



MFA in Integrated Design

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A SEARCH FOR **NOSTALGIA** ON **AMERICA'S** MAIN STREET





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Interactive Documentary Website

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INTRODUCTION

After six years in the Baltimore-Washington area, my husband and I moved to California. I was excited, scared, pensive, and a million other adjectives. On our way to our new life in the West, I fulfilled a lifelong dream of traveling the entirety of US Route 30. This transcontinental highway spans from Atlantic City, New Jersey to Astoria, Oregon. Route 30 is dear to my heart because it passes through the area where I spent my teenage years: the Idaho/Utah border. I recall crossing Route 30 and considering the destinations I might reach by turning left or right and marveling that a traveler can take one, single road from one side of the country to the other.

For 30 days, my husband, my dogs, and I traveled one of America's forgotten highways in a Toyota Prius. My goal was to create a documentary of Route 30 through a personal lens, as this exodus from the East Coast to the West was a symbol of my leaving the place I knew and loved and opening a new chapter of my life. Further, I took this trip as it would have been done in Route 30's Golden Age, thus exploring the value of nostalgia and importance of Americana (or lack thereof) in today's cultural landscape.

ROUTE 30 WITHIN HIGHWAY HISTORY

US Route 30 is a transcontinental highway that ends in Atlantic City, New Jersey and begins in Astoria, Oregon. Commissioned in 1926, it is the third longest road in the United States and the first route to be paved coast-to-coast.¹ Some even say that Route 30 is the “only true transcontinental route left.”² But our nation boasts perhaps hundreds of highways and interstates, so what makes this particular route important?

Ask a Pennsylvanian about Route 30, and you'll hear, “Oh, you mean the Lincoln Highway?” Talk to an Idahoan and they'll swear that Route 30 is Interstate 84. And chat with a Washingtonian and they'll call Route 30 “The Old Oregon Trail Highway.” Route 30 is often confused with other roads and for good reason.

The Lincoln Highway was dedicated in 1913 as the first coast-to-coast route, beginning at Times Square in New York City and ending at Lincoln Park in San Francisco.³ After the creation of Route 30, parts of the Lincoln Highway – specifically, those portions in Pennsylvania – were incorporated into Route 30 and, at the time, it would seem that the Lincoln Highway was disappearing. However, the Lincoln Highway Association, a powerful non-profit with chapters in 12 states, stepped in and saw to it that this historic treasure remain in good use and repair.⁴ Additionally, there have been documentaries created about the Lincoln Highway, such as 100 Years on the Lincoln Highway. Today, the Lincoln Highway is more well-known than Route 30, though Route 30 came after it.

In 1956, President Eisenhower authorized the “Federal Aid Highway Act,” which created a system of major transportation routes now known as interstate highways.⁵ Eisenhower told the media, “The obsolescence of the nation's highway system presents an appalling problem of waste, danger, and death.”⁶ As the interstate highway system was built up throughout the 70s and 80s, I-80 in Wyoming assimilated large portions of Route 30.

In Oregon, Route 30 follows a section of road called “The Oregon Trail Highway.” This highway, originally created in 1917, closely followed the original route pioneers took from Missouri.⁷ While the highway didn’t have the backing to remain preserved like the Lincoln Highway, history itself – with the help of the National Parks Service – saw that this portion of road was remembered.

Between the Lincoln Highway, the interstate highways, and the Oregon Trail, the name “Route 30” has been all but forgotten. For this, and other personal reasons addressed previously, Route 30 was the setting for my project. I traveled, researched, talked to residents, and gathered information about this unsung, yet nationally historic highway and its inhabitants. I captured video, images, and sound, as well as researched archival footage and still images to create an interactive documentary, explorable via a website, of my 30 days traveling Route 30.

THE AMERICAN ROAD TRIP

The importance of transcontinental highways can’t be overstated; the open road has long been an important fixture of the American consciousness. In 1903, Dr. Horatio Nelson Jackson left San Francisco headed to New York City in his 20-horsepower Winton car. There were no gas stations, no fast food restaurants, and very few paved roads. His journey would become the very first recorded transcontinental road trip.⁸ John Heitmann, author of *The Automobile and American Life*, says that after Dr. Jackson’s accomplishment, it becomes unclear “whether the coming of the automobile resulted in the development of improved roadways, or conversely, that existing roads in a number of cities were critical to the acceptance and growing popularity of the car.”⁹ But we do know that by the 1920s, Americans were escaping the heavily populated and industrial cities and experiencing Small Town, America in droves.

What is it about the primal need to travel that keeps Americans moving? Americans by nature are wanderers; our nation, after all, was built on a great exploration. Erin McHugh, author of *The Little Road Trip Handbook*, offers this theory for our wanderlust: “We Americans have been fulfilling our manifest destiny ever since we arrived on these shores. Why, we rode west in covered wagons for heaven’s sake, and didn’t the entire nation hear Horace Greeley tell that young man to go west?”¹⁰ She asserts that Americans find catharsis behind the wheel, traveling beyond familiar borders and getting lost in “the greater collective,” not to mention the promise of “finding one’s self.” In *Romance of the Road: The Literature of the American Highway*, Ronald Primeau says that freedom from constraints and a surrender to the road are part of the healing power Americans seek on a road trip: “The enclosed space [of a car] seals off drivers from external distractions and helps them ward off pressures of the question to ‘find’ themselves.”¹¹

American culture feeds this thinking, celebrating road travel in a variety of art, including books and film. “The road trip movie genre” is considered in *Driving Visions* by David Laderman. Playing on society’s fascination with the road, this genre literally and figuratively explores boundaries and limits, creates symbolism from visual contexts – the road as venturing beyond familiarity, the landscape as promise, and the horizon as seductive – and thematically thrusts the journey as a pivotal life juncture.¹² Laderman says:

“The cultural roots of the road film go beyond the immediate context of its

*emergence, however, and include a literary tradition focused on voyaging (the Journey), which in turn often reflects on ideology of expansionism and imperialism...which combines enterprise and mobility...is perhaps best summed up by the term 'manifest destiny.'"*¹³

The list of road trip novels is as long as road trips themselves. In the fall of 1960, John Steinbeck outfitted a pickup truck and left his home to travel cross-country with his French poodle, Charley. His idea was to travel alone, stay at campgrounds, and reconnect himself with the country he wrote so much about by talking to the locals he met along the way.¹⁴ *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac is based on his travels through the country and considered by many to be a defining work of the "beat" generation.¹⁵ *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Pirsig is about a life-changing road trip from Minnesota to California. The author exclusively took the trip on back roads, crafting a story with deeper, philosophical meanings.¹⁶ And William Least Heat-Moon, author of *Blue Highways*, embarked on an exploration of oddly named towns in unsung America, finding himself along the way as well as interacting with people who had yet to find themselves.¹⁷

My project, then, is part of a rich artistic tradition with an emphasis on journey and discovery. I used these works as road maps for my travels, inspiration for my own creation, and evidence of the public's interest in the road trip genre.

RITE OF PASSAGE, AMERICANA, AND NOSTALGIA CULTURE

While my project is one-part historical documentary, it is another part personal narrative. Like the roadtrippers who came before me, my journey was not, as the aforementioned Erin McHugh says "just a pastime...it [was] a necessity, a rite of passage."¹⁸ A rite of passage is a ritual associated with a change of status for an individual.¹⁹ By this definition, my own transcontinental journey fit squarely into the "rite of passage" category, symbolizing my exodus from the East Coast, a place I knew and loved, and the opening of a new chapter of my life on the West Coast. John McAuliff, a freelance journalist for *USA Today College* is an advocate for a resurgence of road trips: "The road trip is a uniquely American rite, and one we can all share regardless of religion or sub-culture."²⁰ Further, as a generation bombarded with information, Lauren Martin of *EliteDaily.com* suggests that roadtripping may be the last act of human exploration we have.²¹ For my part, this trip was indeed as Kerouac's own journey "the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future."²²

I did not set out to see the tourist sights, nor did I stay and eat at high-end establishments. I wanted to experience Americana. But what is the amorphous concept of "Americana?" In some ways, it "concern[s] or [is] characteristic of America, its civilization, or its culture."²³ In other words, anything related to our history, geography, folklore, or cultural heritage can fall into this category. While our country is not credited for inventing the car, our very own Henry Ford and his mass production techniques put the automobile within the reach of every human.²⁴ And, thanks to Dr. Horatio Nelson Jackson, the first documented transcontinental roadtripper, America does boast the creation of the road trip. One could say, then, that the road trip is synonymous with Americana.

Americana is fed by patriotism, and more importantly, nostalgia. Andrew Higson of the University of York offers a comprehensive view of the subject. Nostalgia, he says, is a wistful, sentimental yearning for the past, typically reconstructed to be more perfect than the present. Higson points out that there has been a shift from classical nostalgia, a homesickness of sorts, to modern nostalgia, a mere longing for the past, to post-modern nostalgia, an actual recreation of the past in the present.²⁵

It would seem that there have always been social groups at the foreground of post-modern nostalgic revivalism. History has labeled these post-modern sects a variety of names – Beatniks, Hippies, Emos, and so on. Today, this divergent group has a new name. Camila Victoriano of *HarvardPolitics.com* says that this group pairs “the grunge, beatnik, hippie, and rebel movements from past eras with protests against today’s social norms.”²⁶ Called “Hipsters,” this contemporary subculture is akin to their alternative ancestors – they avoid chain establishments, frequent vintage stores, and long for a past they weren’t part of. It’s impossible to be a Millennial – born after 1982, according to researchers Neil Howe and William Strauss²⁷ – and not have a general understanding of and perhaps even involvement in this group. I myself am on the outskirts of Hipsterdom – I drive a hybrid and eat local, but I remain firmly planted on the periphery because I shop at big-box stores and I don’t like Lena Dunham.

Hipsters, just as their predecessors, fit into a broader cultural landscape called “Indie.”²⁸ This post-modern movement is fueled by a number of factors, including nostalgia. As Princeton University’s Christy Wampole says, “[A hipster] manifests a nostalgia for times he never lived himself.”²⁹ One goal of my project was to question the merit of nostalgia in today’s road trip. As Primeau says in *Romance of the Road*:

*“On the road we mourn the loss of the old stretches of highway, the disappearance of distinct regions, the homogeneity and commercialization of the individual. Road narratives invite us at the same time to celebrate heroes and places and values that were never there except in our hopes, our imaginations, and our ability to construct myths. The small town has probably never been idyllic, no individual has ever fully discovered a self, and the national identity is hard to find in part because it is constructed rather than found.”*³⁰

Thus, nostalgia for the open road can blind us to the happiness found in modern conveniences. My project investigates this sentiment. I took this road trip as it would have been done in Route 30 and highway travel’s Golden Age, the 1950s: paper map, no fast food, travelodge accommodations, etc. My exploration sought to reveal whether camping under the stars in rural Wyoming, for example, deserves the nostalgic sentimentality as a representation of Americana.

MODELS AND INSPIRATION

My documentary is modeled after *Sherman’s March* by Ross McElwee. This film began with a historical goal: to retrace the path General Sherman and his men took during the Civil War. McElwee claims that he had no clear picture when he started filming, and therefore, the film shifts from a historical journey to a personal journey, wherein McElwee searches out past lovers and

interviews them about his failures.³¹ In my own film, I began with a focus on Route 30 and my travels, but, like McElwee, I left room to explore a storyline that presented itself. Professor Patricia Aufderheide of American University says that first-person documentaries such as this are now their own genre. "Subjective documentary," she says, breaks the boundary between private and public, but it also launches a public discussion about the terms of social identity and public life.³² In *American Ethnographic Film and Personal Documentary* by Scott MacDonald, personal documentaries like Ross McElwee's (and like mine) are called "ethnographic films" and they differ from traditional observational documentary in the director's commitment to the experience, both in living it and sharing it.³³

However, because my film does have notes of history, it has elements of "essay or topic-based documentary," a story based around a central idea. Karen Everett invites filmmakers to consider melding the two forms. "The beauty of the hybrid approach is that you can construct an elegant, complex documentary that demands both left-brained analytical engagement and right-brained emotional immersion. Done right, your viewer is held rapt."³⁴ The authors of *Crafting Truth: Documentary Form and Meaning*, Louise Spence and Vinicius Navarro, agree that a hybrid approach is best because "we describe [something] through our own system of feelings, beliefs, and values." They assert that documentaries can and should explore how individuals connect with larger-scale historical processes.³⁵

NPR's *This American Life* is a proven example of unscripted storytelling that informed my own immensely. In the show, reporters start with an idea for a story and begin crafting. However, following leads often takes the narrative to an unsuspected conclusion.³⁶ This flexible storytelling technique is used by famed filmmaker Doug Block of *The Kids Grow Up*. Block reminds aspiring filmmakers that it is not necessary to begin shooting with a culturally important framework in mind. "[T]here are aspects you'll almost certainly discover in the process of shaping the film."³⁷ I took great heart and encouragement in knowing that narratives such as mine grow out of the process.

Writing about a road trip is not an original concept. My experience and the narrative of my journey can never contend with the aforementioned bodies of work by Kerouac or Steinbeck, nor does it seek to. Despite walking in the footsteps of giants, there is a public interest in travel experiences. As Ronald Primeau said, "Since the 1950s, readers have been fascinated by who goes on the road as well as why, when, and where they go and what they discover along the way."³⁸

Today, personal narratives can come with negative stigmas, but Dinty Moore in *Crafting the Personal Essay: A Guide for Writing and Publishing Creative Nonfiction* reminds us that they do not have to be self-serving, antiquated pieces. They can be a very creative medium to share and connect with other humans. A pitfall of travel reporting is creating rambling accountings, riddled with clichés. "There is a difference between a travel writer and a tourist," Moore says. "A tourist is on vacation; a travel writer is on a pursuit."³⁹ I approached my travels each day as work, not play, and my pursuit – to search a forgotten highway for history, self, stories, and Americana – was clear.

Further, there are creatives in today's landscape who have captured and shared video of road trip experiences. Conrad Zimmer and John Stone took a road trip down Highway 1 from Maine

to Florida in a VW van. They created webisodes based on their experience and posted them on YouTube. This project is similar to mine in that it takes the form of a road trip and is a series of shorter accountings, but different in that it is released via YouTube.⁴⁰ Additionally, their focus was more tourist driven than mine.

In the documentary *This American Journey*, two foreigners travel around the US asking Americans a series of questions about the economy, political issues, and the general direction of America to create a full-length documentary.⁴¹ While I admire their interviewing techniques and editing style, I was an *American* traveling through *my own country*, and I did not discuss politically-infused topics. Similarly, Peter Infelis created an interactive, multimedia exploration of Illinois Route 66 for his thesis project.⁴² Invaluable for helping me consider how to capture historical data and incorporate motion graphic techniques, this content is completely web-based and historically focused.

Finally, there are a handful of interesting and creative journeys, like Matt Frondorf who took a picture at every mile marker from the Statue of Liberty to the Golden Gate Bridge, Amanda Cogndon who drove a hybrid vehicle and blogged her experiences, and Michael Hess, who tracked Jack Kerouac's journey with Google Maps.⁴³ These are all insightful and helpful narratives to consider, but each lacks what my creation includes: a historical *and* personal snapshot of American nostalgia as seen through my eyes, transitioning from one life to the next.

RESEARCH STATEMENT

I explored nostalgia while looking for the America that many think is disappearing from our urban societies because I wanted to know if Americana has a place in today's cultural landscape. By sharing my historically-based rite of passage in an interactive way, I invite audiences to explore these cultural themes with me.



METHODOLOGY GOALS & REALITIES

This was a large and overwhelming project from the outset. Route 30 is 3,073 miles from the East Coast to the West Coast. With 30 days on the road, this equated to about 100 miles a day. Remember that these were not “freeway” miles, which could move along at 60 to 75 miles per hour. Instead, Route 30 is often a “back road” or, in some cases, “no road.” However, my running goal was to maintain my commitment to the original road itself and never deviate more than 10 miles from it.

Not only was it virtually impossible to plan the entire trip down to individual days, it would have had a damaging impact on my project. The essence of my project was about discovery – I did not know in advance what and who I would encounter, but planned to find out along the way. So, while I did research the route and identify potential stopping points, I allowed the process to be inductive, finding the answers as I traveled. I followed Steinbeck’s guidance: “When I plan a route too carefully, it goes to pieces, whereas if I blunder along in blissful ignorance...I get through with no trouble.”⁴⁴

I traveled to Atlantic City on July 31, 2015 and was ready to begin the journey on the morning of August 1, 2015. The first leg of the journey was between New Jersey and Utah, which I covered by August 15, essentially two weeks. My childhood home near the Idaho/Utah border was a stopping point and a moment to pause and assess. I had planned to spend August 15, 16, and 17 there, with the goal of self-reflection and insight. However, I ended up spending a full week interviewing and researching, as well as preparing for the remainder of the trip. As it turned out, my hometown and the surrounding area proved to be a valuable source of ideas on nostalgia.

After I finished the self-reflective aspect of the trip, I began the second leg of my journey – Idaho to Oregon – with the goal of ending in Astoria on August 30. It might seem as though there is not as much ground to cover from Idaho to Oregon. However, with my post-personal viewpoint altered greatly, the Idaho/Oregon piece became incredibly dense. Additionally, the Astoria conclusion was very cathartic and required some pause. Moreover, during the last few days of the journey, I moved much more slowly, taking in the surrounding countryside and tuning more closely into examples of Americana around me.

I needed an assistant, a job which my husband, Adam, “graciously” offered to fill. He was invaluable in aiding me with interviewing subjects, holding equipment, allowing me to film him, and even filming me on occasion. I had no-doubt that he was up to the task as he has been my photography assistant on many of my projects for the last 10 years and I trust him implicitly. He was excellent at engaging interview subjects and asking important questions. He also provided me with moral support and safety.

One of the fears that I had going into this project (and which informed my planning throughout) was the risk that I would find nothing of interest. While the sights and people were initially unique and strange to me, I worried that the novelty would wear off after hundreds of miles of road, hotels, and signs. I was correct in some ways: much of Route 30 looks very similar and I often had to push myself to find something worthwhile. As discussed below, Route 30 and the towns along it often followed a pattern, making the trip seem at times monotonous and tedious. In parts of the country, Route 30 was more or less a highway (due to realignments), so small, nostalgic pockets

were somewhat removed. However, this challenge abated the closer I got to Idaho and Utah and was non-existent thereafter. The nature of Route 30 – from the point where it deviates from Interstate 80 on the Wyoming/Idaho/Utah border to where it ends in Oregon – changes drastically as Route 30 leaves the shadows of the infamous Lincoln Highway.

A major element of the narrative was to be stories from individuals that I met along the way. I envisioned daily interactions with locals living and working on Route 30. However, my vision was also tempered by the reality of talking to strangers: quizzical facial expressions, standoffishness, reluctance to be on camera, and sometimes, my own fears of approaching people. Though unavoidable, this presented an enormous daily hurdle for me. At times, I was able to organically weave the reticence into the bigger message. In other cases, the burden to engage people in an open dialogue pushed me outside my comfort zone and stretched me greatly.

One of the most difficult aspects of the trip was management of my equipment and content. Because I filmed and interviewed material in an improvisational way, I regularly used whatever technology was available to me at the time – iPhone, digital SLR, or GoPro. In an ideal world, I would have had a team of three people, including myself: one person to conduct the interviews of the subject, one person to supervise the audio, and one person to film. Of course, that was impossible for this trip. While Adam was certainly helpful, he lacked the technical knowledge, so often I was doing three jobs at once. I am certain, writing this a year after the fact, that there are portions of interviews that could have been vastly improved with more reliable equipment, less juggling of tasks, and better human expertise.

Additionally, management of my data was a major issue. Part way through my trip, I realized that I would need to have a better data storage and management process; what I had left Maryland with was vastly insufficient. I was unable to download and backup media until the evening of each day, which took large amounts of time and focus. Even with this kind of preparation, I lost data. For instance, my husband had taken hundreds of photos on his iPhone. Unexpectedly, his computer crashed, completely and irreversibly wiping his hard drive before his data had been backed up. Additionally, at the end of Route 30, on the very last day, I dropped a memory card holding important pictures and footage from the last few hours of our trip. I did not realize that it was gone until miles later when I took stock of my gear. In a twist of irony, somewhere at the end of Route 30 is a memory card holding the end of this documentary.

Despite these hiccups, my methodology was adequate to the task at hand and I was able to accomplish my primary goal of documenting what 30 days on the road would look like. In some sense, the jostling picture, the breaking audio, and the lost footage is emblematic of the experience itself: chaotic, but memorable.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Initially, I started out with a list of stock questions I intended to use on a regular basis, but in practice this proved to be impossible to maintain. The areas in which I found myself and the people themselves were so unique that trying to ask standard questions was impossible. Nevertheless, the

following are questions that I drew upon regularly in my interviews:

1. Have you ever taken a road trip?
2. Do you travel extensively?
3. How have you seen Route 30 change in your time living here?
4. Do you believe you share anything with other parts of the country?
5. What do you think about the fact that this road you are standing on connects our entire nation coast to coast, from Atlantic City to Astoria?
6. What does the word “nostalgia” mean to you?
7. What does the word "Americana" mean to you?
8. Do you believe people are moving faster than they used to?
9. Are there things that you are nostalgic for?
10. What is it like living in this part of the world?

FINDINGS

As explained above, my goal was to explore nostalgia in today’s increasingly urban America. After 30 days of living the experience and over a year of reflecting on this topic and assembling this documentary, I have a number of insights on the following concepts: nostalgia, Americana, and the filmographer as explorer.

Nostalgia

Without revisiting the concepts suggested by those artists I identified as my models and inspirations, I can say unequivocally that I know less about nostalgia today than when I started my project. But I do know that nostalgia attaches itself to us and makes us reinvent a past that may or may not have been there. I’ll admit: I went into this project slightly optimistic, believing that maybe nostalgia is like finding the best crab cake in Maryland: do some research, spend some time looking, and you’ll probably find it. I wasn’t quite sold on Ronald Primeau’s ideas about nostalgia being something that we create out of shared memories and incomplete history. I did have some expectations of getting on the road, finding some old signs and buildings, talking to people who remembered the past, and feeling warm and fuzzy for days gone by.

In truth, the longer I spent on the road, the more weary I became of the past. Staying in old, run-down motels in random towns turned out to be less than pleasant; Adam and I did not resurrect the ghost of Rick and Lucy in their teardrop trailer as we pulled into a sketchy motel in Breezewood, Pennsylvania. Likewise, while Steinbeck laments what he sees as a future of cellophane wrapping and sterilized utensils, I found myself thanking modern cleaning methods for bedsheets free of bedbugs and odorless carpet. In some respects, then, my expectations were not met and nostalgia did not win.

Yet, in a surprising way, I did find a *personal* nostalgia, not unlike the countless other travelers who went West before me. As we left Pittsburgh on a rainy August day and saw a sign that said “Gateway to the West,” I realized that a life that I had created and come to love was behind me. My beautiful Maryland home and my East Coast life slipped from under the turning wheels, replaced by a new

and frightening prospect of what lay ahead in California. In a foul old hotel in Indiana, the mood had soured with the joyless landscape of strip malls, stop lights, and burnt out communities; sitting in that hotel room, Adam and I wondered what life was like just a generation before, when industry fueled a white-picket-fence dream in now-lost Gary, Indiana. I found a nostalgia for my past on the road to my future.

Admittedly, I went searching for a yesteryear that I thought could be reclaimed with a map and old hotels. What I found instead was a living, breathing America. I found small towns, suburbs, big cities, wildernesses, all united by one road. I went in search of the past. Instead, I found a present. And the only thing standing between me and it was an open road – sometimes empty, sometimes filthy, sometimes busy, sometimes boring – but at all times, alive. For 30 days, I learned that the past is gone and the present can not simply be mileposts flashing by in a car window. I didn't find "nostalgia" on the road because in a lot of ways, the "Golden Age" of travel is gone and the people, towns, and roads of Route 30 have simply moved on.

So what is nostalgia? It certainly isn't staying in the right lodgings or eating certain foods. It can be found on a personal level as an indefinable feeling of being on the edge of a future, but I don't believe nostalgia for traditions of the past is obtainable in the 21st Century.

Americana

As equally abstract a concept as nostalgia, Americana proved to be much more easy to pin down on the road. While researching this topic, I struggled to wrap my mind around what others considered to be "Americana." It is not clear from literature whether this is an artistic movement, a way of defining a people, or a set of cultural norms that explain a distinctly American phenomenon. I went into this project thinking that Americana was somehow tied to a patriotic or nationalistic sense of unity, and I was unsure how such a concept would present itself over 3,000 miles of road.

In reality, I came to clearly understand what Americana is; it is the spirit and drive for progress that so defines the American experience. My trip took me through history. I started on the East Coast and spent the first few days within 100 miles of the Atlantic Ocean. Here, I saw architecture, art, and industry that was driven by an "old world" sensibility. The East Coast had a "home" quality to it: a place of starting out, a place of beginning. As I worked my way through Pennsylvania, the pastoral landscapes seemed uniquely suited to a world that was at the heart of America's founding.

This feeling of "walking in the shoes" of those who came before me was all the more pronounced as I moved westward. In Nebraska, we spotted a historical marker that identified ruts from wagon trains moving west during America's migrations in the 19th Century. As I hiked to view the ruts, I felt a similar sense of anxiousness for leaving a known world behind to look into a setting sun of uncertainty. In that treeless, wide-open landscape, punctuated only by grain silos, I thought "What am I leaving behind?" How much more so did those individuals who moved West ask that question?

I noticed that this feeling wound its way through every part of America. The closer I came to the Pacific Ocean, the more I felt that the communities I was seeing and the people I was meeting were products of our American desire to never settle and to always be searching. At the base of the

Rockies – mountains I have seen since childhood – I felt a renewed sense of awe, that these were the last gateway to a promise of gold, land, and new life. At a campsite on the Oregon Trail in central Idaho, with crickets singing and a campfire crackling, I reflected on an enormous boulder only a few miles away, still bearing hundreds of signatures of pioneers who had crossed that way a century ago.

At the end of my journey, I got extremely emotional. On paper, Route 30, like any road, looks like a vein that runs through one part of a body – an image that seems hyperbolic and unduly romantic. But in truth, it felt that way. Route 30 unites parts of America that feel so different from one another. How does one try to find common ground between a progressive Portland computer programmer, a conservative Midwestern farmer, and a liberal lawyer in Philadelphia? Route 30 taught me that the shared experience – what truly is Americana – is our desire to move, to push the boundaries, and look for more. Americana is simply our shared experience.

Filmographer as Explorer

Although I had not anticipated how I would be infused into the documentary as a character, I have a newfound understanding for the role of the filmographer. When I set out from Maryland, my plan was to be both a participant in the documentary – in the sense that the documentary was about my journey from one coast to the next – as well as the neutral observer – in the sense that I wanted to carefully capture the experience for other viewers. My goal was to try to limit my editorializing, while at the same time making sure that I was actively participating in the process.

I soon learned that this was impossible. Because I set out to explore nostalgia and Americana – highly subjective and personal terms – my own views and experiences had to be included in the finished product. At every stage, I had to “explore” a new element of the road and, importantly, how that element impacted me. What was it like sleeping on the ground in Wyoming? Did I feel a kinship to the folks who had visited Colo, Iowa decades ago? Was it daunting to realize that I had thousands of miles yet to go in Kearney, Nebraska? Questions such as these came up in my research and had to be answered from my own perspective as the person experiencing it in real time.

While I would have resisted this conclusion last year, I have since decided that the filmographer in this kind of documentary must be an active player. As the one directing the action, I was consciously making decisions of what nostalgia and Americana would look like in my finished product. That necessarily meant that there would be overlap with my own experience. While I may have lost some pieces in terms of neutrality, the finished product is a richer, more personal narrative.

AUDIENCE

Primary

My audience is adult, men and women, ages 25 to 34. They are middle-class individuals with full-time jobs in careers, such as teaching, marketing, and design. They live in urban environments and appreciate art and culture. Their goals involve experiences, not material goods; they have an interest in simplification. A significant portion will be drawn from the Hipster, quasi-Hipster, and Indie cultures. Audience members not from this social group have an understanding and appreciation

for nostalgia and an interest in roadtripping and travel. My audience is technologically savvy, enough to understand and navigate the online portion of my project. Finally, my audience has a heightened social consciousness and interest in the preservation of social history. Because I walked in the footsteps of other road travelers and historical documentarians, my audience has at least a preliminary familiarity with the genre and an interest in conserving it. To that end, my project is both about and for an audience of my peers.

Secondary

There is an additional audience subset that this project could be directed to, namely older adults wanting to relive “yesteryear” and the timeless search for adventure. I say “could” because while I did not create the project with this audience in mind, as I assembled the narrative I see now that an audience of older adults would find the project interesting. Much of Route 30 is tied to the years from 1920 to 1970, a time period when many young adults were coming home from war, starting families, and, later, moving across the country to the West Coast. Route 30 would have likely been the route taken by many of them. In fact, I recently learned that my father’s family took Route 30 on their first trip to the West from South Carolina. Though controversial on the value of nostalgia in today’s society, many of my images and much of my footage recalls that time period and someone from that era would likely find the documentary enjoyable.



MOOD BOARD

A mood board was an essential tool as I began crafting the look and feel of *30 Days on Route 30*. I compiled samples of textures, images, text, and colors to help me capture the style and concept of the documentary and website. Throughout my the entire creative process, I continued to refer to my mood board, which helped ensure that I stayed true to the essence of Route 30.

See the mood board in Appendix A.

LOGO DEVELOPMENT

I created the logo for *30 Days on Route 30* very early in my process, as I needed to begin building brand recognition through social media and other initial materials. I began by sketching my ideas on paper and then took my two favorites into Adobe Illustrator for further development. I then did an informal poll to identify which version of the logo was more successful, and continued refining one of the designs based on that poll.

See the logo development in Appendix B.

FINAL LOGO

In the final logo, I sought to create a mark that used traditional iconography with a personalized touch. I used the roadway shield with a thick, sans serif typeface. I wanted to infuse the design with some outdoor roughness, so I overlaid a texture to give the design a tangible feeling. This lead me to using only yellow and white, two colors often used for markings on top of asphalt. Finally, knowing that the car driven in a roadtrip is an important part of the story, I used a simplified silhouette of my Toyota Prius to create a completely unique and easily recognized marking. The logo is a square shape, which lends itself very well to our mobile society. However, when used in small applications, the text can be removed and the iconic shield and Prius can be used without damage to brand recognition.

See the final logo in Appendix C.

STYLE GUIDE

Colors

My logo drove the color selections for this project. Sticking with the colors found on highways, I used onyx, white, and yellow.

Fonts

I used three fonts in this project:

1. **Norwester**, created by Jamie Wilson, is a condensed geometric sans serif with legible characters, numbers, and symbols. Much like Highway Gothic, the font used by the US Federal

Highway Administration, Norwester has a thick, dominating presence, making it difficult to overlook. However, a bit more stylistic than Highway Gothic, it seeks to pay homage not duplicate.

2. **Din Condensed**, by Tagir Safayay at ParaType in 1997, is my secondary font. Norwester lacks a variety of weights and Din Condensed, with its similar geometric style, tall x-height, and consistent weight, provides a nice contrast. Din Condensed is available in 10 weights, making it versatile and legible.
3. **Chaparral Pro** is the font used for all body copy. Described as “unusually humanistic,” this Adobe font, designed by Carol Twombly, works well to lend an air of informality associated with slab serifs, yet the letterforms give a nod to the tradition of Garamond and Jensen. It has tremendous clarity and preforms well in a variety of capacities – perfect for this project.

Photography & Videography

All photos and videos used in my project are my own, with the exception of archival images and footage. Careful attention was given to ensure that imagery contains colors and textures central to the concept of roadtripping while avoiding the cliché “Americana” look. My mood board was indispensable in ensuring that these visual goals were met.

Graphics

The use of graphics is rare. However, I did create a handful of vector-based images, most notably caricatures of myself, my husband, and our two dogs, and a few icons used in a motion graphic to explain the nuances of the trip. It was important that all graphics bridge the divide between the physical world of road travel and the digital world of documentary, so I used a jagged white background around images as if they had been cut roughly from paper. I also used a number of course textures overlaid on top of the graphics, such as wrinkled paper and vector-based concrete-like textures.

See the style guide in Appendix D.

VIDEO AS PRIMARY MEDIUM

I edited my content into a series of documentary vignettes that collectively tell the whole story. I used a mix of traditional and modern videography techniques and focused on this story through my editing process.

I selected video as my primary medium because documentary is, according to Barry Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski, “the form of cinema that is most closely bound to the real world, to actual personal and collective problems, hopes, and struggles.”⁴⁵ With the decline of the journalism industry, *Huffington Post* reports that documentaries are poised to fill a void, supply information, and bridge the gap between information and entertainment.⁴⁶ Moreover, Nick Fraser with *The Guardian* says that “between the stubborn reality [documentaries] purport to capture and their necessarily limited means, between the impositions of storytelling and the desire to interpret or

analyze...they can seem in their attractiveness more real than reality.”⁴⁷ The need for documentaries to preserve the human condition is categorical.

As a graphic designer, I know the power of visual communications. It wouldn't have been illogical to create a written documentation of this highway and a travelogue of my experience. But Professor Nancy Kalow of Duke University asserts that with Internet audiences being accosted by numberless social and news media sites full of words, the need for visual storytelling is stronger than ever before.⁴⁸ It would seem that a picture is indeed worth a thousand words. Or in this case, 24 pictures per second.

Finally, Scott MacDonald explores the difference between traditional documentaries and what he calls “avant-garde” film making, an independent cinema style that positions the filmmaker closely, often within the world she's capturing and uses a shooting style called “cinéma vérité.”⁴⁹ This documentary filmmaking style of impromptu shooting techniques and “on the fly” narrative capture, employs hand-held cameras and live, synchronous sound.⁵⁰ Though avant-garde filmmaking can take many forms, I adopted practices that explored the personal, both of my life and in the life of those I meet in my travels.

VIDEO DESIGN

At the conclusion of the trip after the “high” of actually accomplishing it with my marriage and sanity still intact, I found myself with several external hard drives full of content. The task to organize this content was daunting and overwhelming. But through daily dedicated time and careful metatagging and foldering, I was able to sort content into usable groups.

But with the media now organized, I was faced with another, possibly even more staggering task: crafting a story from 30 days and well over 500 GBs of video and audio clips. I began by building a list of possible experiences I could share, based on the media I had collected.

Truthfully, I struggled with creating stories out of the media I captured. I had a vision of the stories I wanted to tell, yet it was a challenge to match the available visuals with the proposed narrative. Further, I often felt as if I were trying to change reality to fit an expected storyline. During this time of struggle, I had the pleasure of attending a talk by Sarah Koenig and Julie Snyder from *This American Life's* “Serial” podcast. They shared a thought that profoundly changed my approach to storytelling: “We should always be looking for the moments and the details that tell life the way it really is. Those moments and details move our stories from interesting to meaningful.” It was as if two of my literary icons had given me “permission” to remove the sugarcoating and share my experience organically.

I took a step back, looked at the whole picture, and settled on a primary narrative that each vignette would feed into. I had to remove some content to stay true to the narrative (and my completion timeline), but eventually found that 19 vignettes were necessary to provide viewers with a clear picture of my experience and findings.

With my media organized and my list of vignettes settled, I went to work writing scripts for each vignette. Over the course of five months, I wrote and rewrote text to help further the message of my documentary, always referring back to my available media to ensure that I had the tools to tell the stories and never forgetting the wise words of Koenig and Snyder. I began roughly arranging my video and audio files into a cohesive narrative, tweaking my scripts as I did so.

Finally, with the scripts and the media matching my storyline, I was able to finalize the editing, record my voiceovers in a studio, and polish the entire videos before exporting.

At this writing, I have created a "trailer" using clips from the trip as a way to encourage viewership and promote the documentary. I have completed eight of the 19 vignettes and begun work on the remaining 11. Finally, I selected some of the most intriguing and exciting clips from the remaining footage and created a "teaser" of the remaining 11, to entice active viewers to return for the conclusion of the narrative.

See more about the vignettes in Appendix E.

WEBSITE AS SECONDARY MEDIUM

To house the vignettes and fully push my documentary into the interactive genre by providing audiences video, written, and photographed stories, as well as additional ways to engage, I created a website to house the content. While the documentary portion of this project is told linearly, there is content that adds layers of understanding for viewers. The website provides a type of “transmedia storytelling,” or conveying a story across multiple platforms – in this case, video and web.⁵¹ Interactive documentary of this nature breaks the traditional way of crafting non-fiction films and instead, provides a more user-guided experience.⁵² My website is somewhat exploratory, much like a road trip.

WEBSITE DESIGN

Using some simple information architecture, I started by developing a very basic wireframe to assist me as I began building the website. The wireframe is void of branding, color, and images and merely provided me with clear direction as I began coding.

I researched and considered a variety of alternatives for creating the website – from Wordpress to Hype animation – and finally settled on hand-coding the site myself. Using a one-page format, I combined custom HTML and CSS with found jQuery plugins.

The videos are hosted on Vimeo and embedded into the website.

Visitors to the site are first greeted with a modal that contains a “trailer” for the documentary. This modal uses the "Remodal" jQuery plugin, a responsive, lightweight, and fully customizable modal window plugin by Ilya Makarov. The video begins playing automatically and the modal closes automatically when the video is completed. Through the use of jQuery, the video stops playing when

the modal is closed by a site visitor. A cookie was also created to store the modal's data and cause it to launch only the first time a visitor comes to the site. The cookie expires in seven days, allowing the modal to relaunch and the cookie to reset.

The site boasts the logo for the project at the top left and a full-screen image of an iconic portion of Route 30 as the background.

Visitors are greeted by a timeline of dates with a small icon of a Prius marking the first date. This timeline began as a plugin called "Horizontal Timeline" from *CodyHouse.com*, but underwent a complete overhaul to make it meet my needs and hardly resembles the original source files. Under the timeline, there is a title for the vignette being shown, a small amount of copy, and the vignette itself. Viewers can progress through the timeline by either using the left arrow (they may navigate backwards through the use of the right arrow) or click on the next date. The Prius icon will move to the date and the content will shift.

While navigating a timeline from right to left breaks standard UX and UI practices, I felt it necessary as I traveled from East to West. I tested this functionality on 10 users, and nine out of 10 had no difficulty adapting to this way of navigating.

Main navigation invites viewers to click and explore more content. These links reveal more information about me and the project, a link to view the hashtag and the social media, and extra pieces of content to help enrich the interactive experience. The jQuery and Javascript plugin, "fancyBox" by Jānis Skarnelis, is used to house the main navigational content. This elegant solution allows viewers to access more information at anytime while maintaining their current location in the narrative.

The website uses the above defined fonts to continually build visual recognition. While the fonts I selected are not web-based fonts, I used the Webfont Generator from *FontSquirrel.com* to embedded my selected typography. Visual hierarchy techniques are employed to lead visitors through the content.

The site is completely responsive through the use of viewports, media queries, and other custom CSS. I've also included Google Analytics to track page views, sessions, and bounce rates.

Finally, the site is housed at 30DaysonRoute30.com.

See more about the website design in Appendix F.



SOCIAL MEDIA

One aspect that was crucial to the way in which this documentary was delivered at the time of travel was social media, particularly Instagram and Facebook. My husband and I both made a concerted effort to regularly update our social media pages with information about the project before we started. I also created a searchable hashtag (#30daysonroute30) that was used for all posts. As this was a personal project with myself and my husband as primary characters, we choose to use our personal social media accounts rather than creating dedicated accounts. This allowed us to generate engagement via our own networks and remain in contact with nearly 1,000 total people throughout the duration of the trip.

Throughout the trip, we took time to regularly update our audience. Although I spent most of the day filming and interviewing subjects, I tried to create three or four social media posts every day to update the audience; Adam was able to do much more than that. These posts captured particular moments in the trip, highlighting people we met or out-of-the-way places we saw. Often, we tied our information back to the history of the road itself, noting how and where the road had deviated over time. These posts proved to be an easy way to keep interest high and also gave people an opportunity to engage with this project more broadly. In many cases, followers said things like “I lived near there for five years and had no idea about Route 30!” Moreover, because the posts are public, they can be revisited regularly and require little to no maintenance.

Social media will be utilized more extensively during future phases of this project. See the “Distribution” section for more details.

BUDGET & EXPENSES

Travel is expensive. I needed food, accommodations, and gasoline. My mode of transportation, a Toyota Prius, is a hybrid and very gas efficient, but food and lodging weren’t quite as economical. As previously stated, I did not stay at high-end establishments or eat fancy meals. My goal was to spend \$50 or less on sleeping arrangements each night. This was not possible, as \$50 a night will buy little more than a camping site. However, I was able to limit lodging to roadside hotels, guesthouses, etc. We also camped in a tent in small campgrounds from time to time. For food, I had planned to spend as little as possible, and though this was always the goal, my commitment to local eateries often meant paying the market value.

This trip required video equipment. I owned a video camera, lenses, a shoulder mount, CF cards, and a tripod. Having an assistant operate a boom mic was not possible, so I was able to achieve convenient and portable sound recording through a borrowed handheld recording device. On the road, I had to purchase a few accessories for my GoPro, as well as additional data storage options. My documentary was edited in Adobe Premiere, After Effects, and Audition, all software that I previously owned. My MacBook Pro proved unfit to the task of storing large amounts of data and the memory to run the editing software, so I purchased an inexpensive PC computer to exclusively edit the media.

Obviously this project needed funding, and I was so grateful to be the recipient of the Ed Gold

Award, which contributed \$1500 toward my expenses. This helped me obtain some of the equipment I needed and provided me accommodations along the route. I matched this award with my own money. Nevertheless, resources were scarce and the trip was completed on a limited budget. I was unable to spend multiple nights in one location or invest my time in one particular aspect. My goal was breadth and efficiency, rather than exhaustive depth.

Travel expenses (food, gas, lodging): \$3200

Equipment:

Additional memory cards - \$50

Extra battery - \$30

Additional file storage (external hard-drive) - \$50

Dedicated video editing computer - \$400

Design Software: \$10 a year with faculty discount (preowned)

Web Domain: \$13

Hosting Services: \$120 yearly (preowned)

Website plug-ins and templates: Free

Marketing Materials:

Temporary Tattoos - \$11 for paper and printing

Toy Cars - \$80

EXPANSION

When I began this project, I was ignorant as to the breadth of what I was undertaking. There is still much to do before this project can be considered ready for distribution.

First and foremost, the website boasts only half the content I collected. I have scripts created and some editing work completed on the remaining vignettes, but I will need to finalize these and add them to the current framework. This includes most importantly the focal point of my Route 30 trip, Montpelier, Idaho.

After completion of the vignettes, I plan to weave the storyline into a full-length documentary.

I also believe that despite my weariness at the close of 30 days, there is more yet to explore along Route 30. With the understanding I now have of the route, I'd like to travel it again, with a team of production personnel, and interview even more people, venturing deeper into personal topics, such as daily life and interesting experiences.

Further, I want to research nostalgia as it relates to Americana and roadtripping, and add more content of this nature to the site. There are so many experts on this topic who have interesting insights, such as Ronald Primeau and David Laderman. I'd like to interview these academics and apply this information as another interactive layer.

The second phase of the website will require the hiring of a dedicated web developer who can help me enhance the functionality and interactivity of the site, making it more engaging and interesting.

I would also like to work with this web developer to create an interactive map of Route 30 with my robust collection of pictures geocoded along it.

Some of my future plans are within reach. However, a number of these goals will be costly. I'll need to work to obtain funders for this remaining work. An obvious resource would be Toyota, given that my car – the Prius – played such a starring role in the narrative. But there may also be some potential of pairing with *Roadtrippers.com*, a road trip planning app in partnership with MapQuest that we used heavily and which has an obvious interest in this type of travel. Finally, I'm open to using a crowd funding service such as Kickstarter or Go Fund Me to attract potential partners and investors in helping fully develop the documentary and website.

DISTRIBUTION

In order to reach my audience, my distribution plan will be a two-step process. First, I will market the documentary and website on social media using Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to build interest. Additionally, when the content of the site is complete, I will reach out to bloggers in the video, photo, travel, and lifestyle genres for assistance promoting the documentary and website on their sites.

Second, I will enter this documentary into a number of competitions and film festivals such as the Maryland Film Festival, Baltimore Student Film Festival, and the UC Davis Film Festival. The AIGA and Adobe student awards will also be a useful platform to showcase my documentary and the website. I will continue to research other platforms for releasing this type documentary.

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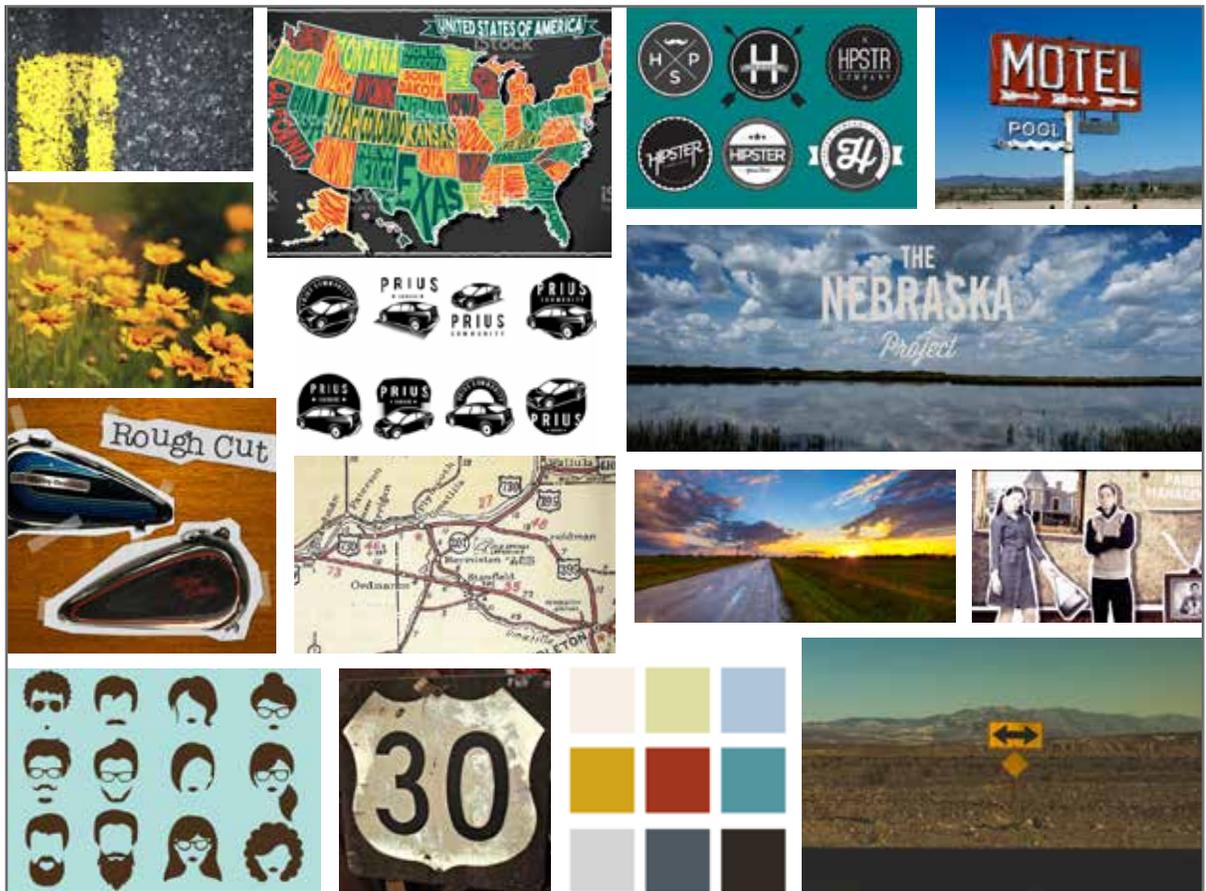
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APPENDIX

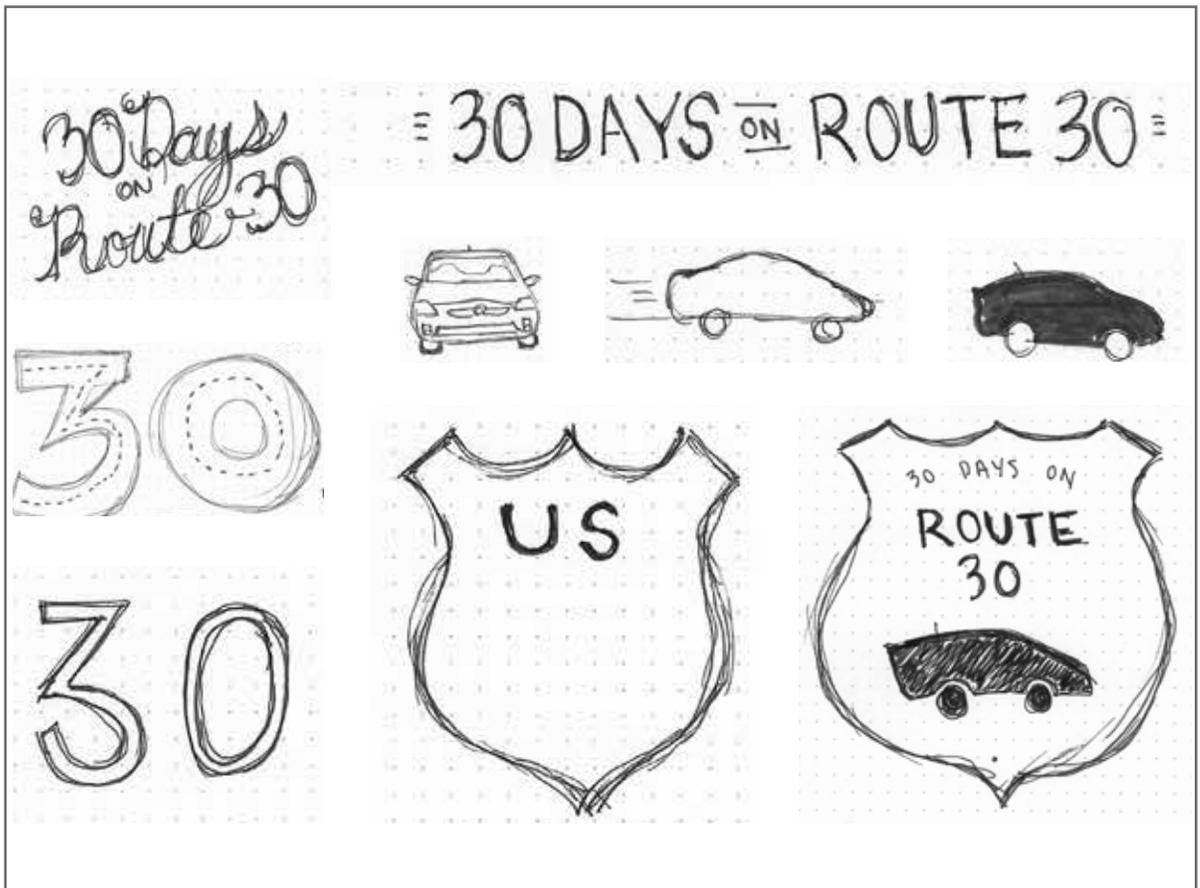
APPENDIX A

Mood board



APPENDIX B

Logo Development



APPENDIX C

Final Logo

Primary Logo



One Color Version (Black)



Reversed Logo on Field of Color



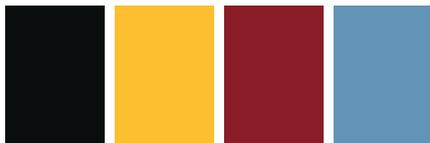
One Color Version (White) on Field of Color



APPENDIX D

Style Guide

Colors



#0a0d0d #febe30 #8b1d27 #6294b7

Fonts



Primary
NORWESTER REGULAR

Din Condensed Light
Din Condensed Regular
Din Condensed Medium
Din Condensed Bold
Din Condensed Black

Secondary
Chaparral Pro Italic
Chaparral Pro Regular
Chaparral Pro Bold

Photography/Videography



Graphics



STYLE GUIDE

APPENDIX E

Video Design - List of Vignettes

1. Atlantic City, New Jersey

“Start Here” – This is where Route 30 and the journey began. Further, Atlantic City represents the East Coast verses the West Coast. This city is built on nostalgia, a past that is gone and can never return. The boardwalk and hotels remain, but the feeling there is very modern. I was clueless and naive at the beginning. Just outside of Atlantic City, the landscape changes from concrete and glass to farmland. Here the past isn’t such a distant memory and the locals remember what this stretch of highway used to be. We stopped to interview a farmer that had been on Route 30 for 100 years. After a less-than-exciting interview (my fault, not his), we drove through New Jersey and into Philadelphia.

2. Breezewood, Pennsylvania

“The Bates Motel” – As previously mentioned, this trip was going to be taken as “Ricky and Lucy” would have when they were going to Hollywood. This meant staying in well-established (read: old) hotels. When we pulled into the Wiltshire Motel, Adam was resistant, but I was committed to finding nostalgia. We hadn’t really gotten into the routine of the trip yet and staying there was a bit shocking. While it was clean and well-kept, it offered little more than two florescent lightbulbs, a TV that didn’t work, and a handful of the sketchiest looking people I’ve ever seen. The entire experience was the first moment of questioning, “What is nostalgia really offering us?”

3. Latrobe, Pennsylvania

“I can’t be your neighbor. I’m moving.” – Mister Rogers holds a special place in my heart and stumbling upon the Fred Rogers Center at St Vincent’s College was such a cliché act of road tripping: you never know what experience is right around the corner. After Latrobe, the city of Pittsburgh loomed as the “Gateway to the West” and my husband and I reflected on our own personal nostalgia for the home we were leaving.

4. Wooster, Ohio

“With a Name Like” – Smuckers is a tried and true American brand, built on a sentimental story of summertime and youth. The Smuckers store in Orrville, Ohio is built to reflect that. But I felt that the modern stakeholders took a nostalgic idea and made it generic and plastic. The people were not warm and friendly, and the products there came straight out of the grocery store. Smuckers is touted as being authentically American, but the store was merely a commercial enterprise. Disappointed by Smuckers, I happened by the historical society in Wooster, a stereotypical Midwestern town just

APPENDIX E

Video Design - List of Vignettes cont.

a few miles down the road. I met an older woman who took an interest in me and my plight. She offered to show me a portion of Route 30 no longer in use. Since it would be tough to find, she insisted on driving me there. Within minutes of meeting her, I was in her car headed through downtown Wooster. This lady didn't know me, nor did she owe me anything. But she took me under her wing and showed me what Smuckers could not: nostalgia can't be fabricated, and it's alive and well in small towns like Wooster.

5. Merrillville, Indiana

"The Steinbeck Moment" – Up to this point, it seemed like we were riding the high of being on the open road. There had been ups and downs, but it was still fun and interesting. However, Indiana was a shock. A lot of the road looked like commonplace suburbia, with chain stores and busy, four lane roads. Additionally, the scenery hadn't changed for hundreds of miles and the people weren't friendly. Here, we came across some hikers who had started in San Francisco a few months earlier and were walking across the US to New York City as an honor to their cousin who had a debilitating disease that made it impossible for him to walk. I loved meeting them, but they left me feeling like my trip was meaningless, small, and unnecessary. It was also my husband's birthday and we stayed in a terrible hotel, eating terrible food. Sitting south of Chicago, we felt that we could commiserate with Steinbeck's statement in *Travels with Charlie* that Chicago was a dead point in his trip.

6. Joliet, Illinois

"Get your Kicks" – Joliet, Illinois is where two major highways cross: Route 66 and Route 30. Joliet represented a crossroads where travelers would have passed through on their journey to the west, regardless of where they were going. Throughout our trip, people continually asked us if we were taking Route 66, because Route 66 has become synonymous with the "only old highway" in America. Visiting the Joliet Route 66 museum made it clear why: old relics of travelers headed to Hollywood, pictures of movie stars and artists celebrating Route 66, and the general mood of the highway proved that nostalgia culture has enshrined Route 66 in American consciousness, while Route 30 had been mostly forgotten.

7. Colo, Iowa

"#ReedNilandCorner" – The focal point of Colo, Iowa is a historic "pit-stop": an old motel, a diner, and a gas station. It's also the place where two important highways meet – the Lincoln and the Jefferson (North to West), but it's much less celebrated than Route 66

APPENDIX E

Video Design - List of Vignettes cont.

and 30. Here in Colo, right at the old crossroads, we found a woman who ran the hotel and diner (the gas station has been closed down and is now a museum). I interviewed her and she showed us around. She's on a quest to reclaim nostalgia and it was really interesting to see her try. The place was quiet, but that's not stopping her from keeping the Colo Motel and Niland's Diner running. As we left her establishment, however, we struggled to place it in today's online landscape.

8. Somewhere Along Route 30, Iowa

"The Phonebooth" – The last phone booth in Iowa sits in the middle of nowhere and was a fun diversion. It was neat to make a phone call and pose in the booth. However, I went because I was told that the old lady across the street watches for people to come to the booth and will call them and say hello. We waited and waited, but to no avail. We went there to experience nostalgia and we didn't get it. Was the lady at the grocery store? Or is she gone and that piece of nostalgia died with her?

9. A Whole Stretch of Highway, Nebraska

"The Nebraska Formula" – Before I left Maryland, I found a postcard that featured a cartoonish map of the towns along Highway 30 in Nebraska. I was unsuccessful in finding similar postcards for other states, but I thought it would be fun to stop in every town along Nebraska's Route 30 and take a picture. I enjoyed seeing Nebraska this way because I learned that the state's towns each looked virtually identical. They all were built along the railroad – which is alive and well in the Midwest. Additionally, they each have a silo in the middle of town, a "downtown" area that features an assembly of old buildings, store fronts, and houses in various states of disrepair, and a modern overpass to get over the train tracks to the new part of town. It was surreal spending almost two days going through one town after the next, wondering if we were in a time-loop.

10. Kearney, Nebraska

"The Halfway Point" – We went to an *enormous* old car museum in Kearney, Nebraska. The curator of the museum was nice enough to sit and talk with us. We talked about why people come to the museum, what it offers to the public, why people are fascinated with old cars, what he thinks about travel in the modern age, etc. In Kearney, we were at the halfway point of Highway 30. We felt re-energized for the trip and why we were traveling. My husband and I happened across *The Sodhouse*, a landmark we saw when we were moving to the East Coast from Utah, almost six years *to the day* before; this was a powerful moment of old and new, remembering a life we had lived six years

APPENDIX E

Video Design - List of Vignettes cont.

earlier and wondering what the next six would hold. The landscape was also beautiful. We stopped and climbed up a mountain ridge to see old pioneer wagon ruts. The view from the top was incredible and I remember feeling like we were headed home and back into familiar territory.

11. Wilcox, Wyoming

“God Bless America” – Route 30 mostly follows Interstate 80 in Wyoming, but there is a point near Medicine Bow where the old highway veers north and makes a circuitous loop into some forgotten ghost towns. At one of these, I asked an old man at a (deserted) gas station if I could interview him. He was so sweet and seemed to be the epitome of Route 30 – seasoned and from another time, but inviting. And then he started spouting off racial slurs, saying very inappropriate things. He was definitely a product of a by-gone age, and it was affirmed to me that it’s OK that some things are gone and in the past.

12. Rawlins, Wyoming

“Under the Stars” – I found a series of images from *Life Magazine* about Highway 30, wherein a photographer had traveled the road in the 1950s and photographed others doing the same. I noticed a great deal of tent camping in those images, especially in the West where towns had not been developed along the road. So, gave it a shot and camped in a KOA in Rawlins, Wyoming. I filmed the whole thing, from the greasy chicken dinner, the dog who was concerned that she wasn’t sleeping indoors, and the cramped sleeping arrangements. It was an interesting night – better than expected, but not something I would want to do again.

13. Little America, Wyoming

“50 Cent Cones” – At the Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho border, Route 30 finally breaks free and leaves Interstate 80 and the Lincoln Highway to wind their way to San Francisco. This is also within earshot of the area my husband grew up and where I spent my teenage years. Right at the divergent point is Little America: a hotel complex that is its own town and has its own zip code. We stayed in the hotel (which had seen better days) and I interviewed a woman who had started working there many years ago as a young woman. She reinforced the idea that, as the interstate came in and gave people a faster way of reaching their destination, Little America had lost some of its glory.

APPENDIX E

Video Design - List of Vignettes cont.

14. Montpelier, Idaho

“Home” – Montpelier is the town on Highway 30 that I grew up very near (it’s not my home town, but it might as well be). My husband and his father are from here, though, and still have many connections to the people who live there. Montpelier is the quintessential old highway town: small and a ghost of its former self. I spent a week here interviewing and videoing. I went to the county fair and visited relatives. I learned that the town has essentially gone from 10,000 people and a railroad hot spot to little more than 2,000 in the space of three decades. People had many opinions about why that was and were eager to share them. When this documentary becomes full length, this place will be the focal point.

15. Burley, Idaho

“Wy-Dell’s” – A friend from Burley, Idaho connected me with Marty Holland, whose father used to own Wy-Dell’s dance hall on Highway 30. He was great to talk to. He told us fascinating stories about the talent that came to the dance hall: Buddy Rich, Dizzy Gillespie, the Everly Brothers, and so many more. He had great artifacts and stories. When interest in dancing started declining, he turned the hall into a bowling alley and it was successful for a while. Then he had the idea to rejuvenate the dance hall and he made it a great PR event. He spent months readying the place – advertised, planned, prepped, etc. The night of the dance, six people showed up and he decided it was time to close Wy-Dell’s permanently. He now runs storage units on the lot where the dance hall stood. His generational perspective was an interesting gloss on the travel experience.

16. Mountain Home, Idaho

“The Highway 30 Drive-in” – When I researched the trip, I was excited to find out about the Highway 30 Drive-in that had been around since Highway 30’s golden age. I phoned the owner and asked if I could come to interview him. He agreed. He was a Hispanic man who came from Mexico and went from working the fields, to working construction, to buying and refurbishing the drive-in. At one point, I asked him if he preferred the fields or the drive-in, thinking he would say the drive-in. I was dead wrong. He said he’d choose the fields and then told us about what a burden it is owning a small business, the toll it has taken on his marriage, and the stresses he has on a daily basis about selling enough burgers to pay his mortgage every month. The “American dream” isn’t what we think it is and our perception of nostalgia was wrong.

APPENDIX E

Video Design - List of Vignettes cont.

17. Union, Oregon

"The Union Hotel" – In Eastern Oregon, we learned that the old version of Route 30 had gone a totally different way than what the map shows today and veered through a mountain valley. We followed the old highway and found the old Union Hotel that was once considered the premiere hotel of the west. Legend has it that Clark Gable stayed there. Today, the Union Hotel and the town of Union stand as evidence of what happens when highways are re-routed: a town dies. The old Union Hotel was frozen in time (and, initially, a little creepy – like staying in the house in Clue). The town's story was somewhat like Montpelier, in that transportation changes can make huge impacts. The hotel proprietors were also interesting people who were trying to reestablish themselves and their hotel, despite the money pit it had become.

18. Arlington, Oregon

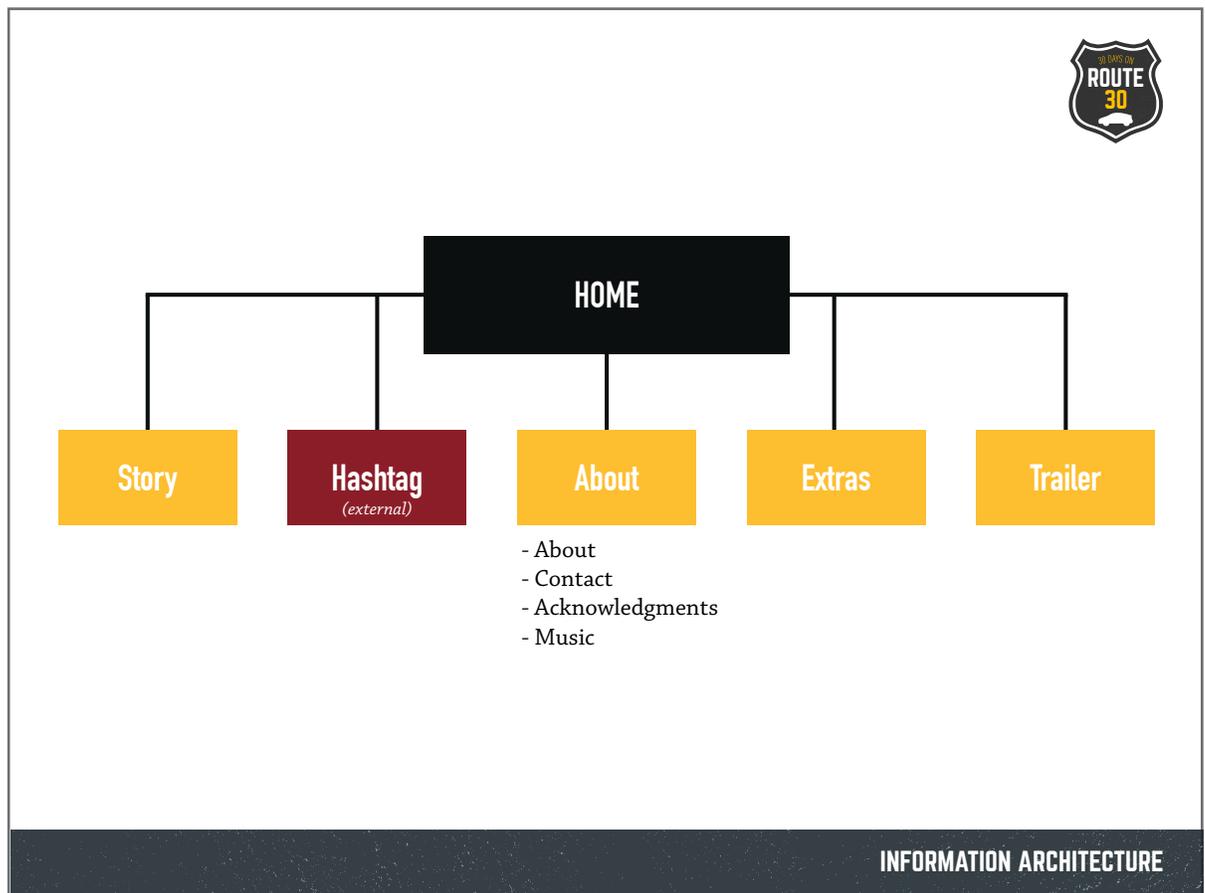
"Bed Bugs" – It was fitting that one of our last nights on the road should be so disastrous. We stayed the night in an older, travelodge-esque hotel. Before we fell asleep, we realized we were not the only ones in the room. My husband found the first bed bug . . . and then another . . . and then a nest. While he lost his mind, I captured the entire ordeal on video: from initial freak-out, to profanity-laden berating of the hotel manager, to the late-night search for a new hotel. We were officially ready for the trip to end.

19. Astoria, Oregon

"End Here" – At The Dalles, where Oregon fades from brown to green, Route 30 finally gets the attention it deserves. The state has preserved the highway beautifully and it was neat to see where it used to cut through very dangerous passes and narrow areas by the Columbia River. There was a strange mix of emotions, as we neared the end point: we were ready to be done, but the beautiful scenery and the well-preserved highway made it hard to bid farewell. The closing scenes are the final approach to the "Route 30 end" sign (and our reactions), a little of Astoria, and us on the Pacific Ocean beach – a bookend to our visiting the Atlantic Ocean beach just 30 days prior.

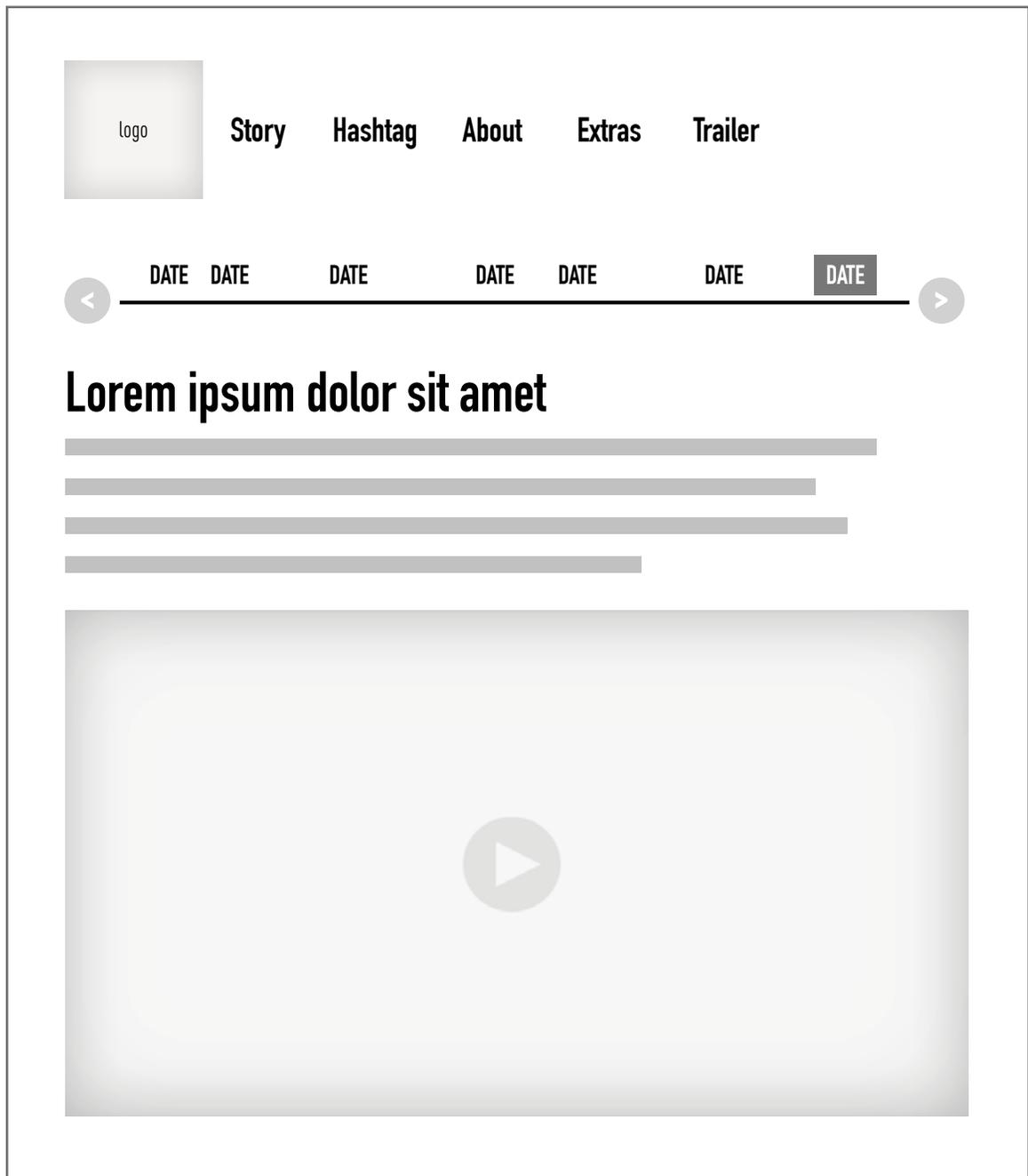
APPENDIX F

Website Design - Information Architecture



APPENDIX F

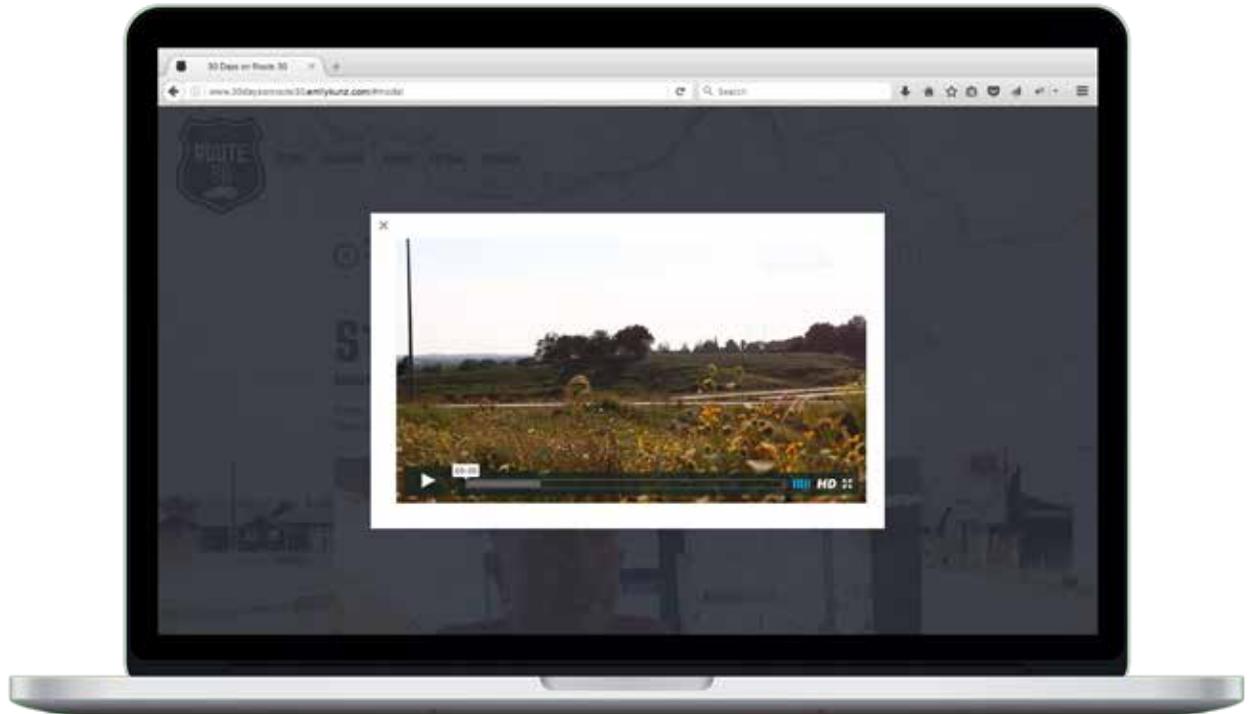
Website Design - Website Wireframe



APPENDIX F

Website Design - Website Landing Page

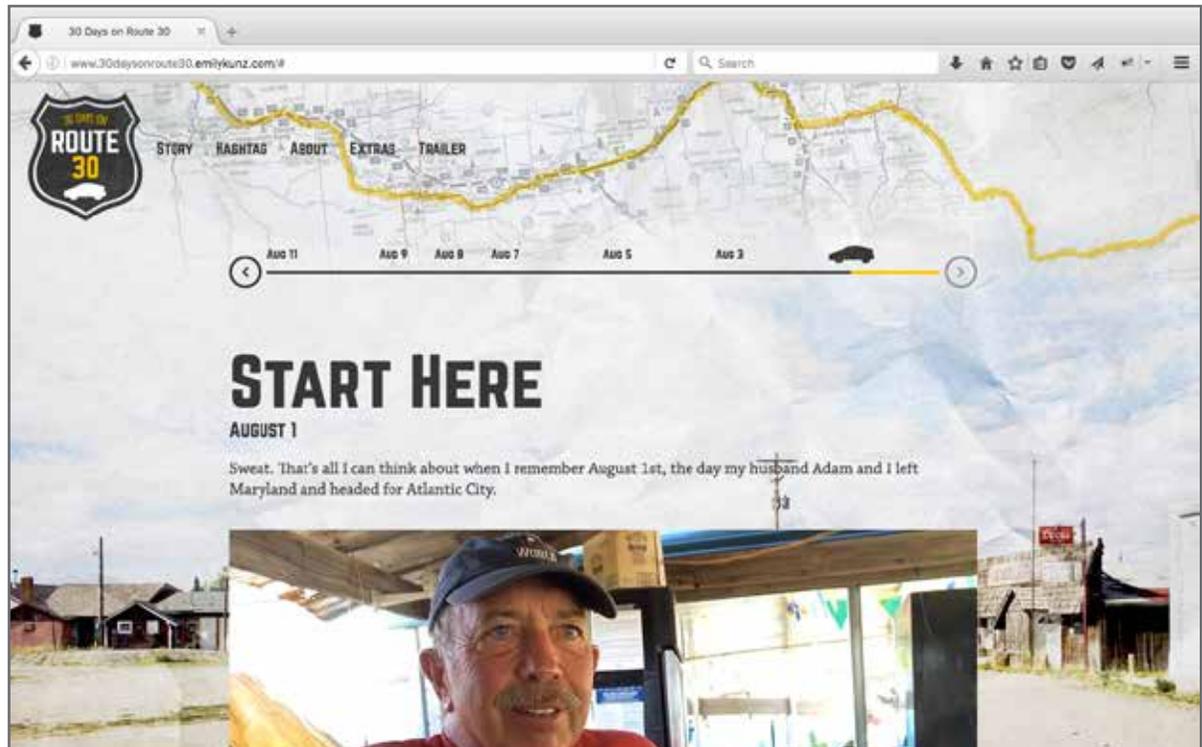
Landing Page (featuring documentary "trailer")



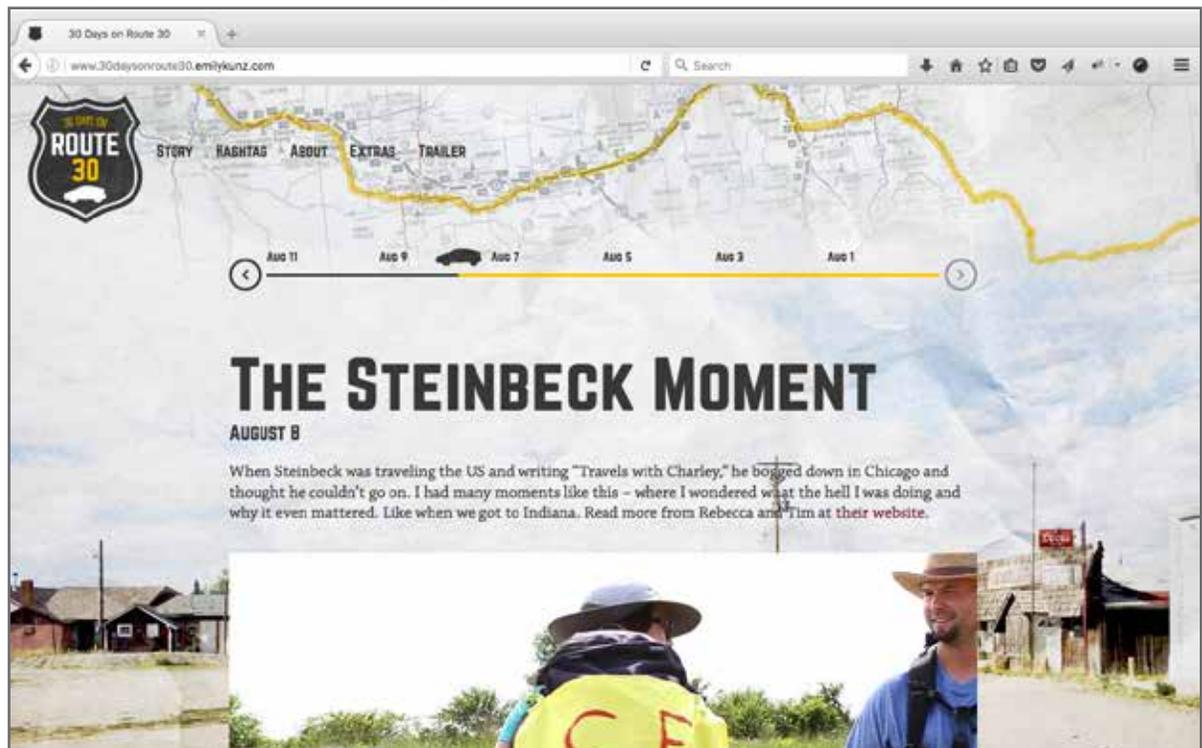
APPENDIX F

Website Design - Additional Website Screenshots

Homepage (featuring first vignette)



Example of subsequent vignette pages



APPENDIX F

Website Design - Additional Website Screenshots Cont.

Example of written narrative

ROUTE 30 STORY KASHYAS ABOUT EXTRAS TRAILER

Aug 7 Aug 8 Aug 9 Aug 10 Aug 11

GET YOUR KICKS

AUGUST 9

Over and over, people we met thought we were taking Route 66 to California, because Americans think that Route 66 is the only old highway in America.

There's a reason for that - the Route 66 preservation folks have their act together. Google returned over 24 million results for the search term "Route 66," Amazon has 5,542 books on Route 66, and Wikipedia told me there are 10 Route 66 museums. Outside Joliet, Illinois, Route 66, Route 30, and Lincoln Highway meet each other and, right on the corner, there is one such museum to commemorate the whole shabang. We stopped in to get an education on the classic road trip.

And we learned a lot! The curator, Heather, asked me not to film her, but gave me tons of information about Route 66 and the classic roadtrip. She said she didn't know as much about Route 30, but directed me to some incredible old images of the route.

I asked Heather why, in her opinion, old highways were so fascinating to people of all age groups. Her response, "Nostalgia." Of course. I asked her to expand and she told me that in highway travel's past, things were a little slower and friendlier. "It's how it used to be," she said. "It's not the hurry and bustle to get on [the Interstate] that is new."

I paraphrased Ronald Primes, English professor at Central Michigan University and author of "Romance of the Road," who said, "On the road we mourn the losses of the old stretches of highway. Road narratives invite us to celebrate heroes, places, and values that were never there. The small town has never been idyllic, no individual has ever fully discovered self, and the national identity is hard to find because it is constructed rather than found."

She thought for a second and then responded, "Well, I suppose everything is different than what we remember. But we like to have that small town feeling. It's like comfort food. Later, you won't remember how the macaroni and cheese made you *blat* up and feel terrible, but you'll remember sitting in that little diner with the locals and the nice waitress. These small towns are comfort towns. People create their own memories and what's so wrong with that? So what?"

So what indeed.

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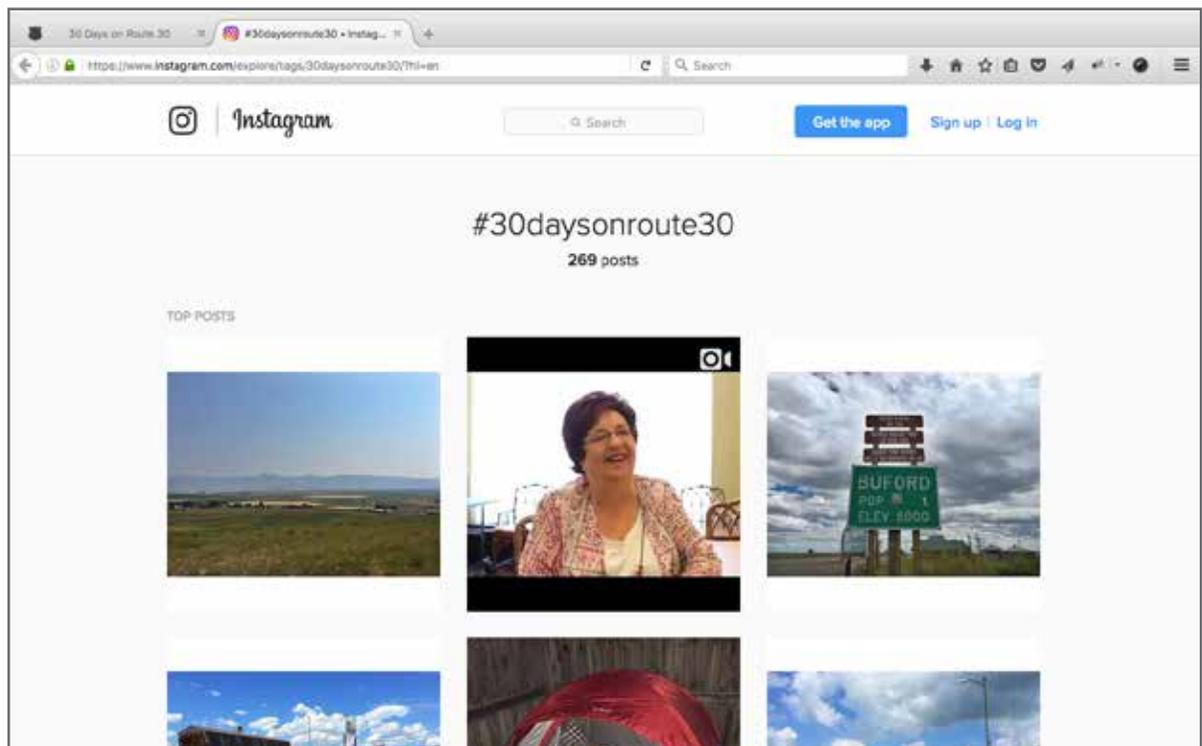
APPENDIX F

Website Design - Additional Website Screenshots Cont.

"Story" Page



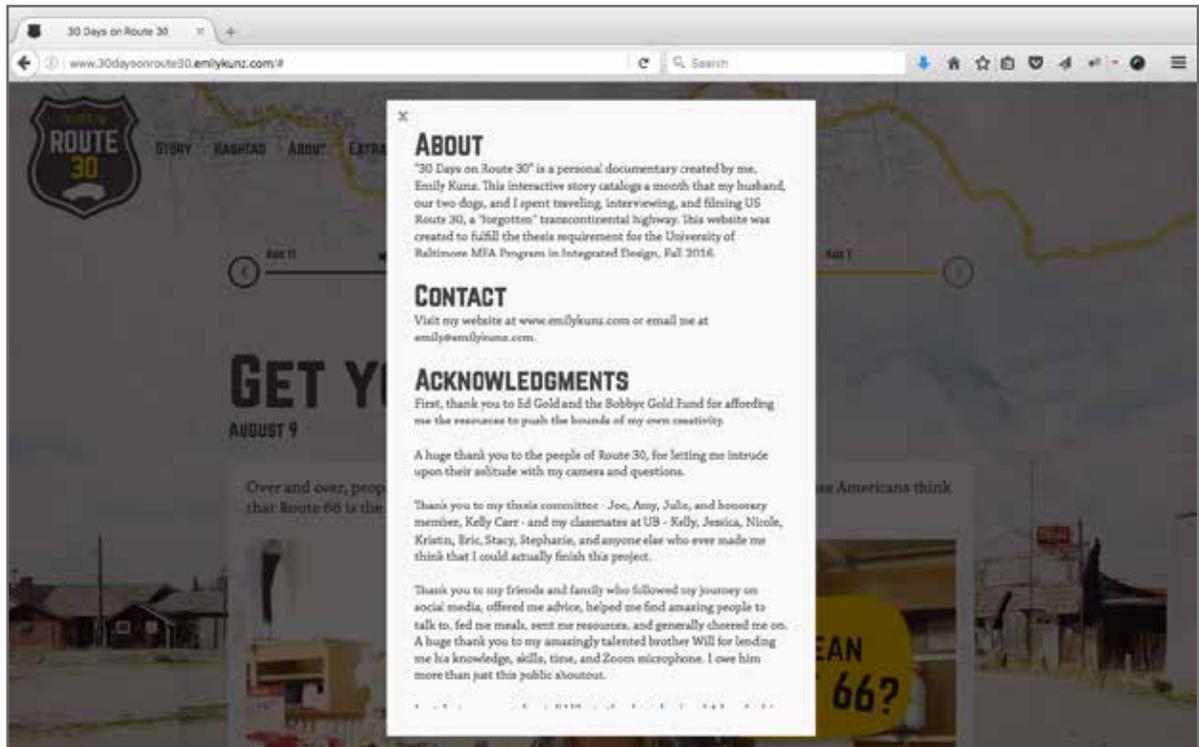
"Hashtag" Page (opens Instagram in a new tab)



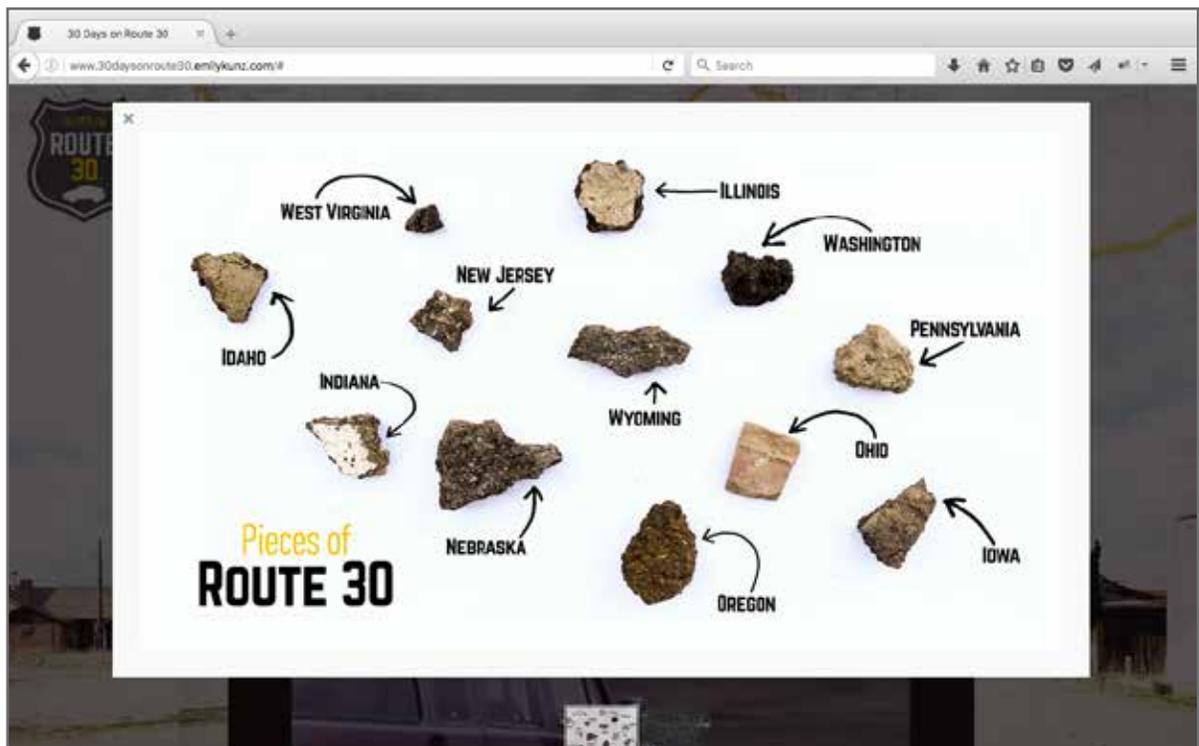
APPENDIX F

Website Design - Additional Website Screenshots Cont.

"About" Page



"Extras" Page (opens a gallery of additional content)



APPENDIX F

Website Design - Additional Website Screenshots Cont.

"Trailer" Page (access to the landing page "trailer" video)



APPENDIX F

Website Design - Website Mobile View

Responsive view of homepage (featuring first vignette)

