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## A Charming Detour

Galena, Illinois has been through it all. Named for a lead-based mineral that was first mined by Native Americans and used in burial ceremonies, the town's growth exploded in the early 1800's when early settlers established mines to exploit the valuable ore. Between 1825 and 1828, more than 21 million pounds of lead were mined and the population skyrocketed from 200 to 10,000, rivaling that of Chicago.

By the 1860s, the town was famous as the home of Ulysses S. Grant and had become a thriving hub of commerce on the Mississippi River between St. Louis and St. Paul. But when the demand for lead fell off in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the town's population plummeted with it - from a high of 14,000 to about 3,200 today.



The enchanting remnant of those high-flying days, though, is a town of unparalleled charm and beauty that TripAdvisor has named one of its top ten "Charming Small Towns." An unspoiled collection of delightful red-brick homes and buildings makes Galena a tourist's delight and thousands of people visit every year to walk the streets, visit the museums and time-travel back to a previous era.

But all that traffic takes its toll. And Route 20, which forms the main street, needed serious attention. In preparation for the reconstruction, the Illinois DOT and City of Galena asked WHKS to prepare the closely parallel Gear Street to serve as the detour route. The existing road was far below DOT standards for a major arterial road and couldn't begin to handle the traffic that would flow along it.

After experiencing a number of funding delays, the project finally received its financing in 2018. Gear Street was now ready to handle Galena's next population boom as the tourists continue to flock to this charming riverside town.

