

Missouri Times

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI / Spring 2026



MISSOURI'S MAIN STREET

100 YEARS OF ROUTE 66

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EDITOR
Beth Pike

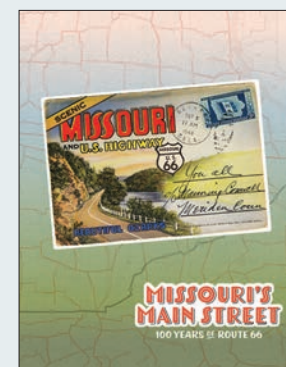
MANAGING EDITOR
John Brenner

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Kristie Lee

CONTRIBUTORS
Bill Eddleman
Haley Frizzle-Green
Danielle Griego
Nicole Johnston
Susan Croce Kelly
Lily Kleinhenz
Maggie Mayhan
Diane McKinney
A.J. Medlock
Atsuko (Yuki) Palmer
Joel Rhodes
Stacia Schaefer
Brittney Schmutzler
Kathleen Seale
Molly Sloan
Joan Stack

CONTACT
contact@shsmo.org
(573) 882-7083
SHSMO.ORG

COVER PHOTO

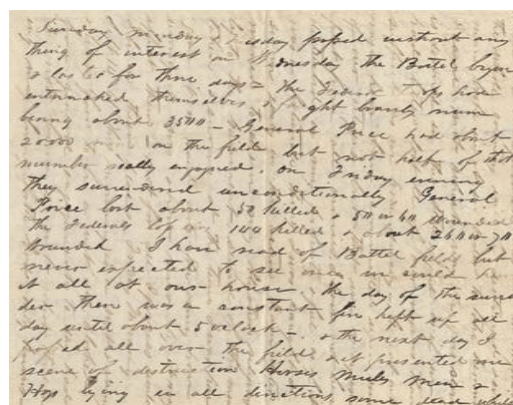


Missouri celebrates the 100th anniversary of Route 66 in 2026. We hope you enjoy this commemorative issue, highlighting the Missouri portion of this route and Springfield's role in the founding of America's Mother Road.

Popular on Social Media

Followers were fascinated to see this September 13, 1861, letter from farmer Isaac Hockaday to his mother. It describes the Battle of Lexington, which took place on the land around his home while he and his family were trapped inside. Hockaday used cross-writing to save paper, a scarce resource during the Civil War.

Join us for the conversation on Facebook & Instagram!



Hockaday Letter

ON THE ROAD

With Joel Rhodes



The Blackwater Depot stands in the original location where the original depot was built in 1888 by the Missouri Pacific Railroad. It is a replica of the original train station in Blackwater, Mo.



Members and partners of historical societies in Northeast Missouri stand on the 1898 Perry Carousel, which is still in operation in Perry, Mo., January 16, 2026.

With Missourians celebrating the centennial of Route 66 and our state's role in its origin story, it seemed like a great opportunity for me to chronicle my travels to local historical societies, museums, and heritage organizations, strengthening and showcasing our collective mission to collect, preserve, and share Missouri history.

All aboard! Our first stop is with the Blackwater Preservation Society, where work is under way for an exciting new permanent exhibition, *Tracks of Transformation: Railroads, Connections, and the Making of Missouri*. Railroads—America's first big industry—are a transformative force in our history. No other technology altered Missourians' lives more in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. Railroading was the catalyst—the engine, if you will—that drove rapid modernization and the industrial revolution. Blackwater was founded in 1887 along the Missouri Pacific's Jefferson City, Boonville, and Lexington (JCB&L) branch, and this exhibit tells the story of railroading through the lens of Missouri history.

Opening in July 2026, *Tracks of Transformation* is funded by a Missouri Humanities Semiquincentennial Grant and will be displayed in downtown Blackwater's rebuilt depot, caboose, and worker's shanties. Many of the photographs, maps, and graphics of nineteenth-century railroading are from our digital collections at the State Historical Society of Missouri.

The Northeast Missouri Area Historical Societies welcomed me to their quarterly meeting in Perry earlier this year. This impressive collaborative alliance of local organizations brings together representatives from area groups, including the Audrain County Historical Soci-

ety, Huntsville Historical Society, Hannibal's Ilasco Area Historic Preservation Society, Monroe County Historical Society, Ralls County Historical Society, Randolph County Historical Society, Vandalia Area Historical Society, and the Tri-States Civil War Round Table. Thirty members networked and discussed their preservation and interpretative efforts, while exploring creative ways to collectively celebrate the region's rich heritage. Chris Kempke, Missouri Humanities' interim executive director, and I discussed how our institutions are natural allies with groups across the Missouri history ecosystem.

In my experience working with local societies, groups, and museums, teamwork can be challenging and sometimes feels counterintuitive, but it is absolutely key to sustainability. I applaud this initiative. For regional public history, a rising tide lifts all boats.

Guided tours by the Ralls County Historical Society highlighted the day. Jeanie Gay hosted guests at the Missouri Mule Museum, and across the street Delores Woodhurst and Ron Leake opened the Ralls County Museum. And everyone took a couple of turns on the historic 1898 Perry Carousel.

The Northeast Missouri Area Historical Societies spring meeting will be held at the Center for Missouri Studies in Columbia. Thanks for being on board for my inaugural *On the Road* column, which will be a regular feature in *Missouri Times*. I look forward to visiting with folks in all areas of the state who champion local history and preserve the stories of Missourians.

Joel Rhodes is the executive director of the State Historical Society of Missouri.



Springfield Hosts National Route 66 Centennial Kickoff

BY BETH PIKE

After years of preparation, a national celebration to commemorate the centennial of America's Main Street officially kicked off on April 30, marking 100 years from when a telegram was sent from Springfield, Mo. requesting that a new transcontinental road be named Route 66. Missouri residents, public officials, and other dignitaries gathered with Route 66 aficionados from across the country for multi-day centennial events in Springfield that included a parade, music, storytelling, landmark dedications, public art, a movie premiere, and, naturally, a classic car show.

Actor John Goodman, a native of Affton and Missouri State University alumnus, hosted a concert featuring Little Big Town and other big-name bands in country, rock, and Americana, including Missouri's own Chris Janson, Ozark Mountain Daredevils, and The Haygoods. The audience sang along with Gary LeVox of Rascal Flatt, who performed his band's iconic "Life Is a Highway" by Tom Cochrane, celebrating adventures of the open road.

Opening day festivities also included the dedication of a sculpture, mural, and interpretive kiosk at Birthplace Plaza, where the Colonial Hotel, the place from which the original Route 66 telegram was sent, once stood. Poet David L. Harrison of Springfield, who served as Missouri's Poet Laureate from 2023 to 2025, read his poem, "Where a Highway Was Born," to honor Route 66 and its legacy

of hope, resilience, and reinvention. Harrison remembers traveling as a youngster in the back seat of his parents' car as they drove Highway 66 from Missouri to Arizona. As a teenager, he experienced the celebrated road through music and books.

"In high school, I listened to Nat King Cole sing 'Get Your Kicks on Route 66' and read John Steinbeck describing the Dust Bowl migrants making their journey west along the 'Mother Road.' The idea that the most famous highway in American history was named in Springfield is a point of pride. It awakens a sense of being connected in a meaningful way to an important part of our nation's past," said Harrison, who still enjoys taking city routes rather than skirting around town on a freeway.

"Unlike the soulless interstates that would eventually replace it, people saw things along 66. They experienced local sights. They enjoyed themselves and learned. That, I think, is the lesson we can take from its history, if we will," added Harrison.

The centennial has given communities along Missouri's portion of Route 66 (Chain of Rocks Bridge over the Mississippi River in St. Louis to the state line with Kansas west of Joplin) a reason to promote old and new iconic places along the route. For history buffs, travelers, and foodies, there is no better place to begin your trip than within our own Route 66 corridor in Missouri.



Photos, left to right:

Actor, St. Louis native, and Missouri State University alumnus John Goodman, along with MSU's mascot Boomer the Bear, ride in the back of a 1954 GMC pickup truck in the Celebrate America on Route 66 parade, May 1, 2026. Photograph by Jesse Scheve/Missouri State University.

Host Al Roker greets the audience attending a live taping of NBC's *Today* show at Birthplace Plaza in downtown Springfield, April 30, 2026. Photograph by Jesse Scheve/Missouri State University.

Over 100 classic automobiles built between 1926 and 1985 were featured in the Celebrate America on Route 66 parade, including this 1939 Graham Sharknose sedan.

Ozark Mountain Daredevils perform at Route 66 Centennial Kickoff concert in Springfield, April 30, 2026.

Poet David Harrison of Springfield reads his poem, "Where a Highway Was Born" at the dedication of Birthplace Plaza, the site where the Colonial Hotel once stood in downtown Springfield, April 30, 2026.

We've dedicated much of this issue of *Missouri Times* to exploring some of the Mother Road's history through collections in our research centers. SHSMO's staff has also created exhibits, an online interactive map, videos, and a webinar series to commemorate a century of life on Route 66 in Missouri. In addition, SHSMO is partnering with Google Arts & Culture's Route 66 page, which explores images and stories from our collection. You can learn more by visiting [shsmo.org/route 66](https://shsmo.org/route-66).

Where a Highway was Born

By David L. Harrison

A century ago, where we now gather,
men met to name a road,
an "Old Roads for New" kind of road,
cobbled from highways, local roads,
scraps of farm-to-market routes,
roads of gravel, dirt, sand.

It would form our nation's first
all-paved highway,
zigzagging across America
from Chicago to LA,
connecting eight states,
town to town, city to hamlet.

A destination road,
a what's-your-rush road
where you could marvel
at new sights, make friends, stay a while,
sample local dishes, buy souvenirs...
a highway like no other
needed a name to match.

No easy task, the naming business.
Men reasoned, debated.
What was available? Route 60? 62?
Each had supporters,
but none outspoke Cyrus Avery,
who came from Oklahoma
to the Colonial that day
to join Springfield's John Woodruff.

"66 is available," Cyrus said.
"It's catchier, better on signs,
easier to remember."
Avery Cyrus won the day.
The highway got its name
and Springfield, Missouri entered history:
The Birthplace of Route 66.

David L. Harrison of Springfield is the Poet Laureate for the National Route 66 Centennial Kickoff Celebration. He is a highly praised American children's author and poet. Reprinted in Missouri Times with permission from Mr. Harrison.

The Story of Route 66

Mud, Money, and the Model T

BY SUSAN CROCE KELLY

In 1926, after a squabble over numbers and 66 was chosen for the road between Chicago and Los Angeles, nothing much actually happened on the new highway. There was very little pavement and few businesses along the road in 1926 – in short, no reason for anyone to drive that particular route.

But Cy Avery, who had been key in choosing the number, was a silver-tongued speaker, longtime Good Roads promoter, and dedicated visionary. Only a few weeks after the highway number was set, and months before the new National Highway System received final approval from the federal government, he and his good friend John Woodruff of Springfield began to lay plans for a U.S. 66 Highway Association that would bring both business and travelers—plus much-needed pavement—to the newly designated highway.

Early in 1927, more than a hundred people, representing many of the towns between Chicago and Los Angeles, met in Tulsa, where they elected Woodruff president of the new U.S. 66 Highway Association and organized to accomplish two primary tasks. First, pave the road, which was mostly dirt, except for the segment through Illinois. At that time, only a very small fraction of roads in the country were paved.

With nearly two million cars on dirt roads, the public was frantic to see pavement. The 66 Association set out to support state and county bond issues that would bring money to pave the roads. By and large, it worked. Completed in 1938, U.S. 66 was the first highway paved all the way west.

As well as getting the road paved, the Highway Association also set out to bring travelers to Route 66. Avery

and Woodruff were both business owners, and from the beginning, they envisioned dimes and dollars rolling down their highway along with every automobile that passed. This effort would bring economic prosperity to the businesses and small towns along the route.

As the *Tulsa Tribune* noted, “the Highway 66 Association met in Tulsa...and planned to make it the most widely advertised road in America.”

Almost immediately, the Association began advertising in national magazines like the vaunted *Saturday Evening Post*. They put up billboards. And in 1928, they joined forces with C. C. Pyle, a well-known sports promoter to sponsor a footrace from Los Angeles to New York City that included Route 66. Open to all nationalities and ethnic groups and offering a first prize of \$25,000 in those pre-Depression days, the race captured the imagination of runners and sports media all over the world.

Today, although official Route 66 is long gone, those early efforts to get the highway paved and made famous still linger. Roughly two million people from all over the world come every year to visit and drive what’s left of the century-old historic highway.

Susan Croce Kelly is the author of two award-winning books on Route 66 history: Route 66: The Highway and Its People and Father of Route 66: The Story of Cy Avery, both published by the University of Oklahoma Press.



Two cars appear stuck in the mud on a road in Lafayette County, circa 1910s. The man on the right is holding a shovel, which was a necessary item drivers carried in their vehicles on the muddy roads in the state.

The Colonial Hotel's Prominence as the Birthplace of Route 66

BY HALEY FRIZZLE-GREEN

The Colonial Hotel in Springfield, which once stood as a popular gathering place for local residents and visitors, is part of the origin story of Route 66. It became known as the “Birthplace of Route 66” after the highway’s famous number was designated there on April 30, 1926. Leading the decision were Cyrus S. Avery, Oklahoma highway chairman, and Bion H. Piepmeier, chief engineer for Missouri’s highway commission. In a telegram sent from the Colonial Hotel to Washington, D.C., the two men wrote:

Regarding Chicago-Los Angeles Road, if California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Illinois will accept sixty-six instead of sixty, we are inclined to agree to this change. We prefer sixty-six to sixty-two.

From its opening on August 1, 1907, the Colonial Hotel greeted guests for nearly two decades prior to this historic moment. Owned by Springfield entrepreneur John T. Woodruff, the six-story hotel cost \$300,000 to build and furnish. Designed by St. Louis architect Francis Drischler and constructed by Caldwell & Drake, the Colonial Hotel was known as the only fireproof hotel in Missouri outside of St. Louis and Kansas City. Guests were treated to 150 bedrooms and 60 bathrooms, a dining room, kitchen, billiard room, parlor, and barber shop. The property was in an ideal location, sitting on



Colonial Hotel, Springfield, Mo., 1927, Missouri Postcard Collection, SHSMO.

the southwest corner of Jefferson Avenue and St. Louis Street (which would later become U.S. Highway 66) in Springfield’s commercial district.

From everyday travelers to high-profile visitors, the Colonial Hotel witnessed an array of guests. High school dances, civic meetings, and business conferences were held there, but it was entertainers and politicians who spread the hotel’s fame. On tour in Springfield, actress Bette Davis visited the Colonial Hotel while hosting a war bond rally in 1942. Before his presidency, John F. Kennedy was an honored guest of the Colonial in 1957. President and Missouri native Harry S. Truman also stayed at the hotel on more than one occasion.

The Colonial Hotel’s prosperity ebbed and flowed during the 71 years before it closed permanently

in 1978. After redevelopment plans failed, the property was gifted to Missouri State University (then called Southwest Missouri State), but it remained vacant and in disrepair. The final blow came in 1997, when the building was razed and replaced with a parking lot. Last December, Missouri State University donated the property to the city of Springfield to use as a memorial park. The city hired internationally renowned Spanish artist Juan Garaizabal to create a new commemorative sculpture at the park. Titled *Ghost of the Colonial Hotel*, the steel sculpture was dedicated during the Route 66 centennial kickoff celebrations, 100 years after the famous telegram gave the new highway its name.

Haley Frizzle-Green is an archivist at the Springfield Research Center.

Blisters, Bribes, and Big Dreams

The Foot Race that Put Route 66 on the World Map

BY KATHLEEN SEALE

United States Highway 66 was not even two years old when members of the Route 66 Highway Association met in 1927 with an idea for a spectacular foot-race to promote the new road. The Trans-Continental Footrace, quickly dubbed the Bunion Derby by the press, attracted marathon runners, champion walkers, and the “average Joe” to traverse the country on foot. Organized by promoter C. C. Pyle, the race followed Route 66 from Los Angeles to Chicago before ending in New York City. Entrants made their way to California for six weeks of training before the race began on March 4, 1928, with 199 runners.

Professional athletes who entered the race had the benefit of coaches and support teams. However, many of the competitors were on their own and had to find new shoes, food, and medical care along the way. These services were harder to come by in Western states where cities and towns were few and far between. The 76 racers who remained on April 19 were relieved to enter Missouri, which had towns with services more evenly spaced along Route 66.

C. C. Pyle earned the moniker “Cold Cash” from a *Kansas City Star* reporter after choosing to have the runners stop for the night in Joplin, rather than Carthage as previously planned. Carthage had paid for the privilege of hosting the racers and Pyle’s attractions ranging from carnival performers to football star Red

Grange. However, Joplin came up with \$1,000 right before the racers entered Missouri, inducing Pyle to stop in their city instead. As Pyle and his caravan drove through Carthage the next day, angry townspeople pelted them with eggs.

Requiring payment up front became Pyle’s trademark and earned him another nickname, Cash and Carry, in many places along the route. He even threatened to bypass Springfield, Mo. entirely if the city did not come up with enough money for the race to stop there overnight. When St. Louis business leaders failed to meet his demands, the runners and caravan went through the city and crossed into Illinois before stopping for the night.

Three Missourians ran in the race: John Gober, Pat Harrison, and James Fleming. Gober was a Greek immigrant who lived in Moberly and owned a shoe repair store. Fleming, a Scottish immigrant, entered the race as one of the oldest competitors at



age 50. Harrison, the only Missourian to complete the race, was born in Sullivan and had been a teacher at schools in Crawford and Washington Counties.

The Bunion Derby ended on May 26, with Oklahoma native Andy Payne winning the grand prize of \$25,000. He used the prize money to help his family and stepped down from the world of racing. The other top 10 finishers, however, did not receive their prize money due to financial problems that plagued the race. Pyle organized a second race in 1929 along a different route, but it ended with more debt than profit. Despite its woes, the 1928 Bunion Derby became the first national and international promotion of Route 66. Newspapers in the runners’ home countries reported on the 3,442-mile foot race, bringing fame to the early years of Route 66.

Kathleen Seale is the coordinator of the Rolla and Springfield Research Centers.

Brushing Back Time

Conservator Restores Route 66 Postcards and Memorabilia

Senior conservator Diane McKinney meticulously cleans the surface of worn and soiled Route 66 postcards donated to SHSMO. Using a rubber dry-cleaning sponge, McKinney delicately removes dust particles on the front and backsides of the card. A vinyl eraser helps clean the reverse side of the postcard with careful attention to avoid words written in pencil. A soft brush removes eraser crumbs before McKinney focuses her attention on cleaning the image on the card.

It's slow but deliberate work that helps preserve the postcards and other Route 66 memorabilia collected over the years, including some donated in the past few months as centennial events for the famous highway begin. Such artifacts give insight into the history of Route 66 in Missouri.

"Seeing these items preserved for researchers or made stable enough to digitize and make more widely available online is a vital part of what we do," said Kathleen Seale, coordinator of the Rolla and Springfield Research Centers. "We want our collections to last for generations and to be accessible for the public to view."

One of the postcards McKinney recently worked on predates Route 66. It features a nineteenth-century log cabin that was visible to travelers on Route 66 nearly a century later. Another interesting image shows the junction where two highways meet. U.S. Route 66 is paved, while the adjacent state highway Route 28 is not. Seale said the junction is



SHSMO senior conservator Diane McKinney cleans the back surface of a late 1920s postcard using a vinyl eraser and dry brush, avoiding pencil markings.

near what is now the town of St. Robert. The early 1930s postcard is a snapshot of the road and highway system at that time, she said. "You see the progress that was being made with a paved Route 66 and where road travel was headed in a new era."

Also on McKinney's work table is a late 1920s fan used to promote the Pierce Petroleum Corporation properties along the newly established Route 66. Seale has only discovered two souvenir fans from the Pierce Petroleum Corporation, with one of them being the State Historical



Postcard titled "Junction 66 & 28" near present-day St. Robert, early 1930s.



McKinney uses wheat starch paste to adhere lifted areas of the Pierce Petroleum souvenir fan.



McKinney removes tape on an early tourist map of Phelps County using a hot-air pencil and palette knife.

Society's at its Rolla Research Center. "The company wanted to be one of the first chain hotels/garages/service stations across major highways, specifically Route 66," Seale said. She noted that the drawings on the fan depict each of the businesses Pierce Petroleum owned along the road. "It's a cool addition to our collection and helps tell the story of Route 66." —BP

From Roses to Rhythm

100 Years of Missouri's Highway 61

BY BILL EDDLEMAN

This year marks the centennial of not only Route 66, but also another iconic highway traversing the east side of Missouri. Highway 61 covers roughly the same distance, about 300 miles, as Missouri's portion of Route 66. It stretches from near Keokuk, Iowa, to just south of Steele in Pemiscot County. Highway 61's original route totaled 1,714 miles from the Canadian border with Minnesota to New Orleans, but now ends farther south at Wyoming, Minnesota. The highway largely follows the Mississippi River and is designated the Great River Road in various sections.

The history of blues music connects intimately with Highway 61's history, giving rise to its popular name the "Blues Highway." Part of it lies on the Mississippi Blues Trail running through the Mississippi Delta. The intersection with Highway 49 near Clarksdale, Mississippi, is the site where blues artist Robert Johnson is said to have sold his soul to the devil to cement his legendary talents as a blues artist. The highway is also the inspiration for Bob Dylan's song and album, *Highway 61 Revisited*.

While the current route of Highway 61 south of St. Louis follows the El Camino Real (the Royal Road), laid out by Spanish explorers in the 1770s, this was not always true. The original route followed Highway 67 from Festus to Fredericktown, then turned eastward to Cape Girardeau. The Missouri State Highway Commission changed the route to the current one in 1953. The local name in several towns along the current highway recognizes the area's Spanish history by designating the road as Kingshighway.

The scenic segment of historic Highway 61 south of St. Louis featured motor courts and other lodging places and notable sites, especially historic sites in Ste. Genevieve. Among the most beautiful portions of the road was the "10-mile Garden" between Jackson and Cape Girardeau, a series of planted rose beds maintained by the Cape Special Road District in the late 1930s. The *St. Clair Chronicle* estimated more than 15,000 roses had been planted by 1947. The fragrance and colorful blooms welcomed motorists from early spring through summer until the plants were uprooted during the highway's expansion.

Other historic sites are in Cape Girardeau and New Madrid. The final notable site is the U.S. 61 Arch spanning



Photographs of the Ten Mile Rose Garden from the Missouri Department of Transportation Photograph Collection, Missouri State Archives.

the highway at the state line south of Steele, which reads "Entering Missouri" on one side and "Entering Arkansas" on the other. The highway department in Mississippi County, Arkansas, constructed this concrete arch in 1924. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.

Today, many segments of Highway 61 survive, although increased traffic led to an expansion of four lanes in urban areas. The construction of I-55 south of St. Louis superseded some stretches. However, it is still possible to drive two-lane stretches and get a feel for the old Highway 61.

The Missouri House of Representatives presented a resolution honoring a century of the "Blues Highway" to the Visit Cape offices in Cape Girardeau on January 30. To find out more about events commemorating 100 years of the Blues Highway in the Cape Girardeau region, visit the U.S. Highway 61 Centennial Facebook page for sample itineraries, sights both current and past along the route, and other information about this well-traveled highway.

Bill Eddleman is the coordinator of the Cape Girardeau Research Center.

Photographing a Vanishing America

Quinta Scott's Journey on Route 66



Photographer and author Quinta Scott, circa 1989.

Since the establishment of U.S. Route 66 in 1926, the highway, stretching from Illinois to California, has occupied a unique place in American culture. It became an important transportation network in the mid-twentieth century, funneling westward migration during the Great Depression and World War II. During the height of its popularity, the Mother Road gave birth to popular hotels and tourist destinations in Missouri, including Ted Drewes Frozen Custard in St. Louis and Sterling's Hillbilly Store near Rolla. After the opening of the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Route 66 and the businesses that relied on the road slowly declined and fell into disrepair. However, a growing number of

historians and preservationists, including Quinta Scott (1941-2024), refused to let the Mother Road fade from public memory.

Scott was a St. Louis-area historian and photographer with a deep interest in architecture. In the late 1970s, she began photographing old motels in St. Louis and along Route 66. As Scott explored the road, she noticed the deteriorating conditions of these once famous landmarks. The original proprietors frequently reminded Scott of their own mortality as well, telling her, 'You better come back quick I may die.' Convinced of Route 66's cultural importance, she decided to write a book about the declining highway before its history was lost forever.

Scott spent the next several years traveling the entirety of Route 66, photographing hotels, stores, and local attractions. She also conducted oral histories with residents and businesspeople who made their living from Route 66 during its heyday. Scott's photographs vividly chronicle landmarks in Missouri and other states that have since been destroyed. One such attraction was the Coral Courts, a notorious St. Louis motel that fueled clandestine romances because its rooms had attached garages where guests could park their cars away from public view. Scott's

research culminated in the publication of *Route 66: The Highway and Its People* in 1989, which she co-authored with Susan Croce Kelly.

Scott pursued numerous book projects in which she focused her powerful lens detailing the Mississippi River and the Eads Bridge. She later revisited Route 66 with the publication of *Along Route 66* in 2000, which focused on the Mother Road's architectural gems, using photographs from her earlier research in the 1980s. After Scott died in 2024 at age 83, her family donated her voluminous papers and photographs to the State Historical Society of Missouri for permanent preservation. The collection includes hundreds of photographs Scott took during her research for her Route 66 books; cassette tapes featuring oral history interviews with Route 66's denizens; and numerous copy edits for both books, enabling researchers to trace her research and writing process from beginning to finish. Thanks to intrepid historians and celebrated photographers like Quinta Scott, Route 66's history and legacy will never fade from memory.

A.J. Medlock is the coordinator of the St. Louis Research Center.

Photographs by Quinta Scott



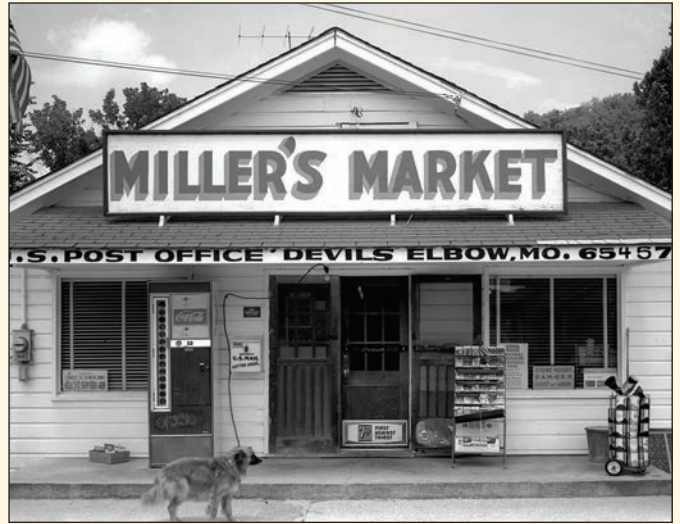
The Coral Court Motel, shortly before it was demolished in 1995. The motel, designed in the Streamline Modern style, was built in the 1940s at 7755 Watson Road in St. Louis County.



Ola and Russell Soulsby stand in front of the Soulsby Service Station in Mount Olive, IL in 1979. Russell's father, Henry Soulsby, built the station in 1926 and the family operated it until 1993. In 2004, a grant from the National Park Service restored the station, which operates as a visitor center and museum.



In 1980, Scott photographed the vacancy sign of the 66 Auto Court on Watson Road in St. Louis County. Built in 1945, the motor court was torn down in 1988.



Photographed in 1979, the Miller's Market and U.S. Post Office opened in 1954 in Devil's Elbow, Mo., located in Pulaski County.



Red's Giant Hamburg served as a restaurant on Route 66 in Springfield. Sheldon "Red" Chaney purchased a Sinclair gas station with motor court cabins and added a café in 1947. Scott photographed the restaurant in 1981, before it permanently closed in 1984.



The 66 Park In Theatre in Crestwood opened in 1947 with a capacity of 800 cars. The popular drive-in was owned by the Weherenberg family in St. Louis. It was demolished in 1994 to make room for a shopping center. Scott photographed the theatre's neon signs in 1980.



Chain of Rocks Bridge, June 19, 1979. Before it became a walking trail in the late 1990s, the bridge enabled Route 66 travelers to cross the Mississippi River from Illinois into Missouri.



People hanging out under the Meramec River Bridge at Times Beach, 1974.

Postcards Capture Kansas City's Park and Boulevard Movement at Turn of Century

BY MOLLY SLOAN

Kansas City's population exploded in the years after the Civil War and into the early 20th century. Urban development, however, failed to keep up with the increased number of residents. New commercial and residential districts were scattered, and the roads connecting these areas were rarely paved. Sidewalks were even less common. Although locals found themselves with more money and leisure time, the Kansas City of 1880 seemed to offer little in terms of entertainment or aesthetics.

This imbalance changed with the establishment of Kansas City's Park Board in 1892. The board hired young landscape architect George Kessler as secretary and engineer, tasking him with creating a parks system to beautify the city. The resulting park and boulevard system exceeded expectations. Kessler took rundown areas, such as the city's northeastern bluffs, and converted them into attractive parks while maintaining features of the original landscape. He also designed the city's first fountain at 15th Street and The Paseo in 1898.

Kansas City's new park system featured a network of scenic boulevards and parkways that allowed Kansas City carriage drivers to easily reach the new parks in all directions. The Park Board continued to expand boulevards as residents' access to automobiles increased. By 1920, Kansas City boasted almost 2,000 acres of parkland and 90 miles of scenic boulevard driving, according to a 2015 article in *Civil Engineering* magazine.

Postcards of Kansas City landscapes from the early 20th century depict a rapidly developing city with new emphasis on travel and leisure. Rapid advances in affordable transportation were turning cities into vacation destinations for the growing numbers with the means to travel. Cards featuring landmarks such as buildings, parks, and city streets enticed visitors to enjoy the lovely places in Kansas City. The early postcards highlighted the area's



Top to bottom:
Lake at Fairmount Park, 1910.
Santa Fe Trail marker at Penn Valley Park, n.d.
Scene in Country Club district, Kansas City, 1916.
The Colonnade on Gladstone Boulevard in North Terrace Park, 1910.
Sunken garden on The Paseo, n.d.

stunning views, often depicting idyllic park scenes, or recreational driving along beautiful parkways and boulevards and past the 40 operating, publicly owned fountains. Kessler's new system of urban planning renewed Kansas City and left a legacy still enjoyed by residents and visitors today.

Molly Sloan is an archivist at the Kansas City Research Center.

Voices from the Past

MU Students Learn from Columbia's Oral Histories

BY BETH PIKE

Several years ago, associate professor Claire Syler, who teaches theater and performance classes at the University of Missouri, read an essay by professor emeritus of English Douglas Hunt about the lynching of James T. Scott, a Black university employee brutally hung from the Stewart Road Bridge in Columbia, Missouri by a mob in 1923. In researching Scott's murder, Hunt used the Haskell Monroe Oral History Collection at the State Historical Society to hear from Columbia residents in the mid-1990s who recalled the stories they heard about the horrific racial lynching.

Between 1994 and 1996, former MU Chancellor Monroe, who also taught history, tasked his students to interview residents who lived in Columbia during the 1930s and 1940s. Monroe later donated the 480 audio cassettes, 17 CDs, and transcripts to the State Historical Society. Intrigued by this oral history collection, Syler had an idea that the recollections about life in Columbia and on the university campus in the 1930s and 1940s would make an interesting project for her students.

"I wanted my students to explore storytelling, find their way to an archive, and discover the contemporary relevance from these past stories," said Syler. The fragile cassette tapes, however, became an obstacle. The tapes were old and brittle, and playing them risked further damage. Syler then approached Sean Rost and archivists at the State Historical Society, along with journalism professor Janet Saidi, to see if a grant might be available to digitize the collection. Missouri Humanities came through with a \$15,000 grant in 2025 that allowed the collection to be preserved and accessed digitally. With help from graduate student Alyssa Durbin and SHSMO archivist Heather Richmond, the paper transcripts were also digitized and made word searchable.

With access to the digital recordings, Syler created the course Theatrical Devising—Engaging in Columbia's Past. This past semester, her students listened to podcasts with an assignment to create audio portraits using the interviews from the Monroe Collection. At the end of the semester, the students' short stories were aired on KBIA. The class also led public oral history walks on campus, describing places that were once called "Campus Town,"



Students listen to an oral history from the Haskell Monroe collection about the "secret pond" on the University of Missouri, Columbia campus at the corner of College and University, April 2026.

like the spot where the Shack, a student hangout, once stood and another popular locale for dancing that served black-and-gold pie before curfews sent students back to their dorms.

Journalism student Robin Crouch, who took Syler's class, said she learned the university had a dean of women whose job in part was to make sure that the young ladies on campus were behaving appropriately.

"There were also a lot of pranks and rituals performed by the student body in the 1930s and 40s. Freshmen were forced to wear beanies and tensions between engineering and law schools ran high," said Crouch. "Overall, campus life is far more individualistic today and rivalries between grades and disciplines much less pronounced. There are many positives to this, but I also wonder how a lack of coherent groups might contribute to loneliness and isolation."

Crouch's classmate Scout Hudson also noticed a shift in campus culture following World War II.

"I've come to love the past all the more. The archive feels like magic. There is so much to learn within the oral histories and the process of creating the archive," said Hudson. "I have become a total proselytizer for oral histories. I think everyone should record one!"

That sentiment seemed to resonate with other students in Syler's class. "I can say that oral histories are one of the most impactful ways to learn about the past," added Crouch, who produced a story about the prevalence of grocery stores in Columbia in the 1940s. Her project, along with those of her classmates, is being archived at the State Historical Society of Missouri as part of the Haskell M. Monroe Jr. Oral History Collection.



W[A]RN and TRANSFORMED: Uniforms as Stories of U.S. exhibition at the William Guitar Little Missouri Gallery of Art.

W[A]RN and TRANSFORMED

Uniforms as Stories of U.S.

BY JOAN STACK AND NICOLE JOHNSTON

A historic military uniform is made of more than just fabric. It incorporates the experiences and memories of its former wearer. The exhibition *W[A]RN and TRANSFORMED: Uniforms as Stories of U.S.* in the State Historical Society's William Guitar Little Missouri Gallery of Art invites visitors to see these uniforms as living witnesses to American history.

Created in conjunction with the national commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, the exhibition explores how military history continues to shape personal and collective identity. The show includes historic clothing, artwork by veterans, and contemporary creations by students from the MU Department of Textile and Apparel Management and School of Visual Studies.

At the heart of the exhibition are historic uniforms from Missouri veterans, posters, and combat ephemera drawn primarily from the University of Missouri's Historic Clothing and Textile Collection and the State Historical Society of Missouri. Military uniforms on loan from Stephens College and the Boone County Historical Society are also on display. Spanning conflicts from the First World War

through more recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, these objects reveal how history resides in material culture.

These historical items are complemented by contemporary artworks that explore the concept of transformation. During the fall of 2025, veteran and artist Drew Cameron, cofounder of the national organization Combat Paper, led a series of workshops at the University of Missouri for veterans, students, and community members in which military uniforms were transformed into handmade paper. The act of making this "combat" paper is deeply symbolic, as the uniforms are shredded, pulped, strained, and pressed into sheets of paper for artistic projects.

Cameron, who served in the U.S. Army, rediscovered papermaking while attending college on the G.I. Bill. Raised by a papermaker father, he believes that when uniforms are transformed into paper, elements of their histories remain embedded in the fibers. The act of making paper and subsequent artworks helps facilitate reflection, conversation, and connections.

In the gallery, artwork and fashion created with this handmade paper is exhibited alongside historic material, creating a visual and conceptual dialogue between past



Air Force Colonel John Clark (right) recalls the day of his release as a prisoner-of-war in Hanoi, Vietnam, on Feb. 12, 1973, after nearly seven years of captivity. His North Vietnamese captors gave him a duffle bag with soap, toothpaste, cigarettes, matchbox, and a hand towel, along with a blue shirt and trousers (on display, right) that he wore when he left the notorious "Hanoi Hilton" prison. Standing to the left of Col. Clark are Nicole Johnston and John Schneider.



World War I era uniforms in front of original WWI posters feature a brown wool field jacket (left) worn by Second Lieutenant Amen Werdell Lincoln and green wool uniform (right) of Second Lieutenant Frederick William Niedermeyer, Jr.

and present. Military uniforms worn overseas stand near dresses incorporating paper made from clothing once worn by anonymous soldiers, inviting visitors to consider how memory can persist through material change.

The exhibition was curated by Nicole Johnston of the Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection, with assistance from undergraduate collection assistant Amelie Vogt and staff from the State Historical Society of Missouri. Support came from the University of Missouri College of Arts and Sciences and Center for the Humanities, the Missouri Arts Council, and Missouri Humanities, a statewide nonprofit dedicated to public conversations about history and culture. The exhibition is free and open to the public through August 15 during regular visitor hours in the art gallery.

Joan Stack is the art curator at the State Historical Society of Missouri. Nicole Johnston is curator of the Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection and teaches in the Department of Textile & Apparel Management at the University of Missouri, Columbia.



Platform with mostly uniforms from the Korean War and World War II on display.



Beyond Zero: 1914-1918 pulp prints created by Drew Cameron for a short film with Kronos Quartet. The prints were created on handmade paper from military uniforms.

Ghosts, Drama, and Mystery

The Meaning of Two Japanese Prints in SHSMO's Art Collection

BY ATSUKO (YUKI) PALMER

Among the most unusual items in the State Historical Society of Missouri's art collection are two multi-colored woodblock prints by the nineteenth-century Japanese Ukiyo-e artist Utagawa Kunisada (also known as Toyokuni III, 1786–1865). These prints were transferred to the Society from the University of Missouri in the 1990s, but when and how the university received them is a mystery. The artworks may have come from one of many academic tours and exchanges with Japan.

Both prints originally functioned as vibrant promotional images for Kabuki plays during the Edo period (1630–1868), celebrating popular productions, actors, and characters. One depicts the nineteenth-century actor Arashi Kichisaburo as the character Minatoyama Chūta. Kunisada captures a powerful and tense moment on the Kabuki stage, showing Chūta pulling firmly on a rope with both hands while bracing his entire body in a dramatic “mie” pose, in which heightened emotion is condensed into a single, powerful visual gesture. This action serves as a visual representation of the intense energy and stylized performance of nineteenth-century Kabuki.

The second print depicts Tamiya Iemon, the treacherous protagonist of the most famous Kabuki ghost story, *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan*, written by Tsuruya Nanboku in 1825. In this print, Kunisada tells the story of Iemon's betrayal and murder of his wife, Oiwa, and her subsequent return as a ghost to haunt him. We see the climactic moment in the play when Iemon, overwhelmed by fear and guilt, reaches for his sword and looks back in terror at a ghostly presence lurking behind him. His frozen stance once again embodies the Kabuki concept of “mie.”

Kunisada created these beautiful color prints by making many individual woodblocks carved from cherry wood to match each color in the composition and printing each



Left: *Arashi Kichisaburo as Minatoyama Chūta* by Utagawa Kunisada (Utagawa Toyokuni III). This print is on display with *Rose and Gladys: The Trailblazing Creative Work of Rose O'Neil and Gladys Wheat*, a new exhibition in the William Guitar Little Missouri Gallery of Art. It's an example of the influence of Japanese art in the early 20th century, including artists O'Neil and Wheat. Right: *Tamiya Iemon* print by Utagawa Kunisada (Utagawa Toyokuni III), SHSMO Art Collection.

colored block in exact alignment on a single sheet of paper. The brightly colored and boldly composed images were popular exports in their day and inspired many famous European and American artists in the late nineteenth century, including Édouard Manet, Mary Cassatt, Vincent van Gogh, and James McNeill Whistler, to adopt new compositional approaches, expressive lines, and flattening of form and space.

Taken together, these two Kunisada prints teach us about the global impact of Japanese culture from the Edo period that reached as far as Missouri. This influence can even be seen in the work of early twentieth-century artists with Missouri associations, like Rose O'Neill and Gladys Wheat.

Yuki Palmer is an office support assistant at the State Historical Society of Missouri. Visitors will find Yuki often helping customers in the Richard Bookstore at the Center for Missouri Studies.

National History Day Students Lauded at State Capitol for Missouri History Day

BY DANILLE GREIGO

On a sunny but chilly morning in February, about two dozen Missouri students who advanced to the 2025 NHD national contest arrived in Jefferson City for tours of the State Capitol and to be recognized by lawmakers of the Missouri House and Senate. With the History Day group seated in the upper galleries of both chambers, legislative leaders spoke about the students' achievements in the state and national contests and their passion for studying history.

Each student also received a Show Me America 250 commemorative coin from Pat Thomas, vice chair of the America 250 Missouri Commission. Pocket-size U.S. Constitution books were distributed to students at the regional contests earlier this year, compliments of the state's commission, which is planning and promoting 250th anniversary events in Missouri. At the Capitol, lawmakers

and visitors were also greeted by several students who brought their NHD projects and explained how they chose their subjects and what they learned from them.

For the 2026 contest season, about 500 students participated in the Missouri History Day state contest at the University of Missouri-Columbia in April. The top-ranking students in each category will serve as delegates at the national contest in College Park, Maryland, in June. For a list of state contest category winners, visit nhdmo.org. Thank you to all the volunteer judges, regional coordinators, teachers, and students who made it a successful contest year!

Danielle Griego is the education program coordinator at the State Historical Society of Missouri and manages the National History Day in Missouri contest.



National History Day students pose for a group photo at the State Capitol after receiving a Show Me America 250 coin from Pat Thomas (left in photo), vice chair of America 250 Missouri Commission, February 11, 2026.



Students prepare their exhibitions at the Mizzou Recreation Center before judging at the state contest, April 25, 2026.



Isabel Paparella portrays Abigail Adams in the performance category at the state contest. Paparella's skit centers on a letter Abigail wrote to her husband John Adams in 1776 about the need for women voting rights.



Sungsan Park shows his documentary "The Wars in the Soil: How Chemical Fertilizer Changes Agriculture Forever" before judges at the state contest.

Missouri Conference on History Wraps in Camdenton, to Set Sail in St. Louis in 2027

Thanks to all who joined us for the Missouri Conference on History in March. Attendance remained steady as 175 registrants came together in Camdenton to network and learn from scholars who are doing research in the field of Missouri history. The annual conference is open to anyone with interest in our state's history and supports efforts to further its study. This year's conference saw the largest number of student posters at the event, largely from Westminster College.



Matthew Knox Averett receives the Missouri Conference on History Book Award from Missouri Science and Technology history professor Petra DeWitt.



Author Ben Moore, professor emeritus of Fontbonne University (center), leads a discussion on the immigrant experience in St. Louis with independent researcher Michael Tschlis (left) and Emily Jaycox (right) of the Missouri Historical Society.



Lorri Glover, Bannon Endowed Chair of History at Saint Louis University, moderates a panel talk on domestic death in 19th-century Missouri.



University of Missouri, Columbia, student Alexander Insley (left) and Owen Martin, a student at Truman State University (right), received awards for their papers at the Missouri Conference on History. Catherine Hutinett (center) is the graduate student representative on the MCH Steering Committee.



Attendees listen to a presentation by Professor Megan Bever of Missouri Southern State University on "Liquor Licenses and Gendered Loyalty in Civil War Missouri."

"I hope attendees gained a new perspective on the depth of historical research being undertaken by scholars from the high school level to senior academics," said Sean Rost, SHSMO assistant director, research. "It really is amazing to go to the conference each year and hear of the fascinating research under way. It's why I love history."

Congratulations to the award winners whose work has contributed to Missouri history scholarship this past year. They include:

Book Award: Matthew Knox Averett, Creighton University, *Canfield Drive: A History of Race and the American City on a Street in St. Louis*

Lawrence O. Christensen Article Award: Brooks Blevins, Missouri State University, *The Missouri Scenic Rivers System and the Origins of the Property Rights Movement*

Petra DeWitt Student Paper Prize: Owen Martin, Truman State University, *Faith, Fascism, and Franco: How the Spanish Civil War Transformed Father Coughlin's Populist Crusade*

Lynn & Kristen Morrow Missouri History Student Prize: Alexander Insley, University of Missouri, Columbia, *A Gateway Closed: African Americans and Imperial Race-Making at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair*

The 2027 Missouri Conference on History will be held in St. Louis in mid-March. Details for paper/panel submissions and attendance will be forthcoming in the fall. Many thanks to this year's hosts, the Missouri State Archives and Missouri University of Science and Technology Department of History and Political Science, along with the MCH Steering Committee. We hope to see you next year!



Missouri Conference on History



Student Kelly Bian, a member of the Asian American Civic Scholars in St. Louis, shows her research on Jue Gong Lee Jr., a St. Louis Chinese American veteran.



Scholar Kendyl Schmidt of the University of Missouri-St. Louis leads a discussion on the panel topic "Facing the Facts of Fiction: Working with Imaginative Sources in Historical Inquiry."



Michelle Spencer, a genealogist and business historian, shares her research about John Michael Hummel, who settled in Boonville and founded a pottery plant near Florence, Mo. around 1876.

Volunteer Spotlight

Parker Nolfo

By Lily Kleinhenz

As a student intern at SHSMO, Parker Nolfo found a new direction on his career path and an interest in Route 66 history. He completed an internship at the St. Louis Research Center before graduating this May with a bachelor's degree in historic preservation at Southeast Missouri State University. Last summer, Nolfo, who grew up in St. Louis, spent 400 hours working on the Quinta Scott Papers Collection. (See A.J. Medlock's article featuring Quinta Scott in this issue.) He began by listening to oral histories that Scott recorded in the late 1970s and 1980s. The subjects of the recordings varied. "Most had to do with the way of life back in the day, like making a riverboat out of scrap material," he said.

During the second half of his internship, Nolfo worked on scanning film negatives Scott had taken along Route 66. Most of the photos he digitized showed Route 66 and communities along the route that



Parker Nolfo

were in decline after the new and faster interstate highway was built. "It was nice to see old stops along Route 66 and the changes it went through over time," Nolfo said.

Kathleen Seale, SHSMO coordinator for the Rolla and Springfield Research Centers, appreciates the help Nolfo provided to digitize and make Scott's collection more accessible. "Parker enjoyed seeing the locations that exist today and others long gone on old Route 66 where he grew up in St. Louis."

By the end of his summer internship in 2025, Nolfo decided he would like to pursue a career as an archivist after graduation, preferably at the state or federal level. SHSMO makes a conscious effort to provide internships that give students real-world experience working in an archive.

"Archive interns learn how to best handle collections, process collections, and make them available to the public," Seale said. Nolfo said the interesting work he was given and the support from his coworkers made his internship with SHSMO "the best summer job I have ever had." Outside of school, Nolfo enjoys hiking, watching movies, and studying post-World War II history. As a newly minted college graduate, Nolfo has SHSMO's very best wishes as he explores a career to collect, preserve, and share history as an archivist.

Lily Kleinhenz is a journalism student at the University of Missouri-Columbia and an intern at SHSMO.



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Search "traveling exhibition"

Looking Ahead



Asphalt to Archives *Telling the Missouri Route 66 Story*

Monthly through November,
Virtual Webinar Series

Join our staff on a Route 66 journey through the SHSMO archives each month on Zoom. From Disneyland of the Ozarks to novelty shops and curiosities, SHSMO staff have found interesting stories of the people and places along the historic highway.

US at 250

July 2 & 8 Center for Missouri Studies

The public is invited to two special events at the State Historical Society marking the 250th anniversary of the United States. An evening program on July 2 features the vocal ensemble PROMETHEUS, under the direction of Paul Crabb and storyteller Larry Brown, who are preparing music and stories that reflect our nation's founding and the place we call home in Missouri. On July 8, there will be a public reading of the Declaration of Independence with musical performances and festivities.



History on Elm

2nd Tuesdays at Noon,
Center for Missouri Studies

Joplin's Connor Hotel, and the Irish millionaire who built it, is the topic for the June 9 program presented by author Chad Stebbins. History on Elm then takes a break for a few summer months before resuming in September with Megan Rapp, the executive director of the Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum in Hannibal, which is celebrating the 150th anniversary of Twain's novel *Tom Sawyer*.

W[A]RN and TRANSFORMED *Uniforms as Stories of U.S.*

Through August 15,
William Guitar Little Missouri Gallery of Art

A new exhibition in the William Guitar Little Missouri Gallery of Art inside the Center for Missouri Studies showcases military uniforms displayed alongside war-era posters, contemporary paper works, and MU student apparel designs made with military uniforms turned into handmade paper called Combat Paper. The exhibition is a collaboration with the Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection at the University of Missouri.





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