

Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965

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Pine Bluff Auto Club, ca. 1903

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Travelers through Arkansas will find no markers designating the once famous Dollarway Road. In its early days, “sporting motorists drove long distances over primitive dirt and gravel roads or shipped their autos on flatcars to Pine Bluff for the thrill of spending a day or two traveling back and forth over 24 miles of bump, rut, and pothole-free ‘super-road’ at speeds up to 45 miles per hour.” Farmers along the new road complained that the roaring automobiles were harmful to their livestock.¹

In Arkansas, as in other parts of the nation, growing numbers of autos brought many challenges. The first problem was constructing an efficient road surface for auto use. Time would tell which materials and techniques built the best roads. Once the infrastructure was in place, roadside entrepreneurs vied for the attention of passing motorists, demonstrating their ingenuity by utilizing innovative designs. Soon the automobile, and the structures associated with it, became ingrained in the American landscape and way of life. Auto travel had become a defining element in American culture.

I. National Car-Culture History: The Victorian-Era Locomotive vs. The Democratizing Automobile

When automobiles appeared in the United States between 1910 and 1920, Americans were abandoning the ideas defining Victorian-era leisure activities in favor of more daring, physically challenging activities. Favoring outdoor settings and Thoreau-inspired activities, they chose autocamping or “gypsying” instead of the resort destinations fashionable during the Victorian era. Gypsying was an expression of the emerging leisure ethic characterized by an unhurried, unstructured lifestyle. Touring literature nurtured the belief that “man was naturally migratory, yet modern life made him stay in one place.”² The auto fostered family togetherness, instead of the gender-based separateness that characterized Victorian spas. While still a rebellion against Victorian conventionality, the traditional, paternalistic values of gypsying appealed to the middle class that feared moral decay and family disintegration.³

Car travel allowed tourists to experience the American landscape train where scenery passed the window like a movie on a screen. The car traveler developed an intimacy with the American countryside. During the “See America First” movement of the early twentieth century, travel writers emphasized the uniqueness of the American countryside. Especially after 1914, when Americans were cut off from Europe, auto travelers sought picturesque historic sites. This led to renovations of existing historic sites and inspired architects of the late 1920s to design gas stations to look like Tudor cottages or colonial Spanish missions.⁴

Burgeoning nationalism and nostalgia for colonial American sites coincided with Theodore Roosevelt’s call for Americans to revive the strenuous life of earlier times.⁵ Forsaking the luxury and relative comfort of the train car, autocampers braved mud, bridge washouts, and breakdowns. For these tourists the experience of traveling was as important as reaching their destination. Camping at roadside parks or in rural fields, families shared in the work of preparing meals and auto maintenance. This allowed families an opportunity unknown in the segregated entertainment and exercise regimes of Victorian spas.

Gypsying also allowed people to meet others from diverse



Travelers brave a flooded bridge on the Fourche River. Ouachita National Forest photo.

locations and backgrounds. Travel accounts illustrate the belief that the road was the real democratic America. All classes traveled the same muddy roads, and all were expected to lend a hand to overcome diverse road conditions. Travelers meeting on the roads “acted as like-minded engineers who could help each other.”⁶ Autocampers downplayed class distinctions by wearing common comfortable clothes. Talk of wealthy privileges, such as servants, was shunned. Nicknames were adopted in the camps and anonymity became the rule.

In the years following World War I Americans stressed democratic principles, and the automobile seemed to embody these ideals.⁷ The auto offered an individual mode of travel free from rigid dress codes and itineraries, unlike its precursor, the railroad locomotive. Class distinctions seemed to fall away as auto travelers braved less than adequate roads, bonding together to overcome obstacles and camping in common areas along the roadside. Unlike trains, cars were the property of the traveler. Whether or not tourists reached their destinations depended upon their ability to coax their automobile over unpredictable road conditions. As a result, many owners developed a personal attachment to their automobile. Simply stated, Americans loved their cars. They were eager to exploit opportunities that allowed them to spend time in their autos.

II. Arkansas Highway History

Because early automobile enthusiasts encountered numerous road hazards, improving existing roads became a priority throughout the United States. In Arkansas the first roads were largely converted from existing overland roads and trails. Prior to statehood in 1836, the federal government funded and constructed many of these roads using military manpower.⁸ Soon after statehood the federal government built and maintained post roads under the jurisdiction of the United States Postal Service and Agriculture Department. They provided for communication and commerce where steamboats could not reach. These roads provided relatively rapid mail and passenger service by stagecoach before the 1860s; after the Civil War, railroads became the predominant means of overland travel. The horse and buggy remained the mode of transportation for most individuals, however.⁹



The horse and buggy, not the railroad, was the primary means of transportation for most Arkansans before the advent of the automobile. Ouachita National Forest photo.

During the 1870s a new form of transportation gained popularity in urban areas. The bicycle provided relatively maintenance free, cost efficient, individual transportation. Poor road conditions quickly became an issue for bicyclists who struggled over ruts, potholes, and became mired in mud. In fact, bicyclists were the first to form good roads committees to address the issue of funding and constructing adequate roads for their own use as well as for use by horse-drawn buggies. In the 1890s a Little

Rock cyclist group, and the Arkansas Gazette newspaper that championed their cause, persuaded Gov. James P. Clarke to host a Good Roads Convention in Little Rock. In 1896 the Good Roads League of the State of Arkansas was founded. The next obstacles to overcome were finding additional popular support, and more importantly, adequate funding to construct better roads. Until this point the only state legislation concerning highway maintenance required healthy men between 21

and 45 years of age to contribute five days per year of road work or the monetary equivalent. In 1897 an act was adopted that authorized counties to appoint an overseer for these work groups with a team of animals and the basic tools to maintain roads. Good road advocates criticized this act because it did so little to improve the general road conditions in Arkansas. The act of 1899 was only a slight improvement mandating that county overseers mark intersections and direct the work of prison crews.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the good roads movement was making progress on the national front. In 1900 the National Good Roads Association was formed. Auto enthusiasts had joined the movement and by 1910 auto owners would control this association. Along with the American Auto Association, formed in 1902, the Good Roads Association formed the driving force of the movement for better roads on a national scale.¹¹

After the second Good Roads Convention in Little Rock, Arkansans agreed on the value of good roads, but the question of who would meet the financial burden remained unanswered. The issue was first addressed by the Arkansas Legislature in 1907 when an act allowed the formation of local road improvement districts.¹² The practice of using local districts with poor centralized supervision and planning would only worsen Arkansas's situation, however. In 1911, Arkansas legislation imposed a registration fee on autos in the state. The need for good roads was increasing with Arkansas's registered autos tripling in the two years between 1914 and 1916.¹³

A. The Dollarway Road and Local Road Improvement Districts

The coming of the automobile to Arkansas brought an awareness of the inadequacy of the state's rural roads. Although residents agreed that something should be done to improve the road situation, the question of how to create a superior road remained unanswered. Only time would tell which construction techniques would produce a lasting road surface. Gravel and macadam paving had proven to be no match for the destructive force of mechanized travel. While concrete highway construction was popular in other regions of the country, it was virtually unknown in Arkansas. That is, until the successful completion of the state's first "Dollarway" road allowed auto-travelers from near and far to enjoy a premium concrete surface.

Early road builders also contended with the issue of who would shoulder the financial burden for modernizing Arkansas' roads. Arkansas began using locally controlled road improvement districts to organize and finance construction. From the beginning, Arkansans recognized problems with the road improvement district system, yet it was not abolished.

This locally controlled system would prevail in Arkansas even after it became a national embarrassment.

Although travelers through Arkansas will find no highway markers designating the once-famous Dollarway Road, clues to its location are found in the addresses of modern residents living along its path. Occasionally, a narrow section of concrete can be found diverging from the path of its modern replacement. In the early days, sporting motorists were thrilled by the superior road surface.¹⁴ Some



This was a not infrequent sight in Arkansas before roads were paved. Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department photo.

farmers along the new road complained that the roaring automobiles frightened their livestock and that the concrete surface was too hard for their horses' hooves.¹⁵ Others praised the road saying "it seems that the size of the load has ceased to depend on what the mules can haul, but rather depends on how much you can load on the wagon, and the ability of the mules to keep out of the way."¹⁶

Soon after the creation of Road Improvement District No. 4 by a special act of the Arkansas General Assembly, bidding began for the construction of a macadam or concrete highway leading from the Pine Bluff city limits northwest to the Jefferson County line. On July 31, 1913, commissioners of the Road Improvement District, chaired by Jefferson County Judge C. M. Philpot, announced the first "Dollarway road" in the state would be constructed by Little Rock contractors Shelby and Bateman. The road, as originally planned, would stretch 22 miles to the Jefferson County line, then a road of the same material would be constructed traversing six miles of Saline County to connect with a highway extending to Little Rock. According to the local newspaper, "the contract was awarded for Dollarway pavement, new in this section of the country, [which] calls for a five-inch concrete base, covered with bitumen and laid nine feet wide," to cost \$160,000. Judge Philpot generously agreed to build the culverts and bridges out of county funds. The newspaper elaborates that "the cost to the individual property owners should not exceed \$100,000," with the majority of the remaining cost to be funded by railroad taxes. Defending the choice of construction materials, the contractor is quoted as saying that "this is a new departure in road building in this part of the country... and should result in a permanent and lasting road." He ventured that the new pavement would eventually replace macadam, which requires relaying every few years.¹⁷

This explanation proved unsatisfactory to several Jefferson County taxpayers, however. On the following Saturday, August 2, they gathered at the courthouse to express their opposition to the use of Dollarway pavement. Through their attorney, the property owners threatened to file an injunction to restrain the commissioners from beginning construction, unless a cheaper material was chosen. After much discussion the meeting was adjourned until the following week when a tax assessor would be available to show how costly the burden was likely to be for owners along the road.¹⁸ By the following Thursday the dispute was resolved. As stated in the local news, "One prominent land owner said that he did not believe the others would object to the use of the Dollarway pavement when he learned how small the assessments are."¹⁹

There were no more objections and construction began on the new highway without delay in November 1913. The first few yards of concrete were laid at the end of the wood block pavement of West Pullen Street, near Bellwood Cemetery in Pine Bluff.²⁰ The completed route would include four bridges, of "virtually indestructible" iron and concrete, at an estimated expense of \$5,000. Engineers offered a conservative estimate that two miles of road could be built each month, but with good weather they would advance at twice that rate.²¹ True to their words, a two-mile long section of the Dollarway opened to traffic in December.²² In mid-March of 1914, a delegation of civil engineers was treated to a luncheon along the progressing road.²³ By July, enough of the road had been completed that a local newspaper reported several arrests were made for speeding along its superior surface.²⁴

But in the fall of 1914, a pioneer settler of Jefferson County brought a troubling fact to the notice of the commissioners. The final section of the proposed path of the road fell across the county line, outside the jurisdiction of the road improvement district. Investigation revealed that Jefferson County had continued maintaining the roadbed even after Grant County was created in 1869, encompassing the route. A solution was proposed that would include the Grant County land in question in the road improvement district. Although an account of the ensuing debate is unavailable, the path of the completed road lies on the Jefferson-Grant County line, following it until it intersects with the southwest corner of Pulaski County. Thus, the finished road differed from its planned path. Rather than

expanding west into Grant County and through the corner of Saline County, the road ran northwest where it connected with the Pulaski County section of the Old Pine Bluff and Little Rock wagon road.²⁵ Despite the setbacks the concrete surface was completed on schedule on October 27, 1914, just eleven months after beginning construction.²⁶

Once completed, the approximately 23-mile long stretch of concrete known as the Dollarway had the distinction of being the longest continuous length of concrete pavement in the nation.²⁷ According to tradition, the Dollarway Road was so named because construction costs approximated one dollar per square yard or lineal foot of its nine-foot wide pavement.²⁸ Actual cost approximated \$1.36



*The Dollarway Road near Redfield in Jefferson County.
AHPP photo.*

per linear foot.²⁹ It was the first use in Arkansas of reinforced concrete for road and bridge construction. A thin bituminous seal coat was applied to the concrete surface, marking its first use in the South.³⁰

Technically, the design for the Dollarway Road called for nine feet of five-inch concrete consisting of a mixture ratio of 1 part cement to 2 1/2 parts sand to 5 parts gravel. The edges of the concrete were constructed on a forty-five degree slope, giving a top width of 8 1/2 feet and bottom width of 9 1/2 feet. Eighteen inches of gravel and three feet of graded dirt were added on each side constructing a total roadbed eighteen feet wide. The gravel shoulder enabled drivers to pass when they met another on the narrow roadway.³¹ Two one-half-yard capacity stationary concrete mixers were the only pieces of machinery used on the job.³²

Isaac Prather Shelby, engineer and contractor, was distressed by the poor horizontal alignment of the finished road in many places. He urged the road improvement district commissioners to permit him to correct the worst situations, such as right angle turns, even at his own expense. He was prohibited

because state legislation specified that new pavement be laid only “on the road as now laid out.”³³

Although modern State Highway 365 covers most of the original Dollarway Road, sections are still visible today. A roadside park featuring a short section of the original road was located south of Redfield, Arkansas, on Highway 365. Although the park closed some years ago, visitors can still see the path of the road winding through the remaining trees. Jefferson County residents living near the park-site use another section of the remaining road to access their property. Further south on Highway 365 is the best remaining section of the Dollarway Road still in public use. A 1.6 mile-long stretch of the original roadbed can be seen peeking through the potholes of a dirt-covered local route.

Now named Reynolds Road, this section also features two original reinforced concrete bridges.

Although not referred to as “Dollarway pavement,” the construction process using a cement road base with a bituminous sealer was a popular method during the early twentieth century. Specifications for this type of pavement were outlined in the *American Highway Engineers Handbook* of 1919. New to the South, this technique had been perfected in other regions of the United States. The *Handbook* claims Rhode Island was the first state to adopt bituminous concrete pavement as a standard type of construction for use on its highways in 1909. Elaborating that, “since 1910 there has been a rapidly growing appreciation of the inherent value of the many different types of bituminous concrete pavements for use on roads and streets.”³⁴ One reason for the material’s popularity was that it was relatively inexpensive when compared to alternative construction methods. The *Handbook* lists the prices of bituminous concrete pavements in 1919 as ranging from \$1.00 to \$2.50 per square yard.³⁵ The average price for macadam, or broken stone, roads in various locations in the United States in 1915 ranged from \$.57 to \$1.40.³⁶ If the construction materials were available locally “the cost may be as low as \$1.25 per ton or about \$3,800 per mile of road 15 feet wide and 6 inches thick.” However, “if the stone has to be shipped a long distance by rail and then hauled a considerable distance by team or truck, the cost of the stone rolled in place on the road may exceed \$3.00 per ton or about \$10,000 per mile.”³⁷ Plus, experts recommended that macadam roads be resurfaced as soon as the top layer of stone was worn through, adding to the expense.³⁸ According to an article written by one of the Dollarway’s engineers, “Jefferson County [had] absolutely no natural road materials within its boundaries.”³⁹ Therefore, a macadam road could have been as costly to construct as a permanent concrete surface.

The designers of the Arkansas Dollarway road recognized the value of concrete road construction. Experiments with concrete road construction were not unknown in Arkansas. This pavement technique had been utilized on sections of city streets in Pine Bluff and Little Rock. According to the local paper, “West Tenth street in Little Rock is paved with this material and East Eighteenth avenue in Pine Bluff, from Main to Georgia streets is paved with Dollarway pavement, as is Oak street from Sixth to Eighth avenues.”⁴⁰ The builders knew that the route would be subjected to a continuous flow of through-traffic between Little Rock and Pine Bluff in addition to local use. Road-building materials such as macadam and gravel had failed under continued auto traffic.⁴¹ They sought to create a lasting road surface, and chose “Dollarway pavement” for its ability to survive heavy use.

According to engineering literature, there were several popular methods for constructing concrete roads. Likewise, there were numerous specifications for the mixture of concrete, sand, or asphalt that comprised the road surfaces. Although records of the exact process utilized to seal the concrete on the Arkansas Dollarway are unavailable, sources state that the completed concrete was covered with a thin coating of bitumen. A similar process is described in the 1919 *American Highway Engineers Handbook* in which a hot liquid is spread over finished concrete, then sand is rolled onto the liquid to create a waterproof, non-skid surface.⁴² Durability aside, the selling point of “Dollarway pavement,” as far as the taxpayers were concerned, was that it was inexpensive. The technique created a permanent, superior surface for an agreeable price.

B. The Legacy of the Road Improvement District System

The Arkansas legislature passed an act allowing the formation of local road improvement districts in 1907.⁴³ The practice of using these poorly supervised districts with no centralized construction plan would soon prove problematic. Eventually the road improvement district system would be blamed for widespread indebtedness, finally resulting in scandal.

After 1907, counties were authorized to establish road improvement districts at the request of a

majority of landowners along a local route. Taxes were assessed against property lying adjacent to the road to fund construction. Various legal questions remained obstacles, however, meaning few road improvement districts were created under this early law.⁴⁴ Notably Pulaski County, home of the state capitol, and Jefferson County, of Dollarway Road fame, were the locations of several of the first few districts created.⁴⁵ When the Arkansas Highway Commission was founded in 1913 the shortcomings of the road improvement district system were already apparent. The Commission acknowledged several problems in its first biennial report, including poorly trained overseers and a lack of centralized highway planning, resulting in little improvement at a great expense. “Under our present lack of system, an enormous sum of one million, two hundred thousand dollars per year is being spent from the general three-mill tax alone, with no great improvements over conditions of the past.”⁴⁶ By February 1915 an audit committee reported misuse and waste within the State Highway Department. The audit committee accused the department of granting free registration tags to officials, depriving the state and county of revenue and abusing its power. The committee also charged that the department used state funds to make unauthorized purchases like autos, gasoline, and other auto-related expenses. The department would make no further response on the charges, except that “it illustrates the fact that automobiles are expensive.”⁴⁷ That same year, the legislature tried again to pass an effective road law. The Alexander Road law allowed “neighbors along a particular route [to] form a road improvement district, contract out for the construction, borrow the money to finance the project, and in effect, mortgage their property as a debt guarantee.”⁴⁸ No provision was made to ensure a unified plan for construction throughout the state, resulting in widely varying road conditions from county to county. The Alexander Road law, coupled with the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 aimed at improving rural post-roads, paved the way for the creation of hundreds of road improvement districts.⁴⁹ By 1921 over 500 districts had been created. “State and federal aid was available for about ten percent of the highway construction costs, the remainder to be met by the real property tax authorized by the Alexander law.”⁵⁰ The new Federal Aid Act of 1921 tried to deal with some of the problems Arkansas and other states had experienced under the 1916 law. This Federal Aid Act provided for the construction of a national road system consisting of interconnected state highways. To facilitate this task, it required that a state highway department supervise all construction and maintenance. Although Arkansas had no highway department with the authority to supervise statewide construction, the state legislature was slow to address the issue.

Meanwhile, the scandalous legacy of the road improvement districts in Arkansas was attracting national attention. The *New York Times* reported that “land owners in numerous instances [were] being taxed amounts that equal or even exceed the total gross incomes of their property.”⁵¹ Compounding the problem, districts were allowed to overlap, making property owners liable for taxes in more than one district. A Grand Jury in Little Rock reportedly charged that “gross extravagance and waste has prevailed” in Arkansas under the use of road improvement districts.⁵² Debated in the United States Congress, the issue resulted in a mandate that federal funds be withheld from states without a centralized means of supervising and planning road construction.⁵³ Yet, despite the efforts of road champion Gov. Thomas Chipman McRae, the Arkansas Legislature was unable to enact the required laws. Reportedly, the legislature had become involved in controversies over the allocation of automobile taxes and local control of road construction. Members of the County Judges Association, who wished to maintain local control of their roads, successfully blocked the passing of an effective bill.⁵⁴ Inevitably, in 1923, federal officials recalled technical personnel and withdrew construction funds from the state. In response, Governor McRae called a special session of the General Assembly in September 1923 and demanded that it pass the necessary legislation to bring about an end to the crisis.⁵⁵ The result was the Harrelson Road Law, which eased the burden of property owners somewhat by increasing user taxes and granted supervisory status to the reconstituted State

Highway Commission.⁵⁶ Arkansas now possessed the prerequisites for participation in the construction of the national highway system in 1925. Property owners, however, would have to wait until the Martineau Road Law of 1927 to be relieved of the responsibility for funding road construction. With this act, the legislature placed the financial burden upon the road-user rather than the landowner.

In Arkansas, as in other parts of the nation, the first roads built were themselves experiments in road construction. Likewise, the systems used to finance and organize road construction were untested. The Dollarway Road remains an example of an instance when the early use of the road improvement district system functioned. With the approval of local taxpayers, the road improvement district commissioners and their engineers created a durable road to facilitate travel between their community and the state's capitol. Sections of the original road surface remain as testimony to the ability of this pavement type to weather auto traffic.

Ultimately, the road improvement district system would fail to be an equitable solution to the Arkansas road-building problem. Use of this system resulted in ruinous indebtedness for rural Arkansans and finally embroiled the state in scandal. Arkansas remained dedicated to the road improvement district system, however. Not even the national attention resulting from the financial situation created by the road improvement districts could bring about change. Local officials were the foundation of the problem, with county judges unwilling to relinquish control even after federal support was repealed for Arkansas road projects due to the state's lack of a centralized highway program. But the dark days resulting from the road improvement district system's deficiency could not erase the Dollarway. It remains an engineering accomplishment of which Arkansans can be proud.

The devastating flood of April 1927 damaged or destroyed most of Arkansas's roads and bridges. Gov. John E. Martineau responded to the road crisis by proposing that the state should assume the remaining debt of the road improvement districts and issue highway bonds for maintenance and construction. He supported user-related taxes, such as auto registration fees and gasoline and oil levies, rather than taxing property owners.⁵⁷ These suggestions were ratified by the Arkansas General Assembly in 1927 and were known collectively as the Martineau Road Plan. The State Road Patrol was organized in 1929 to enforce speed limits and other highway laws necessitated by growing numbers of motorists.⁵⁸

C. Depression Era to Interstate Boom

During the Depression, revenue from gasoline taxes and auto registration fees declined sharply. The great lingering debt inherited from the road districts coupled with declining revenue from highway users' taxes placed the Highway Department in financial jeopardy.⁵⁹ In 1933 the Arkansas legislature passed an act reducing licensing fees in an attempt to promote auto travel. Ironically, this may have encouraged the Depression-era flight of "Arkies" from the state to California to work as agricultural laborers. Later legislative acts during the Depression era shifted the focus to maintenance of existing highways, rather than new construction.⁶⁰

The greatest road construction movement in America resulted from the Second World War. In 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared a state of emergency in response to the escalating European conflict. Congress passed the Defense Highway Act, which called for the construction of a network of highways important to the national defense. Construction materials and manpower were for use only on these highways and access roads. Responding to the President's call to conserve gasoline and rubber, the Arkansas legislature reduced speed limits throughout the state.⁶¹

When Sidney Sanders McMath entered the governor's office in 1949, the Arkansas highway system was arguably at its worst. During the Depression the state was forced to default on highway bonds so there was little money for road maintenance. The wartime prohibition on construction and mainte-

nance on non-defense highways worsened this situation. McMath proposed that general-obligation bonds be issued for the purpose of construction and maintenance of state highways and bridges. State voters later approved the issue. The bonds resulted in unprecedented construction and modernization, including the state's first paved road surfaces. Despite his administration's achievements, McMath's Highway Department was accused of inefficient and wasteful practices. A highway audit



A postcard image shows U.S. Highway 71 winding near Mount Gaylor in northwest Arkansas. AHPP file photo.

commission found that contractors and vendors of road equipment had made political contributions to the governor.⁶² These findings, coupled with the inefficient and unpopular practice of allowing incoming governors to appoint patrons to Highway Department positions, eventually resulted in the passing of the Mack-Blackwell Act of 1952. This act reformed the State Highway Commission and established a self-governing State Highway Department.⁶³

In 1956 the Federal Aid Act established the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. This act charged the federal government with the responsibility of funding 90 percent of the cost of Interstate construction, the remaining 10 percent being charged to the states. Alfred E. Johnson, chief engineer of the Arkansas Highway Department, is considered one of the major architects of the nation's Interstate Highway System. In Arkansas, construction actually began on the first sections of Interstate in 1952. The five original Interstate highways running across Arkansas are Interstate 30, running from the Texas state line north of Texarkana to Little Rock; Interstate 40, running from the Oklahoma state line north of Fort Smith through Little Rock to the Tennessee state line at Memphis; Interstate 55, running from another point on the Tennessee state line at Memphis north via West Memphis to the Missouri state line northeast of Blytheville; Interstate 540, a connection to Fort Smith; and Interstate 430, a loop to the west of Little Rock that included a new fourth bridge across the Arkansas River.⁶⁴

Through the mid-1960s, construction on Arkansas Interstate Highway system was progressing according to schedule. In 1962 Arkansas was leading the nation in Interstate construction, according to the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. The Arkansas legislature was mindful of secondary roads as well, passing an act in 1961 mandating the Highway Department to spend one hundred thousand dollars in each county on unpaved Federal Aid roads during that calendar year.⁶⁵

III. Types of Roadside Architecture

Since the end of the 1920s, automobiles and highways are embedded in the American landscape and define American culture. According to Karl Raitz, author of *A Guide to the National Road*, "the

way people live, and the way they arrange their lives, is hugely determined by the way they travel.”⁶⁶ The growing infrastructure allowed Americans to expand across the landscape bringing about the disintegration of the compact cities that characterized the railroad-dominated Victorian age.⁶⁷ “Galactic cities” emerged, characterized by residential and commercial or industrial sections separated by sprawling undeveloped space.⁶⁸ Vast highway infrastructure, and the resulting commercial development along its length, truly transformed the American landscape.

In order to attract the attention of quickly passing auto travelers, American entrepreneurs first utilized signs and then conspicuous architectural designs. Downtown businesses blanketed traditional commercial buildings with advertisements in an attempt to capture traveling trade. By the beginning of the twentieth century, balancing the need to sell with the need to put forth an attractive and appropriate commercial structure was problematic. Main Street became “the site of a full-scale visual tug-of-war between traditional building styles and bold commercial signs.”⁶⁹

Highway expansion and urban sprawl opened a new frontier for commercial development outside the city limits. Inventive business owners soon learned the advantages of locating outside the traditional, center-city commercial district. Free from zoning regulations, merchants were limited only by their imaginations when designing and constructing their roadside businesses. They used flashing



This oversized attendant used to greet motorists passing through Clarksville in Johnson County. AHPP file photo.

lights, bold shapes, heights and colors to attract the eyes of motorists.

Local entrepreneurs were quick to cater to the new market produced by highway traffic once the infrastructure was in place. Development along Arkansas’s highways mirrored that of other parts of the nation with the appearance of gas stations, tourist courts, auto dealerships, drive-ins and other roadside attractions. Spanning decades, the architecture along Arkansas’s highways represents varied construction trends and cultural interests. Some of the buildings were designed in popular national styles to draw travelers to their attractive facades, while others utilized vernacular building traditions. Some of both types of historic roadside construction have survived in Arkansas to the present.

Hoping to tap into popular sentiment, designers used imagery embedded in the public’s subconscious. Images of domesticity were popular after World War I. In response to the excesses of the flappers and other full-scale rebellions against Victorianism, post-war Americans hoped for a return to normalcy.⁷⁰ Roadside vendors easily converted small homes into shops and fueling stations. Often the traditional touches were exaggerated (oversized roofs, nonfunctional dormers, shutters and chimneys) to draw attention to the structure.⁷¹ Bizarre images were used to surprise and intrigue drivers. Colossal cement animals and food images advertised the products

available to passing motorists who, in turn, spread word of the roadside attraction across the continent. Regional and historic associations were also incorporated into roadside designs. Regional stereotypes tempted travelers to stop for souvenirs and pictures. Reflecting the technological excitement of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Moderne architectural style was popular for gas stations and roadside diners. Moderne architecture used machines as inspiration and produced a kinetic feeling within the structure.⁷² During the 1950s the smooth shapes of Streamline Moderne and Art Deco were replaced by the energetic designs of Exaggerated Modern architecture. Owners of coffee shops, gas stations and motels along the commercial strip hired architects to design flamboyant structures with sloping rooflines and angular signs. Designs inspired by the natural environment were popular during the early 1960s as Americans' awareness of environmental issues increased. Roadside design during this era was intended to blend into the landscape, rather than attract attention. Quieter styles featuring mansard roofs replaced the bold angular shapes of the earlier decade. These ornamental mansards softened the appearance of roadside structures and effectively hid the unattractive collection of vents and machinery housed on the roofs of most restaurants.⁷³

A. Autocamps to Motels

Perhaps the most recognized roadside enterprise, the “motor inn” or “motel” evolved from roadside autocamps frequented by motor “gypsies.” Many cities responded to the popularity of autocamping by creating public campgrounds. By the early 1920s most campers preferred these municipal



*Tall Pines Motor Inn,
Eureka Springs,
Carroll County.
AHPP photo.*

autocamps to camping along the roadside.⁷⁴ Local boosters supported autocamping in their municipal parks as a means to attract tourists and foster contacts with the outside world.⁷⁵ Attitudes began to change, however, as auto travelers became more proletarian. Civic leaders pushed for pay camps to replace the free camps thought to attract vagrants and undesirables.⁷⁶ Autocampers were accepted, even welcomed, when they were wealthy families only pretending to be gypsies. Those who traveled year-round, however, and truly resembled poor, nomadic vagabonds were shunned. By the mid-1920s most camps required an admittance fee and registration, thus destroying the anonymity that characterized the early era of autocamping. Local boosters' enthusiasm for any sort of camp wavered as costs increased to supply campers with standard water and sewage, and tourist spending decreased.

With municipal free autocamps closing to eliminate their presumed attraction to riffraff and competing camps charging fees to cover expenses, the market was opened to private entrepreneurs. Private camps often operated out of town where land was affordable.⁷⁷

Depression-era tourist camps and other auto-related industries fared well in comparison to other recreational activities.⁷⁸ Profits remained small, however, until after the war. Still, many contemporaries believed “the tourist camp [to be] a depression built business.”⁷⁹ Tourist camps illustrated that a small business could still survive. Tourist courts were viewed as democratic, like the larger auto industry to which they belonged.

Some entrepreneurs built cabins as a compromise between auto or tent camping and hotels. During the Depression years farmers opened cabins for auto tourists on their road-adjoining land when crop prices failed.⁸⁰ Often several small cabins were organized around a larger building housing an office and sometimes a restaurant. These motor courts offered several advantages to auto travelers. Fewer preparations and equipment was needed when staying in motor court cabins that provided bedding and plumbing. Motor courts offered an informal setting, allowing weary travelers easy access to their autos and eliminating the dreaded scrutiny of the hotel lobby. The small, one-room cabins fostered family togetherness without the burden of preparing an encampment at every day’s end.



Crystal River Tourist Camp, Cave City, Sharp County. AHPP photo.

At first cabins were sparsely furnished, offering travelers little but shelter. Profitable courts expanded by adding more cabins with the success of each touring season. Soon owners offered more amenities for a modest fee increase, capitalizing on the auto traveler’s desire to carry as little camping equipment as possible.⁸¹ Auto tourists were smart shoppers willing to go the distance for elaborate furnishings at a reasonable rate. Competition among neighboring courts led to more improvements. By the early 1930s some motor courts offered private showers to attract more of the hotel clientele. Manufacturers eagerly capitalized on the motel market by advertising that their products were available at certain courts. Brand name recognition fostered a feeling of familiarity to travelers out of their own region and allowed manufacturers to showcase their products.⁸²

Entrepreneurs in regions hosting tourists year-round could afford to invest more in their establishments. Providing indoor plumbing, kitchenettes and other amenities allowed these motels, as they

were soon known, to attract affluent travelers who otherwise would have patronized hotels. In the long run, however, motels became victims of “their own modernizing rationale.”⁸³ Tourists expected more for less. During the Depression Era this trend increased as miserly travelers began to haggle over nightly fees. Roadside motel owners who refused to upgrade establishments yearly lost the repeat business they sorely needed. Standards rose so quickly that in 1933 most offered shared baths, but by 1939 individual baths were available to meet tourists’ demands for privacy.⁸⁴

Design had always been an important advertising tool for motel owners. Since the first motor courts sprang up, entrepreneurs capitalized on regional stereotypes to attract tourists. Tourist cabins were modeled after log cabins, Spanish missions, and even Indian tepees. In other regions, homey cottages and miniature bungalows dominated motor court design. Typically, individual units were placed around a central courtyard or larger office building. Nearly all units were freestanding originally and owners were encouraged to manipulate the landscaping and unit layout to create variety among the individual units. After World War II, motel design was standardized and space-saving designs dominated. Eliminating the freestanding cottages, motels were now built with units attached to each other in a continuous structure.⁸⁵

An excellent example of vernacular design and local craftsmanship is the Crystal River Tourist Camp in Cave City, Arkansas, located on Highway 167. Built in 1934, this complex of six, single-story stone cabins and a central office building was constructed around a cave entrance. The camp catered to motor tourists who came to explore the legendary cave. The buildings are all constructed of concrete faced with native stone. The stones are varied in size, color and shape. The buildings are further decorated with such found objects as arrowheads and glass shards. Some are ornamented with stones laid in patterns such as crosses or circles, and others feature undulating rooflines ornamented with long, rising stones, emulating the profile of a dinosaur. The variegated walls and boldly textured walkways contribute to the organic quality of the complex’s overall design.⁸⁶

H. C. Carpenter, a U.S. Postal Service employee, developed the Crystal River Tourist Camp with the assistance of Prince Matlock, the local builder credited for designing the camp’s unique stonework. Both the cave setting and the wealth and variety of natural stone available in the area may have inspired Matlock. He celebrated this abundance by incorporating as many different stones and artifacts into his designs as possible, in a number of configurations, some with clear iconographic significance.⁸⁷

Carpenter constructed the camp to service visitors to the large cave for which the surrounding community of Cave City was named. The cave was originally discovered by the Osage Indians years before the arrival of white settlers and had become a popular attraction by the 1900s. The advent of the automobile presented an opportunity for Carpenter to develop the complex for greater profits. The tourist camp operated until around 1955, when fascination for it waned and the expanding interstate highway system drew travelers away from the site.⁸⁸

The close of the war brought a boom to the auto-related industries. According to the definitive text by Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, “post-war affluence, coupled with a housing shortage, brought record numbers of people into [motor] courts.” Motels grew, offering more accommodations as the highways expanded. Soon, the characteristic small-scale courts and motels were replaced by larger “motel-hotels.” Increasingly franchised corporations, such as Howard Johnson, owned these establishments, which offered the conveniences of motels (such as free parking, informal dining and lobby-free registration) with the luxury of hotels. Using architecture as advertising, these franchises were easily recognizable to passing motorists. Motel franchises, like the independently owned establishments before them, used anti-modernist design themes. Reminiscent of New England churches, old tearooms and Elizabethan pubs, these designs were nationally mass-produced.⁸⁹

B. Gas Stations

According to Karl Raitz' *A Guide to the National Road*, corporate franchising was pioneered in the



*Burks Service Station, Malvern, Hot Spring County.
AHPP photo.*

gasoline service industry. Although many independent service station owners contracted with petroleum companies who supplied gasoline, large corporations dominated the industry. "From curbside pumps located at hardware stores or livery stables, gas stations evolved into corporate symbols, complete with signature architecture and signs."⁹⁰

Since automobiles run on gasoline, an infrastructure of fueling stations cropped up along the American roadside. The story of American gas station design is a tug-of-war between functionality and aesthetics. Designers attempted to balance public desire for a pleasing cityscape with the need for numerous service and filling stations. At first, gasoline was available for purchase from existing businesses.

Realizing this was less than ideal, oil companies began designing drive-through gas stations. Concerned citizens soon protested against the characteristic filling station with a tiny building and a disheveled collection of pumps.⁹¹ In the 1920s oil companies responded to the demands of advocates of the City Beautiful by building substantial stone or brick stations with Greek, Beaux Arts or Neo-classical details.⁹² At the same time, prefabricated buildings, available through catalogs, were popular among station owners. These stations were available in many sizes and varied designs and could be bolted together in a matter of days. Gas stations near residential areas purposely resembled cottages so they would blend into the neighborhood.⁹³ Domestic station design fostered a feeling of familiarity and friendliness in the minds of passing auto travelers. For this reason the small house or cottage-style station dominated this era.⁹⁴

*Gulf Company Service
Station,
Paragould,
Greene
County.
AHPP photo.*



The 1930s brought several changes to American gas stations. More cars on the road meant increased demand for repair services, tires and auto-related accessories. The first neighborhood service stations were house-type stations with add-on bays to shelter autos being repaired. During the Depression, station owners were forced to diversify their services as gas revenues plummeted. Selling tires, batteries and accessories was now as important as pumping gas into cars. New, larger station buildings were required to showcase merchandise and provide service. Consistent with post-Depression marketing trends, gas stations updated their look by introducing white, enameled structures designed in the International or Streamlined Moderne style. These box-like structures prevailed until the early 1960s when competition from independents prompted companies to rethink station design. Flat roofs were replaced with soaring, angular roofs forming canopies. In a short time, however, the new flamboyant design was rejected in favor of the traditional box-type buildings.⁹⁵

The Gulf Oil Company Service Station in Paragould, Arkansas, was built in 1926 on the corner of Main and South Third Streets. The station consists of a small rectangular brick building and an adjoining canopy supported by square brick columns. The simple design combines several architectural details, including modest Craftsman windows, patterned brickwork and classic details along the roofline. The traditional station box is divided into four small rooms: an office, two bathrooms and a room for parts and tools. This station has remained virtually unchanged since it was operational - 1926 though 1969 - thanks to the efforts of its last owner.⁹⁶

C. Drive-in Theatres



Howard Auto Drive-In, Nashville, Howard County. AHPP file photo.

Drive-in theatres are a distinctively American auto-born enterprise. Patented in 1933, drive-ins thrived throughout the country in the 1940s and 1950s. Yet, by the end of the 1960s it was clear that the golden years of the drive-in were past. Why did drive-ins enjoy such fleeting success? Post-war America embodied the elements needed to foster this industry. The post-war economy brought the population new-found wealth. Most Americans owned cars and, more importantly, loved to be in their cars. There was also a surplus of cheap, vacant, highway-accessible land on which to construct drive-ins. However, owners' inability to acquire first-run movies coupled with the limitations of drive-in technology resulted in declining attendance. Ultimately, television and shrinking American

cars brought an end to the drive-in era.

According to Kerry Segrave's work *Drive-In Theatres: A History from their Inception in 1933*, Arkansas's first drive-in theatre opened in 1940 at Rose City. "On opening night an estimated twelve hundred cars jammed the highway trying to squeeze into the four-hundred-car lot."⁹⁷ Advertisements promised a loudspeaker for every car. Drivers were led through the lot and instructed how to park on the inclined ramps. Ushers, who also cleaned windshields, brought refreshments to cars. The price of admission was thirty cents and the management promised prices would stay low, "to include many persons not now able to attend the movies in conventional theatres."⁹⁸

Affordability and convenience were the keys to the drive-ins' early success. By charging a fee per carload and admitting children free, drive-ins offered a family entertainment opportunity previously unavailable. Parents were encouraged to bring their children, fostering family togetherness and saving the babysitter's fee. Plus, drive-ins were casual. In a time when appropriate dress was required for public outings, drive-ins allowed mothers to wear housedresses; fathers, tee shirts; and children, pajamas.⁹⁹

Throughout the drive-in's history, owners battled the Hollywood monopoly to acquire first-rate movies, a battle they never won. Soon owners began to sell the drive-in rather than the movie. Some installed stages in front of the screen for live entertainment before sunset. Many offered playground equipment to entertain the youngsters. All constructed concession stands, which brought in a large part of their profit. An evening at the drive-in offered wholesome family entertainment that overshadowed the low-rate movie and poor-quality sound.¹⁰⁰

Drive-ins were usually located outside of cities where owners could afford five or six acres of land with highway frontage. They had at least one thirty-by-sixty-foot screen supported by various construction methods at about twelve feet above the ground. A series of arching terraced rows fanned out in front of the screen. There were several apparatuses developed to deliver sound to the audience. Early drive-ins simply blasted the audio over speakers mounted on the screen tower.¹⁰¹ Later, individual speakers were available to mount inside cars. Although there were many experiments to improve sound and picture quality at drive-ins, the technical aspects of outdoor viewing were never completely mastered.

By the late 1960s television lured families back into their homes. With attendance rates already dropping, the adoption of Daylight Savings Time in 1967 crippled drive-in theaters. Prevented from acquiring new movies, some owners offered X-rated films. Drive-ins, newly adopted by teenagers, had lost their family appeal. Most closed by the 1980s.¹⁰²



Studebaker Showroom, Mena, Polk County. AHPP photo.

*Griffin Car Dealership,
El Dorado,
Union
County.
AHPP photo.*



D. Auto Showrooms

Auto showrooms served as the meeting point between Americans and their beloved cars. The first auto dealerships were modified from horse transportation businesses. Booming business led dealers to construct stores for selling autos exclusively. During the early 1900s, new dealers built their businesses along the commercial strip. These structures were designed to complement the existing Main Street facades. The interiors of these show places emphasized luxury and often included hotel-like lobbies complete with huge chandeliers.¹⁰³ In addition to providing a showcase for new models and auto accessories, these dealerships included a rear garage for servicing autos. Structures with multiple stories were outfitted with freight elevators for transporting inventory. Competition among auto manufacturers necessitated that they become involved in selling and servicing their products. No longer content to leave design in the hands of individual dealers, manufacturers mandated how dealerships would look.¹⁰⁴ The manufacturers modeled dealerships after grand office buildings and banks. Bas-relief and entrance porticos often graced the facades of these impressive structures. These dealerships were designed to be as structurally strong and dependable as they looked from the street. They were reinforced to carry the load of tons of inventory, including moving automobiles being driven through the specially designed interior. Fire prevention was a priority in these environments where electricity and gasoline cohabited. For these reasons reinforced concrete was the preferred construction material.¹⁰⁵

The Depression influenced auto dealership design just as it had other auto-related enterprises. Depression-era showrooms were smaller and less ostentatious with more space devoted to selling previously owned vehicles.¹⁰⁶

After World War II, many auto dealerships were redesigned in the Streamlined Moderne style to reflect the assembly lines where autos were manufactured. Dealers were now encouraged to locate on larger lots outside of cities where they could display more cars.¹⁰⁷

In the 1950s, dramatic improvements in the mass production of autos opened the market to independent salesmen. Many of these dealers simply lined cars up on vacant lots. By the 1960s dealers mass marketed new cars in much the same fashion as used cars had previously been sold. Rather than showcasing new models alone, they utilized huge lots to display inventory and concentrated on selling cars in quantity. Long rows of cars were now the focal point rather than the showroom floor. Dealership design reflected this trend by emphasizing strictly functional structures housing service areas and a small showroom. These structures were almost always removed to the rear of the lot,

behind rows of cars for sale.¹⁰⁸

The Griffin Car Dealership located at 117 East Locust in El Dorado, Arkansas, was built in 1928 by William, Tom, and Carl Griffin to house their Chevrolet car dealership. The brothers had operated a livery business in the city since 1915, but when oil was discovered in the El Dorado region they believed automobile sales would be highly lucrative. The building is designed in the Spanish Revival style with glazed terra cotta and brick details. The front of the structure features an open, drive-in area covered by the second story. Large white porcelain tiled piers support the second story featuring decorative tiled arches along its length. The business complex covers three acres with an adjoining car lot spanning 80,000 square feet.¹⁰⁹

E. The Climber

In addition to national dealerships, Arkansas briefly hosted its own unique automobile manufacturer. The Climber Motor Corporation was established in 1919 by incorporators William Drake, Clarence Roth, David Hopson and, later, Henry Buhler. Its factory was constructed on a 20-acre tract of land located at 1800 East Seventeenth Street in Little Rock. George Schoeneck of Detroit was hired as the company's chief engineer and charged with purchasing or designing the necessary mate-



The Climber. Courtesy of Museum of Automobiles, Petit Jean Mountain, Morrilton, Conway County.

rials and equipment to begin production. As its name suggests, the Climber was specially designed to conquer mountainous Ozark terrain. To prove its prowess, a Climber was driven up the steep steps of the State Capitol building in Little Rock. From 1919 through 1923 the Climber Motor Corporation produced approximately 275 cars, two of which survive. One of the last surviving examples of this vehicle is housed at the Museum of Automobiles on Petit Jean Mountain in Morrilton, Arkansas.¹¹⁰

F. Amusement Parks

Americans have a long history of enjoying amusement parks, such as nineteenth-century Coney Island in New York. After the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, a showcase for amusement technology, America experienced a building boom in this industry that continued through the 1920s. During the 1920s, ride makers refined the mechanical devices that formed the backbone of the amusement industry. In the 1930s Americans visited these parks to escape the trials of the Depression. World



Herschell-Spillman Carousel, Little Rock, Pulaski County. AHPP photo.

Little Rock Zoo. This wood and cast-iron Over-the-Jumps Carousel dates from around 1920 and is representative of the golden age of the carousel from 1875 to 1935.¹¹²

War II emptied parks, but the crowds returned in the 1950s, and the baby boomers followed.¹¹¹

Small roadside parks followed the spread of theme and amusement parks throughout the country. Roadside amusement parks usually offered concessions and a few rides. Some were based on themes, such as regional history or a movie plot. Others were little more than traveling carnivals nailed in place. These parks could be constructed anywhere along the highway where tourists could see the rides (and often fantastic fiberglass sculptures) and pull from the road.

War Memorial Amusement Park operated in a 15-acre lot near the Little Rock Zoo, Ray Winder Field and War Memorial Stadium for nearly sixty years. Featuring brightly colored rides, fantastic fiberglass animals and a frightening mechanical dummy, the park entertained children every summer. The park included many vintage rides and attractions such as “Laughing Sally,” who had been scaring children since 1940. Due to declining attendance since the late 1970s (partially caused by the popularity of new water theme parks), the owner decided to auction off the rides and attractions and close the park in 1998. Only the remarkable Herschell-Spillman Carousel will be restored and reinstalled at the

G. Miniature Golf

The first miniature golf courses were intended as practice putting areas for full-scale golfers. Golf enjoyed new popularity after World War I when individuals hoping to improve their class status adopted it. After a suitable surface was discovered that replicated the movement of golf balls on natural greens, the popularity of putting courses increased. The first miniature golf courses were prefabricated and distributed under the name Tom Thumb Golf. These courses incorporated hazards and obstacles with a fantasy theme that appealed to adults as well as children. Also, miniature golf courses proved to be an unexpected boom during the Depression. These courses created a demand for construction materials, an industry hurt by the national economic crisis.¹¹³ They also provide a fantasy world into which American families could escape.

Not everyone loved miniature golf courses, however. By 1930 urban residents began to protest the noise and crowd congestion generated by these roadside attractions. Zoning regulations were enforced against these businesses. And as the Depression worsened Americans began to seek out alternative forms of escapism, such as the movies.¹¹⁴

Miniature golf courses returned after World War II in a slightly different form. Now rather than locating in urban areas, courses were most often found along commercial strips and tourist areas.

Vacationers enjoy a scenic overlook. Ozark-St. Francis National Forest photo.



They were part of larger operations now and helped attract tourists to motels, shopping centers and other enterprises. Courses built in this era were often handcrafted out of everyday materials and exhibited the ingenuity of their builders, rather than prefabricated like those before and after them. After the mid-1950s, most courses were prefabricated and often included huge fiberglass renditions of animals or fantasy characters. Although the character of miniature golf courses has changed little through the years, they have never regained the popularity they enjoyed during the period preceding the Depression.¹¹⁵

Another genre of roadside attractions is scenic natural sites. Natural bridges, scenic overviews and the like were some of the first attractions exploited along America's roadsides. A simple booth or stand to collect admission fees along with enough space to allow tourists to pull off the road was all that was needed to capitalize on a scenic site.



Old South Restaurant, Russellville, Pope County. AHPP photo.



Jameson-Richards Cafe, Bald Knob, White County. AHPP photo.

H. Dining Out

Americans' affinity for dining away from home preceded the automobile era. Drug store soda fountains and ice cream shops prospered during the horse transportation era. The car, however, offered a new dining opportunity.

Families traveling cross-country in their cars provided the business for the most successful roadside restaurant franchise of the 1930s and 1940s, Howard Johnson's. Howard Johnson's cleverly combined the respectable family dining often found in the roadside tearooms of the 1920s with the convenience of a soda shop. By mandating structure design and regulating menu items and food preparation, these franchises offered familiarity to auto-tourists as they traveled along unfamiliar roads.¹¹⁶

Hamburger and hot dog stands gained new respectability in the mid-1920s with the spread of the White Castle chain. Serving consistently decent food quickly and inexpensively from a sanitary environment, White Castle eliminated the fear of the unknown that had previously characterized hamburger joints and greasy spoons.¹¹⁷

This era also saw the development of the drive-in restaurant. Most early drive-ins consisted of a round or rectangular building with eye-catching advertisements on its roof. Customers encircled the building with their cars. Drive-in restaurants boomed after the World War II rationing of gasoline, tires, building materials and foodstuffs ended. Most post-war drive-ins sported distinctive pavilions to shelter attendants and vehicles. The Exaggerated Moderne design reigned in the 1950s to the mid-1960s. Characterized by projecting roofs and bright, flashing signs, Exaggerated Moderne drive-ins were designed in "the rock n' roll style."¹¹⁸

Diners developed simultaneously with the drive-in. The city cousin to the rural chuckwagon, dining cars maneuvered through the streets in search of customers. As their popularity grew they became permanently affixed in one location. By the 1920s, diners were a booming business.¹¹⁹ Offering a varied and inexpensive fare, they survived the Great Depression and expanded their customer base. "By the early 1930s the diner had become one of the most democratic of all eating places," with individuals of various professions and classes frequenting them.¹²⁰ In the late 1940s, diners traded their wheels for streamlined designs and larger windows. A decade later, when their popularity wavered, designers abandoned the boxcar motif in favor of the Exaggerated Moderne style, which only remotely resembled original diners.

Following the self-service trend in other retail industries characterizing the 1940s and 1950s, McDonald's mass-produced cheap, uniform food extremely quickly. By encouraging customers to

drive through, they increased the number of people that could be served in an hour. McDonald's became the prototype for numerous fast-food chains to follow.¹²¹

The Jameson-Richards Café stands next to the Jameson Gas Station on Highway 367 in Bald Knob, Arkansas, both were constructed c. 1931. Like the gas station, the café is clad in brick with English Revival features. This small, single-story building has stucco and half-timbering on the front gable. The café has six-paned casement windows with multi-paned transoms above each and a French door surrounded by casement sidelights. The remainder of the T-shaped structure is faced with brick. The café's association with the gas station illustrates the importance of the automobile to both establishments.¹²²

Arkansas's automobile history from 1910 to 1965 mirrored that of the nation as a whole. Americans eagerly embraced this new transportation technology that embodied their cultural ideals of individuality, democracy and family unity. Ultimately, choosing the auto over the railroad for traveling had a lasting effect on the American landscape. Creating an infrastructure of good roads became a priority at the state and federal level. The largely forgotten Dollarway Road remains as testament to both the ingenuity and fallibility of those who endeavored to create better Arkansas roads. Everywhere the highways extended, auto-born enterprises such as gas stations, tourist courts, auto dealerships, drive-ins and other attractions dominated the roadside landscape. As in other regions of the nation, Arkansas still has many surviving examples of these roadside architectural types throughout the state.¹²³

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