



# Ferguson Has a History Museum

Ferguson has a Historical Society and a History Museum. We encourage any people reading this article to join in the conversation or become a member. Contact information is at the bottom of this article.

We take so many things for granted today – things, that less than a hundred years ago, were much less developed. Take roadways for example. While some of Ferguson’s streets may be a reminder of far earlier roads, our system of roadways – indeed the actual roadways are a relatively new creation. The earliest attempt at a national road occurred in 1811 when Congress established the “National Road” which extended from Washington DC to Vandalia, Illinois. Since that time little was done to establish a good roadway system – after all, we had many rivers to speed transportation. The next major change in transportation was the beginning of rail traffic in the mid 1800’s. Horse and wagon traffic was still mired in mud and gravel roads. President Eisenhower realized the problem with roads when he was part of a military convoy which traveled across the country in 1919. The 3251-mile trip took 62 days. As a result, when Ike became President, he initiated the Interstate Highway System. The military needed efficient roadways.

There was no national system of roads prior to 1926 – each state had its own road system – and many were narrow two-lane. Outside of large cities, roads were mainly dirt or gravel. Sometimes cities would get together and string a series of roads together to make a highway which would bring business to these communities. The Lincoln Highway, begun in 1912, running from NYC to San Francisco, is an example of a series of state roads using signage to help you stay on the road. Other examples of these “private” road linkages include the Ozark Highway and the Spanish Trace. The Federal Government, in 1926, established the current system of roads we use today. East-west highways carry even numbers, north-south carry odd numbers. Lower numbers begin in the South and East. “0” and “5” being the most important roads (I-70 and I-55 being examples). Relating to Ferguson, there are several major highways including I-70, I-170, I-270 (3-digit interstates go around cities), US-67 – and -once-upon-a-time – US Route 66 – the “Mother Road”. In this article, we are going to explore Route 66.



Like many established highways, Route 66 in Missouri, began as much earlier roads. Initially, the road from St. Louis to Springfield was just a series of Native American/animal trails. By the time of the Civil War Route 66 became



The routing goes through Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California - 2400 miles. In 1926 Route 66 consisted of the linking of several state roads into one national highway with national signage to make travel easier. Driving cross-country prior to 1926 could be difficult. The text to the right, from a pre-1926 travel book, gives directions from Joplin to Springfield Missouri – a turn-by-turn, street-by-street route.

The post-1926 system gives you road signs instead of guesses. If you want to go from Chicago to Los Angeles.



You just follow a series of road signs – stay on the same road.

Route 66 was the original idea of two

Midwesterners – Cyrus Avery (OK) and John Woodruff (MO). The start of the route was in Springfield Missouri. There are many versions of Route 66, changing over the years as bypasses and improved roadbeds were created. In the St. Louis Metro there have been several routings. Initial entry into Missouri from Illinois was over the McKinley bridge to Chouteau and west on Manchester Road. Other times it came over the Free Bridge (McArthur Bridge). Sometimes the route followed Manchester, Lindell or Watson Roads.

With the beginnings of the Interstate System (which began in St. Charles County), some of the old Federal routes began to be overtaken by interstates.

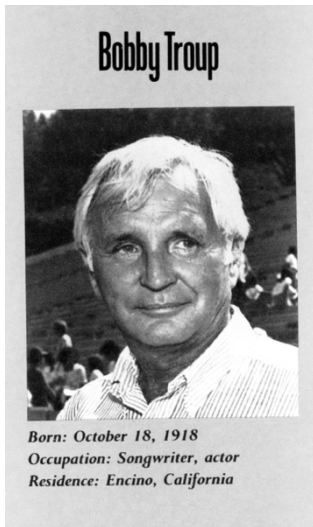
the telegraph road (Old Wire Road) between the cities. Route 66 travels east-to-west beginning in Chicago and ending in Los Angeles. While it does travel from north (Chicago) to south (Kansas/Oklahoma border) its general direction is east-west.

**Route 413—Joplin to Springfield, Lebanon and Owensville, Mo.—245.6 m.**

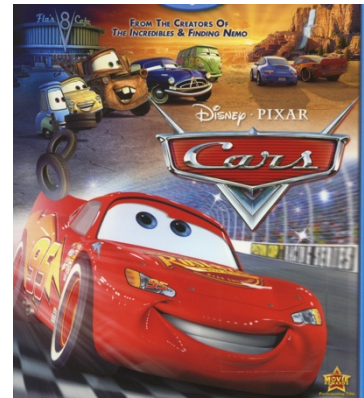
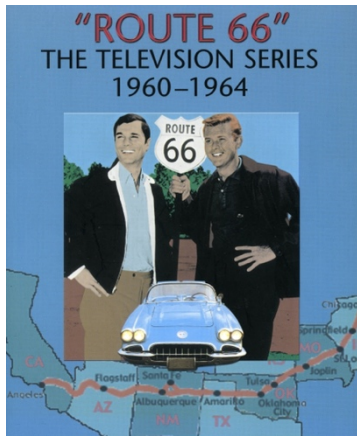
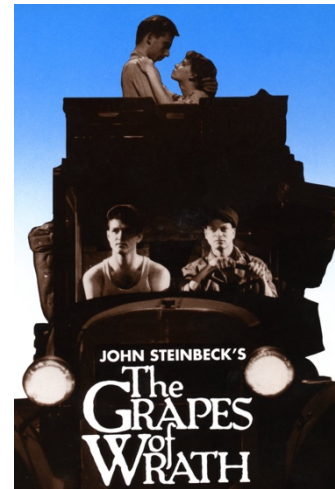
Gravel and dirt. A section of the Ozark Trail (white marker, green "OT") from Stoutland. Thru a rolling and in some places hilly, wooded and farming country. Make inquiry at Joplin for best route to Springfield.

Joplin City Map, Route 450R.

Hiway No.	Mileage	Directions
38	0.0	<b>JOPLIN, Main &amp; 4th Sts.</b> South with trolley on Main St.
38	0.3	7th St.; left.
38	5.8	<b>DUENWEG.</b>
38	22.1	4-cor.; left.
38	22.6	<b>SARCOXIE, 4-cor.</b> at far side of park. Left 2 blks., then right.
38	38.0	<b>HOBURG.</b> Left.
38	41.7	<b>MT. VERNON,</b> at courthouse. Right, and next left.
38	50.2	<b>CHESAPEAKE.</b>
38	61.6	<b>REPUBLIC.</b> Left.
14	71.0	End of street; right.
14	76.3	4-cor.; right, and next left.
14	77.7	Jog right and left on College Ave.
14	78.3	<b>SPRINGFIELD,</b> at square. Thru around square. Now on St. Louis St.
14	92.4	Right-hand road, at school; right.
14	92.6	<b>STRAFFORD.</b> Left.
14	96.2	<b>HOLMAN.</b>
14	100.5	<b>NORTHVIEW, 4-c o r.</b> Left across RR, then right.
14	107.8	4-cor., 1 blk. beyond church; left.
14	107.9	<b>MARSHFIELD.</b> Right.
14	114.2	<b>NIANGUA.</b>
14	118.8	<b>SAMPSON.</b>



In Missouri Route 66 was eventually overtaken by I-44. By the late 1970's traffic on Route 66 was trailing off and the cities along it were being affected by I-44. In 1985 Route 66 was declared closed and the signs taken down. Route 66 was history – but was not forgotten. There was more to Route 66 than just road signs. In 1946, while traveling on Route 66, songwriter Bobby Troup was inspired to write “Route 66” – a song made famous by Nat King Cole. Prior to that, in 1939, John Steinbeck wrote “Grapes of Wrath”. The story of dust-bowl farmers migration to California via Route 66 went on to become film – both classics. Then in the 1960's came the television show, Route 66, which told the story of two travelers in a Corvette seeking adventure across America. That is not the latest movie to treasure Route 66. In 2009, Pixar brought out, Cars, which tells the story of cars (not people) living along western Route 66.

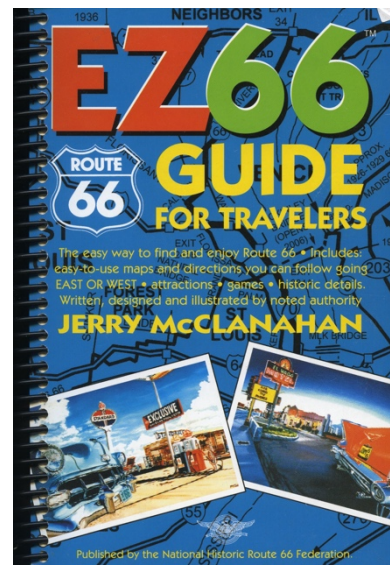


Of all the old and discontinued highways, Route 66 has had the most publicity and, perhaps, that is why in 1989 a group of Missouri “roadies” got to together and in 1990 established “The Route 66 Association of Missouri” (Missouri66.org). The purpose was to keep the “Mother Road” alive and encourage travel down the existing old roadway. Because of this group, currently around 1000 people from all over the world, you can basically travel the old highway from Chicago to LA. However, remember its back to the good-old-days, pre 1926, when travel was more difficult.

If you wish to experience the past – if travel is your destination instead of a location, you can pick up a number of guide-books to help you follow the old road. This one, by Jerry McClanahan, is an excellent guide to not only the road but to attractions along



the way. In addition, the Route 66 Associations of the 8 states on the old road provide signage to help along the way. In Missouri there are two



signs to follow. In all of Missouri you follow the BLUE signs. In St. Louis City, you follow the Brown signs. You will see these signs at critical points along the journey. Now what does this all have to do with Ferguson? Well – the original routes for Route 66 came nowhere near Ferguson. However, in 1936, the Chain-of-Rocks Bridge was opened. “Bypass 66” came into being. From Illinois you would cross the mile-long bridge with a curve in the middle then go right on Riverview Drive then a left on Dunn Road. Follow Dunn Road to Lindbergh and head south to Watson Road. By the 1930’s bypasses were especially popular for travelers wishing to avoid slow “city routes”. Dunn Road almost touches the borders of Ferguson – and Ferguson residents of the time who wished to head east or west would use this road. Dunn Road and Lindbergh roads are marked with the blue signs (except in construction areas). Why not “Get Your Kicks on Route 66”?



**YOU are INVITED  
AN OPEN HOUSE  
“The History House”  
Sunday Sept 24  
1 to 4 PM  
Behind the FergusonCommunity Center  
on Smith Rd.**

*Stories of historic Route 66 come from the Missouri Route 66 Association, Images of America-Route 66 in St. Louis by Joe Sonderman, and The Missouri US 66 Tour Book by Skip Curtis.*

**Membership in the Ferguson Historical Society is open to anyone** – the price is \$20.00 a year. If you are interested in joining or have any suggestions, questions, or items to donate to the Ferguson Historical Society, please contact Jerry Benner at [fjbenner@mindspring.com](mailto:fjbenner@mindspring.com). You are also welcome to visit the History Museum at 1064 Smith (behind the Community Center) by e-mailing the above address. Note: we will need to schedule a date for you, so ask well in advance.

***“The Ferguson Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Ferguson Missouri. Membership is open to all sharing our interest.”***