

## ATTACHMENT J: HISTORIC TRAILS

Jo Daviess County is littered with remnants of historic trails and roads. The earliest were the result of Native Americans following herds of large game animals. As trade networks and cultural centers developed among early cultures, trails branched out. The Galena area became a hub for some indigenous tribes because of the lead trade. As early as 6,000-7,000 years ago pieces of lead from the Tri-States were being traded throughout the Midwest and beyond. These pieces, traced by chemical analysis at archaeological sites throughout the mid-continent, show an advanced trading network at an early date. Galena (Latin for lead sulfide) was used for charms and for body paint.

The first Europeans followed the trails of the native tribes. Waterways provided the most convenient routes for explorers and fur traders. Prairie du Chien was an important fur trading center beginning in the 1600s. The French also became interested in minerals and by 1690 had accessed the Galena Mines by way of the Mississippi and Fever (now Galena) Rivers. Overland routes were also important, particularly when the lead trade came under the control of the American government. The issuance of the first leases for mining were made in 1822, only four years after Illinois became a state. The excitement generated led to the first major mineral rush in U. S. history.

The lead region represented the far fringes of the frontier in the 1820s. There was no settlement in northern Illinois, only the southern part, and the only town of note was St. Louis, Missouri 400 miles downstream from present-day Galena. Despite the lack of any improved roads, the lure of fur-bearing riches gave way to the lure of mineral riches. A trickle of prospectors became a stampede as would-be miners labored along old Indian trails from Peoria.

While a boat down the Ohio and then up the Mississippi River was the preferred migration route, others chose to come north by way of Peoria—an old Indian—and then French village. This soon became the preferred overland route for southerners who would work the mines in the summer and then return south to tend to crops and families for the winter.

Oliver Kellogg in 1825 blazed a trail from Peoria to Galena following an ancient Indian trace that had probably been traveled by various tribes for thousands of years. Others soon followed. Kellogg's Trail worked well but was soon found to trend too far to the east. It went through eastern Jo Daviess County (very near Warren) and then swung westward to Gratiot's Grove (between Shullsburg, WI and Scales Mound, IL and not to be confused with modern-day Gratiot, WI), before coming down present-day Council Hill Road to Galena.

Over the next 8-10 years modifications and realignments took place, shortening the route and making Dixon on the Rock River a major town along the way. The Illinois General Assembly authorized a "State Road" to be laid out along the corridor in 1833, the same year another State Road was authorized from Chicago to Galena. The latter was laid out via Dixon, where it then joined the Peoria-Galena Road. The new State Road from Peoria was laid out by surveyor Levi Warner, who used much of the same route blazed by Kellogg.

These early roads became stage or coach roads as the northward movement of people expanded well beyond the lead mines and reflected increasingly the frontier settlement of Illinois and America. The exact location of these early roads, including the State Roads, was never static. Frequent changes in alignment over the years resulted from local conditions, requests for new surveys, and U. S. Mail contracts.

In the case of local conditions, roads did not follow straight lines. They went wherever the terrain or seasonal conditions dictated. Winter snow drifts or spring rains presented constant challenges. Livestock ran at will during these early years—only crops were fenced in, so heading off the beaten path for a more friendly detour was common. Not infrequently these detours became permanent.

Official surveys were authorized by either the General Assembly (the so-called State Roads) or the county. Jo Daviess County in 1827 (the year of its formation) included most of modern-day northwestern Illinois—including all or parts of ten counties. Normally three individuals (including a surveyor) would be entrusted with the task to lay out and mark the new route. Residents living along the way could petition the County Commissioners Court (equivalent to modern-day county board) to do this. Thus, if new residents felt a section of the public road could serve more people by being diverted, they would sign a petition and ask for a new survey to take place. Since road maintenance at this time was provided by the residents of the area, a strong incentive was provided for moving the road through the more heavily populated areas and abandoning older sections.

The U. S. Post Office was also a key player in early roads development. They awarded highly lucrative contracts to those stage lines that would service local post offices between major destinations. Galena to Dixon to Peoria was the earliest overland mail route, but soon with a branch heading east from Dixon to Chicago. It wasn't long, given the rapid settlement of northern Illinois, before a State Road from Chicago to Rockford to Galena was laid out. It quickly became a very important route, not only for those heading farther west but also for stage travel and the mails.

The Frink & Walker Stage Line quickly became the largest and most far-reaching stage line in the Upper Midwest. They established their main office in Chicago in the 1830s and proceeded to either swallow up or run out of business all competition. Stage operator John Winters in Elizabeth proved no match for the Frink and Walker team. The U. S. Postal Service was soon awarding all their major overland mail contracts to the new stage company.

Frink & Walker's first regular stage service between Chicago and Galena started in 1839. The stage traveled to Galena by way of Rockford, Freeport, Waddam's Grove, Gratiot's Grove and White Oak Springs. The route originally veered off present-day Stagecoach Trail at Waddam's Grove, where it headed west to Millville (now Apple River Canyon State Park). From here the stage went northwesterly to Mt. Sumner and Hudson Mound where it followed the modern-day route Stagecoach Trail to Scales Mound (the mound, not the present-day village). At the mound the stages went up to Council Hill and across the Illinois border to the early Wisconsin lead mining centers of Gratiot's Grove and

White Oak Springs. The stages then traveled down Council Hill Road to Galena. This somewhat circuitous route (part of the original Kellogg's Trail) was dictated by the importance of two Wisconsin lead mining communities and by the fact that the mail contract called for servicing their post offices. As those two communities died, the stages bypassed them and went to Council Hill and down to Galena. And a few years later, the stages by-passed Council Hill and followed present day Stagecoach Trail from Scales Mound directly to Galena.

In all of this Galena was the hub, with spokes radiating out in all directions. One could travel to or from Galena from any direction. Thus, the term "stagecoach trail" could have applied to any of the early coach roads. Some of those roads now represent modern highways. The original Kellogg's Trail north from Peoria came up through Polo, Lanark and then up through Pleasant Valley south of Stockton. A westward branch went along Bethel Road to Elizabeth. It was along this stretch that an important early tavern called Flack's Tavern was located. The route continued from Elizabeth northwestward up Long Hollow to near the Lake Galena dam. It then came out on Mount Hope Road to the current U. S. 20 where it then descended into Galena via both Powder House Hill Road and Bouthillier Street. Another branch from Dixon came up to the vicinity of Mt. Carroll and then up through Derinda to Elizabeth. The low spot along the ridge above Apple River Fort was where the road passed. A remnant can still be seen on the Highway 20 side heading southwestward along the valley wall.

The Galena to Savanna road went along Blackjack (named after the Blackjack mine, the term referring to the zinc ore mined there) to Hanover and then followed closely the current highway 84 southward.

Recognition of the historical and cultural value of some of these early routes is being provided by The Galena Trail and Coach Road Society ([www.galenatrailsociety.org](http://www.galenatrailsociety.org)). It was formed specifically to identify and provide signage for the 150 mile corridor from Peoria to Galena. The State of Illinois has signed on and will be installing signs along the various sections of the old "Galena Road." It is hoped the recognition given along the way to cultural, scenic, historic and natural areas will foster preservation, pride and tourism efforts by local communities.

Given the many trails and roads that criss-crossed early Jo Daviess County, it seems that further recognition should be given more of these routes. The efforts could help tie together various sections of the county that otherwise might lack resources or interest in this part of our heritage.