

The Mississippi Valley Traveler

Travel Guide
Lansing Iowa
to **LeClaire**

Along the Mississippi River in Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin



by Dean Klinkenberg

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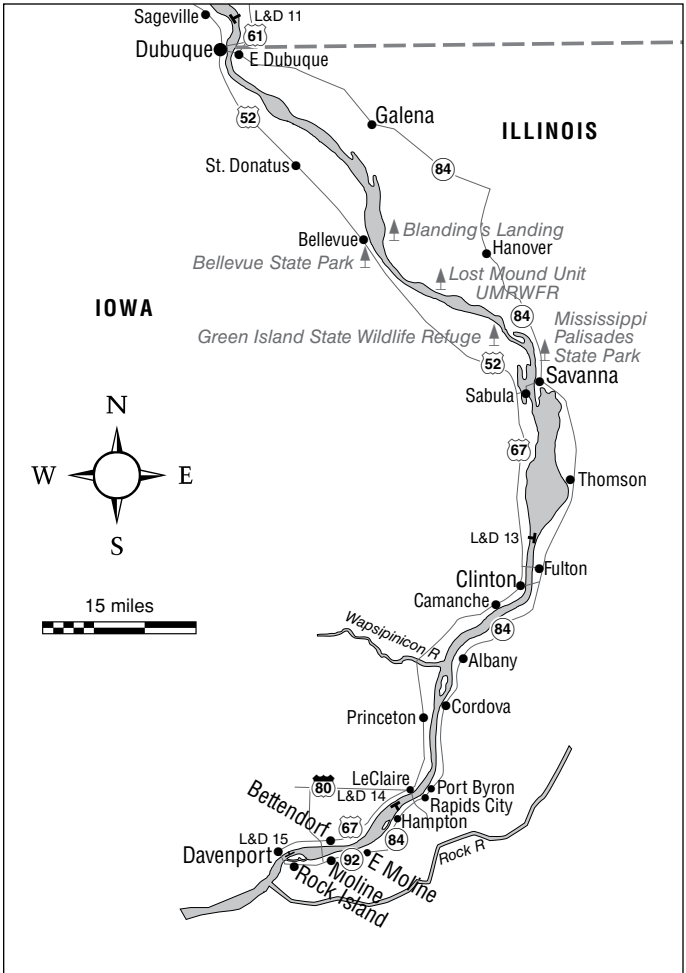
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OVERVIEW MAP







INTRODUCTION

Many areas can claim ownership, rightly, of larger-than-life figures, but the stretch of the Mississippi River from Lansing to LeClaire seems to have more than its fair share of big characters who left a deep mark on an already deep valley: Black Hawk, Father Samuel Mazzuchelli, fiercely independent fur traders, Diamond Jo Reynolds, rugged lead miners, Julien Dubuque, ridiculously wealthy lumber barons, Ulysses S. Grant, mysterious mound builders, and legendary river pilots.

This stretch of the Mississippi Valley is replete with small towns and open space. Hop in a canoe and get lost in the backwaters of the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge. Bike along sparsely traveled country roads and tackle a steep climb into the surrounding hills or glide along the flat roads in the flood plain. Enjoy dramatic views from the popular overlook at Pike's Peak State Park or challenge yourself with a steep climb at Rush Creek State Natural Area and take in the spectacular vistas without the crowds.

Visit apple orchards, enjoy fresh produce, or sample a hand-crafted beer at the born-again Potosi Brewery. Step back to the 19th century in Galena or McGregor; celebrate Luxembourg culture in tiny St. Donatus or

German heritage in Guttenberg; connect with voyagers and fur traders in Prairie du Chien; celebrate the railroads in Marquette; meditate with the Dominicans in Sinsinawa. Get out; explore; try something new; talk to a stranger. Whatever you do, don't rush. Schedule light, so you can take an extra hour or two hiking, chatting with new friends, or just watching the river. You can go back to running around like a madman when you get home.

Don't Miss

On the West Bank

- Effigy Mounds National Monument (page 39);
- The extraordinary sand art of Andrew Clemens in McGregor (page 50);
- The overlook at Pikes Peak State Park (page 51);
- National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, Dubuque (page 100).

On the East Bank

- Mississippi Palisades State Park north of Savanna (page 208);
- The historic district of Galena (page 225);
- The Potosi Brewery and its museums (and beer; page 271);
- Wyalusing State Park (page 298);
- Villa Louis, a well-preserved 19th century mansion in Prairie du Chien (page 309);
- The overlooks at Rush Creek State Natural Area (page 334).

Connecting Both Banks

- Take a ride on the Cassville Car Ferry; there aren't many left (page 280).

✓ **TIP:** If you travel on weekends in summer and fall, you should book accommodations well in advance. Rooms and campsites can be very hard to find at the last minute. However, if you can travel during the week, you will not only have no trouble finding somewhere to stay, but you may pay less and there will be far fewer of your fellow tourists.

About This Book

This is a travel guide, in case you haven't noticed. But, unlike many travel guides, this one includes more of the author, me, in the text. Yes, I want you to know about all the terrific attractions in the Upper Mississippi Valley, but I also want you to know some of the back story, like why certain places excite me.

I have a touch of attitude when it comes to travel. I want to get away from the familiar. I am not a fan of chain stores, malls, mass consumption, or mass marketing. If all you want to do on vacation is lie on the beach, sip apple-tinis, and shop at Eddie Bauer; if you buy all your art at the Pottery Barn; if your idea of a nice meal is the grilled chicken platter at TGI Fridays, then this book may not be for you. Sure, you can find national brands along the River Road—if that's what you need—but why not take a chance and try something that hasn't been focus-grouped and mass-marketed to the lowest common denominator? Why not sample some local flavor with a hand-crafted beer at the Potosi Brewery, or treat yourself to the homey atmosphere of a bed-and-breakfast? Relax, slow down, hang out, talk to people. That's my prescription for enjoying travel anywhere, and it will be very rewarding along the Mississippi Valley.



Julien Dubuque Bridge, Dubuque, Iowa.

✓ **TIP:** If you want to know more about my experiences writing this book, visit my website (www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com). I'll also be posting information that wouldn't fit in this volume.

About My Picks

This book has no advertisements, paid or otherwise. No one paid to get a listing. No one gave me a free meal or free place to stay in exchange for a listing. The recommendations in this book, for better or for worse, are based upon my judgment of what is good, interesting, fascinating, or just worthy of your time.

Restaurants ✂

Look, I can't possibly eat at every single restaurant that might be good. I don't have time for it; I can't afford it; and I don't want to look like the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man, again. That's just the way it goes. Restaurants get on my radar screen through recommendations from locals and visitors. I also pay attention to the places that are always busy. If I don't eat at a particular restaurant, I stop by anyway to check out the visuals

and to look over a menu. If a restaurant is busy and locals speak highly of it, I'll put it in the book, even if I don't get a chance to taste their food personally.

Bars 🍷

My preferences tend toward dives and brewpubs, which are both over-represented in this book. Along the River Road, you will find outstanding brewpubs and dozens if not hundreds of friendly neighborhood taverns and roadhouses. Let me know your favorites. Maybe we'll meet there for a drink, especially if you're buying.

Accommodations 📖

I personally visited every accommodation listed in this book. If a place exists, and it's not in this book, it either means I didn't care for it or my attempts to set up a visit were not successful, and, believe me, I was very accommodating in my attempts to visit. I have listed a wide range of accommodation options, from campgrounds to bed-and-breakfasts to luxury hotels. My bias is to support independent motels, inns, and bed-and-breakfasts. I only provide detailed information for chain hotels that have a spectacular property on the river. Otherwise, I simply note where the chain hotels are located—after all, they tend to cluster like politicians around fundraisers.

A note about the rates cited in the book: I asked for rates for two adults on a Saturday night during the summer, which is when most people travel to the region; peak season in some places is actually mid-September to mid-October, so you may pay a little more for a room at that time.

So here's the disclaimer: room rates can vary tremendously depending upon a number of factors that are beyond my control. You may be able to do better



Nelson Dewey State Park, Cassville, Wis.

than the rates quoted here, especially during the week, but many of the smaller places—bed-and-breakfast inns and mom-and-pop motels—have little room to bargain, unless you want to negotiate an extended stay.

Also, I assume you know that budget motels (which I arbitrarily define as under \$80/night for two people) are a mixed bag. Some are noisy; rooms are not always of consistent quality; and sometimes they get bad reputations, although often for reasons that are greatly exaggerated. But, they usually have the most affordable rates. If all you want is a cheap place to sleep, budget motels should suit you fine. If peeling paint and a few truck drivers scare you, however, you should probably stay somewhere else. So there, you've been warned.

✓ **TIP:** Camping for up to 14 days is permitted on virtually any beach, sandbar, or island within the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge. You don't need any special permit, and it is free. You may have neighbors on summer weekends and there are no services, but it is a great way to experience the river. Head to their website for more details (www.fws.gov/midwest/UpperMississippiRiver/Documents/FSFRegs08.pdf).

HISTORY

Two Defining Events: The Black Hawk War and Lead Mining

When the Sauk and Mesquakie moved into the area in the 18th century, they became another in a long line of people to call the Mississippi Valley home. In the preceding 12,000 years (about as long as Larry King has hosted a talk show), the Valley has been home to hunters and gatherers, mound builders, Illiniwek, Ho-Chunk, and Dakota, to name a few.

In the early 19th century, increasing numbers of settlers were moving into northwest Illinois. Treaties with Native Americans, particularly with Sauk and Mesquakie, were supposed to limit settlements to specific areas, but, by the late 1820s encroachments on Indian lands grew more frequent. Two distinct philosophies about how to respond emerged in the Sauk and Mesquakie nations. One group believed they could not resist the Americans and should accept relocation to lands west of the Mississippi. This group was led by *Keokuk*. The other group believed that existing treaties were not valid because they had not been negotiated by Sauks with the proper authority. This group was led by *Black Hawk*, who was growing increasingly agitated at the treaty violations.

Under threat from federal forces, Keokuk and his followers agreed to permanently resettle west of the Mississippi. Black Hawk, however, continued to return to Saukenuk (their village on the east bank of the river) from winter grounds for the next two years. When he returned to Saukenuk in 1831, he found

squatters living in the lodges. Black Hawk's return sparked several small skirmishes and renewed threats from the Illinois governor to exterminate the Indians if the federal government failed to remove them permanently. Weakened by the departure of many Sauk and Mesquakie families, Black Hawk sought alliances with nearby Kickapoos, Potawatomis, and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago).



Black Hawk (Davenport Public Library)

Among those who offered support was *White Cloud*, a prominent leader of Ho-Chunk communities along the Rock River. By June of 1831, however, large numbers of federal troops had moved into the area, prompting Black Hawk to return to the west bank of the Mississippi. Soon after that, the army moved into Saukenuk and torched it. Rebuked, Black Hawk signed a new treaty promising to stay on the western side of the Mississippi River and to recognize Keokuk as the legitimate leader of the Sauk.

Tensions between Indians and settlers never really abated, however. White settlers regularly ambushed Indians and desecrated grave sites. Meanwhile, the federal government failed to supply the corn it promised under the terms of the treaty. Faced with starvation, some Indians returned to their ancestral lands in Illinois to harvest any remaining corn, but this move

only exacerbated tensions with whites.

In the middle of this mess, Black Hawk accepted an offer from White Cloud to relocate to a Ho-Chunk village along the Rock River in north-central Illinois, breaking his agreement with the US government. Encouraged by rumors that the British would offer support, Black Hawk crossed the Mississippi in April 1832 with 800 Sauk and Mesquakie and 200 Ho-Chunk, intent on re-establishing the Sauk in ancestral lands and proving the injustice of American claims. Black Hawk's actions did not go unnoticed; Illinois rapidly organized several hundred volunteers to pursue him.

Very quickly Black Hawk realized that no help was coming from the British. Further, in spite of White Cloud's assurances, the Ho-Chunk, fearing reprisals from state and federal officials, did not want the Sauks living in their village. Black Hawk moved northwest and, after the Potawatomis also refused to help him, was ready to give up and return to the west side of the Mississippi. Hopes for a peaceful settlement ended when a group of Illinois militia botched a surrender attempt by Black Hawk and triggered a brief fight known as the Battle of Stillman's Run. Although few people were killed in the battle, any hopes for a quick, peaceful settlement ended, and Black Hawk gave up his plan to return to the west via the Rock River. Illinois mustered an additional 2,000 men, including a young Abraham Lincoln.

The ensuing war was more of a lengthy game of hide-and-seek, with Black Hawk and his followers on the run most of the time, trying to stay ahead of a motley group of undisciplined volunteers. Black Hawk made at least two additional attempts to surrender, both of which were misinterpreted by the militias and led to more battles and continued retreat. The Sauk

Name Games

“**W**hat’s in a name? that which we call a rose By any other name would smell as sweet.” Was Shakespeare right? Would we feel the same reverence for the river we know as the Mississippi, if Marquette prevailed, and Huck Finn rafted on the Immaculate Conception instead? What if Jolliet’s Buade caught on? Rivière de Colbert, the name preferred by Frontenac, LaSalle, and Hennepin, has a certain rhythm (and would please a certain late-night fake news pundit), but would Mark Twain’s *Life on the Colbert* have been a best seller? Lucky for us, the Ojibway words Missi Sipi (Great River or Big Water) survived and that which we call the Mississippi is grand.

moved through northwestern Illinois and into southern Wisconsin before making a break for the Mississippi River at Bad Axe Creek (north of Prairie du Chien).

The only major battle of the war occurred on August 2nd when the pursuing troops finally caught up with the majority of the Sauk force. Black Hawk and White Cloud tried to convince the group to continue north toward Ho-Chunk villages and a possible safe haven, but most of the remaining band wanted to get across the Mississippi as quickly as possible. Black Hawk, White Cloud, and a few others separated from the main group and went north, while the majority built rafts to cross the river. Unfortunately, the pursuing armies converged on the main group before most could safely cross the river.

Initially, both sides fought in equal numbers, but federal troops and volunteers flooded into the battle and turned it into a rout, killing more than 200 Sauk men and women. Meanwhile, 150 Sauk had managed to cross the Mississippi safely into Iowa but were immediately detected by *Wabasha*, a Dakota chief who was aiding the Americans. Most of these Sauk were tracked and killed by the Dakota. Of the 1,000 Sauk who had followed Black Hawk across the Mississippi River back into Illinois, fewer than 200 survived.

Black Hawk was eventually convinced to give up—again—so he surrendered to the Ho-Chunk agent at Fort Crawford. In the aftermath of the war, many Indians—even those who had been friendly and cooperated with the United States—were forced by the American government to make additional land concessions.

With the war over and Indians removed west, development took off in the area and waves of settlers poured in. Much of the early growth was fueled by lead mining. Native Americans had been mining

lead for generations but used it primarily in jewelry. Europeans learned of the lead deposits as early as 1658 from local Dakota, but the first recorded attempt to profit from lead mining



Grant with Galena lead miners (Library of Congress).

wasn't until Nicolas Perrot set up a trading post in 1690. Thirty years later, Phillip Francois de Renault set up camp with 200 miners and 500 slaves but mined for only a few years.

In 1778, *Julien Dubuque* left Cahokia, Illinois, for the lead region. Young and ambitious, he successfully negotiated mining rights with Native Americans who lived on the west side of the Mississippi River, and, as a result, became the most prosperous miner in the region. Sauk and Mesquakie Indians jumped into the fray and began mining and smelting lead for trade with Europeans. By 1816, lead was being shipped in large quantities down the Mississippi to St. Louis; *George Davenport*, in whose honor a city downriver is named, was among the first to do so. In 1818, John and Tyler Armstrong arrived from Green Bay and built the first home in what would become Galena. A steady flow of settlers soon followed, including many Irish, French, Welch, and relocated Americans from south-central states like Missouri and Kentucky.

Although the US Congress had set up a mechanism for granting mine leases in 1807, the first one was not granted until 1822. The recipient, *Colonel James Johnson*, traveled upriver from Kentucky with 20 white

miners and 150 slaves. After negotiating a deal with local Ho-Chunk, his mine flourished; the following year, the US granted nine more leases.

In 1823, 425,000 pounds of ore were shipped down the Fever River from Galena; just six years later that had increased to 13,000,000 pounds and peaked in 1845 at 54,000,000 pounds. In just a few years, the US went from importing lead from England to being the largest lead exporter in the world—80 percent of that lead came from the mines around Galena.

After the removal of Indians, a wider range of settlers moved into the area. Many new arrivals bought land and began farming, and new towns sprang up. Fur trading faded into the background as new industries emerged and the railroads pushed deeper into the heartland. Savanna and McGregor quickly became regional transport hubs. Clinton became a lumber manufacturer powerhouse. LeClaire was home for river pilots and boatyards. In a short time, communities on both sides of the Mississippi River were settled and went through boom and bust cycles, re-inventing themselves out of economic necessity, a cycle that continues to this day.

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• **RANDOM FACT:** *The first European to see the Mississippi River was the Spaniard Hernando de Soto, who reached the Mississippi just south of Memphis in 1541. The following year, De Soto contracted a fever and died. His men buried him inside a log and sunk it in the Mississippi, because they feared word of his death would trigger an attack by Indians who believed that de Soto was immortal.*

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GREAT RIVER ROAD ROUTE OVERVIEW

The boundaries of this loop are the Black Hawk Bridge in the north that connects Lansing, Iowa, to rural Wisconsin and the Fred Schwengel Memorial Bridge to the south connecting LeClaire, Iowa, with Rapids City, Illinois, via Interstate 80. The entire loop is about 360 miles. The northern reaches have the best views of the river, while the southern sections tend to wander inland through the hills and flood plain. The route on the west bank covers roughly 170 miles and stays entirely in Iowa. The route along the Great River Road follows:

- Allamakee County Highway X52 past Harpers Ferry;
- Iowa Highway 76 past Effigy Mounds National Monument to Marquette;
- Business US Highway 18 between Marquette and McGregor;
- Clayton County Highway X56 to Guttenberg;
- US Highway 52 to Millville;
- Clayton/Dubuque County Highway C9Y to North Buena Vista, Balltown, and Sherrill;
- Circle Ridge Road (or Sherrill Rd.; your choice) to Sageville;
- Highway 52 through Dubuque and Bellevue;
- Iowa Highway 64;
- US Highway 67 through Clinton and to Interstate 80 at LeClaire.

On the east bank the route meanders about 190

miles through Illinois and Wisconsin, following these roads:

- Illinois Highway 84;
- US Highway 20 through Galena and East Dubuque;
- Illinois Highway 35 through East Dubuque and into Wisconsin;
- Wisconsin Highway 35 to Potosi;
- Wisconsin Highway 133 into Potosi and to Cassville;
- Grant County Highway VV;
- Grant County Highway A to Bagley;
- Grant County Highway X past Wyalusing State Park;
- Grant County Highway C;
- Wisconsin Highway 35 through Prairie du Chien and to the end of the loop at the Black Hawk Bridge.

River Crossings

- The **Black Hawk Bridge**, connecting 2nd Street in Lansing, Iowa with Wisconsin Highway 35 in rural Crawford County, Wisconsin via Iowa Highway 9/ Wisconsin Highway 82. Completed in 1931, the Black Hawk Bridge is a visually striking configuration of two tall trusses linked by a low-arched truss that somehow looks a little bit off;
- the **Marquette-Joliet Bridge** connecting Marquette, Iowa, with Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, via US Highway 18 is a tied-arch bridge completed in 1975;
- between May and October the **Cassville Car Ferry** (page 280) connects rural Iowa with Cassville, Wisconsin;
- the **City Island Bridge** connecting Dubuque, Iowa, to rural southwestern Wisconsin via US

Highways 61 and 151; it is another tied-arch bridge, completed in 1982;

- the graceful **Julien Dubuque Bridge** connecting Dubuque, Iowa, with East Dubuque, Illinois, via US Highway 20; opened in 1943, it uses an arched steel truss design;
- the white-knuckle **Savanna-Sabula Bridge** connecting Sabula, Iowa, with Savanna, Illinois, via US Highway 52, Iowa Highway 64, and Illinois Highway 64; a steel truss bridge completed in 1933 that has a steel grate deck so you can see right down to the river, especially if you are riding a motorcycle;
- the **Lyons-Fulton Bridge** (aka the North Bridge) connecting Clinton, Iowa, and Fulton, Illinois, via Iowa Highway 136 and Illinois Highway 136; completed in 1975, this steel truss bridge has a sidewalk for pedestrians and bicyclists;
- the **Gateway Bridge** (aka the South Bridge) connecting Clinton, Iowa, with East Clinton, Illinois, via US Highway 30; a suspension bridge completed in 1956; and
- the uninspired **Fred Schwengel Memorial Bridge** connecting LeClaire, Iowa, with Rapids City, Illinois, via Interstate 80; completed in 1966.



TIP: Check my website for ideas on itineraries (www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com).

LANSING

(population 1,012)

Lansing is a consummate river town, with an economy that has historically, for better or worse, been dependent upon the Mississippi River. Even if the Lansing of today has fewer people making a living from river-related jobs, the Mississippi remains central to the town's identity.

Arriving in Town

Main Street is the primary east-west road, beginning at the Mississippi River and exiting town as State Highway 9 toward Waukon. Front Street parallels the Mississippi River and becomes County Highway X52 as it exits town to the south.

History

Europeans moved into the area in 1848, just as the Ho-Chunk were leaving. Among the first settlers was *William Garrison*, who hailed from Lansing, Michigan. He did not stick around, but his name for the town did. The following year, Galena transplants *John Haney* and his son, *James*, arrived, followed in short order by *H.H. Houghton*. They built a few mills in Lansing and prospered. Houghton used part of his fortune to build a stone mansion on the side of Mt. Hosmer in 1863 (it is still there).

Lansing was a remote outpost in those early years. Boats passed town just a few times a month and rarely stopped. Communication with the outside world was sporadic in the winter with mail arriving only once a week. Residents had to travel across the frozen Mis-



Black Hawk Bridge, Lansing, Iowa.

Mississippi to Prairie du Chien, which had the nearest railroad. When the ice was not thick enough to walk across, Lansing residents were on their own. The town had a good spot for steamboats to land and eventually became a key supply point for the region; the town grew five-fold in 20 years—from 440 residents in 1854 to 2,280 in 1875.

Just south of nascent Lansing, the town of Columbus also had a bustling boat landing. Columbus was chosen as the first county seat in 1851. (See the sidebar about the battles for the Allamakee county seat). When the town was platted in 1852, two acres were set aside for county buildings; nothing was ever built and, when the county seat was moved, Columbus essentially disappeared. A name change in 1857—to Capoli, in honor of the bluff of the same name above town (this bluff was called Cap-a-l'ail by Henry Schoolcraft)—did not save the town.

Lansing residents have been resilient in the face of changing economic fortunes. The town's initial growth was fueled by a booming trade in shipping grain and the *Kerndt brothers* (Gustav, Moritz, Wil-

liam, Julius) were part of the reason. They built a warehouse in 1859 and an elevator in 1861; both riverfront structures are still standing. Fortunes slumped for a while as the wheat harvest declined, but farmers eventually switched to dairy, livestock, and other crops. Local industry received a boost when the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad arrived in 1872; townsfolk threw an exuberant party on May 8 to celebrate the arrival of the first train.

Lansing also profited from the lumber business in the late 1800s; during the peak years of the lumber trade, log rafts floated continuously downriver. As the great northern forests were depleted around the turn of the 20th century, Lansing developed an industry producing pearl buttons from Mississippi River mussels. As the pearl button industry declined in the 1920s, commercial fishing took up the slack. Lansing's economy today is closely tied to farming, with a boost from the tourist trade.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Tourism information is available through the representative of the **Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce** (563.538.4543; M–F 9–5) and through **Allamakee County Economic Development** (800.824.1424/563.568.2624; M–F 8:30–4:30).

Attractions 💡

The Museum of River History (60 S. Front St.; 563.538.4864/563.538.3943; by appt.; free) is one of my favorite local history museums along the Mississippi. Housed in the Kerndt & Brothers Elevator, the collection is focused on—get out!—river history. Wow. Displays illustrate the fishing business with tools of the trade for clamming, fish processing, and ice harvesting. Heck, they even have a collection of outboard motors.



The Point's Courthouse.

County Seat Battle in Allamakee County

Residents of Allamakee County voted ten times in twenty-five years to decide which town would be the county seat; many elections were decided by only a handful of votes, and the Supreme Court of Iowa had to decide one.

The problems began when The Stake, an uninhabited area, was chosen as the first county seat in 1849. The decision proved unpopular. Columbus (south of Lansing) won the 1851 election but didn't keep the county seat for long. Waukon won the next election and tried to cement the decision by building a courthouse in 1859. Two years later, The Point (also near Lansing) prevailed; following the lead of Waukon, they also built a courthouse. It didn't work out any better for them.

The 1864 election ended up in court, with a preliminary ruling in favor of Waukon (by just 23 votes). The Point appealed but several Waukon residents, including the sheriff, raided the The Point's courthouse and took the records; a posse returned them to The Point. But, in 1867, the Iowa Supreme Court agreed that Waukon was indeed the rightful winner of the 1864 election. In two subsequent elections, Waukon won again and the issue was settled for good. Both of the mid-1800 era courthouses are still around—in Waukon as a local history museum and in Lansing as a private residence (630 S. 2nd St.).

Mount Hosmer Park (N. 6th St.; 563.538.4757) is a 75-acre bluff-top park with commanding views of the Mississippi River from a perch 440 feet high. It was named after one Harriet Hosmer, a rather well-known sculptor from the East Coast in her day, who was reported to have raced up the hill in record time during a steamboat stop in the 1850s.

Our Savior's Lutheran Church (480 Diagonal St.; 563.538.4664) was founded in 1867 as Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church; Norwegian-language services were offered as late as the 1940s. The current building was completed around 1878. In 1946, the building was expanded when the closed Faegre Prairie Church was moved and attached to the east side (and given a matching brick façade); the art glass windows original to Faegre Prairie Church now adorn the parish hall. If you are here on a Wednesday evening, join them at the church for the Laughter Club (6–6:30), where they practice Laughter Yoga (good for people of all physical abilities); you don't need to speak Norwegian to participate.

Getting Out on the River

River excursions are offered by **Mississippi Explorer Cruises** (Main & Front Sts.; 563.586.4444), specialists in tours that focus on wildlife and the environment along the Upper Miss. Tour days, times, and prices from Lansing vary, so call to verify.

S & S Rentals Houseboat Rentals (990 S. Front St.; 800.728.0131/563.538.4454; M–Sa 8–5, Su 9–4 from mid-May–mid-October) can equip you with a houseboat to explore the Mississippi River; weekly rentals in summer run \$2400–\$4100/week.

✓ **TIP:** Life in the country progresses at a different pace than life in the city. This is also true of country drivers. Yes, some drive very fast, but, for the most part, country drivers are not in as much of a hurry as you are, so slow down and take your time. Also, you can't help but notice that railroad tracks parallel the river almost everywhere. Most crossings have automated warning signals but many that cross infrequently traveled country roads do not. Pay attention; you won't fare well in a collision with a train.

Entertainment and Events

Lansing Fish Days (563.538.4641) is the event of the summer social season in Lansing, usually held the second weekend in August; highlights include duck races, granny basketball, and eating lots of fish.

Sports and Recreation

The **Lansing Swimming Pool** (490 Bench St.; 563.538.4343; \$4/adults; open swim daily from 1p–5p, 7p–9p) is on the west side of town.

Shopping

THE RED GERANIUM (60 S. Front St.; 563.538.3943; M–F 9–5 Sa 9–2), next door to the Museum of River History and housed in the same Kerndt & Brothers Elevator, is a fun place to shop for all things floral and creative gifts for that special someone. • **HORSEFALLS LANSING VARIETY** (300 & 360 Main St.; 563.538.4966; M–Sa 9–5, Su noon–4) is an old-fashioned variety store—two variety stores, to be precise—where “variety” is taken seriously; wander through tightly packed aisles stacked high with toys, kitchen supplies, greeting cards, and just about anything else you can imagine. Consider leaving a trail of bread crumbs to find your way out. • **FELICITY ARTS** (80 S. 2nd St.; 563.538.9279; W–Sa 10–4) is a

glassblowing studio and gift shop. They host occasional glassblowing demonstrations, usually in concert with local festivals.

Eating and Drinking

TJ HUNTERS (377 Main St.; 563.538.4544; daily 7a–9p, bar open later) serves up Mid-American cuisine on steroids. Check out the monster burgers: 12 ounces of ground beef with toppings to match (\$10). The fiesta chicken sandwich (\$7) is loaded with an entire jalapeno; something to warm your innards on a cold January day. If you're looking for something more pedestrian, they also serve a range of sandwiches (\$6–\$8), a few Mexican staples (\$9–\$12), and standard steak and seafood entrées (\$9–\$30)

MILTY'S RESTAURANT AND BAR (200 Main St.; 563.538.4585; Tu–Th 10:30–9; F 10:30a–10, Sa 6a–10p, Su 6a–9p; bar open later) is a festive place, with friendly staff and reliable food. Entrées include the standard range of steaks, pork, and pasta (\$8–\$14), but Milty's also offers themed buffets on a regular basis (seafood, Mexican) and a Friday night fish fry. They have live music on some nights.

You can't beat the views at **RIVER'S EDGE BAR AND RESTAURANT** (10 S. Front St.; 563.538.4497; M–Sa 6a–2a, Su 7a–2a; kitchen closes about 9p). Standard breakfast items run about \$4–\$7. For other meals, the burgers (\$3–\$5) and catfish (\$10) won't disappoint. They also have a good selection of quality beer.

Sleeping

Camping and Cabins. RED BARN RESORT AND CAMPGROUND (2609 Main St.; 888.538.4956/563.538.4956; open mid-April thru mid-October) has

117 sites on the western edge of Lansing, most with water and electric (\$18/basic, \$24/full hookup); they also offer five RVs for nightly rentals (\$65 + tax).

Bed and Breakfast. About eight miles west of Lansing, **OUR TARA INN** (1231 Highway 9; 563.568.2665/563.380.8272; WiFi) sits atop one of the highest points in Iowa; on a clear day you can see Minnesota and Wisconsin. The four rooms and one suite are in a rehabbed, 1896-era barn. Each is well equipped with full bath, coffee maker, microwave, fridge, and satellite TV (\$70–\$150).

Budget. THE SCENIC VALLEY MOTEL (1608 Main St.; 563.538.4245; WiFi) has 12 rooms (\$55–\$65 + tax), some with small refrigerators, and a cabin (\$70 + tax) with microwave, refrigerator, and stove. Rooms are well maintained, clean, but not big. • **MILTY'S** (200 Main St.; 563.538.4585) rents a spacious, unadorned second floor apartment (\$70 + tax for two people, \$10/each extra person). The 3 bedroom/1 bathroom smoke-free apartment has a big deck, off-street parking, full kitchen, satellite TV, and washer and dryer.

Moderate. MCGARRITY'S INN ON MAIN (203 Main St.; 866.538.9262/563.538.9262; WiFi) is home to four impressively rehabbed, luxury suites; each unit is spacious, beautiful and loaded with amenities like exposed brick walls, wood floors, cable TV, full bath, and kitchenette (\$85–\$170 + tax).

Houses. UNCLE CHARLIE'S PLACE (221 Walnut St.; 319.393.1423; \$187.50 per night with a two-night minimum; WiFi) is a furnished three-bedroom house loaded with amenities: full kitchen, 1½ baths, BBQ grill, garage, sauna, and great views. • **MURPHY'S COVE BED AND BATH** (51 N. Front St.; 563.568.6448; \$190 + tax/2-night minimum on summer weekends) offers a fully furnished riverfront

house with 3 bedrooms, 1¾ baths, and with amenities like garage parking, a BBQ grill, and cable TV in a new, immaculate house; the views are great, especially from the second floor master bedroom and deck.

Resources

- Post Office: 383 Main St.; 563.538.4767.
- Meehan Memorial Lansing Public Library: 515 Main St.; 563.538.4693; M 9–10:30, Tu,F 1–4:30 & 7–9, Th 1–7, Sa 8:30–noon.

WEXFORD

(Unincorporated)

About eight miles south of Lansing, the road descends into a bowl-shaped valley bisected by Wexford Creek. In 1850, the *Reverend Thomas Hore* led a group of some 450 people out of Ireland to escape the potato famine. After reaching the US, they traveled from New Orleans up the Mississippi River to Arkansas, where many immigrants stopped and joined small Irish enclaves nearby. A few continued north to St. Louis with Father Hore. In spring 1851, he bought 2,000 acres in Allamakee County, then returned to St. Louis and accompanied 18 families to this valley. In short order they built a log church they called St. George. Father Hore returned to Ireland in 1858—he would die there a few years later—and nearby Trappists picked up his ministry. The log church burned down and was replaced by a frame church around 1858. It proved to be too small, so the parish built a stone church that was dedicated in 1870 as **Immaculate Conception Catholic Church** (1416 Great River Rd.; 563.586.2150). This simple country church is simply beautiful, built of limestone quarried from nearby hills and surrounded by a cemetery on three sides and a hill on the fourth.

✓ TIP: For an easy hike along the river, walk the dike at Lock and Dam 9 (608.874.4311). Turn on Red Oak Road at its southern terminus (the one just north of Mohn Fish Market, not the one by Wexford Immaculate Conception Church), then take a quick right across the railroad tracks to the small parking area. Bring a fishing pole (and bug spray), if you are so inclined. (Note: Red Oak Road is a through-road that runs along the Mississippi River; some stretches of the four mile road are only minimally maintained, however, and would probably be very difficult to navigate when wet.)

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

HARPERS FERRY

(population 330)

Harpers Ferry won't wow you with the beauty of its architecture. Many of the homes are of the mobile variety and are occupied by seasonal residents only. A sleepy village of 330 people in the winter, the population jumps ten-fold in the summer. The area has several lodging options and many ways to experience the outdoors, but visitors passing through on the River Road will find few reasons to stop in the town itself.

Arriving in Town

Allamakee County Highway X52 skirts town from the southwest to the northeast as Rhomberg Avenue. The riverfront and most of the town can be reached by turning east on Chestnut Street (at the four-way stop).

History

It took a while for folks to decide what to call their town. In the early years, it was called Paint Rock Prairie, then Vailsville (after early settler Horace Vail). The village was platted in 1852 as Winfield by *William Hall and Dresden Howard*. The Iowa Legislature changed the name to Harpers Ferry in 1860, in honor of pioneer settler David Harper. With a wide, flat plain extending one mile to the bluffs and three miles along the slough, Harper recognized the potential for this area as a steamboat landing, a potential that never really materialized, however. The town never hit it big; it had 300 residents in 1913, about what it claims today.

Among the early settlers of the town were a number of Norwegians, including *Ole Larson and Ole Knutson*

who arrived in 1850. (I just like the sounds of their names, so I included them.) Another early settler, *Asle Knutson*—another great name—was adept at improvising shelter. After he arrived, he cut down a hollow basswood tree, then cut off a 16-foot section. In one end, he stuffed hay, his belongings, and then himself; he closed the other end with more hay. A knot hole provided ventilation and, with the log oriented to the east, also served as an alarm clock. Asle was single, in case you were wondering.

Tourist Information ⓘ

You can get information about Harpers Ferry from either the **Allamakee County Economic Development** (800.824.1424/563.568.2624; M–F 8:30–4:30) or **Northeast Iowa Tourism** (www.visitiowa.org).

Attractions

Tillinghast Park (1st and Vine Streets) is near the river and a nice spot for a picnic.

The simple white frame building for **St. Ann-St. Joseph Catholic Church** (307 Orange St.; 563.586.2350) was built in 1897.

Two miles south of town, **Harpers Slough** (800.824.1424/563.568.2624) has several picnic tables along a narrow strip of land between the river, a mobile home community, and the highway.

Getting Out on the River

Maiden Voyage Tours (563.586.2123) runs a variety of eco-tours on the Mississippi River. On Sunday mornings they offer a tour with open boarding from the Harpers Ferry riverfront (10:30a–1p generally from June to October; \$15).

If you want to canoe on the Yellow River, rentals

are available through **BIG FOOT CANOE RENTAL** (563.539.4272; call ahead to schedule; kayak/canoe rentals \$15/\$20 a day during the week or \$20/\$25 on weekends + transportation fee if you need a lift); they offer routes that last from two to nine hours and could get you all the way to the Mississippi River.

Entertainment and Events 🎵

Harpers Ferry hosts a **Farmers' Market** on Friday evenings from May to October (5p–7p) at Bluffview Park (County Highways X52 & B25).

In August, the town celebrates its heritage with **Harpers Ferry Days** (563.586.2421), a weekend party with a ski show, parade, music, and festival food.

Sports and Recreation 🌊

Just west of Harpers Ferry, **Yellow River State Forest** (729 State Forest Rd.; 563.586.2254) is a jewel in the crown of Iowa public lands. The state forest consists of many separate units, but most of the recreational opportunities (hiking, mountain biking, fishing, hunting, canoeing, horseback riding) are in the Paint Creek Unit, which is about five miles from Harpers Ferry.

Shopping

MOHN FISH MARKET (1140 Great River Rd.; 563.586.2269; M–F 8–12 & 1–5, Sa 8–12 & 1–4), just north of Harpers Ferry is one of the few remaining full-time commercial fishing operations on the Mississippi; pick up some smoked carp, catfish, or sturgeon (or maybe some pickled suckers) for your next picnic.

Drinking 🍷

The building that houses **BUCK N BULLS** (402 W. Chestnut; 563.586.2117; M–Sa 6a–close, Su 11a–

close) was once known as Jim's Tavern; it dates to the 1850s. The tavern is a popular summer hangout.

Sleeping

Camping. A bit off the river road, **SCENIC VIEW CAMPGROUND** (420 Old 16 Rd.; 563.535.7347; WiFi) is a full-service campground next to the Yellow River; they have about two dozen sites for overnight campers that range from primitive to full hookups (\$15/basic, \$20/full hookup).

The **Paint Creek Unit of Yellow River State Forest** has two campgrounds with primitive sites (\$9), a horse campground (\$12), and sites for backcountry backpackers (\$9). (Who knew it was possible to go backcountry backpacking in Iowa?)


Bed and Breakfast. Service is a priority at the **POINT OF VIEW BED AND BREAKFAST** (416 Luster Heights Rd.; 563.586.2061), a ridgetop house just south of Harpers Ferry with four rooms for rent (\$100–\$120 + tax, incl full breakfast). The house has views of the Mississippi Valley and backwaters (especially from the widow's nest), plus extensive grounds with hiking trails. They also have a rental cottage that can sleep eight (\$150 + tax for 4; no breakfast).

Budget. **HARPERS MOTEL** (415 W. Chestnut St.; 563.586.2403) has a new owner who is fixing things up; the four rooms are basic and small but clean (\$50 + tax).

Cabins. **ANDY MOUNTAIN CAMPGROUND** (2335 Andy Mountain Lane; 563.586.2123; WiFi) has five beautiful log cabins available for overnight rental (\$95 + tax from May 1 – October 31; \$65/night the rest of the year; \$10/night for each extra person); on summer weekends, there is a two-night minimum stay.

Resources

- Post Office: 131 N. Greeley Ave.; 563.586.2175.
- Dolores Tillinghast Memorial Library: 234 N. 4th St.; 563.586.2524; M 9–11, Tu, Sa 9–noon, W 3–7, Th 5–7, F 2–5.

 **TIP:** If you define hiking as taking a stroll along the boardwalk in Atlantic City, then I have a few suggestions to help make your hiking experience in Upper Miss country more enjoyable: 1) bring water, plenty of it; 2) bring bug spray; 3) a walking stick will make the hike more pleasant; 4) wear long pants and good hiking shoes (heels don't count); 5) learn to identify poison ivy; 6) and wear a hat.

WAUKON JUNCTION

(Unincorporated)

History

When a railroad spur was built in 1877 to connect the tracks along the Mississippi River with Waukon, Iowa, this area was transformed from wilderness into, well, something just a little less wild. The community that grew around the spur was first called Adams Junction, in honor of the president of the Waukon Railroad, *D. W. Adams*. After the tracks were laid, a few houses were built, a post office was established, and the name of the village was changed to Waukon Junction. A hotel went up where you could get two meals and a bed for \$1.35. The hotel burned down in the 1920s and was not rebuilt; by the mid-1940s, Waukon Junction was no longer a rail stop and the track to Waukon abandoned; part of it is now a hiking trail through Yellow River State Forest.



Great Bear Mound Group, at Effigy Mounds National Monument (National Park Service).

EFFIGY MOUNDS

Just south of Waukon Junction, there is a series of remarkable burial mounds at **Effigy Mounds National Monument** (151 State Highway 76; 563.873.3491; Visitors' Center open M–F 8–5, Sa, Su 8–6; grounds open daily sunrise–sunset; \$3/person or \$5/car). Dozens of animal-shaped mounds were built by Native Americans between 850 and 1,400 years ago that are fully recognizable only from several feet above them. The most common design is a bear, but you will also see birds, turtles, bison, and lizards. Start at the Visitor's Center for an overview of the history of the mounds and their construction. The mounds in the Marching Bear Group in the South Unit are especially impressive; getting to them requires a moderately strenuous four-mile round-trip hike. In the North Unit, the longest hiking route is seven miles and includes several good overlooks of the Mississippi River. You can easily spend half a day at Effigy Mounds. I hiked nearly all of the South Unit trails in about two hours. You won't find any drinking fountains along the trails, so bring water if you plan on being out for more than a short hike. And don't forget the bug spray. Effigy Mounds hosts several festivals and special events throughout the year such as the **Native American Cultural Festival** held every two or three years.

Hey, what's that? Before you reach Marquette, there's a marker describing the old Military Road, plus a few picnic tables in a narrow strip of land between the river and the railroad tracks.

MARQUETTE

(population 421)

Tucked into a small valley at the end of Bloody Run Creek, Marquette was once a major railroad hub and is still a hotbed for railroad enthusiasts, especially during the town's annual festival celebrating the railroad.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 76 enters town from the north and becomes 1st Street along the river; North Street is the main east-west road (and is just about the only east-west road). Business 18 connects Marquette with McGregor and may leave you feeling claustrophobic: the road passes right next to the bluff on one side and railroad tracks on the other that always seem to host a parked train.

History

Around 1785, when the area was under Spanish rule, *Basil Giard* moved from Wisconsin and made a land claim; he built three cabins and began farming a small plot. The American government refused to recognize his land claims, so in 1808 he moved back to Prairie du Chien. After his death, his claims were ultimately upheld and awarded to his heirs, who sold off the land; some of the land became the town of McGregor, and some became North McGregor.

Bloody Run Creek empties into the Mississippi at Marquette; it was initially known as Giard's Creek. (I think you can figure out why.) The current name apparently goes back to *Lt. Martin Scott* from Fort Crawford, an avid hunter in the area, who, on his frequent



Marquette pontoon bridge.

trips across the river, would reportedly remark: “I am going to make the blood run today over on my hunting ground.” His soldier buddies heard this so often that they started to refer to the creek as Bloody Run. I have no idea if that’s true, but it’s not a bad story.

When the railroad reached Prairie du Chien in 1857, Iowa got a serious case of railroad envy. Speculation that a rail line would be built up the Bloody Run valley led to the development of a supply point in 1857 at the mouth of Bloody Run Creek and a small settlement grew up around it that was called North McGregor. Just a year later, North McGregor had 300 residents and a booming business community.

After a few failed attempts, construction of the proposed line from North McGregor to Monona, Iowa, was finally completed in 1864. North McGregor was eventually tied into the first all-rail route between Chicago and the Twin Cities (completed in 1867); the only missing rail link was over the Mississippi River at North McGregor.

All of this excitement doubled the town’s population in ten years. The presence of the railroad spurred other business growth, such as a foundry and Flemming Lumber—one of town’s largest employers ever. In

1870, construction began on another railroad line, one that paralleled the Mississippi River from Dubuque. In late 1871, the tracks reached North McGregor, making it a two-railroad town. With all the trappings of a modern town in hand, residents of North McGregor voted to incorporate on April 25, 1874. In that same year, a reliable rail connection between Prairie du Chien and North McGregor was completed as the innovative pontoon bridge opened (see sidebar).

Marquette has suffered through high water from the Mississippi River many times, but the most damaging floods have been flash floods. On May 24, 1896, five inches of rain in one hour drenched North McGregor and sent a wall of water 20 feet high racing down Bloody Run valley, washing out bridges and railroad tracks, tossing box cars around like rubber ducks, and killing more than 20 people. A similar event triggered a flash flood on June 1, 1916, causing severe damage to the rail yards and roundhouse, but without the fatalities. After the 1916 flood, the railroad built new yards west of town on a higher grade, complete with a new roundhouse, and re-routed Bloody Run Creek. In 1920 residents of North McGregor voted to change their town's name to Marquette in honor of the 17th century explorer. Marquette still has the railroad lines, but it is no longer a rail terminal.

Tourist Information ⓘ

The **Marquette Depot Museum** (216 Edgar St.; 563.873.1200; daily 10–4 from May 1 to late October) serves double duty as visitor's information center and local history museum.

Attractions

The **Marquette Depot Museum** (216 Edgar St.; 563.873.1200; daily 10–4 from May 1 to late Octo-

ber; free) packs a lot of information into a small space. Most of the displays highlight the city's railroad history. Take time to flip through the clippings and photos housed in the display cases, which document the pontoon bridge and the many floods that the town's residents have endured.

Eagle's Landing Winery (127 North St.; 563.873.2509; daily 10–5) offers free wine tastings every day. They grow about 20% of the grapes for their wines, which are a good quality for the price.

Marquette has a **scenic overlook** with a decent view of the river; enter from North Street.

Lady Luck Casino (US Business 18; 888.523.9582/563.873.3531, M–Th 9a–2a, F–Su 24h) has a 19,000-square-foot floating casino with 800 slot machines and 13 gaming tables. The pink elephant in front of the casino is a local legend. Originally built for a Republican political convention in Sparta, Wisconsin, (and painted gray), the elephant was purchased by the owners of the new Pink Elephant Supper Club after Iowa passed liquor by the drink in 1964. In 1978, local Democrats took the elephant waterskiing (actually, it just sat on a pontoon boat) on the Mississippi in advance of a visit by President Jimmy Carter.

Entertainment and Events

Railroad Days (800.896.0910/563.873.1200) honors Marquette's railroad past and draws big crowds of rail enthusiasts in September.

Sports and Recreation

At **Bloody Run Park** (563.245.1516), trout fishing, picnicking and camping (see below) are the main activities.

Shopping


SCHOOLHOUSE MALL (204 North St.; 563.873.9664; daily 10–5 from May–October, F–Su 10–5 in March & April) has several floors of antiques, Amish furniture, and other junk you might like to take home.

Eating and Drinking

LADY LUCK CASINO CALYPSO'S BUFFET (US Business 18; 888.523.9582/563.873.3531, M–Th 8–10:30, 11–3, 4–10, F, Sa 8–10:30, 11–3, 4–11, Su 8–3:30, 4–10) serves their food buffet style—no false advertising here—but does it well. Sunday brunch is a good deal (8a–3:30p; \$12), with a nice range of breakfast and lunch items.

Sleeping

Camping. BLOODY RUN PARK (563.245.1516) has 19 primitive sites tucked into a quiet valley (\$7). **THE NATURAL GAIT RESORT** also has a few campsites; see below.

 **TIP:** If you are camping primitively, you can shower at the public pool in Prairie du Chien (\$1; see page 317).

Cabin. THE CABIN (309 Brown St.; 563.880.3165) is new one-bedroom cabin just behind the casino that has a full kitchen, laundry, and king bed (\$125 + tax, two-night minimum). Also see The Natural Gait Resort below.

Bed and Breakfast. EAGLES LANDING B&B (82 North St.; 563.873.2509; WiFi) has four well-appointed rooms with private baths in a riverside timber-sided house (\$85–\$150 + tax); rates include a four-course breakfast.

Moderate. **THE FRONTIER MOTEL** (101 S. First; 888.681.0144/563.873.3497; WiFi) has 20 simple, clean rooms along the riverfront and next to the casino (\$90 + tax).

Country Escape. A few miles outside of Marquette—out of cell phone range—the **NATURAL GAIT RESORT** (1878 Old Mission Dr.; 877.776.2208) is a soothing place for a getaway, especially if you bring your horse to explore the 20 miles of trails that connect to Yellow River State Forest. Six fully equipped cabins (minus televisions) are cozy and have great views of the area; they can sleep from 4 to 14 people (\$100–\$185 + tax, but cheaper if you stay more than one night; \$10/each additional person). They also have six lodge rooms that can sleep up to three in bunk beds (\$50 + tax). If that's not enough, they also have several campsites in two separate camping areas geared toward horse owners but open to anyone; several sites have good views looking down to the Yellow River (\$15 + tax/basic sites, \$25 + tax/elec sites).

Resources

- Post Office: 112 North St.; 563.873.2338.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

MCGREGOR

(population 871)

McGregor is a rare 21st century river town, one in which the past feels connected to the present. Don't rush yourself. Take time to stroll Main Street, chat with locals, eat a meal, hike at Pikes Peak State Park, and grab some z's at one of the cozy guesthouses.

Arriving in Town

US Business 18 parallels the river, connecting Marquette with McGregor. As you enter McGregor, the road turns west and becomes Main Street. Park along Main Street and explore the town on foot.

History

The future town of McGregor began in 1837 when *Alexander MacGregor*, born in New York to Scottish immigrants, started ferry service to Prairie du Chien. For the next 20 years, few Europeans lived here, even after Alexander's brother, James, bought land in the same vicinity. Steamboat commerce ignited a population explosion in the mid-1850s, sending the town's population from 280 in 1856 to 5,500 just ten years later. McGregor incorporated in 1857 without the "a" found in the town's namesake (but with his permission). Many early businesses grew in response to the abundant supply of wood coming downriver—a sawmill, steam planing mill, a door and sash factory—as well as many businesses catering to the transient worker population: seven hotels, six restaurants, seven taverns.

Further development in McGregor was hampered by



Main Street, McGregor, Iowa.

an unfortunate feud between the MacGregor brothers. For 20 years beginning in 1853, the MacGregor brothers and their heirs fought in court over land ownership, and, in the process, obscured titles for many properties in town. At one point, Alexander's corpse had to be removed from his grave when the property where he was buried was awarded to James; Alexander now rests in Prairie du Chien. To this day, many parcels do not have a clear title, although, if the ownership can be traced back to a MacGregor, the titles are honored.

McGregor has been home to more than its share of people who attained fame. The *Ringling* family lived in McGregor for a few years in the 1860s. The brothers who went on to found one of the world's best known circuses apparently saw their first circus while living in McGregor. (Their former house still stands, but it is a private residence.) *Diamond Jo Reynolds*, one of the most successful river men of the 19th century, lived in McGregor in the building across from Triangle Park (see sidebar on page 121).

One of the more colorful residents in more contemporary times was *Mildred Quimby*, creator of *Quimby's*



Zebulon Pike (Library of Congress)

Zebu- lon Pike

In 1805, Zebulon Pike was hired by the U.S. government to explore the Upper Miss. Pike's mission included recommending sites for forts, describing the river's ecology, and locating the source of the Mississippi. The 26-year-old led a company of 20 men from Fort Bellefontaine (near St. Louis) on August 9, 1805, in a 70-foot keel boat with supplies for a four-month trip; they returned seven months later. Pike and his party spent most of the trip suffering through a brutal winter in northern Minnesota, surviving primarily because British traders living at remote outposts provided food and shelter, even though upon arrival, Pike undiplomatically ordered the men to take down their flags because they were in American territory.

Pike's mission was nearly a complete failure. He identified Cass Lake as the headwaters (incorrectly); he brought along few scientific instruments, so many of his observations were off. His one success was the purchase of land from the Sioux where Fort Snelling would be built (but not until 13 years later!).

Pike later led a mission out west, then was killed in the War of 1812. For his toil, he got a state park named in his honor in Iowa and a mountain in Colorado that he described but never set foot upon.

Harbor Guide (now *Quimby's Cruising Guide*), the bible for thousands of pleasure boaters in the Midwest. A journalist by training, Ms. Quimby lived in a trailer near the Mississippi River just north of town from 1962 until her death in 1983. She personally researched every navigable inch of the Mississippi River in producing her guide. I can respect that.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Get all your questions answered at the **McGregor-Marquette Chamber of Commerce** (146 Main St.; 800.896.0910/563.873.2186; daily 10–5 from May–October, M–F 10–5 the rest of the year).

Attractions

McGregor Riverfront Park (Main & 1st Streets) is a pleasant place to sit and watch the river roll by.

McGregor Triangle Park (Main Street, 1st Street & A Street) is a hub of summer activity.

The **McGregor Historical Museum** (254 Main St.; 563.873.2221; W–Sa 11–3, Su 1–3 from Memorial Day–mid-October or by appt.; free) has an informative collection of exhibits, mostly focused on characters who lived in the area. The most impressive pieces are the sand art created by Andrew Clemens (see sidebar); you should visit the museum for this reason alone.

It took a while to complete, but the **United Methodist Church** (330 Ann St., 563.873.2409) was worth the wait. Construction began in 1852 but the building was not completed until 1873. Inspired by Centenary Church in Chicago, the building is primarily Romanesque in design, but its 151-foot tall towers are topped with Mansard roofs.

The congregation of **St. Mary's Catholic Church** (311 7th St., 563.873.2665) organized in 1855; the

Andrew Clemens

Andrew Clemens was a remarkable man. Without the benefit of an arts education, he created, seemingly without effort, timeless works of art. Clemens was born in Dubuque on January 29, 1857. His father was a successful wagon builder who moved the family to McGregor in 1858 to take advantage of the town's booming economy. At age five, Clemens contracted encephalitis; he survived but the disease wiped out his hearing. He was home-schooled until age 13, at which time his parents sent him to a private school in Council Bluffs where he learned some carpentry but not much else. On his summer vacations, he collected colored sand and used it to create simple geometric designs in glass bottles.

Clemens returned to McGregor permanently in 1877 (after the school burned down) and concentrated fully on his art. Creating a piece took time.

Clemens collected sand from the base of a bluff where iron oxide created more than 40 shades of color; he painstakingly separated colors, then selected grains of uniform size. Most designs were created upside down using tools he made himself: a curved tool to place the sand and a straight tool to achieve perspective. The sand was tamped into place, then the bottle corked and sealed with wax. A simple design could be completed in a couple of days, but a complex one could take weeks. Completed pieces sold for as little as \$1 but not more than \$8. Some of his pieces were commissioned, like the pontoon bridge he did for John Lawler, the bridge's owner. He almost certainly made hundreds of pieces, but only a few survive; the most extensive collections are at the Iowa Historical Society and the McGregor Historical Museum. Clemens died in May 1894; he was just 37 years old.

current church, built next to the bluff at the foot of Main Street, was completed in 1882. Just six years later, a catastrophic Christmas Day fire destroyed the interior; parishioners quickly repaired the church. The building got a top-to-bottom make-over in 1977, with an eye toward preserving important historical



Andrew Clemens.

details: the main altar and sacristy were restored to their original appearance and the art glass windows were repaired. The interior has some beautiful wood: butternut for the main altar, cherry in the sanctuary, pews of red oak, and cedar crossbeams in the ceiling.

The **Agri Aerie** is a large deck that overlooks the Agri Grain Marketing elevator and the river. You can walk to it from Main Street via 2nd Street.

Sitting atop Swede Ridge on County Highway X56 just south of Pikes Peak State Park is **First Lutheran Evangelical Church** (County Highway X56). The Old Norwegian Church is a simple frame “preaching box” with a tower. Built as the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1861, this may be the oldest frame church west of the Mississippi. The interior has simple accents: wood carving on the chancel, a carved pump organ, oil lamps (the building has no electricity), white and gold trimmed altar, and mini wooden collections baskets. The congregation merged with Swedish Lutheran Church in 1936 and moved into the bigger church; this building sat empty until its restora-

tion from 1970–1972. If you are interested in a tour, contact the McGregor-Marquette Chamber of Commerce (800.896.0910/563.873.2186).

Getting Out on the River

Maiden Voyage Tours offers cruises that range in price from \$12–\$25, depending upon the length. Call for information on boarding from McGregor (563.586.2123). **Boatels House Boat Rentals & Marina** (800.747.2628/563.873.3718; M–F 8a–5p, open later on weekends) rents houseboats (\$1385–\$2020/weekend, \$2095–\$3000/week + tax & fuel), pontoon boats (\$250/day + tax & fuel), and fishing boats (\$48/day + tax & fuel). **McGregor Marina** (Riverfront & Main Streets; 800.848.2413/563.873.9613; daily 7a–6p from March–November) is another place to rent a pontoon boat (\$50–\$75/hr, \$200–\$300/overnight + tax & fuel, plus weekend & weekly rentals) or fishing boat (\$75/day + tax & fuel).

Culture & Arts

The **McGregor Art Center** (330 Main St.; F,Sa 10–4) has rotating exhibits from local artists.

The **Lamp Post Inn and Gallery** (424 Main St.; 563.873.1849) features the work of local and regional artists; if the flag is flying, ring the bell to enter.

Entertainment and Events

McGregor and Marquette host a **Farmer's Market** on Fridays (3p–6p, May–October).

The **HOLE IN THE SOCK GANG** stages Old West shootouts in Triangle Park several times during the summer, usually on the last Saturday of the month from June through October.

The **LAMP POST INN** (424 Main St.; 563.873.1849) hosts a five-course dinner/murder mystery theater one Saturday a month (5p–8p; \$30/person or \$50/2 people).

Festivals.
THE TRADER'S JUBILEE

(866.259.9172/563.873.2387) is an annual spectacle for folks interested in period clothing, complete with an evening ball where appropriate attire is required; call for venues or check the web (riverjunction.com/Jubilee/JubileeMain.html). The area hosts an **Arts and Crafts Fest** (800.896.0910/563.873.2186) twice a year: Memorial Day weekend and in early October.

Sports and Recreation

At the top of the hill after you leave McGregor on County Highway X56 is **Pikes Peak State Park** (563.873.2341). Named for explorer Zebulon Pike (see sidebar on page 48), the park has the standard amenities (hiking trails, picnic tables, campgrounds, mountain biking, burial mounds) but the real treat is the spectacular overlook and its expansive views 500 feet above the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers. Most visitors stop only for the overlook, so if you explore the trails, you are likely to escape the crowds.



First Lutheran Evangelical Church, McGregor, Iowa.

Shopping

McGregor has the kind of locally-owned retail to make other communities envious: old book stores, antique stores, reproduction clothing, novelty stores; the list goes on. **THE PAPER MOON** (206 A St.; 563.873.3357; M–Sa 10–5, Su 12–4) defines eclectic and eccentric. Part book store, part novelty store, part local history purveyors, everything they do, they do well and with a heavy dose of humor. **RIVERTOWN FINE BOOKS** (148 Main St.; 563.873.1111; daily 10–5) is, as you might expect, an old-school book seller with a special gift for tracking down rare books. **RIVER JUNCTION TRADE COMPANY** (312 & 314 Main St.; 563.873.2387; M–Sa 9–5, Su 11–5) is the source for authentic reproductions of 19th century clothing; just ask the folks from Hollywood who are among their customers. **MCGREGORVILLE ENTERTAINMENT MALL** (234 Main St.; 563.873.3110; open April–October M–Sa 10–5, Su 11–4, November open Th–Sa 11–5, December Th–Sa 12–4, closed last week of December–March) offers a cornucopia of shopping options, including candy, an antique store, Amish baskets, Christmas stuff, vintage clothing, artisans shop, and a 1950s soda shop. Go crazy. **RIVER GYPSY** (226 Main St.; 563.873.1818; W–Su 10ish–5ish) sells homemade candles, home furnishings, and recycled furniture.

Eating and Drinking

MCGREGOR'S TOP SHELF (221 Main St.; 563.873.1717; M–Sa 9–6, Su 10–2) is a gourmet grocer with a good selection of fresh and prepared foods, many from local producers; think smoked pork chops and bratwurst.

LATINOS RESTAURANT (213 Main St.; 563.873.3838; Su–Th 8:30a–9p, F,Sa 8:30a–10p) serves a wide range of delicious Latin-inspired cuisine, including several vegetarian options; seafood entrées run \$11–\$13, but most entrées are under \$10, including the corpulent burritos (\$7).

OLD MAN RIVER RESTAURANT & BREWERY (123 A St.; 563.873.1999; W–M 11a–10p, bar open to 11p) is a brewpub with an upscale menu. Entrées include pastas, chicken, salmon, and steak dinners that generally run from \$19–\$25. Sandwiches, salads (the Asian Thai Salad is yummy!), and burgers are under \$10. After church on Sundays, they offer free tours of their brewing operation.

Sleeping

In contrast to its neighbor across the river, Prairie du Chien, which is home to several chain motels, McGregor has a range of boutique accommodations that are moderately priced. Not all places accept credit cards; ask when booking.

Camping. **PARADISE VALLEY CAMPGROUND** (19745 Keystone Rd.; 563.873.9632) is a plain but clean campground tucked into a valley a few miles south of McGregor; many of the 200+ sites are occupied by seasonal campers but overnight sites should be available (\$15/primitive sites, \$24/sites with water & elec). • **CLAYTON HILLS CAMPGROUND** (County Highways X56 & C17; 563.964.2236; mid-April to last weekend in October) sits on a shady spot atop the ridge a few miles south of town; they have 42 overnight sites: 30 with water and electric (\$20 + tax) and 12 primitive sites (\$12 + tax). • **PIKES PEAK STATE PARK** (563.873.2341) has 77 rather cramped campsites (\$11–\$16), most of which have electric hookups.

• **SPOOK CAVE AND CAMPGROUND** (13299 Spook Cave Rd.; 563.873.2144; open May 1–October 31), just west of town, has 73 spacious campsites in an attractive setting (\$16/basic, \$18/elec only, \$21/water & elec, \$25/full hookup).

Cabins/Houses. **CLAYTON HILLS CAMPGROUND** (County Highways X56 & C17; 563.964.2236; mid-April to last weekend in October) has a camper available for overnight rentals, reservations recommended, that has water, electric, and sewer and can accommodate up to three adults (\$35 + tax).

• **THE 416** (612.360.3576) is a roomy, tastefully rehabbed two bedroom house within walking distance of Main Street (\$125 incl tax). • **SPOOK CAVE AND CAMPGROUND** also has two deluxe cabins with bathroom and kitchen that can sleep six (\$130 + tax), plus a cabin with kitchenette but no bathroom that sleeps five (\$80 + tax); there is a two night minimum stay on weekends. • **GRUMPSTERS LOG CABIN GETAWAY** (535 Ash St.; 563.873.3767) rents three beautiful log cabins, a large one that can sleep ten (\$165 + tax) and two smaller ones that can each sleep five (\$135 + tax); all come equipped with kitchen and full bath.

Budget. It's easy to miss the **VILLAGE MOTEL** (821 Walton Ave.; 563.873.2200; open March–October) as you drive through the western end of town, but it is a solid budget option, with 14 recently renovated rooms (\$69–\$75 + tax), including a suite (\$129 + tax). • **THE HOLIDAY SHORES MOTEL** (101 Front St.; 563.873.3449; WiFi) is a great deal, with 33 rooms located right next to the river; it is getting a much-needed overhaul in 2009. All rooms have refrigerator and microwave and some rooms have river views (\$70–\$115 + tax). • **THE ALEXANDER HOTEL** (213 Main St.; 563.873.3454; WiFi) was born as the

Lewis Hotel in 1899; the 12 rooms are rough around the edges, (and sometimes generate negative reviews), but I found the rooms to be clean and affordable (\$75 + tax).

Bed and Breakfasts. **THE LAMP POST INN** (424 Main St.; 563.873.1849; WiFi) is a spacious, early 20th century Prairie-style home with ample porches; the three rooms are a good bargain (\$65–\$85 + tax incl full breakfast). • **HICKORY RIDGE BED, BREAKFAST, AND BRIDLE** (17156 Great River Rd.; 563.873.1758; WiFi) is a fine country retreat located atop a ridge south of Pikes Peak State Park, with good views of the Mississippi River; two of the four units have a private bath, and the suite is large enough to comfortably house a family (\$76–\$120 + tax incl full breakfast). • **LITTLE SWITZERLAND INN** (126 Main St.; 563.873.2057/608.412.0400) has four units, including a log cabin built in 1848 (but fully updated, of course), that are spacious, well appointed, and include a full breakfast (\$85–\$125 + tax). • **STAUER HOUSE BED & BREAKFAST** (629 Main St.; 563.873.2713; WiFi) has a period feel without being over-the-top; all rooms have a private bath but not all are en-suite (\$89–\$99 + tax incl full breakfast). • **MCGREGOR MANOR BED & BREAKFAST** (320 4th St.; 563.873.2600) is a gem, with rich maple and oak woodwork, restored tin ceilings, and original 19th century fixtures throughout; the four rooms are comfortably furnished with antiques (\$99 + tax, incl full breakfast).

Moderate. **THE GYPSY SUITE** (226 Main St.; 563.873.1818) is a no-frills two bedroom apartment with full kitchen that offers an economic option for a group traveling together (\$125 + tax); breakfast is continental-style, but special meals can be prepared with advance notice.

• **AMERICAN HOUSE INN** (116 Main St.; 563.873.3364; WiFi) has two spacious and fully equipped suites (\$110–\$135 + tax) that capture the feeling of a 19th century inn—complete with an amiable host in period attire—without being stuffy; the second floor suite has up to four bedrooms (Mark Twain slept in one of them) and good views of the Mississippi. • **MCGREGOR LODGING** (563.873.3112; WiFi) has three festive, well appointed units just off Main Street (\$89–\$120 + tax incl continental breakfast). • **MCGREGOR'S LANDING BED & BATH** (111 First St.; 563.873.3150) has five cozy second-floor units furnished with period touches (\$89–\$119 + tax). • The **OLD JAIL AND FIREHOUSE GUEST SUITE** (212 A St.; 563.873.2759) is housed in an 1874-era building that did actually have a jail at one time. You won't feel walled in here, though; the studio apartment is open and comfortable and equipped with a full kitchen and the breakfast is a generous continental spread (\$85 + tax).

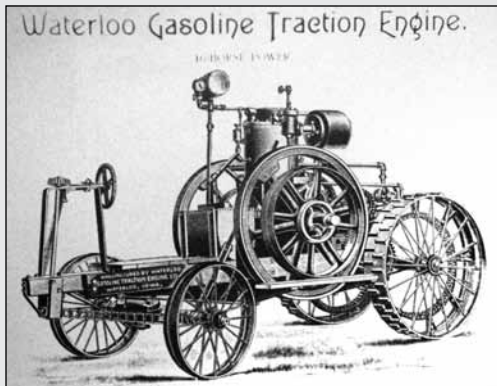


TIP: Remember that all rates for accommodations are based on double occupancy; if you are bringing a group of three or more people, you will almost always pay more than the rates quoted here.

Resources

- The local newspaper is the weekly *North Iowa Times* (608.326.2441).
- Post Office: 107 Second St.; 563.873.3626.
- McGregor Public Library: 334 Main St.; 563.873.3318; M,W 2:30–8:30, Tu,Th 10:30–5:30, Sa 2:30–5:30, Su 9:30–3:30; has a mural depicting the town's history and a Clemens sand art bottle.

Froelich Side Trip



Froelich (Frae-lick), barely a town now with 12 residents, is eight miles west of McGregor on US 18 and is the site of one of the most ground-breaking agricultural inventions.

At the end of the 19th century, John Froelich invented a revolutionary gasoline-powered tractor that could self-propel forward and backward. It took a while to perfect the design, but by the 1910s, the Waterloo Engine Company had a model on the market that farmers were buying. In 1918, the company was purchased by the John Deere Company, who turned the little tractor into an iconic machine.

Froelich also has an authentic country school that you shouldn't miss. (563.536.2841; grounds open M, Tu, Th-Su 11-5 from Memorial Day to Labor Day, weekends only in Sep, Oct; \$3).

Along the way to Froelich you will pass the road to **Spook Cave and Campground** (13299 Spook Cave Rd.; 563.873.2144; open May 1–October 31). The cave tour is a novelty in that it is entirely by boat, but between the number of times you have to duck to avoid bashing your head, the steep price (\$10/adult), and the lack of interesting natural features in the cave, your money is better spent on a campsite.

CLAYTON

(population 55)

Clayton, like other river towns, was once a busy steamboat stop, but, unlike many of those other towns, it is still a busy port. Produce from eastern Iowa is trucked in and stored in large bluffside silica mines, then shipped downriver.

Arriving in Town

Turn left (east) on County Highway C17 (228th Street); it becomes Main Street as it descends toward the river. Front Street and 1st Street run along the river.

History

The future village of Clayton was surveyed in 1849 and named after *John M. Clayton* (the Whig Senator from Delaware and Secretary of State under Zachary Taylor) at a time when this area was still a patch of dense forest. The village grew into a moderately busy steamboat stop, primarily as a shipping point for wheat. The financial crash of 1857 blunted the town's future prospects, however, and it never grew much beyond where it started, even with the opening of the silica mines in 1878 (and that are still operating). By the late 1800s, Clayton had four churches, a school, bank, railroad stop, a post office, and a saloon—basically everything you need for a respectable town.

A fire in 1900 destroyed 23 buildings. Townsfolk summoned some of that famous Midwestern stubbornness and started rebuilding right away; the town officially incorporated in 1901. Like many small towns in the farm belt, Clayton suffered tremendously during

the Great Depression; the bank closed and most businesses left, except for the sand plant and a few commercial fishers.



Pleasant Ridge School, a few miles south of Clayton.

Silica mining has been through two different stages. An open-pit quarry operated from 1878 until the 1930s. Underground mining using the “room and pillar” method began in 1916. The mine is currently about 60 acres in size, has 14 miles of tunnels, and goes as deep as 250 feet below the surface. In 1964, the sand mine was equipped with supplies so it could serve as a bomb shelter, and a very large one at that—large enough to support 44,000 people. The capacity of the shelter was quite impressive, especially since the surrounding area only had 18,000 residents, and there was only one road to it. (The mine is no longer designated as a bomb shelter and is not open to the public.)

In the 1970s, a grain elevator was built next to the river near the foot of Main Street. You may have noticed that Main Street has a steep slope that ends at the Mississippi River, so I’m sure you won’t be surprised to learn that seven trucks had brake failures in the first two years after the elevator opened and ended up in the river. The elevator eventually closed.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Visitor information is available through the **Clayton County Development Group** (800.488.7572/563.245.2201) located in Elkader

or through **Guttenberg Development and Tourism** (877.252.2323/563.252.2323).

Attractions

There is a small **riverfront park** across from the Claytonian Inn; it has a picnic table and shelter.

A few miles south of Clayton, the **Pleasant Ridge School** (Clayton County Highway X56; 563.252.3776/563.880.9336; tours by appt.) educated rural students (K–8) from 1893 to 1954, never more than 19 in any year. The interior remains as it was at the time the school was closed on May 20, 1954, complete with desks, chalkboard, and the original school bell. The exterior of the stone building is covered with a pebble dash texture that gives it a concrete appearance.

Eating and Drinking

At **BILL'S BOAT LANDING** (101 S. Front St., 563.964.2112; Su–Th 8a–10-ish, F,Sa 8a–1a-ish during the summer, in winter generally open Th,Su 8a–10-ish, F,Sa 8a–1a-ish) the food is more interesting than your standard bar food, with entrées like whiskey-marinated chuck steak (entrées from \$8.50–\$19); they also have a selection of sandwiches (\$5–\$8) and breakfast items (\$6–\$8).

Sleeping

Bed and Breakfast. CLAYTONIAN BED AND BREAKFAST (100 S. Front St.; 563.964.2776) has three comfortable rooms in a converted old-school motel (\$80 + tax); rates include a full breakfast.

GUTTENBERG

(population 1,987)

Set in a plain three miles long by a mile deep, Guttenberg is a rare Mississippi River town: there are no railroad tracks running along its riverfront. Take a serene walking tour along the riverfront and check out the collection of solid, 19th-century stone buildings erected by solid, 19th-century German immigrants.

Arriving in Town

At the north end of town, County X56 begins at Kosciusko Street. Most of the sights in town will be along River Park Drive, which is, naturally, next to the river. US Highway 52 is 5th Street, just a few blocks west of the river and across the railroad tracks.

History

Early French explorers called this area *Prairie la Porte*, which basically means door to the prairie, because the interior prairies were easily reached up the valleys; the name stuck for a while. For the Sauk and Mesquakie, this plain was a favorite summer hangout. European settlers trickled into the area in the late 1830s. By 1838 Clayton County had been established, so a sheriff was hired and based at *Prairie La Porte*, with the *Graybill Tavern* serving as temporary courthouse. In those early years, Clayton County was the administrative center for an area that now includes most of the Dakotas, all of Minnesota, and about a quarter of Iowa. Of course, it had fewer residents then, but still, that's a lot of territory! The town's first survey was completed in 1839 and a courthouse was built in 1840. *Prairie la Porte* hit the big time with the opening of the

post office in 1841. Alas, fate is a fickle mistress, and the county seat was moved out of town in 1843; the post office closed soon after that.

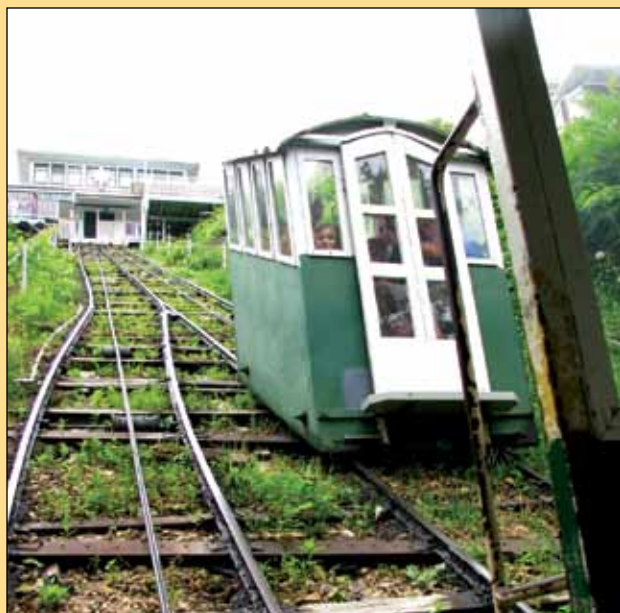
Surprisingly, the loss of the county seat and post office did not kill Prairie la Porte. Lead had been discovered in the region. *Naham Dudley* is credited with discovering the first lead deposits in the area, and the mining industry took off. Around 1843, the Western Settlement Society of Cincinnati, a group founded to help Germans arriving in the US, purchased large tracts of land in Clayton County so they could build a town they wanted to call Gutenberg. The first families arrived on March 8, 1845 and found little more than the abandoned Graybill Tavern (Herman Graybill had died in 1843) and a neglected old county courthouse.

Germans continued to pour into town in the 1840s and in January 1847, the Iowa legislature approved a name change: Prairie la Porte became Gutenberg. The town's founders chose to honor the famed 14th century German inventor of movable type, Johannes Gutenberg. The first appearances of the town's name in print were spelled the same as the inventor's surname, but an 1848 plat by G.A. Mengel Lithographing Company of Cincinnati spelled the name with a double "t" and the spelling stuck. (In 1949, Guttenberg residents voted down a measure to restore the original spelling by dropping the extra 't' in the name.)

The Germans who arrived were generally well-educated folks. They chose street names that honored both their native German culture, as well as that of their new American homeland. To the south, streets were named after German cultural figures Christoph Wieland, Johann Herder, and Johann Goethe. To the north, streets bore the names of musicians Haydn and Mozart, plus early American heroes George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and two of the foreign officers



Midway at the Dubuque County Fair.



Fenelon Place Elevator, Dubuque, Iowa.



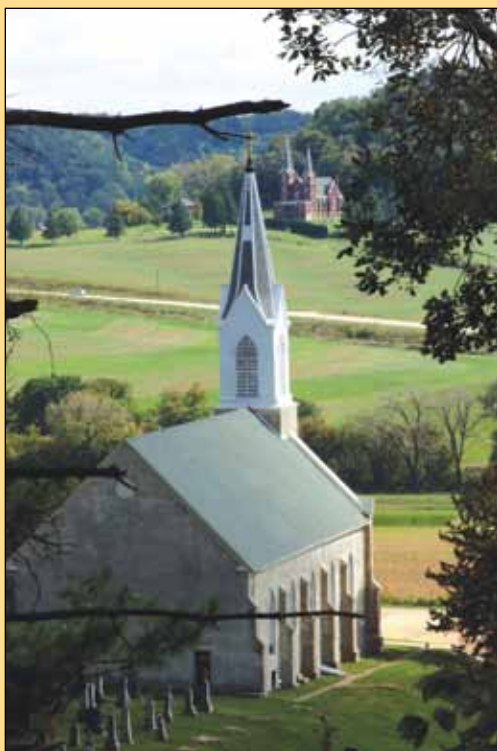
Looking down from Mt. Hosmer, Lansing, Iowa.



The Angel Among the Lilies, used with permission of St. Luke's United Methodist Church, Dubuque, Iowa.



Sunset near Sabula, Iowa.



St. Donatus, Iowa.



Wexford Immaculate Conception Church.



Country life – corn and roadhouses.

who fought with the Americans in the Revolutionary War: the Marquis de LaFayette and Tadeusz Kosciuszko.

Guttenberg grew up in 1851 when it incorporated; it counted about 1,000 residents at that time. In the next decade, the town experienced steady growth that triggered a building boom; many of those structures were built of native limestone from the nearby bluffs and are still around.

Ferry service was initiated to Glen Haven (Wisconsin) in 1855, and several hotels and breweries opened. In 1856, Guttenberg won an election and again became the county seat, but, this status would prove fleeting, too: Elkader won the 1859 election and has had the county seat since. (In a 30-year period, citizens of Clayton County voted for a county seat 11 times, moving the county seat from Garnavillo to Guttenberg to Elkader.)

After the Civil War, fewer immigrants arrived and the town's population stabilized. Guttenberg became a railroad town in 1871, just as the farm economy assumed a more central role in the town's fortunes and as a pearl button factory grew into the town's single largest employer. In 1905, the Army Corps of Engineers shifted the main channel from the Glen Haven side to the Guttenberg side, much to the dismay of Glen Haven.

Guttenberg's residents were not fond of attempts to ban sales and consumption of alcohol. When Iowa voted on Prohibition in 1880, Guttenberg residents were strongly opposed (78% voted no in Clayton County vs. 55% yes statewide); it should be no surprise that the town had five breweries and two distilleries at that time. Although the law was thrown out on a technicality, it was adopted again in 1884. Local breweries cut back production but managed to stay in business. In spite of Iowa Prohibition, Guttenberg had


seven licensed saloons in 1891, with six more added the following year. Guttenberg even managed to keep its three wholesale beer distributors operating by giving them peddler's licenses. In the fine tradition of towns up and down the river, Guttenberg relied on saloons for much of their revenue, and they weren't about to let a little thing like state law get in their way.

Alas, Guttenberg couldn't fight Big Brother forever. A new law in 1910 restricted the number of taverns to 1 per 1000 people, causing five of Guttenberg's six taverns to close. A proposed constitutional amendment in Iowa to ban the manufacture and sale of intoxicating beverages fell just short of a majority in a 1917 election, but residents around Guttenberg again said a resounding "no," rejecting the amendment 510 to 26! By the time the U.S. officially adopted Prohibition in 1918, Guttenberg residents had valuable experience in the art of home-brewing, giving them a head start in the bootlegging business. Congress ratified the 21st Amendment in February 1933 to end Prohibition but it did not become law until Utah ratified the Amendment in December; true to its roots, Guttenberg issued its first post-Prohibition liquor licenses in April, nearly eight months before Prohibition was officially over.

In 1937, Guttenberg threw itself a big party to celebrate the centennial of its founding and the completion of Lock and Dam 10. One ceremony was called *Mingling of the Waters*. It involved mixing water from the Gulf of Mexico with water from the headwaters of the Mississippi River. The mayors of New Orleans and Bena (Minnesota) were asked to contribute samples from their respective ends of the river. New Orleans sent its water in a glass decanter that had been owned for 100 years by an old-time New Orleans family; they spent \$7.69 to ship the package by airmail. Bena sent its water in a beer can; they spent .08 cents on postage.

Tourist Information

Guttenberg Development and Tourism maintains a visitor information center that is conveniently located along the riverfront (323 S. River Park Dr.; 877.252.2323/563.252.2323; daily 10–3 in summer). Even when the center is not staffed, the porch is open 24/7 and full of brochures.

 **TIP:** If you are an architecture fan, stop in at the visitor's center and pick up copies of the walking and driving tours.

Attractions

The riverfront is a series of nicely landscaped areas with paved walking paths and benches, generally called **Ingleside Park**.

Lockmaster's House (at Lock & Dam 10; 563.252.1531; daily noon–4 from Memorial Day–Labor Day and in October., F,Sa noon–4 in September) is partly a local history museum and partly a time capsule preserving snapshots of daily life from 1938, the year the house was built for the lockmasters and their assistants. This is the last remaining lockmaster's house on the Upper Mississippi.

The Upper Mississippi River Fish Hatchery (331 S. River Park Dr.; 319.252.1156; daily 9–3 from May–October.; free) has a few small aquariums displaying fish species native to the Mississippi River and Iowa streams. Stop in here for a few minutes while you are walking along the riverfront.

The viewing area for **Lock and Dam 10** (563.252.1261; daily April to November from dawn to dusk) is a fenced-in area next to the lock accessed at the foot of Prince Street. Bald eagles are usually easy to spot in the winter just below the dam.

Hey, what's that? In 1934, Rudolph Wolter built a memorial for the Native Americans who once lived in the area. The stone memorial houses a few odd items chosen by Mr. Wolter (some look like dime-store figurines); no one seems to know much else about this unusual monument.

In most places, a copy of an original is not a major attraction, but the **Facsimile Gutenberg Bible** in Guttenberg is not your typical copy (Guttenberg Public Library, 603 S. 2nd St.; 563.252.3108; M 10–7:30, Tu,Th,F 10–5, W 1–7:30, Sa 9–3; free). This copy is one of about 300 printed in 1913 in Leipzig; it was on display in Mainz, Germany in 1942 when the city was bombed. Charles Millham, the former publisher/ editor of the *Guttenberg Press*, purchased the book after WWII and loaned it to the library to display. The book is protected in a glass case with one set of pages open to view the exceptional craftsmanship. The library also has a bust of the town's namesake, Johannes Gutenberg.

St. Mary's Catholic Church (518 S. 2nd St.; 563.252.1247) traces its roots in Guttenberg to 1851. The Reverend Joseph Brinkman arrived in 1889 and reshaped the parish with a new school and parsonage. Reverend Brinkman designed those buildings, as well as the new church that was dedicated in 1904—a magnificent Gothic Revival building that is the third building for the parish. This church was to be built of native sandstone but it proved impractical, so they used brick manufactured in St. Louis. The size of the church may surprise you: it is 152 feet deep, 62 feet wide, and 74 feet across the transept, with towers that reach 146 feet high; it can seat 800.

Getting Out on the River

You can rent fishing boats (\$40/half-day or \$60/day) and pontoon boats (\$150/half-day or \$200/day) through **The Landing** (703 S. River Park Dr.; 563.252.1717; daily 6a–6p from March to Thanksgiving); if want to get on the river without the rental boat, they also operate a fishing barge (\$10/day).

Entertainment and Events

Guttenberg has a **Farmers' Market** along the riverfront on Saturday mornings (8a–11:30a from late May through September).

Festivals. **German Fest** (563.252.2323; September: last Saturday) is the biggest party in town, when residents celebrate their German heritage with food, music, and more food.

Sports and Recreation

Just north of town, **Frenchtown Park** (Frenchtown Rd.; 563.245.1516), contrary to what you might think, did not receive its name because it is a great spot for a certain type of tongue-fueled intimacy, even though it is. The park has scenic views of the Mississippi backwaters and has been deserted every time I have visited, even on weekend afternoons in the summer.

The **Big Springs Nature Area** (County Highway X56; 563.252.1161) is an 11-acre park tucked into a ravine with waterfalls, spots for picnicking, and a hiking trail.

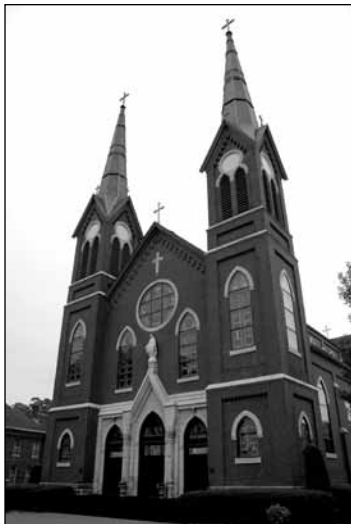
At the south boat ramp, there is a short trail with good bird viewing, the **Upper Mississippi Bottomland Forest Interpretive Trail**. The trail starts at the south end of the south boat ramp, by the “Public Use Regulations” sign.

If you fancy a swim, head to the **Guttenberg Municipal Swimming Pool** (US Highway 52 at Hayden St.; 563.252.1109; open swim daily 1p–5p, 6p–8p from Memorial Day to Labor Day; \$3.25/adults).

Shopping

Most of the shopping in Guttenberg is geared toward meeting the daily needs of residents, not visitors, but you might find

the two places below interesting. (There's no shortage of places to get your hair cut, however, especially if you are a woman.) • **Kann's Imports** (528 S. River Park Dr.; 563.252.2072; M–Sa 10–4) has showrooms full of art objects from across the globe. Collectibles include porcelain figures, plates, Christmas ornaments, and old German steins, to name just a few. • **The Village Green** (502 S. Highway 52; 563.252.3050; M–F 9–5, Sa 9–3) has an eclectic mix of home furnishings, plants, wine, and gourmet chocolates.



St. Mary's Catholic Church,
Guttenberg, Iowa.

Eating

If you need a caffeine fix or simply want to hang out and chat with someone for a bit, drop into **THE BUZZ COFFEE** (506 S. River Park Dr.; 563.252.2522; Tu–F 7a–2p, Sa 7a–noon).

CLAYTON RIDGE FARM MEAT MARKET
(531 S. River Park; 563.252.3820; M, W–Sa 10:30–3)

is a specialty food market that has several types of brats and smoked meats made in-house. It also houses the **PICKET FENCE CAFÉ**, where you can grab a sandwich for about \$5; you **MUST** save room for pie, though.

Another good option for lunch is the **VILLAGE GREEN CAFÉ** (502 S. Highway 52; 563.252.3050; M–Sa 11a–2p), where you can get a light lunch of soup, salad, or sandwich (try the chicken salad) for under \$6, then sample a slice of house-made cheesecake.

JOE'S PIZZA (608 S. River Park Dr.; 563.252.2376; M, Tu 4–9, W, Th 1–9, F 1–10, Sa 11a–10p, Su 4–8) serves a good pizza in a range of sizes and toppings; you can get an 8-inch pizza with two toppings for \$5 or a fully loaded 14-inch pie for \$16. And, if you still have room, grab some gourmet ice cream (under \$3 for a single scoop).

DOUG'S STEAKHOUSE (7 Schiller St.; 563.252.3301; daily 6:30a–10:30p) is a local favorite—for just about any meal, really—and certainly the best breakfast option in town (\$4–\$6), which you can get all day. Lunch offers a plethora of burger and sandwich options (\$4–\$5), while steaks are the crowd pleasers at dinner (\$10–\$15).

CARRIER'S DAIRY ICE CREAM (407 S. Highway 52; open when she feels like it) is a great option for an inexpensive scoop of gourmet ice cream (70¢ for one scoop), perfect to cool you down on a warm summer day; if the sign says “open,” go on in.

✓ **TIP:** If you want another dining option while you're in the Guttenberg area, consider taking a 25-minute drive to Elkader, Iowa, a small town named for Abd el-Kader, an Algerian who led a 19th-century resistance movement against the occupying French forces. Fittingly enough, Elkader has an Algerian restaurant: Schera's Restaurant and Bar (107 S. Main;

563.245.1992; W–Sa 11–2, 4:30–9, Su 10–2) where the food is delicious, affordable (entrées generally under \$12), and they even have burgers, in case you are traveling with someone less adventurous than yourself. You could make a meal by sampling items on the appetizer menu.

Sleeping

Camping. Most of the campgrounds near Guttenberg are filled by seasonal campers; those listed below usually have a few sites available for overnights, although the number varies from season to season. If you have trouble finding a site at one of these places, there are more options between Guttenberg and McGregor.

Primitive camping is allowed in **FRENCHTOWN PARK** (Frenchtown Rd.; 563.245.1516) just north of town; the park is usually quiet, except for the occasional group of bikers that rumbles through the area a few times a year. • **LAKESIDE CAMPGROUND** (503 Koskiusko St.; 563.252.4151) also has a handful of overnight sites on a crowded lot on the north end of town (\$25/full hookup). • **GUTTENBERG RV PARK** (310 DeKalb St.; 563.252.3330; April 1–October 31) has a few overnight sites on a compact site (\$15/primitive–\$25/full). • **MINER'S CREEK CAMPGROUND** (1402 S. Highway 52; 563.252.1838) has five overnight campsites (\$10/primitive, \$15/water & elec).

Cabins. **GUTTENBERG RV PARK** (310 DeKalb St.; 563.252.3330; April 1–October 31) has a rental loft with room to sleep five in an old limestone building (\$40 incl tax and continental breakfast). • **MINER'S CREEK CAMPGROUND** (1402 S. Highway 52; 563.252.1838) rents three micro-cabins with just enough room for bunk beds, microwave, and refrigerator (\$40; \$10/each additional person); bring your own bedding.

Budget. **THE GUTTENBERG MOTEL** (927 S. Highway 52; 563.252.1433; WiFi) has been run by the same family for the past 50 years; the 12 rooms are clean, simple, and a bargain (\$42–\$63 + tax). • At the north end of town just off US 52, the **NORTH OVERLOOK LODGE** (110 Lorenz Lane; 563.252.1456; WiFi) has four bargain rooms equipped with microwave, refrigerator, and good views (\$56 + tax); they also have a large apartment available for rental (call for rates). • Across the road and with even better views, the **EAGLE VIEW MOTEL** (115 Lorenz Lane; 563.252.1653; Internet hookup) is a bargain with a million-dollar view; the ten rooms are clean and well-maintained and many have spectacular river views (\$65 + tax). • **HARTMANN BED & BATH** (314 S. First St.; 563.252.1191) looks like a rental apartment that hasn't been updated since the Reagan administration, but it has a full kitchen and is clean and in reasonably good shape, (\$70 + tax). • The **GUTENBERG HAUS** (218 S. River Park Dr.; 563.590.5608; open May–November) has four spacious suites, each with private bath and full kitchen, in a historic 150 year old commercial building (\$75 + tax). • The **WELCOME INN** (130 S. River Park Dr.; 563.252.1975/563.419.0256) is a one bedroom unit upstairs from the owner's quarters in a house that was built around 1858 (\$79 + tax); the unit has a private entrance, deck, and full kitchen and bath.

Moderate. **THE LANDING** (703 S. River Park Dr.; 563.252.1615; WiFi) has 19 rooms, including nine suites in an 1858-era limestone building on the riverfront (\$49–\$159 + tax); rooms are clean and modern. • **COURTHOUSE INN** (618 S. River Park Dr.; 563.252.1870; WiFi), once an actual courthouse, has two suites, each with two bedrooms and full kitchen (\$115–\$125 + tax).

Houses. Just north of Frenchtown Park, **WILLE RESORT** (563.252.3776/563.880.9336) has one (and sometimes two) spacious and affordable houses for vacation rentals in a vacation community. **WILLEVILLE I** is a furnished four-bedroom, two-bath house near the Mississippi River, with amenities like a gas grill, great room, and patio (\$90 incl tax; call for rates beyond double occupancy). • **WILLEVILLE II** is a furnished three-bedroom, 2½-bath house with fireplace that was rented for the entire 2009 season, but might be available when you call (call for rates); no phone, Internet, or cable TV at either place. • **RIVERSIDE COTTAGE** (806 N. 1st St.; 563.252.3989) is a nicely rehabbed cottage run by a person who owns a professional cleaning company, so you know the place is immaculate. The cottage is at the north end of town away from the main flow of traffic and right next to the river; it has room to sleep six (\$95 + tax).

Resources

- The local newspaper is the weekly *Guttenberg Press* (563.252.2421).
- Post Office: 519 S. First St.; 563.252.1517.
- Guttenberg Public Library: 603 S. 2nd St.; 563.252.3108; M 10–7:30, Tu, Th, F 10–5, W 1–7:30, Sa 9–3.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

MILLVILLE

(population 23)

You wouldn't guess it today, but in 1883, with a population of about 50, Millville was touted as Iowa's most rapidly growing town. Today, only the weeds around the highway are growing rapidly.

Arriving in Town

US Highway 52 goes through town, such that there is a town to go through.

History

If there was an award for the most rapidly contracting town, it might go to Millville—in the 1930s. The town's decline can be traced to the completion of US Highway 52 in 1931. In short order, several businesses shut their doors (people could easily drive to other towns to shop) and the railroad cut off service (trucks replaced trains for freight delivery). Millville's fortunes have also been hurt by severe flooding from the Little Turkey River. On the bright side, the town was electrified in 1941. That's about all I've got for Millville.

Sports and Recreation

Just northeast of Millville, there is a gem of a preserve hidden at the end of a dirt road: **Turkey River Mounds State Preserve** (Estes Point Rd.; 563.873.2341).

The site is home to 38 burial mounds that date to the Woodland Period (500 BCE–900 CE); most are conical, but there is a panther effigy, too. There are no maintained trails and the mounds are not groomed, but if you want a challenging hike with good views,

this will work for you, plus you are likely to have the place to yourself. You can hike through any part of the preserve but the quickest route to the mounds (in the northwest part of the preserve) is as follows: park at the triangle formed where a private road branches to the north and Estes Point Road narrows; walk east along the road and, after you pass the sign for the preserve, hike uphill. You can hike along the ridge from the mounds at the northwest end for about a mile to the spot where the flag pole sits at the southeast end (about 250 feet above the valley), with only a few anxious moments where the path narrows next to steep cliffs. You should be in good shape for this hike and wear hiking shoes that can handle slippery terrain.

NORTH BUENA VISTA

(population 124)

Located in a picturesque and narrow valley just off the river, tiny North Buena Vista—“Buenie” to locals—is best known for its grotto, access to the Mississippi River, and homemade wine.

Arriving in Town

County C9Y curves around the edge of town. Snake Street intersects the county highway at the south. If you go north on Snake Street you'll reach Main Street.

History

North Buena Vista is another community bypassed by the folks who write local histories. Here's what I have so far: The hills were once rife with lead, which attracted large numbers of miners; as early as 1848, hundreds of miners lived in camps in the area. *Charles Meuth*, a moderately successful 19th century artist who painted portraits of federal government officials, lived in town when he wasn't in Washington. *Annie Row* gained fame as a 19th century mail carrier for her dedication to her duties. She reportedly covered rural routes that others (men) wouldn't and rarely missed a day at work.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Visitor information is available through the Clayton County Development Group (800.488.7572/563.245.2201) in Elkader.



North Buena Vista, Iowa.

Attractions

The **Blessed Mother Shrine Grotto** (info through Immaculate Conception Church, 218 Main St.; 563.252.1247) is a hillside monument to the Virgin Mary that was conceived, planned, and built under the supervision of Monsignor Anthony Sigwarth, who was pastor at the town's Immaculate Conception Church from 1937–1945. The 700-pound statue of Mary was made in Germany and installed in the grotto in 1938.

✓ **TIP:** If you take the road next to the grotto up to cemetery and then turn right at the top, there is a nice view of the Mississippi and environs.

Entertainment and Events

Immaculate Conception Church has been hosting a popular picnic since 1929 (Sunday of Labor Day weekend; 563.252.1247) with bingo and gambling among the favored activities, which led to a 1971 raid by state officials. Gambling was illegal, even for a church picnic. The raid led to a change in Iowa law, so bingo-playing nuns no longer live in fear of arrest.

BALLTOWN

(population 73)

As you enter Balltown from the north, you are actually entering Upper Balltown, which is the incorporated village. After a brief stretch of open fields, you descend into Lower Balltown, which is an unincorporated village but was the site of the original village. Upper Balltown has the distinction of residing at the second highest elevation in Iowa: 1,220 feet. Stop laughing. The river is 550 feet below Upper Balltown.

Arriving in Town

As you enter town on County Highway C9Y, there are several spots to pull over to enjoy the view, any one of which will be very pleasing.

History

The first settlers were *John Ball* and his family, who, according to local legend, lived on an island in the Mississippi River prior to 1850. It appears he bought some land on speculation in Lower Balltown and vanished by 1864. Their fate is something of a mystery. No death records exist for him or any family members. Many people believe they were buried in unmarked graves in town, while others believe that they simply sold their land and moved on to another area. *Thomas Cooney* was another early settler, and the first to purchase land, doing so in 1848. Many early settlers, however, moved to nearby Waupeton because it was closer to the railroad.

St. Francis Church, completed in 1891, and the German Methodist Episcopal Church formed the nu-

cleus of Upper Balltown, which became the incorporated village. In 1910, Lower Balltown was a rundown community with a dirt road and frame houses that had seen better times. A few random facts about Balltown:

- The major employer from 1915–1965 was the Balltown Farmers Co-Operative Creamery.
- Balltown incorporated in 1933 for the same reason as its neighbors Sherrill and Sageville: it was believed that only incorporated communities could license taverns in Iowa after the end of Prohibition.
- Main Street was finally paved in 1954, which must have been cause for some sort of celebration.
- The population of Balltown peaked in 1975 at 106 residents.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Your best bet is to stop in at **Breitbach's Country Dining**; see below.

Attractions

This overlook at the **Balltown Lions Club Scenic View Pavillion** has signs that point out features on the horizon, but, when I stopped and surveyed the landscape, all I could do was imagine what it must have been like to cross that rough landscape in a wagon. Yikes.

Sports and Recreation

Finley's Landing Park (24500 Finley's Landing Rd.; 563.552.1571) is about 4½ miles south of Balltown and is a popular place for camping, picnicking, and river swimming.

Eating

Breitbach's Country Dining (563 Balltown Rd.; 563.552.2220) has been a local favorite for genera-



Breitbach's Country Dining.

tions. The Breitbach name goes back to pioneer days in this area. Jacob Breitbach, born in 1824 in Germany, immigrated to the United States in 1846. He bought land in Jefferson township in 1855, purchased from the mysterious John Ball. Although he moved around a lot, some of his children stayed in Balltown and were destined for the restaurant business.

Jacob Breitbach bought the town's restaurant in 1891 (it originally opened in 1852) and it has been in the Breitbach family since, for six generations. During Prohibition, Victor Breitbach, Sr., made and sold homemade beer and wine; during a Federal raid, he broke enough bottles to turn the street into a small creek.

During the Depression, gypsies painted a mural of the scenic view in exchange for food and lodging for two weeks. That mural was uncovered during renovations decades later but was lost for good in the restaurant's recent tragic history: the original restaurant burned to the ground at the end of 2007, was rebuilt, then burned to the ground again less than a year later.

The intrepid Breitbach's gave it one more shot and the newly-newly rebuilt restaurant was scheduled to reopen in the late summer of 2009.

Sleeping

Camping. FINLEY'S LANDING PARK (24500 Finley's Landing Rd.; 563.552.1571) has 42 sites, most with electricity, in an area with little shade (\$10/basic sites; \$15/elec sites).



Ice fishing.

SHERRILL

(population 186)

Sherrill stands out because it sits near a bump in the landscape, but you are most likely to notice the steeples of Sherrill's four historic churches before you notice anything else. The town is also home to one of the oldest inns in the region.

Arriving in Town

Sherrill Road (Dubuque County Highway C9Y) is the main street through town; it is called Balltown Road as it heads north.

History

Sherrill, once called Sherrills Mound or Sherrills Mount, is named for brothers *Adam and Isaac Sherrill*, who were the first permanent residents after leaving their native Kentucky. They settled in the area in 1833—as squatters—hoping to strike it rich in the mining industry but settled into farming by the early 1840s. The Sherrill brothers had a reputation for ruthlessness. According to one story, a neighbor had the audacity to speak ill of the brothers, so they killed him. The brothers were only charged with illegal possession of a weapon; it seems the rest of the town was glad to be rid of the man who chose his words poorly. Isaac moved to Illinois in 1852, and Adam sold his property and left in 1856, leaving the business of town-building to others.

One of those others was *Peter Fries*, an immigrant from Austria, who built a hotel and tavern in 1856 called Sherrill's Mount House. He hosted dances, fed

people, and served drinks like his homemade wine. It was a popular destination for honeymooners and travelers: Jesse James and his gang spent a quiet night here in 1876, shortly before many of them were killed in an attempted robbery at Northfield, Minnesota. The tavern business ended in 1894 when Iowa went dry. During Prohibition, the building was divided into apartments; residents of one unit were arrested for having their own still. A lot of booze was stored in the trees behind the house, which the feds confiscated. After the feds left, another still went into production. Some places are just meant to be drinking establishments.

Tourist Information ⓘ

If you have questions about Sherrill, your best bet is to call the **Black Horse Inn** (563.552.1800).

Attractions

Here's a quick description of Sherrill's four churches. **Sherrill United Church of Christ** was organized in 1849 as the **First German Reformed Congregational Church**. The present stone church was completed in 1911 (4995 Sherrill Rd, 563.552.1108); they became affiliated with the United Church of Christ in 1962.

Catholic worship in Sherrill began in the 1840s with the arrival of immigrants from Germany and Luxembourg. Local Catholics built a log church in 1852 and called it St. Williams. It was replaced by a frame church in the 1860s, at which time the name was changed to **St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church**. The current brick church was completed in 1889 (5131 Sherrill Rd., 563.552.2611).

The first **St. Matthew Lutheran Church** (5350 Sherrill Rd.) was a frame church built in 1864; it was replaced with a brick church in 1903. Most of the early members were German; they enjoyed services in their

native language until 1948. The most recent renovation needs were too expensive for the small congregation, so most of work was donated by member Jeanne Spoerl. She labored for 3½ years to faithfully replicate the original painting scheme and continues to volunteer her time to keep the paint looking fresh.

Sherrill United Methodist Church (5501 S. Mound Rd, 563.556.6899) is the oldest congregation in town, dating to 1844 when a log church was built; it was replaced with a stone church in 1856. The current Gothic Revival church was completed in 1894. Like some of its neighboring churches, Sherrill's Methodists held services in German until the early 20th century.

Sleeping and Eating

Bed and Breakfast. The building constructed by Peter Fries in 1856 as a roadhouse is now the **BLACK HORSE INN** (5259 S. Mound Rd.; 563.552.1800), a unique bed-and-breakfast and still the center of the town's social life. The current owner spent six years restoring the house after it sat abandoned for ten years. Rooms—suites, really—are stylish and comfortable, and two have walk-in showers (\$90–\$125 + tax). The house is decorated with objects collected during the owner's many years living abroad. Friday and Saturday evenings they serve a four-course meal with a menu built around seasonal ingredients (seatings at 5:30 & 7:30; \$27–\$30). On Sundays, the inn hosts a buffet brunch (10a–2p; \$13). Also watch for their popular OctoberFest celebration.

Resources

- Post Office: 14795 Sherrill Rd.; 563.552.2102.

SAGEVILLE

(population 203)

Sageville once claimed to be the narrowest town in the world because it was three miles long but only had a few hundred feet of side streets; the town's south end was all of 500 feet wide.

Arriving in Town

Sherrill Road (County C9Y) meets US 52 by the gas station.

History

In 1833, *Chester Sage* and *Brayton Bushee* opened a sawmill on the east side of the Little Maquoketa River. This little settlement became known as Sageville and eventually became the terminus for a 30-foot-wide plank road from Dubuque; tolls for using the road were: 10¢ for a two horse vehicle, 15¢ for a four horse vehicle, and 5¢ for a man and horse; the road was built in 1851 and was used for 22 years. The Sage and Bushee mill closed during the Civil War, but milling remained Sageville's main industry for decades. *Harvey Thompson* built a six-story mill along the Little Maquoketa River in 1852. In 1890, *Joseph Rhomberg* bought the mill site and hoped to convert it into a resort and lake; it never happened and the former mill was lost to fire in 1942. In 1950, a developer saw a need for low cost housing, so he built a residential community of modest cottages he called Daytonville. Unfortunately, he chose an area that was prone to flooding, so the development was not a big success; it was later annexed by Sageville. In case you are thinking

of moving here, Sageville is the only incorporated city in Dubuque County without property taxes.

Sports and Recreation

Mud Lake Park (11000 Golf Lake Rd.; 563.552.2746) is a quiet riverfront park 5 miles northeast of Sageville with a campground, playground, and picnic tables.

The **Little Maquoketa** (Ma-COKE-uh-duh) **River Mounds Preserve** (563.556.6745) is just south of Sageville; it has a few informative signs about Indian mound building. If you need to stretch your legs, the trail is a moderately difficult uphill climb but once you reach the top, the mounds are fenced off and hidden by vegetation during the summer months.

Sleeping

Camping. **MUD LAKE PARK** (11000 Golf Lake Rd.; 563.552.2746; open April 15 to Oct. 31) has 76 sites, more than half with electricity (\$10/basic site; \$15/elec); more often than not, it is a quiet place to camp.

Bed and Breakfast. Tucked away in a narrow valley and sitting atop a hill, the **QUIET WALKER LODGE** (18132 Paradise Valley Rd.; 563.552.1034; closed in Dec. & Jan.; WiFi) is a gem in a serene location. With 9 suites (all with private baths) in two buildings, the lodge is an elegant country escape just 15-minutes from Dubuque. The newer building, completed in 2010, has 4 suites decorated with original Native American artwork; one of the suites is fully-accessible. Four suites in the other building have heart-shaped whirlpool tubs. All rooms come standard with a fridge and a microwave. The lodge welcomes adults only; let someone else care for your children and pets.

DUBUQUE

(population 57,686)

As you drive into town, your eyes will almost certainly be drawn to the majestic building in downtown Dubuque. That's the county courthouse. You'll learn about that later in this chapter. Dubuque has a nice collection of historic architecture, including some truly amazing churches, and a once moribund downtown that is now alive late into the evening.

Arriving in Town

The Great River Road through Dubuque is US Highway 52. It snakes its way all the way through town from north to south, changing street names several times. If you are in a hurry to get through Dubuque—and I don't know why you would be—stick to US Highway 52.

Tourist Information ⓘ

The Dubuque Welcome Center is in the Lower Main historic district (300 Main St.; 800.798.8844/563.556.4372 M–Sa 9–5, Su 9–3 in summer, reduced hours in winter); it is a good place to grab a few brochures, buy a t-shirt, and ask for directions.

History

Dubuque came to life because of lead. In the early 1700s, *Pierre-Charles Le Sueur* noted the locations of lead mines in the area. By the mid-1700s, Sauk and Mesquakie had arrived and had learned of the potential value of the lead deposits. In 1780, Joseph-Baptiste

Parent set up a trading post on the Little Maquoketa River with about 16 men and made an effort to mine lead. His trading post came to a premature end, however, when he was taken prisoner in April 1780 by a British agent because, unknown to Parent, Great Britain and France were at war. Oops.

Lead mining became big business when *Julien Dubuque* rode into town (see sidebar). In September 1788 Dubuque met with Mesquakie leaders and negotiated exclusive mining rights on Indian lands west of the river—an area once estimated to be twenty-one miles long and nine miles wide. Dubuque joined a small but thriving community of mixed-race residents (mostly French fur traders who married Indian women).

After Dubuque's death in 1810, about 250 Mesquakie lived in a village along Catfish Creek. Concerned about losing their lead mines to the Americans (their territory was still off-limits) they continued to mine and smelt the lead themselves. At the same time, lead mining on east side of the river was growing rapidly and thousands of white settlers were crossing the river, illegally. They were forced out by federal troops, but, by 1832, the Mesquakie were forced to abandon the mines because of continuing hostilities with nearby Dakota. A short time later, the Mesquakie lost ownership of the mines permanently as part of the settlement of the Black Hawk War.

Mining camps quickly sprung up along the west side of the Mississippi River. The area that became known as Dubuque's Mines evolved into the town of Dubuque in 1834. While lead mining was good business, it was never as prosperous as in neighboring areas. Good agricultural prospects lured many miners into farming; some miners left in the California Gold Rush; some mines were plagued by high water

levels that prevented extracting the ore. Lead mining's mercurial history was essentially finished in Dubuque by the 1850s.

Early settlers moved into a territory with no official government and settled on land for which title was uncertain. One document described Dubuque as a lawless territory of "dram shops where armed men congregated to drink and fight." Maybe that's why *Joseph Smith*, in 1834, sent a Mormon elder from Nauvoo to the Dubuque mines to preach to the unwashed masses.

George Harrison (of Galena, not Liverpool, UK) tried to get a head start on the town creation process by laying out a few lots in 1833, but the first official plat did not happen until 1837. By the 1840s, Dubuque was transforming from a rough-and-tumble mining camp into a civilized town, more or less. Log cabins were replaced by stone and brick buildings; streets were created; and local industry expanded beyond mining.

In the 1840s locals adopted the nickname of "Key City" because of Dubuque's role in expanding settlement across Iowa and points west. In the 1850s Dubuque's population, fueled by the arrival of immigrants from Ireland and Germany, grew from 3,108 to 14,319. Wealthier residents built houses on the bluff; downtown was populated with hotels that were often full of single men and a few families looking for temporary housing on their way elsewhere. Steamboats propelled further growth, and Dubuque remained Iowa's largest city until 1875.

During the Civil War, a substantial number of Dubuquers had pro-Southern leanings, even though only a very small percentage of its population had ties to the South. Its Democratic politics were largely anti-Catholic and anti-foreigner, influenced by the Know Nothing movement. In the 1860 presidential election,

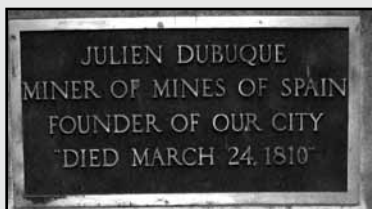
Dubuque city went for Stephen A. Douglas, the Illinois senator who was certainly no abolitionist. Nevertheless, Dubuque contributed a substantial number of volunteers to the Union Army.

Although railroad construction was booming on the east side of the Mississippi River (the railroads reached Dunleith, now known as East Dubuque, in 1855), a few unsuccessful attempts were made to build railroads from Dubuque to the west. It wasn't until after the Civil War that railroad construction took off in earnest. An important link was completed in 1869 when Dubuque's first railroad bridge across the Mississippi River opened.

Even though railroads were replacing steamboats, river traffic did not fade away. In 1874, *Diamond Jo Reynolds* (see sidebar on page 121) moved his headquarters to Dubuque and built a shipyard at Eagle Point; it operated successfully until the early 1900s. Another boatyard opened at Ice Harbor that became the Dubuque Boat and Boiler Works; they built iron-hulled boats until closing in 1972.

Dubuque's expansion through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—between 1870 and 1900 Dubuque's population doubled—was due mostly to manufacturing, particularly lumber and woodworking, brewing, and meat packing. One of the best-known manufacturers was the Cooper Wagon Works, which began in the 1860s and was nationally renowned for its exceptionally solid wagons. Even as Dubuque's population grew, the city didn't see the waves of immigrants in the early 1900s that other American cities saw. By 1915, only one of eight Dubuquers was foreign born.

The city's culture was heavily influenced by Germans and therefore stung deeply by the rise in anti-German sentiment with World War I. In May 1918, Iowa Gov-



Who Was Julien Dubuque?

Julien Dubuque's life has taken on nearly mythical dimensions because he didn't leave much of a paper trail. After his death, sometimes decades after his death, stories about his life appeared, many of which were totally fabricated. What do we really know about him?

Dubuque was born in St. Pierre les Becquets, Quebec in 1762 and in the next 48 years, he lived in territory ruled by France, England, Spain, and America. He went west with his brother to work as his clerk, arriving in Prairie du Chien around 1781. In 1788, Dubuque negotiated with the resident Mesquakie for exclusive mining rights. The territory was also claimed by Spain, so, in 1796, he registered his claim with the Spanish Governor. Dubuque made a good living from lead mining, but his efforts were superficial and left large underground deposits unexplored.

Dubuque's life was more like a middle-class businessman than the backwoods trader of legend. He lived in a large house for the era, with servants, farm hands, and an extensive personal library. Dubuque was probably married, but it is not clear to whom. No written records of a wife or children were found after his death, yet letters addressed to him while he was alive clearly reference a "Madame Dubuque." Any reference to a wife named Potosa is pure speculation.

There is no known portrait of Dubuque; the only existing painting was completed many years after he died and has an uncanny resemblance to the artist.

In 1804, Dubuque sold half his mining claim to Auguste Chouteau (of St. Louis) to settle some debts. Chouteau envied Dubuque's landholdings and was anxious to get a piece of it. When Dubuque died on March 24, 1810, stories circulated that he was broke, but, in reality, he probably just kept his assets hidden. Chouteau was his executor and plundered the estate by buying items at low prices, then reselling them at market prices (all while taking a 10% commission on each debt he settled). He divided the land and sold lots to speculators. Chouteau made no effort to find Dubuque's family in Canada or to ascertain if the Mesquakie had any legitimate claims.

Dubuque's death triggered a decades-long dispute over ownership of his land that wasn't resolved until 1854. In that year, the US Supreme Court decided that Dubuque's original agreement with the Mesquakie was limited to mineral rights only and that he did not own the land itself. The Court also rejected claims by Dubuque's family, in-laws, and speculators who bought lots, thus providing clear title to the land for the thousands of settlers who had moved into the area.

The Mesquakie buried Dubuque atop a bluff, covered by a mound of dirt; Dubuque's friend, Chief Peosta, was buried next to him about five years later. Thieves raided the grave site in the 19th century and some bones disappeared. When Dubuque's remains were reassembled for reburial, the skeletons were examined, revealing that Dubuque was about 5'7" and Chief Peosta about 6'2". Dubuque's remains were re-interred on October 31, 1897 and the limestone turret dedicated. Peosta's bones, however, were fastened together and put on display in local museums. His remains were not re-interred until 1973.

ernor Harding issued the infamous “Babel Proclamation” that prohibited the speaking of foreign languages in public—including on the telephone, at church, and at school. Even after World War I, anti-foreigner sentiment continued to increase in Dubuque and the Ku Klux Klan gained a foothold. Dubuquers may have been crankier than the rest of the nation in the 1920s, because the economic boom that the United States experienced largely bypassed them. They also suffered greater hardship during the Great Depression than the country as a whole. The local economy received a boost from Roosevelt’s public works projects; two in particular had a lasting impact: the building of Lock and Dam 11 and the reshaping of Eagle Point Park.

With the end of World War II, Dubuque finally got some good economic news: the Dubuque Packing Company had a new owner and began a robust expansion, and the John Deere Company built a massive factory at Peru Bottoms. The record flood of 1965 gave the impetus to build a flood wall. Completed in 1973, the new wall was built for a 30-foot crest and opened the flood plains to new development.

Dubuque fell victim to the misguided urban renewal philosophies of the 1970s and 1980s and leveled large sections of old neighborhoods as new development (and housing) pushed west; as in many other places, the anticipated new development never really materialized. Gradually, historic preservation took root in the 1980s and beyond. Like many old industrial towns, the 1980s were tough in Dubuque. The recession resulted in big-time job losses, strikes, and a steep decline in union jobs; the city never regained those manufacturing jobs. Dubuque today remains something of an enigma. What can you say about a town that has elected as mayors an avid Harley rider known as “Poor Boy” and a nun?

Attractions: North Dubuque

Mathias Ham was an early lead miner in the region—too early, in fact. His first attempt to make money involved organizing a group of 50 miners and taking them, illegally, across the Mississippi into Indian lands. They were eventually forced out by federal troops. After the Black Hawk War, mining opened up and Mathias Ham moved in, legally, and got rich. Over the years, however, he lost most of his money on unsuccessful business ventures, such as the failed town of Eagle Point. When he died, his mansion was his last remaining asset. That house is now the **Mathias Ham House Historic Site** (2241 Lincoln Ave.; 800.226.3369/563.557.9545; daily 10–5; \$5). Constructed of native limestone, the house looks solid and imposing from the outside but the interior has an understated elegance. Docents in period costume will guide you around the house after a ten-minute video narrated by local celebrity Kate Mulgrew of “Star Trek: Voyager” fame. The house is stocked with period furnishings (but few are original to the house), and the guides do a fine job of explaining their functions. After the tour is over, don’t forget your coupon for free admission to Eagle Point Park.

Eagle Point Park (2601 Shiras Ave.; 563.589.4238; \$1/car) was created in 1909 and underwent considerable renovation during the Depression thanks to a grant from the Works Progress Administration. If the buildings remind you of Frank Lloyd Wright, it is because the superintendent who designed them, Alfred Caldwell, was a big fan of Wright’s Prairie School. Besides the impressive buildings, the park has great views of the river and Lock and Dam 11 and no shortage of places to picnic. The park is open to auto traffic from May through October. The rest of the year, take Shiras

Avenue up the hill to Eagle Point Drive and follow it around the top of the bluff to a parking lot, then walk into the park.

Lock and Dam 11 (11 Lime St.; 563.582.1204; gates open 8a–midnight) has a viewing platform where you can watch boats locking through. At the opposite end of the levee, **A.Y. McDonald Park** (Hawthorn St.; 563.589.4238), home of the Catfish Festival, has a paved walking path next to the river and picnic tables; it is also an excellent viewing spot for bald eagles in the winter.

Miller-Riverview Park (2 Admiral Sheehy Dr.; 563.589.4238) is situated next to the Mississippi River and the greyhound race track on Hamm Island. It has a Vietnam War Memorial, good views of the river, and a few spots for a picnic, but it is primarily a campground.

Attractions: Port of Dubuque

The Port of Dubuque, also known as Ice Harbor, has undergone a substantial makeover in recent years. It has several places you might wish to pass the time. Parking is free and plentiful.

The National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium (350 E. 3rd St.; 800.226.3369/563.557.9545; daily 10–6 from Memorial Day to Labor Day, 10–5 daily the rest of the year; \$10.50), an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institute, is one of the best museums along the Mississippi River. Indoor exhibits include displays of aquatic life native to Mississippi River environments (check out the unreal fish in the Main Channel display—sturgeon, blue catfish, paddlefish, and don't even get me started on the alligator gar), a cool flyover perspective of the Mississippi River from the headwaters to the delta, the history of river navigation, two

theaters, and a collection of river-related art. Upstairs, you can virtually pilot a tow (using a computer simulation) and visit the National Rivers Hall of Fame. If that's not enough,



Mathias Ham House, Dubuque, Iowa.

step outside and tour the *William Black*, an old dredge that also doubles as a bed-and-breakfast, and a wetland ecosystem.

✓ **TIP:** For an extra \$3, you can buy a combo ticket to gain entrance to the Mathias Ham House and the Old Jail, a savings of \$7.

The newly land-based **Diamond Jo Casino** (400 E. Third St.; 800.582.5956/563.690.2113; Su–Th 8a–3a; F,Sa open 24 hours) has 36,000 square feet of gaming space with 1000 slot machines and 20 gaming tables. The complex also has a concert venue, the Mississippi Moon Bar (563.690.2100; daily 10a–2a), a 30-lane bowling alley (M–Th 9a–11p, F,Sa 9a–1a, Su noon–10p), and several places to eat. The **Grand Harbor Resort** has an indoor waterpark (350 Bell; 866.690.4006/563.690.4000; Su–Th 9–9; F 9a–11p, Sa 8a–10p; \$24), plus restaurants and hotel rooms. At the **Stone Cliff Winery** (600 Star Brewery Dr.; 563.552.1200; Tu–Th,Su 1–9, F,Sa 1–11), housed in the historic Dubuque Star Brewery building, \$4 gets you a souvenir wine glass and samples of up to five of its wines; ask about tours of their facility. Across the railroad trestle from the winery is the **Old Shot Tower**

Map Key

Things to Do

- 41. Cathedral of St. Raphael
- 48. Diamond Jo Casino
- 28. Dubuque County Courthouse
- 29. Dubuque Museum of Art
- 1. Eagle Point Park
- 37. Fenelon Place Elevator
- 24. First Congregational United Church of Christ
- 38. Five Flags Center/Theater
- 30. Grand Opera House
- 8. Hawkeye Boat Sales
- 3. Lock and Dam #11
- 2. Mathias Ham House Historic Site
- 5. A.Y. McDonald Park
- 6. Miller-Riverview Park
- 7. Mystique
- 46. National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium
- 27. Old Jail Museum
- 51. Old Shot Tower
- 15. St. John's Episcopal Church
- 17. St. Luke's United Methodist Church
- 12. St. Mary Catholic Church
- 47. Spirit of Dubuque/Miss Dubuque
- 50. Stone Cliff Winery
- 4. Sutton Pool
- 31. Town Clock

Places to Stay

- 39. Canfield Hotel
- 11. Clarke Manor
- 49. Grand Harbor Resort

- 18. Hancock House
- 43. Hotel Julien Dubuque
- 14. Mandolin Inn
- 33. Redstone Inn
- 13. Richards House B & B
- 35. Solon Langworthy House
- 36. Tredway House
- 45. William M. Black Boat and Breakfast

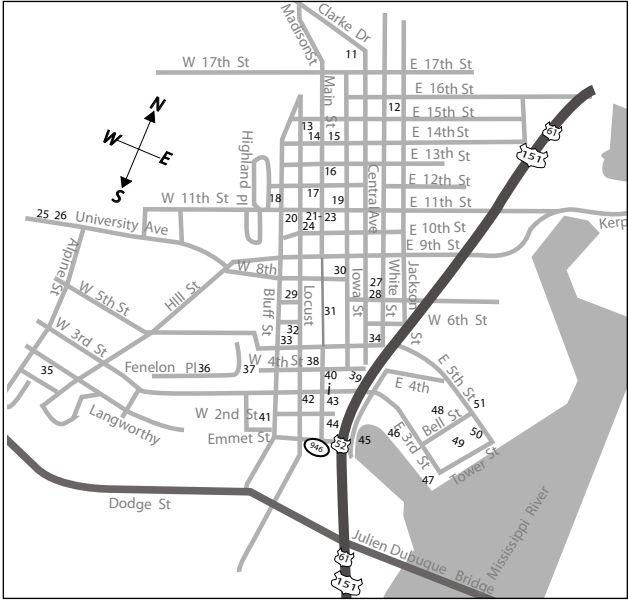
Places to Eat

- 44. 180 Main
- 19. Asian Gourmet
- 26. Athenian Grill
- 42. Café Manna Java
- 25. Dollar Dish Restaurant
- 34. Dottie's Café
- 9. Europa Haus & Bier Stube
- 22. Jitterz Coffee and Café
- 23. L May Eatery
- 16. Mario's Italian Restaurant
- 40. Pepper Sprout
- 21. Salsa's Mexican Restaurant
- 50. Star Lounge and Ultra Lounge

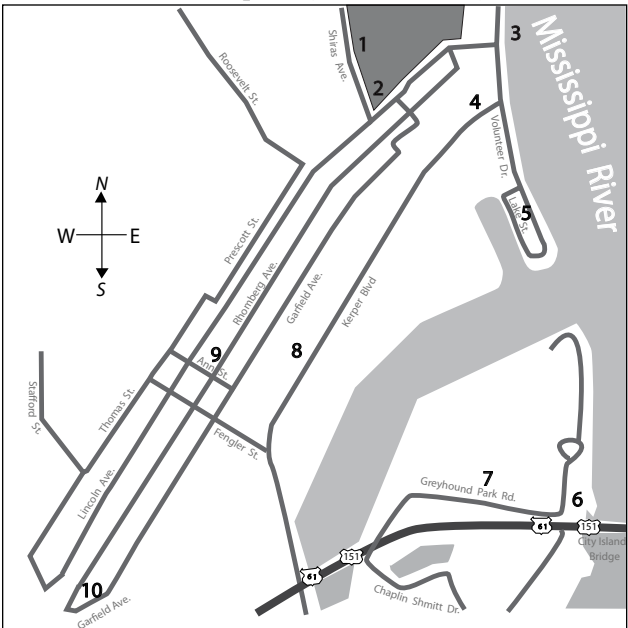
Other

- 20. Carnegie-Stout Public Library
- 32. Post Office
- 10. Trailways Bus station

Dubuque (central)



Dubuque (northeast)



(Riverfront between E. 4th and E. 6th Streets; free), built in 1856, it is one of the few remaining structures that was used to manufacture lead shot. Molten lead was hauled to the top and poured through a series of screens that shaped the lead into pellets; a water bath at the bottom cooled and hardened them.

Attractions: Downtown

Lower Main Street is the heart of the original (1833) commercial district. Reborn in recent years, Lower Main has several sites to explore, plus good shopping and eating. You can park at street meters or the garage on Iowa Street; either way it will cost 50¢/hour.

The **Town Clock** was originally atop the John Bell and Company store in 1864 and hailed as the most accurate town clock in America; that building collapsed in 1872, killing three people. A new building with a new clock was constructed in 1873; the 13-ton clock was stuck on a pedestal and surrounded by a plaza in 1971. Many summer events are held here, including the Friday night jazz series.

The standout **Dubuque County Courthouse** (720 Central Ave.) is a masterful, if over-the-top, Beaux Arts building designed by Fridolin Heer. Completed in 1891, the building was constructed with gray Indiana limestone, red brick, and terra cotta; the exterior is marked by intricate brick work, steeples, Grecian pediments, statues, and a 190-foot-tall tower with a 14-foot bronze statue of Justice atop it. The gilt dome is a recent addition, completed in the 1980s.

The **Old Jail Museum** (721 Central Ave.; 563.582.1002; M–Sa 11–5; \$5) is housed, as you would expect, in the original jailhouse that operated from 1856 to—incredibly—1971. During peak times, up to four prisoners were packed into each of the six-

foot by nine-foot cells. If you are pressed for time, skip the 20-minute multimedia show and browse through the exhibits in the rest of the museum; they present a general history of Dubuque and have some very cool photos, trinkets, and old signs.

The **Main Post Office** (350 West 6th St., 563.582.3674) has two Depression-era murals by Bertrand Adams and William Bunn, both of whom were influenced by Iowa native son Grant Wood.

The downtown area has several historic churches worth a visit. Touring them on weekends will take some advance planning, though. If you only have time to visit one church, head to **St. Luke's United Methodist Church** (1199 Main St.; 563.582.4543; M–F 8:30a–11:30a, 12:30p–4:30p, weekends by appt.; free); founded in 1833, it is home to the oldest congregation in Iowa. The current Romanesque church was completed in 1897 and is an exquisite, beautiful, sublime, stunning temple to God that is home to dozens of Tiffany art glass windows, including five very large and resplendent ones. You can borrow a guidebook from the office.

On the other side of downtown, the Gothic Revival **Cathedral of St. Raphael** (231 Bluff St.; 563.582.7646) was built between 1852 and 1859. The interior has frescoes created by Luigi Gregori and art glass windows imported from London in 1889. The basement has a solemn Italian marble-lined mortuary chapel, built in 1903, that was off-limits to the public until 1997. The church is usually locked but you can ring the bell at the cathedral office during normal business hours to tour the interior.

St. Mary Catholic Church (1584 White St.; 563.582.5469; office open M–Th 8–4, F 8–noon) was completed in 1867 for a predominantly German parish. Designed by John Mullany, an architect with a

specialty in gothic revival design who also designed the Cathedral of St. Raphael, the large—and tall—structure is distinguished by a 252-foot steeple that was modeled after Salisbury Cathedral in England. Many of the art glass windows are the creation of Bavarian artist *F.X. Zetteler*; they were shipped from Munich in



St. Raphael Cathedral, Dubuque, Iowa.

1912, just ahead of World War I. The windows depict key events in the life of Mary, beginning with her birth (west side window at the front) and ending with her death (east side window at the front). The mural of the Assumption behind the altar was painted by *Matilda Brielmaier* in 1912. The mural, 35 feet tall, was painted on three pieces of canvas in the artist's studio, installed in the church, and finished. The Altar of St. Mary (west side aisle) was installed in 1928; it is made of Italian Carrara marble and is decorated with a mosaic of Mary and houses the relics of four saints, including St. Anthony and St. Francis.

Saint John's Episcopal Church (1410 Main St.; 563.556.0252) was founded in 1836; the current English Gothic building was finished in 1882. The limestone exterior is set off by doors painted a deep red—symbolic of the blood of early Christian martyrs and Christ. The striking interior is rich in detail: a vaulted ceiling built to resemble the hull of a ship, five

Tiffany windows, and a Baptismal font from 1851.

Another old congregation, the **First Congregational United Church of Christ** (255 W. 10th St.; 563.582.3648; office open M–Th 8–4) dates to 1839 but the current building was dedicated in 1860, making it one of the oldest existing churches in Dubuque. When news of Lee’s surrender reached Dubuque in 1865, the church bell was rung so vigorously that it cracked. The bell was not replaced until 1886. The sanctuary is spacious and adorned with elaborate but warm woodwork, a Tiffany window, and an impressive organ behind the altar. The organ was installed in 1869, its trip from the manufacturer in Massachusetts completed with a tricky journey across the iced-over Mississippi River. The organ is still being used.

The **Dubuque Museum of Art** (701 Locust St.; 563.557.1851; Tu–F 10–5, Sa,Su 1–4; free) has a few Grant Wood paintings on permanent display but otherwise uses its space to host rotating exhibits.

The **Fenelon Place Elevator** (4th St. at the bluff; 563.582.6496; Open daily 8a–10p from April 1 to November 30; \$2 round trip) was originally built for the personal use of J.K. Graves in 1882, who wanted an easier way to get to his home on top of the hill. It was rebuilt after a fire in 1883 and then opened to the public as the Fourth Street Elevator. In the past 120 years, the only major overhaul was in 1977 when the cars were replaced. It’s a very fun and unique ride with expansive views of Dubuque from the top.

Attractions: South Dubuque

Crystal Lake Cave (6684 Crystal Lake Cave Rd.; 563.556.6451; daily 9a–6p; \$10) is a good starter cave, if you’ve never been in one before. The cave has a good variety of formations for its modest size. At \$10 per

adult, though, the admission price is steeper than the descent into the cave.

Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey (8400 Abbey Hill Lane; 563.582.2595) is home for a group of Cistercian nuns living a contemplative life. They host prayer services at noon and vespers at 5pm; the public is welcome to attend. The nuns have a small organic farm and pay their expenses by producing and selling Trappistine Creamy Caramels, which they sell through their gift shop (hours are generally M,F,Sa 9a–6:30p, Tu–Th 9a–4:30p, Su 10a–4p) and website (www.mississippiabbey.org). The Abbey is about six miles south of Dubuque. If you are interested in a quiet retreat, they offer a few options for singles or small groups; what you pay is up to you.

Attractions: West of Downtown

The Dubuque Arboretum (3800 Arboretum Dr.; 563.556.2100; daily 8a–dusk; free), located in Marshall Park on the city's northwest side, may be a bit out of the way, but you should go, anyway. The Arboretum is divided into several theme beds such as Japanese, English, sun-loving perennials, and the 900-species hosta bed. Directions to the Dubuque Arboretum: Take US Highway 20 west from downtown to JF Kennedy Road and turn right. At West 32nd Street, turn right, then turn left on Arboretum Drive and enter Marshall Park.

Getting Out on the River

American Lady Yacht Cruises (1630 E. 16th St.; 563.557.9700) sails the Mississippi on a modern yacht, offering happy hour cruises (M–Sa 5:30; \$14) and dinner cruises (Th–Sa 7:30; \$26–\$31). **Dubuque River Rides** (Port of Dubuque; 563.583.8093) offers river experiences in two very different boats. The

paddlewheel replica *Spirit of Dubuque* offers daily cruises that range from simple sightseeing ventures to full dinner experiences (\$18–\$48), while the modern yacht *Miss Dubuque* specializes in mystery lunch/dinner cruises (\$53–\$58).

If you are itching to pilot your own boat, contact **Hawkeye Boat Sales** (2385 Kerper Blvd.; 800.203.8463/563.557.0313; M–F 9–5, Sa 9–3) where a single day’s rental of a pontoon boat runs \$450 (plus a \$750 deposit).

Culture & Arts

The **Five Flags Center/Theater** (405 Main St.; 888.412.9758/563.589.4258) opened in 1910 as the Majestic Theater, with the design inspired by Flemish Renaissance architecture. The Civic Center addition was completed in 1979, providing an arena and expanded performance space. The theater hosts a variety of shows and is home for the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra (866.803.9280/563.557.1677), which performs throughout the year.

When the **Grand Opera House** (135 W. 8th St.; 563.588.1305) opened in 1890, it was one of 16 theaters in town and had a seating capacity of 1,100. In 1930, the interior was completely transformed into a movie theater, and the seating capacity reduced to 681. Renovations in recent years have freshened up the look with an eye toward historical accuracy. The theater hosts live shows, heavy on the musicals.

The **Bell Tower Theater** (2728 Asbury Rd.; 563.588.3377; Th 7:30p, F,Sa 8p, Su 3p) is another venue for live theater, offering shows that lean toward musicals and comedies (\$17); pick up a schedule at the Welcome Center.

Mindframe Theaters (555 John F. Kennedy Rd.; 563.582.4971) specializes in art house and independent films.

Tours

Trolleys of Dubuque (800.408.0077/563.552.2896; call for tour times) offers 90-minute tours in a trolley replica (\$16); for an extra \$5, you can arrange a tour that ends with a wine tasting at the Stone Cliff Winery. You can also take a leisurely tour by horse-drawn coach with **Dubuque By Carriage** (563.580.0558; daily noon–5, F,Sa 6:30–10:30 from May–October, weekends only in November/December); tours through historic districts, weather permitting, last from 20 to 60 minutes (\$8–\$20/person). For something completely different, the Dubuque Guide Service arranges a **Victorian House Tour and Progressive Dinner** (800.226.3369/563.557.9545; 2nd & 4th Sa from June–Oct and each Sa from mid-November–December; \$48); the event includes a full dinner with one course (and tours) at each of five historic homes.

Entertainment and Events

Festivals. **Ice Fest** (January; 800.226.3369) at the National Mississippi River Museum is all things ice, including ice carving, ice harvesting demonstrations, snow sculpture, and assorted winter games.

Dubuque Bald Eagle Watch (January; 563.556.4372) celebrates the annual southerly migration of the previously-endangered species. Outdoor viewing events are centered around Lock and Dam 11 and A.Y. McDonald Park. The Grand River Center-Port of Dubuque hosts indoor exhibits.

The **Catfish Festival** (June; 563.583.8535; McDonald Park) is part carnival and part craft fair, with lots of

catfish thrown into the mix for good measure.

Dubuque throws a big party in June called **America's River Festival** (800.798.8844), with music, food, and games next to the Mississippi River.

Dubuque hosts a traditional **County Fair** (563.588.1999; County Fairgrounds) in July, complete with rides on the midway, funnel cakes, beauty contests for cows, and cotton candy.

Outdoor jazz concerts are the featured event for **Dubuque and All That Jazz** (June–September; 563.588.4400; Clocktower Plaza), held one Friday a month during the summer.

Riverfest (September; 563.582.5214; Washington Park) is a fall arts fair in downtown Dubuque.

Sports and Recreation

The **Mines of Spain Recreation Area** (563.556.0620) is another outstanding park along the Mississippi River. The park includes the Julien Dubuque Monument, the dramatic bluff-top location where the city's namesake was buried in 1810. The park has several miles of hiking trails; the $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile hike around Horse-shoe Bluff is a fairly easy and quick hike. Also within the park boundaries is the **E.B. Lyons Interpretive Center** (563.556.0620; April–October hours: M–F 8–4, Sa,Su Noon–4:30, from October to April the



Shot Tower, Dubuque, Iowa.

center is usually open M–F but call to confirm; free), which houses exhibits on wildlife native to the area.

The Swiss Valley Nature Preserve (Swiss Valley Rd.; 563.556.6745) has a number of places to hike in its 500 acres of wilderness, plus trout fishing, and an interpretive center (M–F 7–3:30, Sa,Su 9–5). Virtually next door is Swiss Valley Park (563.556.6745), with more hiking trails, picnicking, and a campground. Directions to Swiss Valley Nature Preserve: Take US 20 west from downtown Dubuque for about 8 miles; turn left on Swiss Valley Road.

Mystique (1855 Greyhound Park Dr.; 563.582.3647; Su–Th 8a–3a, F,Sa 24h) is part casino and part greyhound racetrack. The casino has over 1,000 slot machines and 16 gaming tables in 30,000 square feet.

Sundown Mountain Resort (16991 Asbury Rd.; 888.747.3872/563.556.6676; daily 9–9, in January/February open until midnight on Fridays; lift pass \$27–\$39) will help you pass the time on a cold winter's day, with skiing from late November until mid-March; it has six lifts and 20 trails down a 475-foot slope.

Dubuque has two outdoor municipal swimming pools (Su–Th 1p–5p, 6:30p–9p, F,Sa 1p–5p; \$3): **Flora Pool** (2525 Green St.) and **Sutton Pool** (1900 Hawthorne St.). There is also an indoor pool at **Hempstead High School** (3715 Pennsylvania Ave.; hours vary by season—call to verify). For information on any of these three pools, call 563.589.4263.

Shopping

From May through October, Dubuque has a **Farmer's Market** in the lot next to City Hall (50 W. 13th St.; 563.588.4400; Sa 7a–11-ish). • **RIVER LIGHTS BOOKSTORE 2ND EDITION** (1098 Main

St.; 563.556.4391; M–W,F 10–6, Th 10–9, Sa,Su 10–4) is an independent bookstore with a good selection of books and excellent service. • **CABLE CAR SQUARE** (4th & Bluff Sts.) has a number of boutique shops. • **BASKET EXPRESSIONS** (474 Bluff St.; 563.582.4438; daily 9–5) carries fine coffee, gourmet food items, and health products. • **OUTSIDE THE LINES ART GALLERY** (409 Bluff St.; 563.583.9343; Tu–Sa 10–5) showcases the creations of local and regional artists at reasonable prices. • The family-run **CZIPAR’S ORCHARD** (8610 US Highway 52 South; 563.582.7476) opens its retail doors in the fall to sell apples, gourds, and country crafts. • **KENNEDY MALL** (555 J.F. Kennedy Rd.; 563.556.1994; M–Sa 10–9, Su 11–6) and its 80 stores are west of town on US 20.

Drinking ☪

180 MAIN (180 Main St.; 563.584.9712; Su–Th 3p–2a, F,Sa noon–2a; WiFi) has a spacious basement pub with an Irish theme in a historic downtown location. The wide selection of good beer and other beverages and friendly people make it my favorite place to hang out in Dubuque. Chatting is a bit tough on weekend nights when they host live music (with a cover charge), but you can always head to the upstairs bar if you prefer more conversation-friendly environs.

THE LOUNGE (481 Locust St.; 563.557.7768; M–Th 10a–midnight, F,Sa 10a–2a) is a laid-back place for a drink where the crowd skews toward the under-30 set.

PAUL’S TAVERN (176 Locust St.; 563.556.9944; M–Sa 8a–2a, Su 9a–midnight) is a neighborhood bar with cheap beer and a lively crowd, where you can stare at animal heads behind glass while you drink.

Q BAR (920 Main St.; 563.557.7375; Tu–Sa 6p–2a) is Dubuque’s gay bar; they host drag shows on some Saturday nights.

Eating ✂

JITTERZ COFFEE AND CAFÉ (1073 Main St.; 563.557.3838; M–F 7a–5p, Sa 8a–3p; WiFi) serves panini, soup, and pita pockets (\$6–\$8), plus coffee, of course.

DOTTIE’S CAFÉ (504 Central Ave.; 563.556.9617; M–Sa 5:30a–1:30p, Su 5:30a–11a) has a devoted group of locals who love the burgers (\$6 for a 1/3-pound patty), but they also do a very good breakfast of diner favorites (\$4–\$7).

DOLLAR DISH RESTAURANT (1099 University Ave.; 563.556.2375; daily 7a–9p; WiFi) has a simple idea: charge a buck for everything. Period. For breakfast I had an egg and cheese sandwich on a biscuit (\$1), added a slice of ham (\$1), and a cup of coffee (\$1). The menu includes a range of items from donuts to waffles to turkey and chicken salad, even beer and wine (\$1). If you have a big appetite, you could spend several \$1 here, but the egg sandwich kept me sated all morning.

ATHENIAN GRILL (1091 University Ave.; 563.556.9046; Su, M 7a–3p; Tu–Sa 7a–8p) has good Greek food (gyros and souvlaki: \$5–\$8) but when you see the crowd on a Sunday morning, you’ll understand that it is breakfast that drives the masses mad: omelets, waffles, skilletts crammed with meat and carbs, eggs benedict (\$6–\$10); you can’t go wrong here.

SALSA’S MEXICAN RESTAURANT (1091 Main St.; 563.588.2880; daily 11a–9p) serves generous portions of well-prepared Mexican standards like chicken mole, chile verde, burritos, and enchiladas (\$8–\$14).



Eagle Point Park, Dubuque, Iowa.

ASIAN GOURMET (113 W. 11th St.; 563.582.7343; M, W–Su 11–2, 5–9) has a decent lunch buffet of standard Chinese offerings (\$5), plus a good selection of Vietnamese pho and Thai curries (\$6–\$11.50). Bring cash; they do not take credit cards.

In a town with a strong German heritage, one would hope that it is still possible to get traditional German food. It is, thanks to **EUROPA HAUS & BIER STUBE** (1301 Rhomberg Ave.; 563.588.0361; kitchen open M–Sa 11:30–2, 5–9, bar open 11a–11p). Step into the friendly Bavarian-style pub and dine on German staples like sauerbrauten, Wiener schnitzel, and rouladen (\$9–\$15 but most entrées are \$12), and, if you're lucky, Matt is bartending, and he'll put on some German tunage for you, too; a word of caution: he'll probably sing.

Dubuque also has a number of excellent choices for fine dining. **MARIO'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT** (1298 Main St.; 563.556.9424; M–Sa 11a–11p, bar open until 2am) serves traditional Italian-American fare: panzerotti (which are basically huge dumplings made of pizza dough), calzones, and pizza (\$11–21), sandwiches (\$4–\$6), and pastas like lasagna (\$8–\$13), plus meat entrées like veal marsala, steaks, and seafood (\$10–\$26).

CATFISH CHARLIE'S RIVER CLUB (1630 E. 16th St.; 563.582.8600; Su–Th 11a–10p, F 11a–midnight, Sa 8:30–10p; closed on Mondays in winter) serves well-prepared steaks and seafood in a casual atmosphere next to the marina (entrées range from \$10–\$35 but most are \$10–\$15). If the weather is nice, try to snag a table on the deck.

PEPPER SPROUT (378 Main St.; 563.556.2167; Tu–Th 11–2,5–9, F 11–2,5–10, Sa 5–10; bar open until 2am) is a popular choice for its fine dining and seasonal menu (entrées generally \$20–\$35). During my visit, I was served a lot of attitude with food that I thought was only average. Maybe you'll have a different experience.

STAR LOUNGE AND ULTRA LOUNGE (Port of Dubuque, Star Brewery building; 563.556.4800; M–Th, 11–2, 5–10, F,Sa 11–2, 5–midnight, Su 4–10; bar open daily 11a–2a) has a menu that changes with the seasons and the whims of the chef. Located on the second floor of the Star Brewery building with great views of the river, you can count on high-quality steaks, pasta, and Asian-influenced entrées (\$17–\$26) that will please your tummy.

L MAY EATERY (1072 Main St.; 563.556.0505; M,Th 4:30–9, F 11a–2p, 4:30–10, Sa 4:30–10) has quickly attracted a devoted following for fresh, hand-crafted food: gourmet pizza like chicken pesto and spinach (\$13–\$15 for a large) and entrées that include steaks, pasta, osso bucco, and macaroni and cheese (\$12–\$24). Large pizzas are half-price on Sunday evenings—a very good deal.

Sleeping

Camping. **MILLER-RIVERVIEW RV PARK** (2 Admiral Sheehy Dr.; 563.589.4238) is on Hamm Island

between the Mississippi River and the Greyhound Park; it is a popular site to camp and can feel very cramped when full, which is most summer weekends (\$10–\$12 + \$3 for electric). • Just south of town, **HUSEMANN'S RV PARK & CAMPGROUND** (5447 Olde Massey Rd.; 563.582.8656; generally open April to October) is a cozy, no-frills campground (about 33 sites) far enough off the highway to avoid traffic noise; the reasonably priced sites run the gamut from basic (\$8 + \$2 for electricity) to full hookups (\$20). • Just a half-mile further down Massey Station Road, **MASSEY MARINA PARK** (9500 Massey Station Rd.; 563.556.6745) is in a shady, secluded area south of Dubuque next to the Mississippi River backwaters. Most of the 60 sites have electricity (\$10/basic sites; \$15/elec). • **SWISS VALLEY PARK** (Swiss Valley Rd.; 563.556.6745), west of Dubuque, has a compact campground with 97 sites, 87 with electricity and 26 with water and electric (\$10/basic site; \$15/30 amp elec; \$16/50 amp elec).

✓ **TIP:** There are few decent budget options in Dubuque, especially in the summer; if you are looking for “as cheap as possible without camping,” consider staying in East Dubuque or the Wisconsin towns of Sandy Hook and Dickeyville; none of these places are more than a 15-minute drive from downtown Dubuque. Most of the chain motels are located along US 20 (Dodge Street).

Bed and Breakfasts. Dubuque has a good selection of bed-and-breakfasts; all of these places provide a full, hot breakfast unless otherwise noted. • **RICHARDS HOUSE B & B** (1492 Locust St.; 888.557.1492/563.557.1492; WiFi) has six guest rooms (\$50–\$115 + tax), four with a private bath, in an elegant 7,000-square-foot Queen Anne mansion. Victorian furnishings abound and the house itself has stunning woodwork and a number of unique features,

such as leaded glass in the pocket doors and fireplaces that are lined with fairy-tale-themed tiles. Don't be turned off by the scaffolding in front of the house; the exterior renovation is no reflection of the quality of the interior. • **THE REDSTONE INN** (504 Bluff St.; 563.582.1894; WiFi) is a massive Richardsonian Romanesque mansion built by Augustin Cooper (the wagon manufacturer) in 1894 as a wedding present for his daughter (ten years after the fact; better late than never). Each of the 14 guest rooms has a private bath (\$90–\$195 + tax); the inn is within walking distance of all downtown attractions. • **CLARKE MANOR** (216 Clarke Dr.; 563.588.1182; WiFi) has four rooms in an 1854-era Italianate mansion, all with private bath (\$105–\$175 + tax). Two of the rooms are quite large. The house has a formal but comfortable feel. The views from the tower are very cool. • **HANCOCK HOUSE** (1105 Grove Terr.; 563.557.8989; WiFi) is a rehabbed 1891 bluff-top Queen Anne home with great views of Dubuque and the river and within walking distance of downtown. The nine rooms are in pristine condition and most have a Jacuzzi tub; all have private baths (\$110–\$175 + tax). The engaging owners will ensure that you have a pleasant stay. • **THE MANDOLIN INN** (199 Loras Blvd.; 800.524.7996/563.556.0069; WiFi) is a 10,000-square-foot Edwardian mansion with two rooms that share a bath (\$85 + tax) and six rooms with private baths (\$105–\$150 + tax), including one room that is fully wheelchair accessible. The home is decorated with period furnishings. • **THE TREDWAY HOUSE** (565 Fenelon Pl.; 563.582.5026; WiFi) is located in a nicely rehabbed Queen Anne-style home atop the bluffs near the Fenelon Place Elevator, making for easy access to downtown. The two suites are a good value (\$125 + tax). • If you want quiet and great views, you can't beat **FOUR MOUNDS INN** (4900 Peru Rd.; 563.556.1908; WiFi), a Craftsman-style house

located on 60 bluff-top acres. The six guest rooms have period furnishings; only the suite has a private bath (\$115–\$145). Four Mounds also has a two-room cottage with kitchenette (\$175; no breakfast).

• **SOLON LANGWORTHY HOUSE** (264 Alpine St.; 866.539.0036; WiFi) has three suites in an 1848 Greek Revival home (\$99–\$225 + tax); breakfast is an expanded continental buffet. The house is a work in progress, especially the exterior. • For something completely different, consider a night at the **WILLIAM M. BLACK BOAT AND BREAKFAST** (350 E. Third St.; 800.226.3369/563.557.9545). It caters mostly to groups like scout troops, but is open to the public. If you really want a chance to sleep on an old steam-powered dredge, call at least two weeks in advance and you might be able to secure a state room (\$100 incl tax). • See also the **QUIET WALKER LODGE** in the Sageville chapter.



TIP: Many of the B&Bs offer special rates for business travelers.

Budget. **GLENVIEW MOTEL** (1050 Rockdale Rd.; 563.556.2661) has 30 basic rooms which are clean most of the time, but the walls are thin and the rooms often reek with the fresh scent of faded cigarette smoke. But, it is cheap (\$49 + tax) and just a few minutes from downtown. • **THE CANFIELD HOTEL** (36 W. 4th St.; 563.556.4331) has 54 rooms equipped with microwave and refrigerator in an art deco building that is a bit dated but clean, cozy, and affordable (\$45–\$90 + tax).

Moderate. **THE GRAND HARBOR RESORT** (350 Bell St.; 866.690.4006/563.690.4000; WiFi) is next to the river in the Port of Dubuque. The 193 rooms are tasteful and comfy and come in a variety of configurations; all come equipped with cof-

fee pot, microwave, and refrigerator (\$79–\$199); odd numbered rooms face the river. • In June 2009, the **HOTEL JULIEN DUBUQUE** (200 Main St.; 800.798.7098/563.556.4200; WiFi) reopened after a \$32 million makeover. The results are spectacular, down to the Italian marble floor in the lobby that was hidden underneath carpet. Several types of rooms are available including spacious suites (\$139–\$229 + tax); all have luxury amenities like walk-in showers, granite countertops, and sinfully soothing bedding. The hotel, which also has a swimming pool, restaurant, lounge, and spa, is convenient to many downtown attractions.

Resources

- The local newspaper is the daily Dubuque Telegraph Herald (563.588.5611).
- Main Post Office: 350 West 6th St., Suite 109; 563.582.3674.
- Carnegie-Stout Public Library: 360 W. 11th St.; 563.589.4225; M–W 9–9, Th 1–9, F,Sa 9–5, Su 1–5 (from Labor Day–Memorial Day only).

Getting To and Out of Dodge →

Dubuque Regional Airport (11000 Airport Rd.; 563.589.4127) is served by Northwest Airlines and American Eagle. The airport is about nine miles southwest of downtown on US Highway 61. A taxi to downtown should cost less than \$20. Dubuque has bus connections via **Burlington Trailways** (400 Rhomberg Ave.; 800.992.4618/319.583.3397; station open M–F 10–4, Sa, Su 10:30–11:30, 2:30–3:40), with direct service to Des Moines leaving at 11:15a and to Chicago departing at 3:40p; the office accepts cash only.

St. Louis and St. Paul Packet Co.

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PITTSBURGH, MARY MORTON,
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COMPRISE THE

St. Louis and St. Paul Through Line,

Diamond Jo Reynolds

Joseph Reynolds started his career as a miller in Rockland NY, then moved to Chicago where he opened a tannery. In the 1860s, he began shipping grain from Prairie du Chien to markets in the East. When the Minnesota Packet Company refused to transport his grain, he built his own steamboat, the *Lansing*. Fearing the competition, the packet company purchased the *Lansing* and promised to play nice; Reynolds agreed because he did not want to be in the steamboat business, anyway. In short order, however, the packet company was again causing trouble for Reynolds, so he built another boat, the *Diamond Jo*. The competitors worked out a détente for about three years, but when the packet company merged with the White Collar Line, Reynolds again had trouble finding a shipper for his grain. Not one to be fooled three times, he re-purchased the *Diamond Jo* and made the decision to stay in the steamboat business. It turned out to be a good decision.

Over the years the *Diamond Jo* line operated about 20 different boats. His grain shipping prospered until the 1890s when competition from the railroads forced him to shut down, but passenger service continued until 1911.

Getting Around

KeyLine busses are operated by the City of Dubuque (busses run M–F from 6a to 6:15p and Sa from 8a to 5:30p). Regular adult fare is \$1; bring exact change. Busses don't run as often as you might be used to—you could end up waiting up to an hour on some routes—so pick up a schedule (the Welcome Center has them) or call the office (563.589.4196; M–F 8–5, Sa 8–4) to save yourself some hassle. From Memorial Day through October, the **City Trolley** loops around the Port of Dubuque and several downtown locations every 20 minutes (Su–Th 10–7, F,Sa 10–10, after Labor Day F 6p–10p, Sa 8a–7p, Su 10–7; \$1/ride).

Rental cars can be had at Dubuque Regional Airport through Avis (800.331.1212/563.556.0657) or Hertz (800.654.3131/563.583.0267). Enterprise Rent-A-Car has a location in town (1605 Associates Park Dr., #104B; 800.736.8222).

If you need a taxi, you will probably have to call for one. Try E-Z Taxi Service (800.936.8294/563.582.3999) or E & R Taxi (563.582.1818/563.564.9938).

ST. CATHERINE

(Unincorporated)

Arriving in Town

This small village sits atop the highest point in Dubuque County. It was known as King for most of its existence, but sometime recently St. Catherine became the preferred name. I don't know when or why.

History

The village was named for *Judge John King*, the editor of the first newspaper in Iowa, the *Dubuque Visitor*, which published its first issue in 1836, which was happened to be the year the first settlers arrived. The early arrivals were primarily immigrants from Germany, Ireland, and Luxembourg; dairy farming was a common occupation. King had a peak population of 25 (just enough people for a major league baseball team) before fading into obscurity. Several of the town's original buildings were moved to the property of a local farmer.

Attractions

The land for **St. Catherine Catholic Church** (5180 St. Catherine Rd.; 563.583.0092) was donated by the town's namesake, Judge King. The inaugural mass was held in a log building on Christmas Eve, 1852. The parish was split between German and Irish immigrants who fought over the name: Irish parishioners wanted St. Bridgit, while Germans wanted a German saint. The church even had separate trustees for German and Irish members and separate sections in the cemetery. Bishop Loras found middle ground when he named

the church after St. Catherine of Alexandria. The current Gothic Revival brick church was completed in 1887.



TIP: The drive along St. Catherine Road as it loops around to St. Donatus is a pretty, peaceful diversion with occasional views of the river; the road is gravel in some sections. (St. Catherine Rd. becomes 343rd Ave. at the Jackson County line; turn west on Highbridge Road to get to St. Donatus.)

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

ST. DONATUS

(population 140)

St. Donatus [dun-ae-tus] was founded by immigrants from Luxembourg and built on the backs of the farm economy, never getting too big for its britches. The village has a few attractions that merit a quick stop (including several stone buildings that date to the 1850s), but the real treats are the festivals.

Arriving in Town

US Highway 52 is the main drag and one of the few streets in town. As you pass through town you will notice St. John Lutheran Church to the southwest and St. Donatus Catholic Church to the northeast—built on opposite hillsides, almost as if they were meant to stare each other down.

History

When Flemish missionary/explorer *Father Louis Hennepin* came through this area around 1680, the ground was littered with bones and skulls from a major battle between Native American nations; he called the area *Tetes des Morts* or heads of the dead, which is still around as the name of the township in which St. Donatus is located.

Settlers who eventually founded the town of St. Donatus were natives of Luxembourg who left Europe in the 1840s to escape growing poverty and famine. The first immigrant from Luxembourg, *John Noel*, arrived in 1838 and was joined by his brothers, Franz and Johann, in short order. In 1846, *Peter Gehlen* arrived and founded the village. He chose to name the village after

Saint Donatus, the patron saint of protection from lightning and violent storms. I'm not sure why he saw a connection between lightning and this particular valley; I guess you had to be there. Early settlers built log cabins until they had collected enough limestone to build more permanent structures. Gehlen built a large limestone house and barn in the late 1840s that served as his private residence, as well as the village post office, store, hotel and saloon. (The house is still around, now doing duty as the Gehlen House Bed-and-Breakfast and the barn is open to the public during festivals such as Sorghum Fest.) Throughout its history, St. Donatus has remained a small village closely tied to the farm economy. Things aren't much different today, although its impressive collection of 19th century Luxembourg architecture has earned the entire village a spot on the National Register of Historic Places.

Tourist Information ⓘ

If you have questions about the village, your best bet is to ask someone at **Kalmes Restaurant** (100 N. Main St.; 563.773.2480). They can find someone who will know the answer.

Attractions

St. Donatus Catholic Church (97 1st St. E.; 563.583.0092) was dedicated in 1860. Interior highlights include the German Baroque altars and the Statue of Our Lady of Luxembourg on the right side of the nave. (This statue is usually on the left, but the family that paid for it sat on the right side.) The rectory was built from the same native limestone in 1857. The **Outdoor Way of the Cross**, the first one in the United States, was completed in 1862 under the leadership of Father Michael Flammang, the same priest who directed construction of the church and



Rush hour in St. Donatus, Iowa.

school building. The path is not paved—unless you count sheep dung as paving—and it does get a bit steep—and slick—at times, but it is worth the effort to go all the way to the **Pieta Chapel** (built in 1885) at the top. The cemetery behind the church has a number of remarkable headstones from the 19th-century.

In 1854, the first Lutheran services were held in St. Donatus at the home of John Felderman. The current **St. John Lutheran Church** (US Highway 52; 563.773.2313) was completed in 1921. After the old church was razed in 1919 and before the new one was ready, services were held again at the Felderman home. The altar dates to 1909 and was brought over from the old stone church. St. John's had German-language services until the late 1930s.

The Fritz Chapel (308th St.) is located in an atmospheric valley just six miles south of St. Donatus. The road quickly turns from blacktop to gravel and passes by St. Nicholas Cemetery and the old St. Nicholas Church (built in 1855) before reaching the small chapel two miles west of US 52. Matthias Fritz, his wife, and six children immigrated to the United States in the mid-1800s from Luxembourg. The trans-Atlantic voyage took 42 difficult days. Matthias vowed that,

if he and his family survived the trip, he would build a monument to thank God for their safe arrival. In 1852, he fulfilled his promise by building this small chapel, laying the stones and carving the wood himself. His descendents still maintain it.

Entertainment and Events

Festivals. **National Luxembourg Day** in St. Donatus is celebrated in traditional Midwestern style: with a buffet dinner (Kalmes Restaurant, 100 N. Main St.; 563.773.2480; \$15; usually June 23 unless it falls on a weekend night). Luxembourg has been celebrating the sovereign's birthday since the 18th century. Grand Duchess Charlotte had a long reign in the early 20th century; her birthday—January 23—was a tough time of year to throw a good party, though, so, in 1961, the official celebration day was moved to June 23. Dig in and enjoy the homemade noodles, cabbage, triepen (blood sausage without casing), or Wiener schnitzel.

Come back the last Saturday in September for **Sorghum Fest** and learn how to take a sorghum plant and transform it into a molasses-like syrup that is a little sweeter than the stuff you are probably more familiar with. The stalks are pressed to extract juice, then the liquid is boiled down ten-fold; ten gallons of pressed juice yield only one gallon of sorghum. During the festival, you can also tour the **Gehlen Barn**, Iowa's oldest barn, built around 1839, and one of the coolest barns you will ever see.

Eating

KALMES RESTAURANT (100 N. Main St.; 563.773.2480; M–Sa 7:30a–9p, Su 7:30a–8) has a fairly standard Upper Midwest supper club-type menu with steaks and seafood (\$9–\$22), sandwiches for those with smaller appetites (\$2.50–\$6), and a handful

of dishes from Luxembourg, like homemade pork sausage. You should try to get here for the Luxembourg Day buffet (see above).

Sleeping

The only option in town is the **GEHLEN HOUSE BED AND BREAKFAST** (101 N. Main St.; 800.280.1177/563.773.2480) and it is a fine option, indeed. Built around 1848 as a private residence for Peter Gehlen, the building was renovated in the 1990s with help from the Luxembourg government. The seven rooms provide a little taste of old Luxembourg; five have a private bath (\$56–\$96 + tax); a discount on breakfast at the Kalmes Restaurant is part of the package.

Resources

- Post Office: 118 E. 1st St.; 563.773.8373.

BELLEVUE

(population 2,350)

Built on a high bank next to the Mississippi River, Bellevue enjoys great river views without the hassle of the occasional flood. Bellevue is one of the few Mississippi River towns where the views are not disrupted by a flood wall or railroad tracks.

Arriving in Town

US Highway 52 (Riverview Drive) is the main north-south route through town and Iowa Highway 62 (State Street) is the primary east-west route. If you find yourself driving along a street bisected by railroad tracks, you are on 2nd Street.

History

This territory was part of the 6,000,000-acre Black Hawk Purchase that opened to settlers after the end of the Black Hawk War. One of the earliest settlers was *John Bell*, who platted the town in 1835 and named it Bell View. The name of the town was later modified to Belle Vue, before taking its current form.

Bellevue was one of a handful of towns in the country that received its charter directly from the US Congress. In 1835, the 24th Congress authorized the Surveyor General of Public Lands to plat Bellevue and directed the townsfolk to elect trustees within six months. Residents were apparently not in much of a hurry, however, as the first Trustees were not elected until 1841.

Part of the delay may have been due to the fact that the town was mired in a struggle against a group of res-

ident outlaws. *William Brown* arrived in town around 1836. He served as Justice of the Peace for a couple of years and built a hotel and grocery. Almost from the beginning, Brown was suspected of masterminding a local gang of thieves and outlaws. His main rival (and one-time friend), *William Warren*, settled in Bellevue around the same time; he became Jackson County Sheriff in 1838.

Warren signed a secret pledge with 24 other men in January 1840 that was meant to drive out Brown and his gang. A couple of months later, some petty crimes provided legal cover for the group to act. A warrant was issued for the arrest of Brown and his associates. Brown, however, got word of the warrant and the subsequent formation of a posse and retreated to his hotel where he and his associates holed up. On April 1, a posse/mob of 40 armed men surrounded the hotel. Negotiations to force a peaceful surrender failed, and the town emptied out. As the posse moved in, they were fired on. The men in the hotel retreated to a highly defensible position on the upper floors of the hotel, so the building was torched to force them out. The tactic worked and Brown's group was defeated.

In the end, the posse counted four dead; Brown and two of his men were also killed. The raid also resulted in the arrest of 13 men, although a few of Brown's associates escaped. After their capture, the prisoners were nearly hanged, but the crowd was convinced to wait a day to decide their fate. The following day, deliberations on the men's fate were held; a majority of the assembly (mostly men who were in the posse) voted against hanging, instead recommending that the prisoners be whipped. They were then put on skiffs with three days of supplies, pointed downriver, and told to never return. They complied. One of the prisoners, William Fox, was later implicated in the murder of

Col. George Davenport in Rock Island; he was arrested in Indiana for the crime but escaped and was never found again.

With calm restored, Bellevue residents could return to the business of building a town. The main economic boost happened in 1872 when the railroad arrived, turning Bellevue into a regional hub for grain shipping; a few warehouses from that era still stand. By the end of the 19th century, Bellevue had 1,800 residents, about two-thirds of whom were German immigrants.

In the 20th century, Bellevue's economy remained connected to the river through industries like ice harvesting, clamming, and pearl button manufacturing, but with a gradual shift toward light industrial and manufacturing. Early 20th-century businesses included a clay pot factory, an iron foundry, flour mill, brewery, lime kiln, and cigar manufacturer. Perhaps the best-known local business was *Iowa Marine Engine & Launch*, which built racing boats in first half of the 20th century (the Red Tops brand). One of their boats, *Red Top III*, set an American speed record in the 1920s when it completed a course at an average speed of 35.56 MPH. Bellevue today has maintained a base of light manufacturing, but also relies heavily on tourist dollars to stay afloat.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Get your questions answered at the **Bellevue Area Chamber of Commerce** visitor center (210 N. Riverview St.; 563.872.5830; M–F 10–4), housed in the 1913 Cozy Theater building.

Attractions

Bellevue is another small river town that has poured money into creating beautiful public spaces along the river. The result is **Bellevue Riverfront Park**, which

has a paved walking path, benches, and plenty of grass to rest on. The park is also a good spot to watch boats passing through **Lock and Dam 12** (563.872.3314). You can wander down the hill for a closer look at the lock; parking is at the foot of State Street.

No visit to Bellevue would be complete without a tour of the **Young Historical Museum** (406 N. Riverview; 563.872.3794; Sa 1–5 Memorial Day–end of October), a unique small museum with an impressive assortment of antiques and collectibles. Joe and Grace Young made a small fortune in the hardware business and were avid collectors of antique furniture, china, figurines, teapots, and just about any damn thing they could get their hands on. Lacking heirs, they donated the house and its contents to the city to preserve as a museum. Say hi to Lucille while you're there. The museum has survived through the years in spite of periodic attempts by city leaders to sell off the contents and wash their hands of the responsibilities of preservation. If you enjoy the museum, consider making a donation, so future visitors can continue to enjoy it. By the way, Joe Young was also an early advocate for establishing the Great River Road.

The **First Presbyterian Church** (305 Market St.; 563.872.4853) is the oldest house of worship in Bellevue. The original structure, 62 feet deep by 40 feet wide, was completed in 1860 and still serves as the sanctuary, even after being enveloped by a sprawling addition in 1976. The triangular art glass window above the altar was reportedly ordered from a catalog by a local drug store; after the store determined that they were unable to use it, they sold it to the Presbyterian Church.

St. John's Lutheran Church (302 S. 3rd St.; 563.872.5849; office hours daily 8:30–11:30, noon–3) was founded by German Lutherans from Pennsylvania;

the limestone church is almost as old as the Presbyterian Church, dating to 1868. The tower and steeple, built in 1911, overshadow the rest of the building and the exterior decorations give the whole thing a bit of a birthday cake feel. The interior is light, with pastel walls, a white altar, and subtle gold accents.

The Catholic congregation in Bellevue dates back to at least 1841, when the Dominican Missionary *Father Samuel Mazzuchelli* built a small wooden chapel in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, and floated it down the Mississippi to Bellevue. The 20' by 30' church was called St. Andrew and served Bellevue Catholics until it burned down in 1853. The brick **St. Joseph Catholic Church** (405 Franklin; 563.872.5938) was completed in 1869; a tower was added in 1901. Shortly after the spire was completed in 1903, the old sanctuary was razed and the current church was built behind the tower; the new sanctuary was completed in 1910. The stone church is Gothic Revival in style and has a beautiful rib-vaulted ceiling.

Getting Out on the River

Riverbottom Campground (102 E. Dorchester; 563.872.5201) rents fishing boats (\$100/day plus gas); call in advance to reserve one.

Entertainment and Events

The **Bellevue Farmers Market** is held on Saturday mornings in a gazebo along the riverfront near the lock and dam (May–Oct).

The **Jackson County Pro Rodeo** (563.872.3799) draws a large crowd to the grounds of the Bellevue Horsemen's Club (25125 297th Ave.) on the third weekend in June.



Bellevue, Iowa, and Lock and Dam 12 from Bellevue State Park.

In 1992, the Schlechts celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the family farm by throwing a picnic. That event has grown into an annual community picnic that draws a sizable crowd to the event now known as the **Hoot Owl Holler**. The day-long festivities begin at noon with a flag raising ceremony and include Native American dancing, a gunfight reenactment, and music; bring a dish to pass (contact Joe Schlecht, a man with a lot of gratitude in his heart, by gosh; 563.689.6337; usually the 2nd Sunday in September).

Sports and Recreation

Bellevue State Park has two units south of town. The Nelson Unit (24668 US Highway 52; 563.872.4019) has hiking trails, an overlook with good views of Bellevue, and a butterfly garden. The Dyas Unit (US Highway 52 at 429th Ave.; 563.872.4019) has three short hiking trails and another overlook with a view of the Mississippi River.

Even though it is along US Highway 52, **Duck Creek Park** (563.652.3783) is a little tricky to find, but it is worth the effort. Isolated and quiet, except for the occasional freight train, the park is a good spot to

picnic or watch the river roll by. The park is 1½ miles south of the bridge next to Potter's Mill in Bellevue. You will see a pullover after crossing a small bridge; park here, then hop over the railroad tracks.

A few miles south of Bellevue, **Pleasant Creek Recreation Area** (US 52; 563.582.0881) has some hiking, picnicking, and plenty of shoreline for fishing.

You can get relief from the summer heat at the **Bellevue Municipal Swimming Pool** (607 Park St.; 563.872.3242; daily 1p–5p, 6p–8:30p; \$3).

Shopping

OFF THE WALL ART GALLERY (124 N. Riverview; 563.872.3388; Su–Th 10–5, F,Sa 10–7) showcases the work of several local artists and also sells locally produced wine. • **THE BOOK WORM** (110 S. Riverview; 563.872.4802; M–Sa 10–5, Su 11–5) is the local independent bookstore; they have a good selection of books about the Mississippi River. • **COUNTRY CUPBOARD** (100 N. Riverview; 563.872.3718; M–F 9–5, Sa 9–4, Su 11–4) has delicious homemade candies. • One mile south of town the **MELON PATCH** (22890 362nd Ave.; 563.872.3465; W,F,Sa 9–5, Th 9–6, Su 9–4 plus M 9–5 in summer) is a garden shop that also sells home furnishings, with home-grown gourds for sale in the fall. • **BACKWATERS BICYCLE SHOP** (305½ S. 2nd St.; 563.872.4760; W–Sa 10–6) sells new and used bicycles, and can fix that one you just broke. They can also help you out if you're looking for tips on which country roads to explore.

Eating

Dining options in Bellevue are limited to traditional Midwestern diner food. **RICHMANN'S CAFÉ** (602

S. Riverview St.; 563.872.3749; daily 5a–7:30p) is a popular eatery whose food will remind you of good home cooking: hearty breakfasts for about \$4, sandwiches and burgers (\$3–\$4), and daily specials like meatloaf (\$5); save room for a slice of pie (\$1.50).

Sleeping

Camping. Just north of Bellevue, **SPRUCE CREEK PARK** (396th Ave.; 563.652.3783; WiFi) has 85 sites, some next to the river (\$15/gravel site, \$18/paved site). • **RIVERBOTTOM CAMPGROUND** (102 E. Dorchester; 563.872.5201) is a small place next to the Mississippi at the south end of town and just north of Shady Haven; most of their sites are occupied by seasonal campers, but they keep one or two sites open for folks passing through (\$8.50 for tents only, \$12.50 for elec). • The **DYAS UNIT OF BELLEVUE STATE PARK** (US Highway 52 at 429th Ave.; 563.872.4019) has 47 campsites, 23 with electricity, in a secluded area that could use some shade (\$11/basic site, \$16/elec; open May 1–Oct 1). • **PLEASANT CREEK RECREATION AREA** has shaded, spacious primitive campsites along the river (\$4); no services. • Primitive camping is also OK at **DUCK CREEK PARK** (563.652.3783; see above for directions).

Bed and Breakfasts. **THE MONT REST INN** (300 Spring St.; 877.872.4220/563.872.4220; WiFi) is in the house built by Seth Baker in 1893, the founder of Glen Ellyn (Illinois) and Bakersfield (California) and a real-life rags-to-riches-to-rags story: a native of Bellevue, he got rich in the California Gold Rush, came home and built this eccentric home, then lost it—and most of his fortune—by gambling it away. The house has been through a remarkable three major fires (1895, 1916, and 1997) and rebuilt each time. The inn has 12 guest rooms, each with a private bath, and



Young Historical Museum, Bellevue, Iowa.

guests have access to a spectacular rooftop deck and hot tub; the tower room might not be the most spacious room, but it is the coolest one (\$149–\$219 + tax). • **POT-**

TER'S MILL (300 Potter Dr.; 563.872.3838; WiFi), built in 1843/4 by Elbridge Gerry Potter as Jaspar Mill, was a working flour mill for 125 years. It is now a unique bed-and-breakfast with four guest rooms, including a suite that has three beds and a tent (\$130–\$150 + tax).

Cabins. At **MOON RIVER CABINS** (905 S. Riverview; 877.872.4220/563.872.5443) you can choose among four fully rehabbed cottages next to the Mississippi River; they were originally erected in the 1930s to house Works Progress Administration workers who were building the lock and dam. Each cabin has a private bath, kitchenette, and cable TV (\$125–\$175 + tax with two-night minimum during the summer).

Budget. **THE RIVERVIEW HOTEL** (100 S. Riverview; 563.872.4142) is one of the oldest buildings in town, dating to 1844. It was purchased in 1866 by J.W. Weck and managed as the Weck Hotel until 1960. You can still rent a room here for a reasonable price (\$40–\$65 incl tax), just like Ulysses Grant once did (room #3); rooms are basic, rather musty, and rough around the edges, but they are cheap for the area. Some rooms have private baths.

Houses. **SPRUCE HAVEN VACATION RENT-**

AL COTTAGE (39749 308th St.; 563.659.5631) is a well-kept two-bedroom rental home in a quiet setting near the river, with a screened porch, carport, and very unique bunk beds built into a closet (\$125 + tax).

- Another whole-house option is the **STONE STREET COTTAGE** (901 Stone St.; 563.872.3610; WiFi), a restored 1840s-era home built by a French fur trader for his Native American bride; the two-bedroom, 1½-bath house has been beautifully restored (\$110 + tax but two night minimum).

Hey, what's that? The hillside stone mansion at the north end of town is now a private residence, but was once a pillow factory and the Spring Side Inn Bed and Breakfast. The oldest part of the Gothic Revival house was built in 1850.

Resources

- The local newspaper is the weekly Bellevue Herald-Leader (563.872.4159).
- Post Office: 401 N. 2nd St.; 563.872.3657.
- Bellevue Public Library: 106 N. 3rd St.; 563.872.4991; M,Tu,Th,F 10–5:30, W 10–7, Sa 10–3.

GREEN ISLAND

(Unincorporated)

Arriving in Town

You won't pass through Green Island by accident. From US Highway 52, turn left (east) on Green Island Road, then turn right at the stop sign to loop around through the Green Island Wildlife Management Area and back to US Highway 52.

History

James Clark arrived here in 1839, thus giving the town its early name—Clarkstown; when the railroad arrived, it changed the name to Green Island. During the 1930s, Green Island residents were protected from the worst impact of the Great Depression because of an active stockyard and railroad yards. After World War II, however, employment by the railroads tapered off. The entire town was flooded in 1965, when it had a population of just 97 people.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Information about Green Island is available through the **Jackson County Welcome Center** (60488 State Highway 64; 800.342.1837/563.687.2237; M–Sa 9–5, Su 1–4, in winter open M–F 9–4, Sa, Su 11–4).

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

Sports and Recreation

Green Island Wildlife Management Area (Green Island Rd.; 515.281.5918) is in the quiet backwaters just south of town; it is a very good spot for birding and draws few visitors.

Entertainment

If you are in the area on a weekend, the **Mooney Hollow Barn** (12471 US Highway 52 South; 563.682.7927; Tu–F 5p–close, Sa,Su noon–close; modest cover charges on some nights), the place with the fiddle painted on a silo, hosts barn dances on most Friday and Saturday evenings. Wear your favorite Western attire and kick up your heels to the sounds of local country and western bands.

Shopping

Just south of the Green Island turn, **GRAVERT'S APPLE BASKET** (54757 US Highway 52; 563.687.2298) has a couple dozen apple varieties to please your tastes. You can pick your own apples right off the trees or select from those already on the store shelves (F–Su 9–6 in September–October).

SABULA

(population 670)

Welcome to Iowa's Only Island City. For generations, you needed a boat to reach Sabula, but modern causeways do the job more quickly now.

Arriving in Town

At the stop sign where US 52 intersects with US 67 and IA 64, turn east to go into Sabula or turn west to continue on the Iowa Great River Road. The highway enters town as Sycamore Street and exits as Broad Street. River Street parallels the main channel, while Lake Street parallels the lake, naturally. Sabula is only four blocks wide, so you are never far from the water.

History

French explorers called this area *Prairie la Pierre*. I don't know why, but I'm guessing a French guy named Pierre once lived here. *Isaac Dorman* arrived in the 1830s, put a flat boat propelled by oars and poles in the water, and called it a ferry; he didn't stick around much longer. When the town was platted in 1837 it was called *Carrollport*, which proved unpopular because it created an impression that the town was named after a nearby resident named *Carroll* who was strongly disliked. The town switched its name to *Charleston*, which seemed like a natural because there was a *Savanna* nearby, thus bringing a little *Carolina* to the Midwest. The new name proved problematic, however, because there was already a *Charleston* in Iowa, and mail kept getting directed to the wrong town. In 1846 *William Hubbel*, taking notice of the exception-

ally sandy soil, suggested basing the town's name on the Latin word for sand —*sabulum*—because no one liked Prairie la Pierre, Carrollport, or Charleston. According to local legend, a woman at a party liked the word but thought that “Sabula” was more elegant and easier to pronounce. Sabula incorporated in 1864.

In 1868, town leaders realized that the original town plat was nowhere to be found, which meant that no one had legal title to their property. This being a significant inconvenience, Sabula's leaders turned to the Iowa legislature for help, which resolved the problem and granted permission for a new town survey. Sabula had a solid industrial base in the latter part of the 19th century, with a large packing house, a profitable sawmill, a planing mill, and a jewelry manufacturing company that created sleeve buttons, combs, brooches, and other wonders from local clam shells. In the late 19th century, the backwaters around Sabula were home to a very productive celery industry but, it went under when causeways and levees were built and the fields were permanently flooded.

Sabula was also an important railroad community from the time the first engine steamed into town in 1872. Trains were ferried across the river in summer; in winter, temporary tracks were laid across the ice. A railroad bridge was finally completed in 1880, then replaced with the current steel truss swing bridge in 1906. For a small town, Sabula had a very busy depot in the early 1900s, with up to 17 passenger trains stopping in town every day. The last passenger train left the Sabula depot on April 28, 1958.

In the early 20th century, tent shows were a popular form of entertainment and Sabula was home base for two well-known companies: the Brooks Stock Company and the Marshall Players. The tent shows were part vaudeville, part circus, and part stage dramas. Some of

the companies began performing in opera houses in the early 1900s; as movies took over those venues, the shows went on the road and acted under big tents.

After severe flooding in the 1950s, new levees were built that completely surrounded the village, protecting it from major flooding, except for seepage that tends to fill some basements during high water. So Sabula not only can claim to be Iowa's only island city, but could almost certainly claim to be Iowa's only city that is completely surrounded by a levee.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Fill up on brochures and maps at the **Jackson County Welcome Center** (60488 State Highway 64; 800.342.1837/563.687.2237; M–Sa 9–5, Su 1–4, in winter open M–F 9–4, Sa, Su 11–4), housed in a replica country school but furnished with authentic 19th-century school-house items. They also have a gift shop in the basement that features the work of local artists. And don't forget to say hi to Della.

Attractions

Driscoll's Island is a tiny peninsula park off the US 52 causeway on the west side of town; it is a cozy spot for a picnic. **South Sabula Lakes Park** (1516 South Ave.; 563.652.3783) has some picnic tables and a playground but is primarily a campground (see below).

John Wall Park (River St. at Sycamore St.) has a playground and picnic tables next to the river; there is also green space with benches along much of River Street. **Bill Cotton Park** (Lake Street @ Elm Street) is on the other side of town, which is to say just four blocks away, along the lake.

Eating

On weekend mornings, people line up for the pancakes at the unassuming café with a sign that simply reads “Restaurant.” This is the **ISLAND CITY CAFÉ** (405 Broad St.; 563.687.2606; breakfast served daily 6a–11a), where two large pancakes will only cost \$3; and, if you are not a pancake person, they have plenty of other breakfast options (most \$4–\$6). They are also beloved for their homemade pies, which some consider the perfect complement to pancakes.

BOMBFIRE PIZZA (516 Pearl St.; 563.249.8688; Th–Su 5p–9p, but if the lights are on they’re probably open) makes delicious pizza the traditional way: in a wood-fired oven. Their pizzas have a thin, crispy crust with fresh ingredients made to order (\$8/\$10 for a 12”/14” cheese pizza or \$11/\$13 fully loaded). They also have a wine garden and funky atmosphere. They don’t take credit cards.

THE CORNER STOP (205 Sycamore; 563.687.3013; M–F 3p–9p, Sa, Su noon–9; closed in winter) will satisfy your ice cream craving. A single, generous scoop on a cone will cost you less than \$2.

Just south of Sabula on US 67 is **HILLSIDE STABLES RESTAURANT** (1412 North Highway 67; 563.687.2479; Tu–Sa 4:30–9:30, Su 11–8:30), an unassuming country eatery that serves delicious German fare like jagerschnitzel and bauernschinken, plus a selection of steaks and fish (entrées \$9–\$18).

Sleeping

Camping. SOUTH SABULA LAKES PARK (563.652.3783; \$14–\$18) is a popular but cramped campground; the 40 sites, all with electric, fill up quickly in summer (\$14/gravel sites, \$18/paved sites).

Bed-and-Breakfast. **THE CASTLE B&B** (616 River St.; 563.687.2714) is located on the river side of Sabula and has good views; it has three immaculate rooms that share a bath (\$70–\$80 + tax).

Budget. **HILLSIDE STABLES** has a comfortable two-bedroom apartment (\$79 + tax) just behind the restaurant in a quiet country setting, a good deal for a small group traveling together.

Moderate. **ISLAND CITY HARBOR MARINA** (305 South Ave.; 563.687.2825; WiFi) offers a unique lodging opportunity—a floating cottage (\$189 + tax); roomy enough for a large family, the cottage has a complete kitchen, flat-screen TV, screened-in porch, and a boat dock adjacent to the cottage. The cottage can accommodate eight overnight guests.

Resources

- Post Office: 411 Broad St.; 563.687.2848.
- Krabbenhoft Public Library: 512 Elk St.; 563.687.2950; Tu,Th,F 1p–5p, W 7p–9p, Sa 9a–4p.



Canoeing — one of the best ways to get out on the river.

CLINTON

(population 27,772)

The first time I drove through Clinton, I noted “some towns look like they struggled from the very beginning; Clinton is one of those towns.” Driving through Clinton, one does not get a pretty picture. You certainly don’t get a sense of the city’s well-to-do past. That’s one of the struggles the town faces as a tourist destination right now—there is little connection between Clinton’s prosperous past and a present that simply looks gritty and uninviting to people passing through. With preservation a low priority for city leaders, there is little chance that this will change any time soon. What a shame. Clinton has an interesting history and enough to keep you busy for a couple of days, but it’s hard to get past those first impressions.

Arriving in Town

US 67 winds through much of Clinton. From the north, you enter town on North 3rd Street and exit on Camanche Avenue/Lincoln Way. While there may be slightly quicker ways to get through town, this is a road trip not a race, so stick to the main road, even if you are not stopping here. Just watch the signs carefully as there is little advance notice for many of the turns.

Clinton has numbered streets and avenues; generally speaking, streets go north-south and avenues east-west. In order to find your way around town, please note that the avenues are numbered and divided into north and south. Thus, there are two 3rd Avenues: 3rd Avenue North and 3rd Avenue South. Clinton is also

bisected by US Highway 30, also known as the Lincoln Highway. It was the first cross-country highway in the United States.

Hey, what's that? The gold-domed building on the south end of town is a coal storage facility for Archer-Daniels-Midland (ADM).

History

The Clinton area was once a string of small 19th-century river towns that consolidated into a single city. *Elijah Buell*, a former river pilot on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, kicked off the settlements when he arrived in 1835 and built a log house. This stretch of the Mississippi River was known as “the narrows” because, well, because the river is narrower here. Buell struck a deal with *John Baker* across the river to start ferry service between the two locations. Buell’s spot would grow into a town called Lyons; Baker’s town became Fulton, Illinois. The town of Lyons was platted in 1837 and incorporated in 1855. In 1894, the citizens of Lyons approved a merger with Clinton, but Lyons had a separate school system until 1954. To this day, residents of the north part of Clinton are more likely to identify their hometown as Lyons than as Clinton.

A bit south of Lyons, *Joseph Bartlett* built a log cabin and ran a trading store for Indians in the early 1830s; the town that grew around him was called New York. It was platted in 1836 but, unlike its more famous namesake, this village fell into a deep sleep until the Iowa Land Company was organized in 1855. Around that time, speculators were buying land in anticipation of the building of a new railroad bridge; the folks around New York eventually won and got the bridge. The town’s name was changed to Clinton in honor of the respected former Governor of New York, DeWitt Clinton. You probably wouldn’t be surprised to learn

that many of the early settlers migrated from the eastern US. The railroad's arrival ignited growth and, by 1860, the town had 1,000 residents. In those early, heady days, Clinton's growth was driven almost entirely by the railroads, because the city lacked a wharf big enough for steamboats. Lyons and Camanche remained the primary docking points for steamboats.

Clinton grew rapidly after the end of the Civil War. As the vast forests of Minnesota and Wisconsin were harvested, the logs were assembled into giant rafts and floated down the Mississippi River to sawmills. Log rafts often arrived at odd hours, waking up the whole town; even in the pre-dawn hours, stores and saloons would open their doors to serve the arriving loggers.

The first mills were built in 1855 and would eventually cover five miles of riverfront from Clinton to Lyons. Employees of the mills, many of whom were immigrants from England, Ireland, and Northern Europe (especially Denmark, Sweden, and Germany), worked 12-hour shifts, six days a week for the six months or so the mills operated, earning less than \$1.50/day on average. Work conditions were often hazardous, and many men were killed on the job. The mill owners were not obligated to care for injured employees but some did at least pay the doctor bills for their injured workers. Fires were a constant problem; Lamb & Sons alone suffered four fires. The mills were closed in the winter because logs don't float very well down a frozen river. Some workers supplemented their incomes in winter by harvesting ice from the Mississippi River.

Lumber processing reached its peak in Clinton between 1880 and 1894 and was essentially finished by 1900; the last mill closed in 1910. In the late 1890s, as the mills closed, several thousand workers left Clinton in search of work elsewhere, resulting in many shuttered stores, failed banks, and vacant homes.



George Curtis.

In 1897, Clinton had 28,150 residents but only 3,173 were working, including 700 in the last two mills that would soon close. Today there is not a single piece of evidence that Clinton once had so many lumber mills; the last remaining structure from any lumber-related business was razed in 1977 to make way for the levee.

The booming lumber business created a disproportionate number of millionaires in Clinton. Families such as the Youngs, Lambs, Joyces, and Curtises got very rich and built grand mansions, many along 5th Avenue South. Sadly, most of the mansions, as well as the stately elms that formed a canopy over the street, are long gone.

Into the 20th century, the Curtis Company was arguably the most important employer in town. As the giant sawmills closed down, the Curtis Company continued to expand its business manufacturing window sashes, doors, and interior and exterior woodwork. The Curtis business was advanced by an important innovation they developed: glazing window sashes at the factory instead of at the build site. The Curtis Company provided some stability in the local economy as Clinton slowly built a more diverse manufacturing base. In 1907, Clinton Sugar Refining began operations; it would later become Clinton Corn Processing before being absorbed into Archer-Daniels-Midland (ADM).

Much of Clinton's economy was (and still is) dependent upon the farm economy, so Clinton suffered earlier than the rest of the country



Curtis Mansion.

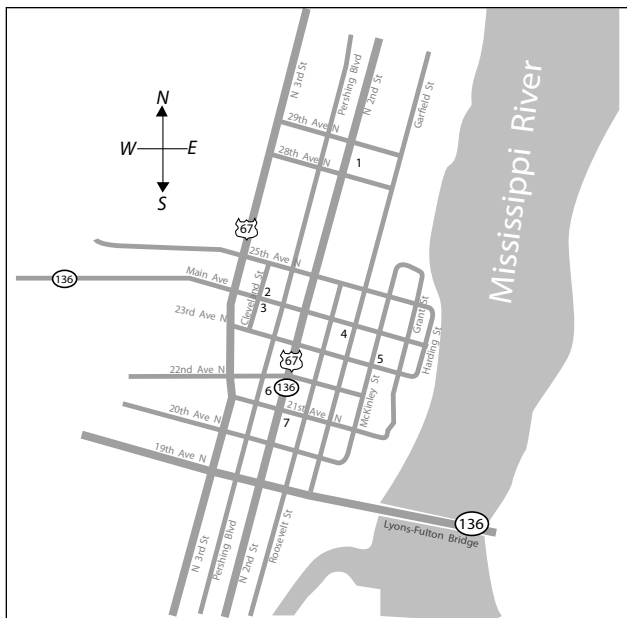
when the farm economy slumped well in advance of the Great Depression and took longer to recover. Clinton's economy got a boost during the Depression when the Works Project Administration built Riverview Stadium and overhauled Eagle Point Park. The building of Lock and Dam 13 also provided needed jobs.

Clinton was hit hard by the flood of 1965. In Lyons alone, 50 square blocks of real estate became Mississippi river bottoms, as did 25 square blocks in south Clinton. The disaster of 1965 resulted in a new, \$23 million levee. Coincidentally, the following year the Curtis Corporation was no longer able to stay afloat and shut down after a century of doing business. The closure signaled hard times for the rest of town, as a number of other Clinton-area businesses also closed and the city lost nearly one-third of its population. It looks like the worst is over though. The ADM plant is growing and adding new jobs, and a newly expanded casino should provide a boost, too.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Visitor information is available at the **Clinton Chamber of Commerce** (721 S. 2nd St.; 563.242.5702; M–F 8–5). There is also an information kiosk in Riverview Park (daily 8a–5p).

Clinton (north)



Map Key

Things to Do

- 6. Christ Episcopal Church
- 8. Clinton County Courthouse
- 23. Clinton County Historical Society Museum
- 12. Clinton Lumber Kings/Alliant Energy Field
- 19. Curtis Mansion
- 25. Felix Adler Discovery Center
- 9. Mississippi Valley Spiritualist Association
- 21. River Arts Center
- 13. Riverview Municipal Pool
- 10. Riverview Park
- 11. Riverview Park Recreational Trail
- 1. St. Irenaeus
- 14. Showboat Theater
- 20. Van Allen Department Store

Places to Stay

- 24. Travel Inn

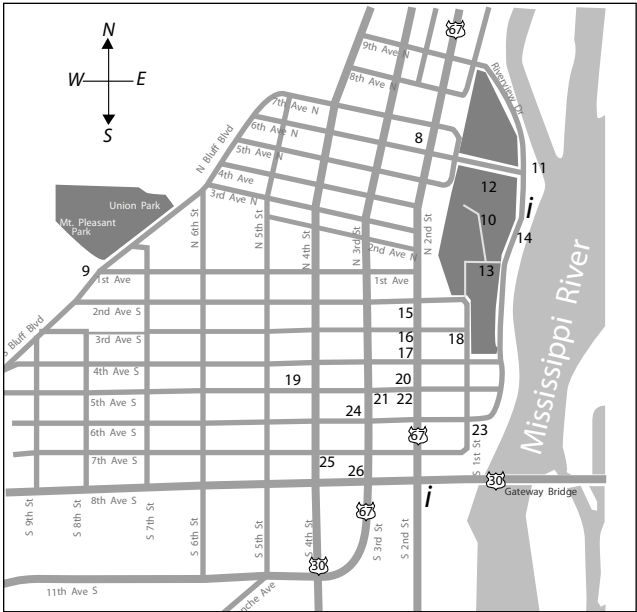
Places to Eat

- 22. Cupcakes Etc!
- 4. Dickys Dogs, Balls, N BarBQ
- 7. Espresso, Cigars, & More
- 16. Galaxy Deli
- 17. J & D Steakhouse
- 5. McKinley Street Taverne
- 15. Nora's Café
- 2. Rastrelli's Restaurant
- 3. Sweetheart Bakery

Other

- 26. Clinton Public Library
- 18. Post Office

Clinton (central)



Woman washing locomotive, Clinton, Iowa (Library of Congress).

Attractions

Just north of town and 1.2 miles down a couple of gravel roads is the **Wide River Winery** (1776 Deer Creek Rd.; 563.340.5678), home to organic wines of good quality. They have free wine tastings on summer weekends from 12–6.

Eagle Point Park (3923 N. 3rd St.; 563.243.1260) is one of the best parks along the Upper Mississippi. There has been a park on this site since the late 1800s, no doubt because of the dramatic vistas overlooking what is now—thanks to the lock and dam system—one of the widest sections of the river. In the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration built several stone structures in the park, including the watchtower on the south end of the park. You should have no trouble finding a spot for a picnic, even on a summer weekend.

The **Clinton County Courthouse** (N. 2nd St. & 7th Ave. N.) is an imposing Romanesque structure in the middle of town. Designed by G.S. Mansfield, it was completed in 1897 at a cost of \$168,000. The exterior was built with red sandstone and granite, with a central tower made of copper. There's not much to see inside.

Clinton Riverview Park (563.243.1260) parallels the river just east of downtown; it is a popular spot to walk or bike, stop for a picnic lunch, swim at the public pool, or take in a Clinton Lumber Kings baseball game; see below.

Downtown Clinton has lost much of the luster it once had, but there are still a few things to see. **The Van Allen and Company Department Store** (200 5th Ave. South) was designed by renowned architect Louis Sullivan—the inventor of the modern skyscraper—and completed in 1914. The first floor is now a pharmacy,

while the upper floors have apartments. Just down the street a bit is the **River Arts Center** (229 5th Ave. South; 563.243.3300; Tu–Sa 1–4; free), a small gallery that highlights the work of local artists.



St. Irenaeus Church, Clinton, Iowa.

The Clinton

County Historical Society Museum (601 S. First St.; 563.242.1201; M–F 9:30–11:30, W,Sa,Su 1–4; free) has two floors and four rooms chock full of objects and displays tied to Clinton’s past, including: the lumber industry, dioramas offering a peak into past living styles, military uniforms from every US war, a tattered Japanese flag from WWII, an exhibit on the actress and Clinton native Lillian Russell, and a very large room of very large agriculture machinery. Give yourself at least an hour here.

In the late 1800s, Clinton counted 13 millionaires among its 20,000 residents, a proportion that would make many cities envious. Most of the mansions built by those millionaires along 5th, 6th, and 7th Avenues South are long gone, but you can still tour one, the **Curtis Mansion** (420 5th Ave. South; 563.242.8556; W,Sa 1–3 from Memorial Day to Labor Day or by appointment; \$5). *George M. Curtis* built this huge Queen Anne-style house between 1883 and 1885. He made his fortune manufacturing windows, doors, moldings etc. The house itself is a marvel, especially on the first floor, with elegantly carved molding of richly grained woods like cherry and oak. The upstairs rooms

were rented for 60 years by the Clinton Women's Club to generate revenue for house maintenance, so they lack the elegance of the first floor.

The **Felix Adler Discovery Center** (332 8th Ave. South; 563.243.3600; W–Sa 10–4, Su 1–4; \$3) is a science-oriented hands-on museum for kids under 12. It was named after the Clinton native who was known as the “King of Clowns” for his 50-year clowning career, much of it with the Ringling Brothers, Barnum, & Bailey Circus.

The **Bickelhaupt Arboretum** (340 S. 14th St.; 563.242.4771; Open daily dawn–dusk; free) has 14 acres of landscaped gardens west of downtown. To get there, go west on 2nd Ave. South to 14th St. and turn left.

St. Irenaeus (2811 N. 2nd) is a monumental church that has long been a landmark in the region. Let's hope that continues. The parish was founded in 1848 by Bishop Loras of Dubuque and the cornerstone of the Gothic Revival church was laid in 1864. The building was completed in 1871 at a whopping cost of \$45,000, which is even more striking considering that almost all of the construction work was donated by members of the parish. Half of the construction costs came from the deep pockets of *Father Francis Cyrillus Jean*, who came from a wealthy family; his inspiration for the design came from a church in his native Lyons, France. The church is built from sandstone that was quarried from nearby bluffs and transported to the site by horse-drawn carts. Buttresses support the exterior walls; the twin towers (166 and 136 feet tall) are topped by wood spires that were completed in 1889. The spacious nave can seat 2,000 worshippers, yet the interior does not have a single pillar or brace supporting the 53-foot-high-single-vaulted ceiling; the details of how the roof is supported were kept secret. The

church was closed in the early 2000s; its fate is still to be determined.

✓ **TIP:** Two new museums are in the works in Clinton. The former St. Boniface Church is being converted into a museum of Catholic culture and history. In addition, the Midwest Sawmill Museum (23rd Ave. N. @ Grant St.) may soon be open and honoring the city's milling past.

Christ Episcopal Church (2100 N. 2nd St.; 563.242.5740; office open M–W, F 9a–noon, 1p–2:30p) was completed in 1856; the design was inspired by St. Martin's in Canterbury, England. The exterior is built of limestone and has a distinctive corner tower and buttresses. An expansion in 1898 added length to the sanctuary and necessitated a rebuilding of the chancel. A renovation of the ceiling in 1904 exposed the original open timber construction.

In the 19th century, spiritualism (a religion that teaches that consciousness lives beyond physical death and that communication with those who have passed is possible, with the help of an intermediary) was popular, especially among the well-to-do, and attending a séance was as common as seeing a doctor. A remnant of that era is still around in Clinton: the **Mississippi Valley Spiritualist Association** (71 Mount Pleasant Park Rd.; 563.242.0116), which was founded in 1882. They host a 6-week summer camp in July and August during which time you can get a private reading from a nationally-known medium. They also host a few weekend events at other times of the year; you can get the schedule and set up an appointment through their website (www.mvsa.info).

Culture & Arts

In the summer, the **Clinton Area Showboat Theater** (311 Riverview Dr.; 563.242.6760) stages live shows,



Clinton native Lillian Russell (Library of Congress).

mostly musicals, at the **Lillian Russell Theater** on a restored paddlewheel-er. The **Clinton Symphony Orchestra** (563.243.6042) performs several times throughout the year. If dance is your thing, the **Gateway Contemporary Ballet** (563.242.1002) hosts performances that feature their students.

Entertainment and Events 🎵

Wild Rose Casino and Resort (777 Wild Rose Dr; 800.457.9975/563.243.9000; Su–Th 8a–2a, F,Sa 8a–4a) is a land-based casino with 600 slot machines and 14 gaming tables spread over 28,000 square feet. It is located in the southwestern part of Clinton, less than a mile west of the US 30/US 67 intersection.

Bars/Clubs/Music 🍸

The **MCKINLEY STREET TAVERNE** (2301 McKinley St.; 563.242.3134) is a friendly spot for a drink; see complete entry below under food.

PENTHOUSE LOUNGE (519 3rd St.; 563.243.0063; opens daily at 4p) is a popular place to karaoke the night away.

Sports and Recreation

Bulger's Hollow Recreation Area (170th St.; 815.259.3628) is just north of Clinton, located at the point where the Mississippi River stretches 3½ miles from bank to bank; the serenity of the site is occasionally disrupted by a passing train.

The **Clinton Lumber Kings** (563.242.0727) are a minor-league Class A baseball team affiliated with the Texas Rangers. Games are played in Riverview Park's Alliant Energy Field, a stadium built in 1937 by the Depression-era Works Project Administration (tickets are about \$7).

Riverview Municipal Pool (Riverview Park; 563.242.4673; \$4) has a large swimming pool, slides, and kiddie pools. Open swim hours vary, so call ahead to confirm when the pool is open to the public.

The **Riverview Park Recreational Trail** is a paved hiking and biking trail that runs about five miles from Riverview Park near downtown to Eagle Point Park.

Shopping

The longevity king of local retail is **SMITH BROTHERS GENERAL STORE** or simply **SMITTY'S** (1014-1020 S. 4th St.; 563.242.0327; M–Sa 9:30–6), located in this very same location for the past 75 years. They take “general” very seriously; you can buy cast iron cookware, a screwdriver, a replica of an old Guinness sign, or a rubber chicken, among other things. • If you work in the medical profession or just like playing doctor, you can find clothing to meet your needs at **BIZZY B SCRUBS** (246 5th Ave. South; 563.243.6955; M–F 9–6 Sa 9–3). • You can still buy vinyl LPs at **CO-OP TAPES AND RECORDS** (516 S. 2nd St.; 563.242.4144; M–Sa 10–7, Su 11–4), plus CDs and that bong you've been meaning to get.

Eating

Clinton has plenty of fast food options, but I see no reason you need to stop at any of them. You can eat just as cheaply, and nearly as quickly—if you are in a rush—at any number of small, independent restaurants around town. Please check out these places.

For food light on your wallet but high in carbs, head to **SWEETHEART BAKERY** (245 Main Ave.; 563.242.4105; Tu–F 6a–5p, Sa 6a–3p), where you can get donuts like bismarks and long johns, turnovers, and something called a Blarney Stone, a piece of sweet cake covered with frosting and rolled in crushed peanuts that is sweet but not as sweet as you might think.

ESPRESSO, CIGARS, & MORE (2007 N. 2nd St.; 563.242.0197; M–Sa 8a–10p-ish, Su 8a–7p-ish) is an unlikely business in an unlikely location: part coffee shop, part Cuban restaurant, and part cigar store. Try some Cuban food—think Cubano sandwiches, fried plantains, churros, *ropa vieja*. I love the food. I'm not into cigars, but, if you are, they sell a variety of Cuban seed cigars, which are grown from the same stock as the famous ones, just not in Cuban soil. So, you could easily spend an afternoon leisurely smoking a stogie, sipping espresso, and snacking on *pastelitos*, while wearing the authentic Cuban *guayabera* you bought here. Why go anywhere else?

NORA'S CAFÉ (212 S. 2nd St.; 563.243.1009; Su–Th 5a–3p, F,Sa 5a–3p & 5p–8p) serves hearty food at cheap prices with a small town diner ambience. Breakfast items range from \$4–\$6 but you can eat well for under \$4. Lunch items (sandwiches and specials) are basically in the same price range.

MAID RITE (2328 Valley West Ct.; 563.242.1144; daily 6a–9p) is a regional favorite that specializes in seasoned ground beef on a bun, kinda like a sloppy

joe, except without the sauce. Get one with everything, including ketchup.

Don't miss **DICKYS DOGS, BALLS, N BARBQ** (89 Main Ave.; 309.373.3514; daily 11–9; closed in winter), a small burger stand in the Lyons District where you can get a burger for as little as a buck-fifty; the conversation is free.

If you can't resist the smell or taste of grilled meat, you must eat at **J & D STEAKHOUSE** (320 S. 2nd St.; 563.242.9831; M–Sa 11–8, Su 11–2). This modest cafeteria-style steakhouse knows how to grill a piece of meat and also has a few Greek items (gyro, baklava). You can get a complete meal for as little as \$6 or as much as \$17 if you want to splurge.

If you have a big appetite, check out **VITALES PIZZA** (1134 Camanche Ave.; 563.242.6140; Su–Th 4p–9:30, F,Sa 4–10:30) where you can get a malaise inducing deep-dish pizza (\$13–\$24 for two toppings) or a perfectly prepared, crispy medium thick crust (\$9–\$17 for two toppings).

If you have more time and a bigger budget, two restaurants offer a fine dining experience. **RASTRELLI'S RESTAURANT** (238 Main Ave.; 563.242.7441; Su–Th 11–9, F,Sa 11–10) has been serving sandwiches (\$7–\$9), pasta and Italian-inspired entrées (most are \$10–\$12 but steaks range up to \$21), and pizza (starting at \$8 for single topping) to residents of Lyons and beyond since 1939.

The **MCKINLEY STREET TAVERNE** (2301 McKinley St.; 563.242.3134; M–Th 5–9, F,Sa 5–10) is an upscale steakhouse in a restored building in the Lyons District. Most entrées are in the \$11–\$21 range.

Sleeping

Camping. **BULGER'S HOLLOW RECREATION AREA** (170th St.; 815.259.3628) has primitive camping sites (\$4) next to the river in a very shaded area; no services. • **THE RIVERVIEW RV PARK** (9th Ave. North & Riverview Dr.; 563.243.1260) is open year-round, although there is no water service from October to April. The 24 sites are rather close together, and there isn't much shade (\$16); no tents.

Budget. Clinton has several chain motels that you should have no trouble finding, but rooms generally cost a bit more here than in the Quad Cities. If you want to go with an independent operator, there are three in town; the rooms at all three are equipped with a microwave and small refrigerator. • Downtown Clinton has the **TRAVEL INN** (302 6th Ave. South; 563.243.4730; WiFi); it looks run down on the outside but the 52 rooms are in reasonably good shape and usually clean, about what you'd expect from a budget motel (\$52–\$62 + tax). • The **TIMBER MOTEL** (2225 Lincolnway; 563.519.5000; WiFi) has 28 large rooms that show some wear and tear but are clean (\$55–\$65 + tax). • The **OAK TREE INN** (2300 Valley West Ct.; 563.243.1000; WiFi) is the newest of the bunch and has 123 non-smoking rooms that are reasonably large and spotless (\$72 + tax); the rate includes a coupon for a free breakfast at the **MAID RITE** restaurant next door. It's hidden behind a shopping center at the intersection of US 30 and US 67 in the southwest part of town.

Moderate. The newest hotel in town is the **WILD ROSE CASINO HOTEL** (777 Wild Rose Dr.; 800.457.9975/563.243.9000), with 60 comfortable rooms equipped with coffee pots (\$99–\$149 + tax); breakfast is included.

Resources

- The local newspaper is the *Clinton Herald* (563.242.7101).
- Post Office: 300 S. 1st St.; 563.242.6214.
- Clinton Public Library: 306 8th Ave. South; 563.242.8441; M–Th 9–9, F, Sa 9–5.

Getting Around

Local bus service is provided by the **Clinton Municipal Transit Administration** (563.242.3721; M–F 6a–6p, Sa 8a–4p). One way fares are \$1, or you can buy a day pass for \$3.

✓ **TIP:** Don't forget to check out the sights in Fulton, Illinois, too.

RANDOM FACT: Iowa began playing around with Prohibition in the late 1880s, decades before it became federal policy, although enforcement of the laws was often uneven. While officials of nearby Davenport opted to ignore the law, Clinton residents circumvented it by creating a system of "jitney busses" that ran across the old Lyons-Fulton Bridge, allowing Iowa residents to get their drink on in Illinois taverns.

CAMANCHE

(population 4,215)

Camanche (pronounced ca-manch even though the street in nearby Clinton with the same spelling is pronounced ca-man-che) is a typical bedroom community. Manufacturing jobs are long gone; proximity to jobs in Clinton and Quad Cities means many people live in Camanche and commute elsewhere.

Arriving in Town

US 67 skirts the edge of town but Business 67 (Washington Blvd.) goes right through.

History

Camanche's first settler was *Dr. George Peck* who arrived in 1835; he reportedly named the town either after the Comanche Indians, none of whom ever lived in this area, or after his race horse. I'd bet on the latter. The town seemed destined for greatness, at least within Clinton County. Camanche was the first county seat and a leading commercial center in the mid-19th century, home to mills and farm implement dealers, commercial fishing, and served as a major transport hub (ferry service to Albany, Illinois dated back to the town's founding). Alas, the town's fate was changed forever on June 3, 1860 when an apocalyptic tornado wiped out most of the town. Dozens of people were killed and momentum for new development shifted from Camanche to Clinton. Camanche became a quiet

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river town, albeit one with a large country club for Clinton's wealthy families. The Camanche Club was a grand resort known throughout the area for its opulence; it even had its own power plant. The economic downturn leading up the Great Depression led its demise, and the building was razed in the 1930s.

Tourist Information

Visitor information is available at the **Clinton Chamber of Commerce** (721 S. 2nd St.; 563.242.5702; M–F 8–5).

Attractions

The **Camanche Historical Society** (1307 S. Washington Blvd.; 563.259.1285; open by appointment; free) has their main collection in a tin shed built to replace an 1860s-era warehouse, which had been moved to the current location, then was destroyed by a fire. The collection includes historic photos, antiques, and a genealogy library. They also manage the **Camanche Depot** (102 12th Ave.), which is next to the library.

 **TIP:** Camanche has a number of small parks next to the river on 1st Street. In addition, there is an old pier behind the library that is a popular spot for hanging out and fishing.

Getting Out on the River

The **Blue Heron Eco-Cruise** (563.259.1876; Th 7p; \$6) offers two-hour excursions on the river from Rock Creek Marina.

Entertainment and Events

The town celebrates its heritage in August with **Camanche Days** (563.259.1209).

Sleeping

Camping and Cabins. Located about six miles southwest of Camanche, **ROCK CREEK MARINA AND CAMPGROUND** (3942 291st St.; 563.847.7202) has a range of camping options (\$10/basic site, \$15/elec site) in a shady, spacious setting, plus six basic cabins with a microwave and small fridge but no bathroom (\$30) and a larger cabin with bathroom and kitchenette (\$45).

Resources

- Post Office: 820 S. Washington; 563.259.8038.
- Camanche Public Library: 102 12th Ave.; 563.259.1106; M–W 11–7:30, Th–Sa 11–5.

FOLLETT

(Unincorporated)

Folletts is a sleepy town at the crossroads of two highways; there are a few places nearby that are very popular with sportsmen.

Arriving in Town

US 67 goes right through town.

History

In 1837, *William D. Follett* of Sodus, New York, arrived in this area and made a land claim; in short order he established ferry service across the Wapsipinicon River. The town that he initially called Sodus was incorporated as Folletts in 1884 and grew to a respectable size, because it was a livestock shipping point for the Chicago, Rock Island, & Pacific Railroad. However, by the Great Depression, growth had essentially ceased and the town was disincorporated in 1933.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Visitor information is available through the **Clin-ton Chamber of Commerce** (721 S. 2nd St.; 563.242.5702; M–F 8–5).

Sports and Recreation 🌊

If you feel the urge for a little Frisbee golf, stop at **Folletts Park**. South of town in the Wapsipinicon River floodplain, **Hagenson Pond** is popular for fishing, as is the adjacent **Ben Martinsen Wildlife Area**, where you can also hunt or go for a hike on mostly undeveloped paths. For information on these three parks,



Bison, Scott County.

contact the Clinton County Conservation Board (563.847.7202).

Sleeping

Camping. Within the **BEN MARTINSEN WILD-LIFE AREA** (563.847.7202), you are free to pitch a tent wherever you like, but please pack out everything you pack in. There is no fee, but there are also no services.



Buffalo Bill (Library of Congress)

Buffalo Bill Connection

The **Buffalo Bill Cody Homestead** (230th Ave. at Bluff Rd.; 563.225.2981; daily 9–5 from April–October; \$2), five miles west of Highway 67, is the home built by Buffalo Bill's father in 1847; it was the family home for about six years. The house's best feature is the period furnishings; the Buffalo Bill history is a bonus. Adjacent to the Cody homestead is a small farm where the bison roam free, within the fence line, anyway.

William Frederick (aka Buffalo Bill) Cody was born February 26, 1846 near LeClaire (but not at this house). His father, Isaac, worked as a stagecoach driver in Iowa before moving the family to Kansas in 1853. Isaac was a vocal abolitionist who was killed in Kansas in 1857 after giving an anti-slavery speech. William earned his nickname while working as a contractor to supply meat to railroad workers, during which time he reportedly killed nearly 5,000 bison in 18 months. Buffalo Bill went on to fame as a scout, and Pony Express rider, but his greatest fame came during his career as an entertainer with his Wild West show.

PRINCETON

(population 946)

Princeton is an unusual river town, one that has historically been less dependent on the river than its neighbors. It found new life in the late 20th century as a bedroom community for commuters working in the Quad Cities.

Arriving in Town

US 67 cuts right through town but River Drive is the road closest to the Mississippi River; it is one block east of US 67.

History

Thomas Hubbard and *Israel Atherton* were among the first settlers; each ran a ferry to the Illinois shore. Brothers *Giles and Haswell Pinneo* arrived in 1836. According to one story, when Giles reached the Mississippi River, he hopped on a log and paddled his way to the other shore where he set up his home. Haswell built a cabin in what is now the south part of Princeton; this area became known as Pinneo's Landing. Giles built northwest of Haswell; that area became known as Pinneo's Grove. The villages of Pinneo's Landing, Elizabeth City, and Pinnacle Point merged into the new town of Princeton in the mid-1840s and the village was formally incorporated in 1857; it had nearly 1,000 residents by 1860. Princeton had a stage-coach connection to Lyons (now Clinton) in the mid-1800s. A standard journey for the 40-mile roundtrip route took about 11 hours, including an hour for lunch in Princeton, assuming the road through the

Wapsipinicon River wasn't worse than its standard muddy mess.

Even though Princeton counted many riverboat pilots among its early residents, its economy was tied closely to agriculture. Throughout most of the 19th century, wheat was the crop of choice, but a series of dry summers in the late 1890s led most farmers to switch to other crops such as corn, oats, or hay. Princeton's population has bounced around like a ping pong ball, dropping to 400 by the late 1880s before rebounding in the 20th century. After World War II, Princeton's proximity to the Quad Cities spurred residential expansion and the population grew again.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Your best bet for information about Princeton is to stop at the library (see below).

Attractions

Princeton has two small parks next to the river at the marina on River Drive where picnicking is an option: **Riverfront Park** and **Clemens Park**. High atop the hills, **Harold B. Woomert Park** (Chestnut S. & 5th St.) has a nice view of the valley.

Blackhawk State Bank (335 River Dr.) has a dock for its customers who do their banking by boat.

On the north end of town, you will find the **ruins of a stone house** with a round silo-like structure next to it. These were built in 1891 by Aaron Lancaster; the round structure was a windmill, one of the first in the area. The top of the tower had a series of vertical and horizontal slats that connected to a system of pulleys and gears. Wind blowing off the Mississippi River provided enough movement to provide power for cutting wood.

Getting Out on the River

Princeton Outdoor Adventures (203 River Dr.; 563.289.5445; call in advance to arrange) rents canoes (\$5/hour or \$35/day) and kayaks (\$5/hour or \$30/day) from Princeton Beach Marina.

Entertainment and Events

The **Princeton Day Celebration** (563.289.5315), typically held at the end of August, is the town's annual salute to itself.

Sports and Recreation

The **Princeton State Wildlife Management Area** (266th St.; 515.281.5918) is located just south of the confluence of the Mississippi and Wapsipinicon Rivers; it is well-known for its wildlife and is a popular place to hunt, fish, and watch birds. If you are lucky, you may even come across a mink, muskrat, or beaver.

Eating

GO FISH MARINA BAR & GRILL (411 River Dr.; 563.289.5137; 11a–11p-ish) serves standard bar food but you won't care much about what you're eating when you are sitting on their second floor deck next to the Mississippi River.

Resources

- Post Office: 634 US Highway 67; 563.289.4013.
- Scott County Library—Princeton, 328 River Dr.; 563.289.4282; M 8a–noon & 3p–7p, Tu 3p–7p, W,Th 9a–11a & 3p–7p, F 2p–6p, Sa 9a–noon.

LECLAIRE

(population 2,847)

LeClaire is a storied river town, a classic Mississippi River port that boomed in the 19th century before suffering through a bust period with the decline of river commerce. LeClaire is located at an area along the Mississippi known as the Point, the spot where the river makes a sharp turn to the west, and at the head of the rapids that Native Americans called Pau-pesha-tuk (“Agitated Water”).

Arriving in Town

US Highway 67 (Cody Road) is the main drag through town.

History

Europeans have had a lengthy presence in the area around LeClaire. In the late 1700s, the French built Marin’s Post at the mouth of the Wapsipinicon River, just north of LeClaire, to facilitate trade with Indian nations. A hundred years later, the American Fur Company built a trading post on Smith Island, just south of LeClaire. That island gets its name from another early settler, *Martin Smith*, who arrived in 1830 and lived in a wigwam for three years until his log cabin was finished (see sidebar).

Antoine LeClaire, the founder of Davenport and major landowner for what became Moline, also owned land further north at the head of the rapids. He started planning a town in 1833, but it was not platted until 1836. In the meantime, *Eleazor Parkhurst* arrived in the same area in 1834 and was soon joined by his

brother, Sterling. (A third Parkhurst brother, Waldo, arrived in 1838 and operated a store for 40 years.) The brothers established a village that became known as—surprise—Parkhurst. In the 1830s and 1840s, riverboats landed at a small harbor near the beginning of the rapids. In spite of this early landing, both Berlin (Parkhurst became Berlin around 1842) and LeClaire grew slowly through the 1840s. In 1848, each town counted just 15 buildings.

By the early 1850s, however, the economy was picking up steam, with the opening of mills, lime kilns, factories churning out plows and bricks, and a busy quarry that supplied limestone for the first buildings at Rock Island Arsenal and for “Old Main” at Augustana College. German immigrants began pouring into the area, undeterred by an unusually wet trio of years that triggered deadly outbreaks of malaria and cholera. Antoine LeClaire sold the land between the two villages to a firm headed by *Adrian Davenport* (no relation to George Davenport, the namesake for the town downriver), who had moved to the area in 1846 and built a sawmill. For a short time, this section was known as Middletown. They mapped out an ambitious plan for a community on 80 acres of land with room enough for 20,000 residents. In 1855, the town of LeClaire was incorporated, merging the two villages with the newly acquired land. Adrian Davenport was the first sheriff of Scott County (1838–1846) and later became the first mayor of LeClaire.

LeClaire’s position at the head of the rapids ensured it would have a prominent role in river commerce. The rapids created a need for a special type of pilot—a rapids pilot. *Philip Suiter*, who arrived in 1836, became the first licensed rapids pilot; many more followed, including three of his sons and a grandson.

LeClaire also had a booming business from its boat

yard, the LeClaire Marine Railway. The yards built several steamboats and repaired thousands of others. With the busy river trade came a busy saloon industry. LeClaire, like many thriving ports, had dozens of saloons; the southernmost one was called “The First Chance” and the northernmost was called “The Last Chance” (or so the story goes!). LeClaire’s shot at the big time was ultimately killed by the Panic of 1857. Businesses closed and the town’s population dwindled; Davenport went on to become the big city, while LeClaire would remain a small town.

After the Civil War, logging and sawmills boosted the economies of towns all along the Mississippi, and LeClaire was no exception. While LeClaire never had a large number of sawmills, the rapids guaranteed a constant demand for rapids pilots. One LeClaire resident, *Sam Van Sant*, perfected the design for a steamboat to help guide the massive log rafts floating down the Mississippi.

Competition from the railroads triggered the demise of river commerce in the early 20th century and led to a significant decline for LeClaire, not just due to the direct loss of steamboat traffic, but also because of the closing of several other businesses, including the boatyards, the Kattenbracher Foundry, the quarry, and the brick and tile factory. Most of the remaining population commuted to work in other cities.

LeClaire continued to lose population through the 1930s, as car ownership increased and people could drive to Davenport to do their shopping. LeClaire’s population decline finally ended when the Quad Cities landed several new factories and thousands of new jobs. This time, expanding car ownership helped LeClaire, as many people moved out of central cities and into new housing developments. LeClaire, just a short 15-minute drive to Davenport, began to develop

into a residential suburb of the Quad Cities. Today, tourism is a major industry.

Tourist Information

The **Mississippi Valley Welcome Center** (900 Eagle Ridge Rd.; 800.747.7800/563.322.3911; daily 8:30–8 from Memorial Day to Labor Day; otherwise daily 8:30–4:30) is an information palace where you can load up on brochures, examine the work of local artists courtesy of Mid-Coast Fine Arts, check your e-mail via the free WiFi service, or take in a nice view of the Mississippi River.

Attractions

The **Buffalo Bill Museum** (199 N. Front St.; 563.289.5580; M–Sa 9–5, Su 12–5; \$5) is jam packed with memorabilia, photos, and antique tools. Highlights include the Red Cross quilt made in 1919 and embroidered with the names of 834 donors, the creepy horsehair coats, and the dog-powered butter churn. Also on-site is the *Lone Star* Steamboat, a steam-powered paddlewheel towboat that was built in 1869 and operated on the Mississippi River for a remarkable 100 years (and piloted for many years by Orrin Smith, the last of the famous rapids pilots). The old boat is now under glass and will be restored.

Just west of the museum along the riverfront near the picnic pavilion, there is a marker where the **Green Tree Hotel** once stood. The large elm with an umbrella-shaped canopy was a popular spot where rapids pilots would sit in the shade on a summer day waiting for a job or, more commonly, men would spend the night after an evening of boozing. The tree eventually gained the nickname of the Green Tree Hotel (it sounded better than telling your parents that you spent the night sleeping under a tree on the levee) and it



Tugfest, LeClaire, Iowa.

became known throughout the US. Sadly, the tree was killed by Dutch Elm disease in 1964 and cut down.

✓ **TIP:** Pick up a self-guided tour to see homes of the rapids pilots. While most of the homes are privately owned, the brochure gives some background on pilots and their work. The tour includes former residences of Sam Van Sant, three sons of Philip Suiter who were also pilots, and John Smith—the “Dean of Rapids Pilots.”

Getting Out on the River

Riversong Mississippi River Tours (Wisconsin St. at the levee; 309.792.5388; W–Su 10–4; \$10) offers laid-back boat rides that may remind you of that Saturday morning you went fishing with your eccentric uncle.

The riverboat **Twilight** (815.777.1660) offers 2-day cruises from LeClaire to Dubuque and back from Memorial Day to mid-October. Cruises depart Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday (\$305).

Entertainment and Events

Festivals. When it comes to festivals, you just can't beat **TugFest** (563.289.3946). Thousands of people descend upon the small towns of LeClaire, Iowa, and Port Byron, Illinois, on the second weekend of August for a spectacle that is part county fair and part athletic competition. For three hours, the Mississippi River is closed to all commercial traffic. Organizers lay out a 2,400-foot rope and stretch it from bank to bank so teams of 20 or so from Iowa and Illinois can compete. While the individual tugs are taken seriously, you can't help but notice that the whole event feels like one big gag and everyone is in on it. Carnies line the riverfront, armed with old-school games of chance that entice suckers with large stuffed-animal prizes. When you get hungry, you can have a hand-dipped corndog, then choose either a fried Twinkie or fried Snickers bar for dessert (or both, I suppose, if you are a true glutton). Bring a chair and get there early to stake a claim to a good spot to watch the action.

Shopping

“**RARE FIND**” **ANTIQUES** (114 N. Cody Rd.; 563.289.5207; Tu–Su 10:30–5) has a fun mixture of unusual and rare antiques and boxes of old photos of the Mississippi Valley. • **ARTSWORK** (221 N. Cody St.; 563.289.3316; M 11:30–4 Tu–Sa 10–5 Su noon–4) showcases contemporary art that could liven up your home. They also have a basement wine cellar. • **GRASSHOPPERS** (208 N. Cody Rd.; 563.289.4652; Su, M noon–4, Tu–Sa 10–5), located in a home built by a 19th-century river pilot, has an eclectic collection of home furnishings and other things you never realized you needed. • **GREEN TREE EMPORIUM** (123 S. Cody Rd.; 563.289.9954; Tu–Su 10–4:30ish) has an eclectic mix

of new and used books, including some about the Mississippi River, antique and vintage items, and fine linens, among other things.

Eating and Drinking

Dan Fullmer is the fourth generation in his family to work as a commercial fisherman. He runs **FULLMER'S FISH MARKET** (112 E. Ferry St.; 563.289.5107; daily 6a–6p but usually closed in January), purveyor of fresh fish plucked out of the Mississippi River. Most of it is sold in smoked form; the catfish is moist and flavorful and all your choices (sturgeon, spoonbill, carp, or buffalo fish) are very affordable (most under \$4/pound).

PELO'S SUNDRIES FOUNTAIN & GIFTS (101 N. Cody Rd.; 563.289.5434; M–Th 8–5, F 8a–9p, Sa 8–7:30, Su noon–4), now run by the fourth generation of the Pelo family, is a friendly, no-frills spot for a cup of coffee on a cold day or fresh lemonade on a hot day.

SNEAKY PETE'S (207 N. Cody Rd.; 563.289.4277; M–Th 11a–10p, F, Sa 11a–11p, Su 7a–10p) is housed in the oldest commercial building in town and is fine spot for a beer. The saloon has the original tin ceiling and a few bullet holes. Their kitchen continues the cowboy theme (look out if you wear a tie here), down to a mundane salad bar that sits in an antique tub and meats that are grilled competently but seasoned little; in true Midwestern form, serving sizes are very generous (entrées \$9–\$29). The dining room has good views of the river.

THE FAITHFUL PILOT (117 N. Cody Rd.; 563.289.4156; M–Th 5–9, F, Sa 5–10, Su 9:30a–1:30p and 5p–9p in the summer) is one of the most highly regarded fine dining establishments in the region. The

seasonal menu includes an impressive range of creative entrées, including a couple of vegetarian offerings, often highlighting local ingredients (\$16–\$30). In the winter, for example, the menu included coq au vin with local free-range chicken (\$22), braised rabbit (\$25), and a lentil and mushroom stew (\$16). They also serve a heck of a Sunday brunch (\$8–\$14). When I visited, they were serving a dish called the French Quarter: poached eggs with smoked Gouda, andouille sausage, and a spicy Hollandaise sauce. Yum.

Sleeping

There are few lodging options in the immediate area. Your best bet is to head into the Quad Cities for a room, unless you want to overpay for a bed at one of the three chain motels at the Interstate 80/US 67 interchange.

Bed and Breakfasts. **LATIMER BED AND BREAKFAST** (127 N. 2nd St.; 563.289.5747) has three rooms that share a bath in a quaint house located on a quiet side-street off the main tourist strip (\$60 incl tax and full breakfast).

Resources

- Post Office: 310 Jones St.; 563.289.4785.
- LeClaire Community Library: 323 Wisconsin St.; 563.289.4242; M,Th 2–8, Tu,W 10–8, F,Sa 10–2.

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Welcome to Illinois!**RAPIDS CITY**

(population 953)

The Mississippi River makes a sharp turn to the west at Rapids City, a direction it will follow for the next 40 miles. The town gets its name from the rapids that predominated here until the Army Corps of Engineers constructed the current lock and dam system and buried them under deeper water.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 84 cuts through the middle of town as 2nd Avenue. The road closest to the river, however, is 1st Avenue, which runs from 18th Street to Shuler's Shady Grove.

History

The *Wells Brothers* arrived here around 1833 and built a grist mill, then later added a sawmill. The village was surveyed and platted in 1838 and incorporated in 1875 (464 “yes” votes against just a single “no” vote). Rapids City’s boom years were in the 1870s and 1880s, mostly because of nearby coal mines; workers were in short supply, so the mining companies imported black workers (who lived in shacks next to the mines). After the last coal mine shut down in 1888, the town lost population, the black miners went elsewhere, and Rapids City became the kind of place where the following story from 1930 was big news: “An alligator, stiff with cold and only two feet and four inches long ... was captured by Roy Williams of Rapids City in a shallow waterhole in Sulphur Creek.” Speculation was rampant that the renegade gator was the same one that had been brought to Rapids City from Florida by Mr. Ralph Filbert and released into the Mississippi River

some 13 years earlier. If so, that was one tough gator, surviving 13 Upper Miss winters.

Rapids City, like other small river towns in the area, experienced a modest population increase in the latter part of the 20th century as suburban growth from the Quad Cities pushed outward. Even so, Rapids City has remained a quiet village with great Mississippi River views, but no more alligators.

Tourist Information

Information is available at the **Mississippi Rapids Tourist Information Center** on Interstate 80 east-bound (309.496.2124; daily 8–6:30 from Memorial Day to Labor Day, daily 8–4:30 the rest of the year). You can also contact **City Hall** during normal business hours (1204 4th Ave.; 309.496.2321; M–F 9–4).

Attractions

Shuler's Shady Grove (1st Ave. & 11th St.; 309.496.2321) is a good spot to view the sharp bend in the river. As long as you're here, you may as well hang out in the gazebo, throw a line in the water, or hop on the **Great River Trail** (309.793.6300), a paved walking and biking path that begins in Rock Island and extends 62 miles to Savanna.

Eating

The **BROTHERS FAMILY RESTAURANT** (1718 2nd Ave.; 309.496.2965; daily 5a–10p) has an extensive menu of familiar home-cooked foods; they serve breakfast all day. If you can't find it on the menu, they can probably fix it for you, anyway. Just ask.

Resources

- Post Office: 135 13th St.; 309.496.2593.

PORT BYRON

(population 1,535)

Port Byron is perhaps best known as the town that competes against LeClaire, Iowa, in the annual Tug-Fest, but it is also a popular place to grab a bite to eat or a drink at one of the establishments along Main Street.

Arriving in Town

Illinois Highway 84 passes through town as High Street, which is, naturally, higher than Main Street, which is one block west and home to the business district. If you wish to take a detour through town that gets you close to the river, turn left on Buchanan Street, then right on Main Street and follow it until you can go no further, at which point Agnes Street will get you back on the highway. The route along Main Street takes you past several antebellum commercial and residential buildings.

History

Port Byron's first settlers were *Thomas and Robert Syms* who arrived around 1828 when the area was inhabited primarily by Sauk and Mesquakie Indians. *Archibald Allen* was another early settler, building his house in a village that was called Caanan; it was eventually absorbed into the village of Port Byron. Port Byron was platted (and named) in 1836 by *Samuel Allen, Dr. P. Gregg, Nathaniel Belcher* (who was granted a license to operate a ferry here in 1837), and *Moses Bailey*; the town is probably named after the 19th century Romantic poet Lord Byron, although it is not clear which of the early founders was a Byron aficionado. Like its neighboring villages, lime production was an impor-

tant local industry, although its 1840 start made Port Byron an early innovator. Lime kilns operated in Port Byron until the 1930s. One early resident was *Colonel Charles Eads*. His son, *James B. Eads*, would go on to become one of the best American engineers of the 19th century, completing a remarkable stone arch bridge across the Mississippi River at St. Louis in 1874.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Direct your questions about Port Byron to the helpful folks at the library (see below).

Attractions

There are a few picnic tables scattered along the Port Byron riverfront, especially south of downtown. **The Brown/Hancke house** (414 S. Main) was built in 1839 and is believed to be the oldest residence in town.

The **Port Byron Congregational Church** (200 S. High St.; 309.523.2318) was founded in 1849 with 12 members; the current building was dedicated in 1856. Most of the materials to build the church were shipped up the Mississippi River, including the art glass windows that were made in Germany. While the initial construction was done frugally, the congregation splurged on a 500-pound bell that was cast in Boston in 1854, a gift from the pastor's brother. When the bell was being unloaded from the steam boat, it was dropped in the Mississippi and had to be fished out. The entire front of the building was rebuilt in 1934 to make room for the new highway.

Entertainment and Events 🎵

Festivals. Port Byron competes against Le Claire every year at TugFest. For more detail, see the entry under LeClaire (p. 178).

Eating and Drinking

IT'S ON THE RIVER (201 N. Main St.; 309.523.2867; kitchen open Su–W 11a–8p, Th 11a–9p, F,Sa 11a–10p; bar open as late as 2a) is a good choice for casual dining or just to grab a beer. The views are good from inside but even better on the riverside patio. Sandwiches and salads run from \$3–\$7; dinner entrées go from \$12–\$16; pizza starts at \$12.

G'S RIVERFRONT CAFÉ (102 S. Main; 309.523.2781, Tu–Sa 5p–10p, bar open later) offers a fine dining experience and good river views, to boot. The menu was about to change after my visit, but I had a choice of entrées that included a range of steak and fish plus a vegetarian stir fry (\$15–\$25), as well as sandwiches and entrée-size salads (\$7–\$12). If you visit on a weekend night, stick around and enjoy live music and a responsible drink or two.

Sleeping

Camping. **CAMP HAUBERG** (129th Ave. North; 309.523.2168; April 15–October 15) has nearly 200 sites next to the Mississippi River (\$15/basic site, \$17/water & elec, \$20/full hookup); campers also have access to a boat ramp and dock.

Resources

- Post Office: 105 Hickory; 309.523.2345.
- River Valley District Library: 214 S. Main St.; 309.523.3440; M,W,F 1–8:30, Th 9–1:30 & 5:30–8:30, Sa 9–1.

CORDOVA

(population 633)

Cordova has few public places where you can enjoy the river. If you are inclined to spend a night, however, they have a bed-and-breakfast in one of the best darn locations along the Upper Miss.

Arriving in Town

Illinois Highway 84 skirts the eastern edge of town. To reach the town center, and the river, turn left (north) at the park and follow 11th Street to Main Street, then turn left.

History

In 1837, *John Marshall* (one of many early residents who relocated from New Jersey), *Archie Allen*, and *Dr. Thomas Baker* platted the town that became Cordova. The village's early economy centered on agriculture, but it was also an early transportation hub; *Israel Atherton* operated a hand-powered ferry between Cordova and Princeton, Iowa. The Diamond Jo Company built a warehouse in the 1850s (at 2nd and Main) that served his interests for two decades. Like Port Byron, Cordova was an important center for lime production; the industry began in the 1850s and lasted until the 1940s.

The railroad arrived in 1871 but because of the topography, the tracks were laid further east of the river than usual. As a result, Cordova did not suffer the fate of other river towns that were separated from the riverfront by railroad tracks. The arrival of the railroad signaled the demise of river transportation, at least for

Cordova, and the Diamond Jo warehouse was shuttered. It sat empty until the 1880s when it was turned into a button factory for a few years.

After World War II, new families moved into Cordova, many of whom worked in the Quad Cities. New industries in the 1960s included chemical refineries built by Nitrin (which closed in 1969) and Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (better known as 3M), as well as a nuclear power plant.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Your best bet is to contact the library (see below) or the **Village Hall** during normal business hours (309.654.2620)

Attractions

The **Cordova Township Park and Civic Center** (11th St. at State Highway 84; 309.654.2620) has a park next to state highway with a walking path and plenty of spots to picnic.

Just north of town is the **Cordova Dragway Park** (19425 Illinois Route 84 North; 309.654.2110), which, as the name suggests, hosts drag races. During the summer, you can usually find some action on a Wednesday, Friday, or Saturday evening.

Sports and Recreation

Princeton Beach is a popular locale for swimming and general river enjoyment. It is located on an island just north of Cordova; you'll need a boat to get there.

Sleeping

Bed-and-Breakfast. THE LEISURE HARBOR INN (701 Main Ave.; 309.654.2233; WiFi) has four well-kept rooms, each with a private bath, in a sprawling

1852-era house right on the Mississippi River (\$99 + tax). Guests are greeted with freshly baked goodies. The views from the porches are brilliant and the house has a number of common rooms in which guests can spread out. They even have a marina with transient slips, if you want to boat in.

Resources

- Post Office: 1001 Main Ave.; 309.654.2349.
- Cordova District Library: 402 Main Ave.; 309.654.2330; M,W 9–8, Tu,Th 1–8, F 9–5, Sa 9–1.



Egret.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

ALBANY

(population 895)

Albany has a long history of enticing rootless folks to settle down for a while, including Native Americans who established summer villages and river pilots who stuck around in winter. The town was home for many people whose occupations were tied to the river well into the 20th century.

Arriving in Town

Illinois Highway 84 passes through the middle of town as Main Street.

History

Settlers began arriving in Albany in the late 1830s; among the first was *Erastus Allen* who built a house in 1837. The Allen family named the new settlement Albany in honor of the city in their home state of New York. From its inception, Albany was a transportation hub and served as a way station for travelers, many of whom arrived via stage coach. The first hotel was built in 1837 and many more soon followed. Ferries ran from Albany across the Mississippi River to Camanche beginning in 1840 with the horse-powered ferry operated by *David and Samuel Mitchell*. In the mid-1800s, ferry fare for a single person was 25¢, but it would cost you \$1.50 to ferry your loaded wagon and team of oxen to the other bank of the river. The Mitchells bought a steamboat in 1850 to replace the horse-powered one, which operated until 1860 when the Great Tornado lifted it out of the Mississippi and trashed it. Ferry service from Albany continued into the early part of the 20th century.



“E.O. Efner, killed in Tornado of 1860.”

Early industry in town was, naturally, closely linked to the river, and included sawmills, a pearl button factory, and fisheries. Albany suffered severe damage from the tornado of June 3, 1860 that wiped out neighboring Camanche, Iowa. Albany suffered five deaths, dozens of serious injuries, and the loss of over 100 buildings, including most of its commercial

properties. The brick Presbyterian Church was leveled; its bell, the only one in town, was found a block away; the pulpit Bible was also recovered, although the tornado had edited out several chapters of Genesis. The town started losing population and industry after the tornado. A large proportion of Albany’s population was involved in trades directly related to the river, including river pilots, barge hands, and commercial fishers. This continued well into the 1950s when new industries located near Albany and the town experienced a modest influx of new families.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Direct your questions to the library (see below) or Albany Village Hall (101 Lime St.; 309.887.4064).

Attractions

Dolan Memorial Park (309.887.4064) is a small riverside park at the south end of town that has a few picnic tables.

There are many places in the Mississippi Valley to see Indian burial mounds, but few are as informative as the **Albany Indian Mounds State Historic Site** (Cherry St.; 309.887.4335; daily sunrise to sunset; free). The site has numerous conical mounds built by Indians of the Hopewell culture (200 BCE–300 CE), people who had extensive trade networks that stretched across much of North America. This site once had nearly 100 burial mounds; about half remain. Many are still visible and easily reached along a well-groomed trail with plentiful interpretive signs.

Shopping

Albany has a few antique stores, including **Albany True Value Antiques** (401 S. Main St.; 309.887.4850; Tu–F 10–5, Sa 9–5 Su noon–4), which is housed in an 1880s-era building that once housed a hardware store. They have a good collection of old books, pictures, and other old stuff.

Eating

The Mississippi Café (306 S. Main St.; 309.887.9014; Tu–Su 7a–9p) offers standard Midwestern family fare; your best bet is the all-you-can-eat fish fry (Th–Sa evenings, \$9).

Resources

- Post Office: 204 3rd Ave. South; 309.887.4433.
- Albany Public Library District: 302 Main St.; 309.887.4193; M, Tu, Th 6p–7p, Sa 9:30a–10:30a.

FULTON

(population 3,881)

The Mississippi River is not as wide here, hence this spot became known as The Narrows and gave Fulton and Clinton an advantage over other river communities. The first Dutch settler, *Thomas Smith*, arrived in Fulton in 1856, and, remarkably, Fulton has maintained a strong Dutch identity to this day.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 84 skirts the eastern edge of town as Waller Road. Fulton is another Upper Miss town that uses numbered streets and avenues to confuse visitors; streets run north-south and avenues run east-west. The business district is along 4th Street; 14th Avenue is the main east-west drag, connecting to Clinton, Iowa, as Iowa Highway 136. The Lyons-Fulton Bridge (aka the north bridge) has a sidewalk for pedestrians and bicyclists; the Gateway Bridge (aka the south bridge) does not.

History

Long before Europeans arrived in this area, Native Americans (Ho-Chunk, Pottawattamie, and Mesquakie) were drawn here for its plentiful game and relatively easy Mississippi River crossing. When Europeans began to arrive in the 19th century, remnants of a large Native American village were still visible.

The first European settler was *John Baker*, who arrived in 1835, which explains why the town was first called Baker's Ferry. He built a three-room log cabin near Cattail Creek, and by 1837, he had been joined

by his nephew, *John W. Baker*, and 27 other settlers. The new settlement was named in honor of Robert Fulton, the inventor who counted the steamboat among his innovations. The post office was estab-



De Immigrant windmill in Fulton, Ill.

lished in 1838, with John Baker as the first postmaster. It was a cush job in the early years—mail arrived only three times a month. In 1840, *Caleb Clark* received the first license to operate a ferry, kicking off an industry that would last for nearly a century. Other new arrivals during this period were Michael and Catherine Reagan, immigrants from Tipperary County, Ireland, whose great-grandson, Ronald, would become President of the US in 1980.

Like much of the country, Fulton experienced a wave of industrial growth and an influx of immigrants around the turn of the century. New industries included the Hellerstedt Carriage Company and the Ohio Stove Company which became the Mississippi Valley Stove Factory. Many of the immigrants were Dutch.

Fulton's industrial base was similar to its neighbors—a few sawmills, lime kilns, and a railroad roundhouse—but Fulton also was a center for clay pipe manufacturing, because of the exceptional quality of the local clay, at least for making clay pipes. The first factory was opened by *Nick Gerten* in 1869; he was joined by three other factories in short order. At their peak, the four factories produced 72,000 clay pipes

every month for use in shooting galleries and as souvenirs. The last factory closed in the 1930s.

Fulton was also home to the Patent Novelty Company. Beginning in 1906 the company manufactured the So-E-Z Dustpan—gather up that dust without bending over!—and eventually made over a million of them a year, in spite of the occasional explosion that resulted from the combustible production process. The company expanded its production line to include mailboxes, kitchen racks, curling iron racks, and other modern conveniences. It is now called the Fulton Corporation and is still churning out mailboxes and dustpans.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Information about Fulton is available at the windmill, **De Immigrant** (see below) and the **Fulton Chamber of Commerce** (415 11th Ave.; 815.589.4545; M–F 8–4).

Attractions

Fulton is working hard to preserve the heritage of its Dutch ancestors. Judging by the giant windmill next to the river called **De Immigrant** (1st St. & 10th Ave.; 815.589.4545; M–Sa 10–5, Su 1–5; free), they are doing a fine job of it, too. The windmill is an authentic, functional Dutch windmill that was completed in 2000. Take a free tour of the windmill, then stop at the gift shop and buy flour that was milled on-site. Next to the windmill, **Den Besten Park** (815.589.2616) is a pleasant place to picnic, but you'll have to climb to the top of the levee to see the river.

The **Martin House Museum** (707 10th Ave.; 815.589.3809 or 815.589.3587; Su 2–4 or by appointment; free), a two-story brick home whose pedigree stretches back to 1855. It has a collection of exhibits about the town's Dutch history, the Reagan



Fisherman sculpture, Fulton, Ill.

connection, and samples of products made in Fulton, including a very cool coal-burning stove. In the near future, the **Fulton Dutch Museum** (10th Ave. & 1st St.) will show off a collection of windmill models.

Also worth a look is **Heritage Canyon** (515 N.

4th St.; 815.589.4545; daily 9–5 from June–September; weekends only in April, May, October, November; \$2), a replica of a historic village tucked into a narrow hollow near the Mississippi. Actors in period costumes wander the grounds during special events such as Dutch Days, the Fall Festival, and the Christmas Walk.

Fulton Catholic Cemetery (N. 4th St. at northern city limits; 815.589.3153) is the final resting place for several ancestors of Ronald Reagan, including his great-grandparents Michael (1829–1884) and Catherine Reagan (1829–1908). The Reagan graves are on the highest hill.

First Reformed Church (510 15th Ave.; 815.589.2208) is the mother church for the local Dutch Reformed community, with a congregation that began in 1866. The building was completed in 1885 and has been renovated a few times. Several churches spun off, including Second Reformed Church (703

14th Ave.; 815.589.3425) whose members wanted English-language services. Their church was completed in 1916.

Just north of town, **Lock and Dam 13** (Lock Rd.; 815.259.3628) opened for service in 1939 and underwent a major overhaul in the 1990s. The public areas include opportunities for fishing, wildlife viewing, picnicking, and barge watching. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, the Corps offers a guided tour on Sundays at 1pm (free).

Entertainment and Events

Festivals. The big events of the season are **Dutch Days**, when the town celebrates its Dutch heritage during the first weekend in May, and the **Fulton Fall Festival** the second weekend of October. Call to confirm dates and to get a schedule of events (815.589.2616).

Sports and Recreation

When the glaciers were retreating at the end of the last ice age (about 13,000 years ago), an ice dam 40 miles downstream diverted the flow of the Mississippi River and created a pool that extended up to Savanna. As the flow of water slowed, sediment settled to the bottom, creating a sandy base. The ice dam eventually broke and the Mississippi returned to its previous course, in the process draining the lake and creating sand prairies. Many of the prairies have been lost to development, but there are still a few remnants, including the **Thomson-Fulton Sand Prairie Nature Preserve** (Railroad Lane; 815.244.3655). To get there from Illinois Highway 84, turn west on Lock Road, then take the first right. The preserve is one mile on the west side of the road. There is a gate another 0.2 miles further on Railroad Lane where you can park.

Shopping

RIVER HUIS TRADERS (1105 4th St.; 815.589.3160; M–F 8–5, Sa 10–3) has Dutch items and cute little replicas of barges and tows made by a Kentucky artist. • **SUSAN’S CALICO CREATIONS** (1108 4th St.; 815.589.2221; Tu, W, F, Sa 10–5, Th 10–8, Su noon–4) sells quilting supplies, unfinished wood products, and Christmas collectibles. • **SWEET WOODRUFF** (1106 4th St.; 815.589.2937; M, Tu, W, F 10–5, Th 10–8, Sa 10–close) specializes in handcrafted items like jewelry, glassware, and purses. • If you are in the mood for a treasure hunt, **GREAT RIVER ROAD ANTIQUES** (23080 Highway 84; 815.589.3355; daily 10–6), north of Fulton, just might be the place you need, especially if you’re into glassware and dishes. If their 10,000 square feet of indoor space isn’t enough, check out the uber-flea market on weekends from April to October (Sa, Su 9–5; free).

Eating

The **FULTON MEAT MARKET** (211 11th Ave.; 815.589.3213; M–Sa 8–5:30) has the usual supplies for the meat lover, plus treats like smoked herring and other Dutch food products. They also sell a variety of prepared foods, in case you want to get supplies for a picnic lunch next to the river. From April to October they run a very popular barbecue on Saturday afternoons from 11a–2p.

Just north of town, **SCHAFFER FISHERIES** (21985 Waller Rd.; 800.291.3474; daily 8–5), one of a dying breed of commercial fisheries along the Mississippi River, is another place to stock up for a picnic lunch. Stop in to buy live or smoked catfish, buffalo fish, carp, or frozen seafood from around the country (clams, alligator, shrimp) for that Mississippi bankside clambake.

MANNY'S TOO (305 11th Ave.; 815.589.2520; M 5–9, Tu–Th 11:30–9:30, F 5–10:30, Sa 4–10:30, Su 3–9) is a local favorite for its tacos (\$3.75 for 3) and pizza (large 1-topping for \$10).

FREEZER'S ICE CREAM (1510 10th Ave.; 815.589.2681; daily noon–10p in summer, noon–9 in late spring and fall, closed November–mid-March) is a popular place to enjoy the frozen treat, in soft-serve form.

Sleeping

Camping. **LOCK AND DAM 13 RECREATION AREA** (Lock Rd.; 815.259.3628) has five primitive campsites that are located by the fire pits, just before the pit toilets (free).

Budget. **THE PINE MOTEL** (19020 13th St.; 815.589.4847; WiFi) is a great bargain (\$48 incl tax). The rooms are clean and well kept and each has a small kitchenette (microwave, fridge, coffee pot, hot plate). They also rent a small cottage on the grounds that has similar amenities (\$52 incl tax).

Resources

- The local newspaper is the weekly *Fulton Journal* (815.589.2424).
- Post Office: 915 4th St.; 815.589.2020.
- Schmaling Memorial Library District: 501 10th Ave.; 815.589.2045; M,W 2:30–7:30, Tu,Th 10:30–7:30, F 2–5, Sa 10–2.



TIP: Don't forget to check out the sights in Clinton, Iowa, too.

THOMSON

(population 559)

Thomson is the Melon Capital of the World, according to the signs. They do grow a lot of melons around here. They also have a number of pleasant recreation areas nearby.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 84 goes through the eastern edge of town. The business district is west of the highway on Main Street.

History

Thomson is one of those communities that exist because of a decision made by a railroad executive. In 1864, the Western Union Railroad selected this location for their tracks, bypassing the older and more populous community of Bluffville that was located two miles to the northeast. The first post office carried the name Sandville, but the town was eventually named after *G.A. Thomson*, one of the officers in the very same railroad company that created the town. In its early years, Thomson grew as the railroads attracted stockyards, warehouses, and most of the businesses from Bluffville. The melon industry has been strong for generations due to the sandy soil in which the rotund gourds thrive.

Tourist Information ⓘ

You can contact the **Carroll County Motel Hotel Tax Board** (866.367.6505; www.gocarrollcounty.com) for information about visiting Thomson or the **York Township Public Library** (see below).

Attractions

The **Thomson Depot Museum** (907 Main St.; 815.259.2361; F–Su 1–4 from Memorial Day to Labor Day; free) has the usual relics of local history, plus railroad memorabilia, an old telephone switchboard, and a very cool antique post office service window and post office boxes.

✓ **TIP:** For something completely different, consider a farm tour. The brochure called **Carroll County Farm Tours** (available at the tourism info kiosk in Savanna or by calling 800.678.2108/815.244.3001) lists about a dozen options for touring operating farms that produce things like pigs, Christmas trees, dairy, beef, and grain. Call the farms directly to set up a tour.

Getting Out on the River

Fin & Feather Campground (6284 Riverview Rd.; 815.273.3302) rents fishing boats and canoes (\$10/day).

Entertainment and Events

Festivals. Thomson celebrates the harvest of its favorite crop over the Labor Day weekend with **Melon Days** (866.367.6505), a traditional hometown festival but with free watermelon.

Sports and Recreation

Arnold's Bikes & Embroidery (831 Main St.; 815.259.8289; Tu–Sa 10–6) rents bicycles of the recumbent (\$10/hour or \$45/day) and regular kind (\$6/hour or \$25/day).

Ayers Sand Prairie Nature Preserve (Airport Rd.; 815.244.3655) is another treeless sand prairie remnant, representative of how the immediate area once looked.

The **Thomson Causeway Recreation Area** (815.259.2353) is located at one of the widest spots along the Mississippi River. Besides the numerous campsites, the recreation area has plenty of space to picnic, fish, or just hang out next to the river. This is a popular spot on summer weekends.

Just east of Thomson, **French Bluff State Natural Area** (Scenic Bluff Rd.; 815.273.2731) was once the site of the village of Bluffville. It withered away when the railroad went to Thomson. You can hike through the natural area on old service roads that make for a moderately easy hike to a bluff-top ridge, but the views of the valley are blocked by trees in the summer.

Eating

Just north of Thomson, **BUCK'S BARN** (5020 State Highway 84; 815.259.8278) is a popular local steakhouse (entrées \$11–\$26).

Sleeping

Camping. **THOMSON CAUSEWAY RECREATION AREA** (815.259.2353; April–Oct.) is one of the better Corps-operated recreation areas. The campground has plenty of shade and is not too cramped; most of the 131 sites have electricity and share a common water source (\$10/basic sites, \$16/reservable sites, \$18/first come, first served). • The **FIN & FEATHER CAMPGROUND** (6284 Riverview Rd.; 815.273.3302; May 1–duck hunting season) won't win any awards for "best-kept campground" but is located next to the river, and it is inexpensive; there are a handful of overnight sites, some with electric (\$8/tent, \$13/elec; no showers).

Budget. **THE EXECUTIVE INN** (800 One Mile Rd.; 877.575.3233/815.259.7378; WiFi) is a newer



White pelican.

motel with 40 very clean rooms equipped with fridge and microwave (\$55 + tax).

- **LYNNWOOD LYNKS AND LODGE GOLF RESORT** (5020 State Highway 84; 866.596.6966/815.259.8278; WiFi) is north of town and has 52 rooms that are in much better shape than you might think based upon the exterior of the building (\$74–\$84 + tax); each room has a microwave and small fridge.

Resources

- Post Office: 705 Argo Fay Route; 815.259.3121.
- York Township Public Library: 1005 W. Main St.; 815.259.2480; M,W 5:30–8, Tu,Th 9–4:30, Sa 9–2.

SAVANNA

(population 3,542)

Popular with bikers—both the manually-propelled type and the Harley variety—Savanna is a bit rough around the edges after a couple decades of job losses. Don't let the peeling paint deter you from getting to know what some folks call the Blue Collar Galena.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 84 enters town as Viaduct Road, becomes Chicago Avenue after merging with US Highway 52, then makes a sharp turn and becomes Main Street as it passes through the business district and exits town to the north.

History

Savanna's first settlers arrived in 1828, several years before most other river towns in this area. *Aaron and Harriet Pierce* and their four children came south from Galena, guided through the wilderness by *Vance Davidson*. They were soon joined by the families of *William Blundell and George Davidson* who reached the same spot only hours later after traveling via the Fever River and down the Mississippi.

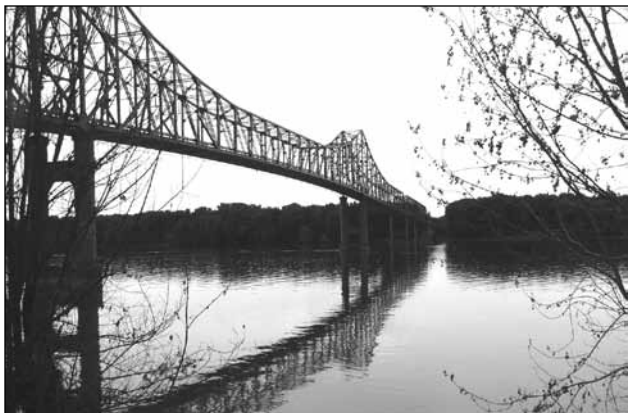
Luther Bowen bought the claims of the original settlers and platted the town of Savanna in 1836. The town was named for the marshy plain it inhabits because it was thought to resemble those in the South. Savanna had about 200 residents by 1840 and was a regular stop for steamboats. The usual businesses sprang up: hotels, a sawmill, a ferry, a brickyard. By the late 1840s Savanna was growing steadily enough to

withstand the defection of many early settlers for the California Gold Rush, including Vance Davidson.

Savanna's steady economy was based largely on its status as an important Mississippi River port. The Western Union Railroad arrived in 1865 and by 1880 a railroad bridge across the Mississippi had been completed. In 1886, the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad also reached Savanna. At their peak, the railroad companies switched 4,500 freight cars every day.

With the railroad business humming along, another employer that would dramatically impact life in Savanna set up shop. In 1918, the federal government purchased land just north of town and established the Savanna Proving Grounds to test artillery; it would grow into a large military base called the Savanna Army Depot (see sidebar). Between the success of the railroads and the opening of the Proving Grounds, Savanna's population continued to grow, reaching 5,237 in 1920. Flush with cash and facing the needs of a growing city, town leaders began a series of improvements after the turn of the century: sewers were built, telephones installed, a power plant built, cement sidewalks laid, a library opened, parks created (including Marquette Park along the Mississippi River), and the Sabula-Savanna Bridge opened for passenger cars.

Savanna's dependence on the two major employers, however, led to dramatic fluctuations in employment and population. During the Depression, both industries struggled and cut jobs, but both recovered with World War II. The good times didn't last, however, and the railroad and Depot, which accounted for over half of the jobs in Savanna, began to scale back their operations; Savanna lost nearly one-quarter of its population between 1970 and 1990. By the time the Savanna Army Depot officially closed on March 18, 2000, most of the damage to the local economy had already been



Savanna-Sabula bridge.

done. Savanna today is working to revive its economy by emphasizing light industry and service-sector jobs, with hopes of growing its tourist trade.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Pick up brochures at the **Savanna Chamber of Commerce** (312 Main St.; 815.273.2722; M–F 8:30–3) or the information kiosk next to the **Train Car Museum** (see below).

Attractions

About 2-½ miles south of town, the **Ingersolls Wetlands Learning Center** (7071 Riverview Rd.; 815.273.2723; M–F 8–4; free) is information central for the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge.

The **Savanna Train Car Museum** (25 Main St.; 815.273.3292; M–Sa 9–5 Su 10–6 from April to November; free) has railroad trinkets in an old passenger rail car.

The town is also raising funds for the future **Savanna History Museum** (404 Main St.) that will have a wider focus on local history, including displays about



Former residential building.

Savanna Army Depot

On June 28, 1917 the US government bought 13,172 acres of sand prairie next to the Mississippi River. In short order, the Savanna Proving Grounds thundered to life with the testing of 75mm and 155mm howitzers. After World War I, warehouses were built to store ammunition, and the Savanna Ordnance Depot was born. During World War II, employment jumped (from 143 in 1939 to 7,195 in 1942), and construction boomed. The Depot buildings included 407 igloos to store ammo and other volatile weapons like mustard gas. Each igloo had between 1,000 and 2,000 square feet of storage space under a steel-reinforced hump that was secured with a very sturdy four-ton steel door. Completed igloos were covered with dirt and grass to hide them from aerial surveillance, creating more than a passing resemblance to Indian burial mounds. On January 21, 1948 an igloo containing 150 tons of volatile chemicals exploded, excavating a hole 100 feet wide and 50 feet deep that is still visible today. In nearby Hanover and Savanna, the blast blew out windows and cracked plaster. The igloo's steel door was never found.



Ammunition storage igloo.

In 1962 the base was rechristened the Savanna Army Depot; it continued to store munitions but also recycled and destroyed old munitions. The base escaped closure in the late 1970s through political sleight-of-hand, an act that only delayed the inevitable. In 1995, with employment down to about 500 people, the base couldn't escape the closure list again and shut its doors in March 2000. Most of the land (9,400 acres) was transferred to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

The Depot today is a creepy, intriguing place: large buildings rot, surrounded by tall fences topped by razor wire; railcars sit empty, stripped of their exterior sheathing; deer graze next to abandoned gas pumps. The base's skeleton remains intact, but the heart and soul, the thousands of people who once worked here, are long gone, replaced by no trespassing signs and warnings about unexploded ordinance. Igloos no longer store mustard gas but computer data. Much of the property remains off-limits, even though it is part of a public wildlife refuge. The authorities are very serious about enforcing the "no-go" rules, so stick to the paved roads or you risk forfeiting that digital camera you just bought as a penalty for trespassing.



Downtown Savanna, Ill.

the Savanna Army Depot and an ambitious Civil War display; check back later.

What to do with an oak tree that

is nearing the end of its 150 year long life? Why not sculpt a memorial to the town's railroading past. That's exactly what artist Thom Gleich did when he created the **Trainman Wood Carving** for the Law-Jones Funeral Home. You can see the finished product on South 4th Street, just ½ block south of Illinois Highway 84.

You can view—and purchase—the works of local artists at **321 Art Gallery** (321 Main St.; 815.273.2781; Th–Sa 10–5, Su 12–4).

The Iron Horse Saloon (314 Main St.; 815.273.2600; daily 10–9p) is a popular tavern with the Harley set; it has a motorcycle museum (free) in a restored 19th century building with an impressive tin ceiling and beautiful back bar.

Marquette Park (815.589.2616) is the riverfront park and a place where I have enjoyed many picnic lunches.

Monument Park (Main & Randolph Sts.) is a small park at the north end of town that has a marker commemorating the first European settlers in the area, the Aaron Pierce family.

The former Savanna Army Depot has a couple of attractions worth a stop. The newly opened **Rock Island Technical Society** (Savanna Army Depot Building 252; 815.273.4013/563.451.7458; Tu,F,Sa 10–4)

has a museum dedicated to rail history, particularly to the defunct Rock Island Railroad. The museum is in a cluster of buildings to your right as you reach the entry to the old base. Next door is the new **Savanna Army Depot Museum and Welcome Center** (815.273.4021; Tu–Su 10–4). Housed in the old chapel, they have a very cool giant relief map of the old base, plus other memorabilia from the Depot days.

Getting Out on the River

South of Savanna, **Winter's Spring Lake Resort** (8048A State Highway 84 South; 815.273.4595; open May 1 to Oct 1) rents rowboats that can take you around the backwaters (\$10/day).

Entertainment and Events

The **Savanna Times Theater** (222 Main St.; 815.273.2951) has two screens.

Festivals. **Music on the Mississippi Riverfest** (815.273.2722) is a June music festival on the riverfront, usually on a Friday night.

Sports and Recreation

Savanna is the northern terminus of the **Great River Trail**; from here you can ride 62 miles to Rock Island.

Mississippi Palisades State Park (16327A State Highway 84; 815.273.2731), established in 1929, is another spectacular park along the Mississippi River. The park has a few Indian burial mounds, several overlooks, and an extensive trail network. A short hike on the Indian Head trail, leads to a spectacular view of the Mississippi Valley. Please be careful. It's a long fall. If you are the adventure sport type, this is one of the few public parks along the Upper Miss where rappelling is allowed. Call the office for a list of bluffs where it is OK.

On the grounds of the old depot, the **visitor's center for the Lost Mound Unit**, part of the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge, (3159 Crim Dr.; 800.344.9453/815.273.3184; M–F 7:30–4) has a few stuffed birds and some pictures that show the dunes before they were leveled for the army depot. The rest of the unit has an overlook and plans to develop trails as funds permit. Please stick to the areas along the road. It will take a little while to get to the overlook, because you will probably be distracted by deer and the abandoned buildings of the old depot. Other parts of the unit are accessible by boat only but, if you can get to them, are fine spots for swimming and camping. Be aware that some areas along the shore are off-limits. Don't camp or park your boat in spots that are marked with No trespassing or Danger signs—but I really don't need to tell you that, do I?



TIP: Every year a pair of Trumpeter Swans passes through Savanna in late spring. You can often see them in the marshes south of town.

If you're looking for a place to fish for a couple of hours, just south of Savanna, there are two wildlife areas that are part of the Upper Miss Refuge that just might suit you: **Frog Pond** and, a half-mile south, **Spring Lake Wildlife Area**.

The **Savanna Swimming Pool** (Savanna High School; 500 Cragmoor; 815.273.3887; \$3/adult) has a lap pool and a wading pool, both indoors, call for open swim times.

Shopping

PULFORD OPERA HOUSE ANTIQUE MALL (324-330 Main St.; 815.273.2661; M–Th,Sa 9:30–5:30, F 9:30–5, Su 11–6) has several rooms full of antiques and collectibles on two floors of the

old opera house. • If you are in the market for something with a motorcycle theme, head to **POOPY'S** (815.273.2363); while you're there, you can also get that tattoo that's been on your list (815.273.7667).

Eating and Drinking

FISH "R" US (7634 State Highway 84; 815.273.3277; daily 9–5), just south of town, is a family-run commercial fishing operation; the store has live and smoked Mississippi River fish (carp, catfish, and sturgeon) for very reasonable prices.

Get your coffee fix at **SURF'S UP JAVA HUT** (734 Viaduct Rd.; 815.273.4528; M–F 7–5, Sa 8–3).

AUNT MANNIE'S KITCHEN (417 Main St.; 815.238.8123; M–F 7a–2p, Sa, Su 7a–noon) serves up inexpensive home-style food; you can fill up at breakfast or lunch for about \$5.

CJ'S (405 Main St.; 815.273.2050; 11a–9ish daily) serves delicious, affordable thin-crust pizza (\$7–\$10 for a cheese pizza); pass through the 1940s-era bar and order at the kitchen, all the way in the back.

POOPY'S PUB N GRUB (1030 Viaduct Rd.; 815.273.4516; kitchen open 6a–10p daily, bar open until 2a during the week and 3a on weekends) has a shitload of food options; most breakfast items (pancakes and omelets) are under \$5; lunch and dinner entrées are primarily grilled or fried meats served in ridiculously large portions (\$8–\$10; steaks from \$12–\$24). Poopy's also hosts live music on weekends.

DOMENIC & MARIA'S (402 Main St.; 815.273.4242; Tu–Su 5–9:30) serves standard Italian food (lasagna, spaghetti) that is popular with the locals (\$7.50 to \$15).

IRON HORSE SALOON (314 Main St.; 815.273.2600; daily 10–9p), as noted above, is a popular place to wet your whistle, especially if you are traveling on a Harley.

Sleeping

Camping. Primitive camping at any island in the river is fine with the folks who run the Upper Miss Refuge (800.877.8339). • **WINTER'S SPRING LAKE RESORT** (8048A State Highway 84 South; 815.273.4595; open May 1 to Oct 1) is south of Savanna and situated along Spring Lake (go figure!) which connects to the main channel; it has about 50 sites (\$14/night, water & elec.), plus 20 tent sites on a peninsula next to the lake (\$10/night); no showers. • **SEVEN EAGLES CAMPGROUND** (9734 State Highway 84; 815.273.7301; open Memorial Day–mid-October) is tucked between Frog Pond and Spring Lake along the River Road; they have 73 sites with full hookups (\$30 + tax or \$25 for tents). • **MISSISSIPPI PALISADES STATE PARK** (815.273.2731) has 241 sites, many well-shaded (\$10/basic, \$18–\$20/elec; \$10 extra on major holidays), including several primitive sites that are accessed only by a 1½ mile hike (\$6).

Cabins. **SEVEN EAGLES CAMPGROUND & RESORT** (9734 State Highway 84; 815.273.7301) also has two cabins, each with private bath and kitchen (\$100 + tax). • At **THE NEST AT PALISADES CABINS** (Scenic Ridge Rd.; 815.273.7824) choose from three comfortable, private cabins in a quiet setting just a short walk from the trails of Mississippi Palisades State Park; each cabin has a spa tub, microwave, fridge, coffee pot, and access to dirt bikes (\$131–\$186). • **THE MISSISSIPPI BLUFF CABINS** (1000 Calhoun St.; 815.238.1080) are tucked into a wooded hill on the north end of town; the nine

cabins are in great shape and come equipped with spacious porches, microwave, refrigerator, and coffee pot (\$149 + tax); one cabin is wheelchair-friendly, and a few have river views.

Bed and Breakfasts. **GRANNY O'NEILS RIVER INN** (31 Third St.; 815.273.4726; WiFi) is housed in a century-old brick house, with three guest rooms with shared baths that are tastefully decorated with antiques (\$75–\$95 + tax); the owners love good food and serve a scrumptious full breakfast and can arrange other meals with advance notice. • **BLUE BED & BREAKFAST** (321 Main St.; 815.541.8684) is a modern apartment in an old commercial building with three rental rooms, one with a private bath and a view of the river (\$75 + tax, breakfast is \$10/couple extra).

Budget. South of town, **SEVEN EAGLES CAMPGROUND & RESORT** (9734 State Highway 84; 815.273.7301) has five immaculate motel rooms equipped with microwave, coffee pot, and a small fridge (\$50–\$75 + tax). • **L & M MOTEL** (2000 N Oakton Rd.; 815.273.7728; WiFi for most rooms) has 27 rooms equipped with coffee pot and small fridge and decorated in various themes (wolves, Harleys, Mustangs), a festive communal atmosphere in the summer, and a hot tub in the parking lot (\$69–\$93 + tax). • Just north of Savanna near Mississippi Palisades State Park, **INDIANHEAD MOTEL** (15161 State Highway 84 North; 815.273.2154) has 10 small rooms that feel dated, but they are clean and are a decent budget option for the area (\$45 + tax); most rooms are equipped with a microwave and small fridge.

Resources

- Post Office: 321 3rd St.; 815.273.3621.
- Savanna Public Library: 326 3rd St.; 815.273.3714; M, Tu 1–8, W 10–5, F 1–5, Sa 9–1.

HANOVER

(population 836)

Hanover, the Mallard Capital of the World, is in a picturesque location along the Apple River. The town has a couple of sights worth a stop.

Arriving in Town

State Highway 84 goes through the middle of town as Jefferson and through the north end as North Washington.

History

In 1827, *George Charles Eams* and *Daniel Fowler* moseyed down from Galena, found an Indian village along the Apple River led by *Chief Wapello*, and immediately made a land claim. They came back in the spring of 1828 to farm and were soon joined by *James Craig* who built a sawmill, grist mill, and the first of many dams on the Apple River. The nascent town, known as *Craigsville*, lost one of its founders, *Charles Eams*, during the Black Hawk War. Following the end of hostilities, the town, like many in the region, welcomed an influx of new settlers. In 1836, the village was platted under the name *Wapello*, in honor of the Indian chief the early settlers encountered. In 1849, the resident postmaster, *James White*, suggested that the town's name should be changed because they were getting confused with *Wapello*, Iowa. Perhaps feeling a little sentimental, he recommended the name of his hometown: *Hanover*, New Hampshire. Hanover held its first Fourth of July celebration in 1852; the man in charge of firing the cannon, *Jesse Conant*, shot it off prematurely and blew off his hand. Four years later, 60

local women followed *Delinda Craig*, Daniel Boone's granddaughter, and took the fight for temperance literally by attacking the town's saloon and gambling hall, using ropes and crowbars to reduce the building to rubble, presumably while it was unoccupied.

One of the town's leading businesses, the Hanover Woolen Mill, began operation in 1864. At its peak, the company processed 2,500,000 pounds of wool each year. Raw wool came directly to the plant, where it was washed, carded, spun, woven, and finished. The finished cloth was shipped to manufacturers around the Midwest. Although the company weathered the early years of the Depression, it went out of business in 1931. The building now houses Invensys, which manufactures automotive thermostats, thermal elements, and similar heating control parts.

In 1935, Hanover, Illinois, was visited by a representative from the Research Institute of Civic Development based in Hanover, Germany. The institute was shooting a film called "Hanover, A City Wanders Over the Face of the Earth," about towns named Hanover around the world—all 77 of them. It didn't win an Oscar. (If you've seen this movie, let me know if Hanover, Illinois, got any screen time.)

Tourist Information ⓘ

Direct your questions about Hanover to the **Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau** (877.464.2536/815.777.3557).

Attractions

The **Hanover Historical Museum** (500 Fillmore; 815.591.3623; F 9a–11a; free) is a little tricky to find but worth a short diversion with several fun old photos and displays on the woolen mill. The museum is located at the back of the Hanover Township Park District

building (the old elementary school). From Highway 84 turn south on Garfield, then left on Fremont to the parking lot at the end of the road.

Hanover Antiques (201-205 Jefferson St.; 815.591.3339/815.529.1884; hours vary; if the flag is flying, they're open) is not just a cool antique store but also a museum highlighting local Native American history and natural resources, with some artifacts from a local archeological site known as the Wapello Dig. They also sell ice cream.

Ducks made Hanover famous, such as it is, specifically ducks from **Whistling Wings**, a mallard hatchery. The visitors center (113 N. Washington; 815.591.3512; M–F mornings) has a store where you can buy trinkets, T-shirts, and frozen fowl. Unfortunately, they no longer offer public tours of the hatchery itself.

Rocky Waters Vineyard (2003 W. Hanover Rd.; 815.591.9706; F,Sa 10–6, Su 12–4 from May–November; by appt the rest of the year) is two short miles east of Hanover on a ridgetop location with great views. At the tasting room, \$3 will get you 5 one-ounce samples of their wine. Try to stop by on a Saturday evening between Memorial Day and Labor Day when they have live music (7p–11p).

At the top of a hill just west of the Illinois Highway 84/US Highway 20 merge, there is a rest area with a tall viewing tower called **Long Hollow Tower**. I am sure that this tower has a spectacular view of the area, but it has been closed for a while, so I've never experienced it. The tower needs some work before it can reopen and the state of Illinois seems more inclined to spend money to tear it down than to fix it. What a shame.

Entertainment and Events

Festivals. **Mallard Fest** (815.591.3512; 3rd Saturday in September) is host to a variety of challenging activities such as a duck calling contest and hitting golf balls across the Apple River into a duck painted in the grass.

Sports and Recreation

Hanover Bluff Nature Preserve (Whitton Rd. at W. Depot Rd.; 815.745.3302) has good views from several bluff-top perches but the hike to the top is not easy and often goes through thick brush. You should be in good shape for this hike. I hiked up the hillside under the power lines, then up the backside of the bluff. After you get to the top, the best views are back down toward the edge, but the carpet of pine needles and brush makes for precarious footing, so be very careful, or you'll end up finding the quick way down. (Don't confuse this place with Hanover Bluff State Natural Area, which is located nearby on Hanover Hill Rd.; the preserve is the one with the bluff-top views.)

Just down the road is **Hanley Savanna** (Whitton Rd. at Hanover Hill Rd.; 815.947.2695), a section of (restored) native prairie with a flat, groomed hiking trail.

Just south of town, a quick, moderately steep hike at **Falling Down Prairie** (11811 Airhart Rd.; 815.745.3302) leads to a nice view of the Mississippi Valley. The easiest hike is via a partially groomed trail that begins on the right-hand side of the parking lot. Some of the terrain is rocky, so wear good hiking shoes and don't forget the bug spray. Hiking is not recommended during hunting season, which is usually in April or May and again in late October and late November.

Shopping

See HANOVER ANTIQUES above.

Eating

CHARLIE'S PLACE (213 S. Jefferson; 815.591.3501; Su–W 7a–2p, Th 7a–2p, 5p–8p, F,Sa 7a–8p) is a friendly local restaurant with good eats and breakfast served any time. Burgers run about \$6, entrées top out around \$10. A slice of homemade pie will only set you back \$2.50.

Sleeping

Budget. If you just need a bed for a night, **RICK'S BAIT AND TACKLE** (100 Jefferson St.; 815.591.2128) offers inexpensive no-frills rooms (\$50 + tax). • **THE VIEW MOTEL** (US Highway 20 & State Highway 84; 815.858.2005; WiFi) is a few miles north of Hanover and about 15 minutes east of Galena. It is a great bargain. Its 11 rooms are immaculate and all have a 25" flat screen TV, which may be why most summer weekends fill up well in advance (\$60–\$110 + tax).

Moderate. **SCHATZI'S ROOMS FOR RENT** (201 Jefferson St.; 815.591.3339; WiFi) has two dog-friendly suites with full kitchens in an 1888-era building above Hanover Antiques (\$95 + tax).

Resources

- Post Office: 220 Jefferson St.; 815.591.2219.
- Hanover Township Library: 204 Jefferson St.;

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

GALENA

(population 3,460)

The oldest city in northern Illinois, Galena was more populous than Chicago at one time and has the infrastructure for a city three times its current population. It has a compact center of well-preserved 19th-century commercial buildings tucked into a narrow river valley; terraces race up the steep hillsides north and west of downtown, giving the town a feeling of beauty on the edge. Galena survived decades of down economic years before slowly growing into an artist colony and tourist Mecca. Galena, however, has evolved into a town with two distinct personalities: it may be the only town in America where you can spend thousands of dollars on an original piece of art, then walk two doors down and buy a T-shirt that reads “Firemen like it hot and wet.”

Arriving in Town

US Highway 20 cuts through town in a mostly east-west direction, descending to the Galena River from the east as Decatur Street and from the west as Spring Street. The downtown commercial district is centered along Main Street, which parallels the Galena River. The Galena Territory is a distinct, mostly residential development about 15 miles east of town on US Highway 20.

History

Galena became a town, a very wealthy one at that, because of lead. In 1818, *John and Tyler Armstrong* arrived from Green Bay and built the first home in what would become Galena. They moved on to Wisconsin after a few months and *Francisco Bouthillier*, an inter-

preter for the British at Prairie du Chien, moved into their cabin and set up the first ferry service across the Fever River. A steady flow of settlers soon followed, including many Irish, French, and relocated Americans, who would soon be joined by immigrants from Wales. Many of the American settlers came from south-central states like Missouri and Kentucky, who stayed only for the summer months, then returned home for the winter.

In 1822 *Colonel James Johnson* received a lease from the US government to mine around Galena. After negotiating a deal with local Ho-Chunk leaders, he was allowed to proceed. His mine flourished, and the following year, the US granted nine more leases. In 1823, 425,000 pounds of ore were shipped down the Fever River; just six years later, that jumped to 13 million pounds. Galena grew in nearly equal proportion, even as folks had a hard time deciding on a name: are we La Pointe, Fever River Diggings, or Bean River Settlement? Stores and taverns opened, including a trading post owned by *Frederick Dent*, the father-in-law of Ulysses S. Grant.

In 1823, the *Virginia* was the first steamboat to navigate the Upper Mississippi River and the first of many steamboats to travel up the Fever River. You wouldn't guess it by what you see today, but the Galena River used to be wider and deep enough (300 feet wide and 15 feet deep—about four feet deeper than the Mississippi at that time) to handle steamboats from the Mississippi.

By 1826, the town had become a bustling trading post populated with miners, gamblers, traders, rivermen, trappers, and other reputable characters. In that year, a certain *Doctor Newhall* wrote to his brother that “neither law nor Gospel can pass the rapids of the Mississippi.” By the end of the year, residents met to for-

mally name their settlement. After rejecting the names Frederickstown, Jo Daviess, Harrison, and others, they settled on Galena—the Latin word for lead sulphide.



Galena mine (Mueller Collection, Galena, Ill.)

In 1828, the year *John Dowling* built his house, the number of buildings in town doubled and the population reached 800. In the same year, the burgeoning town experienced its first serious flood, which had an upside when one resident caught a 106-pound catfish. Galena suffered a brief decline from 1829–1832 in part because lead production was cut, intentionally, in an attempt to increase prices and because of uncertainty created by the Black Hawk War. Once hostilities ended, however, the economy once again kicked into high gear. Excitement about the area started to attract a wider range of settlers, many of whom were more interested in farming, and Galena also became a regional hub for grain shipping. By 1840, there were more farmers than miners. Because most goods were shipped via the Mississippi River, Galena had strong ties to St. Louis and New Orleans.

The 1840s were very prosperous years for Galenians, with productive mines, good farming, and a growing city. For the next two decades, Galena was the richest town in Illinois and arguably its most prominent community, producing several future governors and a future US Secretary of State. Galena, which had been



Ulysses S. Grant (Library of Congress).

organized by an act of the US Congress in 1835, incorporated under Illinois law in 1841 and elected its first mayor. Its population at that time had reached 2,225 and would more than double to 6,000 by 1850.

Lead production peaked in 1845 at 54 million pounds. In just a few years, the U.S. had gone from importing lead from England to being the world's largest exporter of lead; 80 percent of that lead

came from the mines around Galena. By 1854, residents were concerned that the name of the local river, the Fever River, might scare away potential settlers, so they petitioned the state legislature to call it the Galena River; the legislature agreed.

Signs of trouble were beginning to appear, however. Years of clear-cutting hillsides for mining and farming had speeded soil erosion, sending tons of silt into the Galena River and making navigation increasingly difficult. Mining was also in decline, as remaining deposits were deeper and more expensive to extract. Further complicating matters, Galena was bypassed by the railroads in the 1850s. Galena had become an important trading outpost, with large warehouses and trade connections to Eastern cities. This commerce helped offset the decreasing production from lead mining, as did a burgeoning industrial sector, at least until the railroads built elsewhere. When East Dubuque became the terminus for the Illinois Central railroad, much of the shipping business was shifted from Galena. In 1858, Galena's population peaked at 14,000; four years

later, on the eve of Civil War, it had fallen to 10,000.

Galena was deeply affected by the Civil War. Nine men with ties to Galena served as generals in the Union Army. One of the generals, *Ulysses S. Grant*, was a recent transplant. Grant was a West Point graduate and 15-year Army veteran. After he retired, he tried a number of private sector jobs and failed at all of them. He and his family arrived in Galena in 1860, where he began work as a clerk in his father's tannery business. He lived in town for just one year before Fort Sumter was attacked and the Civil War began. Grant quickly became involved with organizing and training local recruits, but his eyes were on a more prominent position in the Union Army. His initial attempts to contact the War Department went unanswered, so he entered service as Adjutant General of Illinois, where he organized state troops and was commissioned Colonel of the 21st Infantry Regiment before President Lincoln hired him to lead the Union forces.

As men abandoned their normal trades to enlist in the Army, Galena transformed from regional commercial hub into a center for recruiting and equipping volunteers. Several Galenians became high-ranking military officers, including *Major General John Rawlins* (Grant's Chief of Staff). Grant returned to Galena in August 1865 to a cheering crowd of 10,000. Galenians presented him a new, fully furnished home as a token of thanks. He was elected President of the US just three years later.

By 1870, Galena's economy had fully transformed to the point where the value of farm products was much higher than lead, but the decline in the city's role as a transportation and warehousing hub sent property values plummeting: the city's total assessment went from \$1,500,000 in 1857 to \$450,000 just ten years later. The Grants returned to Galena in 1879 after a

world tour, again to an enthusiastic crowd, and lived in Galena until 1881. U.S. Grant died in New York City on July 25, 1885.

Galena's economic decline is perhaps the main reason that the downtown core has remained intact: they didn't have the money to tear down the buildings and experiment with urban renewal. That nearly changed in 1970 when city leaders, based upon the recommendations of outside consultants, proposed an urban renewal plan that would have demolished 22 buildings and replaced them with parking lots and more modern shopping venues. The plan triggered a revolt and Galenians voted down the plan 80 percent to 20 percent. In short order, the process of renovating downtown buildings began. The key event may have been the collapse of one wall of the Coatsworth Building (the building that once housed the leather goods store where U.S. Grant worked). *Mayor Enisweiler* turned back efforts to demolish the building, instead seeing it as the anchor that could kick-start rehab efforts for the whole district. It worked. In 1978, the DeSoto House Hotel got money for an overhaul and the momentum was rolling. You can see the results as you walk down Main Street today.

Tourist Information ⓘ

A difference in opinion about marketing strategies led to the creation of two different groups to promote tourism; an unfortunate development for a small town. For the City of Galena, the **Greater Galena Marketing Inc.** maintains tourist information at the **Old Market House** (123 N. Commerce St.; 888.942.5362) and a website (www.visitGalena.com). For the remainder of Jo Daviess County, contact the **Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau** (720 Park Ave.; 877.464.2536/815.777.3557; www.galena.org),

which hosts a welcome center in the Old Train Depot (Park Ave. & Bouthillier St.; M–Sa 9–5, Su 10–4).

✓ **TIP:** Parking can be tough in Galena on weekends. You can troll Main Street and the side streets for the free spots (2-hour limit), but, if you think you are going to spend the better part of the day exploring Galena, just buck up and pay at one of the all-day lots around the Galena River (\$5/day).

Attractions: Walking Tour of the Central Core

Plan on spending at least half a day on this tour, longer if you take the house tours. If you want a shorter tour, stick to the sights around Main Street only.

Begin your tour at the former family home of President Grant—the **Ulysses S. Grant Home State Historic Site** (500 Bouthillier St.; 815.777.0248; W–Su 9–5; free). The interior has been maintained in the style in which the Grants lived in 1881 and has some impressive period pieces, although not original to the house.

The **Washburne House** (908 Third St.; 815.777.9406; F 10–4 from March–October; free) was completed in 1845 as a single-story Greek Revival home and enlarged 16 years later. The home’s namesake, *Elihu Washburne*, was a lawyer, politician, and friend of U.S. Grant, who learned he won the Presidential election of 1868 while sitting in the library of this house. The house is furnished with period items, although few are original to the house.

Nothing is subtle about the **Belvedere Mansion** (1008 Park Ave.; 815.777.0747; Su–F 11–4, Sa 11–5; \$10). Built in 1857 by *Russell Jones*, a future ambassador to Belgium, this Italianate house was his home for barely four years. When he moved away from Galena,

Map Key

Things to Do

- 39. Belvedere Mansion
- 44. Buehler Preserve
- 1. Church of St. Mary
- 18. Dowling House
- 34. Fever River Outfitters
- 14. First Methodist Church
- 13. Galena/Jo Daviess History Museum
- 33. Galena Cellars
- 38. Galena River Bike Trail
- 16. Grace Episcopal Church
- 15. Grace Parish House Gallery
- 43. Grant Park
- 7. Great Galena Cookery
- 5. Linmar Gardens
- 32. Mark Twain and the Laughing River
- 37. Old Blacksmith Shop
- 36. Old Market House
- 27. Old Stockade
- 12. St. Michael Catholic Church
- 45. Ulysses S. Grant Home
- 41. Washburne House

Places to Stay

- 2. Abbey's High Street Bed & Breakfast
- 6. Abe's Spring Street Guest House
- 40. Annie Wiggins Guest House

- 10. Captain Harris Guest House
- 30. DeSoto House Hotel
- 4. Grandview Guest Home
- 8. Renaissance Riverboat Suites and Rooms
- 9. The Steamboat House
- 3. Victorian Mansion

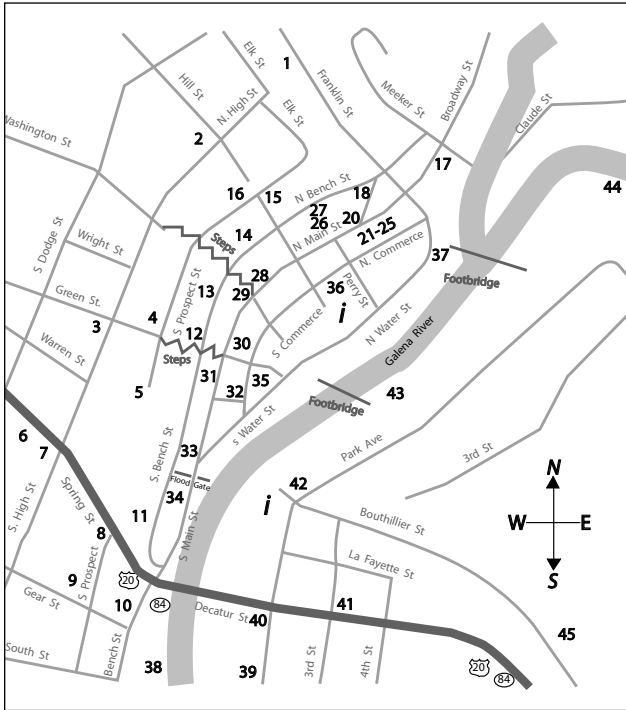
Places to Eat

- 33. Boone's Place
- 21. Cannova's
- 20. Clarks Again
- 22. Durty Gurt's Burger Joynt
- 24. Fried Green Tomatoes
- 17. Fritz & Frites
- 28. Galena Café
- 23. Gobbie's Sports Pub & Eatery
- 31. Kaladi's .925 Coffee Bar
- 25. Log Cabin Steakhouse
- 26. Market House Restaurant
- 42. Railway Café
- 29. Vinny Vanucchi's Little Italy

Other

- 11. Galena Public Library
- 35. Post Office: 110 Green St.

Galena



ILLINOIS



Downtown Galena, Ill.

he took his possessions and stripped the house to the rafters. Neglected for 20 years at one stretch, it was resurrected in the 1960s as a high-end restaurant. The current owners have called Belvedere home for over 35 years, yet every year they open it to the public for daily tours from May to October. I could be wrong, but I think they have a fascination with fame. The house is furnished with an exquisite collection of antiques they have purchased over the years, many of them at auction. Antiques in the house include chairs from the movie “Marie Antoinette,” furniture once owned by Liberace, and green curtains from the movie “Gone with the Wind” (no, not the curtains that became a dress). The tour is certainly worth the \$10 and 30 minutes it takes to go through the house.

Grant Park (Park Ave.; 815.777.1050) is across the Galena River from downtown and has good views and plenty of shady spots for a picnic. It was created in 1891 to honor the former President, who died six years previous. The park has several antique cannons, including one that was part of the Confederate battery that started the Civil War by firing on Fort Sumter in 1861.

From Grant Park, take the pedestrian bridge across the Galena River to the main business district. There are four churches worth a visit; if you want to go inside, you should call in advance as they are usually locked.

The Old Market House State Historic Site (123 N. Commerce St.; 815.777.2570; W–Su 9–5; \$2 suggested donation) is an 1845 Greek Revival structure that has served a dual purpose of market and city council home. The first floor houses a permanent exhibit about U.S. Grant, most of which is quite informative, with some occasional kitsch thrown in to make sure you are paying attention, like the rock paintings of Grant and other presidents. The second floor has an exhibit about the building’s history.

You can watch demonstrations of a craft that once seemed on the verge of disappearing (but can now be found at just about any historical park) at the **Old Blacksmith Shop** (245 Commerce St.; 815.777.9129; F–M 10–4 from May–October; free). Kidding aside, the blacksmiths are very skilled and worth watching, and you can purchase their hand-made iron products in the gift store.

Father Samuel Mazzuchelli designed the brick **Church of St. Mary** (406 Franklin St.; 815.777.0134) for a growing congregation of German parishioners; he also delivered a sermon at the first mass in December 1860. The high altar and the painting of the Assumption just above it were completed in 1878. The entire church has been through a series of renovations in the past 20 years and is in excellent condition.

✓ **TIP:** Father Samuel Mazzuchelli was a remarkable frontier missionary and architect (and future saint) whose legacy runs deep in this region. If you want to learn more about his life and his legacy, follow the detour that is described on pages 247–249.

The **Grace Parish House Gallery** (309 Hill St.; 815.777.2590; Tu–F 9–noon, Sa 1–4; free) hosts rotating exhibits spotlighting the work of local artists. Just around the corner on Prospect Street, the Gothic **Grace Episcopal Church** was completed in 1849 from limestone quarried on-site. The church has Belgian art glass windows and the oldest pipe organ in the Upper Midwest, which was donated to the church in 1838 by the widow of Alexander Hamilton (the first US Secretary of the Treasury), whose son, Colonel William S. Hamilton, worked the mines around Galena from the early 1820s to 1849. The impressive choir stalls and altar are walnut.



Dowling House, Galena, Ill.

The Romanesque Revival **First Methodist Church** (125 S. Bench; 815.777.0192; office open M, W–F 9–noon) was dedicated in 1857 and was once the home church for the Grant family; their pew is still marked. The church has a dozen art glass windows that

date to the church's construction (and were restored in 1980s) and a Moline Pipe Organ installed in 1880.

The **Galena/Jo Daviess History Museum** (211 S. Bench St.; 815.777.9129; daily 9–4:30; \$4.50) has two floors of exhibits about Galena history. Start your visit by watching the informative 16-minute video about the town's history. The exhibits about lead mining and Galena's Civil War history are especially interesting.

The first **St. Michael Catholic Church** (227 S. Bench St.; 815.777.2053) was completed in 1842 for the astronomical sum of \$14,000 but was destroyed by fire just 14 years later. Father Mazzuchelli designed the new church. Construction started in 1856, but troubles with financing delayed completion until 1863. At 135 feet long and 60 feet wide, this is the largest church designed by Father Mazzuchelli and is arguably his finest building. In order to eliminate the need for columns inside the spacious nave, Father Mazzuchelli designed a special truss to support the roof, an innovation well ahead of its time. The interior

has been through several renovations, most recently in the late 1980s.

If you feel up to a good climb, take the Green Street stairs uphill (just south of St. Michael), then go left and walk to **Linmar Gardens** (504 S. Prospect St., 815.777.1177; daily tours 11a, 2p from May–Oct.; \$8) 3½ acres lush with waterfalls, church ruins, and architectural salvage cleverly hidden in a densely landscaped hillside above town. Check their website for packages that pair tours with lunch or wine tasting (www.linmargardens.com).

The last stretch takes you along Main Street. Don't rush. Take time to explore the shops, grab a bite to eat, and check out the following sights.

Sample locally produced wine at **Galena Cellars Vineyard & Winery** (515 S. Main St.; 815.777.3330; open M–Th 9–5, F, Sa 9–8, Su 9–6 from January–May, the rest of the year open M–Sa 9–8, Su 9–6; 1 free taste or 6 samples for \$3).

Preserving the history of the **Old Stockade** (208 Perry St.; 815.777.1510; Su 1–4; free) has clearly been a labor of love. The building was constructed as a warehouse around 1828 in the French post-on-sill style in which logs were placed vertically on the foundation instead of horizontally. Inside the building, you will see cutaways showing the interior construction and displays of local history. The building also serves as an etching studio for artist Carl Johnson.

Dowling House (220 Diagonal St.; 815.777.1250; M–Th, Su 10:30–4; F 10:30–5, Sa 10–6) is the oldest house in Galena, dating to 1826. After sitting empty for 50 years, an architect from Chicago purchased the property in the 1950s and used it as a country retreat. It has since been restored to resemble a country trading post on the first floor (with some fun antique tools)

and a 19th-century residence on the second floor. Guided tours only. Buy a combo ticket with Belvedere Mansion and save \$2.

Attractions Away from the Business District

The **West Street Sculpture Park** (620 S. West St.; 815.777.9591; sunrise–sunset; free) is the creation of a single artist who works on a very large scale. His playful creations have titles such as Eyeful Tower and Leaning Tower of Farming. A map and description of the pieces is available from an info kiosk on-site.

At the **Ryan Mansion** (11373 US Highway 20 West; 815.281.0408; F–Tu 10–3:30; \$10), you can tour a 19th-century mansion with guides in period clothing, who are also fitted with a sense of humor. There are no set tour times; on the designated days, just ring the bell and wait.

Attractions in the Country

Adventure Creek Alpaca Farm (Galena Log Cabin Getaway, 9401 W. Hart John Rd.; 815.777.4200) has a free open house on Saturdays from 11–1 (all year) where you can gawk at or, for a modest fee, walk an alpaca. They also have a retail store open on weekends where you can buy alpaca yarn made on premises.

Tours

The **Galena Historical Society** (815.777.9129) offers a once-weekly one-hour walking tour of the business district (Sa 10a from May–October; meet at the DeSoto House Hotel, 230 S. Dodge St.; \$5; just show up).

If you don't feel like walking, **Galena Trolley Tours** (314 S. Main St.; 815.777.1248) will take you around

town with either a one-hour tour of historic sites (tours depart hourly every day from 10–5 from April–November; \$18) or a two-hour tour of three historic homes (daily 11a, 2p; \$32 including admission to the homes).

Tri-State Trolley (buy tickets at 220 N. Main St./next to the DeSoto House Hotel; 800.779.4869/815.777.0820; \$14) also operates daily narrated tours from its ADA-accessible trolleys from late May through October. Consider one of their specialty tours, such as the three-hour wine and culinary experience that includes a cooking demonstration and winery tour, complete with tasting of the food and wine (\$39).

Jack's Galena Carriage Company (404 S. Dodge St.; 815.275.9470) offers romantic evening carriage rides (\$18/person), 45-minute historic tours (F,Sa 3p–5p; \$35/person), and a few other package options from May through November. Reservations are required for some tours, and they don't take credit cards.

If you want to go deeper into the area's lead mining history, consider arranging a tour with professional historian **Tracey Roberts** (815.218.3571), who leads custom tours highlighting sights and stories from the lead mining era (tours by appointment only and best arranged at least two days in advance; \$50/hour for up to 5 people/additional charges for larger groups).

Galena Birding (815.777.0621; \$10) offers guided birding tours along the Mississippi River and other habitats in the region. Tours depart from the Depot Visitor's Center. Call for tour times and locations.

A town as old as Galena is bound to have its share of characters who refuse to go away. Steve Repp's **All About a Ghost Tour** (DeSoto House Hotel, 230 S. Dodge St.; 815.777.9252; tours F,Sa 8p; winter



Alpine Slide, Chestnut Mountain Resort, Galena, Ill.

tours inside the hotel; \$10) offers a 90-minute walking tour that will introduce you to some of those characters and other mysteries in Galena's past. **Annie Wiggins Ghost Tour** (1004 Park Ave.; 815.777.0336; F,Sa evenings from May–Oct; \$10) also offers a walking introduction to Galena's spirits; call to confirm times for the 75-minute tour.

✓ **TIP:** If you prefer to explore on your own, the Depot Visitors Center has self-guided walking tours that go into more detail on the town's architecture.

Getting Out on the River

Fever River Outfitters (525 S. Main St.; 815.776.9425; daily 10–5 from Memorial Day to Labor Day; Sa, Su 10–5 the rest of the year) is the place to rent canoes, kayaks (\$26/\$35/\$45 for 2/3/4+ hours), bicycles (\$12/\$16/\$25 for 2/3/4+ hours), and other outdoor gear to get you closer to nature. They also offer several packages on the Galena River, plus a full-day “Mississippi River Adventure Day” that includes kayaking, hiking, and bicycling; call for details and prices.

Mississippi Explorer Cruises (563.586.4444; Sa,Su 10:30, 1:30, 3:30 from May–October; \$25) offers a

90-minute eco-cruise on the Mississippi River from Chestnut Mountain Resort. The ticket price includes a ride on the Alpine Slide and the Chair Lift.

Entertainment and Events

The **Galena Farmers' Market** is held on Saturday mornings (7a–noon) at the Old Market House Square from May to October (123 N. Commerce St.; 815.777.1838).

If you feel a need to brush up on your Victorian manners, **Miss Annie's Academy of the Victorian Arts** (1004 Park Ave.; 815.777.0336) can provide lessons in authentic Victorian living, including how to dress and socialize. The schedule varies, so it is best to call ahead.

“**Mark Twain and the Laughing River**” (Galena Trolley Depot Theatre, 314 S. Main St.; 877.425.3621/815.777.1248) is actor Jim Post's well-regarded musical interpretation of the youth of one Samuel Clemens (you might know him as Mark Twain).

Two Tarot Ladies (411 Park Ave.; 815.777.0404) offers tarot readings that may offer a glimpse of your future, strictly for entertainment purposes, of course. Call to arrange a personal reading or catch them when they make appearances around town (\$15 for basic reading).

The Great Galena Cookery (412 Spring St.; 815.777.1556) is a private cooking school that hosts many theme nights such as California Vegetarian, Simply Italian, and The Perfect Picnic; students typically prepare a 5-course meal, then eat it (\$60; Th,F 6:30p).

Bars/Clubs/Music

FRANK O' DOWD'S PUB (The Irish Cottage Boutique Hotel, 9853 US Highway 20 West;

866.284.7474/815.776.0707; M–Th 4p–1a, F–Su 11:30a–1a) has live music, mostly on weekend nights. **GRAPE ESCAPE** (233 S. Main St.; 815.776.9463; M–F 5p–1a, Sa, Su 11a–1a) is a wine bar/martini bar; check out the half-price appetizers and \$5 martinis on Wednesday evenings. **THE CORNERSTONE** (125 N. Main St.; 815.776.0700; M–F 4:30p–1a, Sa, Su 1p–1a) is another pub with live music; the performers are generally of the singer/songwriter genre. **THE GOLD ROOM** (249 N. Main St.; 815.777.0319; M–Sa 5a–1a, Su 6a–1a) is a popular spot for unwinding.

Festivals. **The Great Galena Balloon Race**

(800.690.1287; mid-June) features 20 or more hot air balloons at Eagle Ridge Resort in Galena Territory. **The Country Fair** (Grant Park; 815.777.0817; \$2) draws about 20,000 people every year for its well-regarded art and craft vendors. Plan far in advance if you want to stay around Galena for this weekend. Amtrak offers service from Chicago for this event only.

Sports and Recreation

The Galena River Bike Trail (815.777.1050) is a 3.4-mile (one-way) flat, crushed-rock trail, mostly shaded, that is great for biking in summer and cross-country skiing in winter. The trail begins at Depot Park; please note that you must pay a fee to park at the adjacent parking lots.

Buehler Preserve (815.858.9100) is an 18-acre preserve along the south bank of the Galena River and just east of the Meeker Street footbridge; this is a good spot for an easy hike with good bird-spotting.

Located atop a bluff about nine miles southeast of Galena, **Chestnut Mountain Resort** (8700 W. Chestnut Rd.; 800.397.1320/815.777.1230) is a year-round resort destination. In winter, ski and snowboard on your choice of 19 trails that descend 475 feet (Su–Th

9–9, F,Sa 9a–10p, open until midnight on Fridays in January/February; lift pass \$35 weekday/\$45 weekend). In summer, check out the 2500 foot alpine slide (M–F 12–8, Sa,Su 10–8; \$7), mini-golf (daily 8a–10p; \$5), or rent a mountain bike (\$10/hour or \$25/day).

Just four miles from Galena, the 85 acres of **Caspar Bluff** (870 Pilot Knob Rd.; 815.858.9100) rise above the Mississippi River floodplain. The site has 51 Native American burial mounds, and even though many aren't visible, the most dramatic—a bird effigy—is a short walk from the parking lot and is fairly easy to discern; it's at the southern end of the preserve. From Galena, follow US 20 to Blackjack Road, then veer right on Pilot Knob Rd. The park is about 2½ miles on the right.

The folks at the **Shenandoah Riding Center** (Galena Territory; 200 N. Brodrecht Rd.; 815.777.2373) will teach you the proper way to ride a horse; rates begin at \$30/hour.

If you want a wider perspective on life (and the region), check out a hot air balloon ride with **Galena On the Fly** (Eagle Ridge Spa & Resort; 800.690.1287/815.777.2747). One-hour rides are offered year-round and take off at sunrise and again about two hours before sunset, weather permitting (\$175/person). Advance reservations are required.

Shopping

Galena offers a range of locally-owned shopping options, from fine chocolate and fine art to imported crafts and jewelry, from T-shirts to costume jewelry, from high-end to lowbrow.

Get your nostalgia fix at the retro-minded **ATOMIC TOY COMPANY** (211 S. Main St.; 815.777.8697; M-F 11-5, F 10-6, Sa 10-7, Su 10-5), where you can supply yourself with toys like Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots, a Red Ryder BB gun and Tiddly

Winks. • **POOPSIES** (107 S. Main; 815.777.1999; M–Th,Su 10–6, F,Sa 10–9) is Galena in a nutshell. Buy an art lamp for \$569, a toy tiara for your little princess for \$14.99, or a book of White Trash Sex Coupons for \$5.95. • **PEACE OF THE PAST** (408 S. Main St.; 815.777.2738; daily 10–5) is lined with tall shelves filled with used books, antiques, and fun stuff from the past—probably a few things you remember from your childhood. • You can browse and purchase the work of local artists at the **GALENA ARTISTS GALLERY** (324 Spring St.; 815.777.2870; Th–M 10–5). • **STONE HOUSE POTTERY AND GALLERY** (412 Spring St.; 815.777.0354; Th–M 10–5), housed in a former brewery, showcases the work of potter and sculptor Charles Fach, as well as other local artists. Stop in on a weekend for a pottery-making demo (Sa 2p–4p, Su 10a–noon). • **HELLO GALENA!** (121 N. Commerce St.; 815.777.1448; open M,W–Sa 9–5, Su noon–4 from May–Oct; the rest of the year open F,Sa 9–5, Su noon–4, M 10–2) is a cooperative that highlights the work of more than 60 local artists. They are located next to the Old Market House. • About seven miles east of Galena on US 20 and another mile down a gravel road, **WOODED WONDERLAND COUNTRY STORE** (610 South Devils Ladder Rd.; 815.777.1223; daily 9–5 from mid-April–December) is a fun place to shop for homemade honey, soaps, and handmade furniture. In season, you can buy organic produce or pick organic blueberries; no chemicals have been used at their farm for 60 years. They also operate a sawmill and gladly offer tours but calling ahead is advisable (815.777.3426).

Eating

Galena has plenty of fine dining, but if you're on a budget, though, don't fret. You have options.

Coffee Houses

Besides coffee, **KALADI'S .925 COFFEE BAR** (309 S. Main St.; 815.776.0723; M–Th 7a–5p, F,Sa 7–7, Su 8–5; WiFi) serves panini for about \$7 and gelato to satisfy your sweet tooth.

THE RAILWAY CAFÉ (100 Bouthillier St.; 815.777.0047; M,Tu,Th,F 7:30a–3p, Sa 8a–3p, Su 9a–3p; WiFi) makes a fine cup of coffee and creative sandwiches and salads (\$7–\$10); they have live music on weekend afternoons.

Budget Eating

CLARKS AGAIN (200 N. Main St.; 815.777.4407; M–F 5:30a–1:30p, Sa,Su 5:30a–2p) is your standard small-town diner where you can get a hearty breakfast for under \$7.

GOBBIE'S SPORTS PUB & EATERY (219 N. Main St.; 815.777.0243; daily 11:30a–1a) serves up gigantic sandwiches (\$7–\$9) and awesome pizza with crusts from thin to pan (from \$11) in a sports-bar atmosphere.

DURTY GURT'S BURGER JOYNT (235 N. Main St.; 815.776.9990; Su–Th 11a–8p, F,Sa 11a–9p) has a fun faux-hillbilly atmosphere and burgers bigger than most men's heads (\$9); you can splurge, if you dare, and get a burger with four half-pound patties layered with cheese and bacon for \$15. Go crazy, just don't complain to me in the morning.

GALENA CAFÉ (129 S. Main St.; 815.777.1466; M–F 9–2:30, Sa,Su 8–2:30) serves breakfast all day. Most lunch entrées are in the \$9–\$11 range; they also have a few Greek food options, such as gyros (\$12).

CANNOVA'S (247 N. Main St.; 815.777.3735/815.777.8020; M,Tu,Th 5–9 F 5–10, Sa noon–10, Su 1–9) is a popular place for Italian

comfort foods like pizza (from \$8), pasta (\$10–\$13), and sandwiches (\$8–\$9).

BOONE'S PLACE (515 S. Main St.; 815.777.4488; Su–Th 11a–8p, F,Sa 11a–10p, bar open later) has above average bar food. I ate a French Dip sandwich (\$7.50) served on fresh bread with tender, juicy meat; it didn't really need the dip part. Sandwiches run \$7–\$9, while entrées like steak and fish run a bit more (\$12–\$18). They also have a decent beer selection.

The **MARKET HOUSE RESTAURANT** (204 Perry St.; 815.777.0690; M–Sa 11–9) is best known for its Crab Louis Salad (\$9–\$13), which is like a creamy, sweet cole slaw with crab. The rest of the menu is a fairly standard collection of sandwiches/burgers, including a few vegetarian options (\$6–\$10); dinner entrées cover the familiar pasta, steak, and seafood territory (\$11–\$30). The garden room is a beautiful and relaxing space to enjoy a meal.

VINNY VANUCCHI'S LITTLE ITALY (201 S. Main St.; 815.777.8100; daily 11a–10p) is another favorite for its Italian food, with meatball and sausage sandwiches (\$9–\$10), pastas (\$13–\$18), and main dishes like chicken cacciatore, veal marsala, and pollo compomare (\$17–\$23).

Fine Dining

FRANK O' DOWD'S PUB (The Irish Cottage Boutique Hotel, 9853 US Highway 20 West; 866.284.7474/815.776.0707; M–Th 4p–10p, F–Su 11:30a–10p) serves food with a decided Irish influence, albeit a modern one, with dishes like the Irish seafood bake and Gaelic steak (most entrées \$20–\$25).

One of the best spots for a splurge is **FRIED GREEN TOMATOES** (213 N. Main St.; 815.777.3938; M–Th 5–9:30, F–Su 3p–9:30ish), an

atmospheric restaurant housed in a restored commercial building that serves classic Italian dishes, steak, and seafood (\$16–\$42).

FRITZ AND FRITES (317 N. Main St.; 815.777.2004; Su, Tu–Th 11:30a–9p, F, Sa 11:30–10ish) serves an unlikely mix of German fare like Wiener schnitzel (\$11–\$16) and classic French dishes such as poulet roti (\$15–\$18), but the food is top-notch and the bistro setting comfortable; the menu changes with the seasons.

THE LOG CABIN STEAKHOUSE (201 N. Main St.; 815.777.0393; Su–Th 4p–9:30p, F, Sa 4p–10p) is a long-time favorite of Galenians; steak reigns supreme (\$15–\$35), but they have a host of seafood entrées, as well as entrées with a Greek touch (\$16–\$24).

Sleeping

Galena may be the boutique accommodations capital of the Mississippi Valley, with a healthy number of bed-and-breakfasts and small inns, although budget accommodations are in short supply. During summer weekends, rooms fill up quickly, so book in advance.

 **TIP:** If Galena's accommodations are too expensive, consider your options in Hanover, East Dubuque, and Dubuque, as well as southwest Wisconsin (Sandy Hook and Dickeyville).

Camping. You can pitch a tent at **BUEHLER PRESERVE** (815.858.9100; free) but you must call in advance to make arrangements; there are no services and open fires are not permitted. • Primitive camping is also available at the **WOODED WONDERLAND** (610 South Devils Ladder Rd.; 815.777.1223) in a secluded hollow just east of Galena on US 20 (\$8). • **THE PALACE CAMPGROUND** (11357 US High-

way 20 West; 815.777.2466) is the only full-service campground in the immediate area; it has nearly 200 campsites on a sprawling site (\$20–\$30).

Cabins. The **PALACE CAMPGROUND** has five rustic cabins that are like camping but with walls (\$40–\$50 + tax; no bathroom or linens). • **GALENA LOG CABIN GETAWAY** (9401 W. Hart John Rd.; 815.777.4200) is only a few miles outside of Galena but feels hours removed from civilization. The 11 cabins were constructed with 19th-century building techniques but furnished with the 21st century in mind (\$199 + tax), with amenities such as a microwave, satellite TV, and small refrigerator. The property includes over two miles of hiking trails and a herd of alpacas (see above).

Budget. In Galena? Are you kidding? You won't have much luck finding a room under \$90/night in summer. Here are two of the less expensive options. **GRANT HILLS MOTEL** (9853 US Highway 20; 815.776.0707; WiFi) has 33 updated rooms on the outskirts of Galena; all rooms have a refrigerator and some also have a microwave (\$79–\$99 + tax); all guests have use of a common kitchen and dining area, picnic area with grills, and laundry room. • **THE GRANDVIEW GUEST HOME** (113 S. Prospect St.; 815.777.1387; WiFi) has three guest rooms, one with private bath, (\$70–\$95 + tax), in an 1870-era brick home furnished with antiques and within walking distance of Main Street via a series of steep steps to work off that big dinner you just ate.

Bed-and-Breakfasts: In Town. All of the following places serve a full breakfast.

ABE'S SPRING STREET GUEST HOUSE (414 Spring St.; 815.777.0354; WiFi) has two suites in a former ice house decorated with the handiwork of local sculptor and potter Charles Fach, one of the owners

(\$110–\$139 + tax). One suite has a bathroom with Jacuzzi tub in a very cool former root cellar. Guests have use of a private sauna and hot tub. • Comfortable is the operative word at the **CAPTAIN HARRIS GUEST HOUSE** (713 S. Bench St.; 815.777.4713; WiFi); they rent three rooms (\$119–\$159 + tax) and a 900-square-foot suite (\$209 + tax) in the house built in 1836 for steamboat pilot and lead-mine owner Robert Harris; they also offer a honeymoon cottage (\$179 + tax). • **RYAN MANSION** (11373 US Highway 20 West; 815.777.0336; WiFi) is a marvelous 1876 Victorian mansion that faithfully evokes the feeling of the late 19th century, thanks to the owners' passion for living history. The six rooms have period furnishings and private baths (\$125–\$250 + tax). The house is host to several special events throughout the year, including high tea and croquet matches. • **ABBEY'S HIGH STREET BED & BREAKFAST** (105 S. High St.; 815.777.1850; WiFi) sits atop a hill with one of the best views in town; the three rooms and carriage house each has a private bath and each is bright and comfortable (\$129–\$189 + tax with 2-night minimum, \$239 for a single weekend night). • The **STEAMBOAT HOUSE** (605 S. Prospect St.; 815.777.2317; WiFi) has five antique-rich guest rooms (\$140–\$155 + tax) in the house built for another steamboat pilot/lead miner, Daniel Harris, brother of Robert Harris; the current owners brought the house back to life and filled it with period furnishings. Guests are treated to a wine and cheese reception every evening. • **ANNIE WIGGINS GUEST HOUSE** (1004 Park Ave.; 815.777.0336; WiFi) offers seven antique-furnished rooms rich in comfort, each with a private bath, in a three story Greek Revival house built in 1846 (\$155–\$235 + tax); guests can enjoy the relaxing gardens and patio. • The **VICTORIAN MANSION** (301 S. High St.; 815.777.0675) has eight rooms decorated with period

furnishings (\$175–\$285 + tax; WiFi); guests can roam around the four common rooms on the first room, the ample porches, and beautiful gardens, and can descend to Main Street via nearby steps.

Bed-and-Breakfasts: Country Escapes. **WILD TURKEY BED & BREAKFAST** (1048 N. Clark Lane; 815.858.3649; WiFi) is about 15 minutes east of Galena in a pastoral 26-acre setting near the Galena Territory. The three guest rooms have a country décor and a private bath (\$100 + tax incl full breakfast); guests have plenty of opportunities to experience the outdoors via decks, hiking trails, and a fishing pond. The hosts are friendly and good-humored. • **THE PINE HOLLOW INN** (4700 N. Council Hill Rd.; 815.777.1071) was built in 1988 but feels like it has been around a long time, which is what the owners intended. If you like slow food and slow travel, you'll love this place. The five rooms are spacious, comfortable, and bright (\$135–\$165 + tax incl full breakfast); the 120-acre property includes a babbling brook and a small forest with hiking trails. • **CHESTNUT MOUNTAIN RESORT** (8700 W. Chestnut Rd.; 815.777.1230; WiFi) is an alpine-themed resort about nine miles from Galena located on a ridge with great views of the Mississippi River. The rooms are spacious, comfortable, and most have river views (\$149–\$179 + tax in summer; prices higher in winter but check for package deals that bundle rooms with skiing). • The first thing you will notice about the **LE FEVRE INN & RESORT** (9917 W. Deining Lane; 815.777.3929) is the great panoramic views, which are especially impressive at sunset; rooms are elegant but comfortable (\$149–\$199 + tax incl continental breakfast); the property includes five miles of hiking trails and outdoor heated pools and hot tub. • **THE INN AT IRISH HOLLOW** (2800 S. Irish Hollow



West Street Sculpture Park.

Rd.; 815.777.6000; WiFi at the Inn only) is a luxurious option in a bucolic location. The Inn has three spacious rooms accented with seasonal decorations (\$185–\$295 + tax). They also rent five cottages that range from simply elegant to spectacular (\$265–\$395); some cottages have showers with four showerheads! All units have a private bath and are the epitome of tasteful elegance.

The setting is peaceful and isolated, all the better to savor the gourmet meals. Breakfast is up to three courses and guests have the option of partaking in a 7-course dinner. If you are looking for a special splurge, look no further. Check their website for package deals (www.irishhollow.com).

Moderate. RENAISSANCE RIVERBOAT SUITES AND ROOMS (324–328 Spring St.; 815.777.0123) has 10 rooms, including six suites, in a pair of 1830s buildings; all rooms have a private bath and some have a small refrigerator and microwave (\$89–\$195 + tax; no breakfast). • The **DESOTO HOUSE Hotel** (230 S. Main St.; 815.777.0090; WiFi) was built as a five-story hotel in 1855 in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad, but demand never lived up to expectations and the top two floors were removed in 1880. The building was renovated in the 1980s after years of neglect. The 55 rooms evoke 19th-

century style without sacrificing comfort and put you in the middle of Main Street (\$150–\$188 + tax). • The **IRISH COTTAGE BOUTIQUE HOTEL** (9853 US Highway 20; 815.776.0707; WiFi) has 75 spacious rooms decorated with Irish County themes in a hotel/entertainment complex that is Ireland on steroids (\$179–\$265 + tax incl full breakfast on weekends).

Resources

- The local newspaper is the weekly *Galena Gazette* (815.777.0019).
- Post Office: 110 Green St.; 815.777.0225.
- Galena Public Library: 601 S. Bench St.; 815.777.0200; M–Th 11–8, F,Sa 11–5.

Getting To and Out of Dodge →

Galena is served by Burlington Trailways (800.992.4618; the bus stop is at McDonald's at US 20 & Irvine), which has direct service to Chicago, Dubuque, and Des Moines.

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• **RANDOM QUOTE** about Galena's early history: In 1826, Doctor Newhall wrote to his brother that "neither law nor Gospel can pass the rapids of the Mississippi." He added: "There are but comparatively few families and few ladies. Hence every lady, unmarried, who lands on these shores, is immediately married. Little girls fourteen and even thirteen years old are often married here."

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Mazzuchelli Detour

Carlo Gaetano Samuele Mazzuchelli was born on November 4, 1806 in Milan, Italy to a wealthy merchant family. At the age of 17, Samuel shocked his family when he announced that he felt called to a religious vocation. In a short time he joined the Dominican Order and gave up the familiar and privileged life in 19th century Milan in exchange for the alien world and privation of the American frontier. At the age of 22, he endured a grueling seven-month journey to America, arriving in Cincinnati



Young Mazzuchelli, courtesy of Sinsinawa Dominican Archives.

in 1828 with only a crude knowledge of English. After his ordination in 1830 he was assigned to serve Native Americans and fur traders in the remote outposts of the Northwest Territory: Mackinac Island, Green Bay, and Sault Ste. Marie. In 1835 his mission shifted to the growing communities in the lead-mining region around Galena and Dubuque. Father Mazzuchelli arrived just after the end of the Black Hawk War, at a time when tens of thousands of new settlers were streaming into the region in search of riches and a new life. For eight years, Father Mazzuchelli served Catholics along the Upper Mississippi River from Prairie du Chien to Fort Madison, Iowa—a territory 250 miles long and 100 miles wide.

While his ultimate purpose was to save souls, he devoted considerable energy to the construction of buildings to serve that aim. Most of his architectural work comes from the period when he was based in Galena. The route below will introduce you to his life and his churches. You can view other of his buildings in Galena and Prairie du Chien.

Begin the detour by staying on Illinois Highway 84 from Galena after US Highway 20 splits off toward Dubuque. Follow Highway 84 for six miles to County Highway W in Hazel Green, Wisconsin; turn right. After six more miles, turn right on County Highway I in New Diggings (at the New Diggings General Store), then left at the top of the hill. Your destination is **St. Augustine Church** (just off County Highway W; 608.965.4517; Su 1–4 from late May–October) in the tiny village of New Diggings. When the church was built in 1844, the community of New Diggings was in the middle of a robust lead mining industry and a very wild place. Father Mazzuchelli built the church in an attempt to draw the miners out of the bars and brothels. The building is predominantly Greek Revival in style with a bit of Gothic flair (e.g., the pointed arches on the windows). St. Augustine was closed in 1925 and sat neglected until 1959 when the Mazzuchelli Assembly 4th Degree Knights of Columbus adopted the building and began to restore it. This is the only building designed by Father Mazzuchelli that is essentially unaltered from his initial plan, right down to the original pews, mostly intact 160-year-old plaster walls, and the continuing absence of a modern heating and cooling system, electricity, and running water. The exterior was restored in 2007 by replicating the original rusticated finish, a method used to give wood the appearance of stone. If you can't be here on a summer Sunday afternoon, call ahead to schedule a tour.

Head back to County Highway W and turn left (west). Go 1.8 miles to County Highway J toward Benton, then another 1.8 miles to State Highway 11. Turn left and you have reached a cluster of Mazzuchelli sites: **St. Patrick Church** (237 E.

Main St.; 608.759.2131), designed by Father

Mazzuchelli and dedicated in 1854 (but significantly altered), the **rectory** where he lived, and his **grave** behind the church.

Continue on State Highway 11 for 11 miles to County Highway Z, just after the metal dinosaur sculptures and after passing through the town of Hazel Green again. After a mile you will reach the parking lot for **Sinsinawa Mound**, the Motherhouse for Dominican Sisters in the United States (585 County Road Z; 608.748.4411). Founded by Father Mazzuchelli, the Dominican Sisters are devoted to teaching and preaching, with a special emphasis on social justice. The center has a large, modern chapel, art that adorns the hallways, and a gift shop that sells sinfully good homemade bread (daily 10–5; closed on Mondays from December 1–March 31). Stop at the reception window to pick up a visitor's badge and map of the grounds. You are free to wander around the chapel and explore the outdoor areas. An exhibit about Father Mazzuchelli is located in the lower level of the main building and is well worth a visit (M–F 10a–noon & 12:30–3:30, Sa,Su 12:30–3:30). When you are done, turn right from the parking lot onto County Highway Z and go ¼ mile to County Highway ZZ. Turn left. After five miles and a name change to Menominee Road, you will return to US Highway 20. Go west to continue to East Dubuque.

On a bitterly cold February day in 1864, Father Mazzuchelli responded to an urgent request to visit a seriously ill woman who lived four miles out of town. He went immediately, without shielding himself properly from the freezing weather. The next day he developed pneumonia and died one week later at his rectory in Benton. His life has been an inspiration to many, so much so that he is now being considered for sainthood.

EAST DUBUQUE

(population 1,995)

East Dubuque has long had a reputation as a wild place, but city leaders have recently taken steps to clean things up—again—by closing the bars a bit earlier. While you don't need to spend a full day here, there are a couple of sights worth visiting.

Arriving in Town

US Highway 20 runs east-west through town; Illinois Highway 35 (Wisconsin Ave.) goes north from US 20 to the Wisconsin border; the business district is located along Sinsinawa Avenue.

History

The area around East Dubuque has seen its share of action over time. Native Americans of the Hopewell period (200 BCE–500 CE) built numerous mounds on the hills (many of which are preserved in Gramercy Park). The first European to settle in the area was *Eleazor Frentress*, who arrived in 1827. (The cabin built by the Frentress family is now on display at the Mississippi River Museum in Dubuque.) *Thomas Jordan* showed up five years later and got a license to operate a ferry across the Mississippi River; the settlement was therefore known as Jordan's Ferry for a while.

The town was platted in 1853 as Dunleith; the name was apparently chosen in honor of a Scottish city that had been home to several of the founders, although there does not appear to be a town of Dunleith in Scotland today. Dunleith got a big boost in 1855 with the arrival of the Illinois Central Railroad; it trig-



The Zephyr at the East Dubuque station in 1940 (Library of Congress).

gered an economic boom that lasted for the next 13 years. When Dunleith incorporated in 1856, its industry included breweries, a nail factory, farm machinery, and a barbed-wire manufacturer.

In March 1866, 100 East Dubuque Catholics walked across the frozen Mississippi River to attend mass (their Priest was ill). On the way home, the ice broke free and they were carried down river; four bone-chilling hours later, the ice rammed into a sandbar, allowing all of them to escape unharmed.

Dunleith developed something of an unsavory reputation, so the town decided a name change was just the fix it needed: in 1879, Dunleith became East Dubuque. Old habits die hard, however, and the town maintained a reputation for being a rough place. A riot erupted on June 30, 1919, the day before Prohibition took effect, as anxious drinkers took out their frustrations on civic landmarks; city hall and the fire station were damaged and prisoners were freed from jail. During Prohibition, stills operated in the hills and river islands, and *Al Capone* was reputed to be involved

in the local liquor business. East Dubuque was known as Sin City because of its speakeasies, roadhouses, and gambling halls. When Prohibition ended in 1933, Illinois enacted liquor by the drink and Iowa did not, so East Dubuque's Sinsinawa Avenue was again a busy place for those who preferred a little kick in their beverage.

Local doctor *U.S. Lewis* got his 15 minutes of fame in 1949 when he was featured in a "Ripley's Believe it or Not" cartoon for delivering three babies in three states (Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa) within 24 hours (7 hours, actually). The local economy received a boost in 1964 with the construction of a fertilizer plant (still around) and again in 1967 with the arrival of go-go girls (long gone).

Tourist Information ⓘ

There is an open-air info booth at 3rd and Wall Streets (April to November); you can also call the **Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau** for information (800.747.9377/815.747.2600).

Attractions

Gramercy Park (Beecher St.; 815.747.3100) is home to 26 burial mounds from the Hopewell Period, most of which are reached by a paved walking path. Interpretive signs describe the mounds' construction and history. Being atop a bluff, the park also has some nice views of the river.

Getting Out on the River

T.J.'s Bent Prop Marina (780 Harbor Dr.; 815.747.8860) has an 8' by 24' pontoon boat available for daily rentals (\$265/day incl 18 gallons of gas + deposit); call ahead to reserve.

Shopping

Tri-State Market/Pumpkin Barn (1887 Highway 35 North; 815.747.6832; daily 9–6 from July 1–Oct 31) will keep you stocked with locally grown produce.

Eating and Drinking

MULGREW'S LIQUOR AND TAP (244 Sinsinawa Ave., 815.747.3845; daily 7a–3a) is home to cheap drinks (\$1 mystery shots) and a foot-long chili dog that sends local residents into random fits; topped with cheese and onions, it will only set you back \$4. If you're craving a chili dog at 2am, come here.

Get a cup of joe and breakfast or a light lunch at the **LUNCHBOX CAFÉ** (280 Sinsinawa Ave.; 815.747.6819; M,W,Th 7a–2p, F 7a–6p, Sa, 7a–3p, Su 7a–1p). Breakfast items include pancakes topped with different fruit combinations (\$4–\$6); the name-sake lunches consist mostly of sandwiches modestly priced at \$5 or less. Next door, the **LUNCHBOX BAKERY** (274 Sinsinawa Ave.; 815.747.2575; Tu–Th 7a–2p, F,Sa 6:30a–close) sells donuts, cinnamon rolls, and other baked goods.

The **CAPTAIN MERRY GUEST HOUSE** (399 Sinsinawa Ave.; 877.797.3644/815.747.3644; W–Sa noon–4p, 5p–10p) hosts a fine dining restaurant in an elegant setting (entrées \$12–\$22).

Sleeping

Budget. **THE SWISS INN MOTEL** (US 20 one mile west of the Julien Dubuque Bridge; 815.747.3136) has nine basic but clean rooms (\$60 + tax).

Moderate. **TIMMERMAN'S HOTEL & RESORT** (7787 Timmerman Dr.; 800.336.3181/815.747.3181; WiFi) has 74 recently renovated rooms atop a hill overlooking the area

(\$84–\$94 + tax); check their website for packages that include extras like dinner or riverboat rides (www.timmermanhotel.com).

Luxury. THE CAPTAIN MERRY

GUEST HOUSE (399 Sinsinawa Ave.; 877.797.3644/815.747.3644) was built in 1857 for *Charles Merry*, who had a monopoly on the local ferry business, at least until the bridges offered an alternative river crossing. The house is now an upscale retreat with five luxury rooms (\$149–\$279 + tax on summer weekends; \$169–\$329 for holiday or fall weekends), lounge, and spa.

Resources

- The local newspaper is the daily *Dubuque Telegraph Herald* (563.588.5611).
- Post Office: 200 Wall St.; 815.747.3039.
- East Dubuque District Library: 350 Wall St.; 815.747.3052; M–Th 10–8, F 10–5, Sa 10–2.

When you are done in East Dubuque, Illinois Highway 35, aka Wisconsin Avenue, will whisk you into Wisconsin to continue the adventure.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

Welcome to Wisconsin!

SANDY HOOK

(Unincorporated)

Sandy Hook takes its name from the deep piles of sand in the area. No need to get bogged down here, though.

Arriving in Town

Badger Road is the main (and just about the only) road in Sandy Hook.

✓ **TIP:** In Wisconsin, warm air is an impatient guest: it may visit a few times a year, but it won't stick around. Bring clothes that you can layer, even in summer.

History

Sandy Hook is a small, unincorporated village that has slipped under the radar of those folks who write local histories. With no written history as a resource, I relied on more informal sources. Here is what I learned: Sandy Hook is located in Jamestown Township, first settled in 1827 as miners migrated to the settlement of Hardscrabble (now known as Hazel Green). Mining was the main draw in the early years. *Peyton Vaughn* established ferry service downhill from Sandy Hook in 1840 and his settlement became known, predictably, as Vaughn's Landing. Jamestown Township was organized in 1849 when it had 666 residents; in 2000, the township counted 2,077 residents, only a small portion of whom live in Sandy Hook. Before Lock and Dam 11 was completed in 1937, there was a popular dance hall near the river (downhill from Sandy Hook); it is now submerged. During Prohibition, the islands

in the Mississippi River were favored places to locate stills. The village's anchor has been, for generations, the Sandy Hook Tavern, which you can still visit today.

Tourist Information ⓘ

The **Wisconsin Welcome Center** at US Highway 61 and State Highway 35 (800.432.8747; Open daily 8–6 from Memorial Day to Labor Day, daily 9–5 the rest of the year) is a good source of information for the immediate area and the entire state.

Sports and Recreation 🌊

O'Leary's Lake Recreation Area (Eagle Point Lane; 866.472.6894), next to Lock and Dam 11, was named for the family with seven kids that grew up next to its shore; it is a popular place to fish and watch the river.

Fenley Recreation Area (Bluff Hollow Rd.; 608.996.2261) is an out-of-the-way nature reserve with a secluded overlook atop Sinipee Bluff that has good views of the Mississippi River. The only way to the top is via a slippery uphill climb, then a hike along the edge of a cornfield. Allow at least an hour to get up and back and to ensure that you have time to hang out on the overlook. The flat path along the backwaters was originally one of the main streets for the town of Sinnippi (an Indian word for lead ore). The town was settled in 1831 by Payton Vaughn; by 1839 the town had 1000 residents and several thriving businesses, including a bank, church, mill, school. The village was located next to a swamp, which turned out to be the town's undoing. Low river levels at the end of the summer in 1839 bred widespread disease and led to the abandonment of the town. A few remnants of building foundations are still visible. Mississippi City was supposed to be a neighbor of Sinnippi and was noted on some maps in 1837 and 1842, but the town was never


settled. The recreation area is a little tricky to find, so follow these directions. From Dubuque, take the Kieler exit for Highways H/HHH. Turn left, then after going under the bridge, turn right. When you reach the stop sign, turn left onto Peddle Hollow Road and go 2.3 miles to Bluff Road. Turn left. After about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, you will see a dirt road on the right. Turn there and follow it to the parking lot, which is next to a creek.

Eating

The **COUNTRY HEIGHTS SUPPER CLUB** (1154 N. Badger Rd.; 608.748.4868; Tu–Th 4:30–9, F,Sa 4:30–10, Su 4:30–8:30) is a traditional Wisconsin supper club-type deal. Most entrées will run you \$18–\$25. For something a little different from standard supper club-type fare, try the beef rib tips stir-fry (\$18) or an alligator appetizer.

Sleeping

The **COUNTRY HEIGHTS MOTOR INN** (1154 N. Badger Rd.; 608.748.4866; WiFi) has 23 simple, clean, spacious rooms next to the supper club of the same name (\$60 incl tax).

 **TIP:** When driving on the back roads, keep your hand on top of the wheel. When another car approaches, subtly lift a finger (not the middle one) as a gesture of hello to passing drivers. This works especially well in Wisconsin, for some reason.

KIELER

(Unincorporated)

This unassuming village has a church that screams out for attention but not much else to explore.

Arriving in Town

From the highway, exit five for County Highways H/HHH takes you into town. The main strip is along County Highway HHH.

History

The town was named after *John Kieler*, a stone mason from Prussia who arrived in the area in 1855 with his wife, Catherine Hube, and their seven children. Their son, George, gets much of the credit for the town's early development. He built a general store and shoe shop and a town grew up around him. In those early years, the hills in the area made travel to Kieler difficult; their only connection to the outside world was the daily stagecoach to Louisburg. George Kieler opened the first post office in 1883, and christened the town with its current name. Kieler was hooked up to the electric grid in 1926 and got its first paved road in 1931. In spite of its prime location on the main road to Dubuque, Kieler has remained a small, unincorporated village.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Direct your questions to the **Grant County UWEX Office** (866.472.6894/608.723.2125).

Attractions

The lofty **Immaculate Conception Church** (3685 County Road HHH; 608.568.7530) was built in 1869 for a predominantly German congregation. In 1896, the church got a new front entrance and the two towers; the steeples were added in 1911. The inside has lost some of its original luster, but it is light and the windows are beautiful.



Immaculate Conception Church,
Kieler, Wis.

Sleeping

Camping. **RUSTIC BARN CAMPGROUND** (3854 Dry Hollow Rd.; 608.568.7797; WiFi) has 58 sites (\$16–\$24) in a mostly shaded but cozy setting that is only ten minutes from Dubuque (open mid-April–Oct 31).

Resources

- Post Office: 3664 County Road HHH; 608.568.3426.

DICKEYVILLE

(population 1,043)

Thousands of people stop in Dickeyville every year to visit the eccentric religious/patriotic grotto created by Father Mathius Wernerus.

Arriving in Town

Exit #8 from the superhighway keeps you on Wisconsin Highway 35/US Highway 61, which will take you through the middle of town as Main Street. If you miss the exit—like I did the first time—continue on Highway 151 to Grant County Highway O and head west. It is a beautiful drive through a narrow coulee. Heck, you may just want to take the drive, anyway.

History

Charles Dickey, a surveyor from Pennsylvania, settled here in 1842 and opened a dry-goods store. Dickey left town in 1861 after surveying Grant County and never returned. But who says you need to stick around to lend your name to a community? Initially called Dickeyville, the “s” was dropped in 1932 so the name would fit better on a map. Andrew Schmitt purchased Dickey’s property and operated a store, but, idleness being the devil’s workshop, he also opened a hotel, farmed, sold fire insurance, and served as the town’s notary public, postmaster, and justice of the peace. In 1870, Dickeyville counted only 24 residents but exploded to 100 citizens just seven years later.

Telephone service reached Dickeyville in 1915; an operator ran the switchboard 24/7 in exchange for free rent and \$55 a month. When Dickeyville incorporated

in 1947, it still had just 220 residents, but with the growth in automobile ownership, Dickeyville became something of a bedroom community for Dubuque. By 1972, the town had over 1,100 residents.



The Grotto, Dickeyville, Wis.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Direct your questions to the **Grant County UWEX Office** (866.472.6894/608.723.2125).

Attractions

The **Dickeyville Grotto** (305 W. Main St.; 608.568.3119; daily 9–5; free) was created by Father Mathius Wernerus in the 1920s to honor God and country. This is folk art on steroids. Look closely at the walls and you will see a strange mix of embedded materials: fossils, Indian relics, glass and pottery fragments, porcelain, seashells, petrified wood, and hornets' nests. The gift shop is open from April through October (daily 9–5). The church itself, **Holy Ghost Catholic Church** (608.568.7519), was organized in 1872; the current building was completed in 1913.

If you are ready to stop for a picnic lunch, **Dickeyville Community Park** (Church St.; 608.568.3333) offers a quiet spot just north of the highway.

Eating

SHULTZIE'S SUPPER CLUB (110 S. Main St.; 608.568.3754; S, Tu–Th 5–9, F, Sa 5–10) is a tradition-

Why We Fear Clowns

Brothers Samuel and Henry Redman were more ornery than most early settlers. They lived in Dutch Hollow, a predominantly German community that began life as a lead mining camp. The brothers made a lot of money from mining and spent it as quickly as they made it, mostly on booze. They dressed in red flannel shirts open at the collar with a miner's belt around the waist equipped with large hunting knives. They ambushed dances, instigated fights, and generally terrorized their fellow citizens.



Uncle Sam in 1898
(Library of Congress).

In June 1855 the Buckley Circus set up a single-ring show under a big tent in Dutch Hollow. The show was overflowing with spectators. The Redman boys, true to their character, yelled and heckled and berated performer after performer. Fed up with the drunken abuse, two clowns stepped into the crowd and grabbed the Redmans. The brothers were dragged, kicking and screaming, out of the tent where they were given a resounding beating by the two men with oversized red noses. The Redmans promptly ran back to their log cabin for shelter. Meanwhile, the clowns returned to the tent and continued with the show as if nothing unusual had happened.

I'm sure you wouldn't be shocked to learn that both of the Redmans died at a young age. The clowns, Dan Rice and Warren Dailey, both enjoyed very successful careers. Rice went on to become one of the best loved clowns of the 19th century, and his portrait was the basis for the iconic Uncle Sam image created by painter Thomas Nast.

al Wisconsin supper club, serving the standard range of steaks, seafood, pasta, and other staples. While you can spend up to \$37 for lobster, most entrées are less than \$20; a few meals are priced at a modest \$7 and Sunday brunch is a good bargain (\$9; 9a–1p). But, if you are up for something entirely different, check out the turtle entrée. Harvested from the Mississippi River (by Schafer Fishery of Fulton, Ill.), the turtle meat is beer battered and deep-fried and has a surprising variety of flavors. At the salad bar, you can also sample pickled gizzards, just to make your night complete.

Shopping

HAUBER'S PROCESSING INC. (125 N. Main; 608.568.7579; M–F 7:30–5:30, Sa 7:30–3) can supply you with a variety of local meat products and genuine Wisconsin cheese for that barbecue you are planning, and may just have the best summer sausage you will ever eat.

Sleeping

Budget. Dickeyville has two good budget options and are just 15 minutes from Dubuque. The sign for the **PLAZA MOTEL** (203 S. Main; 608.568.7562; WiFi) proudly proclaims that the motel has “TVs with remotes”; it also has 21 clean rooms outfitted with a microwave and small fridge (\$45 + tax). • The **TOWER MOTEL** (224 S. Main; 608.568.7996; WiFi) has 15 clean rooms with microwave and small fridge (\$50 incl tax); they have laundry facilities on-site.

Resources

- Post Office: 200 W. Main St.; 608.568.7221.
- Brickl Memorial Library: 500 East Ave.; 608.568.3142; M 3:30–6:30, W,Th 11–6:30, Sa 9–noon.

TENNYSON

(population 370)

Tennyson and Potosi are virtually adjoining communities in southwest Wisconsin. Potosi gets most of the visitors, which makes sense since it has most of the stuff that interests visitors. Tennyson, though, is located among picturesque rolling hills and has a very interesting history in its own right.

Arriving in Town

Most of the town is along State Highway 35 or County Highway O; the latter is conveniently called Tennyson Street.

History

Before Tennyson was Tennyson, it was a mining camp called Dutch Hollow. German immigrants transformed it into a village. (In many parts of America, Dutch was an Americanized form of the word Germans used for themselves: Deutsch.) *Henry and Godfrey Kreizer* arrived around 1836. Henry was a butcher who made his living selling meat to the miners.

Another early settler, *Frank Mueller*, built a three-story rock house in 1848 for his large family. Their home was the center of the community's social life for decades, but especially during the mining era. The building had a general store on the first floor, a saloon and dance hall on the second floor, and the family's residence on the third floor (for mom, dad, and 11 children!). The family was blessed with great musical talent and would gather on the front steps on warm days to sing. About 1847, a guest at the Mueller's

house was a young actor named *John Wilkes Booth*. He stayed for a while at their log cabin, often throwing his voice to tease the construction workers and performing for guests; most people don't know that President Lincoln's assassin was a gifted ventriloquist. The house is still around (it is now an apartment building across the street from Haverland's Bar) although barely recognizable since the exterior was covered with stucco. Curiously, there are no markers that say: "John Wilkes Booth slept here."

In 1913, the community changed its name to honor the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson. Local residents were probably motivated by rising anti-German sentiment in American on the eve of World War I.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Direct your questions to the **Potosi-Tennyson Chamber of Commerce** (608.763.2121/608.763.2261; www.potosiwisconsin.com).

Attractions

The parish for **St. Andrew Catholic Church** (101 Church St.; 608.763.2671) dates back to 1846 when it was founded to serve a community of German immigrants. The current brick church was completed in 1876. The steeple is an impressive 135 feet tall. The interior has been through several renovations, but the altar is original.

Entertainment and Events

Festivals. The event of the social season is the **Potosi-Tennyson Catfish Festival** (608.763.2261) usually held the second week of August.

POTOSI

(population 711)

The sign welcoming you to Potosi says “World’s Longest Main Street.” Maybe I’m over-thinking this, but I haven’t been able to figure out what this claim actually means. Robert Ripley (“Ripley’s Believe It or Not”) once said that Potosi “was the smallest town with the longest street without an intersection.” (I noticed a lot of intersections when I drove Main Street.) Locals say the proper definition is “the longest Main Street in the world that is not interrupted by a stop sign”—it’s three miles long (and it does have a stop sign if you are driving north). Or maybe it’s “the world’s longest Main Street that is not intersected by a through street,” except that Main Street is intersected by East Street, which is definitely not a dead-end. I just don’t get it. I guess “World’s Longest Main Street” wasn’t catchy enough, though, because Potosi also calls itself the Catfish Capital of the World. That’s two long nicknames for one small town.

Arriving in Town

Most of the town is concentrated along a couple of roads that snake through a ravine that slopes down to the Mississippi River. Wisconsin Highway 133 enters town from the east as, you guessed it, East Street, and exits as South Main Street.

History

Potosi was the prototypical lead mining community. Early settlers arrived in the 1820s, before the Black Hawk War, and scoured the hollows and ravines for

signs of lead. While it was known as early as 1829 that lead sulfide deposits were abundant, little mining occurred because conditions were not stable and, well, technically, Americans had no legal title to the land until after the Black Hawk War. In 1832, *Willis St. John and Isaac Whitaker* moved in. St. John founded a mine and got rich very quickly. He found a cave rife with lead and also with snakes, which is why the area around his cave became known as Snake Hollow. He died in 1853 a pauper, however, after losing all his money in a bank crisis. Mining took off full bore around 1835, and Snake Hollow boomed.

Separate communities grew up in different sections of the hollow. Lafayette was south of Snake Hollow on the bank of the Grant River in Grant Slough; that town was laid out in 1837. Van Buren was located in the lower portion of the hollow (near the Potosi Brewery); settlers began arriving in 1837 and the town was laid out in 1839. Van Buren had the first post office but Lafayette had the steamboat landing (the “Port of Potosi”) and ferry service to Iowa.

In 1839, these disparate communities consolidated into a single town called Potosi; businesses quickly moved toward the new center and out of Lafayette and Van Buren. By the time Potosi incorporated in 1841, the town claimed 1,300 residents and within a few years it had an economy nearly as large as Galena’s. The bulk of the town was concentrated along a three-mile hollow pierced with a single road. Rain often turned the road into a dangerous creek (it can still happen after torrential rain).

Like Galena, the decline of lead mining had a dramatic impact on the town’s economy. Between 1849 and 1852, scores of miners abandoned Potosi for the California gold rush, leaving in two waves. Potosi weathered the first wave, but the second one,



Lead miners (Library of Congress).

Life in the Mining Camps

Mining camps were not for the faint of heart. The camps typically had few permanent structures and were often home to thousands of men, many of whom were immigrants from mining communities in Wales, Ireland, and England. Mining was demanding physical labor, with fortunes that were subject to boom and bust periods. Many miners made very little money; favorite pastimes included drinking, gambling, and visiting prostitutes, cock fighting, dog-baiting, and racing horses. Lead mining dropped off sharply in the 1850s but did not stop completely. A few years later, zinc mining replaced lead and continued well into the 20th century. Many of these early mining camps grew into permanent communities: Hardscrabble (Hazel Green), Snake Hollow (Potosi), and Tough Shit (just kidding).

If you want to go deeper into mining history, take a side trip to **The Mining Museum** in Platteville, Wisconsin (405 E. Main St.; 608.348.3301; daily 9–5 May 1–October 31, galleries open M–F 9–4 November 1–April 30), which takes you several stories underground via 90 steps into an old lead and zinc mine. It's not worth the side trip, though, if you can't tour the mine (tours daily May 1–October 31, by appt the rest of the year; \$8). You can also get a good overview of lead mining at the **Galena/Jo Daviess History Museum** (see page 230), the **St. John Lead Mine** (see page 270), and via the private tour offered by **Tracey Roberts** in Galena (see page 234).

fueled in part by a cholera epidemic in 1852, devastated the town. At the peak of the exodus, ferries were so busy that emigrating miners had to wait up to



British Hollow Smelting Furnace.

five days to cross the Mississippi. Another factor in Potosi's decline was the fact that Grant Slough, the area that had the steamboat port, filled with silt because of deforestation, making steamboat landings impossible. Unable to dock at Potosi, river commerce shifted south to Dunleith (East Dubuque) and north to Cassville.

The town emptied out so quickly that incorporation was repealed in 1854. Even the town clerk's books vanished, taking with it all official record of village life before 1854. The Chicago, Burlington, and Northern railroad reached Potosi in 1884, injecting new life to town. Potosi reincorporated in 1887 but by 1895 the town's population had fallen to 454 or roughly one-quarter of what it was at its peak.

Potosi has never again experienced the economic prosperity it knew during the lead mining years, but it settled into the life of a small town with a farm-centered economy. Today, many of its residents commute to jobs in other towns.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Direct your questions to the **Potosi-Tennyson Chamber of Commerce** (608.763.2121/608.763.2261; www.potosiwisconsin.com).

✓ **TIP:** You can pick up a self-guided driving tour brochure (\$1) at the Passage Through Time museum that will take you around the area's major historical sites.

Attractions

The **Passage Through Time Museum** (104 Main St.; 608.763.2745; Tu–Sa 12–4 from May–September; free) has a modest but informative collection of local history memorabilia (such as displays about barn design, barbed wire, and the Potosi Brewery), as well as Native American artifacts from a local collector.

At the **St. John Lead Mine** (129 S. Main St.; 608.763.2121; M, Tu, Th–Su 9–5 from May 1 to June 30, daily 9–5 from July 1 to the end of October; \$7) get the full story about the mine discovered by Willis St. John, as well as lead mining generally during a one-hour tour. Unlike most mine tours, this one takes you uphill instead of underground because the old mine was in a cave. Cross the road and hike the Badger Hut Trail for relics of lead mining days, including the ruins of a few badger huts and the Old Irish Cemetery.

Hey, what's that? If you thought Wisconsin got its nickname from the furry critters that are native to the state, well, you're not exactly right. It actually goes back to the state's days as a lead mining center. Here's the connection. Miners were typically around for seasonal work only. Those who remained year-round usually lived in holes they dug in the side of a hill, rather like burrowing badgers, thus earning them the nickname "badgers." This practice was widespread enough that 19th-century historians referred to Wisconsin as the "land of the badgers." And that is how nicknames are born.

The unassuming **St. Thomas Catholic Church** (124 S. Main St.; 608.763.2671) was completed in 1847.

The legendary Father Samuel Mazzuchelli built a frame church here in 1838, and some believe he also designed this brick church.

The newest attraction in town is also one of the oldest: the **Potosi Brewery** (209 S. Main St.; 608.763.4002). The Potosi Brewery was founded in 1852 by Germans *Gabriel Hail and John Alrecht*. Albrecht later sold his share, and Gabriel ran it until his death in 1878. John Hail, Gabriel's brother, ran the brewery for a few years until he killed himself in 1881. The brewery struggled for a few years, even closing at one point, until *Adam Schumacher* purchased it in 1886. Three generations of Schumachers operated the Potosi Brewery until it closed in 1972. The building sat empty for three decades until a massive restoration effort spearheaded by several members of the local community was finished in 2008. They formed a non-profit corporation (all of the profits are funneled back to support the business or donated for other local projects) and completed a restoration that includes a brewpub (see below) and two museums. **The National Brewery Museum** (daily 10–6; \$7) fills several rooms with beer industry memorabilia like neon signs, advertising posters, glasses, and mugs. Also on site is the **Potosi Brewing Company Transportation Museum** (daily 10–9; free), which highlights ways that the old brewery distributed its product around the area. Don't forget to visit the gift shop and the Great River Road information center.

Getting Out on the River

You can rent a canoe through **St. John Lead Mine** for \$25/day and explore the Grant, Platte, or Mississippi Rivers. They do not provide transportation, but you can rent the van for an extra \$15 plus gas.



Potosi Brewing Company, Potosi, Wis.

Entertainment and Events 🎵

Festivals. The event of the social season is the **Potosi-Tennyson Catfish Festival** (608.763.2261) usually held the second week of August.

Sports and Recreation 🌊

The **Potosi Recreation Area** (608.822.3501), also known as Potosi Point, is a little strip of land that juts far into the Mississippi River. The views are magnificent, especially in spring and fall when migrating birds are passing by. In summer, water lilies carpet the shallow stretches near shore. The Point, a popular spot to fish, is south of town near the spot where State Highway 133 turns sharply to the west; go forward instead of turning north, go under the railroad trestle, and follow the road for ½ mile until it ends.

Shopping

COUNTRY FIELDS WITH COUNTRY FLORAL (196 S. Main St.; 608.763.2001; M–Sa 10–7, Su 10–5), located in the former Potosi Brewery Bottling Plant, has a wide range of country-themed items, Christmas accents, and home furnishings.

Eating and Drinking

THE ROADHOUSE TAVERN (310 Roadhouse St.; 608.763.2208; Su–Th 7a–midnight-ish, F,Sa 7a–2:30a) has been exactly what it sounds like since the 1920s. You can snack on burgers, sandwiches, and soup (\$2–\$4), but you’ll probably be more interested in the cheap drinks, darts, and company.

THE POTOSI BREWERY (209 S. Main St.; 608.763.4002, x 106; daily 11–9) is a high quality brewpub that has become very popular very quickly (reservations are recommended for dinner on weekends). The lunch menu is mostly sandwiches, wraps and salads (\$7–\$8.50); try the sweet potato fries. Dinner entrées include root beer marinated pork loin, steaks, and cedar smoked salmon (\$11–\$26). And don’t forget to sample the beer brewed on-site. The Snake Hollow IPA is my personal favorite.

Sleeping

Camping. The **Grant River Recreation Area** (River Lane Rd.; 309.794.4527; open early April to October 31) is a compact site wedged between railroad tracks and the river. The full-service campground has 73 sites, most of which have electric (\$10/basic site, \$16–\$18/elec). The Old Osceola Indian Burial Grounds, known to archeologists as the Old Copper Culture Find, was located nearby. Relics from the site were washed into view during a flood in 1945. An extensive excavation of the site in 1947 unearthed thousands of artifacts, revealing that native hunters and gatherers lived at this site for at least 2,000 years beginning around 2170 BCE. Most of the haul is on display at the Milwaukee Public Museum, but Potosi’s Passage Through Time Museum (see above) has items unearthed by private collectors.

Cabins. PINE POINT LODGE (219 S. Main St.; 608.763.2158/608.763.2767; WiFi in the big cabin) has four fully-stocked cabins in a quiet setting on the edge of town; small cabins sleep four (\$70 + tax), while the large cabin can sleep 12 (\$190 + tax).

Budget. THE POTOSI INN (102 N. Main St.; 608.763.2269) rents two spacious, beautiful suite-size units with kitchenettes with a third unit on the way in 2009; they are a great bargain (\$75 + tax).

Resources

- Post Office: 101 East St.; 608.763.2202.
- Potosi Branch Library: 103 N. Main St.; 608.763.2115; Tu,Th 3:30–8, W,Sa 10–1.

RANDOM FACT: *In 1912, the steamboat Potosi and its 100 passengers survived a short but violent storm. When they reached the Maquoketa Chute they were shocked by the appearance of 17 men who seemed to be standing in the middle of the river. They were survivors of the Revenna, which had been flipped upside down by a tornado; the men were standing on the hull. The Potosi picked up the survivors (three men had died), cleared the wreckage, and continued up river.*

CASSVILLE

(population 1,085)

Cassville's location off the main highways hasn't helped its economic fortunes in recent years; if you get here, it's because you meant to come here. It is worth meaning to get here, though, as Cassville has good hiking and historical attractions nearby.

Arriving in Town

Wisconsin Highway 133 is Amelia Street in Cassville, which runs parallel to the river; the other main route is State Highway 81 (Denniston Street), which goes north from Cassville.

History

The town was named after *Lewis Cass*, the one-time governor of the Michigan Territory (which included Wisconsin for many years). It is not clear who actually named the town, but it was probably *Martin Thomas*, the Federal Superintendent of Mines; he used the name on his *1827 Map of Public Mines*. Most of the early settlers were from Philadelphia and New York. Their claims were purchased by speculators from New York in 1836, around the time Wisconsin became a territory, who were betting that Cassville would become the new territorial capital. In 1836, these speculators tried to advance their cause by building a large five-story hotel to house the legislators—before there was even a legislature. The building really stood out, as there was essentially nothing else in Cassville at that time. (The Denniston House, as it came to be known, is still around.) By 1837, the plan had failed—

Madison won the capital by just a single vote over Cassville—and the town's prospects did not look good.

Slowly, though, things began to happen. In 1843 Cassville's population reached 125, but the town continued to grow very slowly for another dozen years. One barrier was that land titles in town had very murky lineage, a legacy of the failed attempt to make Cassville the capital. In 1856, former *Governor Nelson Dewey* stepped in and purchased much of the property in town and, in the process, straightened out the titles. With that barrier removed, Cassville's fortunes looked bright again: 50 houses were built in 1856 alone. The town's population grew from 149 in May 1855 to over 800 just three years later. Cassville did a good business exporting wheat, and the arrival of the Chicago, Burlington, and Northern Railroad in 1886 also provided an economic boost. Throughout the 19th century, Cassville had a diverse economy: sawmills, a brewery, and robust industries in canning and pearl harvesting. Today, Cassville retains a surprisingly diverse economy for a town of its size, with jobs in shipping (river barges), power (Alliant Power, Mid-America Power), tourism, and farming.

Tourist Information

Direct your questions to the **Cassville Department of Tourism** (877.891.8298/608.725.5855).

Attractions

Riverside Park is a nice place to hang out and watch the river or to catch a ride on the Cassville Car Ferry (see below).

Give yourself at least two hours to explore **Stonefield & the State Agricultural Museum** (12195 County Road VV; 866.944.7483/608.725.5210; daily

10–4 from Memorial Day to Labor Day, open Sa,Su from 10–4 in September & October; \$8), located just north of town on County Highway VV. This is the original estate of Nelson Dewey, the first Governor of Wisconsin. The site includes a replica of a 19th-century village, original buildings from the Dewey farm, and a collection of antique farm implements. When organizing your time here, keep in mind that three buildings are visited via guided tour only and are on a timed schedule; pick your tour times for these before wandering around the grounds.

Entertainment and Events

Cassville hosts a farmer's market in Riverside Park from May to mid-October (Sa 7a–11a; 608.724.5400).

Festivals. Like many towns along the Upper Miss, Cassville hosts **Bald Eagle Days** at the end of January in honor of the once-endangered species (608.725.5855). The first **Twin-O-Rama** (608.725.5855; mid-July) was held in 1929 and has been held most years since; this is primarily a social event for identical twins and their families, a modest number of whom turn out for the celebration. Stonefield's **Railroad Days** (608.725.5210; mid-August) celebrates all things railroad, complete with a hobo camp.

Getting Out on the River

Upper Mississippi River Adventures (105 W. Amelia St.; 608.732.6184) offers several different types of river cruises between mid-April and mid-October, mostly on weekends, including a one-hour sunset cruise (\$18) and a two-hour eco-tour (\$28). Advance reservations are required.

William Walker operated the first ferry at Cassville in 1836 and the **Cassville Ferry** is carrying on the

Nelson Dewey

Nelson Dewey was born in 1813 in Lebanon, Connecticut to a family that traced its roots in America to 1634. He studied law in his father's firm, but left to explore opportunities in the West. He reached Cassville in June 1836 and landed a job as a clerk with the firm that was trying to establish Cassville as the territorial capital. About a year later, he was elected Register of Deeds for Grant County and appointed Justice of the Peace. He moved to Lancaster and set up a law practice but made his biggest chunk of money from investing in lead mines and land. He continued in politics and reached his zenith in 1848 when he was elected Governor of the newly created State of Wisconsin; he was only 35 years old.

Toward the end of his first term, he married Catherine Dunn, daughter of a prominent judge. They had three children: Charles (who died of cholera in childhood), Katie, and Nelson Dunn.

After finishing a second term as governor, the family moved back to Cassville, where Nelson bought a bankrupt development company, clearing disputed titles in the process and opening the door to new development in Cassville. His purchase included the incomplete Denniston Hotel, which he finished while his family lived in it. Ready for a more elegant lifestyle, he proceeded to create a country estate, spending \$100,000 to build Stonefield.

In spite of its elegance—the house had a central heating system—Mrs. Dewey preferred city life. When Katie reached college age, wife and daughter moved to Madison; Mrs. Dewey never returned to Cassville.

Stonefield was badly damaged by fire in 1873, and, because of the economic depression that year, Nelson lacked the money to restore the house to its former grandeur. The younger Nelson left home in the late 1870s and went west to find work. Governor Dewey lived alone the last ten years of his life and the last five with no contact with any family members. He suffered a stroke in February 1889 while arguing a case in Lancaster. Friends secured him a room in the Denniston Hotel and cared for him until his death five months later. The once wealthy governor died in rented room in the hotel he once owned. He was buried in Lancaster, next to his young son, Charlie. His estate was sold to settle his debts and went through several owners before the State of Wisconsin purchased it in 1936.

tradition more than 170 years later (608.725.5180; W–Su 9–9 from Memorial Day to Labor Day; F–Su 9–9 in May, September, October; One-way fares: \$12/car or \$7/motorcycle or \$4/ bicycle or \$2/walk-on).

Eagles Roost Resort (1034 Jack Oak Rd.; 608.725.5553) has two fishing boats for rent (\$65/day + gas).

At **Schleicher's Landing** (7110 Closing Dam Rd.; 608.725.5216; April to October), just north of Cassville, you can rent a 16' fishing boat (\$50/day), pontoon boat (\$250/day), canoe (\$14/day), or paddleboat (\$12/day).

Sports and Recreation

Cross the road from Stonefield and explore **Nelson Dewey State Park** (12190 County Road VV; 608.725.5374; \$7/day for WI residents, \$10/day for non-residents). One of several outstanding Wisconsin state parks along the Mississippi River, it offers good hiking and great views. The short 0.2 mile hike along the Prairie Trail through Dewey Heights offers a glimpse of the bluff-top prairies that were once common in the area.

Cassville Bluffs-Roe Unit State Natural Area (Sand Lake Lane; 608.784.3606) has a bird-shaped effigy mound, bluffs, upland and lowland oak-hickory forest, and goat prairies. Whew! It offers a more challenging hike for those of you who are tired of paved trails. The trails are groomed a few times during the year, but you will probably still find yourself hiking through thick brush. To get there from Cassville, head north on Highway 133 to Sand Lake Lane (near the bottom of the descent from the ridge to the flood plain); turn right. Drive 0.4 miles until it ends; the gate is on the left. Park near the gate, and do not block any of the nearby residences.



The Charlie D., the Cassville car ferry.

The Cassville Municipal Swimming Pool is on the northwest end of town and is open from Memorial Day until late August (parking lot at Wyota & Amelia Sts.; 608.725.2166; daily 1p–5p & 6p–8p; \$2.50/adult).

Eating and Drinking

With 17 years in the business, the folks at **VOGT'S TOWN PUMP** (118 E. Amelia; 608.725.5175; kitchen open M–Sa 8a–9p-ish, Su 8a–6p, bar open later) know a thing or two about service. Part small-town tavern and part small-town restaurant, the Town Pump has something to please everyone, whether it's ice cream, a burger, or a cold beer. The food covers the range from hearty breakfast items, to burgers (<\$5), to a few steak and fish entrées on the dinner menu (\$7–\$13).

Sleeping

Camping. There are two campgrounds north of Cassville. • **WHITETAIL BLUFF** (8973 Irish Ridge

Rd.; 608.725.5577; open year-round but some services only available from April 15 to October 15) is a full-service campground on a flat, treeless plain atop a ridge, a bit of a drive from the nearest towns. Most of the 98 sites have full hookups, but a few are primitive (\$20/basic; \$24/elec; \$28/full hookup + tax). • **BIG “H” CAMPGROUND** (4929 County Highway N; 608.725.5921) has 50 sites in a ravine next to the Mississippi backwaters, although about half are occupied by seasonal campers; most sites have water and electric (\$17/basic site, \$21/water & elec). • In Cassville proper, **K7 KORRAL CAMPGROUND** (10895 Jack Oak Rd.; 608.725.2267/608.732.3690) is at the northern end of town next to the backwaters with hiking, fishing, and a place to dock your boat. There are usually a few overnight sites available with hookups (\$16/elec, \$22/elec & sewer) and several tent sites (\$12). • **NELSON DEWEY STATE PARK** (12190 County Road VV; 608.725.5374) has 46 shaded and spacious campsites (daily entrance fee of \$7/day for WI residents or \$10/day for non-residents + camping fee of \$12 for residents/\$14 for non-residents; \$5 for electric). If you don't mind a short hike, the park also has four walk-in sites that are along the edge of a bluff and have spectacular views but are a good hike from the shower house.

Cabins. **WHITETAIL BLUFF** (8973 Irish Ridge Rd.; 608.725.5577) has two basic cabins without a bathroom (\$49 + tax) and a cabin with bathroom and kitchen (\$89 + tax). • **EAGLES ROOST RESORT** (1034 Jack Oak Rd.; 608.725.5553) has six nicely equipped cabins next to the Mississippi River (\$125–\$175 + tax).

Budget. **THE SAND BAR MOTEL** (1115 E. Bluff St.; 608.725.5300; WiFi) is a good budget option with ten clean rooms equipped with a small fridge (\$54.50

+ tax). **EAGLES ROOST RESORT** (1034 Jack Oak Rd.; 608.725.5553; WiFi) has five tidy, well-maintained motel rooms (\$75–\$85 + tax).

Moderate. UPPER MISS RIVER ADVENTURES (105 W. Amelia St.; 608.732.6184; WiFi) has two highly-recommended units for rent. Contemporary (think flat-screen TVs) with historic accents (clawfoot tub), the units are spacious, comfortable, and beautiful (\$95 + tax).

House. MAJOR'S INN (109 W. Front St.; 608.725.5232) is a two bedroom ranch house in good condition next to Riverside Park that would be a good spot for a family or group traveling together (\$95 w/ tax). The house has all the amenities one expects from a house, like a full kitchen, cable TV, and central heat and air.

Resources

- Post Office: 205 E. Amelia St.; 608.725.5136.
- Eckstein Memorial Library: 1034 E. Dewey; 608.725.5838; M,Th 10–5, W 12–8, Sa 9–noon.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

GLEN HAVEN

(Unincorporated)

Once a lively livestock depot, the small river community of Glen Haven is a quiet place these days.

Arriving in Town

You have to detour off the main route to reach Glen Haven. Take Grant County Highway V for one mile west. You arrive on Main Street; if you drive two miles west, you'll end up in the Mississippi River.

History

Known initially as Stump Town—which is simply not flattering—not much happened until early settlers *Alex Ramsey* and *Joseph Orr* arrived around 1836. *Richard Ray* joined the party around 1837, thence came Newton Ray and the area became known as Ray's Landing. In 1850, *Marcus Hayes* operated a horse-powered ferry to Guttenberg. A steam ferry began operating in 1856, but the boiler exploded in its first year of operation; it was soon replaced with a new boat.

The name Glen Haven was apparently first used in 1856. According to one story, the name was suggested by a Scottish immigrant, *George Burroughs*, after other residents tried to name the town Burroughsville in his honor. He wasn't too keen on their idea—maybe he was just modest—so they let him pick another name. Shortly after Glen Haven was platted in 1857, a steam sawmill was built and the town grew to an impressive 30 buildings. But economic conditions changed and by 1859, many of the town's buildings sat empty. Slowly the town bounced back as it grew into



Downtown Galena, Ill.



Dugway Road, Grant County, Wis.



Fresh produce.



American Lotuses.



Fishing near Prairie du Chien, Wis.



Reflection in a mirror ball, Dickeyville Grotto, Dickeyville, Wis.



Crawford County, Wis.



Winter along the Upper Mississippi River.

an important shipping point for stock and produce. The railroad arrived in 1884 and granted the town some economic security through the rest of the 19th century; it was one of the largest shipping points for livestock between St. Paul and Chicago. Glen Haven's role as a transportation hub ended in the early 20th century when trucks took much of the freight business from railroads. The construction of the lock and dam system ended Glen Haven's close ties with Guttenberg as ferries stopped running and the ice was no longer safe for winter crossings. Glen Haven lost much of its population in the ensuing years and relied mostly on a farm-based economy. In 2004, the village had fewer than 100 residents.

Tourist Information

Direct your questions to the **Grant County UWEX Office** (866.472.6894/608.723.2125).

Attractions

Glen Haven Recreation Area (Main Street) has a boat ramp and a few picnic tables next to the river.

Resources

- Post Office: 13211 Main St.; 608.794.2385.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.



“Catherine, daughter of Wm. and Martha Jordan, murdered by Wm. Kidd.”

Glen Haven’s Tragic 19th Century Murders

The tiny community of Glen Haven has known its share of tragedy.

In 1875, Milas Young was murdered by his son, Albert. The father and son had a long-standing feud about the family property. In early spring, Albert had attacked his father with an axe, inflicting serious but not life-threatening wounds. On May 14th, Albert went to his father’s house and attempted to force his way into his father’s room. Unsuccessful, he went downstairs, grabbed a revolver, and sat outside waiting for his father to emerge. An hour later, he went back inside and kicked down the door. Milas tried

to escape through another door, but ran right into Albert. Both men fired their pistols—neither getting in a fatal hit—so Albert picked up a hatchet and used it to beat Milas to death. A seriously wounded Albert started to flee, then stopped, reloaded his pistol, and killed himself with a shot to the head.

Milas's widow lived a rough life after his murder. She had to sell much of the family property to stay afloat financially, but, after achieving a modicum of financial stability, she remained troubled. On May 13, 1889, a day shy of the anniversary of her husband's murder, she hanged herself.

Another local tragedy was memorialized in stone. In 1868, William Kidd murdered Catherine Jordan, whose father ran a general store in Glen Haven. Kidd was apparently in love with Jordan but his feelings were not reciprocated. At one point he threatened to kill her unless she married him. On June 15 he talked her into accompanying him on a ride in the country. Her body was found the next day with her throat cut. Kidd escaped but was eventually apprehended in Minnesota. During the ride back to Grant County for trial, he confessed to the crime, then killed himself by consuming a dose of strychnine he had hidden in his clothes. Jordan was buried in the nearby village of North Andover.

The inscription on her tombstone reads: "In memory of Catherine E., dau. Of Wm. & Martha Jordan, murdered by Wm. Kidd June 15, 1868, aged 21 y'rs, 3 mo's, and 6 d's."

Dugway Road Detour

Dugway Road is a scenic, narrow gravel road on a ledge next to the bluffs. It parallels the river and offers a shortcut to Bagley from Glen Haven.

Don't even think of driving your RV down this road, though. From Main Street, loop around Wagner Memorial Shelter on 1st Street to Bluff Street, and you will see Dugway Road. After four miles, it intersects County Highway A, which will take you into Bagley. Along the way, about one mile north of Glen Haven after the pavement ends, is **Devil's Backbone State Natural Area** (608.784.3606); park along the road where it passes over the creek. A short, steep hike takes you atop a ridge where a trail follows its spine for a more gradual ascent.

In the summer, the views are partially blocked by trees, but there are a few rocks ledges where you can plant your butt and let your feet hang out over the precipice while you sit, stare, and enjoy the breezes. Be aware that the trail will probably be littered with debris, making footing tricky at times.

BAGLEY

(population 339)

Another out-of-the-way river town, Bagley became a haven for tourists as early as the 1920s and still does a respectable tourist business today.

Arriving in Town

County Highway A enters Bagley as Chicago Street. When you turn on County Highway X, you are on Bagley Avenue. The business district is along South Bagley Avenue.

History

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, *James Orr*, settled around the mouth of Sandy Creek in 1836 (south of the current town of Bagley). He and his partners proposed a new town—to be called Cincinnati—at that location. Even though the town was never more than a paper tiger, it was listed on a Grant County map in 1842.

Alfred Bagley established a farm in the mid-1800s and made a decent living growing corn. The Chicago, Burlington, & Northern railroad purchased land in 1885 from Bagley's widow, Mary, which spurred the creation of the village. The town was platted in 1886, the same year the first train roared through. According to one story, the railroad gave a glass plate with a train embossed on the bottom to every woman who gave birth that year and attended the viewing of the inaugural train. Mary's sons, Dorlen and Dorwin (names you don't hear very often anymore) built the first house and store in 1887 and gave the town its name. By

1895, Bagley counted 173 residents, many of whom were retired farmers.

The railroad has certainly had an impact on Bagley. There was once a “hobo jungle” just west of the tracks. Passenger trains served the town until the 1950s; residents could ride to Glen Haven for 8¢ or to Prairie du Chien for 12¢—roundtrip. Bagley was also famous for being the exact spot where the two Zephyr trains would meet (when they were on time).

Tourist Information ⓘ

Direct your questions to the **Grant County UWEX Office** (866.472.6894/608.723.2125).

Sports and Recreation 🌊

The hiking is a bit difficult but worth the effort at **Devil’s Backbone State Natural Area** (see Dugway Road sidebar on page 292).

Jay’s Lake Recreation Area (Pine Lane; 309.794.5332), just south of town, is located next to the backwaters with a boat ramp, shoreline fishing, and a short hiking trail.

North of Bagley, **Bagley Bottoms Boat Landing** (Bohringer Lane; 608.935.3368) is a good spot for bird-watching in the Mississippi backwaters.

Gasner Hollow Prairie State Natural Area (Gasner Hollow Rd.; 608.266.2621) is an undeveloped area with a mix of prairie and oak savanna. There are a few Indian mounds at the top, which is reached via a moderately difficult uphill hike. The footing can be slippery; a walking stick would be a big help. The natural area is on the northeast corner of County Highways X and Gasner Hollow Road. Park along Gasner Hollow Road and walk upslope (NW) into the prairie. The trailhead is near the stop sign.

Getting Out on the River

River of Lakes Resort (132A Packer Drive; 608.996.2275) rents boats including canoes (\$3/hour or \$10/day), paddle boats (\$3/hour), flat bottom boats (\$45/day + tax), and pontoon boats (\$65–\$100/day + tax & deposit).

Eating & Drinking

THE BAGLEY HOTEL (175 S. Bagley Ave.; 608.996.2300; Kitchen open daily 5:30a–8p-ish, bar open later) opened in 1913 as the Park Hotel. The bar looks virtually unchanged since that time, which is not a bad thing at all. They serve up great burgers for about \$7. The house specialty is the Bagley Burger, which is a half-pound patty with ham and egg, but I also love their patty melt. Mmm, good!

LUCK OF THE IRISH (150 S Bagley Ave.; 608.996.2204; Tu–Su 11a–close) is a spacious bar and restaurant and a popular place to boot. The bar menu (burgers and sandwiches \$5 or less) is fairly standard tavern fare, but they also have a supper club that serves steaks and seafood (Tu, Th–Sa, \$7–\$17). The bar has a pool table, video games, and darts.

Sleeping

Camping. Just before Bagley, the **RIVER OF LAKES RESORT** (Willow Lane; 608.996.2275) is a full-service recreation destination in a quiet vacation community, with boat docks (\$5/day), fishing, a campground, and boat rentals. The campground, located next to a backwater channel of the Mississippi River, has about 100 sites, most with water and electric (\$18–\$25 + tax). Although it is open year-round, many services are only available from mid-April through mid-October. The resort is one mile south of Bagley on County

Highway A, then $\frac{3}{4}$ mile west on Willow Lane.

• **YOGI BEAR'S JELLYSTONE PARK** (11354 County Highway X; 800.999.6557/608.996.2201; Open May–October) is a full-service campground in a coulee just north of Bagley with over 200 sites, half with full hookups and most of the rest with water and electric (\$37/basic, \$45/water & elec, \$48/full hookup + tax).

Cabins. The **RIVER OF LAKES RESORT** (Willow Lane; 608.996.2275) has nightly rentals of RVs (\$50–\$100 + tax), plus a log cabin with kitchen and private bathroom (\$100 + tax/2-night minimum).

YOGI BEAR'S JELLYSTONE PARK (11354 County Highway X; 608.996.2201) has 11 basic cabins that sleep five without kitchen or bath (\$65 + tax; \$6/additional person), three cabins that sleep five with a half-bath, microwave, and small fridge (\$115 + tax; \$6/additional person), three small lodges that sleep six equipped with a half-bath, microwave, and small fridge (\$145 + tax; \$6/additional person), and two large lodges that can sleep ten with a half-bath and kitchenette (\$210 + tax for 4 people; \$6/additional person) .

Budget. The old-school **BAGLEY HOTEL** (175 S. Bagley Ave.; 608.996.2300) has nine clean, basic rooms with shared baths (\$50 incl tax), perfect if you just want a cheap place to crash; no credit cards.

Moderate. The **RIVER OF LAKES RESORT** (Willow Lane; 608.996.2275) has a two-bedroom apartment with kitchen and private bathroom (\$100 + tax/2-night minimum).

Resources

- Post Office: 140 S. Bagley Ave.; 608.996.2620.

WYALUSING

(Unincorporated)

As you drive through Wyalusing today, it's hard to imagine that folks once had high hopes for developing a major city at this site. The busiest place around here today is the attractive beach, which draws a crowd on weekends.

Arriving in Town

Grant County Highway X passes through the middle of the town.

History

Good river access created optimism among speculators that a prosperous town would grow here. A town called Columbus was founded around 1828 and appears on an 1833 map, but nothing much came of it. Around 1843, several speculators bought 80 acres and laid out a town that had but a single (abandoned) log cabin. The cabin had been built a few years earlier by some guys who called the area New Diskivery; travelers knew it as Loafer's Retreat because the men used it as a hunting and fishing cabin. The newly platted village was known as Wyoming for its first three years, but when the post office was established in 1851, a new name was required because Wisconsin already had a town named Wyoming.

Robert Glenn is believed to be responsible for choosing the name Wyalusing (there was a town near his home in Pennsylvania with the same name). Wyalusing is derived from a Native American word for "where an old (holy) man dwells" or possibly "home of the warrior."

The first person to build a home was *Isaiah Cranston*, who was given property gratis on the condition that he maintain a hotel, which he did for some 20 years. In 1860, Cranston's hotel provided quarters for General Ulysses S. Grant. The Cranston property was purchased by *N.W. Kendall* who built a sawmill that attracted a steady stream of steamboats in the 1850s. With prospects for the town looking brighter, Kendall and two compatriots surveyed and platted the village of Wyalusing in July 1856. Alas, a short time later the railroads chose a route that bypassed Wyalusing and the town's bright future fizzled away. The farm economy became the main factor in the town's survival, as well as ferry service to Clayton, Iowa (a bustling service in the 1870s as it ferried settlers heading west).

Tourist Information ⓘ

Direct your questions to the **Grant County UWEX Office** (866.472.6894/608.723.2125).

Sports and Recreation ≡

Wyalusing Recreation Area (County Highway X; 866.472.6894) is on the west side of County Highway X; it has a boat ramp and a nice beach that draws crowds on summer weekends. It's a good spot to picnic and for shore fishing.

Wyalusing State Park (County Highway X; 608.996.2261; \$7/day for WI residents, \$10/day for non-residents) is simply spectacular. Located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers, the park overlooks the spot where Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette first caught sight of the Mississippi River on June 17, 1673. The park has a full range of outdoor activities, including hiking, mountain biking, and swimming, plus a number of spectacular overlooks and a few Indian burial mounds. There is a signed canoe route on the Mississippi River

and backwaters. If you're bored here, you should just stay home. Several of the best hiking trails were washed out during monsoon rains in the summer of 2007 and probably won't be rebuilt for a while. However, the 1.6-mile Sentinel Ridge and 3.5-mile Mississippi Ridge Trails both survived and have good views; the former is a moderately difficult hike because of the hilly terrain, while the latter is an easy, level hike. The Henneger Point picnic area is off the beaten path but it has a great overlook of the main channel of the Mississippi River.

Getting Out on the River

You can rent a canoe or kayak at **Wyalusing State Park** (608.996.2333; \$10 for 1 hour/\$25 for 4 hours/\$35 for 8 hours).

Sleeping

Camping. **WYALUSING STATE PARK** (County Highway X; 608.996.2261) has two campgrounds. The Wisconsin Ridge Campground has 54 shaded sites (24 with electric) and a concession stand; the 20 sites on the north side sit on the very edge of the ridge with spectacular views. The Homestead Campground has 55 sites (9 with electric) that are bigger and offer more privacy. Camping fees are \$12 for Wisconsin residents and \$14 for non-residents plus \$5 more for electricity; you must also pay the park entrance fee.

House. **THE LANDING** (12014 County Road X; 608.444.3974) is a cozy one-bedroom house near the riverfront and within walking distance of the beach (\$150 + tax/2-night minimum); it has a full kitchen, screened porch, AC, and satellite TV.

BRIDGEPORT

(Unincorporated)

This small township and unincorporated village benefited from its location on the north bank of the Wisconsin River, at least in the early years. This is primarily a residential community today and you won't find much reason to stop, unless you need to fill your gas tank.

Arriving in Town

Wisconsin Highway 35 skirts the small village.

History

When *James and Samuel Gilbert* arrived here in 1826, they made Bridgeport the first settlement in Crawford County outside of Prairie du Chien. *Seth Hill and Francis La Pointe* operated a pole ferry across the Wisconsin River along the old military road beginning around 1838.

Thomas Marsden opened a large limestone quarry in 1863. Stone from his quarry was used to build the Wisconsin state capitol, the Prairie du Chien county courthouse, and some bridges in Minneapolis. Ferry service was essentially killed in 1857 with the completion of a covered bridge over the Wisconsin River. That bridge was razed in 1931 after a new highway bridge was completed. The railroad arrived in 1857 and turned the sleepy village into an important shipping point for products from southeast Wisconsin, including livestock and grains.

Tourist Information ⓘ

Direct your questions to the **Prairie du Chien Regional Tourism Center** (800.732.1673)

Getting Out on the River 🚣

THE CAPTAIN'S COVE MOTEL (13389 US Highway 18; 608.994.2860), just south of Bridgeport, has canoe and kayak rentals from Memorial Day to Labor Day; they specialize in routes on the Wisconsin River (call for rates).

Sleeping 🛏

Budget. The **CAPTAIN'S COVE MOTEL** (13389 US Highway 18; 608.994.2860; closed December–March) has eight simple, clean rooms (\$49 + tax), some of which have microwaves and refrigerators.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN

(population 6,018)

Prairie du Chien is Wisconsin's second oldest community and one of the oldest along the Mississippi River. Located on a wide prairie next to the river, Prairie du Chien has lost much of its old town to that unruly mistress, the Mississippi River, but continues to reshape itself as it moves into its fourth century.

Arriving in Town

Wisconsin Highway 35 becomes Marquette Road through Prairie du Chien. At the turn to the Marquette-Joliet Bridge to Iowa, westbound US 18 is called Wisconsin Street and eastbound US 18 is Iowa Street. The business district is located along Blackhawk Avenue just west of Marquette Road.

History

The prairie just north of the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers was bound to attract attention. Located at the western end of the Fox-Wisconsin waterway, this was a key transportation route for fur traders, voyageurs, and missionaries that connected Montreal and the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River. Each spring and fall, Indians and traders assembled for a rendezvous to conduct business.

After France ceded its North American lands in 1763, Britain gained considerable influence in this strategic area where British, Spanish, and American agents met and competed to sway Indian nations to their sides. When *Jonathan Carver* arrived around 1766, he described a village called Prairie les Chiens

that had about 300 huts. The town's name apparently dates back to the 1730s when fur traders encountered a Mesquakie camp on the prairie. The Chief's name was Alim, which meant dog, so the French traders translated the word into its French counterpart: chien.

Prior to 1781, no Europeans owned land around Prairie du Chien, even though many traders and former voyageurs had homes in the area. In 1781—in the middle of the Revolutionary War—the British governor, after negotiating with resident Mesquakies, granted nine square miles to *Pierre Antaya*, *Augustine Ange*, and *Basil Giard*.

After the Revolutionary War win gave America control of the region, Prairie du Chien was far from the minds of the new American government. American explorer *Zebulon Pike* reached Prairie du Chien in 1805, but no other American military forces would reach Prairie du Chien until the War of 1812. In spite of their loss, British traders continued to dominate commerce in the Northwest. When George Washington was sworn in as the first President of the United States in 1789, there was not a single American trader at Prairie du Chien.

Slowly, the American government began to assert control over the distant western lands. In October 1796, they took control of Mackinac Island from the British, opening up the vast Northwest Territory to American exploration and trade. Civilian government in Prairie du Chien began in 1802 with the appointment of a Justice of the Peace. At that time, most of the 100 or so residents were of French-Canadian or mixed-race ancestry and worked as traders or farmers. Several Indian nations lived in close proximity and depended upon the town for their supplies.

During the War of 1812, the British had nearly unchallenged control of the Northwest Territory,

The Pontoon Bridge

For nearly 20 years, passengers and freight that arrived at Prairie du Chien had to be unloaded, shipped across the river on ferries, and reloaded on a new train. Building a standard bridge was simply too expensive: the river at this spot was 8,000 feet wide, with two main channels and many islands. John Lawler, who operated the ferry service but worried about his future business prospects if he couldn't find a quicker method of moving traffic across the river, hired Bavarian engineer Michael Spettel to find a solution. Spettel used his expertise in buoyancy to design a floating draw bridge that won the approval of river interests. Construction took less than a year, and the first train crossed the new bridge on April 15, 1874.

The bridge had 8,000 feet of railway, all on pile-supported trestles, except for the east channel's 396-foot pontoon and the west channel's 405-foot pontoon. Each pontoon was attached to a piling via a hinge pier; the hinge could rise and fall with river levels, an important feature as river levels could vary as much as 22 feet. The pontoons were constantly swinging open and closed to accommodate rail and river traffic.

Shortly after the bridge opened, John Lawler filed for a patent, apparently without Spettel's knowledge; moreover, the patent made no mention of Spettel and appeared to give all credit for the design to Lawler himself. For decades, claims about who was the real designer were debated and generated enormous controversy and bad will. Ultimately, the evidence seems clear that Spettel was the designer, not Lawler.

By 1959, rail traffic was in serious decline and the railroad decided to dismantle the bridge. The last train crossed on October 31, 1961. The pontoons were removed shortly after that, ending 87 years of service for one of the most unique Mississippi River crossings.

aided by strong alliances with several Indian nations because of their long-standing trade relationships (and no attempts by the American government to build alliances). A handful of resident Americans at Prairie du Chien built Fort Shelby in June 1814, but it was quickly captured by the British and renamed Fort McKay. The British held Fort McKay until May 1815, when American forces finally forced them out; on their retreat, they torched the fort.

British control of the fur trade finally ended when the Americans won the War of 1812, although some British traders remained active for years. With the British out of the business, *John Jacob Astor* moved in and consolidated control through the American Fur Company, building a monopoly that lasted until his retirement in 1834. The lucrative fur trade in this region faded away by 1848, killed primarily by the forced removal of Indians west.

After the War of 1812 ended, Americans moved to establish a military presence and civilian government at Prairie du Chien. In June 1816, *General Thomas Smith* arrived with six companies and proceeded to build Fort Crawford on St. Feriole Island near the ruins of Fort Shelby/McKay. In 1818, Crawford County was established as part of Michigan Territory with Prairie du Chien as the county seat.

In August 1825 a large council of Indian nations was convened at Prairie du Chien to create land boundaries for each nation, although the US would later move to negotiate (or just take) land within these defined boundaries. Among the Indians leaders who attended were Wabasha, Red Wing, and Little Crow (all Dakota), Keokuk (Sauk), and Decorah (Ho-Chunk). Black Hawk, however, was not there and few Sauk were represented. The following year, the soldiers were transferred to Fort Snelling (near St. Paul) and

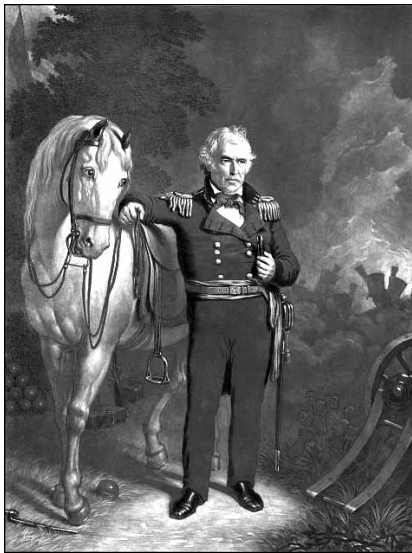
Fort Crawford was abandoned. A brief Indian uprising in the fall led to a renewed Army presence and by the summer of 1827, Fort Crawford was occupied again. During an official visit to the fort that year, *General Edmund Gaines* noted that continual flooding was ruining the fort and that its location on the island made the soldiers vulnerable to numerous diseases. He recommended relocating it.

Lieutenant Colonel Zachary Taylor (and a future US President) arrived in 1829 to command Fort Crawford. He supervised early construction of a new stone fort that was located on the mainland safely out of the Mississippi River's reach. Taylor left Fort Crawford in 1830 but returned in 1832 (the same year a cholera epidemic killed 100 soldiers) to command troops during the Black Hawk War. This time he stuck around a little longer, serving until 1837. The fort declined in importance after the Black Hawk War, and the last US soldiers left on June 9, 1856.

As the fur trade waned, Prairie du Chien became an important port for shipping wheat and lumber and started to attract new settlers. The Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad arrived in 1857 (completing the first rail line across Wisconsin); the new jobs attracted a lot of Irish immigrants, who were then followed by waves of Bohemians and Germans. The more established French families turned to farming, mostly on the northern part of town, gradually losing their cultural traditions to assimilation and intermarriage. Prairie du Chien remained a key grain shipping point until after the Civil War when St. Paul (Minnesota) took most of that business. Even as Prairie du Chien lost river commerce, however, rail traffic stepped up. Some other industries that came and went: clamming/pearl button, cigar factories, and woolen mills.

A fire in 1873 shifted the business district to its

current location along Blawkhawk Avenue. When Artesian wells were discovered near the end of the century, Prairie du Chien became a spa destination. Many of those wells are still in use, although they are no longer drawing spa tourists. After the



big flood of 1965 and several smaller ones in subse-

quent years, the Army Corps of Engineers used Prairie du Chien as a guinea pig for its first flood protection program that did not involve building levees and dikes. Under this new approach, the Corps purchased property in flood-prone areas and moved residents to higher ground. Between 1978 and 1984, 121 properties were purchased and its residents relocated, some of whom took their homes with them; in one case, an entire block of six houses was moved.

Tourist Information ⓘ

The **Prairie du Chien Regional Tourism Center** (US Highway 18; 800.732.1673; daily 9–5 from May through October; M–F 9–5 the rest of the year) is at the foot of the causeway that connects Wisconsin and Iowa and has an extensive collection of brochures.



Jane Fisher (image from *History of Crawford and Richland Counties*, 1894).

Attractions: St. Feriolo Island

Lawler Park (608.326.6406) is right next to the river on St. Feriolo Island. The park is named for John Lawler, a significant player in Prairie du Chien's interstate commerce, as he made his living getting

people across the Mississippi River, first by ferry, then by an innovative pontoon bridge he built that served rail traffic from 1874 until 1961 (see sidebar on page 304).

The former **Dousman Hotel** (Water Street) on St. Feriolo Island was built in 1864 for railroad passengers. They would stop in Prairie du Chien on their journey west, spend the night in the hotel, then take a ferry across the river the next morning and board another train. After the pontoon bridge was completed in 1874, the Dousman Hotel lost a lot of business and closed. It is currently vacant but slowly being restored.

The **Rolette House** (Water Street) is the white frame building next to the Dousman Hotel. It was built in the early 1840s for fur trader *Joseph Rolette*, who, like many frontier entrepreneurs, made and lost a lot

.....
 • **RANDOM FACT:** *Prairie du Chien has been through 40*
 • *major floods since 1785.*
 •

money, living in luxury and dying in poverty. He arrived at Prairie du Chien in 1804 as an agent of the Mackinac Company and switched to



Blufftop gravesites of the Brisbois family.

the American Fur Company in 1820. His store at Prairie du Chien sold a broad range of merchandise besides fur, including cattle, lead, feathers, flour, wheat, and meat. The house is awaiting restoration.

Brisbois House (Water Street) was built by Joseph Rolette for his ex-wife, *Jane Fisher*, as part of a separation agreement (see sidebar on Michel Brisbois). The house was completed around 1836 from limestone left over from the construction of Fort Crawford. She lived in the house until 1844 when she married *Hercules Dousman*, then gave it to her cousin, *B. W. Brisbois*. It remained in private hands well into the 20th century. It is currently owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society and is typically open only for special events.

Villa Louis (521 N. Villa Louis Rd.; 866.944.7483/608.326.2721; daily 9:30–5 from May–October; \$8.50) is the impressive Victorian home built by the Dousman family. The home was built on top of an Indian mound (not a burial mound). The interior is dark but elegant and, remarkably, most of the furnishings are original to the house. The Villa Louis tour includes several other buildings on the property and the nearby **Fur Trade Museum**, built in the 1850s for the last fur trader in Prairie du Chien, B.W. Brisbois.

The museum has displays and artifacts about the fur trade, naturally.

The **Mississippi River Sculpture Park** (N. Villa Louis Rd.; 608.326.8555) is the brainchild of sculptor Florence Bird, who has ambitious plans to chronicle in bronze several thousand years of human history in the region. Four sculptures currently are in place: Black Hawk, Dr. William Beaumont, the Touring Lady, and the Voyageur; 22 more will be added as funds permit.

You may also notice two abandoned log houses on the island. The **Gautier House** (Brisbois St. at 5th St.) and the two-story **LaChapelle House** (Villa Louis Rd. at Blackhawk Ave.) were built in the early 1800s by fur traders in the traditional French Canadian *pièce du pièce* style: squared logs were laid horizontally, the ends notched to fit together, gaps were filled with moss, and the exterior was plastered.

Attractions: On the Mainland

St. Gabriel Archangel Catholic Church (506 S. Beaumont; 608.326.2404) dates back to the late 1830s when it was built under the guidance of Father Samuel Mazzuchelli (see sidebar on page 247). The church has undergone several alterations during its lifetime. The major changes include the removal of the original bell tower and a 1908 expansion that added a vestibule and towers on the west side of the church and an addition on the east side that increased the depth of the sanctuary. A series of drawings depicting the changing appearance of the church is displayed on a wall inside the vestibule. Just outside the church is the grave of Father Lucien Galtier, the person who is at least partially responsible for the fact that the town across the Mississippi River from Minneapolis is now known as St. Paul instead of Pig's Eye.

Michel Brisbois

Michel Brisbois was the kind of independent character that we Americans love to mythologize: fiercely independent, a perpetual underdog, resentful of the people in charge. He arrived in the area in 1781 and spent the next 40 years working in the fur trade and generally doing whatever he wanted—authority be damned! He did not work for the big companies and, in fact, worked hard at undermining his rivals—rich traders like Hercules Dousman and Joseph Rolette. During the War of 1812, Brisbois sold supplies to both sides, a tactic that brought treason charges after the war; he was acquitted. Rolette appeared to exact some revenge in 1818 when he married Jane Fisher, a young woman adopted by Michel Brisbois and his wife.

When Brisbois died in 1837, he (and later his wife, a son and the family dog) was buried atop a bluff overlooking Prairie du Chien, reportedly so Michel could look down on his rivals in perpetuity. The rivalries did not end with his death.

Shortly after Brisbois died, his adopted daughter, Jane Fisher, separated from Rolette and got him to build a house for her as part of their separation agreement. A short time later, Rolette's business was destroyed by the Astor machine; Rolette, once one of the wealthiest men in the area, died penniless in 1842. Jane Fisher later married Hercules Dousman and ruled one of the great mansions in the region—Villa Louis.

✓ **TIP:** The gravesite has great views of the region and is open to the public but is rather tricky to get to, especially if you don't have four-wheel drive. If you want to visit the gravesite, contact the Fort Crawford Museum (608.326.6960).

Map Key

Things to Do

- 9. Brisbois House
- 12. Dousman Hotel
- 25. Fort Crawford Cemetery
- 27. Fort Crawford Museum
- 5. Fur Trade Museum
- 10. Gautier House
- 31. Hoffman Hall Recreation Center
- 23. Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
- 14. LaChapelle House
- 11. Lawler Park
- 8. Mississippi Explorer Cruises
- 7. Mississippi River Sculpture Park
- 15. Old jail/dungeon
- 36. Prairie Fun Land
- 13. Rolette House
- 3. St. Gabriel Archangel Catholic Church
- 6. Villa Louis
- 30. Wacouta Aquatic Park

Places to Sleep

- 35. Big River Campground
- 38. Bridgeport Inn
- 4. Brisbois Motor Inn

- 33. Delta Motel
- 1. Eagle Creek
- 2. Frenchtown Charmer
- 29. Holiday Motel
- 16. Neumann House Bed & Breakfast
- 32. Prairie Motel
- 34. Windsor Place Inn

Places to Eat

- 26. Coaches Family Restaurant
- 28. Eddie's Irish Pub & Grill
- 18. Fort Mulligans
- 39. Jones Black Angus
- 17. Kaber's Supper Club
- 20. Pete's Hamburger Stand
- 19. Simply Coffeeshouse & Eatery
- 21. Valley Fish and Cheese
- 37. Wasabi Japanese Restaurant

Other

- 22. Post Office
- 24. Prairie du Chien Memorial Library



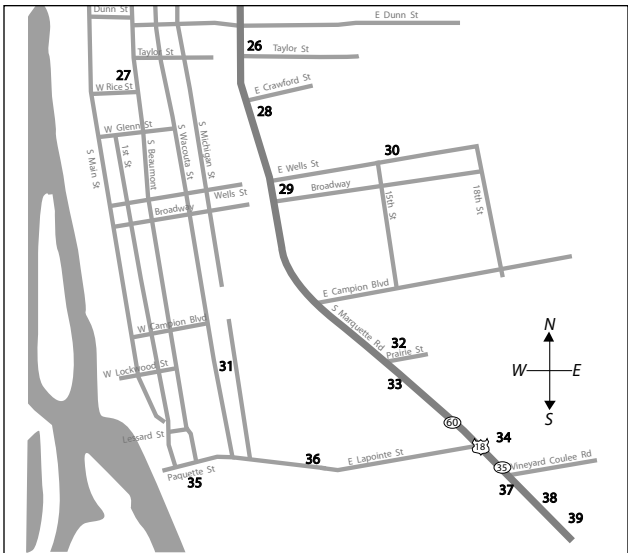
Houses on stilts near Prairie du Chien, Wis.

Prairie du Chien (north)



WISCONSIN

Prairie du Chien (south)



The **Fort Crawford Museum** at Prairie du Chien (717 S. Beaumont Rd.; 608.326.6960; daily 9–4 from May 1 to Oct 1; \$5) has two museums: the Second Fort Crawford Hospital Museum and the Museum of Prairie du Chien. The Fort Crawford Museum is housed in the reconstructed hospital building of the Second Fort Crawford and has exhibits about the fort and on the history of medicine left over from the days when this museum was operated by the State Medical Society of Wisconsin, including a 19th-century pharmacy and an exhibit on *Dr. William Beaumont*, who performed experiments on Alexis St. Martin, “the man with a hole in his stomach.” St. Martin had been shot at close range, opening a hole in his rib cage, right through to his stomach. The wounds eventually healed, except for the hole in his stomach. Beginning around 1829, Beaumont did two years of experiments to observe digestion through the hole, like tying string to a piece of sausage, dropping it into St. Martin’s stomach, then pulling the sausage out periodically to check on the progress of digestion. The book he subsequently wrote (*Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice and the Physiology of Digestion*) was required reading for generations of medical students. The Prairie du Chien Museum has the usual memorabilia and displays: fossils, arrowheads, Mississippi muskels, river bridges, an iron lung, plus two transparent female mannequins with organs that light up during the 13-minute anatomy lesson, so it even has something for the kids.

Just down the street, **Fort Crawford Cemetery** (413 S. Beaumont Rd.; 414.382.5300) is the smallest national cemetery in the US; 64 people are buried in its half acre. In the 1930s, the United Daughters of the Confederacy erected a monument to Jefferson Davis, the future President of the Confederate States of

America, who served (briefly) at Fort Crawford, which is one of four sites that claim to be the location where Davis eloped with the daughter of future US President Zachary Taylor.

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church (220 S. Michigan; 608.326.6085) was organized in 1837 to serve officers at Fort Crawford. The current Gothic Revival church was built in 1856; the bell tower and bell were added in 1870. The inside has the pews original to 1856 and woodwork with painted grain. The church sat empty at times in the 19th century because the parish lacked a minister, but it has an active congregation today.

The **old jail/dungeon** in the basement of the 1860s courthouse is a creepy place. Deep in the basement, with little access to natural light, the seven feet deep by five feet wide cells are built of thick limestone blocks darkened by years of smoke from kerosene lamps and secured by heavy iron doors. There is no regular tour schedule, so if you want to check it out, your best bet is to contact the Fort Crawford Museum (608.326.6960).

La Riviere Park (62036 Vineyard Coulee Rd.; 608.326.7207) is a sprawling city park on the east side of town with a nature center, hiking trails, mountain biking, and an archery range, plus the standard picnicking and playground options.

Getting Out on the River

Mississippi Explorer Cruises (563.586.4444; \$20) offers 90-minute eco-cruises from the Lawler Park dock on Saturdays at 2pm. Reservations are advised; they do not accept credit cards.

Entertainment and Events

Festivals. Prairie du Chien has a wealth of festivals,

including some that are truly unique. **Prairie Villa Rendezvous** (608.822.6916) kicks off the summer festival season in mid-June with a big crowd of men and women in leather tights reliving the glory of 18th-century trapper life. On summer Friday evenings, enjoy a free water-ski show courtesy of the **Mississippi Blackhawks Water Ski Show** (June to mid-August). The War of 1812 in Wisconsin (608.326.2721) is a re-enactment of a battle that took place in Prairie du Chien during the war of the same name. What started as a private party has grown into the **Prairie Dog Blues Festival** (888.567.1567/608.326.0085): two full days of live blues next to the Mississippi in late July.

In September, the **Carriage Classic** (608.326.4436; \$8.50) is a two-day antique carriage riding competition on the grounds of Villa Louis, and it is way cool. For a short time in the 1880s, the Dousman family home, **Villa Louis**, was the site of an Artesian Stock Farm. I don't really know what that means, but I think it has something to do with breeding horses, or aliens. In 1980, local carriage enthusiasts got together on the Villa Louis grounds to resurrect the contest. Since 1985 the competition has been sanctioned by the American Driving Society (no relation to AAA) and the event has grown to become an important national event, if you're into Artesian stocks or carriages. Several categories of competitions and exhibitions occur over the course of two days, including things like the Junior Reinsmanship, Antique Turnout, Large Pony Open Cross Country, and Picnic Class. The carriages, antiques all, are beautiful examples of art meets function, and the horses are the picture of grace and elegance, even when occasionally feisty and impatient.

Prairie du Chien Cannons & Redcoats (608.326.6960) in mid-September is a re-enactment of life around the time of the War of 1812. The **Shi-**



Carriage Classic at Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, Wis.

hata Orchard Fest (608.326.2785) in early October celebrates the apple harvest. If that's not enough for you, how about finishing the year with the traditional **Droppin' of the Carp** (608.326.8602) to celebrate the New Year, complete with a Carp King and Queen and the Carp Bowl pitting two teams of firemen against each other in a spirited football game.

Sports and Recreation

You and the kids should have no trouble killing a few hours at **Prairie Fun Land** (515 E. Paquette; 608.326.0888; Sa,Su in May 10–10, daily 10–10 from Memorial Day to Labor Day, after Labor Day, open M–F 4p–10p, Sa,Su 10–10 until season ends); chose from mini golf, go-karts, and an arcade.

On the causeway between Prairie du Chien and Marquette Iowa, **Sturgeon Slough Hiking Trail** (800.877.8339/563.873.3423) is a tranquil one-mile loop on mostly flat terrain next to the river and its backwaters. The viewing platform at the end of the trail has good views of the slough. Watch out for poison ivy.

Wacouta Aquatic Park (1401 E. Wells; 608.326.8071; M–F, Su 1p–4:45p, 6:30p–8:30p, Sa 1p–4:45p from mid-June–August; \$4/adult) is a public outdoor swimming pool with a waterslide. There is an indoor pool at **Hoffman Hall Recreation Center** (1600 S. Wacouta; 608.326.2985; open swim M, W 1–2, 6:30–8, Tu, Th, F 1–2, Sa, Su 1–5; \$4).

Prairie Hills Trail Rides (61011 Sebastian Lane; 608.326.6167) caters primarily to horseback riders, with trails that connect to La Riviere Park and horse-friendly campsites (see below). Riding lessons are available year round (\$20/hour) but also watch for special events like the periodic roping clinics and the summer rodeo.

Shopping

VALLEY FISH AND CHEESE (304 S. Prairie St.; 608.326.4719; open March 15–December M–Sa 9–6, Su 10:30–5) is true to their name, selling a variety of local food products, including fresh and smoked fish (carp, catfish, or sturgeon), pickled fish, cheese, specialty meats like summer sausage, turtle meat, and fresh morel mushrooms (in season). Buy a gift box to take home to all your friends! • The downtown strip along Blackhawk Avenue has a few stores that are worth a visit. • The **PRAIRIE PEDDLER** (200 W. Blackhawk Ave.; 608.326.7357; Tu, Th, F 10–6, W 10–3, Sa 9–4) offers bicycle sales, supplies and repairs, but they also sell works of local artists. Feel free to join them for the Thursday night music jam.



TIP: If you want the inside scoop on biking routes in the area, check with the folks at the Prairie Peddler.

PICKETT FENCE (100 W. Blackhawk Ave.; 608.326.4593; M–Th 10–6, F 10–8, Sa 10–5, Su 11–4) is mostly a quilt shop, but they also sell

yummy gourmet chocolates and other candies. • **STARKS SPORTS SHOP** (119 W. Blackhawk Ave.; 608.326.2478; Su–Th 9–6, F,Sa 9–9) is a huge liquor store where, it just so happens, you can also buy Wisconsin cheese, regional beer and wine, fishing supplies, and a gun. Check out the stuffed animals behind glass at the front of the store. • Since 1929, **HAMANN'S VARIETY STORE** (216 E. Blackhawk Ave.; 608.326.6911; Tu–Sa 9–5) has been selling postcards, greeting cards, kitchen supplies, home furnishings, hardware, and candy, all displayed in vintage, hand-made oak display cabinets. Check out the still-in-use antique cash register and Coke machine. This is what a variety store looked like before they were killed by soulless big-box stores. • **OUR NECK OF THE WOODS** (228 N. Marquette Rd.; 608.326.6517; daily 9–5) sells northwoods-inspired furniture and home furnishings. Their next door neighbor, **THE CANNERY ANTIQUES AND GIFTS** (300 N. Marquette Rd.; 608.326.6518; daily 9–5) is a huge store, housed in what used to be an actual cannery, that may sate your shopping needs, with the standard inventory of antiques, and home furnishings, plus specialty foods aimed mostly at your sweet tooth—ice cream, home-made fudge, and caramels.

If you find yourself at the river without a boat, or with the desire to fish but no fishing pole, you need **CABELAS** (33901 State Highway 35; 608.326.5600; M–Sa 8a–9p, Su 10–6), where you can find anything to meet your outdoor needs, at reasonable prices, plus you can gawk at the kinda creepy natural history display of stuffed animals in the back.

During apple harvest season, roughly late August until the snow falls in October—just kidding; the snow usually doesn't start until November—**SHIHATA'S ORCHARD** (61543 Limery Rd.;

608.326.2785) runs an apple orchard and country store where you can buy a wide variety of fresh apples, homemade cider, jams, and country accents.

Eating and Drinking

Your dining choices in Prairie du Chien have as much range as Sylvester Stallone's acting, but there's no reason to starve. Just don't expect to find a lot of health food on the menus in town.

SIMPLY COFFEEHOUSE & EATERY (204 W. Blackhawk Ave.; 608.326.7467; M–Sa 7a–3p; WiFi) serves a variety of coffee drinks, breakfast sandwiches (\$5), and gourmet soups, salads, and sandwiches for about \$7.

COACHES FAMILY RESTAURANT (634 S. Marquette Rd.; 608.326.8115; daily 5a–10p) is a good choice for inexpensive, hearty breakfasts (\$4–\$8) like chicken fried steak, biscuits and gravy, and omelets.

PETE'S HAMBURGER STAND (118 W. Blackhawk Rd.; 608.326.6653; F,Sa 11a–9p, Su 11a–7ish from late April to mid-October) is your basic local institution serving burgers grilled in a hint of water and topped with grilled onions. Started in 1909 by Pete Gokey, it is still run by the Gokey family. It's a popular place, so don't be surprised if you have to wait in line for a while. You won't get anything fancy here, just really good grilled burgers.

The **SPRING LAKE INN** (State Highway 35 at County Highway N; 608.326.6907; Su, Tu–Th 11a–9-ish, F,Sa 11a–10-ish), about four miles north of town, is a popular and highly regarded country inn that serves ten varieties of hearty half-pound sirloin burgers and six types of chicken sandwiches (\$6–\$8). Dinner entrées are mostly of the steak and seafood variety (\$10–\$20); the Friday night fish fry is very

popular (\$10). Bring cash; they do not accept credit cards.

FORT MULLIGANS (214 Blackhawk Ave.; 608.326.0639; M–Th 11a–9p, F,Sa 11a–10p, Su 11a–8p), housed in an 1850s-era building long known as the French Store, serves 24 types of sandwiches and burgers (\$5–\$10 but most are \$7), plus a range of fried foods, pasta, and above-average entrées (\$11–\$23) like herbed pork tenderloin (\$14).

EDDIE'S IRISH PUB & GRILL (900 S. Marquette Rd.; 608.326.6625; Su–W 11a–10p, Th–Sa 11a–11p, bar open later) makes some good sandwiches (\$3–\$7.50), especially the Reuben and BBQ brisket, but most everything else is fried; at least you can get a pint of Guinness.

THE BARN RESTAURANT (32800 County Road K; 608.326.4941; Su–Th 5p–9-ish, F,Sa 5p–10p) is a moderately priced, supper club-type restaurant, with Iowa pork chops, walleye (\$15), catfish (\$11), and a wide selection of chicken entrées; entrées run \$8–\$22, but most are \$12–\$17.

KABER'S SUPPER CLUB (225 W. Blackhawk Ave.; 608.326.6216; Su–Th 5p–9p, F,Sa 5p–10p) has been serving residents and visitors with moderately priced supper-club fare since 1920; the fourth generation is now in charge. Entrées include steaks (\$10–\$26), lamb chops (\$15), and fish/seafood items (\$10–\$17) like frog legs, walleye, and catfish. Kaber's also has affordable lunches, with daily specials for about \$6 (M–F 11–2).

JONES BLACK ANGUS (37640 Highway 18 South; 608.326.2222; daily 5p–10p) is another long-time supper club in the area, serving the traditional range of steaks (\$14–\$23), fish and seafood (\$14–\$32), and other hearty entrées (\$11–\$21) in a

fine dining atmosphere; you can also get a sandwich for about \$7.

WASABI JAPANESE RESTAURANT (37505 US Highway 18; 608.326.4343; M–Th, 11a–2:30p, 4:30–9:30, F 11a–2:30p, 4:30–10 Sa noon–10, Su noon–9) opened in 2009, and, in all honesty, I don't know if they will be open when you read this, but you should certainly check it out if they are, especially if you want to eat something that no one else in the area offers: sushi, noodle dishes, Teriyaki; you can also sit at the Hibachi grill and enjoy a show with your meal (most entrées are in the \$10–\$15 range but you can spend up to \$28).

The **SAWMILL SALOON** (206 W. Blackhawk Ave.; 608.326.4020; Su–Th 10a–2a, F,Sa 10a–2:30a) is a friendly place to grab a drink. When the weather's nice, you can enjoy the spacious patio; indoors, you can shoot some pool, throw some darts, or stare at dead animals on the wall.

Sleeping

Prairie du Chien has a lot more lodging options than one would expect for a town of its size, but summer prices are surprisingly high. Most of the options are fairly standard motel rooms, some chains and a few mom-and-pop operations; if you want to stay in a smaller, boutique place, check out the options across the river in McGregor and Marquette. If you want to stay in the one of the chains, check the Internet.

Camping. **LA RIVIERE PARK** (62036 Vineyard Coulee Rd.; 608.326.7207) has four basic sites for walk-ins near the barn (you must call in advance to register) plus 30 sites for horse campers with water and electric (all sites free). • **BIG RIVER CAMP-GROUND** (106 W. Paquette; 608.326.2712; open

May 1–October 1; WiFi) is in a generally shady location on a slough on the south side of town; it has a couple dozen overnight sites (\$20/tent, \$22/camper).

• **FRENCHMAN'S LANDING CAMPGROUND** (28741 Frenchman's Landing Dr.; 608.874.4563) is the only campground in the area located on the main channel; it has 50 sites with water and electric (\$26) and about ten primitive sites (\$15). • **SPORTS UNLIMITED CAMPGROUND** (32800 County Road K; 608.326.2141; open April 15–November 1) is a large facility on the north side of town with 350 fully equipped sites (\$28–\$35 + tax), mini-golf, and a marina. • **PRAIRIE HILLS CAMPGROUND** (61011 Sebastian Lane; 608.326.6167) caters mostly to horse campers (\$20/elec) but can accommodate others looking for primitive sites (\$15), as well.

Cabins. These places are big enough for families or groups traveling together; the base rates are for two people unless otherwise noted. **THE DUCK INN LODGE** (38299 Stuckey Rd.; 608.326.5118) is a labor of love that began with the renovation of an old railroad car into a small private hunting lodge. The lodge is decorated with themes that celebrate railroads and sports teams and is equipped with full kitchens and cable TV. While the nine-bedroom lodge may be best for big groups, the space can be divided into three separate areas and individual rooms can be rented if space is available (\$119–\$149/bedroom + tax). • **THE LOG HOUSE** (35509 Loghouse Ln.; 608.326.4756) sits at the back end of a small coulee and is well-buffed from the outside world; guests can enjoy the extensive gardens and a homey ambiance in a cabin furnished with recovered items, some collectibles, some simply fun (\$125 + tax/\$150 for 3+ people). • **PICATEE CREEK LODGE** (63723 Picatee Creek Rd.; 608.874.4187), about four miles north of Ca-



Calvary Cemetery, Prairie du Chien, Wis.

bela's and hiding in a coulee, is another quiet spot for a group retreat, with two bedrooms and five bunk beds in a loft (\$125 + tax for 4, \$10/additional person); the lodge is fully equipped with kitchen, satellite TV, full bath, and plenty of space to sprawl. • The **CABIN AT WHISPERING RIDGE** (35103 Nature Lane; 608.306.0681), located high atop a ridge about five miles outside of Prairie du Chien, is a fully-stocked cabin that is perfect for a relaxing getaway, yet close enough to town to enjoy the area's attractions. The cabin has two full baths, can sleep 8, and is supplied with satellite TV, a large deck, gas grill, hot tub, and hiking trail (\$200 + tax).

Bed-and-Breakfast. A short walk from downtown, the **NEUMANN HOUSE BED & BREAKFAST** (121 N. Michigan St.; 608.326.8104; WiFi) is housed in an 1858-era home and decorated faithfully with period furnishings. Each of the three guest rooms has a private bath and free use of the house cats (\$100–\$110 + tax incl full breakfast on weekends).

Budget. The **SPRING LAKE MOTEL** (State Highway 35 at County Highway N; 608.326.6907)

is about four miles north of Cabela's on Highway 35 at County Highway N; the six rooms are about as basic as they come, but come clean and cheap (\$45 + tax). • The **HOLIDAY MOTEL** (1010 S. Marquette Rd.; 800.962.3883/608.326.2448; WiFi) has new owners making improvements to the 18 generally clean rooms, each equipped with refrigerators and microwaves; the theme rooms cost no more and are decorated more attractively (\$59–\$79 + tax), and the two Jacuzzi rooms are large and a decent value for what you get, if you are into Jacuzzis (\$100–\$140 + tax). • The **PRAIRIE MOTEL** (1616 S. Marquette Rd.; 800.526.3776/608.326.6461; WiFi) has 32 clean, spacious rooms equipped with microwave, refrigerator, and coffee pot (\$65–\$75 + tax). • The **DELTA MOTEL** (1733 S. Marquette Rd.; 608.326.4951; WiFi) is one of the best values in the area. The 16 rooms are immaculate and have small refrigerators; most also have microwaves (\$75 + tax).

Moderate. **BRISBOIS MOTOR INN** (533 N. Marquette Rd.; 800.356.5850/608.326.8404; WiFi) is clean, affordable, and has nice size rooms (\$69–\$109 + tax). If you really need WiFi, though, get a room close to the office or you may not pick up the signal. • The **BRIDGEPORT INN** (37502 Highway 18 South; 800.234.6082/608.326.6082; WiFi) is a newer, independently owned motel with 53 spacious rooms equipped with a refrigerator and coffee pot (\$110–\$150 + tax). • The **WINDSOR PLACE INN** (1936 S. Marquette Rd.; 608.326.7799; WiFi) has 35 modern rooms hidden behind a row of chain motels. Each room is non-smoking and is equipped with coffee pot, refrigerator, microwave, and cable TV. All rooms are the same price for two people (\$120 + tax), so try to score a big room with two queen beds and sofa.

Houses. These places are also big enough for

families or groups of friends traveling together. The base rates are for four people. Always wanted to live like a river rat in one of those houses on stilts next to the water? • **AMBRO HOUSE** (31893 Ambro Rd.; 608.723.4939) is just your place; the non-smoking house includes a full kitchen, two bedrooms and a loft; guests have use of a paddleboat, bicycles, charcoal grill, and a firepit, plus access to a nearby boat dock (\$150 + tax, \$225/night for 5–6 adults; no pets). • **FRENCHTOWN CHARMER** (827 N. Main St.; 608.326.2381) is a restored 1825-era farmhouse located on the backwaters of the Mississippi; the house has a full kitchen, flat-screen TV with cable, screened porch, and gas grill, among other things (\$125 + tax, \$25 extra for up to two additional people; adults strongly preferred). • The folks at **EAGLE CREEK** (608.326.9000) have 4 houses for rent along the backwaters of the Mississippi River; each house has cable TV, boat docks, large windows overlooking the slough, spacious decks, and plenty of space for even the largest families (\$225 incl tax, \$25 extra for two additional people/\$15 for each additional person after 6).



TIP: Rooms fill up fast on summer weekends, especially when there's a festival. Book in advance if you can, or plan on staying somewhere else.

Resources

- The local newspaper is the twice-weekly *Prairie du Chien Courier Press* (608.326.2441).
- Post Office: 120 S. Beaumont Rd.; 608.326.6914; inside is a relief sculpture of Father Marquette and Louis Jolliet.
- Prairie du Chien Memorial Library: 125 S. Wacouta Ave.; 608.326.6211; M–Th 9–8, F 9–5, Sa 9–1.

Gays Mills Detour

The area north of Prairie du Chien has a number of apple orchards tucked back into the coulees. For a quick detour through part of the region, turn east on State Highway 171 toward Gays Mills, a village along the Kickapoo River founded in 1847 when James Gay built a sawmill. The drive takes you on a narrow, hilly, winding road that is typical of southwest Wisconsin. Along the way, there are several places to buy locally grown apples during the late summer/early fall season. You will find a pleasing mix of familiar varieties like Granny Smith and Macintosh, plus newer ones like the Honey Crisp (my favorite) and Jonamac, heirloom varieties like Wolf River and Golden Russet, and many more you have probably never heard of.

In Gays Mills proper, six log buildings representing the vernacular architecture of the Kickapoo Valley have been preserved at Log Cabin Heritage Park (next to the County Fairgrounds). Gays Mills hosts the Crawford County Fair in July and the Gays Mills Apple Fest the last full weekend in September (866.452.7967 for tourism info). When you reach US 61, you can backtrack the 17 miles to the river or open your map and find another coulee to explore. Give yourself at least an hour for the detour.

LYNXVILLE

(population 176)

Commercial fishing was once a big deal around Lynxville; today sport fishers carry on the tradition, just on a smaller scale.

Arriving in Town

Wisconsin Highway 35 is called Main Street in Lynxville.

History

Brothers *John and James Haney* set up shop here in 1848, building a trading post and a log cabin, thus giving the future town of Lynxville its first name: Haney's Landing. When the village was laid out in 1857, the surveyors chose the name Lynxville, because they had just arrived on a steamboat that was called the *Lynx*. Not a very sexy beginning. For most of its existence, Lynxville's economy was heavily dependent upon the Mississippi River. The town had a good harbor at a spot in the river called Devil's Elbow, so the big boats traveling between St. Louis and St. Paul made regular stops. Commercial fishing was the main industry for many years, with huge yields of fish shipped to places as far as New York City. In December 1873 the Johnson brothers harvested 80,000 pounds of fish in a single day by drawing a seine under the frozen Mississippi River. They shipped the headless fish by rail to Dubuque where it was weighed because someone thought the car exceeded the 20,000-pound limit. The car weighed in at 43,000 pounds and only contained half the catch.

One of the largest log rafts ever on the Mississippi was assembled at Lynxville in 1896. The raft was 270 feet wide and 1550 feet long—it had more than two million board feet of lumber or enough to build nearly 700 three-bedroom ranch houses. In the winter, Lynxville residents harvested ice from the river. It was stored in sawdust and sold in summer. When Lynxville was incorporated in 1889, it counted 313 residents. The railroad reached town in 1895 and folks did a nice business shipping wheat, livestock, and apples to regional and national markets.

Tourist Information ⓘ

If you have questions, your best bet is to contact the **Lynxville Town Clerk** (608.874.4424) during normal business hours.

Attractions

Just south of town, you can watch boats lock through at **Lock and Dam 9** (608.874.4311), which opened in 1937 and went through a ten-year overhaul that was finished in 2006.

Hey, what's that? The three shepherds (10–16 feet tall) and a cross on the side of the bluff at the north end of town were put in place in 1960 by barber Henry Cooper, who spearheaded a community effort to build a religious monument on the bluff. The shepherds are lit from Thanksgiving to New Year's, while the cross is lit during Lent.

Getting Out on the River

HUBBARD'S FISHING FLOAT & CAFÉ (608.732.1084; open daily from late March–November) is just below Lock and Dam 9. To get there, head to the boat ramp across from the Falling Rock Inn and

raise the flag; a boat will come get you. Rates for fishing are \$15 during the day (7a–5p) and \$20 at night (5p–7a).

Sports and Recreation

Larson Bluff (Larson Road) has a good overlook, especially if you want the view but not the work to get to it. Go 3½ miles north of Lynxville to Hobbs Hollow Road and turn right (east). Drive 1.7 miles to Oak Grove Ridge Road, turn right, and go 0.4 miles to Lucky Lane, a gravel road. Turn right. Follow Lucky Lane for 1.9 miles until it reaches a circle (the road that continues to the left is a private driveway). Park and walk two minutes to the shaded overlook.

Drinking

You can get your drink on at **HOOCHIES II RIVER ROAD RESORT** (313 Spring; 608.874.4422; M–F 11a–close, Sa,Su 8a–close), which has a decent selection of refreshing beverages and a friendly atmosphere.

Sleeping

Camping. MISSISSIPPI BEND CAMPGROUND & RV PARK (251 Hillside Dr.; 608.874.4478; open April 15–October 15), located in a shady valley on the south end of town, has a few sites for overnight campers, most of them primitive (\$20/primitive; \$25/water & elec; \$30/full); for something completely different, consider staying in the newly built teepee, which comes with a fair amount of privacy and its own deck (\$50 incl tax). • **HOOCHIES II RIVER ROAD RESORT** (313 Spring; 608.874.4422; WiFi) has 24 sites with water and electric in an unshaded area next to a lagoon (\$20); no showers.

Cabin. MISSISSIPPI BEND CAMPGROUND & RV PARK (251 Hillside Dr.; 608.874.4478; open

April 15–October 15) has a two bedroom, two bath rental cottage that has a full kitchen, screened porch, and many other amenities (\$110 incl tax).

Budget. The nine motel rooms at **Hoochies II River Road Resort** (313 Spring; 608.874.4422; WiFi) are tiny and basic — perfect for the fisherman passing through town who just wants a place to crash (\$35–\$55 + tax).



Winter scene near Ferryville, Wis.

For more information and updates, visit my web site at www.MississippiValleyTraveler.com.

FERRYVILLE

(population 174)

The self-described “Sportsmen’s Paradise” lives up to its billing, with fishing, hunting, and other outdoor activities in abundance nearby.

Arriving in Town

Wisconsin Highway 35 passes through town as Main Street, which is the only through street in town.

History

The settlement of Ferryville began with the arrival of *Misters Sanborn* and *Stillwell* who built a race track to train their horses. The village was first known as Humble Bush, a name with real character, if you ask me. The town became known as Ferryville when ferry service was established to Lansing, Iowa. Ferryville became an important shipping point for wheat when *Charles Huffs Schmidt* built a large warehouse. A tornado in 1873 destroyed the warehouse and much of the town. It took nearly a decade for Ferryville to recover. The arrival of the railroad in 1886 provided the usual economic boost, with Ferryville becoming a popular spot for railroad workers to pass the time.

Many early settlers were from Pennsylvania and New England, but a large number of Norwegians put down roots in the area, too. In 1939, *Prince Olaf*, the future King of Norway, made an appearance at the depot as his train passed through town, making the resident Norwegians very happy.

It snowed on June 2, 1929. Just thought you might like to know that.

Here's a fun news item from November 29, 1932: "Last Sunday, John Nicholson and his fiancée, Ms. Mildred Seymour and C.C. Howard went hunting rabbits, just around the bend out of town. Howard sighted a rabbit near a brush pile, and both men got out to shoot. Nicholson bidding the young lady to stay by the car. Howard shot at the rabbit first and Nicholson on the other side of the brush pile also shot, neither one hitting the rabbit, but to Nicholson's surprise he heard a cry from Miss Seymour who had followed along and was standing opposite him on the other side of the brush pile. The charge from his gun hit the frozen ground and rebounding, two shots hit her in the ankle. She was taken at once to the local doctor, who inoculated her for tetanus and the shot still remains in her limb without troubling her."

Tourist Information

The Ferryville Tourism Council (608.734.9077) is your best bet for information about town.

Attractions

Riverview Park (State Highway 35 across from the Sportsmen's Bar & Grill) is a new spot for river or train watching (dozens of trains a day pass through here); the observation deck has a viewing scope for a closer look at birds and other critters in the river.

Sports and Recreation

Sugar Creek Bluff State Natural Area (Lagoon Rd.; 608.784.3606) has great views of the river valley from the top of the bluff. The hiking is moderately difficult, partly because of the incline and partly because the trail is only roughly cut through the forest. In summer, you will be hiking through thicket that can easily be waist-high, much of it with nasty thorns. Wear long

pants or your legs will get cut up. You will also be much happier if you apply a fresh layer of bug spray before you start hiking. Give yourself at least 60–90 minutes for the round trip hike, longer if you want to linger at the top. The natural area is at the south end of Ferryville. Turn on Lagoon Street (across from Sugar Creek Park); go ¼ mile across the Sugar Creek Bridge and park along the road. About 100 feet down the gravel driveway is a sign for the trail.

Rush Creek State Natural Area (Rush Creek Rd.; 608.785.9000) just might have the best overlooks along the Mississippi River. Two goat prairies atop the bluffs provide a wide panoramic view of the Mississippi Valley, from which you can see the river make a sweeping bend to the west. The hike is moderately strenuous, as you have a steady uphill climb via an old service road, sometimes through waist-high brush. The hike from the parking lot on Rush Creek Road (cross the road and walk east to the old service road) to the top will take 30–45 minutes; give yourself at least two hours to explore and enjoy. I would suggest you find somewhere else to hike during deer hunting season, though. You should also be aware that rattlesnakes nest in the area, although you aren't likely to encounter them.

Entertainment and Events

From May 15 until the last Saturday in October, stop in to the **Market in the Park**, a farmers' market at Sugar Creek Park (Sa 9a–4p) where you can purchase fresh, local produce, plus Amish products such as baked goods and handmade baskets and rugs.

Festivals. The main event in Ferryville is **River Bluff Daze** (608.734.9077) in July; check out the antique tractor pull and fireworks, if you happen to be in the neighborhood.

Shopping

There aren't many places in the country where the local gas station advertises cheese along with the price of unleaded, but the **MOBILE GAS STATION/FERRYVILLE CHEESE AND MORE** (163 Main St.; 608.734.3121; M–Sa 5a–10p, Su 6a–10p, closes at 9p in winter) isn't your typical gas station, and you are in Wisconsin, after all. The store has a cooler full of Wisconsin-made cheese and sausage; stock up for your next picnic lunch. • On summer weekends, check out **KAY'S POTIQUES** (150 Main St.; 608.734.3423/608.648.3647; Open Sa,Su noon–6 from May 1 to Oct 31), the retail store for a local potter Kay Campbell who handcrafts stoneware and porcelain pottery. • **OLD TYME QUILT SHOPPE** (62682 Rush Creek Rd.; 608.648.2081; daily 10–5 in summer) sells handmade quilts with original designs; the store is 2½ miles east of Highway 35 down a gravel road.

Eating and Drinking

THE SWING INN (106 Main St.; 608.734.9916; daily 7a–11p) was a popular watering hole for railroad workers in the late 1800s, perhaps because it counted a number of prostitutes among its customers. One of them, Blue Moon, was murdered at the tavern and many believe her ghost still haunts the place. The food is about what you'd expect: burgers and sandwiches (\$3–\$5.50), steaks, and fried stuff (\$9–\$16). Offer a toast to Blue Moon while you're here.

END OF THE RAINBOW ORGANIC FARM (58138 North Buck Creek Rd.; 608.734.3400; daily 9–5 during growing season) is about three miles east of the River Road and is a good choice for fresh produce grown the all-natural way (roughly June–October); they also have organic poultry products but call ahead



Ferryville, Wis.

to find out what's available.

Sleeping

Camping. SUGAR CREEK PARK

(State Highway 35; 608.734.9406) has several primitive sites with firepits (\$10); all share a common water source and there are no showers.

Budget. Basic but cheap is what's in store at the **RIVER'S EDGE MOTEL** (132 Main St.; 608.734.3621), with four rooms (\$43 + tax; \$8 each additional person) and a cabin/kitchenette (\$73 + tax; \$12 each additional person). • The **GRANDVIEW MOTEL** (14812 State Highway 35; 608.734.3235) is an exceptional place with nine well-kept, wood-paneled rooms (\$65–\$90 + tax), four of which have kitchenettes. Room 1 (\$90 + tax) is a kitchenette with two queen beds, a wood-burning stove, and large picture windows to take in the expansive views of the Mississippi River. Book in advance, if you can.

Houses. The **SCENIC RIVER INN** (194 Main St.; 608.632.3362) is a whole-house rental, with up to 3 bedrooms and 1½ baths, full kitchen, four-season porch, and off-street parking big enough for your boat trailer (\$75–\$85 + tax). • **MULQUEEN'S CABIN RENTAL** (168 Main St.; 608.734.3456) is a five-bedroom, two-bath house with good views of the river; the house has a fish cleaning shed, cable TV, washer and dryer. You can rent the main floor with its two bedrooms for a very reasonable rate (\$85 incl tax) or pay a bit more for extra rooms (\$15/extra bedroom).

• **153 MAIN** (153 Main St.; 608.317.1530) is a one-year old house on the riverfront with great views and loaded with modern amenities: Jacuzzi tub, full kitchen with granite countertops, flat-screen TV with digital cable, WiFi (weekend rates \$200/night + tax w/2-night minimum). • **KNUDSON PROPERTIES** (608.648.2569) offers three rental houses atop a ridge just outside of town: Secluded Grove, The Pines, and Secluded Valley. Each property is similar, with room to sleep 6–8, two full baths, hot tub, cable TV, and WiFi in a private setting (\$200 + tax + \$50 cleaning fee, two night minimum on weekends).

Resources

- Post Office: 158 Main St.; 608.734.3331.

A final note: the **RED LION PUB AND EATERY** (608.648.3100; Tu-Th 4p-11ish, F-Su noon -11ish) in tiny Victory, Wisconsin is technically located outside the range of this book (it is about six miles north of the turn for the Black Hawk Bridge), but I love this place for its amazing beer selection and good food—it's the only place to get Indian curries in about a 150-mile radius—and, hey, it's my book, so I can do what I want. Check out the perfectly cooked fish and chips (\$11) or one of the many curry dishes (most about \$12).

REGIONAL INFORMATION

When to Go

The climate along the Upper Mississippi can vary widely, sometimes in a single day. I am sure that more than one local can tell you about a day where they left the house in shorts and were scraping ice off their car by the end of the day. (Actually, that was my story from a January day in St. Louis, but it can happen further north, too.) All locations are in the Central Time Zone, the same as Chicago.

Winters along the Upper Miss are cold and long with healthy accumulations of snow. This should not stop you from visiting, however. North of the Quad Cities, the Mississippi River usually freezes over, with a few patches of open water around locks and dams and discharge pipes; the open water at those locations attracts large numbers of bald eagles on their annual trek south. Ice fishing is a popular sport (but ask around about local ice conditions before venturing out), as is cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and brandy-drinking.

The return of warmer weather in spring brings snow melts (and lots of mud), high water on the rivers, and strong storms. Warm is relative, however, as some places along the Upper Mississippi can get snow into April. Warm spring days are great for exploring the overlooks as there are no bugs and the views aren't yet obscured by leaves and other vegetation.

Summers are usually quite comfortable, with just a



Ice fishermen in the Upper Mississippi River backwaters.

handful of hot, humid days. Campgrounds and motels fill up quickly on weekends, and it is peak season for mosquitoes and other insects. Summer is the most popular time for pleasure boating—weekends are not the best time to take your boat out in search of peace and solitude, although backwater areas may get you away from most of the crowds.

Fall is the busiest travel season along much of the Upper Mississippi. The leaves begin to change colors and the limestone bluffs are brushed with a variety of reds, greens, and oranges. This is also a great time for fresh produce like gourds, apples, and the last of the season's tomatoes. Fall weather is usually pleasantly cool, with more cloudy days than summer. Fall is also prime time for hunting (deer season usually begins in late fall), so you may want to avoid hiking in places that are crawling with people carrying big guns; most state parks do not allow hunting, so those are probably the best places to hike.

Mississippi River Ecology in Brief

From its headwaters at Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota to its delta at the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana, the

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

Growing settlements in the Mississippi Valley had a tremendous impact on the river's ecology. By the 1920s, pristine sections of the river were hard to find. Plans for a massive drainage project in the Winnesheik Bottoms around Lansing, Iowa motivated Will Dilg to action. Dilg and like-minded fellows founded the Izaak Walton League of America, one of the earliest conservation organizations in the country.

With remarkable speed and skill, the League organized a successful campaign that resulted in a 1924 Congressional act designating parts of the Mississippi River as a National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

The refuge today covers 240,000 acres that span 261 miles from Rock Island, Illinois to Wabasha, Minnesota. The refuge has been an unqualified success; refuge lands are popular places for public recreation and the expanse of protected lands helps to ensure the survival of habitat for the river's creatures.

There have been (and continue to be) a number of significant challenges, however, such as the fact that the refuge must coordinate with four state governments. The biggest challenge (and threat) has undoubtedly been the building of 29 locks and dams along the Upper Mississippi to improve navigation. The lock system caused serious damage to the river's ecology, and it has taken decades for the Fish and Wildlife Service and Army Corps of Engineers to develop ways to cooperate to remediate the impact of navigation systems on the river, something that remains a work in progress but that seems to be heading in the right direction.

Mississippi River is about 2,300 miles long and passes through ten states; the exact length changes because the river has a habit of carving new channels. The river drains 41 percent of the lower United States (and part of Canada), about 1,200,000 acres. As the glaciers retreated, the meltwater carved layers of limestone to form the deep valleys along the Upper Mississippi.

Flora

The Upper Mississippi Valley has a wide variety of plant life in a narrow area. At river level, plants that tolerate a lot of moisture flourish: trees such as willow, elm, sycamore, maple, river birch, as well as water lilies, sedges, and pondweeds. Further uphill, trees like oak, hickory, and walnut predominate. A few remnants of the prairies that used to be common atop the bluffs (sometimes called “goat prairies”) can be seen (and visited), like the ones with impressive views at Rush Creek State Natural Area north of Ferryville, Wisconsin.

Fauna

When you live in the city like I do, it's easy to forget how wild much of the country still is. There is a much greater range of animal life along the Mississippi River than I thought. Deer are ubiquitous; it is the animal (other than squirrels) that you are most likely to see. If you are paying attention and have some luck, you may also catch sight of beaver, muskrat, otter, raccoons, and fox. If you are really lucky, you might spot mink or a rattlesnake. Animals you might hear but probably won't see are coyotes and bobcats. In 2009, a black bear wandered into northeast Iowa, about 30 miles west of the Mississippi Valley. Bear are more common in the forests of Minnesota and Wisconsin, but they do occasionally stray.

If you are a birder you probably already know about

the Mississippi River flyway. For the rest of you, a few facts: 40 percent of all North American waterfowl migrate along the Mississippi River; 326 species of birds—one-third of all birds on the continent—migrate through in the spring and fall. Among the migrants are bald eagles in winter, song birds and pelicans in spring and tundra swans in late fall. Species that are fairly easy to spot include hawks, turkey, peregrine falcons, great blue heron, egrets, geese, ducks, cormorants, and turkey vultures. The Audubon Society produced a series of maps for birding along the Mississippi River. They do a much better job than I ever could describing the variety of birds in the flyway and when they can be seen. Some of the maps are still available at tourist information centers; all of the content is also available through their website (www.GreatRiverBirding.org).

Even with the dramatic man-made changes to the ecology of the Mississippi River, fish still abound—260 species live in the river or one-quarter of all fish species in North America. Many species are threatened, but fish that are still common include fishermen's favorites like crappie, largemouth bass, walleye, catfish, white bass, and bluegill, as well as carp, suckers, and buffalo fish. Threatened or endangered species include the prehistoric sturgeon, paddlefish, and alligator gar (the latter is native only in the southern sections of the Mississippi). And, of course, there are plenty of turtles and mussels. All of these are under pressure from invasive species like zebra mussels and the very odd Asian jumping carp.



TIP: You can see many of these fish up close and personal at the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque, Iowa.

Getting There →

The biggest city in this stretch, Dubuque, has bus connections via Burlington Trailways, as well as the region's only commercial airport (see page 122). The nearest Amtrak stations are in Galesburg, Illinois and La Crosse, Wisconsin, although there are hopes that a new Amtrak route will soon reach Galena and Dubuque. Stay tuned. That's about it, though. You are almost certainly going to need your own transportation to get here.

Getting Around 🚌

Without your own transportation, most of this area will not be accessible. You really need a car, motorcycle, boat, bicycle, or ultralight to explore this region.

Food ✂️

In many towns, there isn't much variety to the food. Meat and potatoes rule the day, which often means a burger and fries. Iowa is a major pork-producing state, so if you want to go native in Iowa, eat some pig. Dubuque and Galena have the highest concentration of fine dining. Wisconsin is known for its cheese (which is widely available at many grocery stores and gas stations) as well as supper clubs, which almost every small town has and is where local people, especially more mature people, go for a nice steak, a trip to the salad bar, and some brandy. In the Midwest, making pie is a fine art practiced in every small town and nearly every home kitchen. If we spent as much time on the rest of our food as we do on pie, we would have the best cuisine in the world. You should therefore always save room for a slice of pie when eating in small-town restaurants. In fact, you may want to skip the burger and go right to the pie.

Things That Could Ruin Your Vacation

Look, I'm not into scare tactics and I certainly would never dream of telling you how to live your life. But, to help make your vacation experience a pleasant one, I offer a few tips about things that could ruin your vacation:

1) **TICKS AND MOSQUITOES:** they can spread disease and make you feel miserable.

Remedy: wear a hat and use bug spray. Here are a few tips on repellents, courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- **Picaridin** (works against mosquitoes, ticks, chiggers, gnats, fleas): irritates skin less than DEET but needs to be reapplied more often; no scent. Available in Avon Skin-so-Soft Bug Guard and Cutter Advanced.
- **Lemon-eucalyptus oil:** the only commercial product in the US is Repel Lemon Eucalyptus; don't use on children under four years of age.
- **DEET:** the most widely used; it comes in different concentrations: 5% will last about 90 minutes, while 100% will last ten hours; 20% will also keep the ticks away; it is oily and concentrations of 30% or greater should not be used on children.
- **Citronella:** not as effective as DEET; at 10% concentration, citronella only works for 20 minutes.

2) **POISON IVY:** most people will develop a very nasty rash when they come in contact with poison ivy.

Remedy: learn to identify the plant. See the picture on this page but also search for images on the Internet. Wear long pants when hiking. If you think you've walked through a patch of poison ivy, wash your skin as soon as possible and wear gloves to remove your shoes and clothes; wash them right away. The oil from

the plant, urushiol, is the main irritant, and it can stick around for years. I once got a nasty rash by petting a dog that had run through a patch of poison ivy. Don't burn the plant or exposed clothes; the oil is carried in the air and can give you a very unpleasant rash in your lungs if you inhale it.

3) FALLING OFF A BLUFF: IT HURTS.

Remedy: Pay attention to the edges. Duh. Good hiking shoes or boots will also help.

4) IGNORING SIGNS THAT SAY "PRIVATE PROPERTY" OR "NO TRESPASSING": they mean it, and they have guns.

Remedy: Don't ignore the signs.

5) HITTING A DEER WITH YOUR CAR: you'd be surprised at how much that deer will mess up your car.

Remedy: pay attention and don't drive too fast, especially at night.



Poison ivy.

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Words of Thanks

Thanks to the folks who provided shelter and support to me while working on this book: to Piper and Alex in Rock Island and John in La Crosse; to Kopper for his helpful comments on the manuscript; to Brett for helping with the maps; to the good folks at the various tourism offices and chambers of commerce for their generous help, especially Della at the Jackson County Welcome Center; to the knowledgeable editors at Riverwise Inc., who helped turn a vague idea into a tangible product; and, to John, for having the patience to allow me to spend weeks on the road, away from home, to indulge my passion for exploring the Mississippi River Valley.