



City of Wilmington

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GEMINI GIANT TO STAY IN WILMINGTON

To our residents and enthusiasts of Route 66 around the world the City of Wilmington is happy to announce that the Gemini Giant will be staying in Wilmington along historic Route 66.

Today, the Joliet Area Historical Museum placed the winning bid on the iconic Gemini Giant. Immediately following the announcement of the winning bid, the Gemini Giant was then donated to the City of Wilmington. The purchase of the Gemini Giant was made possible through a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity supported by State Representative Anthony DeLuca.

For over a year, the Joliet Area Historical Museum and the City of Wilmington have been working together in the common goal of saving the Gemini Giant to preserve its historic place along the world's most famous road. As the operator of two of Will County's leading Route 66 attractions, the Museum has always been an enthusiastic proponent of the Gemini Giant in its "hometown" of Wilmington along the Mother Road. Since the Museum's Route 66 Visitor's Center opened its doors in 2002, it understands that a win for Route 66 preservation in Wilmington is a win for the entire region. Today's news reinforces the cooperative spirit that defines the Route 66 community.

Wilmington has a very tight-knit community, and we go to great lengths to protect it. Since the announcement of the auction, a local GoFundMe was created as well as a massive fundraising effort by our local VFW Post. For generations, the Gemini Giant has created lasting memories for both our residents as well as travelers from all corners of the globe. So much so that this story has been picked up by national news outlets as well as international tourism groups hoping to preserve this piece of history.

Last week, in preparation for the impending auction, representatives from the Joliet Area Historical Museum, VFW, the GoFundMe, and myself met at City Hall to discuss the plan forward should our efforts come to fruition. Our shared goal was to ensure that the Gemini Giant would not leave Wilmington.

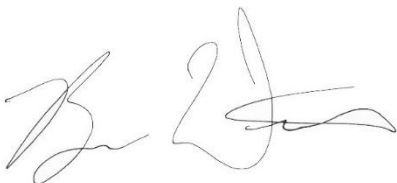
In short order, guided by the technical expertise of the American Giants Museum, the Gemini Giant will be carefully taken down, protected, and transported offsite for temporary storage. The American Giants Museum, located in Atlanta, Illinois, is dedicated to helping preserve and share the story of the Muffler Man and Bunyan Giant's that sprung up in the 1960's. Their assistance in this project again shows the cooperative spirit that makes Route 66 a truly American Experience.

Earlier this year the city council approved plans to re-imagine the entrance to our South Island Park. The park not only sits directly along Route 66 but is also adjacent to our historic downtown and along the Kankakee River National Water Trail. Initially the plans included placement of a Route 66 monument, a walking trail, and a new dedicated parking lot. With today's news, the city is happy to announce that the Gemini Giant will also be on display right alongside the Route 66 monument. This will ensure the Gemini Giant will remain in a secure location that is fully accessible to residents and travelers alike. Most importantly, the placement on public parklands will ensure protection from future development. Having the Route 66 monument right alongside of the Gemini Giant will be sure to be a must-have photo op. It is the cities hope to have the park, with its new iconic resident, ready to meet visitors in late spring this year.

In the coming weeks, the city along with the VFW and the GoFundMe teams will be hosting a meeting to discuss additional goals and ideas for the Route 66 park. The city will also be working towards gaining historical status for the Gemini Giant.

I cannot begin to thank everyone in the community and around the world for your support in helping to preserving this iconic piece of history. I wanted to highlight the massive effort from our local VFW Post and Ryan Jandura with the GoFundMe team for sharing the story of the Gemini Giant and what it means to our community. A special thank you to the American Giants Museum for your expert assistance and your shared love for the Gemini Giant. Lastly, on behalf of the city, I wanted to convey our appreciation to the Joliet Area Historical Museum for your dedication to helping to preserve the Route 66 story for years to come.

Route 66 has seen its share of history lost over its lifetime. For decades, the Gemini Giant has created lasting memories to our residents and welcomed tens of thousands of visitors annually from all corners of the globe. As the Mother Road approaches 100 years old, I am beyond grateful for all the support to keep this iconic piece of history standing tall and watching over Route 66 for another 100 years in Wilmington.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Dietz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ben Dietz, Mayor
City of Wilmington