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## **The Mill on Route 66 Accessibility Project Completed; Grand Opening on April 29<sup>th</sup> as Part of “Route 66 Day in Lincoln” Plans That Are Underway**

The Mill in Lincoln, Illinois has completed their 2016 grant project awarded by the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, which is administered by the National Park Service, National Trails Intermountain Region. The historic Route 66 building now has an ADA-compliant entrance and restroom facility with two ADA accessible bathrooms and one standard bathroom. The grant amount was \$10,720, and was matched by \$12,000 from the City of Lincoln hotel tax fund, and an additional \$4756 from the same fund that was needed for additional expenses.

The announcement of project completion came from Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County board secretary, Geoff Ladd, in an update to the Lincoln City Council on Monday, February 21<sup>st</sup>. The 501c3 non-profit foundation owns the iconic former restaurant and bar that sprang up along the original Route 66 alignment in Lincoln in 1929. The business was originally a sandwich stand, and evolved over the years into a restaurant, a bar and even a dance hall with live music.

Ladd offered his thanks to Lincoln Mayor Neitzel and the City Council, including Alderman Tracy Welch, who was an enthusiastic early supporter of the project. Matthews Construction of Lincoln was the building contractor for the project.

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017, The Mill on Route 66 will open for the first time ever as a Route 66 museum. The restroom project is one of the final steps in the restoration process. Ladd told the City Council that the rest of the building is nearing completion, including the floorplans for

the museum displays. Plans also include a gift shop, featuring unique local items and Route 66 souvenirs.

Ladd requested from the Mayor and City Council a proclamation marking April 29<sup>th</sup> as “Route 66 Day in Lincoln”. He presented the council with plans for a parade from Historic Downtown Lincoln departing at 11am and ending up at The Mill, where there will be a formal ribbon cutting and Grand Opening from Noon-4pm.

The downtown district is now signed as the 1926-1930 alignment in Lincoln, thanks to the efforts of the City of Lincoln, Illinois Department of Transportation and the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway.

By following this newly signed alignment, Route 66 travelers will experience the historic structures that make up Lincoln’s downtown, including City Hall (with the phone booth on top of the building), the Logan County Courthouse, the Andrew Carnegie-designed Lincoln Public Library, the Lincoln Depot (which is undergoing renovation) and the uniquely beautiful Scully Building. There is also an Abraham Lincoln downtown walking tour that includes Lincoln’s famous Watermelon Christening Scene. And for shoppers, check out the large variety of specialty shops downtown and plenty of great home-cooked dining options for visitors coming to town.

The proclamation and parade plans will be finalized and voted on by the City of Lincoln in March. The Railsplitter Antique Auto Club, Salt Creek ABATE Chapter and the Abraham Lincoln National Railsplitting Festival have all indicated their interest in being a part of the parade. All of these organizations have also been big supporters and volunteers at The Mill. Local, State and Federal officials have also been invited.

Ladd announced that the Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County has been working with the Logan County Tourism Bureau, and they are providing a grant for advertising and collateral materials for the upcoming grand opening event. He also announced Lincoln-based technology firm, Integrity Data is donating a computer system and monitor to the museum, and that ExploreLoganCounty.com will be providing smartphone technology enhancements as well. Visitors will be able to access a QR code that will provide additional audio and video materials about the various displays. Ladd noted that the museum will feature transportation themes from Logan County’s rich Route 66 history, including food, fuel and lodging. He noted that the museum will house the official collection from both The Mill in Lincoln and the former Pig Hip Restaurant in Broadwell.

In addition, Ladd announced that the Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County had recently received a donation from Invenergy LLC. Invenergy is a Chicago-based company in the process of developing the Logan County Wind Energy Project in the rural Atlanta, Illinois area. Route 66 Heritage Foundation president Bob Wilmert worked with Invenergy project development manager Allyson Sand, and the company subsequently made a \$2500 donation.

“It's great when an iconic Route 66 property like the Mill in Lincoln is restored and can again be shared with visitors from around the world,” observed Bill Kelly, Executive Director of the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway. “A lot of hard work, creativity and cooperation will be rewarded this Spring when the Mill resumes its proper place as one of the great stops anywhere on the Mother Road.”

The April 29<sup>th</sup> date for the event is also the same day as the annual Bike Blessing in Lincoln, hosted by local motorcycle enthusiasts, Ron & Lois Thornton. The event is being held at Zero Tolerance in Lincoln beginning at 1pm, and includes a meal and live music.

Local Lincoln attractions, Postville Courthouse State Historic Site and Lincoln Heritage Museum at Lincoln College will also be open that day. The grand opening event is also during Lincoln College's Alumni Reunion weekend.

After the grand opening, the celebration will move to Spirited Republic craft beer bar and wine shop, located on the south side of the square, from 4pm-6pm. The public is invited.

“We've had so many incredible grants, donations, contributions, in-kind volunteers and supporters, that we are dedicating the back wall of The Mill to display the individuals, companies and organizations that have made this all possible. For example, we now have had two Logan County wind farm projects make donations (Apex Clean Energy and Invenergy LLC), the local band 5<sup>th</sup> Saturday Opry recently did a fund-raiser for us, the Lincoln College music program has provided fantastic live music at our events, Lincoln Printers is providing our new outside sign and Serendipity Stitches, located in downtown Lincoln, has made an amazing contribution which you'll have to wait until opening day to see,” said Ladd. “I want to thank everyone as always over these past 11 years who have contributed, including John Weiss and the volunteers from the Route 66 Association of Illinois, Bill Kelly and the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway, Bill Hoagland and the Logan County Tourism Bureau, State Representative Tim Butler, all our board members and volunteers, and especially at this time, the National Park Service and the City of Lincoln.”

Details forthcoming at [Mill66.com](http://Mill66.com).