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Illinois Governor Rauner Attends Mill on 66 Museum Grand Opening – Smithsonian Magazine Publishes Online Article About the Iconic Attraction

After 11 years of hard work and dedication, the Mill on 66 in Lincoln, Illinois is now open as a museum. The Grand Opening was a focal point of “Route 66 Day in Lincoln” on Saturday April 29th, 2017.

Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner attended the ribbon cutting for the event and talked about the tourism and economic impacts the museum will have in the community, and noted the importance of Route 66 throughout Illinois. Also in attendance were Illinois State Representative Tim Butler, Hal Smith from U.S. Representative Darin Lahood’s office, and local officials.

"As Route 66 became more popular, a new service industry of restaurants, motels, gas stations and shops evolved to support those traveling the Mother Road. Many of those businesses are gone while others have been preserved. Still others have been re-purposed," said William Kelly, Executive Director of the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway. "One such Renaissance was celebrated on Saturday, April 29th in Lincoln, Illinois. After eleven years of closure and decay, the iconic Mill Restaurant reclaimed its Route 66 prominence as a Museum and Gift Shop. It's great to have the Mill back!"

The Mill originally opened as a sandwich stand called The Blue Mill in 1929 along the original alignment of the famous road in Lincoln. After WW2, it expanded into a bar and restaurant that featured live music and the schnitzel sandwich. Around 1996, it closed permanently and fell into a state of disrepair.

Over a decade later, the Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County was formed to save the roadside attraction and eventually re-open the facility as a Route 66 museum. During that timeframe, over \$90,000 was raised through grants and donations and over \$150,000 of in-kind labor went into the project.

The museum features display from Route 66 in Lincoln and Logan County, including artifacts from The Mill (including the Mill sign that hung outside for decades), The Pig Hip Restaurant and The Tropics Restaurant. Visitors can also take a “selfie” at the Crossroads Motel sign, and with “Illy”, the Illico gas station robot as he’s moving his arm and flashing his lights. The gift shop has Mill and Route 66 items for sale.

The grand opening garnered quite a bit of media attention, including a new article from Smithsonian Magazine that published online on May 3rd.

[\(http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/get-your-kicks-route-66-museum-180963097/\)](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/get-your-kicks-route-66-museum-180963097/)

“This was a great day for all of us and I want to thank all our volunteers and donors,” said Bob Wilmert, president of the Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County.

The Mill is located at 738 S. Washington (Old Route 66) in Lincoln, Illinois. Hours are Tues-Sat, 1-4pm and other hours by appointment. Phone 217-671-3790 or visit Mill66.com for more information.

Illinois Dept. of Central management Services video from the event:

http://multimedia.illinois.gov/ioci_vid/Archive/2017/WebpageOnly/GOV/042917-TheMillBikeBlessing/042917-TheMillBikeBlessing.mp4