

2019 IGS Post-Meeting Field Day Itinerary

“Exploring Galena, Then and Now”

Sunday, April 28, 2019

Overview: This Illinois Geographical Society-sponsored tour will be a pleasant walking tour that explores the history, architecture and unique qualities of a community that attracts roughly one million visitors each year. Dr. Daryl Watson, local geographer and historian will be our guide for this excursion. The tour is self-pay for all meals, gas, parking fees, and admissions. Parts of this tour are financially subsidized by the IGS.

Meeting Point: Park at the public parking area across the RR tracks next to the 1857 IL Central Depot at Park and Bouthillier and collect on the north (Bouthillier) side of the depot.

Tour cost: \$20 per person to be paid at registration prior to the trip. Some funding support is being provided from IGS. Pre-registration is necessary for this trip. Admission to the Historical Society museum is an additional \$10 per person payable at the door.

Transportation: The day will be a pleasantly-paced walking tour in and around the downtown. Total walking distance is approximately one mile. You will be responsible for any personal expenses, such as food, gas, parking fees and admissions.

Itinerary

10:00-10:45 a.m. From the train depot we will stroll along Park Avenue as we sample over 100 years of architectural history and the people who were a part of it. We'll make sure to view the Belvedere Mansion, perhaps the most striking home in Galena. The owner, J. Russell Jones, chose a Chicago architectural firm and spared no expense, from a conservatory to central heating and running water. Jones was part owner in one of the largest wholesale firms in Galena and secretary of the huge Galena steamboating firm that dominated trade north of St. Louis for many years. Opposite the small but historical Grant Park we will see the Captain Orrin Smith mansion. It was built in the Italianate style in 1852 by one of Galena's most influential men for the princely sum of \$6,000. This was at a time when a good working class cottage could be built for \$500. As president of Galena's largest steamboat line, it was said that he could watch his boats land at the levee from the cupola. We will also view the pristine Hoge House, one of the finest examples anywhere of the Greek Revival style, this one built in 1844 for a prominent attorney who was elected to the U. S. Congress.

10:45 – 11:30 a.m. Next, we will saunter through a little gem named Grant Park, established in 1891 and ideally located to view Galena's downtown and the mansions high above. It's the perfect place to understand what happened to the river that built Galena, and then buried it. With an elevation nearly the same as the Mississippi River over three miles distant, it wasn't long before the soil lost from the slopes upstream through mining and farming soon choked the little channel. The result would severely impact steamboat navigation as sediments and then floods caused increasing alarm. The worst flood of all came in 1937, when 4-5 feet of water inundated Main Street. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers built a large levee, completed in 1951, that saved the historical downtown buildings. Sidewalks and interpretive signage now line the top of that levee.

11:30 - 12:30 p.m. We will next slip back to an 1899 building (100 Bouthillier St.) opposite the old depot for lunch (on your own). This is Otto's Place (<http://www.ottosplace.com>) Phone: 815-776-0240), built originally to serve the nearby railroad traffic.

12:30 - 1:00 p.m. Everyone will enjoy a jaunt across the footbridge over the Galena river to the downtown commercial district, packed with buildings from the 1840s and 50s and the many shops that now inhabit them. We will walk through the oldest continuously-owned and operated post office in America, built in 1858 and still nearly original. Across the street we will walk through the historic DeSoto House Hotel, perhaps the oldest in Illinois. It has operated almost continuously since its opening in 1855. It served as U. S. Grant's presidential campaign headquarters in 1868.

1:00 - 2:00 p.m. A short walk up to Bench Street will take us to the Galena-Jo Daviess County Historical Society's museum, well worth the \$10.00 admission (on your own). (<https://www.galenahistory.org> Phone: 1-815-777-9131) Exhibits relating to all of Galena's history are presented, but a real treasure is an original lead mine shaft in the back of the hall that goes down 30' and can be viewed from above. Dr. Watson will lead us on a guided tour of the institution.

2:00 - 2:30 p.m. A special tour through Galena's historic 1874 Turner Hall, a reminder of Galena's strong German heritage. The German Turnverein societies were a product of German immigrants starting in the 1850s. Their halls soon appeared in almost every city of note with large German populations. Like so many, Galena's Hall became a community center for plays, concerts, debates, speeches and receptions. Today, the building is restored and home to everything from school plays to wedding receptions. It is also a place of persistent tales of hauntings.

2:30 -3:00 p.m. We'll stroll along Main Street and back across the river to the old train depot to conclude the day.

Reservations and contacts for Additional Information:

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Reservations need to be made by Monday, April 1, 2019

Itinerary Subject to Change