

*A link to the* **PAST,**

MERAMEC RIVER  
**BRIDGE**



[SaveThisBridge.org](http://SaveThisBridge.org)

*a path to the* **FUTURE**

## Preserving, renewing and protecting the Route 66 Meramec River Bridge

Bridges exist to connect people, places and communities. In rare cases, such as with the historic Route 66 Bridge over the Meramec River near Eureka, Mo., they can also connect past and present, and provide a path to the future.

A nationally recognized landmark and one of the last Warren Truss designs in Missouri, the 84-year-old bridge was scheduled for demolition sometime this year due to advanced deterioration. But thanks to a collaborative effort from local stakeholders, Missouri State Parks was recently able to accept ownership of

the bridge and earn it a reprieve from the wrecking ball.

The opportunity now exists to renew the 1,008-foot-long bridge as a connection for people walking and biking in Route 66 State Park, where it is located. Additional funding is needed to save the structure and create a lasting cultural asset. The historically significant bridge, already an international attraction for Route 66 and architecture enthusiasts, could become a vital conduit for transforming the surrounding area.

### THE MOTHER ROAD

When the U.S. government designated Route 66 as a federal highway in 1926, officials couldn't have foreseen the pop culture icon that would emerge. The Mother Road, as it became known, originally ran 2,448 miles from Chicago, Ill., to Santa Monica, Calif., passing through the states of Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, and piquing the imagination of the travelers the world over.

America's most storied highway at first bypassed the Meramec River and Times Beach, a small summer resort

town southwest of St. Louis. But in 1931, as traffic increased on the burgeoning motorway, a revised plan extended Route 66 westward across the river. Construction soon began on J-421, commonly called the Times Beach Bridge or the Route 66 Meramec River Bridge, which officially opened in 1932.

Route 66 and the Meramec River Bridge transported millions of Missouri residents and visitors alike until the 1980s, when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) discovered dioxin contamination in Times Beach, resulting in the organization buying out

and leveling the town so it could clean up the soil and debris. In the meantime, Route 66 was officially decommissioned in 1985, having been replaced by the Interstate Highway System.

Strong interest in the road remained, however, and in 1997 the EPA transferred ownership of the Times Beach property to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources for development as the Route 66 State Park. The Meramec River Bridge, owned by the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT), served as a connection between the park's visitor center, housed in the old Bridgehead Inn

### AN ARCHITECTURAL BEAUTY

Built by Frazier-Davis Construction Company in 1931 and 1932 with steel fabricated by Stupp Bros. Bridge & Iron Company, the Route 66 Meramec River Bridge is a rarity — one of only four Warren Trusses remaining in Missouri.

Truss bridges use a triangular placement of beams to stiffen and strengthen the roadbed, with horizontal "chords" at the top and bottom connected by vertical posts and diagonals. James Warren and Theobald Manzani patented the Warren Truss in 1848, a design defined by its precise arrangement of the chords to create equilateral triangles.

The Route 66 Meramec River Bridge consists of three spans and totals 1,008 feet in length, with a deck width of 30 feet wide. Evoking both engineering excellence and functional beauty, it is on the list of National Register of Historic Places and deserving of refurbishment to preserve its legacy while providing new life and purpose.



### THE SPIRIT OF 66

Travelers from around the world still cruise historic Route 66 to honor its legacy. In this spirit, a trip to Route 66 State Park and the Meramec River Bridge is a journey to a simpler time, when The Main Street of America romanced motorists with roadside attractions and small town hospitality.

The logbook at the park's visitor center reveals tourists from nearly every continent, who stop in to see the Route 66 memorabilia and neon signs that graced the buildings of Missouri from the 1930s to the 1960s. The unique history and location of the Meramec River Bridge is an opportunity to celebrate the almost mythological heritage that has come to define Route 66.

Building off the investment for a renewed bridge, Route 66 State Park has the potential to create a regional attraction and a place for international visitors to stay and experience new features such as a drive-in theater, Route 66 signage museum, beer garden and concert venue.

A revitalized Meramec River Bridge becomes the backdrop for a new chapter in the Route 66 story, reimagining multiple timelines at this vital crossroads.



on the east bank, and the 417 acres of river bluffs, forest and prairie on the western side.

Sadly, in the fall of 2009, MoDOT determined it could no longer invest the money needed to maintain the deteriorating Route 66 Meramec River Bridge and closed it for safety reasons.

### PROTECTED FOR NOW, URGENCY TO RENEW

The movement to preserve the bridge began even before its closure, when the structure was added to the National Register of Historic Places. In 2012, MoDOT had the bridge's concrete roadbed removed to reduce weight, thereby further protecting the rare Warren Truss.

Even so, deterioration persisted. MoDOT concluded that if a new owner with a viable redevelopment plan did not step forward by the end of 2016, demolition of the bridge would become necessary. The organization set aside \$325,000 for the demolition, but specified the funds could go to help rehabilitate the bridge if an alternative plan emerged.



In 2015, Great Rivers Greenway completed a detailed feasibility study to determine the options and costs involved with renewing the bridge, including transforming it into a greenway on which people could walk, run or bike. Fortified by the study, Missouri State Parks stepped forward to become the new

owner, but only if supporters could raise \$675,000 to combine with the \$325,000 from MoDOT to establish a \$1 million endowment to maintain the structure.

MoDOT, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Landmarks Association and Great Rivers Greenway all pledged funds, yet it wasn't until Philip and Judith Stupp stepped forward with a final donation that the endowment was realized. Missouri State Parks took ownership of the bridge in early 2017, with Missouri State Parks Foundation serving as the repository for funds needed to complete the restoration project, which is estimated at \$10 million.

It was a positive outcome, stopping the immediate threat of demolition. Still, the battle has not been won. "Phase 2" of preserving, renewing and protecting the Route 66 Meramec River Bridge comes with a sense of urgency, as the remaining life of the truss is estimated at just eight years. The goal now is to raise additional funds through outreach efforts not only in Missouri but worldwide.

**Be part of this exciting revitalization — visit [www.SaveThisBridge.org](http://www.SaveThisBridge.org) today.**

### FUTURE PATHWAYS

Located on the original Route 66, the Meramec River Bridge is both historically and geographically significant. With the closure of the structure to all traffic, there is currently no connection between the visitor center on the east side of the river and the park entrance on the west side.

A renewed Route 66 Meramec River Bridge will create a convenient east-west connection within the park, providing access to the trails and other natural resources on the 424 acres and also improving logistics for park staff. In addition, the dramatic topography around the site allows for impressive outlook and viewing opportunities.

The bridge will advance the vision of connecting the park to the Meramec Greenway, which currently stretches from Sherman Beach in southwest St. Louis County along the river to Glencoe. Connecting Route 66 State Park and the Meramec Greenway will one day provide access to the Ozark Trail, which stretches southwest through Missouri into Arkansas.

Via the proposed plan, the new Route 66 Meramec River Bridge will act as a catalyst for the future development of the site, enabling a network of trails and greenways that connect people to their rivers, parks and communities.

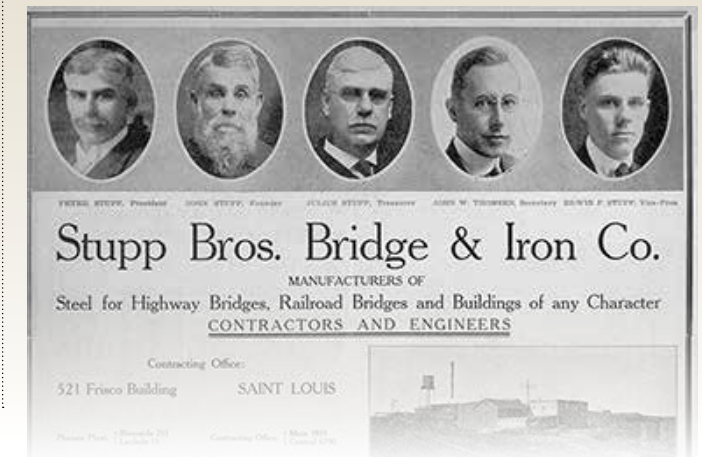


### STUPP FAMILY CONNECTION

Philip and Judith Stupp joined the movement to save the Route 66 Meramec River Bridge in mid-2016 when Judith learned of the proposed demolition of the landmark structure online.

Stupp Bros. Bridge & Iron Company, founded in 1856 by German immigrant, Johann Stupp, fabricated the steel for the bridge. The family business, now operating as Stupp Bros., Inc., has expanded and grown over the years into a major infrastructure provider with emphasis on structural steel buildings, bridges and steel pipe for transporting energy.

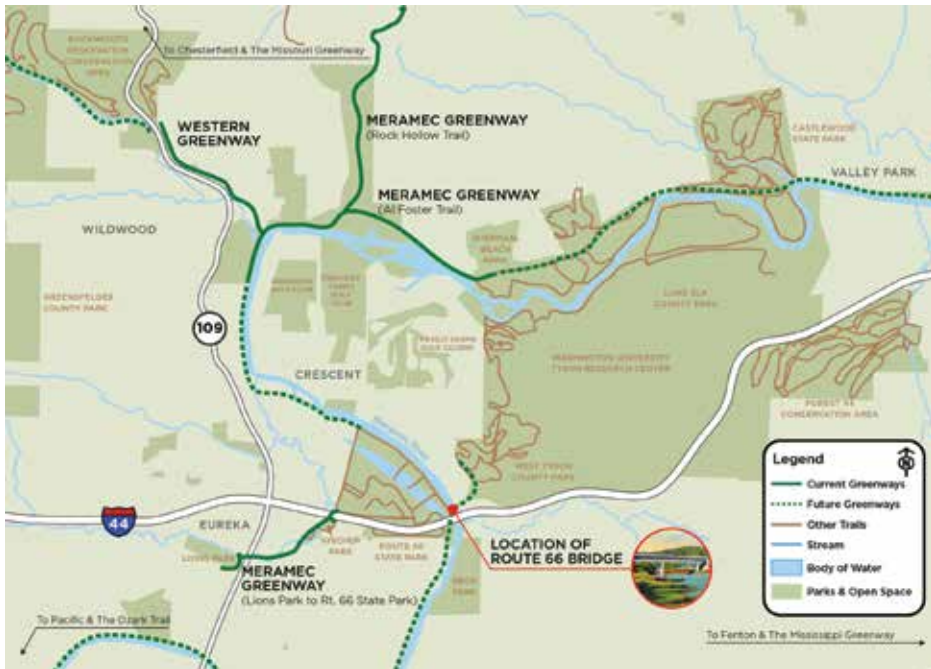
The Stupp Bros. Bridge & Iron Co. Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the business, supports the Route 66 Meramec River Bridge initiative, with the goal of raising money and refurbishing the bridge.





Be part of the revival of this historic structure and connection to a vibrant future –

visit [www.SaveThisBridge.org](http://www.SaveThisBridge.org) and donate today!



**Revitalizing this bridge will:**

- Restore a vital piece of history
- Promote healthy lifestyles
- Connect communities
- Enhance State Park experience
- Encourage international tourism
- Catalyze future development

**STAKEHOLDERS**

