



CAM Chronicles

The Newsletter of the California Automobile Museum



Volume 3 No.1

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CAM Chronicles

From the Director's Desk

Happy New Year From CAM

As we turn the calendar to a new year, the unmistakable feeling of a fresh start settles across the museum, much like the quiet hum of an engine warming up before a long, exciting journey. January is always a moment of reflection for us: a time to look in the rearview mirror with pride and through the windshield with anticipation.

This past year, our museum saw inspiring new exhibitions and galleries, new community partnerships, and more visitors than ever who share our passion for the automobile as an innovation, an art form, and a cultural touchstone. Each car that rolls onto the museum floor brings with it a new story, and thanks to your support, we are preserving and sharing those stories with future generations.

In 2026, you'll see continued improvements to our galleries and visitor experience, along with an exciting transformation of our main entrance, so stay tuned for more information!

Most importantly, I want to say **thank you**. Your membership, enthusiasm, and presence in the museum make this place more than a building; you make it a living community. Museums preserve objects, but communities preserve meaning, and we could not do this work without you.

Here's to a 2026 filled with discovery, inspiration, and plenty of horsepower. May your year be smooth on the curves, steady on the straights, and full of memorable rides.

Warm Regards,



Karen McClafin, Executive Director
California Automobile Museum



Meetings...

Board Meeting	Last Thurs, 5:30 pm
Docent Council	2nd Weds, 1 pm
Education Committee	Last Weds, 1 pm
Exhibits	2nd Thurs, 1 pm
Library	Weds, 10 am
Road Crew	1st Weds, 1 pm

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We have some exciting news to share with you!

In 2026, we're taking a trip down the Mother Road of memory lane!

Route 66: California Dreamin' will be a celebration of all things Route 66, rolling through the many decades of history on the Main Street of America. This exhibit arrives just in time for the 100th anniversary of the route!

You can't miss this once-in-a-lifetime exhibit. Stay tuned on social media or on our email newsletters for more information about opening day, January 31, 2026!

2026 Board of Directors

Ralph Carbone	David Felderstein
Chandler Knapp	Karen Long
Joe Hensler	Glenn Rondeau
Steve Meyer	John Shirey
Ed Silva	Don Tollefson
John Smith	

Docent Council

Ralph Carbone	Chair
Vacant	Vice Chair
Jared Seese	Treasurer
Bob Daloia,	Training Co-Chairs
John Tennyson	
Doug Cook	Training Curriculum
John David	Docent Mentoring
Vacant	Secretary/Membership
Greg Alumbaugh/Denny Albrecht	Events
Frank DeBernardi	Communication
Duwayne Brooks	At Large

Volunteer Leaders

Ken Rothaus	Car Club Cavalcade
Jon Paavola/Eric Seifert	Pit Crew
Terry Emery	Detail Crew
Ron Grantz, Mike Ling	Library
Richard Armstrong	Road Crew
Vacant	Education Committee
Steve Koonce	Exhibits Committee

Museum Staff

Karen McClaffin	Executive Director
Scott Mikkelson	Vehicle Sales Coordinator
Sol Goldman	Vehicle Sales Assistant
ShaVolla Rodriguez	Exhibits Manager
Katie Martin	MarComs Manager
Tamara Samsa	Office Manager
Ellie Montgomery	Ed & Collections Coord
Lauren Trask	Event Rentals
Derrick Jurrison	Maintenance
Dieter Stenger	Accountant
Evan Spoonhunter	Guest Services
Nayeli Rodriguez	Front Desk Relief
Mario Pulido	Janitorial



A Piece of Hollywood at CAM

By Katelyn “Katie” Biddle Martin, Staff Reporter

Getting up close to a Hollywood star isn't too far away - just visit the California Automobile Museum (CAM)! You'll find a bit of movie magic in our Racing Gallery: the 1963 Shelby Cobra replica used in the movie *Ford v. Ferrari*.

The 2019 flick follows a team of English and American engineers and drivers led by Carroll Shelby (played by Matt Damon) and Ken Miles (played by Christian Bale), who are on a quest to build a revolutionary Ford vehicle to beat Enzo Ferrari at the 1966 24 Hours of Le Mans in France. The cars in the movie are characters themselves - so how did one end up at CAM?

The museum's car on display is the 1963 Shelby Cobra replica that portrayed one of the early prototypes Shelby and Miles raced at the Willow Springs International Raceway. The Cobra, as well as the GT40 replicas used in the film, were built by Superformance. It is the same car that Miles, in a fit of frustration, pounded with a mallet to get a suitcase to fit into the trunk, per regulations; it is also the car whose windshield was smashed when Miles threw it at Shelby. Those destructive scenes ended in an adrenaline rush as the car sped first to the finish line.

Fun fact: the shattered windshield was going to be fixed prior to display, but CAM requested that it be kept as it is!

Of course, in those iconic scenes, a stunt driver was the skill behind the wheel: Tony Hunt. Hunt is a veteran stunt driver and 10-time USAC champion who was the movie's driving double for Christian Bale. He drove the car that we have on display, and also owns the vehicle.

“There were critical shots that were pretty dangerous,” Hunt recalls. “If something would've gone wrong with one of those cars - they're not equipped with the latest safety resources...if there was a snafu, or if something got overlooked, you could really get hurt. Plus, you're running with period-appropriate tires, you're dealing with a lot of variables.”



Once *Ford v. Ferrari* finished filming, Hunt started looking for a home for the car. He was put in touch with CAM through the museum's connection with his father, Tommy Hunt, who, in turn, was connected to Bill McAnally Racing. Bill McAnally is a former racer and docent instructor at CAM, and we have displayed one of his cars. Through those connections, Tony Hunt contacted CAM to see if we would be interested in displaying the car. The answer was a resounding “YES!”

The Shelby Cobra remains one of the most popular in the museum, and is still active - it just went to a show in October! We are so grateful to the Hunt family for displaying the car at the museum. Don't miss your chance to see a piece of Hollywood up close!





Events

A poster for the "Wild Horses Farewell Party". At the top, the words "WILD HORSES" are written in large, stylized letters with a purple-to-pink gradient. Below that, "FAREWELL PARTY" is written in white, followed by the date and time "1.11.26 • 1-4 PM". The central image is a front view of a modern Mustang with its headlights on, set against a dark background. At the bottom, a red-to-purple gradient banner contains the text "SET THE MUSTANGS FREE WITH US AND ENJOY:" followed by a list of activities: "• A RAFFLE OF EXHIBIT PIECES • FOOD VENDOR • MUSIC • MUSTANG MERCH SALE •". Below the banner, the text "FREE WITH MUSEUM ADMISSION" is written in white.

WILD HORSES
FAREWELL PARTY
1.11.26 • 1-4 PM

SET THE MUSTANGS FREE WITH US AND ENJOY:
• A RAFFLE OF EXHIBIT PIECES • FOOD VENDOR • MUSIC •
• MUSTANG MERCH SALE •

FREE WITH MUSEUM ADMISSION

On January 11th, 2026, the Mustangs will run free!

Say goodbye to our "Wild Horses: Sixty Years of the Mustang" exhibit with us! It's one last celebration of all things Mustang. View the gorgeous collection of cars one last time and enjoy food from a local vendor, music, a Mustang merch sale, and a raffle of exhibit pieces!

This event is free with museum admission, and CAM members are always free. The event will take place from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. We hope to see you there!

Events (Cont.)



**MODEL A
DRIVING CLASS
JAN.
17TH**



This class is designed to give students an understanding of Model A constructions, nomenclature, operation and basic maintenance, and history. Each student will then have the opportunity to drive a Model A!

\$99 Non-Member / \$89 Member

[Click here to get your tickets!](#)



Don't miss our next exhibit opening!

Save the date for January 31, 2026, for an exhibit opening event. More details to come! Keep an eye on our email newsletters and social media for more information!



Beginnings

By Glenn Rondeau, Board Member and Newsletter Editor

In 1857, Lt. Edward Fitzgerald Beale, a naval officer in the service of the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers, was ordered by the War Department to build a government-funded wagon road along the 35th Parallel. His secondary orders were to test the feasibility of the use of camels as pack animals in the southwestern desert. This road became part of US 66.

Before a nationwide network of numbered highways was adopted by the states, auto trails were marked by private organizations. The route that became US 66 was covered by three highways.

Legislation for public highways was first introduced in 1916 and revised in 1921, but the government did not execute a national highway construction plan until Congress enacted an even more comprehensive version of the act in 1925. The original inspiration for a road between Chicago and Los Angeles was planned by entrepreneurs Cyrus Avery of Tulsa, Oklahoma and John T. Woodruff of Springfield, Missouri, who lobbied the American Association of State Highway Officials for the creation of a route following the 1925 plans. (1)

Route 66 was one of the original highways in the United States Numbered Highway System. It was established on November 11, 1926, with road signs erected the following year. The highway ran from Chicago, Illinois, through Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona before terminating in Santa Monica, California, covering a total of 2,448 miles.

US 66 was a primary route for those who migrated west, especially during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, and it supported the economies of the communities through which it passed.

People doing business along the route became prosperous, and they later fought to keep it alive in the face of the growing threat of being bypassed by the more advanced freeways of the Interstate Highway System in the 1960s and 1970s.

US 66 underwent many improvements and realignments over its lifetime, but it was officially removed from the United States Highway System in 1985 [2] after it was entirely replaced by segments of the Interstate Highway System. Portions of the road that passed through Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, and California have been collectively designated a National Scenic Byway by the name “Historic Route 66.”

Parts of the original Route 66 from 1913, prior to its official naming and commissioning, can still be seen north of the Cajon Pass. The paved road becomes a dirt road, south of Cajon, which was also the original Route 66. (2)

Championed by Avery when the first talks about a national highway system began, US 66 was first signed into law in 1927 as one of the original U.S. Highways, although it was not completely paved until 1938. Avery was adamant that the highway have a round number and had proposed the number 60 to identify it. After the new federal highway system was officially created, Cyrus Avery called for the establishment of the U.S. Highway 66 Association to promote the complete paving of the highway from end to end and to promote travel along the highway. In 1927, in Tulsa, the association was officially established with John T. Woodruff of Springfield, Missouri, elected as its first president. In 1928, the association made its first attempt at publicity: the “Bunion Derby,” a footrace from Los Angeles to New York City, of which the path from Los Angeles to Chicago would be on US 66. (Cont. on page 8)



Beginnings (Cont.)

The publicity worked: several dignitaries, including Will Rogers, greeted the runners at certain points on the route. The race ended in Madison Square Garden, where the \$25,000 first prize was awarded to Andy Hartley Payne, a Cherokee runner from Oklahoma. The U.S. Highway 66 Association also placed its first advertisement in the July 16, 1932, issue of the Saturday Evening Post. The ad invited Americans to take US 66 to the 1932 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. A U.S. Highway 66 Association office in Oklahoma received hundreds of requests for information after the ad was published. The association went on to serve as a voice for businesses along the highway until it disbanded in 1976. (3)

(1) *Illinois' Haunted Route 66*. History Press, Tremear, Janice, 2013

(2) "A Table of Mileposts for the Original US 66 Alignment of 1926", *Route 66 Web & Atlas*, 2018

(3) *Hip to the Trip: A Cultural History of Route 66*, Dedek, Peter B, 2007





Scrapbook

THE GEMINI GIANT

The **Gemini Giant** is a landmark statue on U.S. Route 66 in Wilmington, IL. Now installed at the entrance to the South Island Park, the statue previously stood outside the Launching Pad Restaurant from 1965 to 2024. The 30-foot-tall statue is one of many giant “Muffler Man” advertising props found throughout the US in the 1960s. The Gemini Giant is named after the Gemini space program and holds a silver “rocket ship” in his hands, while sporting an astronaut’s space helmet that resembles a welding mask.

History

John and Bernice Korelc opened a Dari-Delight restaurant in 1960 at the present-day location of the Launching Pad. The proprietors bought a 438-pound fiberglass Muffler Man figure for \$3,500 at the annual National Restaurant Association convention. Seeking to capitalize on America’s fascination with the Space Race, they rebranded the restaurant as the “Launching Pad” and had the statue outfitted as an astronaut with a helmet and rocket. A naming contest was held at the local grade school to give the statue a new moniker, and Cathy Thomas’s suggestion of “Gemini Giant” was selected as the winner. Since then, the Giant has become a famous icon of Route 66, often appearing in national and international media alongside stories about the Mother Road. Its continued presence in Wilmington has become one of the most photographed destinations for travelers making the Route 66 journey.

The history of the Gemini Giant and Launching Pad is intertwined. The Giant’s attractiveness as a tourist photo stop has brought more visibility to the business than a small, local, independent fast-food restaurant could expect to receive otherwise, while the restaurant’s success is needed to keep the Giant where it has stood since 1965.

Korelc retired from full-time work in 1986 but would continue to assist his daughter, Sharon, at the restaurant. Both the Launching Pad and the Gemini Giant were inducted into the Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame in 2000.

In 2007, Morey Szczecin purchased the Launching Pad and Gemini Giant from Sharon and her husband, Jerry Gatties, marking the first time the restaurant and statue were owned by an individual outside of the founding family. The business struggled and began closing seasonally until it closed in 2010. An auction was held in April 2016, with a local couple submitting the high bid of \$177,500. The bid failed to meet the reserve price of the auction, and the buyers and sellers could not come to an agreement in negotiations following the auction. The property would remain vacant until late 2017, when the building, contents, and statue were purchased by the Gemini Giant LLC for a combined \$300,000.

The business was forced to close as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Efforts to sell the shuttered Launching Pad restaurant and the Gemini Giant were derailed in early January 2024. The Gemini Giant was auctioned off on March 20, 2024. The winning bid was \$275,000.





Car Club Cavalcade

January - The Metropolitan Owner's Club

The Metropolitan Owners' Club of North America Inc. is a community built on the shared love for the Metropolitan, guided by the vision of unity, knowledge, and enthusiasm. From its roots in the ambitions of the American Motors Corporation to the establishment by C.R. "Dick" Maize, our club has flourished into a vibrant assembly of enthusiasts.

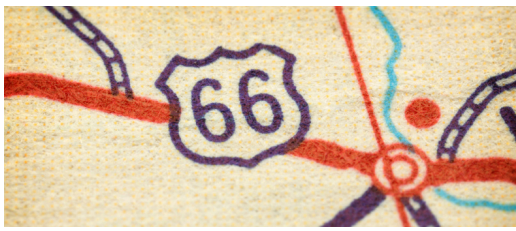


February - The Porsche Club of America, Sacramento Valley Region (To be confirmed - keep an eye on our Facebook and Instagram!)

From their website: For over 60 years, the Porsche Club of America has been dedicated to enhancing the Porsche ownership experience. Social, technical, or competitive – no matter your interest, the PCA has something to offer every Porsche owner.

We know the unbridled joy that a Porsche can provide, and we've built a community around that very feeling. The Porsche Club of America offers driving experience, technical assistance, member benefits, and camaraderie second to none.





From Chicago to St. Louis

By Glenn Rondeau, Board Member and Newsletter Editor

The earliest known Chicago-to-St. Louis road was a former Native American Indian trail and stagecoach road that was renamed the Pontiac Trail in 1915. Route 66 began in Chicago and, once outside the metropolitan Chicago area, traveled down the Pontiac Trail through many cities and towns on its way southwest, including Joliet, Odell, Bloomington, Lincoln, Springfield, Edwardsville, and East St. Louis. (1)

Illinois 4 coincided with most of the Pontiac Trail and closely paralleled the Chicago and Alton Railroad tracks running from Chicago to East St. Louis. The roadbed for Illinois 4 was prepared in 1922 by teams of horses dragging equipment behind them. Laborers received 40 cents per hour for performing backbreaking labor on the roadbed. In 1923, in Bloomington-Normal, concrete was poured along the road's path along much the same route US 66 would take on its original route through the area. By 1924, Illinois 4 was almost entirely paved between Chicago and St. Louis. Construction on the few remaining parts of US 66 in Illinois began in 1926.

U.S. Route 66 connected Chicago, Illinois, St. Louis, Missouri, and the historic road, also known as Main Street USA, had previously been Illinois Route 4 and has now been largely replaced by Interstate 55. Parts of the original road still carry traffic, and six separate portions have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places: U.S. Route 66 Alternate: Bolingbrook-Gardner, Illinois, U.S. Route 66 Business: Towanda-Bloomington, Illinois, U.S. Route 66 Business: Lincoln, Illinois, U.S. Route 66 Business: Springfield, Illinois, and U.S. Route 66 Business: Mitchell-East St. Louis, Illinois.

Aside from these six sections of the route in Illinois that have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the 436-mile stretch of road was declared the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway on September 22, 2005, by the U.S. Department of Transportation. (2)

When US 66, later dubbed the Mother Road by novelist John Steinbeck in 1939, was designated on November 11, 1926, the original path used mostly pre-existing roads. It was meant to minimize any needed construction and to get the entire path of the route open to traffic as soon as possible. In fact, because Illinois had already paved most of the roads that would comprise US 66, Illinois was the first of the eight states through which the route would run to have its segment of US 66 completed at a time when much of Route 66 was still a gravel-and-dirt road.

Beginning in the western Chicago suburb of Cicero, US 66, Illinois, was fully completed by 1924. Roughly paralleling the Chicago & Alton Railroad, this old chunk of pavement represents the first hard portion of the Mother Road and is a monument to the birth of the interstate highway system. In its earliest years, it was used by hundreds of soldiers returning from World War I, and later by Chicago mobsters during the Prohibition era, which led to the road's reputation as "Bloody 66" and spurred the formation of the Illinois State Police.

In Springfield, US 66 entered from the east of the Illinois State Fairgrounds before veering south through the capital and meandering through downtown streets until following South Grand Street to what is now Chatham Road and exiting the city on the southwest side.

Continued on page 12



From Chicago to St. Louis (Cont.)

Along this route, present-day travelers can see old brick road sections, concrete paths, abandoned routes, old bridges, and numerous small towns. These small towns provide numerous historical looks at the past, and the countryside is filled with interesting barns, homesteads, and farms.

A bypassed portion of old Route 4 north of Auburn, Illinois, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This segment consists of a 1.53-mile-long brick road and a 1921 Portland cement road. Both are well-preserved examples of Route 66's early years in Illinois and showcase early highway construction methods. Legend has it that this portion was built of bricks because a politician in "high places" owned a brick factory.

These sections served as part of Route 66 until 1930, when the realignment of Route 66 south of Springfield rerouted traffic to the less populated eastern side through Litchfield in order to speed up traffic flow by avoiding as many towns as possible.

Another brick section was incorporated into the 1932 modifications. Today, known as the Auburn Brick Road, it contains two original single-span concrete bridges over Little Panther Creek constructed in 1920. Just south of Nilwood, Illinois, turkey tracks were imprinted within the original concrete when poured. After more than 80 years, they can still be seen today. Underscoring the fast-paced evolution of Route 66 in Illinois, this segment was designated as a part of the Mother Road in 1926. Still, it was quickly replaced in 1930 with a major realignment to the east.

Constructed in 1920 as part of old State Route 4, this short-lived section of Illinois Route 66 is typical of the engineering and construction methods of the post-World War I era.

This was a time of genuine transition in road construction methods. Often combining horses and mules with state-of-the-art trucks and machinery in World War I, the road's cross-section included two eight-foot-wide lanes with 4-7-foot-wide gravel shoulders. The Portland cement slab was generally six inches thick.

Although cracked in places, its current concrete pavement is original. The road segment retains five original concrete box culverts and a 1920 single-span concrete bridge. (3)

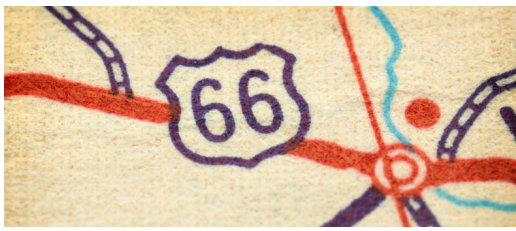
Illinois is home to various museums devoted to the history of US 66, such as the Berwyn Route 66 Museum in Berwyn, the Joliet Area Historical Museum's Route 66 Welcome Center, the Illinois Route 66 Association Hall of Fame and Museum in Pontiac, and the Cruisin' with Lincoln Visitors Center, inside the McLean County Museum of History in Bloomington, Illinois. Vehicles used by late Route 66 travelling artist Bob Waldmire, including a Volkswagen Type 2 minibus that inspired the creation of Pixar animated character Fillmore in the film *Cars*, are part of the museum collection in Pontiac.



Artist Bob Waldmire's van at the Pontiac Route 66 Museum

Two other museums of interest in Pontiac are the International Walldog Mural and Sign Art Museum and the Pontiac-Oakland Museum. The newest Route 66 museum is the Litchfield Museum and Route 66 Welcome Center, which opened in 2012 across from the Ariston Cafe.

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From Chicago to St. Louis (Cont.)

This museum houses an extensive history of the city of Litchfield and offers guided tours and special events. (4)

US 66 has come to stand for the collective American tourist experience and holds a special place in American popular culture. There is a certain nostalgic appeal to Route 66 that is associated with the thrill of the open road, which has contributed to its popularity. Looking at the historic roadway through Illinois from a different perspective reveals a unique history that tells the story of movement and road building across the prairie. A study of the highway in Illinois also reveals the evolution of the Interstate Highway System and the growing popularity of automobiles.

(1) *“Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 Through Illinois”*, Seratt, Dorothy R.L.

& Ryburn-Lamont, Terri August, 1997

(2) *“Historic Route 66: Illinois” America’s Byways*. Federal Highway Administration, 2007.

(3) Kathy Alexander/*Legends of America*, updated July 2024

(4) *Litchfield Museum & Route 66 Welcome Center*, October 2014.

“Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 Through Illinois”, Seratt, Dorothy R.L. & Ryburn-Lamont, Terri, 1997





Features

DOCENT AND VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Eric Seifert - Volunteer of the Year

If you visit CAM on a Tuesday (and many times, more days than that), you're sure to see Eric! Eric is a constant, invaluable part of the CAM team. He is one of the heads of Pit Crew, keeping the crew and our cars running smoothly. He can often be found helping at museum events, and brings a smile and a laugh wherever he goes.

At the age of 10, Eric's love of cars was sparked by building models. This led him to taking auto shop in high school and automotive repair in college, setting him up for a 15-year career as a mechanic and a further career in data management for vehicle repairs.

Eric shares his knowledge every day at CAM, having started as a volunteer in 2024. He loves meeting people who love cars from all over the world and bringing cars back to life with the CAM teams. His favorite car in the collection is the 1974 Plymouth Satellite - he learned to drive in one, and went on many childhood road trips in the one that belonged to his family!

Terry Root - Docent of the Year

If you're ever in need of a laugh, Terry's your guy!

Terry Root has been part of CAM since the 90s, and has been a part of the museum's success ever since. From serving on the Board to Docent Council and stellar docenting, Terry helps bring improvements and a fun outlook wherever you find him.

Terry's love of cars started when he was a boy, when he had to learn how to fix cars to get anywhere on his family's Pennsylvania farm. He has been a hobbyist in car repair all his life, even fixing Minis during his time in England in the 70s and 80s.

Terry currently serves as a docent on Sundays at CAM, and loves talking and joking with guests while sharing history. He has loved seeing how CAM has grown throughout the years. He has no one favorite car in the museum, but is partial to the Model Ts. He loves all of the cars and sharing how they have changed throughout history. Catch him at CAM every other Sunday!

