completely bypassed by a new bridge. There was never any plan to demolish it.

"It was the only bridge of its kind on Route 66 and we thought it should remain open to traffic as a tourist attraction," Nelson said. "We worked very hard from November to March to keep it open, and we contacted whoever we could for help."

The value of Route 66 to Galena, Riverton, and Baxter Springs in terms of tourist dollars, Nelson said, is evident by the stream of visitors who pass through Riverton.

"We are getting people from all over the world," said Nelson. "Recently, the San Francisco Examiner did a story on Route 66. I have received mail from across the country. In fact, every time a major newspaper does a story I end up with a backlog of mail from people who want information about

Route 66 in Kansas," he said.

"There are 250 million people in this country and if one million, a small percent of the total, are interested in Route 66, well, you can see the potential impact," said Nelson.

In Missouri, only one property associated with the highway, the Coral Court Motel in suburban St. Louis, is listed on the National Register. The Connor Hotel in Joplin, with its main entrance fronting Route 66, was on the National Register before it was demolished in 1978.

Beverly Fleming, director of the Route 66 Association of Missouri, said the association will attempt to document 200 buildings along rural portions of the route for placement on the National Register. The nominees for designation, she said, do not include other buildings and sites in St. Louis, Springfield, and Joplin. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources has given the association as \$11,531 grant to hire someone who is trained in architectural history to do the survey.

"Just how difficult the survey will be is unknown since no one has ever done a highway survey of this kind in Missouri," she said. "It could be a much larger task than we imagined."

Ms. Fleming said the historical information could be used to produce promotional literature and exhibits, as well

As providing the basis for the National Register nomination.

A 307-mile segment of Route 66 was designated a historic highway in Missouri in 1990, the first such legislation of its kind along the eight-state route. A year later, the first of 300 signs marking the path of the highway were erected. Funding for the signs, about \$19,000, was raised through the joint efforts of the Missouri association, and 25 communities and 10 counties along the route.

Oklahoma is the only state to survey all of its portion of Route 66. The Oklahoma Historical Society helped design the survey in 1984. Preservationists identified some 30 buildings as nominees for the National Register.

Melvina Heisch, with the Oklahoma Historical Society, said some of the nominated buildings that were identified in 1984 are gone now, but preservationists are pushing hard to designate those that remain.

"Even when a building is listed, there is no guarantee it will stay in place," she said. "A registered building can be demolished or severely altered."

The survey was promoted by the historical society, the state Department of Tourism and the National Trust for Historic Preservation with a singular purpose in mind.

"It is hoped that this will become a real draw for tourists. Route 66 conjures up all kinds of emotion and excitement," she said.

## From the Archives... Rainbow Bridge Dedication

From the Oct. 12, 1994 issue of the Galena Sentinel-Times



The Kansas Historic Route 66 Association made a special presentation last Saturday to Cherokee County Commissioner John Delmont and the Cherokee County Commissioners a special certificate of appreciation for their efforts involved in keeping Rainbow

Bridge open and accessible to tourist and travelers. Rainbow bridge is located west of Riverton on Historic Route 66.

The association noted that the efforts in the preservation of the historically significant bridge saves a significant part of old Rt. 66.

The bridge was noted as one of the more memorable stops on the legendary highway.

The Rainbow Bridge, which spans Brush Creek, represents the last remaining Marsh Arch Bridge on Route 66. The bridge was

Continued on Page 5



# Continued story from pg. 4

listed on the National Historic Registry on March 10, 1983.

The bridge was constructed in 1923 and represented Federal Project no. 142. Kansas Highway Commission Chairman at the time was Jonathan M. Davis.

Delmont, who was present at the ceremonies, noted that once the commission realized the significance of the bridge they worked to help preserve the historic bridge.

Delmont also noted that

men from the Correctional Center in Labette County should be thanked for their work in cleaning and placing the signs at each end of the bridge.

Thelma Lou Miller was also present at the ceremony, representing her brother, Roy Weiss, who helped construct the bridge in 1923. Weiss was 25 years old when he began working on the bridge. Mrs. Miller brought a family photo album that showed her brother working on the bridge.

## Some of the Route 66 Associations

### Kansas

Route 66 Association of Kansas  
P.O. Box 66  
Riverton, KS  
(620) 848-3330

### CALIFORNIA

California Historic Route 66 Association  
P.O. Box 64  
Azusa, CA 91702-0064  
(909) 885-6324

### ARIZONA

Arizona Route 66 Association  
120 W. Andy Devine Avenue  
Kingman, AZ 86402  
(928) 753-5001

### NEW MEXICO

New Mexico Route 66 Association  
1415 Central NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87106  
(505) 852-2995

### TEXAS

Old Route 66 Association of Texas  
P.O. Box 66  
McLean, TX 79057  
(806) 779-2225

### OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma Route 66 Association  
P.O. Box 446  
Chandler, OK 74834  
(405) 258-0008

### MISSOURI

Missouri Route 66 Association  
P.O. Box 8117  
St. Louis, MO 63156  
(417) 865-1318

### ILLINOIS

Illinois Route 66 Association  
110 W. Howard  
Pontiac, IL 61764

# Kansans push for a resurrection of Route 66

From the Sunday, July 7, 1991 issue of the Morning Sun By Neal McChristy, Morning Sun Staff Writer in Pittsburg, Kansas



Scott Nelson, chairman of the Kansas Historical Route 66 Association, stands in the middle of Route 66 in Riverton, which runs in front of the convenience store he manages, the Eisler Brothers Market. The store, which opened a year before Route 66 did, has two Kansas U.S. 66 signs sporting the front and sells a variety of Route 66 memorabilia.

Many area residents remember driving on 'America's Main Street'

RIVERTON - Even though Kansas wasn't in the song, there are plenty of people in southeast Kansas singing the praises today about the historical value of Route 66.

In addition to the "Get Your Kicks On Route 66" song by Bobby Troup, people have written books about the highway. A television series, "Route 66," starring Geroge Maharis and Troy Donahue, was broadcast in the '60s. And people have driven it in everything from 1926 to 1992 Fords since it opened in 1926.

By this fall, Kansas is expected to join other states in marking the historic Chicago to Los Angeles highway. The 13.2-mile Kansas route winds through Galena, Riverton, and Baxter

Springs.

The State of Kansas will put up two signs - one each as the motorist enters from Missouri and Oklahoma.

The 200-member Kansas Historical Route 66 Association plans to raise \$2,500 to put about 50 more signs along the route and promote it as a tourism site. T-shirts are being sold for this purpose, but donations are welcome.

This is their way to mark "America's Main Street," as it was called. Others called it "The Mother Road." Another nickname: "Will Rogers Highway."

And Bobby Troup has been enrolled in Kansas' 200-member group, thanks to Lucy Weiss, Baxter Springs.

"It was real cute when I called him," Weiss said. "...I said I had one question, 'How come you left Kansas out of the song?' and he said, 'Nat King Cole did that.' Whether it was in the song or not, Kansans remember driving it.

Vivian McCormick, Pittsburg, remembers just getting her license at age 16 and helping drive the family car, a 1963 Chevrolet. They took Route 66 west, and she said her father insisted they look at scenes in the countryside.

"I got a wealth of education from that," she said, "and I've never forgotten it."

Years earlier, Bob Hardwick,

was about age 4 when they opened the route in 1926. He helped open the route in Oklahoma by riding a horse in the parade.

Later, he upped his horsepower to a 1937 Ford convertible, but still rode Route 66.

"We'd go to Oklahoma and sometimes Illinois," he said. "We always took 66 whenever we traveled, because it was kind of a personal thing."

Charlene Webb, Riverton, drove the highway to California. She now helps head the Kansas Historical Route 66 Association in southeast Kansas as vice-president.

"I think now it's just the only old road that ties all of these states together," she said, "and goes from Chicago to the west coast."

One location along the route that has remained there since a year before Route 66 opened is now called the Eisler Brothers Market, Riverton. The manager, Scott Nelson, was recently elected to chair the Kansas Route 66 Association.

The store has two Kansas U.S. 66 signs sporting the front. And if you want Route 66 t-shirts, coffee cups, earrings... You name it - they're probably there.

"They even have Route 66 cologne," Nelson said. "It's not out yet, but there's a man making it."

He sat at one of the ivory-colored tables in the coolness of

his greenery-shaded patio. Soda pop on the table was water-chilled from a pop cooler at the store.

Nelson says the recognition of the route will help his business, and that's his interest.

"It's good for us," he said. "You have to have an old place in an old location. A quick-stop place wouldn't be a good place to sell things about Route 66. In 1925, they built this, and I guess in anticipation of the road."

The store has been visited by a Notre Dame history professor, a German film crew and a freelance photographer from Japan. The store was built by Leo and Lora Williams in 1925, then sold to Nelson's aunt and uncle, Isabelle and Joe Eisler, in 1973.

"They're interested in preservation and renovation, and so they're going to renovate the whole thing in the next year. It's all going to be original."

The U.S. 66 route through southeast Kansas does not follow the main road. For example, the original road used to cut behind where the McDonald's is now located in Baxter Springs, and about a quarter mile through Riverton is not driveable. But bridges that were part of the original still stand, and Nelson has a tip on how to determine if it's the original route.

"If you follow the road and you go through few curves," Nelson said, "you know you're on the new one and not the old one."

"That was just the road they took everywhere they went," Weiss said. "To Joplin and everywhere, but they didn't think it was anything but just the road they took."

"It made history for itself at the time, but we're making history now by working to promote it."

McCormick said it would link well with tourism such as the proposed "Land of Ah's" theme park in Cherokee County.

Webb calls the Kansas portion "the knot tying it together in the corner of the state."

"I feel like 66 is sort like family," Hardwick said.

Enjoy your  
time in  
Riverton, KS