

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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VISITBN HONORING 100 YEARS OF ILLINOIS ROUTE 66 WITH SPECIAL CENTENNIAL-THEMED EVENTS

(BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL, IL) — [VisitBN](#) (the Bloomington-Normal Area Convention and Visitors Bureau) announced a yearlong celebration of the centennial of Historic Route 66 in McLean County. From Chenoa to McLean, special events along the Mother Road — including a two-day party weekend in June — to commemorate each community's connection to the most famous highway in America, hosted by VisitBN, community leaders, and business partners.

"For a century, the Bloomington-Normal area has been intertwined with the history of Route 66 — the Main Street of America," said Melissa Chrisman, VisitBN President and CEO. "These events offer a remarkable way for the communities of McLean County to welcome travelers from around the world to our corner of the country, to not just stop here but also to witness the one-of-a-kind experiences waiting on our stretch of the byway."

Since the Mother Road's commissioning in 1926, McLean County has boasted a proud connection to the highway, which has had an undeniable impact on the communities through which it passes. Spawning iconic stops during its heyday that still stand, including [Parkview Inn](#), [Dixie Truckers Home and Family Restaurant](#), and [Sprague's Super Service](#), Route 66 has become intrinsically tied to the culture and heritage of McLean County over the past century. Today, that legacy lives on as thousands of cross-country travelers — some from around the world — come to catch a glimpse of nostalgic American life.

"As Route 66 celebrates its centennial, we honor the legacy of the Mother Road beyond being a fun place for family road trips. Route 66 was a way out for families fleeing the Dust Bowl and a critical artery for domestic mobilization during World War II," said U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL). "The efforts of everyday Americans to protect Route 66 led to the creation of the National Scenic Byways Program. I have supported the program throughout my time in Congress, including securing funding to preserve key sections of Route 66 in Illinois. May the Mother Road continue to connect Americans for many centuries to come."

"McLean County is brimming with remarkable opportunities for adventurers to immerse themselves in the history of both Illinois and America," said Beth Whisman, chair of the VisitBN Board. "This unique celebration of the Route 66 Centennial shines a spotlight on how travel and interconnectivity has influenced the development of our region and showcases the best our communities have to offer. Route 66 continues to have a massive global appeal, so there's no better way to celebrate both the 100th anniversary of the Mother Road as well as the 250th birthday of America than spotlighting an engineering marvel that continues to inspire the idyllic sense of freedom and Americana in travelers the world over, from Europe to Asia to Australia."

Special Commemorative Events for 2026

Throughout the year, McLean County communities will host special events honoring the legacy of Historic Route 66 and its continued influence on American culture. Special events and offerings planned through fall include:

- Route 66 Night hosted by the [Bloomington Bison](#) on January 24
- Red Carpet Corridor Weekend from May 2-3
- Cruisin' Through the Century party weekend from June 6-7
- Route 66 Centennial-themed activities at [Rader Family Farms](#)
- A special screening of the documentary, *The Main Street of America*, at [The Normal Theater](#)
- A Hops on 66 beer locally brewed by [White Oak Brewery](#)
- A centennial-themed performance by the [Illinois Symphony Orchestra](#)
- A county-wide scavenger hunt for residents and visitors to win special prizes
- Centennial Streets designations in each Route 66 community
- A grand marshal contest

A Countywide Decades Party

The Cruisin' Through the Century party weekend will feature themed celebrations in the communities lining the McLean County stretch of the Mother Road during a spectacular, two-day event from June 6-7, 2026. Scheduled themed events include the following:

- **CHENOA** — A 1920s-themed party on the downtown square, featuring a “flapper” dance contest with regional dance groups. (Saturday, June 6)
- **LEXINGTON** — A 1930s-themed party at The Castle with big band music and lawn games. (Saturday, June 6)
- **TOWANDA** — A 1940s-themed party. (Saturday, June 6)
- **NORMAL** — A 1950s-themed party with a roadside picnic. (Sunday, June 7)
- **BLOOMINGTON** — The signature event for VisitBN efforts is a groovy 1960s party on the square with live music and a BIG surprise. (Saturday, June 6)
- **SHIRLEY/FUNKS GROVE** — A 1970s tie-dye party on the Funks Grove property. (Sunday, June 7)
- **MCLEAN** — A retro 1980s party on the village square with live music, food, and a classic car parade. (Sunday, June 7)

“The link between the City of Bloomington and Historic Route 66 is well documented. Because of the influence of the Mother Road, our city has been built on a rich history, which has been strengthened over the years by people who care deeply about this community,” said Bloomington Mayor Dan Brady. “Cruisin’ Through the Century blends the past, present, and future of McLean County for one extraordinary weekend. The 100th anniversary of America’s most storied and significant highway is a celebration of our community’s connection to a treasured piece of American history.”

“Historic Route 66 is more than just a stretch of pavement. It’s a symbol of progress, connection, and courage, both in the Town of Normal and across the country,” said Normal Mayor Chris Koos. “Route 66 is a connector — for people and for our community. Celebrating the centennial of the Mother Road means meeting people from all over. The Cruisin’ Through the Century event will commemorate our community’s generations-old link to other places here in America and around the world.”

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VisitBN

About VisitBN

The Bloomington-Normal Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (VisitBN) collaboratively leads the region's visitor economy by developing, choreographing, and promoting our community as a diverse, innovative, and welcoming destination. Headed by President and CEO Melissa Chrisman since February 2025, VisitBN has worked diligently to promote the incredible sights and sounds in the Bloomington-Normal area, publishing an all-new Visitor Guide with feature articles highlighting some of the region's premier Illinois Route 66 attractions. The VisitBN team includes:

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