



## The Mill on 66 Receives National Park Service Grant & Additional Funding Contributions

For Immediate Release: Tuesday, August 30, 2016. To set up media interviews contact Geoff Ladd at 217-671-3790.

The Mill on 66 in Lincoln is one of four Illinois recipients of this year's National Park Service, Route 66 Corridor Preservation cost-share grant. The program, as described by the National Park Service, "provides grant assistance for eligible historic preservation, research, oral history, interpretative, and educational projects. Grants are offered through an annual, competitive grant cycle. Since 2001, 130 projects have been awarded \$1.9 million with \$3.1 million in cost-share match, totaling \$5 million in public-private investment toward the revitalization of the Route 66 corridor."

From the National Park Service, Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, here is the information on The Mill grant:

### **The Mill on Route 66 Accessibility Project**

Location: Lincoln, Illinois

Total Grant amount: \$22,720

"The Mill Restaurant in Lincoln, Illinois, is a prime example of early American roadside architecture, and is one of the few buildings from the era still standing. The restaurant was first opened on Route 66 in 1929 under the name of the Blue Mill. The eatery was constructed by local contractors in the shape of a small Dutch windmill with sails on the front. It was white with blue trim, with continuously turning sails decorated with lights.

In 1945 an army barrack from Camp Ellis was attached to the back of the building to accommodate a restaurant, bar, and dance hall. It was then that the entire building was painted red and renamed The Mill. One of the restaurant's claims to fame was its fried schnitzel. The Mill also offered a display of strange objects to attract and entertain customers: a mechanical leg kicked its way through a hole in the ceiling; four life-sized figures, a suit of armor, and a 20-pound stuffed catfish were on display; and a basket above the bathroom door – when opened – would blast a loud siren throughout the restaurant.

The Mill closed in 1996 and stood deteriorating for many years. In 2006 the Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County was created to promote and preserve the Mill and other Route 66 sites in Logan County. The foundation worked with the City of Lincoln to save the building from the wrecking ball and gain title to the property. The foundation has been working to restore the National Register-eligible property to a museum and visitor center ever since. A NPS grant in 2008 helped with structural repairs. The current grant will provide accessibility to the building including an entrance and bathroom. The original basket and loud siren that once adorned the bathroom door will also be restored."

This grant would not have been possible without a \$12,000 commitment by the City of Lincoln using funds from the local hotel/motel tax. The Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County is extremely grateful for the unanimous support from the City Council for this project. The project includes the development of an historic architectural plan by Melotte Morse Leonatti Parker, Ltd of Springfield, IL, and for the development of the accessibility to the building, utilizing the expertise of Matthews Construction of Lincoln, IL, that includes the entrance and bathroom located at the back of the structure.

A previous National Park Service, Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program grant was awarded to The Mill in 2008 in to restore the foundation and beautiful wood floor in the front section of the building. "This year's grant, in combination with the fund raising efforts of Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County president Bob Wilmert will take The Mill across

the finish line, and allow us to be open as a museum by April of 2017,” said Geoff Ladd, secretary and past president of the organization. “This funding by the National Park Service is very competitive and is open to projects from all eight Route 66 states, and so we felt that the best way to get this grant this time around would require a strong financial commitment of up to \$12,000 from the City of Lincoln. The fact that the City was willing to offer an additional contingency amount beyond the exact 50% matching amount was, in my opinion, a critical element in ultimately receiving this grant. These matching funds are from the hotel/motel tax collected by the City for the purposes of drawing in tourists, and opening The Mill as a museum, after 10+ years of working on the project, will be an economic boost for the City of Lincoln and Logan County. Route 66 is the second most popular tourism theme in Illinois. It is a logical pathway to get visitors to our Abraham Lincoln sites as well. We see an enormous number of international travelers from dozens of countries and visitors from every state traveling Route 66, which is the most famous road in the world – this commitment says to the traveler that you need to stop here,” said Ladd.

In addition to the National Park Service grant, the Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County is pleased to announce a \$2500 donation from Apex Clean Energy, which is in the process of developing the Sugar Creek Wind Farm project in Logan County. The project is slated for completion in 2017, and will generate enough energy to power 80,000 homes (<http://www.sugarcreekwind.com/>). “The Mill is the perfect symbolic fit for this charitable donation from Apex Clean Energy, as it is the original windmill in Logan County, if you will,” said Ladd. “I want to thank Scott Kozair from Apex Clean Energy and their entire company. And, we couldn’t have done it without the help of Daris Knauer, a long-time local businessman who has been helping to bring the Sugar Creek project to the county.” Knauer is also the co-founder of the Abraham Lincoln National Railsplitting Festival, which is coming up on the weekend of September 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> in Lincoln (<http://www.railsplitting.com>). The festival is celebrating their 46<sup>th</sup> year, and will be held at Postville Park, Postville Courthouse and The Mill this year. All three locations are location on the original Route 66 alignment in Lincoln, Illinois. Salt Creek ABATE, Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County and the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway will be hosting a new Motorcycle Show on that Saturday of the Railsplitting Festival from 11am to 3pm at The Mill.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Railsplitter Antique Auto Club Cruise-In is also coming up on Saturday October 8<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 3pm at The Mill. “We want to thank the volunteers from Salt Creek ABATE and the Railsplitter Antique Auto Club for their expertise in putting these events together, and for the incredible amount of volunteer time and hard work that members from both these organizations have put in on restoring the interior of The Mill. They are both great assets to our community,” said Ladd.

“We also recently received a \$2500 charitable donation to our 501(c)(3) organization from Illico Incorporated, which is headquartered in Lincoln, Illinois. I want to thank Illico president Dave Goldwitzer, who after talking with our president, Bob Wilmert, made this donation,” said Ladd. “Both \$2500 donations come at a critical time, and will allow us to finish the interior work at The Mill.” Illico was founded in 1904, starting in the gas station and farm supplier business, and then expanding to operate nearly 50 convenience stores in Central/Southern Illinois.

Another fantastic development for The Mill, that showcases the global reach of the project, is the development of a new series of professionally designed t-shirts, postcards and magnets that are a fund-raising mechanism for The Mill. Giesla Hoelscher, a digital collage artist and graphic designer from Saint Paul, Minnesota, recently launched Explore and Preserve, a series of products designed to raise funds for preservation projects around the US, with a current focus on Route 66 preservation projects, including the Meramec Bridge restoration in Eureka, Missouri, and now The Mill in Lincoln, Illinois. The Mill products are based on the menu that was saved from the original Mill restaurant, and are available for purchase at [www.exploreandpreserve.com](http://www.exploreandpreserve.com).

Giesla became a champion for the Mother Road after her travels on the famous highway:

"After my Route 66 honeymoon trip in 2015, I learned that the Mother Road is more than just a bucket list trip, it's a community of people from all over the globe who connect with each other around their shared passions. After becoming more involved in that wonderful community, I learned that there is a lot of work that needs to be done to help preserve as

much as we can of the Mother Road so it can be enjoyed by future generations. There are some incredible people out there doing some amazing work, but preservation is hard (and expensive) and this shop is my way of lending a hand.

My hope with the project overall is to aid groups that are trying to raise funds for preservation but may not have the means or the time to hire a designer or launch a Kickstarter project. I deal with all of the fulfillment, inventory, online store management and bookkeeping and the groups I work with can focus on what they do best: saving our history! The Mill is a unique project in that after the fundraising for the restoration is complete, the products will continue to fund the museum by being sold in the gift shop. Giving back long term is an exciting aspect about being involved with The Mill," said Hoelscher.

As always, the Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County wishes to thank all our supporters, donors, grantors and volunteers over the years.

The Mill is in the final phase of renovation, with plans to open as a Route 66 museum in April of 2017. Donations are always welcome. For more information, visit [www.savethemill.org](http://www.savethemill.org) or contact Bob Wilmert, president, at 217-732-8600 or Geoff Ladd at 271-671-3790.