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SHAMROCK

In 1890, Irish settler George Nickel asked that his dugout in northeastern Texas be designated as a postal station. He proposed the name "Shamrock" in honor of his Irish roots. Although Nickel's home burned later that year, the Chicago, Gulf and Rock Island Railway kept the name when it arrived in the summer of 1902.

In 1938, Glen Truax—the town bandmaster—started a Shamrock St. Patrick's Day tradition. Every year on the Saturday closest to March 17, Shamrock men dye their beards green. Citizens must wear green or risk being thrown in the local "jail."

In 1959, Shamrock acquired a piece of the Blarney Stone. You will find it displayed prominently in the town's city park.

Shamrock's most famous Route 66 landmark is the Tower Station and Cafe—home to the late U-Drop-Inn. This art deco masterpiece opened for business on April 1, 1936. Local John Nunn used a nail to draw original plans for the building in the dirt at the driveway of the nearby Cross Roads Motor Court.

In 1995, the U-Drop-Inn closed. In 1999, the First National Bank purchased the property and gifted it to the city of Shamrock. Today, the Tower Station and Cafe are being restored as a museum and visitors center.



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40 EXIT 157

LELA

Known as "Story" when the Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railway established the

OR DRIVE 66!

From Shamrock, continue west on the I-40 south service road. Watch for the large "Rattlesnakes" sign on your right.



known as "Story" when the Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railway established the site as a station, Lela acquired its current name around 1903 when postmaster Bedford F. Bowers rechristened the town in honor of his sister-in-law.

During its early years, little Lela struggled to build a reputation for itself. But by 1906, the tiny hamlet had been supplanted by Shamrock as a trade center.

Curiously, the Lela area also marks the last stand of roadside reptile exhibitor E. Mike Allred. The surly carnival man—who at one time operated snake attractions along Route 66 near Elk City and Erick, Oklahoma—moved to Texas to establish the Regal Reptile Ranch at Alanreed. He partnered in this scaly enterprise with his sister, Addie. But when business relations grew rough, E. Mike moved his share of snakes toward Lela and set up shop in the old service station that had once been graced by Conald Cunningham's Neon Steer.

Today, E. Mike's towering *RATTLESNAKES: EXIT NOW* sign survives as a local landmark. E. Mike's old building has been moved to McLean and now serves as part of the Red River Steakhouse. E. Mike himself can best be honored through a visit to the Devil's Rope Museum of McLean, Texas—where some of his sister's pickled snakes remain on display.

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McLEAN

McLean was established around 1900 as a cattle-loading area on the Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railway. The townsite was donated by Alfred Rowe—a man born to British subjects—who immigrated to America from Peru in 1878. Alfred absorbed

more than 200,000 acres of Texas grassland into his sprawling R O Ranch. He died when he booked a trip on the Titanic. Legend says rescuers found him hugging his briefcase—frozen to death atop an ice floe—with gold watch still ticking.

McLean was named McLean for Judge William Pinckley McLean—a member of the first state Railroad Commission. During the Golden Age of Route 66, McLean boasted 16 service stations and six motels. In September of 1942, an area northeast of McLean was chosen to serve as the McLean Permanent Alien Internment Camp. During its operation, the camp boasted twenty to thirty buildings and housed 3,000 prisoners-of-war. Today, a plaque placed by the Texas Historical Commission marks the site.

McLean was the last Texas Route 66 town bypassed by Interstate 40. As such, it remains a gentle time capsule filled with the flavor of days gone by.

Historians traveling from armchairs will want to read *The McLean POW Camp* and *The R O Brand: The Story of Alfred Rowe, the Founder of McLean, Texas, and the R O Ranch*. Both books were written by local scholar and preservationist Delbert Trew.

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EXIT 146

OR DRIVE 66!

Continue west on the I-40 south service road. When you reach I-40 Exit 146, cross over the interstate to the north service road. Turn left and drive west into McLean.



DEVIL'S ROPE MUSEUM





The Devil's Rope Museum of McLean, Texas, houses the largest historical barbed wire collection in the world. Located at 100 Kingsley Street, this 12,000 square foot building is also the physical home of the Old Route 66 Association of Texas and the Texas Old Route 66 Museum.

The Texas Old Route 66 Museum features over 700 artifacts from the Mother Road's heyday—including road signs, souvenirs, a mock-up of a "greasy-spoon" cafe, and E. Mike Allred's welded cobra from the Regal Reptile Ranch of Alanreed. Highway heroes are honored in the Route 66 Hall of Fame.

The museum is open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

Call (806) 779-2225 or e-mail barbwiremuseum@centramedia.net for more information.



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ALANREED

Known, by turns, as Spring Tank, Prairie Dog Town and Gouge Eye, Alanreed took its permanent title from a rather mundane source: This sleepy community—laid out in 1900 by a railroad surveyor—was named after a contracting firm called Alan and Reed.

Alanreed became a shipping point after the Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railway line was completed in 1903. By 1904, Alanreed was the largest town in Gray County. Watermelons kept its economy sweet. Each year, the town shipped 500 boxcars filled with fruit to points east.

Alanreed's Standish Court was once a stylish overnight stop for motorists. But one particularly harsh snowstorm left travelers stranded inside. A man among them had heard that antifreeze was safe to drink—provided it was strained through bread. The poisoning left three dead—and tacked a story onto this stretch of Mother Road that refuses to fade away.

Modern motorists find Alanreed lying silently between two historic sites—the oldest cemetery to be found along Texas Route 66 on the east side of town, and the 1904 First Baptist Church on the west. In between sits Bradley Kiser's 66 Super Service Station. The 1930s Texaco classic is currently being restored.

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40 EXIT 135

OR DRIVE 66!

Head west from McLean. Cross TX 273. One mile later, turn left instead of entering I-40. Bear east. The road turns under I-40 to the south service road. Follow this west into Alanreed.



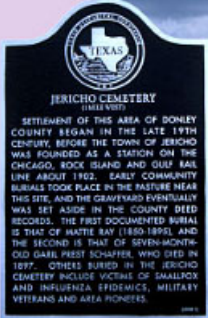
JERICHO

Named for the Biblical city in Palestine, Jericho was established in 1902 as a station on the Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railway. The town reached its zenith in the 1930s when three stores and a grain elevator complimented a tourist court, filling

40 EXIT 124

OR DRIVE 66!

Join I-40 at Alanreed or continue west to I-40 Exit 132 (Johnson Ranch Rd). Here, you MUST enter I-40. Use Exit 124 south (TX 70) to visit Jericho.



station and garage.

Today, this ghost of a Panhandle town is recognized by the remains of the crumbling tourist court, a tottering windmill, and two historical markers that commemorate a pair of nearby cemeteries.

Mention Jericho to Texas old-timers, and they will likely tell you about the infamous "Jericho Gap"—a break in paved Route 66 that wasn't bypassed until the late 1930s. Locals wrapped chains around their tires to brave the black mud. Tourist automobiles bogged down in the goo and had to be pulled free by horse teams.

In 1996, a fictional Jericho, Texas, became the setting for the Hollywood feature *Last Man Standing*. The film starred Bruce Willis and Christopher Walken in a Prohibition-era shoot-'em-up involving Chicago-land gangsters, and had nothing to do with the real Jericho—or its black-gumbo mud.

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[Westward to Groom](#)

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