



For Immediate Release
9/3/19

**5th Annual Route 66 Miles of Possibility Conference in Normal, IL October 17-20
Highlights “The Green Book”, Gamma Phi Circus & Panel of Route 66 Roadies**

The fifth Annual Route 66 Miles of Possibility conference will be held in Normal, Illinois, from October 17-20, 2019. The first conference was held in Edwardsville in 2015, and rotates south to north through Illinois to showcase different communities. It is the only annual conference that focuses on the history, preservation, and economic development of communities along Route 66. The conference typically draws 100+ participants and is the only annual conference that focuses on the history, preservation, education, and economic development of Route 66. The main location for the conference this year is Uptown Station, 11 Uptown Circle, in Normal, IL.

The conference focuses on Route 66, but additionally showcases what is unique about the area. In this case, the 2019 conference will showcase Bloomington-Normal’s historic connection to the circus, as well as the communities’ substantial Route 66 assets and attractions. Bloomington-Normal is experiencing the positive economic development impact of Route 66 via the 2015 opening of the Cruisin’ with Lincoln on Route 66 Visitors Center located at the McLean County Museum of History.

Additionally, Ryburn Place at Sprague’s Super Service opened in 2017 on Route 66 in Normal as a visitor center and gift shop. The traditional conference hot dog roast will be held at Ryburn Place at Sprague’s on Thursday, October 17 from 7-9pm. An optional bus tour will also be a part of the first day of the conference. Conference sessions will be held on Friday and Saturday.

The Friday night conference keynote speaker, Candacy Taylor will discuss a project she has been working on since 2013: *Overground Railroad: The Green Book and the Roots of Black Travel in America*. Her research is based on *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, published from 1936-1967 by Victor H. Green, a black postal worker from Harlem, New York.

Taylor is an award-winning author, cultural critic, and photographer with a Master’s Degree in Visual Criticism. Her work has been featured in over 30 major outlets including: The New Yorker, The Wall St. Journal, Guardian UK, The Library of Congress, Photographer’s Forum (cover), Rachel Ray, PBS, the CBC, BBC and NPR.

“The Green Book” has been called the “Bible of Black Travel” and the AAA guide for black people; its purpose was to assist them in traveling the country with dignity and safety. The book featured barbershops, beauty salons, department stores, restaurants, nightclubs, taverns, gas stations, garages, and other businesses who served or accommodated black people. The book was the inspiration behind the award-winning movie of the same name.



Candacy Taylor. Photograph by Katrina Parks, Assertion Films.

Candacy Taylor’s presentation is not only the keynote for the Route 66 Miles of Possibility Conference, but it is also free and open to the public. The presentation will be held at ISU Alumni Center, 1101 North Main Street, Normal, IL on Friday, October 18, from 7-9pm. This special presentation is co-sponsored by the Town of Normal and the City of Bloomington.

In addition to the Abraham Lincoln and Route 66 history of Bloomington-Normal, the twin cities also share an extensive circus history.

Starting in the 1870s, a couple of barns and the YWCA served as practice sites for aerial performers, who became famous and are still revered in American circus history. The art of trapeze, in particular, became a specialty in the area during the golden age of aerialists. Circus acts like The Flying LaVans, The Flying Fishers, The Flying Wards, The Flying Concellos, The Flying Valentinos, and many others helped shape the aerial acts of today.

Gamma Phi Circus (GP) at Illinois State University in Normal, founded in 1929, is the oldest collegiate circus in the United States. Circus Director Marcus Alouan, Artistic Director Ivan Stoinev, and Aerial Coach Maritza Atayde will discuss the history of Gamma Phi and share their personal stories of circus performance and travel.

Also new to the conference this year is the “Roadie Panel” – a discussion of wide-ranging Route 66 topics with well-known Route 66 Roadies. The panel will be moderated by Jim Livingston who is a professional photographer known for “I Am Rt 66” which is a project by Jim and Route 66 enthusiast Bob Lile showcasing the people found along Route 66. Jim will be talking with the distinguished panel of Roadies that

includes Penny Black, Ron Jones, Rita Kirchoff and Mike Wallace. Livingston's "I AM Rt 66" photography will also be on display throughout the conference.

Additional topics include history, preservation, economic potential, internet security, social media and much more. Conference sessions run throughout Friday and Saturday. Complete conference schedule is located at *miles的可能性.com*.

On Saturday evening at the Eagles Club in Bloomington, is the conference dinner, live circus performance, and live music from *3rd Street Down*, an extremely talented up and coming band from Bloomington.

On Sunday, the conference wraps up with a Cruise-In at Ryburn Place at Sprague's Super Service from 11am-2pm. The Cruise-In is being hosted by the Mid-State Cruisers with special guests, the Prairie Capital Corvair Association. The Blues Brothers Mobile will also be on display, courtesy of Ron Romero of the Illinois Rock & Roll Museum on Route 66.

Special thanks to our conference sponsors: Town of Normal, City of Bloomington, Bloomington-Normal Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, McLean County Museum of History/Cruisin' with Lincoln on Route 66 Visitors Center, Ryburn Place at Sprague's Super Service and the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway.

Registration for the full conference is \$100 (\$90 for early registration before October 1st). You can also register for Friday October 18 only and Saturday October 19 only for \$50 per day.

Hotel information, vendor information and additional information is available at *miles的可能性.com*, by email at route66lives@gmail.com or call 309-452-5325.