

"IOWA HISTORICAL MOMENTS"

A PROJECT OF
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
WITH
KDSM-TV (DES MOINES)
KCRG-TV (CEDAR RAPIDS)
& THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FACT SHEETS

VOLUME 2

"IOWA HISTORICAL MOMENTS"

FACT SHEETS

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IOWA'S BOUNDARIES

Iowa's boundaries have been disputed on several occasions. The state's western boundary is defined as "the middle of the main channel of the Missouri River." Through time the channel of the river has moved. Carter Lake, Iowa, started on the east side of the river. One hundred years ago the river changed course and now the town lies on the west bank. It is completely surrounded by Nebraska land and has a Nebraska zip code and area code, but officially, the town of 3,500 has remained part of Iowa.

The southern boundary has also been controversial in the past. Two different lines were surveyed in the early 1800s; Missouri claimed the northernmost line was accurate and Iowa supported the line that gave the state nearly 2,500 additional acres. Before the issue was decided, people settled in the disputed strip of land. When a Missouri sheriff attempted to collect state taxes from residents who believed they lived in Iowa, militia from both states faced off at the border. The federal government intervened before shots were fired but for some time it looked as though Iowa and Missouri would go to war with each other over the contested border.

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BRUCEMORE
(THE SINCLAIR/DOUGLAS/HALL MANSION)
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

Three important Cedar Rapids families have made their home in this mansion since its construction in 1885. At that time, Cedar Rapids had a population of less than 15,000, and the 11-acre estate was well outside the city limits. The legacy of these prominent families gives us insight into the important part industry played in the growth of the community.

The first inhabitants were the T.M. (Thomas McElderry) Sinclair family, who came to Cedar Rapids in the early 1870s. Mr. Sinclair founded the Sinclair Meat Packing Plant, one of the city's early, successful industries. After his death, Caroline Sinclair commissioned the architectural firm of Josselyn and Taylor to design what the local newspaper called, "the finest residence this side of Chicago."

The materials of the house are smooth red brick, dressed stone foundation and trim — combined with a steep and multi-gabled slate roof and decorative shingles on the upper walls. The interior featured an asymmetrical plan with fireplaces in almost every room, stained glass, bedrooms on the second floor, and many porches and balconies reached through windows with sills at floor level. The mansion was heated by steam and lighted by gas. Surrounding the house were a barn for animals and carriages, an orchard, and a large vegetable garden. Caroline Sinclair and her six children lived here until 1906, when she traded "the House on the Boulevard" to George and Irene Douglas for their home at 800 Second Avenue.

The Douglas family also gained wealth from industry — in their case it was cereal processing and starch manufacturing. They called the home "Brucemore," combining George's middle name with a word that referred to the Scottish Highlands. Within a year of their ownership, they added to the acreage and began extensive changes to the property, inside and out. The new terrace and porches allowed sweeping views of the expanded grounds. Inside, the Douglasses first added butternut paneling and wood-beamed ceilings. Brucemore changed to reflect the family's personal interests. Among their later additions were a greenhouse, an organ, a carriage house, a squash court, a duck pond, a swimming pool, and a mural commissioned for the Great Hall. George died in 1923; Irene in 1937, after which their eldest daughter, Margaret Douglas Hall, inherited Brucemore.

When Margaret Douglas married Howard Hall in 1924, he had already served as president of Iowa Steel and Iron Works, and established Iowa Manufacturing Company. After they moved into the mansion in 1937, they sold 19 acres, keeping the 26 acres that remain today. The Halls were frequent hosts to locally and nationally prominent guests, including Herbert Hoover and Harry Truman (on the dedication of the Hoover Presidential Library).

Margaret Hall died in 1981. She had bequeathed Brucemore to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, for use as a public historic site and a community cultural center. Brucemore is the only National Trust property in Iowa, and one of less than two dozen historically and architecturally significant properties owned in America by the National Trust. The magnificent Brucemore is a national treasure open for tours, fairs, garden walks, Christmas celebrations, and fine arts performances. Call ahead for details on hours and special events: 319-362-7375.

OTHER FACTS

- The Sinclair house was built on "the Boulevard" — the road between Cedar Rapids and Marion. Designed in the popular Queen Anne style, the mansion cost \$55,000 to build, 10 to 20 times the cost of a Queen Anne-style house built for a middle-class family of the same era.
- The Hall's pet lion, "Leo," which once roamed the grounds, now serves as the symbol of the estate.
- Caroline Sinclair, George and Irene Douglas, and Howard and Margaret Hall all were prominent members of their generations in Cedar Rapids, which benefited from their donations and philanthropic endeavors. Among the institutions they contributed to were Coe College, the YMCA, Saint Luke's Hospital, the White Cross, the Art Association, and Camp Good Health.

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FENELON PLACE ELEVATOR

The Fenelon Place elevator has been plagued by fires throughout its history — especially in the early years when a coal-powered steam boiler provided the motive power for the line.

Builder A.J. Graves, who initiated the railway as a personal convenience, assigned to his gardener the task of caring for the boiler. Unused to this task, one night in 1884 the gardener banked the fire too high and the boiler house, engine, upper station, and hemp cables all were destroyed before horse-drawn fire engines could struggle up the bluff. Graves soon rebuilt the line with the original track and cars.

In 1892 another fire destroyed much of the line. The culprit this time was the police officer who interrupted his evening beat to stoke the boiler. Graves had installed one of Dubuque's first telephones in the station and one evening the officer received a call and became so excited he left the draft wide open. Financial reverses prevented Graves from rebuilding the line on this occasion. Ten neighbors interested in preserving the convenience each invested \$250 to rebuild the railway. The new owners replaced the steam engine with one of Thomas Edison's first electric streetcar motors and also installed steel cables.

Despite the conversion to electricity, fire menaced the elevator once more in 1923 when lightening struck the power line. The station caught fire but Dubuque's modern mechanized fire equipment arrived in time to save the building.

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CATALOG HOUSES

HOUSES BY MAIL FROM 1900 THROUGH THE 1930S

Of the 12 or so firms that provided houses by mail order in the first three decades of the 20th century, the Gordon-Van Tine Company of Davenport was one of the most important, especially here in Iowa. The firm had factories in St. Louis, Washington, and Mississippi, as well as Davenport. Another Iowa-based firm, the Curtis Companies, was located in Clinton. Beginning in the late 1800s, the Curtis Companies provided "Better Built Homes," along with their millwork catalogs. But it was Sears, Roebuck & Company that was the largest seller of mail-order houses.

Sears offered three categories of houses. "Honor Built" had the finest quality of construction. All the framing lumber was cut to the correct length and numbered at the factory, then shipped to the site. Included with the shipment were detailed drawings and instructions that gave advice on plastering and the installation of heating, plumbing, and electrical systems. The other houses were the "Standard Built" (the lumber was not pre-cut at the factory) and the "Simplex Sectional Cottage" (which had a lighter frame and was designed for use as a summer house.)

One example of a Sears mail-order house was the "Concord." A one and one-half story house, it was offered for sale from 1911 to 1922, and varied in price from \$815 to \$2,546. One of these houses is located near Bussey, Iowa, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

TIME LINE

1895-1910	Catalog houses become available from Hodgson Company, Aladdin Homes, and Montgomery Ward.
1908	Sears, Roebuck & Co. issue the "Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans" featuring 22 styles in 44 pages, with prices from \$650 to \$2,500.
1924	Sears has sold more than 30,000 houses by mail.
1929	Sears introduces an interior design coordinator.
1930	Sears has sold 49,000 catalog houses.
1940	Sears dissolves the Modern Home Department — but more than 100,000 people call their Sears catalog house "home."

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IOWA CAUCUSES

Iowa's caucuses are now famous as the first major event in the presidential election season. But it wasn't always so. The state held a presidential primary in 1916, but few candidates entered the race. Not until 1972 did Iowa's presidential caucuses enter the limelight.

That year, the Democratic Party had to move the Iowa caucuses to an earlier date, in January, to allow time for the county and district conventions to meet before the state convention. This put Iowa's caucuses ahead of the New Hampshire primary.

George McGovern's unexpected success in that caucus (which led him to the Democratic nomination), and Jimmy Carter's surprising victory here in 1976, helped make the Iowa precinct caucuses a media event. Carter proved that an unknown candidate could win by spending months organizing those voters most likely to attend the caucuses.

By 1980 the Iowa caucuses were an institution. Increasingly, some criticize them, saying the caucuses get too much media attention, and that Iowa is not representative of the rest of the country. Despite these challenges, Iowa's first-in-the-nation status as testing-grounds for presidential candidates has remained intact.

OTHER FACTS

- A caucus is a political party meeting where voters suggest policy issues and pick delegates to the county convention. It's the first step in selecting party candidates for president.
- In 1976, the Republican Party moved their caucus date to coincide with the Democrats' — to maximize their candidates' media exposure and to prevent voters from switching to the Democratic Party.
- The caucus system was the dominant system for nominating public officials until the primary system became popular in the early 1900s.
- The caucuses themselves do not guarantee secure backing of any candidate, because chosen delegates can change their preferences later.
- The State Historical Society of Iowa will open an exhibit on the Iowa caucuses on November 2, 1991.

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THE CHERRY SISTERS

One of the least talented, but most popular vaudeville acts in history was the Cherry Sisters from Marion, Iowa. Born in the mid-19th century, they were left to manage their farm after their father's death in the 1880s. So, having always enjoyed performing, Ella, Elizabeth, Addie, Effie, and Jessie decided to attempt a career in vaudeville.

Their first show, in 1893, was performed by Ella, Jessie, and Effie. It was a big success with the crowd, which consisted mostly of friends and neighbors from Marion. Their next performance, however, didn't fare so well. A *Cedar Rapids Gazette* review of their performance at Greene's Opera House was so negative that the sisters demanded a retraction. Addie even charged editor Fred B. Davis with libel.

At the suggestion of legal authorities, the *Gazette* and the sisters decided to use their next performance as a trial. The show was a great success for the sisters and the editor was found guilty. As punishment, Davis was sentenced to take care of the sisters' livestock while they were on tour and to marry the first sister who would accept his proposal of marriage. None of the sisters were apparently interested in marrying Davis, but the sisters as well as the *Gazette* received much publicity across Iowa because of the affair.

The next appearance of the Cherry Sisters was a momentous one. It took place in Davenport and featured two of the sisters. Instead of showering the Cherry Sisters with cheers and applause for the show, the audience hurled rocks, fruits, and vegetables at them. A tradition was born.

A performance in Dubuque one week later got out of hand. Someone in the audience sprayed a fire extinguisher into one sister's face, and a young boy who went on stage to try to calm the crowd was hit by an old wash boiler. As the sisters left the scene, their carriage was bombarded with eggs and rocks. A marshal and nine police officers hired to maintain order did nothing. The sisters' sued once again, but this time were unsuccessful. An investigation found the police innocent of negligence.

Undaunted, the Cherry Sisters continued to perform throughout Iowa, and also in Kansas and Illinois. In 1896, Oscar Hammerstein signed the Cherry Sisters to a contract and booked them in the Olympia Theater in New York City. They received terrible reviews, but audiences packed the theater for six weeks to throw rotten vegetables at the sisters. Their performances helped bring Hammerstein out of debt.

In 1898, the sisters made legal history when they charged the *Des Moines Leader* with libel for a review that it reprinted. The Iowa Supreme Court ruled that an editor can print any review that is not written in malice. After the sisters' retirement, they opened a bakery in Cedar Rapids, specializing in cherry pies. Effie ran for mayor of Cedar Rapids in 1924 and again in 1926, receiving about eight percent of the vote in her first bid and five percent in the second campaign.

In 1935, Effie and Addie attempted one of their many comebacks, performing in New York City in front of a audience that included two other female comedians (who, unlike the sisters, possessed talent) — Gracie Allen and Tallulah Bankhead.

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DOW HOUSE

Located in Dow City, Crawford County, the Dow House survives as an example of how a well-to-do family lived in Iowa in the late-19th century. More ornate than the ordinary farm house, it was completed in 1874. Simeon E. Dow, an early entrepreneur in the county, situated his house on a hill to command an impressive view of the Boyer River valley.

The house was designed by a local builder, Lew Sewell, who also oversaw the construction. The house, built in a modified Italianate architectural style, cost nearly \$11,000 to build — more than five times what most area homes cost in that era. The Dow House is unusual in that the floor plans on all three levels are identical, and all the walls are three bricks wide with no main wood partitions. The brick for these 12-inch thick walls was fired just south of the homestead.

The Dow House became a haven for many travelers for food and a fresh horse. It was also the scene of many social and business activities. But in the early 1890s, Dows suffered serious financial losses, from which the family never fully recovered. In 1902, the family sold their home to George Crandall and moved into town. Crandall's heirs owned the home until 1923. After passing through various hands, the house was leased to the Crawford County Historical Society in 1970. Two years later it was added to the list of properties on the National Register of Historic Places.

OTHER FACTS

- At the center of the arch over both the first- and second-floor front doors, were ornamental keystones with carved roses. The keystone on the second floor is still in place. The one over the first floor door was moved because it interfered with the design of the front porch, which was added later. The removed keystone was placed in a basement room, which gave rise to the local folklore that it's an "Indian gravestone."
- Simeon Dow moved to Crawford County in 1855 and bought a farm in Union Township that consisted of 2,600 acres. He was also postmaster, county probate judge, county treasurer, and operated a hardware store, a lumber yard, a grain elevator, and a cheese factory.

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ESKIMO PIE

A FAMOUS IOWA-MADE PRODUCT

Marco Polo introduced ice cream to Europe in the 1300s. The sweet treat was first sold commercially in 1851. And in 1920 the Eskimo Pie was born in Iowa. It was the first innovation in ice cream since the ice cream cone was invented in 1903.

Onawa, Iowa, ice cream vendor Christian Nelson created the Eskimo Pie. A child who wanted both an ice cream sandwich and a chocolate bar inspired Nelson's idea of freezing a coating of chocolate around a slice of ice cream. After much trial and error, he found just the right mixture of chocolate and cocoa butter that would stick to the ice cream.

He called his creation an "I-Scream-Bar." He got it patented, and then teamed up with Omaha confectioner Russell Stover to produce what they began to call the Eskimo Pie.

They first tested their new product in Des Moines and Chicago. Soon, millions of people from California to New York fell in love with the Eskimo Pie. It became a national sensation — along with flappers and flivvers. And its influence spread even farther: so strong was the demand for the Eskimo Pie, that it helped lift cocoa- and chocolate-producing countries out of a depression. Not bad for a simple idea from a creative Iowan.

OTHER FACTS

- The Eskimo Pie was an overnight sensation. At the height of its popularity, more than 1 million sold daily.
- Christian Nelson also developed an insulated jug for selling Eskimo Pies at newsstands and by street vendors.
- In 1924, Nelson sold the Eskimo Pie Corporation (which became a subsidiary of the Reynolds Foil Company) but he remained a principal stockholder.

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HENRY FIELD & RADIO STATION KFNF
EARL MAY & RADIO STATION KMA
SHENANDOAH, IOWA

Shenandoah, Iowa, was home to two men born in the nineteenth century who were both pioneers in radio, and also founders of seed companies which still flourish today.

HENRY FIELD

Born in 1871 near Shenandoah, Henry Field heard his calling at a very young age. When he was five years old, he became fascinated with a seed catalog from the James Wick Seed Company; that same year he made his first sale of flower seed to a neighbor.

In 1899 he started his own seed company, working out of his house and barn. Three years later Field borrowed \$500 to build a seedhouse for his growing business. By 1907 he had grossed \$63,000 and was able to incorporate the company.

The first issue of his publication, *Seed Sense*, appeared in 1912. Intended for "the man behind the hoe," it was part almanac, part seed catalog.

By the 1920s Henry was past 50 and looking forward to retirement, when he discovered radio. In 1923, an Omaha station, WOW, asked Field and two dozen of his employees (who became known as the "Seedhouse Folk") to provide an evening of entertainment. It consisted of three hours of old-time music — hymns and folk music — played on banjos, fiddles, and guitars. The response was so overwhelming — Henry received some 5,000 fan letters — that he applied for an operating license, and with the help of friends he built a 500-watt station. KFNF — the "Friendly Farmer Station" — was born.

People all across Iowa and the Midwest tuned in. On his popular afternoon program he chatted informally about whatever was on his mind — what he'd had for lunch, his wife's recipes, his philosophies on farming, or advice on tending trees, flowers, and vegetables. Other programs featured gospel singing, barn dances, morning prayer services, and a variety of downhome musical performances. In 1925 Field placed second in a national poll by *Radio Digest* to determine "The World's Most Popular Announcer." In 1930 readers of that magazine voted his station the most popular in the Midwest.

Henry was one of the first broadcasters to use radio for advertising. People so believed in him that they would buy anything he promoted. Despite this great success, the Field Company was hit hard by the Great Depression. Field was forced to sell to outside interests.

In 1938, when he was 67, he retired from managing the Henry Field Seed and Nursery Company, then the largest retail mail-order seed and nursery firm in the United States. Though officially retired, Henry remained president of the company and also continued his radio programs, even after 1948, when he sold his radio station. Henry Field died on October 17, 1949, at the age of 77.

EARL MAY

Earl May was born in 1888 in Hayes Center, Nebraska. His introduction to the seed business came in 1911 (while he was a student at the University of Michigan Law School), when he took a summer job in sales for the D. M. Ferry Seed Company.

In 1915 he married a college classmate, Shenandoah native Gertrude Welch, whose father owned a

nursery where Earl worked after his marriage. Four years later, with the financial backing of his father-in-law, he started the May Seed and Nursery Company in a ramshackle building with two employees.

Noting the success of Henry Field's KFNF, May founded his own station, KMA, in 1925. To set his station apart, May came up with several innovative programs. These included an audience participation program, early morning programming for farmers (beginning at 5:30 a.m.), and regular news broadcasts based on wire services reports.

May also established a magazine touting his enterprises. The *KMA Guide* kept its listeners abreast of the station's activities, and included a feature called "A Chat With Earl May."

KMA managed to weather the hard times of the Depression, but World War II brought some changes. For example, the station took on a decidedly female sound as many of the male announcers enlisted or were drafted for service.

On December 19, 1946, Earl May died. He was 58. His son, Edward, has carried on and expanded the family business. Earl May Seed Company and radio station KMA remain a living legacy to their founder.

OTHER FACTS

- The advent of radio and the automobile helped to ease the isolation of rural America. Radio pioneers like Field and May used this to their advantage.
- In the 1920s both KMA and KFNF hosted week-long programs of special events and free food festivals called the Radio Jubilee. The event in 1928 attracted 100,000 visitors to Shenandoah and the KMA studios. The rationing of gasoline and tires during World War II ended the jubilees.

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GENERAL GRENVILLE DODGE

Grenville M. Dodge was born in Danvers, Massachusetts, in 1831. He attended several military schools in his teens, completing his education at Norwich Academy in Vermont. Like many who attended such academies, Dodge received training in engineering.

In the early 1850s when the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad crossed Iowa, Dodge took a position as a surveyor. He was so impressed with the Council Bluffs area upon his arrival in 1853, that he wrote other family members to join him. He engaged in several business ventures, including banking.

With the outbreak of Civil War, Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood commissioned Dodge to raise a unit of men from around Council Bluffs. He was appointed colonel of the 4th Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment and was sent to Missouri, where he saw service at Pea Ridge, and later, Cornith, Mississippi, and the Battle of Atlanta.

During the war, Dodge was noted for his skill in maintaining vital rail and supply lines for Union forces. He also established a network of spies to gather information from southern forces. During his military career he received several promotions, the esteem of his fellow generals, and wounds from a confederate sharpshooter in Atlanta.

After the war, Dodge embarked on one of the most important projects of his life: he was appointed chief construction engineer of the Union Pacific Railroad. In 1869 he witnessed the uniting of the continent when the "Golden Spike" was driven at Promontory Point, Utah, marking the union of the Central Pacific Railroad (originating in California) and the Union Pacific Railroad (originating in Omaha).

That same year Dodge returned to Council Bluffs and built a magnificent house overlooking the city and the eastern terminus of the railroad he helped build. He continued an active family life, laced with social, business, and political projects. Dodge counted many great Americans among his friends, including Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and mountain man and scout, Jim Bridger.

Dodge died in 1916. In 1965, his home was declared a National Historic Landmark, and is open year-round for public tours.

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General Dodge wrote several books, including: *How We Built the Union Pacific and Other Railway Papers and Addresses*; *The Battle of Atlanta and Other Campaign Addresses*; *Personal Recollections of President Abraham Lincoln, General Ulysses S. Grant and General William T. Sherman*; and *Biographical Sketch of James Bridger, Mountaineer, Trapper and Guide*.

GLENN MILLER

Glenn Miller and His Orchestra was the most popular band the world has ever heard. Miller was born in 1904 in Clarinda, but left the state in 1909 at the age of 5. After more than a decade playing trombone and arranging for various big bands, he formed his own band in 1937. He disbanded it in 1942, at the peak of its popularity, to accept a commission in the U.S. Army. His Army Air Force Band boosted the morale of U.S. troops wherever it played. On December 15, 1944, he boarded a plane in England to prepare for the band to entertain the troops in France. The plane never arrived. Miller was dead at the age of 40.

OTHER FACTS

- In 1940 Glenn Miller and His Orchestra recorded 45 top-selling songs, more than Elvis Presley or the Beatles ever turned out in a single year.
- A partial list of hits by Glenn Miller and His Orchestra: In the Mood, Chattanooga Choo Choo, One O'Clock Jump, I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo, Juke Box Saturday Night, String of Pearls, Sunrise Serenade, American Patrol.
- His theme song: Moonlight Serenade.
- "Chattanooga Choo Choo" was the first million-seller to be awarded a gold record by the record industry.
- *The Glenn Miller Story*, starring Jimmy Stewart and June Allyson, premiered in 1953. Stewart and Allyson visited Clarinda for the movie's premiere there.
- A Glenn Miller festival is held every year in Clarinda, usually the last weekend in May. It includes performances by big bands, a scholarship competition, panel discussions with Miller Orchestra alumni and experts, and displays of Miller memorabilia.
- The Glenn Miller Birthplace Society has about 600 members, and publishes a regular newsletter, *Miller Notes*.
- The Glenn Miller Foundation (founded by Miller's daughter Donnie and her husband) has purchased Miller's birthplace on Clarinda's main street (renamed Glenn Miller Avenue) and has launched a capital campaign to (1) restore the birthplace to its condition at the time of Miller's birth; and (2) establish a Big Band Museum in Clarinda.
- The Glenn Miller Archives is housed at the University of Colorado, which Miller attended briefly. He flunked his only formal music course, first-year harmony.

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JOHN L. LEWIS

John L. Lewis was born in Cleveland, Iowa, Lucas County (near the town of Lucas), on February 12, 1880. His father, Tom Lewis, and his maternal grandfather, John Watkins, both immigrated to the United States from Wales, though they did not know each other at the time.

Coal was discovered near Lucas in 1876, bringing many settlers to the area. Many mine owners recruited British miners through ads in immigrant newspapers and magazines. This is probably how Tom Lewis and John Watkins were drawn to the Whitebreast Coal and Mining Company, the largest coal mining company in the Lucas area.

When John was 15 months old, the family moved to Beacon, near Oskaloosa, in Mahaska County, one of the largest coal-producing areas in Iowa. Throughout John's childhood his family moved to many different coal mining towns in southern Iowa. In 1897, they returned to Lucas, where the once numerous Welsh immigrant population had now greatly diminished.

Lewis claimed to have attended high school, although according to some accounts, his education ended with the seventh grade. By the time he was 21 years old in 1901, he had held jobs as a newspaper boy, farmer, miner, amateur actor, theater manager, and secretary of the United Mine Workers Union Local 1933 in Chariton, Iowa.

In 1903, Lewis left Iowa to go to the Rocky Mountain mining region, but he returned to Iowa in 1906. The next year he married Myrta Edith Bell, whose father was a doctor and a prominent Lucas citizen.

In 1908, Lewis, along with his wife, parents, and five brothers and one sister, moved to Panama, Illinois, where his union career blossomed. That same year he was elected president of United Mine Workers Local 1475. His career advanced as follows:

- In 1909, he became a lobbyist for the UMW in Springfield, the state capital.
- In 1911, Samuel Gompers named Lewis an organizer for the American Federation of Labor.
- In 1917, Lewis was elected vice-president of the UMW.
- in 1920 he was elected president of the UMW.

In the 1928 presidential election, Lewis was a strong supporter of Herbert Hoover. After Hoover's victory, Lewis worked hard to obtain Hoover's endorsement as Secretary of Labor. Although many encouraged him to pick Lewis, Hoover chose someone else. Despite this, Lewis supported Hoover again in the election of 1932.

During Franklin Roosevelt's administration, labor recovered from many of the setbacks that occurred during the 1920s and the early years of the Depression. In October of 1935, after a disagreement with the AFL, Lewis formed and became president of the Committee for Industrial Organization. In 1937, just two years later, union membership in the CIO was larger than in the AFL. During this time, Lewis took an anti-war position, because he believed a war would take away some of the gains labor had made in the 1930s.

Lewis resigned as CIO president in 1940, but remained president of the UMW until he retired in 1960.

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LAURA INGALLS WILDER PARK & MUSEUM

BURR OAK, WINNESHIEK COUNTY, IOWA

The author of *Little House on the Prairie* and many other beloved childrens' stories lived for a short while in Iowa. Burr Oak, the small town where Laura Ingalls Wilder lived, operates a museum and a one-acre park in her honor.

In 1876, Charles and Caroline Ingalls and their three daughters — Mary, Laura (then 9 years old), and Carrie — moved from Walnut Grove, Minnesota, where Charles had bad luck homesteading, to Burr Oak, a town of about 200 people. Charles and Caroline were hired to help run the Masters Hotel. The Ingalls family also lived in the hotel, which, in addition to lodging, also served as a community center for dances and weddings.

Because of the constant traffic of strangers and the drinking that occurred on the premises, Charles and Caroline felt the hotel was an unhealthy atmosphere for their young daughters. So the family moved to rooms above Kimball's Grocery. This, too, proved unsatisfactory: it was near the Burr Oak saloon; also, the Kimballs fought incessantly. Once again, the family moved — this time to a red brick house on the edge of town. The family did not remain long there either: in the autumn of 1877 they moved west, back to Walnut Grove.

Wilder was 65 when she began writing her "Pioneer Tales for Children." Her childhood memories remained vivid, and the stories she wrote closely mirrored the activities of her family. But her life in Burr Oak is not well known because she omitted the period in recounting her tales. One reason for this is because the theme of Wilder's books is one family's westward movement in a time of great national expansion and opportunity. The family's move to Burr Oak did not fit this theme — Burr Oak was a move east.

The community of Burr Oak, however, has preserved this slice of the writer's life. In 1973, the nonprofit organization, the Laura Ingalls Wilder Park and Museum, bought the Masters Hotel building. With donations of time and money from local residents, the hotel was restored and furnishings were added to make the place appear as it did in the 1870s when Laura and her family lived there. The site, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was opened as part of Burr Oak's Bicentennial celebration in 1976.

It's open for public tours, May 1–October 1, Monday–Saturday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Sunday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. To tour the museum at other times, call 319-735-5436 or 319-735-5916.

OTHER FACTS

- Located 12 miles from Decorah (the Winneshiek County seat), Burr Oak was founded in 1851. By 1876, it was an important town, providing local farmers with many businesses and services. At its peak, Burr Oak was a crossroads of the western movement. Roads and trails through the town led north to Minnesota, and westward through Iowa to Nebraska and other points west.
- Many of the Burr Oak buildings Laura knew in the 1870s are gone or considerably altered.
- Other books by Laura Ingalls Wilder include: *Little House in the Big Woods*, *Farmer Boy*, *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, *By the Shores of Silver Lake*, *The Long Winter*, *Little Town on the Prairie*, *Those Happy Golden Years*, *The First Four Years*, *On the Way Home*, and *West from Home*.
- A variety of books about the author, as well as souvenirs, are available for purchase at the Wilder Museum.

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LITTLE BROWN CHURCH IN THE VALE
NASHUA, CHICKASAW COUNTY, IOWA

In 1857, a young music teacher traveling home to Wisconsin was so inspired by the serene beauty of a certain Cedar Valley spot that he wrote a song about it when he got home. Imagining it as the perfect setting for a church, William Pitts wrote the hymn, "The Church in the Wildwood." His song described an imaginary "little brown church in the vale." Imagine his surprise years later when he returned to the area to teach and found just such a church now standing on that very site.

The First Congregational Church of Bradford, a village two miles northeast of Nashua, was organized in 1855. Members held services in stores and schools until the church was constructed during the Civil War.

Pitts returned to Iowa in 1862, settling in Fredericksburg, and eventually taught singing in Bradford. He first performed the hymn for his students in the spring of 1864 inside the church, which was still unfinished. The building was dedicated on December 29 of that year.

Unfortunately for Pitt, the hymn did not gain fame until years later, when it was popularized by a male quartet from Charles City, Iowa. They sang it on the chautauqua circuit in 1910 and 1911. In addition to performing the song, they also told the remarkable story behind its creation. Soon, tourists began searching for the *real* church in the wildwood. By then, services were no longer held in the church, which had fallen into disrepair.

A reunion in 1914 observing the 50th anniversary of the church's dedication sparked a move to save the church. By the next year, a local preservation society had restored the church to resemble its original appearance, and services were resumed.

Still functioning as the First Congregation Church of Bradford, the church is a favorite site for weddings. Some 700 weddings were performed in 1990.

OTHER FACTS

- Though the song became popular throughout the world, William Pitts made no fortune from it. He had sold its rights to a Chicago publisher — long before it became famous — for \$25.
- The church was designed by Reverend J.K. Nutting, the first pastor. It's a plain gabled building fronted by a bell tower. The stone foundations have the same inward pitch as the stone fences of New England, because the man who fitted the masonry gained his experience building fences in Massachusetts.
- Marriage Reunion Sunday is held the first Sunday in August. The reunion was begun in 1952.
- Efforts are underway to place the church on the National Register of Historic Places.

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THE LOESS HILLS

Bordering the Missouri River in western Iowa, the Loess Hills are among the most beautiful and unusual areas encountered while traveling in Iowa.

The hills are made up of fine-grained, cohesive quartz silt that was left behind by glaciers. Water erosion over time has contributed to the shape of the hills, which resemble small mountains. So different from the rest of Iowa are the Loess Hills, it's as though a chunk of the western United States was plunked down in the Midwest. The climate is desert-like, and there are more sunny days without precipitation here than anywhere else in Iowa.

Many plant and animal species found in the hills also generally only exist in the western U.S. (some of these are listed below). Unfortunately, farming, the spread of communities, and the use of the hills as landfill, have wiped out most of the prairies that once thrived within the Loess Hills. And owing to the unstable nature of its quartz silt, the hills have one of the highest soil erosion rates in the country (see below for how to control erosion).

Those interested in traveling in the area can choose from among more than 60 county and state parks and wildlife areas.

OTHER FACTS

- Fossils have been found showing that former inhabitants of the Loess Hills include mammoths, reindeer, bison, Jefferson's ground sloth, a giant armadillo, stag-moose, giant beaver, a species of camel, American elk, and black bear.
- Some of the western animals found in the hills include the prairie rattlesnake, plains pocket mouse, great plains skink, western fox snake, great plains and Woodhouses' toads, and plains leopard and western chorus frogs. Other animals that live there include the eastern mole, big brown bat, raccoon, coyote, red fox, and white-tailed deer.
- Birds of the Loess Hills include the hawk, brown-headed cowbird, northern cardinal, brown thrasher, house wren, mourning dove, American crow, blue jay, and red-headed woodpecker.
- Among the unusual plant life in the hills are yucca, tumbleweed, cowboy's delight, and prairie wildflowers.
- There are more than 1200 acres in the Waubonsie State Park, Fremont County.
- Long's Landing, near Council Bluffs, consists of 24 acres and offers camping, picnicking, and boating on the Missouri River.
- North of Long's Landing is Lake Manawa State Park, one of the most popular parks in the Council Bluffs area.
- On the border of Pottawattamie and Harrison counties lies the Wilson Island State Recreation Area and DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Refuge.
- The Lewis and Clark State Park is located in Monona County, surrounding Blue Lake.
- Stone State Park in Plymouth County provides hiking, camping, picnicking, and equestrian and nature trails.
- Ways of controlling erosion include: no-till farming, maintaining permanent grasslands, seeding waterways, decreasing the grazing of farm animals, preventing sewer and water line leaks, preventing over-watering of lawns, less gully cutting, and diverting surface run-off. Planned prairie fires help to get rid of unwanted invasive plants while encouraging the growth of native plants. The use of dirt bikes and snowmobiles for recreation kill vegetation and also speed erosion. Horseback riding and all-terrain vehicles also speed erosion, though to a lesser degree. These activities should be done in valleys and lower slopes, which are less susceptible to damage than are ridges and steep slopes.

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LOST CREEK MINING DISASTER

On January 24, 1902, the worst disaster in Iowa mining struck the small company town of Lost Creek in Mahaska County. Shortly before noon, an explosion ripped through the coal mine, trapping 50 to 60 mine workers underground. Rescue efforts were hampered by fallen debris, and by the presence of dangerous and volatile gases. Among the 14 injured were boys as young as 12. Some were badly burned. Twenty mine workers died. More victims died from the effects of the gases than from the blast itself.

The accident was caused by an explosion of coal dust. Each miner was responsible for setting and placing his own explosive. These shots were generally fired at noon and at the end of the work day, allowing dust to settle while the miners were away for lunch and after they had left work for the day. Instead of dislodging chunks of coal off the solid wall, the shot sometimes would discharge a tongue of flame that would raise and ignite a cloud of coal dust. The burning dust could expand with explosive force and do great damage as the force traveled down the mine's passageways.

Determined to stop such accidents, miners demanded safer mining practices. They wanted shot-examiners hired to examine all shots, and they wanted special shot-firers hired to fire the shots only at the end of the day, after most workers had left. This would allow the dust to settle over night and, in the event of an explosion, limit the number of casualties.

In response to the Lost Creek accident and the miners' demands, Governor Albert B. Cummins appointed a special commission to investigate the disaster and to recommend safety legislation. The commission included the three state mine inspectors, two coal operators, and mine union leaders John P. Reese and John P. White. After the investigation, the Iowa General Assembly passed a law partially meeting mine workers' demands. The miners also sought remedies through collective bargaining and reached a compromise settlement with the mine owners. Eventually the practice of employing shot-examiners and using shot firers, and firing only once a day, was established everywhere in Iowa where coal was shot off the solid.

OTHER FACTS

- Lost Creek was a company town, owned and operated by the Lost Creek Fuel Company. Lost Creek was similar to many other coal camps in southern and central Iowa in the early 20th century. The town consisted of a company store, two boarding houses, and about 100 company-owned miners' houses. Each four-room house was about 22 by 24 feet.
- A few days after the explosion, Lost Creek Shaft No. 2 reopened and stayed in operation for a few more years. By 1907 the Lost Creek mines had been abandoned. The mining community had moved away, the machinery was shipped elsewhere, and the houses were moved to new locations.
- In Iowa, most coal was mined by the "room and pillar system." Two miners were assigned a section of the mine. Together they would blast and dig out the coal to form the "room." The room eventually became about 24 to 30 feet wide and 120 to 150 feet long. At Lost Creek the height from floor to room ceiling was four to six feet (elsewhere in Iowa the height ranged from 12 feet to only 18 inches). The rooms were separated by supporting walls of unmined coal, eight to ten feet thick, called "pillars." Breakthroughs were cut between the rooms for air circulation.
- In 1902 a coal miner in Mahaska County averaged only about \$450 a year. Mine workers and other laborers were not protected by workers' compensation laws until 1913. After the Lost Creek accident, labor organizers across Iowa immediately began raising money to help the families who had lost wage-earners.

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THE MORMON TRAIL IN IOWA

On February 4, 1846, Brigham Young began an incredible journey. He and thousands of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints members traveled across the southern half of Iowa on their way from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Utah. Their leader, Joseph Smith, had been murdered on June 27, 1844, in Carthage, Illinois, and the Mormons as a group were being forced out of the state. Young had replaced Smith as head of the church.

During the trip they faced many hardships and deaths attributed to extreme cold and excessive snow and rain that sometimes made travel impossible. They started from Sugar Creek, near Montrose. On February 28, Young asked Iowa Governor James Clarke for protection for Mormons crossing Iowa. Iowans in the southeast part of the state had been accusing the Mormons of such crimes as murder, theft, and assault. Such persecution had followed them from Missouri to Nauvoo.

The Mormons camped near Farmington, Bonaparte, Keosauqua, Bloomfield, Centerville, Corydon, Garden Grove, Mount Pisgah, and Council Bluffs. At Garden Grove and Mount Pisgah, both permanent camp sites, Mormons stopped long enough to build log houses and plant crops. People who were too weak to travel farther stayed and cared for the farms.

At the end of their Iowa journey, they made rafts and crossed the Missouri River into Nebraska. From 1846 until 1852, almost 20,000 people had made the migration across southern Iowa.

OTHER FACTS

- On April 15, at a site in Wayne County, William Clayton wrote the popular Mormon hymn, "Come, Come Ye Saints."
- On May 18, Brigham Young's group found Parley P. Pratt camped on the Grand River. Pratt was part of a group responsible for scouting the route in advance of the other Mormons. On a nearby hill, Pratt had discovered broken granite resembling an ancient altar. This was the only rock found in the area. Pratt named it Mount Pisgah, and the Mormons kept the Union County camp until 1852. (At Mount Pisgah, they buried more than 800 people who died on the journey.)
- In May and early June, the Mormons traveled through Adair County and near Council Bluffs, where they encountered helpful Potawatomi Indians.

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OLD CAPITOL IOWA CITY, IOWA

Old Capitol in Iowa City was the last capitol of the Territory of Iowa and became the first state capitol when Iowa entered the union in 1846. A National Historic Landmark, its construction began in 1839 and although still incomplete, it was first occupied in 1842.

A classic example of Greek revival architecture, Old Capitol's original dimensions were 120 by 60 feet; it was made from limestone quarried from the banks of the Iowa River. Foundation walls are six feet thick, with individual stones weighing an average of four tons.

Many important events have occurred within its walls. The Supreme Court of the Iowa Territory met here for many years, as did four legislative assemblies and six general assemblies. Old Capitol was also the site of constitutional conventions in 1844, 1846, and 1857 (Iowa is still governed by the 1857 constitution), and the adoption of the Iowa Code of 1851.

In 1857, the capitol moved from Iowa City to Des Moines. Afterwards, the building became property of what is now the University of Iowa for educational purposes. Old Capitol served the university until 1970. It provided classrooms, offices, space for chapel services, and a meeting place for 19th-century literary societies. In addition, university administrative offices were housed in Old Capitol until 1970, when the building was closed for its second major restoration.

The first restoration took place between 1921 and 1924. During this time the west portico was completed, the reverse spiral staircase was totally rebuilt and extended to the ground floor, 650-pound chandeliers were hung in the House and Senate chambers, and the dome was covered with five-millionths of an inch of gold leaf.

The second major restoration project was spearheaded by Margaret N. Keyes, then director of Old Capitol, in 1970. Much of the interior was restored to resemble its 1842 to 1857 appearance, and furnishings from the period were also added.

Old Capitol is open for public tours from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Saturday (9 a.m. to noon on home football Saturdays). It's closed on holidays. For details, call 319-335-0548.

OTHER FACTS

- The total cost of constructing Old Capitol was \$125,000.
- Floor trusses were made of native hewn oak; the roof was of pine shingles on oak sheeting; gutters and downspouts were hewn from walnut logs. The interior trim was white pine, and the flooring was plain oak, later levelled off with a yellow pine overlay.
- The restored Old Capitol was dedicated on July 3, 1976, to coincide with the nation's Bicentennial celebration.

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THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN IOWA

HITCHCOCK HOUSE, JORDAN HOUSE, TODD HOUSE

Not a railroad at all, the so-called "underground railroad" was a secret network of anti-slavery activists who helped slaves escape to freedom by setting up a series of houses and hiding places along a route known only to a few.

The underground railroad was begun around 1830 and existed until the abolition of slavery in 1865. It stretched from the South all the way to Canada. Its route through Iowa went from Kansas and Missouri toward the Mississippi River and Chicago. Along the route were "stations" where fugitive slaves could stop for food and rest. Runaway slaves were transported, usually in the dark of night, in false-bottomed wagons, along the passageway to freedom.

Iowa can claim a series of important stations, several of which still survive. These include the Hitchcock House in Lewis (Cass County), the Jordan House in West Des Moines, and the Todd House in Tabor (Fremont County). Hitchcock and Todd were both ministers who believed strongly in abolition. Jordan was an Iowa senator.

- **Hitchcock House:** Built in 1854 by George Hitchcock, this sandstone house was a stop on the underground railroad in the 1850s. The house is now owned by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and managed by the Cass County Conservation Board. The house is open for public tours during the summer.
- **Jordan House:** Built (circa 1850 to 1865) by James and Melinda Jordan, the house served as the chief underground railroad station in Polk County. The house is now owned by the West Des Moines Historical Society and is open for public tours during the summer.
- **Todd House:** Built in 1853 by Rev. John Todd, this frame house served as the first station on the underground railroad's route north and east from Kansas. It was also the headquarters of John Brown's failed insurrection in the late 1850s. The house is now owned by the Tabor Historical Society.

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ANNIE TURNER WITTENMYER

The Civil War work of Annie Wittenmyer showed women that their contributions on the homefront were essential to the welfare of soldiers and their families. Keokuk, Iowa, where Wittenmyer lived, was a departure point for many Iowa troops heading down the river to fight. Realizing that soldiers would need food, clothing, and bandages, Wittenmyer quickly became involved in the Keokuk Soldiers' Aid Society. As executive secretary, she toured western camps and military hospitals to find out what soldiers needed. She mobilized soldiers' aid societies across Iowa to provide supplies, and forwarded massive shipments to the soldiers.

In hospitals on the front, she saw firsthand the horrors of war and was dismayed by the appalling conditions. "It was an inside view of a hospital that made me hate war as I had never known how to hate it before," Wittenmyer wrote. She worked to have women nurses assigned to each Iowa regiment. She herself cared for soldiers under fire. In October 1862 Iowa governor Samuel J. Kirkwood appointed Wittenmyer the first State Sanitary Agent. In this role she continued to distribute supplies, as well as arrange furloughs and discharges for wounded or disabled soldiers and correspond with their families.

Dying soldiers asked her to care for their children, and so she pushed to establish orphanages. Funds poured in from across Iowa. In 1864 the first orphanage opened in Farmington, near Keokuk. By late 1865, the abandoned barracks of Camp Kinsman in Davenport had been turned into the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home (in 1949 the Iowa legislature renamed it the Iowa Annie Wittenmyer Home).

Finding her own brother ill with typhoid fever and dysentery in a military hospital, Wittenmyer was shocked to see him offered strong coffee, fried fat bacon, and bread — common enough fare for troops, but inappropriate for wounded or ailing soldiers. She established dietary kitchens in military hospitals to provide healthier food.

Her work to help troops and families during the Civil War showed women that their work was essential to the nation. Her leadership in other reform issues — temperance, nurses' pensions, relief work — established a public role model for women.

OTHER FACTS:

- Annie Turner was born August 26, 1827, in Sandy Springs, Adams County, Ohio. She married William Wittenmyer in 1847. In 1850 they moved to Keokuk, Iowa. Four of their five children died in infancy. Only Charles Albert survived. William Wittenmyer died shortly before the Civil War.
- In Keokuk in the 1850s, Annie Wittenmyer started a school for poor children. She organized local women to wash and clothe the children and found a benefactor to provide books. She also established a Sunday School, which evolved into Chatham Square Episcopal Methodist Church of Keokuk.
- Wittenmyer was the first president of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union from 1874 to 1879, a period of substantial growth in the WCTU movement.
- In the 1880s she wrote widely for national publications. In 1889 she served as national president of the Woman's Relief Corps, the woman's auxiliary of the Grand Army to the Republic (GAR), and helped establish and direct homes for former nurses and veterans' widows and mothers. In 1892 she won a long fight for government pensions for former army nurses.
- Wittenmyer died February 2, 1900, at the age of 72. She is buried in Sanatoga, Pennsylvania.

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