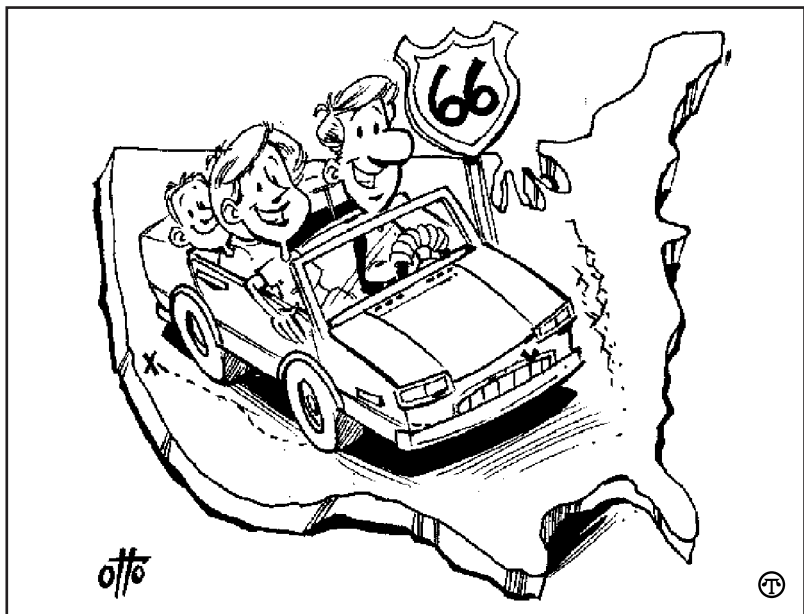


AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

Route 66 "Kicking" With Culture



A new program will restore some storied landmarks along Route 66.

(NAPSA)—Fading, but not forgotten, a symbol of American individuality is beginning to receive needed attention as part of a nationwide restoration effort. Route 66, still sprinkled with mom 'n' pop diners, neon signs and funky roadside attractions, tells a compelling story of American culture.

The Route's eight state, 2,448-mile stretch was originally designed in 1926 to help farmers in rural states move their crops to Los Angeles and Chicago. As the popularity of car travel grew, so did the need for highway stops on this East to West journey. Business boomed for unique sites, restaurants and visual attractions that entertained travelers passing through, from ghost motels to giant whales. Today, Route 66 attractions are in disrepair and hundreds of miles of the famous roadway are now unmarked.

"Route 66 has been immortalized in songs, movies and books because of its free-spirited culture and fascinating sites," said Jim Conkle, executive director, Route 66 Preservation Foundation. "The road is an important connection to our past and now to American nostalgia."

Conkle has been working with Hampton Hotels to preserve Route 66, bringing it needed

attention on both its blacktop and Capitol Hill. The *Explore the Highway with Hampton, Save A Landmark* program will refurbish some of its well-known landmarks, donate Route 66 signs to re-designate the historic roadway, and mark specific landmarks with "Route 66 Point of Interest" road signs. An online letter writing campaign also has been established to help designate Route 66 as a National Landmark.

Before turning its focus on Route 66 this year, the program already restored 10 landmarks across the country, from a 125-year-old one-room schoolhouse in Michigan to the world's largest Santa Claus statue in North Pole, Alaska. The program operates with no federal funding and is run by donations and the volunteer efforts of Hampton hotels.

The focus to save landmarks began as a result of a survey that found 80 percent of leisure travelers vacationing by car stop at roadside attractions, and nine out of 10 Americans believe it is important to preserve our country's roadside landmarks.

To join the campaign to save America's landmarks and Route 66, send recommendations to Explore the Highway with Hampton, P.O. Box 15422, Beverly Hills, CA 90209-1422 or www.hamptoninn.com.