TEAPOT anyone? The refreshment stand operated in Chester, West Virginia, for over half a century, until the local phone company bought the property in the early 1980s and donated the teapot to the town. A local volunteer committee has almost completely restored the teapot but has repeatedly run into obstacles trying to find it a new home. The landmark, red and white in its heyday, now waits on the edge of town.

Wilfred "Babe" Devon built the roadside attraction in 1933 at Carolina Avenue and First Street, on West Virginia's four-mile stretch of the nation's first transcontinental highway, the Lincoln Highway (now U.S. 30). Devon sold ice cream, hot dogs, and ceramic souvenirs made at his adjacent pottery business. The area around Chester and East Liverpool, Ohio, once boasted a world-renowned ceramics industry.

The highway now bypasses Chester's downtown, a fate shared by hundreds of other towns along the route. The restoration committee would like to display the teapot at the cloverleaf, but some fear the novelty would cause accidents. Other townspeople feel the teapot would be an eyesore, though an informal ballot won it overwhelming approval.

Nearby towns have offered to take the teapot, but many Chester residents still regret the loss of Rock Spring Park, an amusement park erased in the mid-1970s by the new highway and cloverleaf. A hoaky relic to some, the teapot is a symbol of community identity to others in a town whose pottery boom has passed and whose downtown has been bypassed. The teapot is a beacon of originality in a sea of standardization. — Text and bottom photograph by Brian A. Butko; top photo courtesy of Ira C. Sayre, Chester, W. Va.