

THE BILLY HOLCOMB CHAPTER
OF THE ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ORDER OF E CLAMPUS VITUS®

Presents its

**FALL CLAMPOUT - 6028
ROUTE 66 AND
THE ROAD RUNNER CAFÉ**



AS PRESENTED BY

HUMBUG DENNIS "THE ERECTOR" PARKER

HISTORY COMPILED BY PAUL "GATLIN GUN" RENNER, P

Crossing two-thirds of the nation from Chicago to Santa Monica, U.S. Highway 66 goes by many names: the Mother Road, the Main Street of America, the Will Rogers Highway, and simply Route 66. Memorialized by humorist Will Rogers, author John Steinbeck, and songwriter Bobby Troupe, Route 66 has become an icon of mid-twentieth century America. From flivvers escaping the dustbowl to post-war motorists in high-horsepower iron, drivers needed a place to stop, gas-up, and enjoy a cup of coffee, a burger and fries, or a cold soda. Even before the highway was completely paved, businesses sprung up along the right-of-way to meet the needs of travelers. By 1950 Route 66 between Needles and Barstow saw the construction of road-side gas stations, garages, and “greasy spoons” in Essex (Goffs having been bypassed in 1932), Cadiz Summit, Amboy, Bagdad, Klondike, Ludlow, and Newberry Springs. A decade later another restaurant, garage and gas station joined the list: the Roadrunner’s Retreat between Amboy and Chambless. Roadrunner’s Retreat was a bit late in joining the Route 66 scene, but it certainly attracted its set of travelers, characters, and Clampers. But first, let’s review a little of the story of the Mother Road.

From Chicago to the Sea: A Brief History of Route 66

America has always been a nation in motion: west to the Mississippi after the Revolution, west to the Continental Divide following the Louisiana Purchase, west again to the Pacific Coast after the war with Mexico. Like many of today's highways, Route 66 has its roots in the nation's old pack and wagon roads. The first trails followed paths used for centuries by Native Americans, and so it was that for centuries Mohave Indians travelled between the Colorado River and the Pacific Coast along a well-watered trail about twenty miles north of present Route 66. In 1857 Lieutenant Edward Fitzgerald Beale was commissioned by Congress to survey a possible railroad route along the 35th parallel from Fort Defiance, Arizona, to the Colorado River. Crossing that river at present-day Fort Mohave, Beale followed the Mohave Indian’s path across the desert as he made his way to southern California. Known as Beale's Wagon Road, this route established an important communications and transportation link between east and west. Its westward extension between the Colorado River and Los Angeles became what we now call the Mojave Road.

The last third of the nineteenth century brought the railroad into southern California. The Atlantic and Pacific built west through Arizona to Needles, while at the same time the Southern Pacific built east through the California desert to the Colorado River. The Southern Pacific, working east from the town of Mojave through Waterman (now Barstow), in this region followed a route south of the Mojave Road, thereby avoiding the rough terrain through which that trail passed. The railroad skirted the Providence, Old Dad, and Bristol Mountains to the north of here, reaching Needles (about 155 miles east of Barstow) in 1883. In 1884 the Santa Fe Railroad purchased the desert right-of-way from the Southern Pacific, and operated it as the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad, Western Division. Small towns were established along this route to provide water for the thirsty steam locomotives. Although the towns to the west of our clampsite are named in no particular order, starting in Amboy the towns were named alphabetically

from west to east: Amboy, Bristol, Chambless, Danby, Edson, Fenner, Goffs, Homer, Ibis, Java. Later, Edson became Essex and Bristol became Bengal. (Moore and Cunningham, 2003) During the Golden Age of rail travel, the Santa Fe Railway ran some of its most famous passenger trains over this route, including the Grand Canyon Limited, the Chief, and the Super Chief.

The turn of the twentieth century brought the advent and increasing popularity of the automobile. Early automobile roads were basically converted wagon roads with little or no improvements. These roads were poorly marked, if they were marked at all. In the first years of the new century, cars were few and far between in the Mojave Desert, where horse and wagon were the primary methods of conveyance. By 1905 a few adventurous motorists had travelled at least some distance across the desert. Usually these people would follow the railroad, as water could be had at regular intervals, the grades encountered would be relatively easy, and if an emergency arose it might be possible to flag down a passing train. (Renner 2016) In "Goffs and Its Schoolhouse" Dennis Casebier tells us that "autoists" would avoid the sandy sections between Ludlow (about 28 miles west of Amboy) and Goffs (about 40 miles east of Amboy) by loading the cars onto the train at one end, and unloading them at the other. He goes on to tell us the earliest recorded account of someone making the entire crossing comes from 1907. (Casebier 1995) A good portion of this route soon became the desert section of the National Old Trails Road.

In these early days of automobile travel, groups of businessmen formed associations and clubs to promote travel along routes upon which their businesses were located. Automobile clubs also formed; these would signpost routes in their area and lobby for improvements. The route along the Santa Fe railroad through the Mojave Desert was signposted early on by the Automobile Club of Southern California. As more and more motorists took to the road the Auto Club of

Southern California touted what became the National Old Trails Road as the best means of entering California. (Casebier 1995) Goffs, the final stop on our DAMM Trek, soon became an important point on the National Old Trails Road, situated as it was at the highest point between Needles and Ludlow. (Renner 2016) Soon businesses sprang up along the road at Essex, Chambless, and Amboy.

But it was a long, dusty trip across the desert. Through the 1910s and into the twenties conditions along the National Old Trails Road were primitive. Occasionally a few sections were oiled or macadamized, but in most places the road was merely a two-track path through the sand. In many places there were multiple alignments; motorists took the one that looked best. According to Bischoff, George Greider wrote this description of the route from Cajon Pass out through the desert:

That (concrete) slab lasted all the way to Cajon Pass, and we really moved on that little slab of paving. When we came to the end of it at the top of the rise, the terrain flattened out and the pavement just stopped. There were no signs—nothing—and we just drove off into the sand....We stood there awhile. There were two ruts in the sand from there on. There were a few signs, and through the desert

and prairie there were two ruts in the sand for miles and miles, hundreds of miles. There was not a sign of civilization at all: no roadwork, no fences, no highway. (Bischoff 2005 from Scott and Kelley 1988)

In 1919 the California Division of Highways acquired responsibility for maintaining the National Old Trails Road—although the actual maintenance was done by San Bernardino County until 1923. (Bischoff 2005) Grading at first was done by horses, mules, and Fresno scrapers. Later graders were pulled by small tractors. Ruts continued to be a problem, and the state tried a number of methods to keep the ruts filled in. Early in its use, oil was used as a surface on the National Old Trails Road, but it was largely unsuccessful. The Department of Highways found that if the dust and sand were removed before the oil was applied, it had a higher likelihood of staying in place. Graders and broom drags were used to expose a more stable base, then the oil was applied.

As the popularity of the automobile increased, it became obvious that better roads and a better marking system were needed. However, there was no central organization coordinating any of these efforts, and each local trail or highway association marked roads in its own way. Of course, these random numbering systems created nightmares for early travelers, so in 1924 the Secretary of Agriculture created a board of state and federal highway authorities to standardize a national highway system. It was Cyrus Avery and Frank Sheets who proposed a highway from Chicago to Los Angeles, connecting various trails that passed through America's heartland and into the west.

Originally proposed as Route 60, Route 66 in California paralleled the Santa Fe Railroad for most of the distance from Needles to Los Angeles. The highway passed through the railroad watering stops on the way and, in many cases, small communities with gas stations and other services developed in these locales. At first the road was unpaved, and followed the National Trails Highway. Temperatures in the summertime were extreme, and veterans knew to travel the desert section from Needles to Barstow at night. Even in the winter time travel in the early days of Route 66 could be perilous, as the possibility of getting stuck in the sand was ever-present along much of the way. By the beginning of the 1930's, however, much of the desert section had been paved, fortuitous because of the increase in traffic the road was about to see.

THE ROAD AND THE DEPRESSION YEARS

Sid Blumner, XSNGH

Background

To understand the traffic on the road that would occur during the Depression until World War II, it is first necessary to review the economic conditions in the United States that would eventually lead to the migration west that occurred in the 1930's. The so called "Roaring Twenties" brought economic growth to almost all sectors of the economy save our farm sector. The farm sector's last good years ended in about the early twenties as Europe recovered from World War I and the demand for American farm products in Europe declined. By the time of the Great Depression, beginning in October 1929, the agricultural sector of the United States was lagging behind the rest of the economy. Farmers faced

foreclosure, and people were losing their homes. Thirty per cent of the total population was unemployed and, as farmers lost their farms and livelihood, it was difficult for them to find work.

Drought struck the Midwest during the period of the early 1930's. Because of the farming techniques in use at that time, much of the land was subject to wind and water erosion. Soil conservation practices were largely ignored. Beginning in 1932, dust storms swallowed the nation's heartland. Farmers who had not lost their homes and farms due to economic conditions lost the soil on them due to the wind. This created a drought-stricken area in which the top soil had blown away. Many farmers stayed on to fight nature and the economy but many of them began to migrate west to what was considered the promised land of California.

The so called "Okies" (people from Oklahoma) and "Arkies" (people from Arkansas) began to migrate west to California. (There were people from all over on the move; not just from Oklahoma and Arkansas). Most believed that if they could just get to California they could find work and make a home in the agricultural sector of the state. The migrants packed what belongings they could into some type of transportation, sold what they could not take, and what they could not sell they left behind. Having done this, the migrants took to the road.

The Road

Route 66, named the "Mother Road" by John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*, was assigned its now famous number in 1926. The Road was paved in California by the time of the Depression. The Road entered California at Needles and followed the original dirt route from Needles to Santa Monica. Route 66 was a two-lane road from Chicago to Santa Monica. Towns and stops were located about every twenty miles. Even with communities and stops every twenty miles or so, Route 66 in the desert area was a lonely, desolate place. After Kingman, Arizona, the migrants found themselves in desert terrain until reaching San Bernardino, California.

Travel on the Road During the 1930s

By the 1930's, Route 66 was a well-traveled highway. The migrants crossed into California via the Needles Bridge across the Colorado River (the bridge is still in place but is not used by autos). Often, right after entry they were stopped and confronted by county Sheriffs or State Police. While they could not stop the migrants, these officers discouraged them from entering California whenever possible. This was done for two reasons. First, the agricultural jobs in the Central Valley were limited and there were already more workers than jobs. Secondly, many of the migrants had little or no money and California's welfare system was out of funds and could not aid the migrants. The feeling was that the fewer the people who entered the state with little or no funds the better off the state would be if they were kept out. If the migrants survived the "port of entry" hassle they found themselves in Needles. Needles represented their last major supply stop before the desert. Communities and stops in the desert had only basic supplies and services. Each of these stops represented a little oasis in the desert to the weary migrant.

The migrants tended to travel in groups for mutual support. Each group helped its members. Communities such as Essex, Chambliss, Danby, Ludlow, and Barstow and stops such as Siberia (long

gone) represented a place where one might be able to get a drink of water and find a mechanic who could fix their transportation. These communities were crowded with cars and trucks that had been abandoned and were used for parts. These vehicles were left behind by their owners who could not afford the repairs. Route 66 was also littered with disabled, abandoned vehicles and household goods tossed aside by people who could no longer transport them. Here and there a grave could be found for those migrants who did not survive the trip. Today we see names spelled in rocks along the side of the road. These are a reminder of a tradition that goes back to the 1930's when the migrants left their marks in the form of rocks to indicate they had been there so they would not be forgotten. It was a long, hard trip which ended when they got to San Bernardino and were out of the heat and desert. From San Bernardino many of the migrants continued on to Los Angeles. Many traveled Route 99 to the central valley where they hoped to find work.

The migration of those fleeing the Dust Bowl would continue in growing numbers until the United States entered WWII. The New Deal brought aid to the farmers in the Dust Bowl area but it was too late for many. Even with federal aid, faced with the loss of their homes and farms, the outflow continued. Only with our entry into WWII and the influx of these jobless men into the military were many able to get work. Many of their wives found work in the California defense industry.

WORLD WAR II AND ROUTE 66 IN THE EAST MOJAVE

Bill Pearson, XNGH

After the outbreak of World War II, Route 66 was the main highway through the Zone of the Interior in the northern part of the Army's Desert Training Center. In early 1942 General George Patton received orders to create a means by which American soldiers could be trained for combat in North Africa. Patton, a native Californian, knew the Mojave Desert would provide the necessary conditions for training soldiers in desert warfare. In March 1942 the Desert Training Center was opened, extending from Pomona in the west to within 60 miles of Phoenix in the east, and from Las Vegas in the north to Yuma in the south. The Desert Training Center was served by three railroads (Union Pacific to the north, Santa Fe in the center, and the Southern Pacific in the south) as well as a major aqueduct (the Colorado River Aqueduct). And running roughly through the middle of the DTC was Route 66.

Part of the Zone of the Interior, the new Desert Training Center included all of the Inland Empire. Spanning most of the Mojave Desert, it contained various military hospitals, ordnance and supply bases and P.O.W. camps. It was also home to 13 divisional camps. Whereas the troops and their equipment were mainly brought in by train, Route 66 provided connections between camps Clipper, Ibis, Goffs, Needles and the Colorado River. Goffs was a large ordnance dump and the 7th Infantry Division was based behind the Goffs school house. Camp Clipper was the home of the 33rd Infantry Division and the 93rd Infantry Division. There is some confusion in the literature over the name of Camp Clipper. It was also known as Camp Essex. Everet Hayes of the Bureau of Land Management explains it best, "The locals called it Camp Essex and the military called it Camp Clipper." Camp Ibis was the home of the 9th and 11th Armored Divisions. This camp had to bring water in by truck from the Colorado River. Camp

Needles was more of an administrative camp with an air field, general hospital, and a combat engineer training camp.

Goffs was an important point of supply, situated as it is on both Route 66 (although by 1942 this was an older alignment of the highway) and the Santa Fe Railway. Goffs was one of the first camps to be opened, and was occupied for three months in 1942 by the Seventh Infantry Division. Units like the Seventh came to the Desert Training Center for three months, participating first in small unit exercises, and gradually building to division-strength maneuvers. Goffs was also home to the 563rd QM RHD Company. (Casebier 1995) Supplies, equipment, provisions, ammunition and weapons were shipped by train to Goffs, where they were offloaded by the 563rd; Route 66 was used as an artery for distributing this materiel to the nearby divisional camps (Ibis and Clipper/Essex).

The coming of the war with Germany and Japan changed the face of the Mother Road quite literally. Convoys of military vehicles replaced passenger cars on 66; gas rationing during the war created a situation in which only a few civilians crossed the desert on the highway. Those who did generally were moving from the east to the new aircraft plants located in Southern California. The road itself suffered a significant amount of damage due to the large number of heavy (for the time) trucks and other vehicles travelling to various points on the desert, or to Los Angeles.



CAMP IBIS EAST MOJAVE

AFTER THE WAR: GLORY DAYS

The end of World War II saw an expansion of the American economy that was unprecedented. After twelve years of depression and four years of war, Americans had money in their pockets and they were ready to spend. Gas rationing was over, and Ford, GM, Packard and Chrysler shifted their production lines from war materiel back to automobiles. Americans were ready to roll.

Soldiers who had been stationed “out west” in California were among the first to travel Route 66 for leisure. Either by train or by truck, these men had seen the country through which the Mother Road passed, and were ready to take their time and travel the route at a more leisurely pace. But the greatest boon to travel during the post-war years was the explosion in westward migration, as millions of people

moved from the east to California to take advantage of the growing job market there. Businesses along Route 66, for four years dependent almost entirely on military traffic, began to take advantage of the growth in tourism and migration. Two factors that led to the growth of Route 66 as a cultural icon were Bobby Troup's 1946 song "Get Your Kicks on Route 66" and, a few months later, Jack D. Rittenhouse's "A Guidebook To Route 66." Both Troupe and Rittenhouse had traveled along the increasingly famous highway during the war. Troupe's song was recorded by Nat King Cole and was an overnight sensation (Bischoff 2005):

If you ever plan to motor west
Travel my way, take the highway that is best
Get your kicks on Route sixty six

It winds from Chicago to LA
More than two thousand miles all the way
Get your kicks on Route sixty six

Now you go through Saint Looney
Joplin, Missouri
And Oklahoma City is mighty pretty
You see Amarillo
Gallup, New Mexico
Flagstaff, Arizona
Don't forget Winona
Kingman, Barstow, San Bernardino

Won't you get hip to this timely tip
When you make that California trip
Get your kicks on Route sixty six
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When you make that California trip

Get your kicks on Route sixty six
Get your kicks on Route sixty six
Get your kicks on Route sixty six

Troupe and his wife wrote most of the song on a ten-day journey from Pennsylvania to California, where Troupe was hoping to make it big as a song writer. It worked.

Rittenhouse's Guidebook included information on points of interest, eating establishments, mileages between towns, and road conditions. All this and more for only one dollar! The combination of Troupe's song and Rittenhouse's guidebook was to make Route 66 a household name, synonymous with travel west.

The increase in traffic along the Mother Road led to an increase in roadside businesses and attractions. Those businesses that had survived the lean depression and war years now began to thrive, while at the same time new businesses sprang up all along the highway. The competition between restaurants, tourist attractions (like the alligator farm and the world's largest ball of string), and curio shops (such as the famous Two Arrows Trading Post near Hollbrook, Arizona) became fierce. Auto courts, which before the war had been little more than overnight parking spots for weary travelers, began to be replaced by "motor-hotels," or motels. And each business did its best to make sure it was well seen by motorists, trying to outdo each other with bill boards, bright colors, and modern or outlandish designs (ever sleep in a tipi? Try the Wigwam motels in Holbrook or San Bernardino). The towns through the East Mojave were no different; businesses in Essex, Chambless, and especially Amboy served motorists day and night in cafes, gas stations, and motels. In addition, the Mother Road continued to be a cultural icon. Bobby Troup's song was recorded in the fifties by Perry Como and in the sixties by the Rolling Stones. There was even a TV show that gave the highway star billing: "Route 66" was the story of two young men travelling the country in an always new Corvette convertible, and starred Martin Milner and George Maharis (whose character was later replaced by Glenn Cobett). Although "Route 66" never really featured the real Route 66, it added to the image of the Main Street of America. The period from 1946 until 1972 was truly the Golden Age of Route 66.

It was during this time that Buster Burris, son-in-law of Roy Crowl, expanded Amboy to the point that it became the largest Route 66 stop between Needles and Barstow. Roy opened a gas station and garage in 1938—the original "Roy's," and after the war he and Buster expanded the business: the original garage was converted into a café, and a new garage was built. Buster brought power to Amboy on his own, installing power poles along the highway from Barstow. Buster and Roy also opened the motel. Amboy flourished, its population reaching 250. This was enough to support a school, a Catholic church, and several other businesses.

Increased traffic along Route 66 had its downside: an increase in traffic accidents. Most of the highway, and all of it from Needles to Barstow, was still a narrow, two-lane road. As the volume of traffic passing along the highway through the California desert rose, the number of serious traffic incidents, many of them fatal, rose proportionately.

Adding to the problem was the increase in performance of passenger cars, and the increase in size of commercial trucks. A fast, powerful sedan attempting to pass a large semi-truck along the many narrow stretches of Route 66 often led to gruesome results. Furthermore, there wasn't much help available on this stretch of the road. For many years, there was just one CHP officer patrolling Route 66 from Needles to Barstow: Walter Terry. Stationed in Barstow, Terry rode his Harley Davidson back and forth between the Los Angeles County Line and the Nevada border, responding to emergencies, helping those in need, and bringing others to justice. He started on his beat in 1937, and retired in 1967. For many years, his Harley had no radio, so Patrolman Terry used the dispatch telephones along the Santa Fe Railway to call in emergencies. (Bischoff 2005) But even travelling at top speed, it might be a long time before Terry, or anyone else for that matter, could get to the scene of an accident. Buster Burris recalled,

Most of these accidents we had out here, no first aid would have helped. They was bad (sic). We all carried wood saws because the bridge railings were wooden and people would miss the bridge and the

railings would go through the car, the firewall, and the driver's chest. We'd saw it off in front and back and pull them out. Some I've gone to where you just take a sack. It's gruesome....Out here when 66 was full of people, they was head on. (Bischoff 2005, from Scott and Kelly 1988)

Despite the wrecks, Route 66 continued to be the Main Street of America. But it was not to last. The road continued to deteriorate, safety concerns increased with each accident, congestion increased. It was clear that the Mother Road's days were numbered.

Death and Rebirth

The creation of the Interstate Highway System in 1956 marked the beginning of the end for Route 66. By the mid-fifties it was clear that the largely two-lane road could no longer handle the increased traffic and heavier and faster cars and trucks. More modern four-lane roads built to the standards of the Interstate Highway system began to replace sections of the Mother Road. At first, rural sections were improved or abandoned; then cities and towns were bypassed. Probably the first to be affected were owners of roadside tourist services. Later, as

Interstate 40 bypassed Essex, Chambless, and Amboy, gas stations, motels, and cafes were forced to close their doors:

Business owners along the route usually remember the exact time of day the Interstate opened around their towns. Most compare the experience to the closing of a water faucet. One day hundreds of cars passed in front of their businesses; the next day only a dozen or so might pass. Businesses struggled, but most eventually failed, and by the late 1970s most of the route had been replaced. On October 13, 1984, Williams, Arizona became the last town along Route 66 to succumb, and in 1985 the fabled U.S. Highway 66 was officially decommissioned and all remaining signage removed (Olsen 2004).

The story does not end here, however. Americans have a love for their past, and the nostalgia for Route 66 is no exception. Not long after the decommissioning of the Mother Road, Americans started to turn off the busy Interstate and take a step back in time to a slower pace. Some of today's travelers are graying baby-boomers who want to relive past adventures, or want to share with their children the excitement of traveling the old road. Many others want to explore the abandoned towns and oases to get an understanding of what life was like in another time. While many businesses and towns along the route are long closed, some still survive. Roy's Café in Amboy is one such place. Roy's has changed hands more than once in the past twenty years and for a time its future, and that of Amboy, was

in doubt. Fortunately, though, Mr. Albert Okura purchased the town, along with its famous café, in April 2005. The café serves as a souvenir shop and a nice place to buy a cold drink, and gas flows again from the pumps outside. Amboy has been preserved as an icon of Route 66 history. Route 66 offers a path to the past, and for many is still the preferred route through the East Mojave Desert.

Road Runner's Retreat

(From "Silence and the Sun." Used with permission of author Joe deKehoe)

The Roadrunner's Retreat is a mile and a half west of Chambless and 10 miles east of Amboy, California on National Trails Highway, formerly Route 66. The business consisted of a restaurant and

service station that was started by Roy and Helen Tull in the early 1960s. Roy Tull was a truck driver and envisioned the Roadrunner's Retreat as a truck stop strategically positioned on Route 66 between Needles and Barstow. While construction was still underway Roy sold the 40-acre property to F. B. "Duke" Dotson who formerly owned and operated Duke's Western Wear in Montclair, California. Roy and his wife Helen may have operated the café for a couple of months, but soon after it opened in 1962 Dotson took over and ran the service station and restaurant as a truck stop and towing service. In 1963 the rest of Dotson's family, his wife Virginia, and their two sons and daughter moved out to the desert and settled into a mobile home parked behind the restaurant. Duke Jr. recalls that when he arrived, fresh out of the 6th grade, his dad told him to put on an apron and start bussing tables. He said that he thought his life had come to an end moving from Ontario out to this place in the desert.

Roy Tull's wife Helen worked in the restaurant for a short time with the help of several local women who served as waitresses, one of whom was Lola Joyce Nelson, a Navajo Indian who lived nearby at the railroad depot at Cadiz. It was not uncommon at the time on Route 66 for a man and wife team to arrive looking for work. If there were openings Dotson would hire the husband to work either in the restaurant as a cook or at the service station and the wife worked as a waitress.

The Standard Oil service station just east of the cafe was built with a distinctive Googie-inspired upswept roof, an architectural style that was popularized in the 1950s and 60s, influenced by the up and coming Space Age, the Atomic Age and Jets. In addition to the service station / garage, Dotson also ran a towing service with the help of a Texan named John Gwen.



Together, John and Duke, and of course their German Shephard "Ace," built and maintained all of the trucks and "fixed everything that was broken." Duke's first tow truck was named "King of the Road," but all of the other trucks were named after bears: "Smokey," "Papa Bear," "Mama Bear," "Teddy Bear," and "Grizzly Bear."

Today both the cafe and service station are boarded up and slowly deteriorating. While the Roadrunner's Retreat was open a small community of a dozen or so mobile homes grew up behind the

diner and provided living quarters for some of the employees who worked in the restaurant and the service station, but all of those have now either been removed or are also in ruins.

The Roadrunner closed in 1973 when Interstate 40 was opened between Needles and Barstow and this section of the highway was bypassed. All of the roadside businesses on this stretch of Route 66 through the Mojave Desert between Essex and Ludlow died almost overnight. Businesses that depended on tourist and commercial traffic – service stations, restaurants, motels, car repair shops – were all forced to close. Duke Jr. remembers that when his father made the decision to close they were in the restaurant for most of the day and their only customer was a railroad employee who stopped in for a cup of coffee and not a single car went by on the highway.

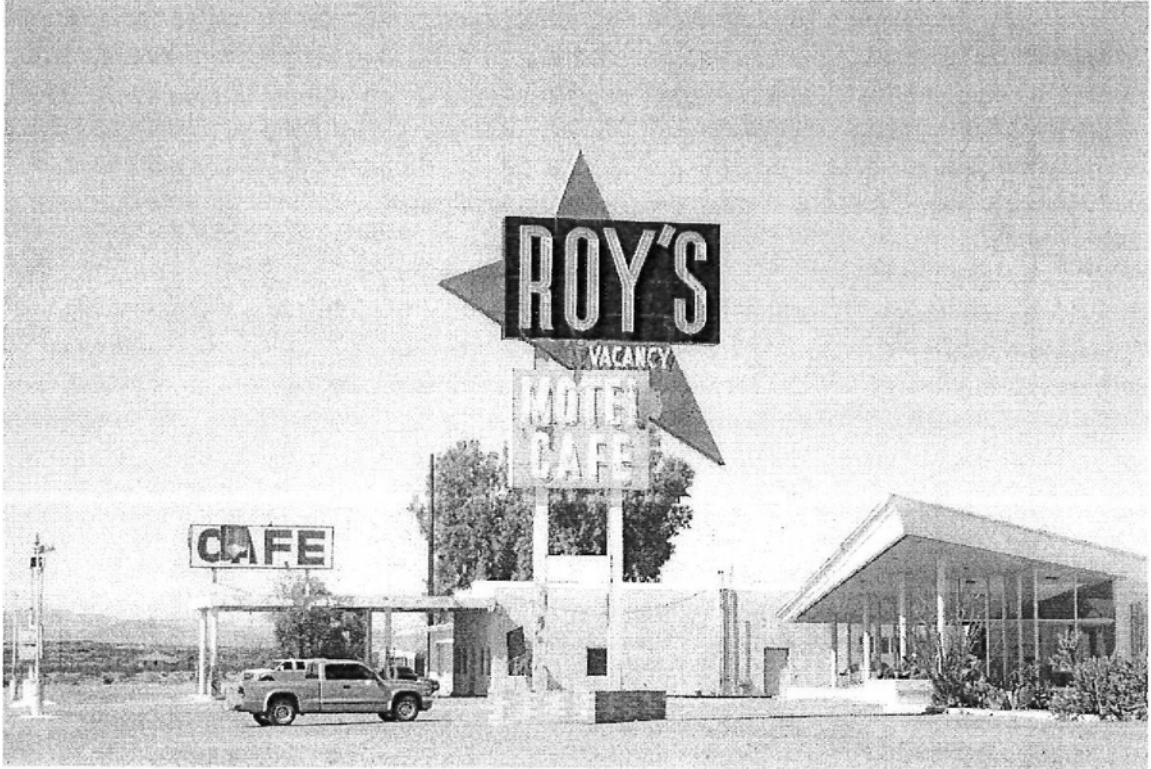
After the Roadrunner's Retreat closed Dotson sold the property to the Murphy family who are still the current owners. Mr. Murphy never intended to reopen the restaurant; his interest was more toward having a desert retreat and in maintaining the site for its historic significance on old Route 66. Before he passed away Mr. Murphy was able to enjoy memorable weekends on the property with his



family. The distinctive neon sign next to the highway that advertised the Roadrunner's Retreat, although weather-beaten and pale, still stands and is immediately recognizable as one of those iconic symbols on this stretch of old Route 66 and there are tentative plans in place to re-light the sign although the service station and restaurant will remain closed. (Thanks to Joe deKehoe for allowing us to use the above article from his blog "Silence and the Sun.")

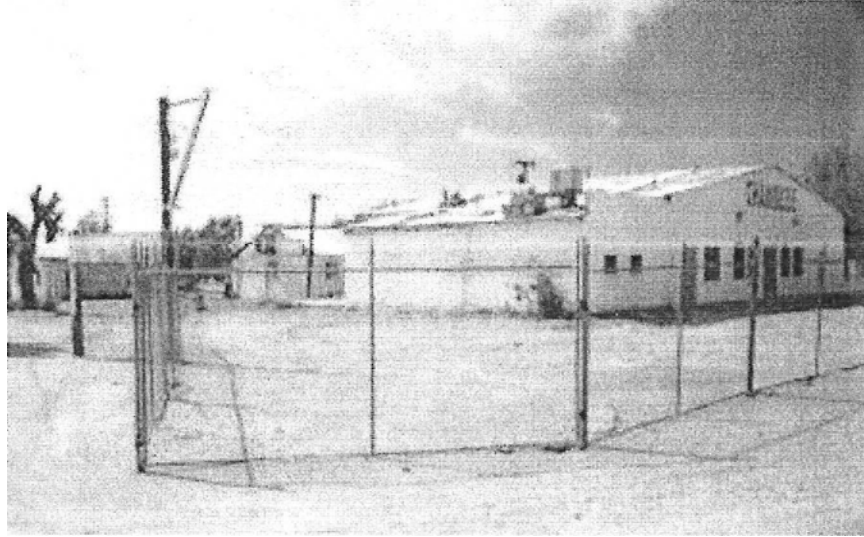
For those of you wishing to experience a little of the flavor of Route 66, presented below is a "travelogue" that includes the major stops on the Mother Road between Amboy and Goffs.

Amboy



Another siding along the Southern Pacific, Amboy was established in 1883. By the time Route 66 was officially designated, Amboy consisted of a railroad depot, several garages, and a couple of stores. (Metcalf-Shaw, 1926) By the late 1930's, its population was nearly 100. Roy's Café, opened about 1938 by Roy Crowl and later owned and operated by Buster Burris, became an icon along Route 66 through the Mojave Desert. Amboy reached its height after World War II, when its population reached 264 souls and it boasted two cafes, a motel, tourist cabins, and two gas stations. Many buildings remain today, including two section houses (ca. 1900), three cottages from a highway maintenance facility (late 1940s), the Amboy schoolhouse (1903), Roy's Café (1947), Roy's Motel office (ca. early 1950s), several cottages from Roy's Motel (ca. early 1950s), a Catholic Church (ca. early 1950s), and highway maintenance buildings (ca. 1970) (Bischoff, 2006).

Chambless



James Albert Chambless of Arkansas established a homestead at an intersection of a mining road with the National Trails Road in the early 1920's. The Automobile Club of Southern California reported a store in this location in the late 1920's, after the road was designated as part of Route 66. In 1932 the highway was realigned, and the business followed it; a gas station, motel and store were added, and by 1939 a post office, tourist cabins, and a café were operating here. During World War II, the Army used a portion of the desert across the road from Chambless for an artillery range (Bischoff 2006). Today the businesses have closed, but many of the buildings remain, including the store and tourist cabins. A Billy Holcomb plaque was placed here in 1992.



Cadiz Summit

By the late 1930's, a gas station, café, and tourist cabins were located at the low pass east of Chambless known as Cadiz summit. This oasis was known as Summit, and sometime prior to 1931 an

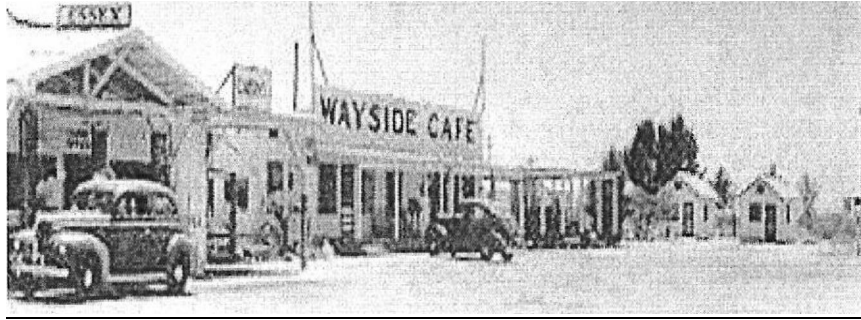
aircraft beacon was built on top of the nearby hill. The café was brought from Goffs by George and Minnie Tienken when a new alignment of Route 66 bypassed that town in 1931. At some point the café burned down. Foundations of the café and garage as well as a stone retaining wall still remain on the north side of the highway, and the foundations of the beacon are located on top of the hill. From the summit, old alignments of the highway can be seen north and south of the road; this section was straightened in the early 1930's.

Danby



Originally a railroad siding for the Southern Pacific, Danby was established in 1883. Danby was a shipping point for salt extracted from the nearby dry lake. By 1900 Danby contained a mill, two wells, a store, and a group of cabins (Bischoff, 2006). Later, when Route 66 was realigned in 1932, Danby moved from its original location along the railroad north to the highway. A small group of tourist cabins and a service station were in operation late in the 1930s. A small county courthouse was built there to serve the Amboy Judicial District for the County of San Bernardino. The first courthouse was replaced in the 1950's by a larger structure, which can be seen today. About seven buildings still stand at Danby (the one along the highway), including the courthouse, two garages, a residence, and a few storage sheds.

Essex



Originally called Edson, Essex was established as a siding on the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1883. The name was changed to Essex in 1906 (Bischoff, 2006). A highway maintenance facility was constructed in about 1924. T.G. Blythe homesteaded on land near the siding and opened a service station in 1927. The realignment of Route 66 that bypassed Fenner and Goffs meant well for Essex, as it became the last stop of significance before Needles. Additionally, the road to Mitchell Caverns intersected with Route 66 in Essex. A school, store, and post office were operating by the 1930's. Many buildings and a few residents remain at Essex today. There are two gas stations, representing two periods of Essex history. A combination well and water fountain, built by the California Highway Department, can be seen at the west end of town on the current highway (Bischoff, 2006).

Fenner

Fenner had its beginnings in 1883 as a railroad construction camp. It was also a railroad station for the nearby town of Providence. Fenner gained in importance in the late 1890's as a shipping point for local mines, and boasted a boarding house, saloon, post office, blacksmith shop, horse corral and feed yard, section house, telegraph office, and pumping station (Bischoff, 2006). By the late 1920's, the town had a store, hotel, café, and service station to take advantage of the new highway traffic (Bard, 1972). Fenner was bypassed in 1932 with the new alignment of Route 66. Today, little remains of the original town of Fenner; there is a gas station and store just to the west of the town site.

Goffs



Goffs was a siding built by the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1883. Named for a railroad official, Goffs was located at the highest point between Needles and Amboy. At first, Goffs was merely a turning around point for helper engines that assisted in pulling trains up the grade from Needles. However, the Nevada Southern Railroad was constructed north from Goffs in 1893 from the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad (a subsidiary of the Santa Fe). The Nevada Southern served the mines in the New York Mountains to the north, and was eventually extended to the mining town of Searchlight Nevada.

By the time the Nevada Southern (later the California Eastern) ceased operation in 1923, traffic along the National Trails Road, and in 1926 Route 66, was beginning to increase. Business was good until 1932 when Route 66 was realigned to the south, bypassing Goffs. The post office closed in 1932, as did many businesses that depended on the highway traffic. The Goffs School closed in 1938. Today, the Goffs school house is the center piece of the Friends of the Mojave Road and the Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association.

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Paul enjoys long walks in the desert and full moons,
proud owner of the world's best dog.

S A T I S F A C T O R Y