

Reopened West End Service Station Honors Local Route 66 History

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - From gas station to dentist's office, the West End Service Station in Edwardsville has had its share of milestones. On June 9, the station celebrated its reopening as a Route 66 tourist center.

Route 66, the classic highway from Chicago to California, originally ran through Edwardsville. As a tourist center, the West End Service Station will pay tribute to this national and local history.

"We want people who live in Edwardsville to know where we came from," Edwardsville Mayor Art Risavy said. "The West End Service Station will preserve a piece of history, which is so important as we move forward."

The center has interpretive panels with information about Route 66, Edwardsville and the station. Guests can visit the station and its gift shop free of charge.

The West End Service Station opened in 1927 as Springer's Madison Oil Co. It was renamed and rebuilt in the 30s; today's building has been standing since 1939. When Route 66 was replaced with interstates, the station became a dentist's office for over 50 years.

"This is really saving a piece of Route 66 history," Cory Jobe, the president and CEO of Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau, said. "There are not many service stations left on the route in the country, let alone here in Illinois. And so we have converted this now into a Route 66 interpretive center, visitor's center and history of sites and attractions here in Edwardsville along Route 66."

The station's renovation was the result of a partnership between the tourism bureau and the City of Edwardsville. Jobe explained that the building was vacant and slated for demolition. He worked with 4th Ward Alderman S.J. Morrison to keep the station standing.

The Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau received a Route 66 grant through the Illinois Office of Tourism, and that's when the project took off. The City of Edwardsville purchased the building in 2022, and community members, elected officials, city staff and the tourism bureau collaborated to reopen the station as a tourist attraction.

“There are so many great stories along the Last 100 Miles of Route 66 in Illinois and we want to bring those stories back to life in time for the 100th anniversary of this iconic roadway,” Jobe said.

He added that the station's opening is an opportunity to “celebrate our historic past.” The Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau has several projects in the works, including further tributes to Route 66 history for the Route's centennial in 2026.

You can read more about the West End Service Station and the tourism bureau's work at [their website](#).