

Sell your own sponsorship ads for MPA's Route 66 series

To all MPA members:

Here's an exciting opportunity for you that will surely please your local advertisers. You can sell sponsorship ads that will run on the same page, or on the facing page, of the weekly series of "100 Years on Route 66 in 52 Weeks" that Missouri Press will be providing you every week of 2026.

This is perfect for those many advertisers who only want to run an ad when you have a special section or a special page. This is a special page that runs all year! If you prefer, you can sell a monthly appearance to four different advertisers.

See the attached page layout of the first feature that will be sent to you to be published the week of Jan. 5, 2026. The position at the bottom right corner of the piece is where you can drop in your local ad, to replace the Missouri Press ad that is in the sample at right.

Have a sponsor lined up? Missouri Press has versions of each feature available with the bottom right corner blanked out to make it easy for you to feature your local advertiser.

After the bottom right corner spot is sold, don't stop there! Sell ads for the facing page. Include a web ad with the print buy. Run a Route 66 contest. Ask locals for their most memorable Route 66 experience, and share them with your readers. Or try another idea you might have that would tie in well with these features Missouri Press is providing.

Please remember, every time you use something, be sure to credit our two series sponsors – the Missouri Division of Tourism and Missouri State Parks. Their sponsorships are paying for us to make this content available to Missouri Press members.

To access the Route 66 content throughout 2026, scan the QR code, go to <https://bit.ly/MoPress-Route66> or visit mopress.com.

Please let me know if you have questions.

Good luck, and happy selling!

Ted Lawrence

Director of Advertising, Missouri Press Service
tlawrence@mopress.com



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PRESENTING SPONSOR



Route 66's great paving celebration in Rolla



By Susan Croce Kelly

No matter how many birthday parties Route 66 has in 2026, there probably won't be any as heartfelt as the bash held in Rolla on March 15, 1931.

That day, 8,000 people from at least four states gathered to celebrate the fact that a person could drive all 302.7 miles of U.S. 66 in Missouri on hard pavement – almost a miracle!

Everyone at the Rolla party recognized what a miracle that was. In 1904, there had been more than two million miles of rural roads in the U.S., but only about 150,000 miles of those roads had any kind of surfacing. The rest were dirt, mud, and possibly gravel. By the time of the Rolla party in 1931, those roads were supporting more than 22 million automobiles, plus trucks and buses. Pavement couldn't have come fast enough.

So the people who came to Rolla knew what it was like to drive up to the hubcaps in mud, slide off slick roads, and inadvertently get stuck in ditches. They also knew that with paved roads came more traffic – and more dollars spent in towns along the way.

Concrete wasn't even available as a paving material until 1909, but by 1931, some 7,500 miles of road had been built in every county in Missouri and U.S. 66 was the longest all-weather road in the state.

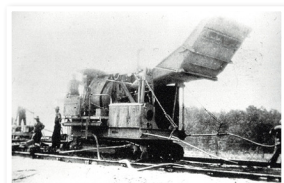


The reviewing stand at the U.S. paving celebration in Rolla in 1931 included Cy Avery and John T. Woodruff, founders of the Route 66 Association, and Missouri's Governor Henry S. Caulfield. During his speech, Caulfield took the opportunity to ask the legislature to pass legislation creating a Missouri Highway Patrol. (Photo courtesy of State Historical Society of Missouri)

It was clearly time for a celebration. That party in Rolla was a real bash. Politicians and leaders of the national Route 66 Association gave speeches, the 100-member Springfield Boy Scout Band, the Springfield Legion Drum Corps, the Rolla ROTC band and dozens of high school bands joined a parade and Pageant of Progress that reflected the evolution of transportation from the buffalo (described in the Springfield newspaper as "the original trail breaker") to the modern-day automobile.

Missouri Secretary of State Charles Becker spoke about how just 12 years earlier, Missouri was "still in the mud and the road system was ... nothing more than a disconnected chain of cow paths." He told the crowd that in 1930, 763,375 automobiles had been licensed in Missouri and that U.S. 66 was "all concrete either 18 or 20 feet wide."

H.P. Moberly, the division highway engineer from Springfield, said finishing 66 was the largest single paving project ever to have been completed in the state in one year, with the last section of concrete poured on a mile-and-a-half in Phelps County by a St. Louis contractor on Jan. 5, 1931. With the opening of the highway three weeks later, U.S. 66 was paved across Illinois and Missouri, Kansas and much of Oklahoma.



As far as automobile drivers were concerned in the 1920's, concrete pavement was almost magical. (Photo courtesy of State Historical Society of Missouri)

Gov. Henry S. Caulfield told the crowd about spending \$12 million "to bring Highway 66 to its present state of perfection," and asked the state legislature for a State Highway Patrol. Others of the special guests reviewed the history of road building in the state, and an Oklahoma highway promoter from the U.S. Route 66 Highway Association pointed out that "This highway is a gold mine to every state that it goes through."

On that day, though, the biggest part of the celebration was a two-mile-long parade of historic floats sponsored by cities and counties along the route.

One particular float was driven by one of the greatest promoters ever to live on Route 66. Lester Dill was a cave guide who would purchase and open Meramec Caverns to the public in 1933. As the floats wound slowly past the crowd, a flatbed truck carrying a log cabin reputed to have been Daniel Boone's broke down right smack in front of the reviewing stand. The driver of the float was Dill, and it was no accident that his float stopped when and where it did.

"We dressed my dad up as Daniel Boone and took a log cabin from the park around the cave and cut it down so it would fit on the back of the truck," Dill recalled years later after he had become something of a legend as the "cave man" from Missouri. "I drove the truck. I was going to win first prize or nothing," he chuckled. "I drove it up to the governor's reviewing stand – there were more people in Rolla than I ever saw before or since, and I stopped the truck in front of the reviewing

stand and couldn't get it started again." That gave Dill the opportunity to shake hands with the president of the U.S. Route 66 Association, the governor, and the other officials. His float won the blue ribbon.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, it was thanks to the efforts of the U.S. 66 Association and the enthusiasm of towns from Chicago to Los Angeles, that in 1938, U.S. 66 was the first national highway to be completely paved.

Susan Croce Kelly is the author of two prize-winning books on the history of Route 66 and has lived in three U.S. 66 communities – Chicago, St. Louis, and Springfield, Missouri. She grew up hearing family stories about the old road, and after working as a newspaper reporter in St. Louis and Springfield, decided she needed to find out about 66 for herself. Susan's website is susanroccekelly.com. Email her at Susanroccekelly@gmail.com.

Miles of Route 66 by state

California	316
Arizona	401
New Mexico	487
Texas	186
Oklahoma	132
Kansas	13
Missouri	317
Illinois	301

Total 2,448



When was U.S. 66 paved?

The whole highway was not totally paved until 1938.

Illinois	Already paved from Chicago to St. Louis when 66 was born in 1926, including some brick pavement.
Kansas	1929
Missouri	1931
Texas	1932
California	1935
Oklahoma	1937
New Mexico	1937
Arizona	1938

SUPPORTING SPONSORS



This feature and many more like it will be available throughout 2026 as part of Missouri Press' 100 Years on Route 66 in 52 Weeks series. As you use the content, be sure to credit our two series sponsors – the Missouri Division of Tourism and Missouri State Parks. Their sponsorships are paying to make the series available to all MPA members. Have a local sponsor? Sell the space in the bottom right corner of each feature (circled in yellow above) or get creative and sell supporting spots on a facing page.