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Arizona Route 66 Road Trip (A26A)

Weather killed my first big planned trip of the year. A jury duty summons killed a second, my annual spring Utah trip. The date I was to appear landed in the date range I had set aside for that trip, only to be notified the night before that I wasn't needed. Too late to reschedule the trip (I had another long trip coming up), I decided to take a short Arizona road trip.

My primary target was the Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve near Flagstaff, Arizona. I had planned to visit it for a hike last summer, but they were having a bit of a bubonic plague problem in the area at the time. From about 700AD to 1300AD, this local park was once home to the Northern Sinagua people and includes the largest concentration of Sinagua petroglyphs in the state. There are a number of hiking trails in the park, including a segment of the Arizona National Scenic Trail. I planned a hiking route to visit the park's two featured rock art sites, a ruins site, a small waterfall and a historic site.



Its most famous rock art panel is named for a "water bird" petroglyph (red arrow).



A circular stone wall perched above Picture Canyon is what is most visible at the pit house ruins.



The waterfall of the Rio de Flag, which carved Picture Canyon into a thick layer of basalt deposited by area volcanoes.

I'm a sucker for roadside kitsch. I was at Flagstaff along the old Route 66, and generally followed it west, with major stops in Flagstaff, Seligman and Kingman, Arizona, with some minor stops in between, to check out sights along the famous "Mother Road". That's one way I get my kicks, especially in this 100th anniversary year of the establishment of Route 66.



Miz Zip's Diner, Flagstaff, Arizona



Americana 66 Motor Hotel, Flagstaff, Arizona



Seligman, Arizona is known as the birthplace of Historic Route 66. Route 66, also known as the Mother Road, was designated in 1926 as a route that headed southwest from Chicago to Oklahoma City and then west to Santa Monica, California. Many towns along the way soon catered to travelers with motels, restaurants and attractions, often with eye-catching signs or architecture. But interstate highways were eventually built along the same general route, including I-40 across Arizona, bypassing many of those towns, and Route 66 was officially removed from the U.S. Highway System in 1985.

The day I-40 opened for traffic bypassing Seligman, Arizona, traffic through town all but disappeared. The first Route 66 Association was established in Seligman by local businessman Angel Delgadillo with the goal of preserving and promoting segments of the old Route 66, not just the roads but also the kitsch that characterized the old tourist experience. Some segments of the old highway were incorporated into I-40, but other segments survive, some of which are now designated as Historic Route 66 All-American Road.

Survival continues to be a challenge, though, as chain hotels and restaurants at interstate exchanges have taken away a lot of business from these towns, although a few places – like Seligman – do attract a fair amount of Route 66 tourism.



Delgadillo's Snow Cap Drive-In was founded in Seligman, Arizona in 1953 by Angel's brother Juan, and still draws a lot of business.



The Deluxe Inn Motel was established along Route 66 in 1932, Seligman, Arizona



The Copper Cart, Seligman, Arizona



I was told that my Seligman hotel room was fit for a king. Oops. Fit for The King. It was an Elvis Presley-themed room.



Burma-Shave was a brand of shaving cream introduced in 1925, at about the same time as America's car culture was taking off. It was struggling until the brand came up with an advertising gimmick – the Burma-Shave signs.

Basically, a Burma-Shave jingle was divided across a handful of small roadside signs that were placed in sequence about 100 feet apart. These were followed by one last sign that typically featured the Burma-Shave name.

The advertising gimmick worked. They boosted Burma-Shave sales, and early-day traveling families looked forward to seeing them as they provided some entertainment on long road trips. But as highway speeds increased, transportation changed, and the gimmick got old, the signs were increasingly ignored.

Burma-Shave eventually became part of Phillip Morris, and the larger owner decided that the jingles were silly and discontinued them. The last Burma-Shave signs had disappeared from roadsides by 1966.

Today, new signs featuring a number of old Burma-Shave jingles can be found at several locations along Historic Route 66 in Arizona, including segments both east and west out of Seligman.

But purists will note that although Burma-Shave at one point had about 7,000 signs around the country, it did not have any signs in four of the lower 48 states – including Arizona.

From Seligman to Kingman, the old Route 66 generally followed a train route across the relative flatness of the Coconino Plateau, whereas today's I-40 follows a shorter, more direct route that was blasted through some rugged landscape. The primary town on this route is Peach Springs, the administrative headquarters of the Hualapai Indian Reservation. Once a thriving stop along a remote stretch of Route 66, it now sits about 25 miles north of I-40. Fans of the Disney-Pixar movie *Cars* might recognize it as the inspiration of the town Radiator Springs in that movie.



Osterman's Gas Station (top) and the Peach Springs Trading Post, seller of "General Merchandise & Indian Curios" as it says on the rusted over sign (bottom) are both long-closed, although preservationists hope to come up with some purpose for these Route 66 relics.



Same with the long-closed Frontier Motel & Restaurant in nearby Truxton. For every thriving Route 66-themed business you find in a place like Seligman, it is easy to find ten more like this one that died when highway traffic no longer passed through town. Of course, this isn't just a Route 66 phenomenon. On my road trips, I pass through a lot of towns where business has gravitated towards interstate exits, leaving deserted downtown business districts behind.



Hackberry General Store, Hackberry, Arizona



The Antares Point Ranchero souvenir shop, featuring the *Giganticus Headicus*, Antares, Arizona



Mr. D's Route 66 Diner, Kingman, Arizona

The old powerhouse in Kingman, Arizona' oldest known reinforced concrete building, houses a visitor center and the Route 66 Museum. The museum is rather limited compared to other Route 66 museums that I've been to, but it is still worth a stop.



A museum exhibit on the Harvey Girls. When trains were the way to travel west before Route 66 came along, passengers often brought their own food and sleeping supplies. Fred Harvey began his Harvey House restaurants at train stations to serve travelers and railroad employees with meals and in some places overnight accommodations. Harvey Girls ran these places. In an age where waitresses were regarded more as “good time girls” than respectable working women, Harvey Girls were expected to follow strict behavior, wardrobe and moral rules. Seligman, Peach Springs and Kingman all had Harvey House locations.



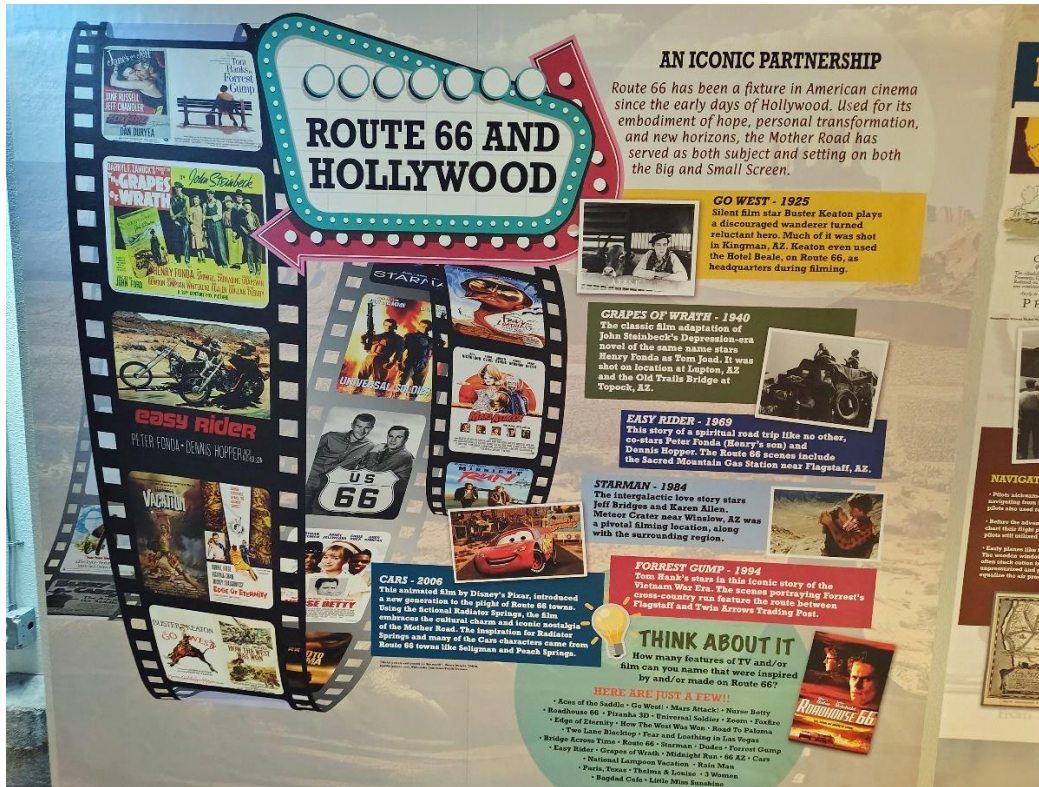
The early days of Route 66 in the 1920s



Route 66 was an important route to California during the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s. It served as the primary route for Dust Bowl migrants heading to California in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.



A Studebaker



Route 66 and Hollywood



Early electric cars in the pre-Tesla era



Distances from Kingman when traveling along Route 66

After getting my kicks along Route 66, I headed back to Las Vegas, about 100 miles northwest of Kingman.