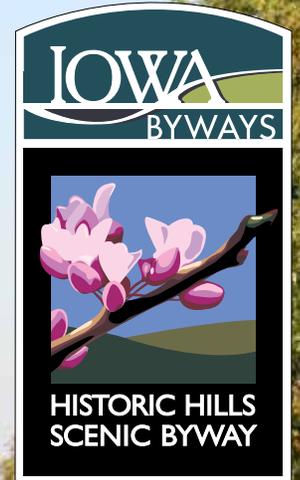


# HISTORIC HILLS

## SCENIC BYWAY

### INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN



**November 2017**

*Front cover: The byway route on J40 northwest of Keosauqua, overlooking the “Great Bend” of the Des Moines River.*

*Facing page: Lake Wapello State Park.*

# HISTORIC HILLS SCENIC BYWAY INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN

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Farms and agricultural remnants are part of the byway landscape.



The byway route follows a rolling landscape.

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*Byway signs feature the byway logo depicting Eastern redbud trees in bloom.*



Footbridge over the Des Moines River in Bentonsport.



The Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail, tracing the route of the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, intertwines with the Historic Hills Scenic Byway.

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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION



Byway route on J40 just  
outside of Bentonsport.



The Villages of Van Buren promote the historic ambiance of county communities.

## INTRODUCTION

Touring Historic Hills Scenic Byway, a 112-mile route in the southeastern corner of the state, is a journey back into old Iowa. Each town reveals tangible connections to the past preserved by dedicated local historical groups. The absence of stoplights and fast-food restaurants enhances the historic character.

### Old River Towns

The road crisscrosses the lower Des Moines River that flows past six Villages of Van Buren communities. Each town

has a historic riverfront featuring antebellum mills, potteries, schools, depots, churches, and even the oldest courthouse in Iowa still in use.

### Iowaville Cemetery

Upstream from the byway, the Iowaville Cemetery overlooks the Des Moines River valley. A memorial to Black Hawk is a reminder of the clash of cultures that led to Iowa's statehood and the flood of settlers moving upriver. The vista from the site is a perfect place to imagine the 10,000-year sweep of human cultures in the valley. Prior to European settlement, a large village of Ioway Indians grew corn, beans, and squash in the fertile soils.

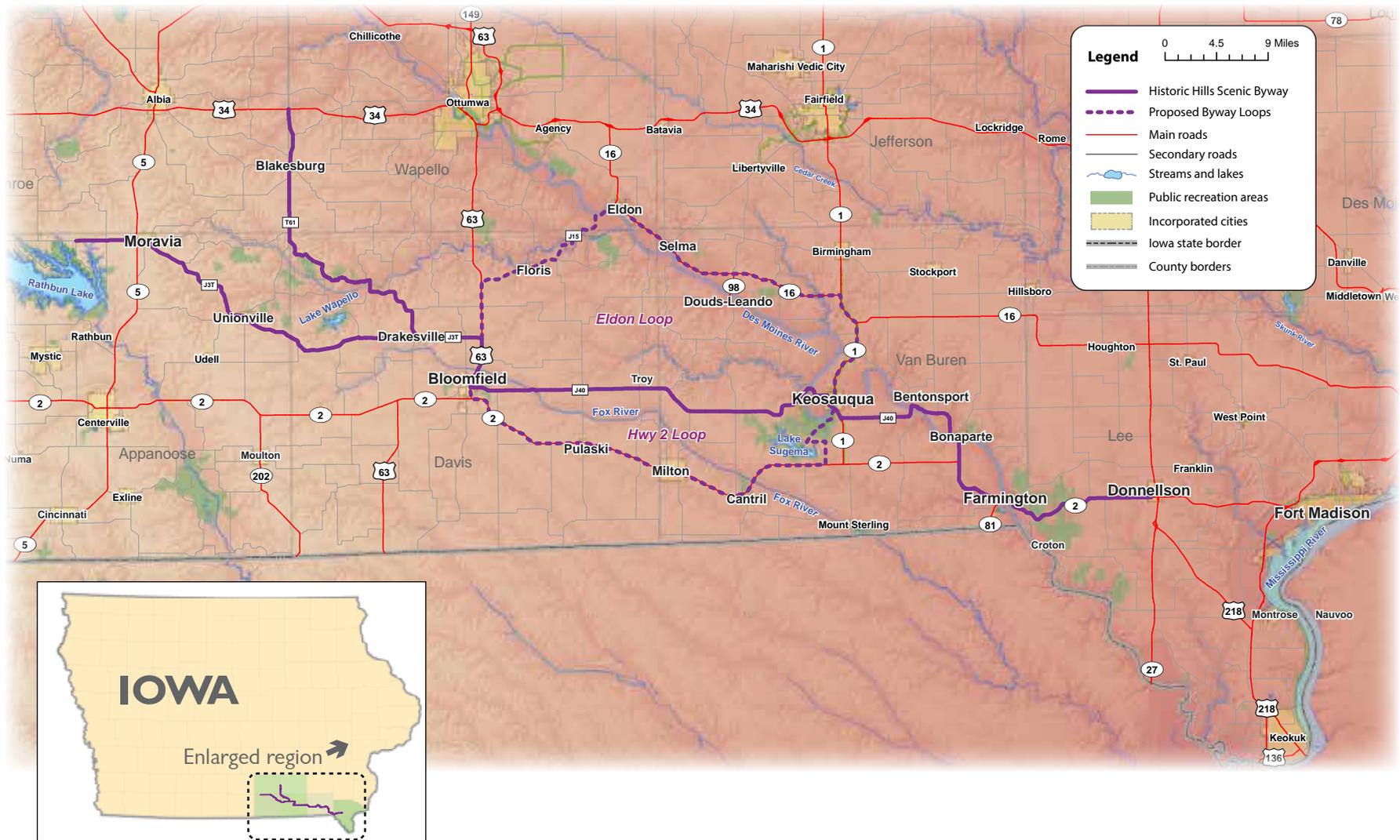
### Mormon Trail

Turning west from the river, the byway parallels and crosses the Mormon Trail from Nauvoo, Illinois. Byway travelers encounter numerous landmarks that illuminate the compelling stories of their exodus through southeastern Iowa. The most poignant is the Richardson's Point grave of Edwin Little and 15-month old James Tanner. They were the first of almost 6,000 deaths on the trek to Salt Lake City.

Iowaville Cemetery overlooks the site of a former Ioway village on the Des Moines River. Chief Black Hawk lived here after the Black Hawk War and died in 1838. The brow of the cemetery hill has a Black Hawk Memorial where some people claim his bones lie buried.



# HISTORIC HILLS SCENIC BYWAY MAP





*Cars and buggies share the road in Amish country.*

## Old Order Amish

From Bloomfield the byway traverses Amish country to the west. Davis County, with over 300 families, has one of the largest Amish populations in Iowa. Horse-drawn buggies are a common sight. Several businesses feature handmade Amish furniture, quilts, crafts, produce, and cheese.

## Nature and Recreation

Nature lovers have abundant opportunities to get out of their car and explore. Three state parks, two state forests, and the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail invite hikers, bikers, boaters, paddlers, and horseback riders. The Shimek and Lake Sugema-Lacey Keosauqua Bird Conservation Areas are favorite sites for birdwatchers.



*Lake Wapello State Park features a public beach and a boathouse constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression.*

# ESTABLISHING THE BYWAY

The Iowa Byways program began in 1993 when the Iowa Department of Transportation designated four routes as Iowa Scenic Byways to encourage tourism. Six additional state byways were added later. The byways are:

- **Historic Hills (previously named Woodlands), 1993**
- Grant Wood, 1993
- River Bluffs, 1993; additional segments, 2000
- Western Skies, 1993
- Iowa Valley, 1998
- Loess Hills, 1998 (designated a National Scenic Byway, 2000)
- Driftless Area, 2000
- Glacial Trail, 2000
- Delaware Crossing, 2002
- Lincoln Highway, 2006 (designated as an Iowa Heritage Byway)

Initially, uniform Iowa Scenic Byway signs were placed along these routes.

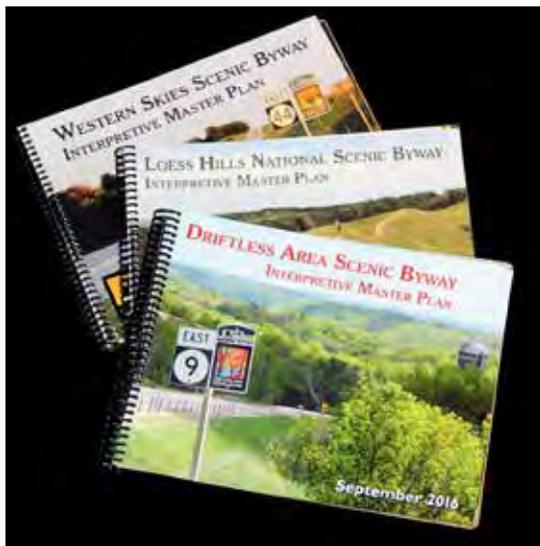
However, the byways lacked local support and promotion. There was little or no information provided to tourists about what to see and do.

The Iowa Byways Sustainability Project (IBSP) began in 2008 as a response to this need. The IBSP is a collaborative effort between the Iowa Department of Transportation and Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D) across Iowa to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote Iowa's scenic byways. Pathfinders RC&D serves as the lead entity for Historic Hills Scenic Byway. In the intervening years, much has been accomplished in this mission to interpret and promote the byways.

Three additional byways were designated in 2016: Bridges Byway in Madison County, Jefferson Highway Heritage Byway, and White Pole Road Byway.



*These Iowa Scenic Byway signs marked the byways from 1993 to 2011.*



The Historic Hills Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan is part of a series of 10 master plan publications for the Iowa Byways.

## SCOPE OF WORK

In January 2012, Golden Hills RC&D, based in Oakland, Iowa, was awarded a Transportation Enhancement Grant through the Iowa Department of Transportation to complete interpretive master plans for ten Iowa byways. Additional funds were awarded for the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway plan and the Western Skies Scenic Byway plan through the Iowa West Foundation.

A request for proposals was issued in early 2013, seeking interest from firms to provide professional services to develop long-range interpretive master plans for Iowa's byways. Four firms were interviewed in August 2013. In February 2014, a professional services agreement for the ten interpretive master plans was entered into between Golden Hills RC&D and Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters agreed to develop one interpretive master plan for each of the following scenic and historic Iowa Byways: Delaware Crossing, Driftless Area, Glacial Trail, Grant Wood, Historic Hills, Iowa Valley, Lincoln Highway, Loess Hills, River Bluffs, and Western Skies.

The work is divided into three phases, with Loess Hills and Western Skies completed in the first phase. Phase one interpretive master plans were delivered in 2015. Phase two included interpretive master plans for Driftless Area, River Bluffs, Grant Wood, Delaware Crossing, and Iowa Valley scenic byways. These plans were delivered in 2016 and 2017. Phase three includes Historic Hills and Glacial Trail scenic byways, and Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway, to be delivered in 2017.

Each interpretive master plan is based on the following tasks:

- Task 1: Inventory and Analysis of Byway Resources
- Task 2: Stakeholder Coordination and Public Input Process
- Task 3: Development of Interpretive Themes and Conceptual Interpretive Plan
- Task 4: Finalize Interpretive Plans with Recommendations and Design of Interpretive Elements
- Task 5: Reporting

# THE PLANNING PROCESS

**Interpretation** is defined as a communication process that guides visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes. We adhere to the philosophy that interpretive planning is a process of consensus development—of achieving a shared perspective by all stakeholders of why interpretation is needed, who it will serve, and what significant stories it will tell. Effective planning answers the following questions, which can be illustrated by the Planning Triangle:

## Who?

Determine who the byway visitors are and the experiences that they are seeking. This includes activities and visitor groups that are not currently being targeted.

**Chapter 3:** Byway Travelers

## Why?

Confirm and/or further define the purpose, vision, and goals of developing a master plan for the Historic Hills Scenic Byway.

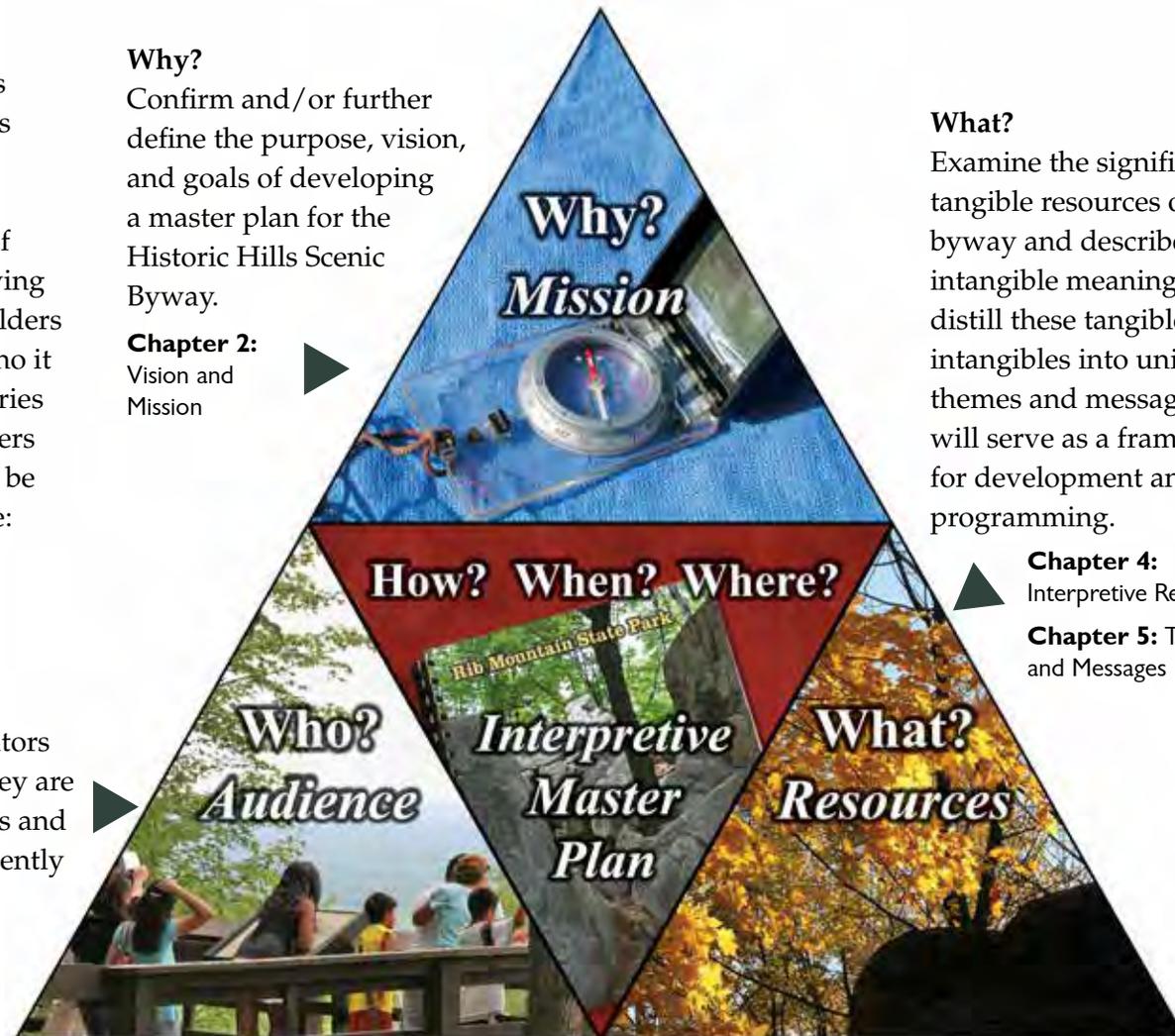
**Chapter 2:** Vision and Mission

## What?

Examine the significant tangible resources of the byway and describe their intangible meanings. Then, distill these tangibles and intangibles into unifying themes and messages that will serve as a framework for development and programming.

**Chapter 4:** Interpretive Resources

**Chapter 5:** Themes and Messages



## Where? When? How?

Based on the why, who, and what, develop a plan for interpretive facilities, media, and programs that best facilitate visitor-resource connections within the parameters of the mission and vision of the Historic Hills Scenic Byway.

**Chapter 6:** Interpretive Media



Richardson's Point near Milton was a campsite and grave site for the first deaths on the Mormon Trail.

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# CHAPTER 2

# VISION AND MISSION

BENTONSPORT

*A former traffic bridge now serves as a footbridge across the Des Moines River at Bentonport.*

## VISION, MISSION, AND GOALS

A strong vision and mission statement supported by established values and goals is necessary to guide the future planning, management, and implementation efforts for the interpretation of the Historic Hills Scenic Byway.

The *Historic Hills Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan*, published in September 2016, included vision and mission statements. As part of the process for developing the Interpretive Master Plan, Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters held a visioning meeting in July 2016 where byway board members could share additional insight into the vision and mission (see Appendix, page 161). The following vision, mission, and goals include input from both of these sources.

### Vision

A vision statement answers two fundamental questions:

1. What are the values or beliefs about the significance of this place that inform your work? Why should people visit?
2. What do you ultimately hope to accomplish through your efforts?



One of the byway entrances is just north of Blakesburg, where Highway 34 intersects with County T61.

## Vision Statement

Historic Hills Scenic Byway attracts visitors from across Iowa and neighboring states to experience small-town charm, outdoor recreation, fascinating history, cultural diversity, and natural beauty.

Our thriving communities welcome visitors to unique shops, diverse dining, and a variety of overnight accommodations. Opportunities to enjoy the arts abound. History comes alive through a variety of interpretive media. Well-maintained roads, excellent signage, and convenient scenic pull-offs lead travelers on a safe journey through the corridor.

Sustainable funding provides a byway coordinator who works with byway stakeholders, directs marketing efforts, plans events, and promotes group travel in the corridor communities.

Through the collective efforts of Pathfinders Resource Conservation and Development and stakeholders in the byway corridor in implementing this interpretive master plan, byway visitors will have meaningful, rewarding experiences that lead to increased visitation at byway attractions and economic development for byway communities.



*Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters hosted a Historic Hills Byway Visioning Meeting in July 2016.*

## Mission

The mission statement answers two questions:

1. **How do you plan to work toward this broad vision?**
2. **For whose specific benefit does the organization exist?**

## Mission Statement

To share with and interpret for visitors the scenic, historical, natural, cultural, and recreational resources along Historic Hills Scenic Byway, while balancing the preservation of these treasures with the economic development of the byway corridor.



*The Mormon National Historic Trail parallels the byway. The National Park Service has developed wayside exhibits at several landmarks along the byway, such as this one at the Moravia Historical Complex. These panels connect visitors to the hardships of the Mormon exodus through southeastern Iowa.*

## Interpretive Goals and Actions

Goals support the vision and mission. They are ambitious, broad statements of desired conditions. The goals are meant to be translated into actions (programs and projects) that the byway organization, partners, and supporters will strive to implement.

To understand the interpretive vision of the Historic Hills Scenic Byway, Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters conducted an Interpretive Master Plan Visioning Meeting in July 2016 at the Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative in Bloomfield. Thirteen byway board members and stakeholders from throughout the byway attended. The meeting results are included in the Appendix, Page 161.

One of the questions asked of the participants was: **“What is your vision of success for improving the visitor experience on your scenic byway?”**

Responses to this question have been grouped into interpretive goals with actions to achieve each goal:

### Interpretive Goal 1

**Develop effective interpretive media that guides visitors in their search for meaningful experiences along the byway.**

#### Responses related to Goal 1:

- More interpretation should be offered for visitors without sites being staffed. Many sites don't have volunteer resources to be open regular hours, so there should be more outdoor interpretation for visitors to access.
- Visitors should leave the byway with all of the information they need but also with a desire to return for more.
- A continuity of markers and messaging and of the visual identity should exist throughout the route.
- A brochure that includes a map of the byway should be handed out at the museums.

### Goal 1 Actions:

- Secure grants and other sources of funding to implement this interpretive master plan.
- Develop interpretive and educational opportunities for residents and visitors through theme-consistent audio tours, interpretive panels, wayside exhibits, art, information hubs, mobile/digital media, exhibits, audio-visual programs, and publications.

### Interpretive Goal 2

Offer programs that engage visitors in learning the stories of the byway.

### Responses related to Goal 2:

- Museums could provide more programs that tell about local history.
- Van tours should be offered.
- More interactives should be developed along the byway to provide interest when attractions aren't open. For example, develop games that children would have played at school and agricultural interactive attractions such as barns and hay bales.

- Develop more participation of volunteers and visitors.
- Coordinate "Our Iowa" tours, reaching out to broader tours.
- Explore the potential for joint projects such as a golf course tour or other tours based on themes.

### Goal 2 Actions:

- Promote, encourage, and develop conducted tours of the byway led by knowledgeable guides. Develop a training manual or handbook for tour guides that captures the themes and compelling stories of the byway.
- Promote and encourage the development of programs and events at museums and other attractions.



*Mars Hill log church, built in 1850, is remote and difficult to find but well worth visiting. Periodic programs led by a knowledgeable parishioner would greatly enhance the experience.*



Byway visitors can ask questions, purchase gifts, and pick up free publications at the Davis County Welcome Center in Bloomfield.

### Interpretive Goal 3

Improve visitor services and the byway “streetscape.”

#### Responses related to Goal 3:

- Staff should welcome visitors, be friendly and positive, and let visitors know about the whole byway and its attractions.
- Attractions and businesses should provide more regular hours, especially during tourism season from May to October. Many businesses are closed on Mondays but it is still a big travel day.
  - More volunteers are needed to provide more open hours at museums.
  - Offer front-line hospitality training for not only visitor attractions but also gas stations.



Byway art, such as this whimsical display in Unionville, adds interest for travelers. Art also can reinforce byway interpretive themes.

- Develop better signage for attractions, to help visitors navigate from the byway to the attractions.
- Repair dilapidated buildings and properties along the byway and Main Streets.

#### Goal 3 Actions:

- Provide hospitality incentives, training, and resources for byway businesses to provide visitors with information about what the byway has to offer.
- Implement recommendations included in the Corridor Management Plan, such as Intrusion Minimization, page 75; and Outdoor Advertising, page 77.
- Promote through-the-windshield art along the byway such as murals and sculptures that reinforce byway themes and messages.

## Interpretive Goal 4

Develop marketing strategies to promote the byway and its attractions.

### Responses related to Goal 4:

- Promote return visits so visitors come back.
- Visitors should leave the byway with all of the information they need but also with a desire to return for more.
- Encourage visitors to stop and look at things while they are here and to visit the museums.
- Provide more and multiple marketing tools so that people can find things of their particular interest. Develop marketing tools that target certain opportunities.
- Improve promotion of each other's communities and attractions.
- Promote DNR natural resources opportunities: state parks and state forests, to appeal to families and younger people seeking recreational opportunities.
- Cross-market antique stores

### Goal 4 Actions:

- Brand the byway website to be unified with other media such as brochures, booklets, and interpretive panels to reinforce the byway identity among travelers.
- Use social media to market the byway attractions, events, and amenities.
- Develop an official byway guide that provides a thematically organized comprehensive overview of byway attractions.



*Milton Creamery, a cooperative operated by a Mennonite family, is a popular tourist stop. It is an ideal location to market other Mennonite and Amish attractions.*



# CHAPTER 3

## BYWAY TRAVELERS

*Visitors can dress up to re-create the iconic "American Gothic" painting at the American Gothic House Center in Eldon.*



*Bonaparte Pottery tours engage visitors in exploring a 19th century pottery.*



*Dutchman's Store in Cantril, operated by a Mennonite family, is an old-fashioned general store featuring locally made and bulk products. The store is popular with visitors whose main interest is browsing the quaint shops of the Villages of Van Buren.*

## BYWAY TRAVELERS

Visitors to the five counties that encompass the byway come with diverse interests. They may be Latter-day Saints following the Mormon Pioneer Trail. Some are recreationists enjoying the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail, Shimek State Forest, or Lacey-Keosauqua, Lake Wapello, or Honey Creek state parks. Others seek a memorable experience to another time in the historic Villages of Van Buren or by shopping in Amish stores. Some come for an encounter with Grant Wood at the iconic American Gothic House in Eldon.

This chapter reports what our team has learned about byway visitors and provides recommendations for marketing the byway experience. The goal is to enhance the visitor experience and increase visitation that will lead to economic development throughout the byway.

### Visitor Demographics and Interests

What we know about visitors to the Historic Hills Scenic Byway is based on some statistical data, but is primarily anecdotal. Some statistics

were provided by the Iowa Welcome Centers and studies from the Iowa Economic Development Authority and the Department of Economics, Iowa State University Extension. The Villages of Van Buren reported useful statistics on their marketing effectiveness and Constant Contact survey results for 2016. Interviews with Davis County Welcome Center volunteers and with Stacey Reese, executive director of the Villages of Van Buren, and Sarah Camp, administrator of the American Gothic House Center, provided insights into their visitors' interests.

#### Visitor Profile Data

- Iowa Welcome Center surveys report that the primary interests of Iowa visitors are historical experiences (57%), scenic byways (53%), and recreation and parks (42%).
- Visitors are primarily older. The average age at Iowa Welcome Centers is 57. The average age of Villages of Van Buren visitors is 56.5.
- The average travel party size at Iowa Welcome Centers is 2.5, whereas it is 3.2 at the Villages of Van Buren.

- The average stay in Iowa for visitors at Iowa Welcome Centers is 3.6 nights; in the Villages of Van Buren it is 3.5 nights.
- Visitors to the Villages of Van Buren spent an average of \$194 for their total trip. This data includes day trips.
- 82,050 people visited the Villages of Van Buren website. Of that, 59,872 were new, first-time visitors, which was up 29% from 2015.
- In 2016, the Van Buren County Welcome Center hosted 659 visitors. The Davis County Welcome Center hosted 3,333 visitors. The American Gothic House Center logged 17,101 visitors.
- 2,451 copies of the Villages of Van Buren guide were mailed, and 2,253 were downloaded online.
- The primary target market for the Villages of Van Buren is a 150-mile radius that includes Des Moines, the Quad Cities, and even extends to St. Louis (200 miles).

### Interview Insights

Volunteers at the **Davis County Welcome Center** reported that the Amish community is the “biggest draw” in the area. Tour groups focus on

Amish businesses. A full-color map and directory lists 94 Amish businesses in the county. The volunteer staff answers questions on where to go, what to see, and how to get to places. They promote Lake Wapello as the most scenic area of the county, and the Historical Complex in Bloomfield as the county’s best tourist attraction. In 2016, the center hosted 3,333 visitors. The Welcome Center did not collect demographic information about these visitors.

**Villages of Van Buren** Executive Director Stacey Reese portrays their visitors as “coming here to get away, to kick back and enjoy a slower pace of life. They want to step back in time in a place where there is no fast food and no stop lights.” There are events almost every weekend. The serenity of nature in the parks and forests is another facet of this experience. Reese describes the Historic Hills Scenic Byway as “another tool—another thing to offer. The byway brings people to us. They want something to do. ‘Let’s take the backroads.’ ”



*Davis County Welcome Center, Bloomfield*

Courtesy of American Gothic House Center



Large groups of schoolchildren visit the American Gothic House Center in Eldon each spring.

Courtesy of American Gothic House Center



An Ottumwa artist painted this “Overalls All Over” statue for the American Gothic House Center.

The **American Gothic House Center** is a unique attraction that captures a diverse audience, including international visitors. Administrator Sarah Camp stated that people from 80 different countries have visited. The *American Gothic* painting, owned by the Art Institute of Chicago, was on tour in late 2016 and early 2017 at the Louvre Museum in Paris followed by an exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. This has generated interest for Europeans to experience the site. Camp indicated that a significant number of U.S. college students with an interest in art also visit the center.

Peak visitation at the center is in June, July, and August. Many travelers to Des Moines or St. Louis respond to the signs on Highways 16 and 34. Local residents bring out-of-town visitors. There is also a trend of people who

are visiting all 50 states. Their motivation is to post photos of themselves on social media at iconic places in each state. In Iowa, these includes the Bridges of Madison County, Field of Dreams, and the American Gothic House Center.

A large ad campaign in Chicago has resulted in an increase in visitation from the Windy City. The “Overalls All Over” public art project is an annual event sponsored by Go Cedar Rapids with an aim to bring visitors to eastern Iowa. In 2016, the project marked the 125th birthday of Grant Wood with 24 life-size fiberglass statues of the *American Gothic* figures that were painted and displayed throughout the region. The American Gothic House Center was a participant, which brought visitors to the center.

In April and May the center is booked “almost solid” with school groups. Most are elementary classes with typically 100 students. The class is divided into three groups for their hour and a half visit to view the film, tour the exhibition, and get their photo snapped at the American Gothic House. Small groups of secondary students visit, especially from surrounding states where art education was cut from the curriculum. Their focus is on the style of painting and technical terms.

## Marketing the Byway

Survey data portrays the typical Historic Hills Scenic Byway traveler as older, affluent, and educated. This visitor group has a high level of interest in Iowa scenic byways in general, historic attractions, outdoor recreation opportunities, and festivals and events offered on the byway. Historic Hills Scenic Byway offers much of what this demographic is seeking.

During the Historic Hills Visioning Meeting, participants were asked, “What unique audiences visit the Historic Hills Scenic Byway? What audiences should be targeted to visit the byway?” (Appendix, Page 161). Marketing efforts tailored to each of the groups listed would promote awareness of the byway opportunities that meet their interests.

Marketing approaches for Historic Hills Scenic Byway should focus on satisfying travelers’ needs. The existing tear sheet byway map includes a list of attractions but is limited in detail. Well-crafted travel guide booklets, touch-screen exhibits at visitor centers, kiosks, and website and Facebook connections are better suited to provide the detailed information travelers need to decide where and how they will spend their leisure time. Villages of Van Buren Executive Director



*An old pump at the Douds-Leando White School No. 5 invites participation. An interpretive panel, with stories of the children and teachers who attended this school, would connect them to this artifact.*

Stacey Reese stated the importance of social media in marketing the byway: “Visitors post their experiences on Facebook or Instagram, and boom, it is shared with several hundred friends.”

Travel Iowa, the official tourism website for the state of Iowa, is key to promoting the byway in the region and could easily include a downloadable copy of a printed guide.

Families with children make up a smaller audience segment that will require special marketing efforts to identify and promote family-oriented byway excursions. This initiative might include a focus on pursuits such as fishing, camping, hiking, and canoeing. Chapter 6: Interpretive Media provides other recommendations for meeting the interests of children.

Extracting commodities



Making goods



Delivering services



Staging experiences

## Staging Experiences

In their book *The Experience Economy*, B. Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore argue that in the “progression of economic value,” the American economy has progressed as follows:

As an example, they describe the four-stage evolution of the birthday cake:

“In an agrarian economy, mothers made birthday cakes from scratch, mixing farm commodities (flour, sugar, butter, and eggs) that together cost mere dimes. As the goods-based industrial economy advanced, moms paid a dollar or two to Betty Crocker for

premixed ingredients. Later, when the service economy took hold, busy parents ordered cakes from the bakery or grocery store, which, at \$10 or \$15, cost ten times as much as the packaged ingredients. Now, in the time-starved new millennium, parents neither make the birthday cake nor even throw the party. Instead, they spend \$100 or more to “outsource” the entire event to Chuck E. Cheese’s, the Discovery Zone, the Mining Company, or some other business that stages a memorable event for the kids, and often throw in the cake for free.

The implications of this economic progression are clear for Historic Hills travelers: if planners stage themed immersion experiences, the road will grow as a popular tourist getaway.

It is important to distinguish between experiences and services. As Pine and Gilmore point out, “Experiences are a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods.” The idea is to intentionally use services as a stage, goods as props, to engage tourists in a way that creates a memorable event. Goods are tangible, services intangible, and experiences memorable. Goods and services are external to the tourist. Experiences are inherently personal, existing only in the mind of a visitor who has been engaged



A trail in Shimek State Forest immerses hikers in the beauty of southeastern Iowa.

on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level.

### **Pine and Gilmore's Nine Keys to Staging Experiences and Applications to the Historic Hills Scenic Byway**

Pine and Gilmore offer nine keys to staging experiences. A concerted effort to apply these keys to the Historic Hills Scenic Byway will result in increased visitor satisfaction, return visits, and word-of-mouth marketing of the byway experience.

1. **Create a rich portfolio of experiences—create a series of related experiences that flow one from another.**

The Mormon Pioneer Trail that parallels the byway is a model for this key. The National Park Service and Iowa Mormon Trails Association have published guides to the marked auto route. Wayside exhibits interpret the tangible features and the intangible meanings associated with the exodus to Salt Lake City.

The development of a comprehensive guide to byway attractions as well as interpretive panels and online media will provide this “rich portfolio of experiences.”



*Mormon craftsmen built this log cabin before continuing their trek on the Mormon Trail. The cabin is displayed at the Davis County Historical Complex in Bloomfield.*

2. **Use experience hubs in locations where people naturally congregate.**  
Place experience hub kiosks at strategic locations and attractions on the byway that motorists frequent. Ideally, experience hubs should be placed in the major communities of Keosauqua and Bloomfield as well as at byway entry points.
3. **Create a flagship location—a singular place where you stage the very best, most dynamic experience.**  
The county seats of Keosauqua and Bloomfield, each with visitor centers, are logical key communities to develop as flagship locations.

4. **Integrate physical and virtual experiences.**

Develop a website as an interactive venue for holistically exploring the byway and its experiences. The website design should be responsive to mobile devices so visitors can get information while on the road. Develop mobile apps and other interactive multimedia/audio tours downloadable from the website.

5. **Theme the experience. The theme must drive all design elements and staged events of the experience toward a unified story line that wholly captivates the customer.**

This plan provides themes and sub-themes with their associated messages that guide the development of all interpretive media. It is essential that all of the one-room schools, depots, churches, and other preserved structures become part of the byway's story and not just empty old buildings.

6. **Harmonize impressions with positive cues—render the experience with indelible impressions. Impressions are the “takeaways” of the experience.**

The Historic Hills experience offers many indelible impressions. The historic ambiance of the Villages of Van Buren are harmonized by the absence of stoplights and fast-food establishments. Local historic associations have preserved much of their 19th century architecture. Amish farms exhibit a 19th century appearance with traditional dress and horse-drawn implements and buggies. Interpretation that tells the stories behind these tangible features will provide the “takeaways” of these experiences.

7. **Eliminate negative cues. Ensure the integrity of the customer experience by eliminating anything that diminishes, contradicts, or distracts from the theme.**

The Corridor Management Plan offers several recommendations for maintaining the integrity of the byway “streetscape.”



*Historic buildings, such as the Douds-Leando Valley School No. 3, require theme-based interpretation to bring them to life.*

8. **Mix in memorabilia and photo opportunities.** Certain goods have always been purchased primarily for the memories they convey—a physical reminder of the experience.

With almost everyone connected through social media, photo opportunities are an essential part of the experience. For example, the Moravia Historical Complex has a giant Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox. The American Gothic House Center in Eldon provides costumes for visitors to mimic the *American Gothic* painting, even indicating where to stand in front of the house for the classic pose. The Davis County Welcome Center has a life-size horse statue and buggy. Additional photo opportunities should be developed.

Historic Hills has many opportunities for buying memorabilia. A variety of outlets sell Amish crafts, jams, and cheese. Historic Bonaparte Pottery sells pottery made in the original 1875 molds. *American Gothic* reproductions are available on shirts, refrigerator magnets, and other souvenirs. The Villages of Van Buren have many gift and crafts shops.



An Amish-style horse and buggy statue draws attention to the Davis County Welcome Center in Bloomfield.

9. **Engage the five senses.**

Historic Hills Scenic Byway is much more than a through-the-windshield experience. The many parks and the Lower Des Moines River engage visitors in outdoor recreation. Byway travelers explore indoor and outdoor museums, stroll through river town historic districts, and participate in festivals, events, and workshops. To be effective, interpretive media should promote active participation.



The Moravia Historical Complex provides a cutout of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox as a photo opportunity.



A view of Lake Wapello from the stone boat and bathhouse.

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- ▶ Villages of Van Buren 2016 Visitor Data: 2015 vs. 2016 Marketing Effectiveness; Constant Contact survey results.

### Personal Communication (email or phone):

- ▶ Davis County Welcome Center
- ▶ Villages of Van Buren Executive Director Stacey Reese

# CHAPTER 4

# INTERPRETIVE RESOURCES

*Indian Lake Park in Farmington.*

# INTERPRETIVE RESOURCES

This inventory of interpretive resources documents natural and cultural attractions along Historic Hills Scenic Byway. It serves as the foundation for the interpretive themes and messages in Chapter 5 that connect tangible resources with their intangible meanings. The themes and messages are incorporated into interpretive media (Chapter 6) that engage visitors in meaningful experiences along the byway.

The planning team invited input during a visioning session in July 2016 in Bloomfield. Session results are included in the Appendix (page 161). The group was asked to respond to these questions:

- What are the important attractions along the Historic Hills Scenic Byway that visitors should experience? Describe their significance.
- What compelling stories and messages make this byway unique?

The planning team used these visioning session results and other publications and documents to guide exploration of the byway and to experience each resource systematically. The team interviewed staff from various attractions to gain further insight into the resources.

## Resource Categories

The U.S. Department of Transportation Scenic Byways Program identifies six intrinsic qualities that define a scenic byway. This plan lists each core interpretive resource in these categories, combining Scenic and Natural, and Historic and Archaeological. Intrinsic quality categories are:

### Scenic and Natural

Resources related to geology, nature, or overlooks with scenic views.

### Historic and Archaeological

Resources with artifacts or other tangible evidence of prehistoric or historic people and events.

### Cultural

Resources that provide insight into Historic Hills' culture and sense of place.

### Recreational

Resources for camping, picnicking, hiking, fishing, or paddling.

## Byway Regions

This plan organizes the byway resources into two regions. A separate full-page map for each region lists each attraction or resource and identifies its location on the map.

The **Eastern Region** encompasses the eastern half of the byway, including Donnellson, Franklin, Farmington, Bonaparte, Bentonsport, and Keosauqua.

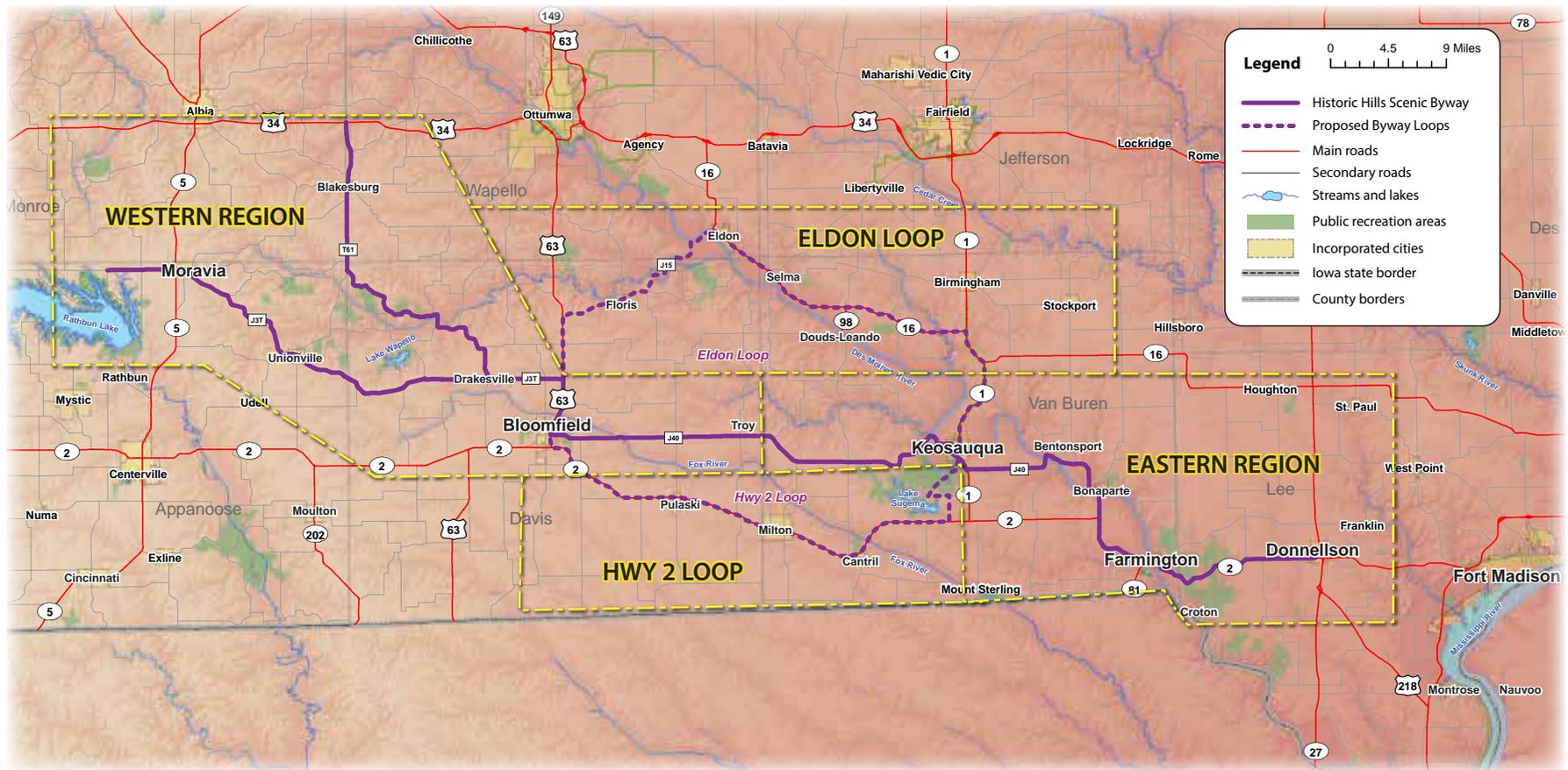
The **Western Region** includes the western half of the route, starting in Troy and heading west to Bloomfield, Drakesville, Unionville, Blakesburg, Moravia, and ending at Honey Creek Resort State Park.

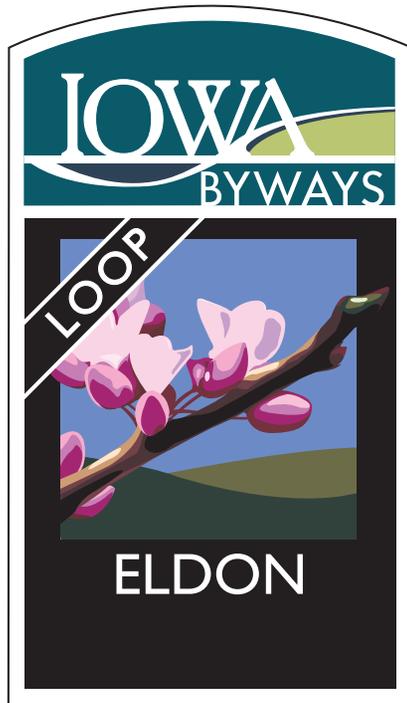
## Byway Loops

Two proposed loops would greatly improve organization and wayfinding on the byway. The byway currently requires travelers to make several dead-end excursions off the designated route.

The loops would not add communities or additional resources that are not already promoted on byway publications such as the tear sheet. They are simply a way to improve accessibility and organization of byway resources.

# HISTORIC HILLS SCENIC BYWAY REGIONS MAP





A separate map for each loop will be provided, showing the location of interpretive resources.

The **Highway 2 Loop** from Keosauqua to Bloomfield includes Cantril, Milton, and Pulaski.

The **Eldon Loop** from Bloomfield to Eldon to Keosauqua passes through Floris, Eldon, and along the Lower Des Moines River. A short side trip to Birmingham and Stockport is optional.

The Iowa Byways Signage Policy (Iowa DOT, September, 2015, page 21) provides signage designs for designated byway loop roads. The policy guidelines (page 11) provide specifications for loop designation (see sidebar below).

### Loop Indicators from Iowa Byways Signage Policy

Some Iowa Byways have officially designated secondary routes known as “Loops.” For byway routes that are designated as Loops, a Loop Indicator graphic shall be included in the Byway Guide sign.

The Loop Indicator graphic is a diagonal band containing the word “LOOP” placed in the upper left corner of the byway graphic identity. Typeface for the loop name shall be Gills Sans set in all caps and printed white on the black background.

If an Iowa Byway Loop has a name approved by the Iowa Byways Program Coordinator, the loop name may be printed on the Byway Guide sign in lieu of the designated byway name.

### Trails

This chapter also lists resources that are specific to two trails that intersect the byway. These linear corridors are independent yet interconnected with the Historic Hills Scenic Byway. Each has natural and cultural resources unique to the interests of its users. The resources of these corridors are treated separately from the resources of each of the byway communities. However, those that are within a community will be cross-referenced as byway resources using the Iowa Mormon Pioneer Trail logo and Iowa Water Trails logo. Separate maps are provided for these corridors.

#### Lower Des Moines River Water Trail

These resources are directly related to the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail.

#### Mormon Trail

These resources are directly connected to the Mormon Trail in southeast Iowa and the story of the westward migration from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Salt Lake City, Utah.

# EASTERN REGION

Starting just west of the Mississippi River, the Historic Hills Scenic Byway begins in Donnellson, a prime agricultural area that includes Harvestville Farm and Appleberry Orchard. Donnellson hosts the Lee County Fair, which was first held in 1841, making it the oldest county fair in Iowa.

The byway follows Highway 2 through the Shimek State Forest to Farmington, the oldest town in Van Buren County, and continues to the historic steamboat port towns of Bonaparte, Bentonsport and Keosauqua, the anchor community of the Villages of Van Buren and the eastern byway region.

## Donnellson

Located in the heart of Lee County, Donnellson takes its name from the Donnell families who arrived in 1839. Served early on by a railroad, the agricultural community thrived. It is home to the Lee County Fair, Iowa's oldest fair dating from 1841.

### 1 Appleberry Orchard

Appleberry Orchard is the oldest working orchard in Iowa, with its first



trees planted in 1852. Original farmstead buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Appleberry features a farm market, a children's play area, a petting zoo, and offers tours for youth groups.

### 2 Wilson Lake Park

This 116-acre Lee County park east of Donnellson offers camping (including cabins), hiking, and boat-ramp access to the 6-acre lake.



### 3 Harvestville Farm

This fifth-generation farm has seasonal activities, including a pick-your-own pumpkin patch, a play area, a corn maze, and horse-drawn wagon rides. Seasonal produce and products are offered for sale in the barn and in the Pitchfork Café.



### 4 Railroad Park and Museum

The railroad operated in Donnellson until 1969. The old depot houses a museum. A historic marker describes the history of Mennonites in the community. The park and other parks in Donnellson display charming sculptures of children.

## Franklin

This small town, established in 1840, is named for Benjamin Franklin. Franklin is known as “The City of Stones” for its stone and brick Federal architecture, which is rare in Iowa.



### 5 Christian Herschler Winery and Stagecoach Stop

This 1840s limestone home and stagecoach stop, restored to pre-Civil War condition for use as a winery, includes six murals that were uncovered and restored in the old home. The restored barn and smokehouse feature hand-hewn beams and a rare wooden hay track and trolley. Visitors can enjoy historic tours, wine tastings, and strolling through gardens.

*Bitternut Lake in Shimek State Forest.*



### 6 Shimek State Forest

Located in Lee and Van Buren counties, the forest encompasses more than 9,000 acres of mostly oak and hickory forest along the Lower Des Moines River. During the Great Depression, naturalist and University of Iowa professor Bohumil Shimek convinced the Iowa Legislature to buy abandoned farms and restore them to forestland. It is the largest contiguous forest in Iowa. The forest offers a range of recreation opportunities, including camping, hunting, fishing, equestrian trails, hiking trails, and winter sports.

## Farmington

Farmington—the oldest village in Van Buren County—was settled in 1833, one year after the Black Hawk War. The first county seat, it was a center for milling, manufacturing, and trading.



### 7 Sharon Presbyterian Church and Cemetery

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Sharon Cemetery was designed in the late 1800s by renowned Chicago landscape architect O.C. Simonds. It is the only example of his “Naturalistic School of Cemetery Design” in Iowa. It features curving driveways and walkways and an iron fence separating the property from the surrounding countryside. Sharon Presbyterian Church is 7.5 miles northeast of Farmington on County Road J40.

# EASTERN REGION MAP



- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>1</b> Appleberry Orchard                             | <b>11</b> Croton Civil War Memorial Park         | <b>21</b> Bentonsport Bridge                      | <b>31</b> Bentonsport Nature Trail                                    |
| <b>2</b> Wilson Lake Park                               | <b>12</b> Indian Lake Park                       | <b>22</b> Historic Presbyterian Church            | <b>32</b> Bentonsport Campground                                      |
| <b>3</b> Harvestville Farm                              | <b>13</b> Bonaparte Pottery                      | <b>23</b> Greef General Store                     | <b>33</b> Vernon School   |
| <b>4</b> Railroad Park and Museum                       | <b>14</b> Bonaparte Historic Riverfront District | <b>24</b> The Stone House                         | <b>34</b> Riverfront Trail and Park                                   |
| <b>5</b> Christian Herschler Winery and Stagecoach Stop | <b>15</b> Riverfront Park                        | <b>25</b> Mason House Inn                         | <b>35</b> Van Buren County Welcome Center and McCoy Historical Museum |
| <b>6</b> Shimek State Forest                            | <b>16</b> Lock and Dam No. 5                     | <b>26</b> Hancock House                           | <b>36</b> Hotel Manning   |
| <b>7</b> Sharon Presbyterian Church and Cemetery        | <b>17</b> Aunty Green Hotel Museum               | <b>27</b> Herman Greef House                      | <b>37</b> Twombly Museum  |
| <b>8</b> Hel-Mart                                       | <b>18</b> Lindsay Wilderness Area                | <b>28</b> Cowles House                            | <b>38</b> Van Buren County Courthouse and Memorial Park               |
| <b>9</b> Pioneer Museum                                 | <b>19</b> Bentonsport National Historic District | <b>29</b> Rose Garden                             | <b>39</b> Pearson House Museum Complex                                |
| <b>10</b> Farmington Park                               | <b>20</b> Indian Artifact Museum                 | <b>30</b> Odd Fellows Hall/Paddle, Pedal and More | <b>40</b> Richardson's Point  |



Hel-Mart

8

**Hel-Mart**  

Hel-Mart, located in the 19th century Sterling Woolen Mill, is owned by Roger and Carol Helling and contains a doll-house collection, rocking horse collection, and a “Train Room” with miniature trains.

9

**Pioneer Museum** 

Constructed in 1848, the First Congregational Church of Farmington was modeled after rural New England churches. It is the second oldest Congregational Church built west of the Mississippi River. It now houses historical artifacts and is home to the Pioneer Historical Society. It is open during special events, weekends, and by appointment.



Pioneer Museum



10

**Farmington Park**  

This is the southernmost of nine river access points on the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail.



11

**Croton Civil War Memorial Park** 

The Battle of Athens between Missouri and Iowa militia units occurred on August 5, 1861, across the Des Moines River from Iowa in Athens, Missouri. The Missouri Confederates fired cannonballs across the river before Union militia drove them off. It was the northernmost Civil War battle west of the Mississippi and the only one on Iowa soil. Croton Civil War Park is 3 miles south of Farmington along the Des Moines River. A monument marks the battle, but the cannon and cannonballs are not authentic to the period.



## 12 Indian Lake Park

This 177-acre city-owned park features cabins, camping, fishing, and picnicking. A 2-mile nature trail encircles the 44-acre lake. The park is noted for its beautiful stone lodge built in 1936 by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

## Bonaparte

William Meek and Dr. R.N. Cresap established Bonaparte in 1837, naming it Meek's Mill. Meek, an admirer of the emperor, renamed it Bonaparte in 1841. A sister town of Napoleon was planned across the river but never developed. A river mill complex, powered first by a wing dam and in 1846 by a stone lock and dam, created a booming community. Major floods and a fire caused the mills to shutter and the population declined. Recent restorations and businesses aimed at tourism have sparked a renewal for the historic town.



## 13 Bonaparte Pottery

Established in 1865 and operating until 1896, this is the only standing pottery manufacturing site remaining in Iowa. Nineteenth century settlers depended on stoneware for a variety of utilitarian uses. At the peak of stoneware production in the 1880s, 251 named potteries operated in 34 Iowa counties. Tours show the workings of a pottery mill. Reproduction pottery sales, made from original 1875 molds, finance the development of the historic site.



*Bonaparte Pottery owner Marilyn Thomas, who oversaw the redevelopment of the National Historic Site, shows a canning jar and pottery molds to a tour group.*



Meek's Flour Mill, built in 1878, replaced the first Meek's Mill building lost to fire.

its era of historic significance. Woolen, grist, and lumber mills powered by huge water wheels lined the river.

**15 Riverfront Park**  

This lovely setting on the Des Moines River features a butterfly garden, a refurbished band shell, restored mills, and a wayside exhibit interpreting the Mormon Trail River Crossing.

**14 Bonaparte Historic Riverfront District**   

Eighteen structures built between 1852 and 1909 are included in this nationally recognized historic district. Bonaparte's commercial development focused on riverboat traffic and waterpower during



Riverfront Park

**16 Lock and Dam No. 5**  

Lock and Dam No. 5, completed in 1852 as part of the Des Moines River Improvement Project, is one of three actually completed. Congress approved 28 lock and dams to make the river navigable to the Raccoon Forks at Des Moines. Floods, corruption from contractors, and competition from the

Keokuk and Des Moines River Railroad led the Iowa Legislature to end the project in 1858. Visitors to Riverfront Park can walk on the lock and imagine a time when steamboats docked there.



**17 Aunty Green Hotel Museum** 

Bonaparte's museum is a national historic site. English immigrants John and Mary Green built this brick home in 1844. They converted it into a hotel when the railroad came to town in the 1850s.

**18 Lindsay Wilderness Area** 

This 220-acre recreational wildlife area on the northeast edge of Bonaparte features two 1-mile loop trails and two ponds stocked with fish.

## Bentonsport

Bentonsport, platted in 1839 and named for Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, became a thriving mill town and steamboat port. It supported a population of about 1,000 before floods, fire, and railroads led to the closing of the mills and the town's decline. Bentonsport was declared a National Historic District in 1972 as "one of the few unchanged villages in America." Restored to their 1840s appearance, the shops, homes, and riverfront offer a sense of life 150 years ago.

### 19 Bentonsport National Historic District



A self-guided tour includes 34 historic and natural attractions in Bentonsport and across the bridge in Vernon. Some key attractions are described below:

### 20 Indian Artifact Museum



Tony Sanders designed and built the museum to display artifacts he collected in the area. Sanders' handcrafted paneling and casements made of inlaid native wood display more than 4,000 Native American artifacts.



*Bentonsport Bridge*

### 21 Bentonsport Bridge



This 1882 wagon truss bridge connects Bentonsport to Vernon. It is the oldest truss-span bridge over the Des Moines River. It carried traffic until it was converted to pedestrian use in 1985.



*Indian Artifact Museum*



Historic Presbyterian Church

**22** Historic Presbyterian Church 

This Georgian-style church, dedicated in 1855, now hosts weddings and non-denominational services.

**23** Greef General Store  

Built in 1853, Greef was once the largest general store in the county. The general store and adjacent 1854 Ira Corns House and 1852 Bank of Bentonsport are preserved by the Van Buren County Conservation Board. The Greef store serves as an information center, museum, and consignment shop for local antiques and crafts. The Corns House and bank building now house antique and specialty shops.



Greef General Store, Ira Corns House (left), and Bank of Bentonsport (right).



The Stone House

**24** The Stone House 

Originally a two-story duplex built around 1846, the Stone House is known colloquially as the “Mormon House.” Stonemasons who constructed the Nauvoo Tabernacle are reputed to have built it. It serves as the Village Reception Hall.



*Mason House Inn*

**25** **Mason House Inn**  

Described as the “oldest steamboat hotel on the river,” the Mason House is a brick Colonial structure that was built in the 1840s. It was famous on the Des Moines River as a stopover for steamboat captains and railroad workers. The Mason House was one of many buildings constructed by Mormon craftsmen. They spent months in Bentonsport earning money for their trek to Utah. The bed and breakfast features original and period furnishings.

**26** **Hancock House**  

This 1847 home was restored to its original period to serve as the Bentonsport Village Bed & Breakfast.

**27** **Herman Greef House** 

Greef General Store owner Herman Greef built this Federal Style brick home in 1863. It is a private residence.

**28** **Cowles House** 

Erastus Cowles built this house in 1843. It was renovated in the 1970s. It is privately owned.



*Hancock House*



*Herman Greef House*



*Cowles House*



*Bentonsport Rose Garden*

**29** **Rose Garden**  

The Rose Garden, enclosed within the stone walls and mill pond of the 1840s era Brown grist mill, is located on the riverfront. It is maintained by volunteers.

**30** **Odd Fellows Hall/ Paddle, Pedal and More**  

Built before 1840, this building was home to one of Iowa's oldest Odd Fellows Hall and a furniture factory. It now houses a canoe, kayak, and bicycle rental business.

**31** **Bentonsport Nature Trail** 

The Van Buren County Conservation Board and volunteers maintain this 2.5-mile trail. This trail entrance is at the intersection of J40 and Des Moines Street. An alternative entrance is on Ridge Road.



*Odd Fellows Hall now houses the Paddle, Pedal and More rental shop.*



*Bentonsport Nature Trail*



**32 Bentonsport Campground** 

Located one block from downtown, campers enjoy modern facilities. A boat ramp provides access to the Des Moines River. The Bill Richards Nature Trail, following an abandoned rail right-of-way, begins at the eastern edge of the campground.

**33 Vernon School** 

This three-room public school is across the Des Moines River from Bentonsport. It served Vernon from 1868 to 1960. Noted artist Wendell Mohr converted it to a home and studio.

### Keosauqua

Located in the “Great Bend” of the Des Moines River, Keosauqua became the county seat with the establishment of Van Buren County in the Iowa Territory in 1838. Keosauqua is a Sauk and Fox word meaning “Bend in the River.”



**34 Riverfront Trail & Park**  

The paved Riverfront Trail begins in Riverfront Park, passes under the Highway 1 Bridge, and parallels the Des Moines River. It connects with the Keosauqua Loop Trail, a 2-mile long bike and walking trail on an abandoned railroad bed.



Vernon School



Van Buren County Welcome Center

**35** Van Buren County Welcome Center and McCoy Historical Museum 

This 1870s cottage houses the Villages of Van Buren, the local tourism and economic development office, and the Villages Folk School, which offers folk arts classes. Hugh McCoy donated the building and an extensive collection of Van Buren County memorabilia to the Van Buren County Historical Society. Visitors can enjoy this collection, get tourism information, and buy souvenirs.

**36** Hotel Manning 

This three-story hotel, constructed in 1899, mimics the neo-Gothic architecture of mid-century Des Moines River steamboats. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in the 1970s, federal grants made restoration possible. The Manning operates as a bed and breakfast, with the lobby and guest rooms filled with period antiques.



Hotel Manning



Twombly Museum

**37** Twombly Museum 

Voltaire P. Twombly, Civil War Medal of Honor recipient, was the first occupant of this 1875 building. He operated a grocery store on the first floor, and the second floor housed the Keosauqua Republican newspaper. Later, the building housed the post office and a telephone company. Today it is a Van Buren County museum.

**38** **Van Buren County Courthouse and Memorial Park** 

The Van Buren County Courthouse, a Greek Revival edifice built in 1843, is still in use, the oldest in Iowa and second oldest in the nation. Iowa's first trial resulting in execution (in "Hangman's Hollow" north of the courthouse) took place here in 1845. In 1846, Brigham Young's company band played here in exchange for supplies and money to support their trek. Near the courthouse in Memorial Park, an 18-foot monument and four cannons commemorate county veterans who served in the Civil War.



*Van Buren County Courthouse*

**39** **Pearson House Museum Complex** 

Benjamin Franklin Pearson, a skilled stonemason, built this home in 1845, using stone on the first floor and bricks received as debt payment on the second floor. The Pearson House was a stop on the Underground Railroad. The Van Buren County Historical Society maintains the site and provides tours of the home and of two historic buildings moved to the grounds. The 1847 Ellis School includes its original desks and potbelly stove. Moughler Log Cabin includes 19th century furnishings.



*Pearson House*

**40** **Richardson's Point**  

The graves from the first deaths on the Mormon Exodus mark the March 1846 campsite of Brigham Young's "Camp of Israel." The site is open to the public, although situated on private land just off the J40 byway route north of Milton.



*Richardson's Point*



A bronze statue at the Lacey-Keosauqua State Park Gatehouse pays homage to CCC workers.

## HIGHWAY 2 LOOP

Highway 2, built along the Burlington and Southwestern Railroad (later part of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy), travels through the four Historic Hills Scenic Byway counties bordering Missouri, including the railroad towns of Cantril, Milton, and Pulaski. A proposed Highway 2 Loop to include these communities has many attractions that are already part of the byway experience. The loop begins in Keosauqua, passes through Lacey-Keosauqua State Park, and ends in Bloomfield.



### Keosauqua

#### 1 Lacey-Keosauqua State Park



Bordering the great “horseshoe bend” of the Des Moines River, Lacey-Keosauqua State Park is one of Iowa’s largest and most picturesque parks. Originally named “Big Bend State Park” in 1921, it encompasses 1,653 acres of oak-hickory forest. Woodland Culture Indian mounds line the bluffs along the river. The park features a scenic lake and swimming beach with a bathhouse built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Ely’s Ford monument marks a minor Mormon river crossing.

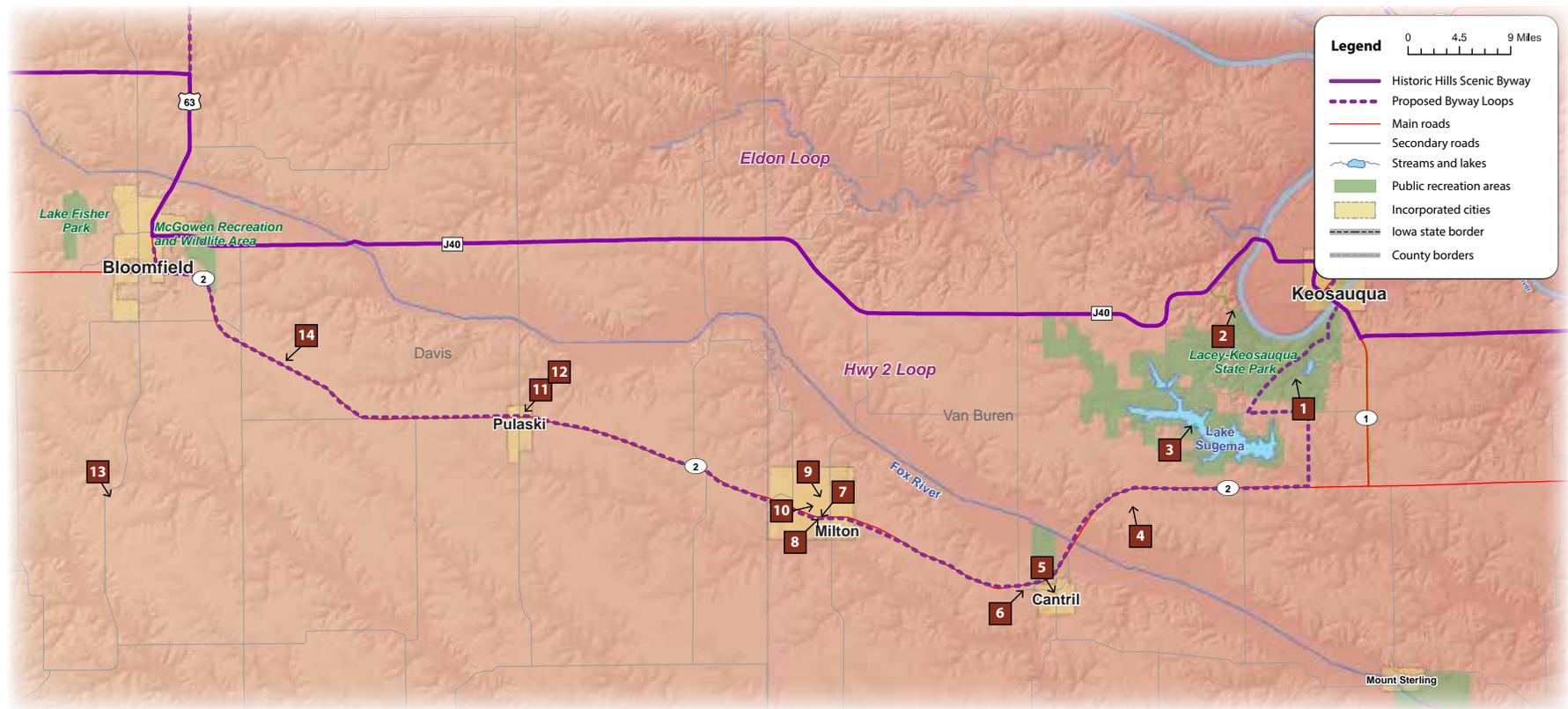
#### 2 Lacey-Keosauqua State Park CCC Interpretive Pavilion



Many beautiful stone structures built in the Depression era by the Civilian Conservation Corps grace the park. At the west gatehouse built by CCC workers in the 1930s, interpretive panels commemorate the work here of “Roosevelt’s Forest Army.”

The lake at Lacey-Keosauqua State Park.

# HIGHWAY 2 LOOP MAP



- |   |                               |                            |                                 |  |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>1</b> Lacey-Keosauqua State Park                           | <b>4</b> Wickfield Round Barn | <b>7</b> Milton Trail Park | <b>10</b> Milton Heritage House | <b>13</b> Guerilla Raid Civil War Monument |
| <b>2</b> Lacey-Keosauqua State Park CCC Interpretive Pavilion | <b>5</b> Dutchman's Store     | <b>8</b> Milton Creamery   | <b>11</b> Pulaski Park          | <b>14</b> Trimble-Parker Historic District |
| <b>3</b> Lake Sugema  | <b>6</b> Waubonsie Trail Park | <b>9</b> Milton Depot      | <b>12</b> Pulaski Depot         |  |

Courtesy of USDA NRCS



### 3 Lake Sugema

In the 1990s, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources built a dam on Indian Creek, creating 574-acre Lake Sugema. Siltation dams and soil conservation practices in the watershed protect this popular fishing lake. About 3,000 acres around the lake, purchased by the DNR and Van Buren County Conservation as a wildlife area, connect with the 918-acre Lacey-Keosauqua Unit of Shimek State Forest and the 1,653-acre Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. In 2015, the DNR designated these more than 6,500 acres as the core of the 51,500-acre **Lake Sugema-Lacey-Keosauqua Bird Conservation Area**.



Courtesy of The Iowan



### Cantril

In 1871, construction of the Burlington and Southwestern Railroad led to the platting of a town on land owned by L. W. Cantril. He offered right-of-way and land through 80 acres as enticement to locate a station at his proposed town. He then built and operated the first store.

### 4 Wickfield Round Barn

Built in 1919 as a sales pavilion for a Hampshire hog farm, the barn has a colorful history, including allegedly serving as a Prohibition speakeasy. Its design included a basement dining room and kitchen, dormer-studded upper floors used as a dormitory for workers, and a social parlor. The barn is listed on the National Register of Historic Places but is not open to the public.

### 5 Dutchman's Store

A Mennonite family operates this old-fashioned general store, which features bulk foods, fresh produce, a fabric and craft room, shoes, hand-made items and seasonal plants—or, as it advertises, “pretty much everything you need to run a small farm or homestead.”



**6** **Waubonsie Trail Park** 

This 25-acre city park offers a modern campground that includes two cabins, picnic shelters, a 1½-mile nature trail, and a disc-golf course.

### Milton

Founded in 1847 by settlers from Milton, Delaware, the town thrived with the arrival of the Burlington and Southwestern Railroad in 1871.

**7** **Milton Trail Park** 

This 1.5-mile gravel bike and pedestrian trail includes covered bridges. At the park shelter, the entrance facade of the Milton School, built in 1926, includes photos of the school.

**8** **Milton Creamery** 

Milton Creamery opened in 2006 and is owned by a Mennonite family. Milk for the award-winning cheese comes from pastured cows on local Amish farms.



*Milton Creamery*



*Milton Trail Park*



**9** Milton Depot 

The Milton Depot, built in 1871 when the Burlington and Southwestern Railroad came through town, served passengers and freight until 1969 when all train service ended. A large tank pond was used for the steam engines and was popular for fishing, boating, duck hunting, and swimming. In 1951 diesel replaced steam and the pond was drained.

**10** Milton Heritage House 



The Milton Heritage Society restored the 1898 Presbyterian Church, known as the Heritage House, which now houses the community's museum.

**Pulaski**

Founded in 1856, the town is named for 18th century Polish nobleman Casimir Pulaski, who immigrated to America to join George Washington's Continental Army, where he became a hero and

martyr of the Revolutionary War. The town received a boost in 1871 when the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad came through.

**11** Pulaski Park 

Managed by the Davis County Conservation Board, the park has been home to the Pulaski Corn Show since 1910. It features a shelter, picnic area, and playground.



Pulaski Depot

**12** Pulaski Depot 

This Burlington and Southwestern Depot served the community until the closing of the railroad in 1969. The depot displays memorabilia and photos documenting the community's history.

**13** Guerrilla Raid Civil War Monument 

On Oct. 12, 1864, 12 self-described "Rebels and Bushwhackers" led by Lt. James "Bill" Jackson and dressed in Union uniforms raided Davis County, robbed citizens of money and horses, and killed three men. It is described as the northernmost incursion by Confederates in the Civil War. The Davis County Civil War Guerrilla Raid Society placed a monument 5 miles south of Bloomfield at the intersection of Lilac Avenue and 265th Street to commemorate this historical event. The monument is



Guerrilla Raid Civil War Monument

located where farmer Thomas Hardy was murdered.

**14** Trimble-Parker Historic District  

A U-shaped barn built in 1901 is the most prominent building on this farm that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The farm reflects the dreams of three families that built prosperous lives here. The current owners operate a bed-and-breakfast in the 1914 Craftsman house.

*Courtesy of [iowabedandbreakfast.org](http://iowabedandbreakfast.org)*



Trimble-Parker, a National Historic District, is run as a bed and breakfast.



*Bloomfield is the anchor community of the western half of the Historic Hills Scenic Byway.*

## WESTERN REGION

Bloomfield is the Western Region's anchor community with its amenities and historic attractions. The byway follows county highway J3T through the farm communities of Drakesville, Unionville, and Moravia, terminating at Honey Creek Resort State Park. A spur connects Drakesville to Blakesburg.

### Troy

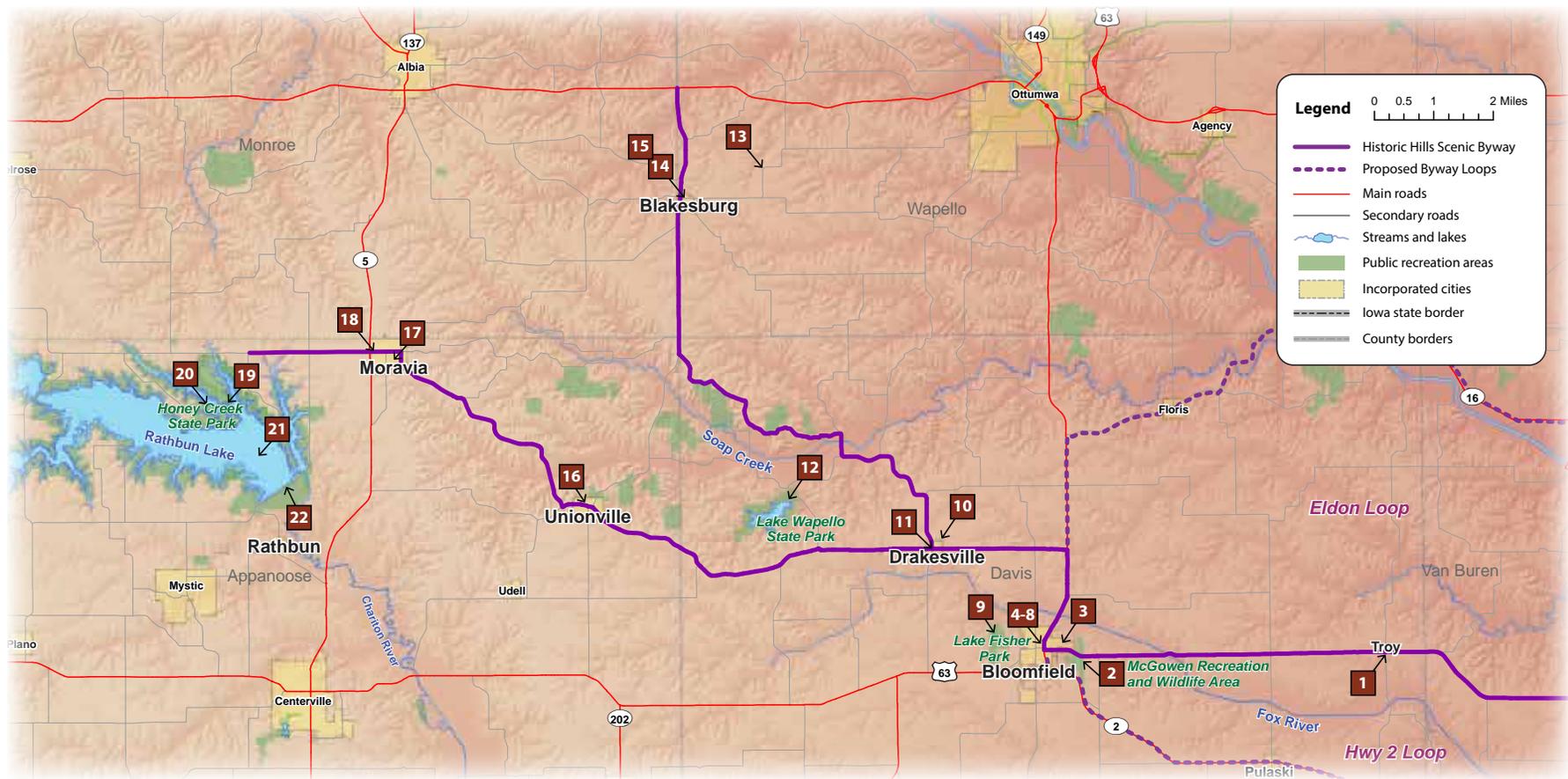
Located midway between Keosauqua and Bloomfield, this unincorporated town's most noteworthy attraction is the historic Troy Academy.

#### 1 Troy Academy

Founded in 1850 as a "seminary of learning," Troy Academy became the first normal school to train teachers in Iowa. It also taught students studying for other professions. It became the high school of the Troy Independent School District in 1904. The building has been restored to its original style, and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.



# WESTERN REGION MAP



- |  |   |                                       |   |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>1</b> Troy Academy                                  | <b>6</b> Davis County Welcome Center        | <b>12</b> Lake Wapello State Park     | <b>17</b> Moravia City Park             |
| <b>2</b> McGowen Wildlife and Recreation Area          | <b>7</b> Bloomfield Public Library          | <b>13</b> Airpower Museum             | <b>18</b> Moravia Historical Complex    |
| <b>3</b> Bloomfield City Park                          | <b>8</b> Weaver House                       | <b>14</b> Blakesburg City Park        | <b>19</b> Honey Creek Resort State Park |
| <b>4</b> Bloomfield Square and Davis County Courthouse | <b>9</b> Lake Fisher Park                   | <b>15</b> Blakesburg Community Museum | <b>20</b> Honey Creek State Park        |
| <b>5</b> Davis County Historical Complex               | <b>10</b> Drakesville Park and Mormon Cabin | <b>16</b> Unionville Methodist Church | <b>21</b> Rathbun Lake                  |
|  | <b>11</b> Drakesville Main Street Park      |                                       | <b>22</b> Rathbun Fish Hatchery         |



McGowen Recreation and Wildlife Area

## Bloomfield

Davis County, organized in 1844, was named in honor of Garrett Davis, a U.S. Representative from Kentucky. Three commissioners appointed by the Territorial legislature laid out the new county seat. They each proposed a name and drew "Bloomfield" from a hat.

### 2 McGowen Recreation and Wildlife Area

This 300-acre recreation area provides wildlife habitat, ponds, prairie, trails, and environmental education programs.



Courtesy of Davis County Trails

Davis County Trails bridge in Bloomfield

### 3 Bloomfield City Park and Davis County Trails

The community park includes two playgrounds, basketball courts, a shelter, and a swimming pool. The newly developed Davis County Trails connect the community center and park to McGowen Wildlife Area.

### 4 Bloomfield Square and Davis County Courthouse

Built in 1877 using Second Empire architecture, the Davis County Courthouse features a tower with a Kimberly bell, an original Seth Thomas clock, and is topped by a Lady of Justice statue. The courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The square surrounding the courthouse is a National Historic District. It consists of 55 commercial buildings constructed between the 1850s and 1890s.



Davis County Courthouse  
on the Bloomfield Square



Davis County Historical Complex

**6 Davis County Welcome Center** 

Housed in a 1910 Sears and Roebuck home, the Welcome Center provides tourist information daily except Sundays.

*Rendering courtesy of Bloomfield Public Library*



*Bloomfield Public Library was renovated in 2017.*

**7 Bloomfield Public Library** 

Philanthropist Andrew Carnegie funded the construction of 1,608 libraries in the U.S., including the Bloomfield Library, which opened in 1913. It is on the National Register of Historic Places and was renovated in 2017.

**8 Weaver House** 

General Weaver built this home in 1867, living there until 1890. The home is one of Iowa's 26 National Historic Landmarks. This designation honors Weaver's legacy. A Bloomfield lawyer, Weaver enlisted in the 2nd Iowa Infantry during the Civil War as a 2nd Lieutenant, demonstrated leadership under fire, and quickly rose to the rank of Colonel. At war's end, the War Department brevetted



Weaver House

him as Brigadier General for his gallant service. His distinguished career after the war included three terms in Congress and being twice nominated as third party presidential candidate. He was concerned with social justice and advocated for farmers and laborers. The Weaver House is now a bed-and-breakfast.



**9 Lake Fisher Park** 

The 310-acre park just west of Bloomfield offers fishing in the 100-acre lake, picnic shelters, and a campground.

**5 Davis County Historical Complex** 

The complex includes the 1866 Findley home. Dr. William Findley came to Bloomfield to practice medicine in 1843. Displays include the doctor's instruments and other collections. The complex also includes a Mormon log cabin, the Livery Barn, the Wheeler Ridge School, and the Savannah Christian Church.



Davis County Welcome Center

## Drakesville

Founded in 1847, this community was named for founder John A. Drake. A large Amish community settled on farms near here in recent years and now operates several businesses.



### 10 Drakesville Park and Mormon Cabin

This community park provides camping, a picnic shelter, playground, and a horse arena. The cabin is attributed to Mormon craftsmen who constructed it in 1846 while they camped nearby.



### 11 Drakesville Main Street Park

A park divides Main Street traffic through downtown. Here, a Mormon Trail panel interprets the trail's diversion to higher and drier ground, and a Freedom Rock commemorates Civil War veteran James Weaver and Korean War veteran Ted Sprouse.

### 12 Lake Wapello State Park

In 1932, the Iowa Fish and Game Commission, with financial support and volunteer labor from local communities, began developing this park and clearing land for an artificial lake. It was named for the Sac and Fox leader Wapello, who had friendly relations with early Davis County settlers. In 1936, a 187-man Civilian Conservation Corps camp was stationed here to complete park development. Their work includes a large stone boat and bathhouse on the 330-acre lake.



## Blakesburg

This small community is at the entrance to the byway from Highway 34. Blakesburg was established in 1852 and was named for one of its founders, Theophilus Blake.

### 13 Airpower Museum

Founded in 1965, the Airpower Museum displays and flies about two dozen antique aircraft. The museum interprets the history of aviation through models, engines, propellers, photos, and original art. It also is home to the Antique Airplane Association.



### 14 Blakesburg City Park

The park provides picnic tables and a shelter on the byway.



### 15 Blakesburg Community Museum

The Blakesburg Historical Preservation Society renovated the old city post office to display artifacts that showcase the community's history.





United Methodist Church

### Unionville

Founded in 1843, this small farm community was the first settlement in Appanoose County.

**16** **United Methodist Church** 

Constructed in 1856, the Unionville United Methodist Church is the oldest active church in Appanoose County. The congregation dates to 1846. An interpretive panel relates the importance of the church bell in Unionville’s history.

### Moravia

Moravian families from Salem, North Carolina, established the town in 1850.



**17** **Moravia City Park** 

The city square serves as a park, with the community center and library at the center. The Moravia Fall Festival is held on the park grounds.

**18** **Moravia Historical Complex** 

This complex includes historic buildings moved onto the site and interpretation of local history. Featured are the 1903 Wabash Depot and a section car, the 1894 Fairview Church, and the 1873 Fairview School.





**19** Honey Creek Resort State Park 

Honey Creek Resort State Park, managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, includes a 105-room lodge and conference center, 28 cottages, a restaurant, indoor water park, 18-hole golf course, beach and marina, trails, and a nature center. The park includes 900 acres of public land.

*Courtesy of Travel Iowa*



**20** Honey Creek State Park  

This 828-acre park on Lake Rathbun is a favorite for campers, boaters, and fishers.

**21** Rathbun Lake 

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provides five areas for camping, 22,900 acres of public land for wildlife and hunting, and 11,000 acres of water in Rathbun Lake as a fishery and recreation area. The Rathbun Lake Visitor Center is located on the south end of the dam.



*Rathbun Lake Visitor Center*

**22** Rathbun Fish Hatchery 

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources operates this hatchery. Walleye and channel catfish broodstock from Rathbun Lake provide the eggs. Fingerlings are distributed throughout Iowa. Visitors can view the hatchery operation from an elevated walkway, browse exhibits including aquariums, and watch a theater presentation on production methods.



*Rathbun Fish Hatchery*



Mars Hill Church and Cemetery

## ELDON LOOP

Beginning in Bloomfield, the loop traverses hill country through Floris to Eldon. This particularly scenic area of the byway is best experienced at Mars Hill, where a historic log church offers beautiful landscape vistas. Eldon, a historic railroad town and home of the Gothic home made famous by artist Grant Wood, anchors this region. The road continues down the Des Moines River Valley through Selma and Douds-Leando. This historic area was home to

the Ioway and Sauk and Fox tribes before settlement.

### Bloomfield

#### 1 Pioneer Ridge Nature Area

Pioneer Ridge Nature Area, managed by Wapello County Conservation, includes 1,000 acres of oak-hickory forest and restored prairies and fishing ponds. Hikers can explore more than 12 miles of trails. A small campground and four cabins and picnic shelters are available.

#### 2 Mars Hill Log Church

This 1850 log church sits on a ridge four miles north of Floris. It is thought to be one of the oldest log churches in Iowa. Local lore says the church was used as an Underground Railroad hiding place. The adjacent cemetery includes the grave of John Donaldson, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for actions at the Battle of Appomattox in the Civil War.

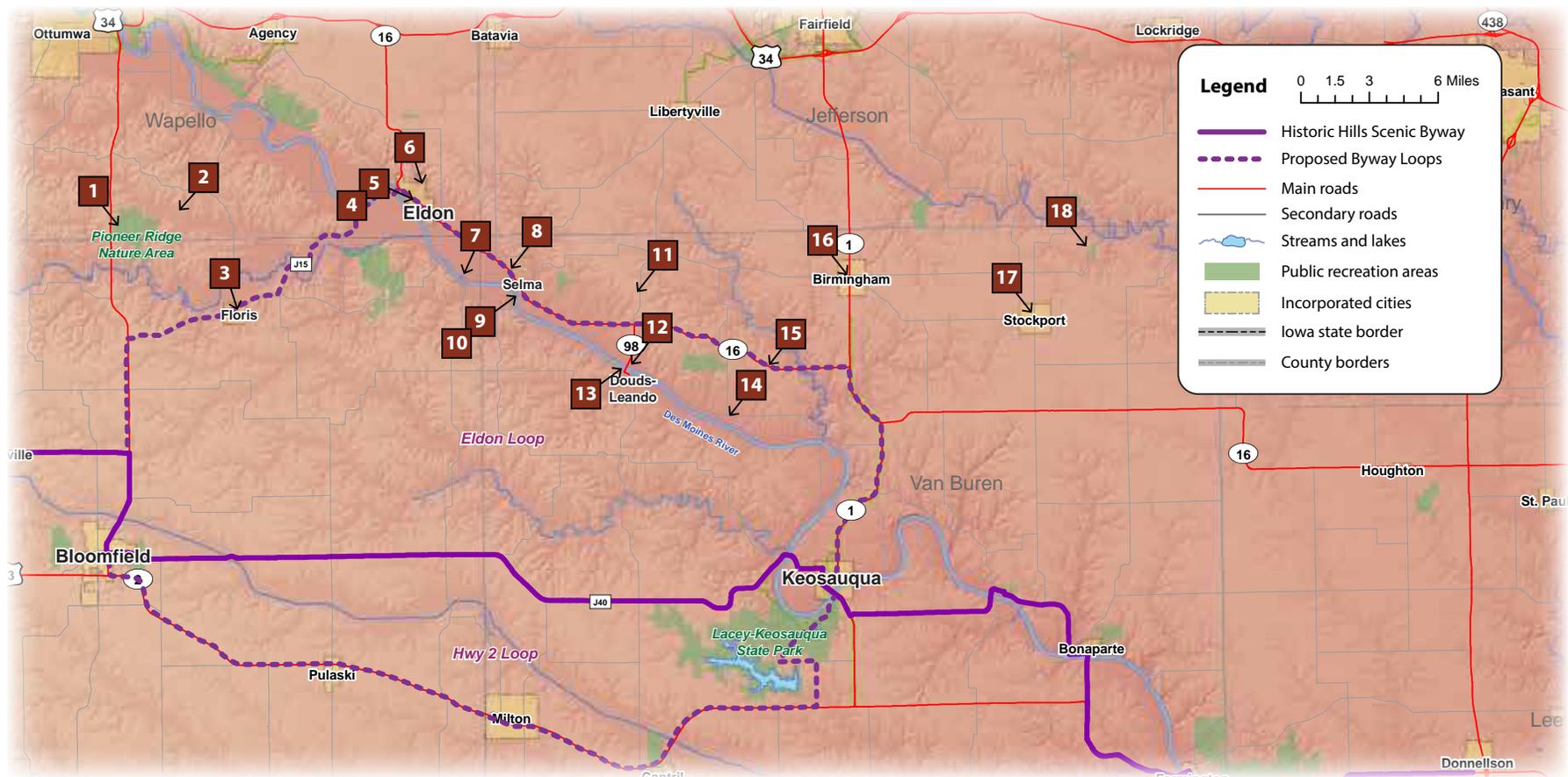
### Floris

The town, established in 1847, was named Floris (City of Flowers). A Chicago & Southwestern & Rock Island station helped the town flourish in its early years.



Pioneer Ridge Nature Area

# ELDON LOOP MAP



- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>1</b> Pioneer Ridge Nature Area                   | <b>6</b> American Gothic House Center               | <b>11</b> Mount Moriah Methodist Church | <b>15</b> White School No. 5                |
| <b>2</b> Mars Hill Log Church                        | <b>7</b> Lockkeeper's House                         | <b>12</b> Douds Depot                   | <b>16</b> Birmingham City Park              |
| <b>3</b> Veterans Memorial Park and Floris City Park | <b>8</b> lowaville Cemetery and Black Hawk Memorial | <b>13</b> Valley School No. 3           | <b>17</b> Peavine Railroad Depot and Museum |
| <b>4</b> Eldon Library                               | <b>9</b> Log Cabin Park                             | <b>14</b> Oak Grove Church and School   | <b>18</b> Morris Park                       |
| <b>5</b> Eldon Depot Museum                          | <b>10</b> Crane Winery                              |   |   |



**3 Veterans Memorial Park and Floris City Park** 

Main Street divides the community park, which has a picnic shelter, playground, bell tower, and Veterans Memorial Park, which is dedicated to Davis County service members.

### Eldon

The town began with the construction of the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines, and Minnesota Railroad and a “flag station” at the site known as Ashland Crossing. A few settlers located there in 1861. In 1870, the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific line came to that point and merged with the K & DM Road. This important junction soon included a depot, roundhouse, repair shops, and a new bridge. Eldon incorporated in 1872, quickly developing into a thriving community.



**5 Eldon Depot Museum** 

Eldon honors its railroad heritage with a museum in the restored 1870s depot, a Rock Island caboose, and other rolling stock. A trail follows the tracks to a view of the Des Moines River where pilings mark the site of the railroad bridge into town. Tours of the Depot Museum are available by appointment.



**4 Eldon Library** 

The Eldon Library, made possible by a grant from the Andrew Carnegie Foundation, opened in 1913. It is one of 101 Carnegie libraries built in Iowa between 1872 and 1917, and it is one of 49 still in use.

**6 American Gothic House Center** 

Famous as the inspiration for the backdrop of Grant Wood’s 1930 painting *American Gothic*, the house has become a major tourist attraction with the addition of a visitor center. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was donated to the State



Historical Society. A popular activity is to dress in costumes resembling those in the painting and be photographed, re-creating the *American Gothic* image.

## 7 Lockkeeper's House

The Des Moines River Improvement Project aimed to build a lock and dam system along the Des Moines River to make it navigable from the Mississippi River to the Raccoon River at Des Moines. The Lockkeeper's House is near the partially completed lock and dam No. 10, but there is no evidence that it was part of the project. It is possible that the



house was constructed around 1845 from stone quarried for the lock. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



## Selma/Iowaville

Before 1824, Iowaville was a main village of the Ioway Indians. After the War of 1812, the Ioway signed a peace treaty with the U.S. government. They departed Iowaville in 1824. The Sauk and Fox occupied the site after their departure. In 1837, at the site of James Jordon's Indian trading post, Jordon and others purchased the village site and in 1838 platted the town of Iowaville. While most Indians departed, Black Hawk and a few others remained. Black Hawk died and was initially buried there. The town grew to about 200, but Selma and Eldon, located on the rail line, became commerce centers, and Iowaville disappeared.

Selma, just downriver from Iowaville, was platted in about 1851 as Independent. At one time a thriving rail town, today it is an unincorporated village.



**8 Iowaville Cemetery and Black Hawk Memorial** 

This cemetery on a bluff overlooking Iowaville and Selma is sited on prehistoric Indian mounds. Many of the area’s pioneers are buried here. A grave-site memorial on the bluff’s edge honors Chief Black Hawk. It is unlikely that any of his remains are interred here. Black Hawk’s remains, stolen from his Iowaville grave, reportedly burned in an 1855 fire at the Burlington Geological and Historical Society.

**9 Log Cabin Park** 

Selma’s historic log cabin dates to 1846. The cabin, moved to the Selma City Park along Highway 16 from its original location, was restored in 1969. The cabin is open by appointment.



Log Cabin Park



Crane Winery

**10 Crane Winery** 

The Crane Winery is a family owned winery featuring fruit and grape wines. They describe their products as “wines that grandpa used to make.” The wines are named after popular or local historical sites. The winery is located in the 1876 Oddfellows Lodge across from the Log Cabin Park and is open weekends.



## Douds-Leando

Leando, on the southern bank of the Des Moines River, was platted in 1836 as Portland and renamed Leando in 1840. In 1866, Ohio brothers Eliab and David Doud platted Douds on the northern bank of the river. In the original deed it was stipulated by the Doud brothers that there was to be no buying or selling of intoxicating liquors in the town, which held until 1990. An iron bridge built in 1898 joined the two towns.

### 11 Mount Moriah Methodist Church

The Mt. Moriah Methodist Church, built in 1892, served a congregation until 1958. The Douds Historic Preservation Association restored the church in 1997. Located two miles north of Douds, it is the only surviving country church/cemetery combination in Van Buren County.



### 12 Douds Depot

Douds Depot, built in 1907, replaced one built in 1861. It remained in service until 1972. It is presently a mining and railroad museum, open by appointment.



### 13 Valley School No. 3

Built in 1928, the school held classes until 1966. The Douds Historic Preservation Association moved the building into Memorial Park in Leando.



**14** Oak Grove Church and School 

Oak Grove School is one of the last church-school sites in Iowa. It held its first classes in 1874 and served students until 1959. The adjacent Oak Grove Church was built in 1895. The buildings now serve a variety of community functions.

**15** White School No. 5 

Located east of Douds on Highway 16, White School No. 5 is complete with a hand-pump well and outhouse. The school is original to the site.

## Side trip from the Eldon Loop

### Birmingham

Laid out in 1839 and incorporated in 1856, Birmingham was described in the 1878 *History of Van Buren County* as having 700 residents, and next to Bonaparte, the most important manufacturing town in Van Buren County, including three mills, a plow and wagon factory, creamery, tannery, pork-packing plant, woolen factory, and a cheese factory.



**16** Birmingham City Park 

This well-maintained park includes a new shelter building, playground, renovated band shell, and pioneer log cabin.

## Stockport

In 1881, the state offered a \$500 bonus if a narrow-gauge railroad operated by the Chicago, Fort Madison, Burlington & Quincy Railroad would enter the junction that would become Stockport. A boxcar served as a depot until 1890, when neighborhood men volunteered to move the depot from the defunct town of Longview to Stockport. The new town incorporated in 1887 and prospered when the line known as the Peavine changed to standard track in 1891. The line served Stockport until the late 1970s.



*A replica of the Morris family's log cabin at Morris Park*

### 17 Peavine Line Railroad Depot and Museum

The historic depot, set in front of the old 1898 track, houses memorabilia from the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad. The museum is open by appointment or for special events.



### 18 Morris Park

In 1938, the grandsons of Henry and Jane Morris established this park to mark the 100th anniversary of their grandparents' settlement on this pioneer farm. They built a replica of their grandparents' log cabin that includes period furnishings. The park, now operated by Van Buren County Conservation, has seven buildings containing artifacts from the county's farming past, as well as a stocked pond, nature trails, picnic areas, and camping hookups. Morris Park also has a log barn, a one-room school, and turn-of-the-century barn—all with period artifacts.



*One-room school at Morris Park*



The sign at Mason House Inn in Bentonsport states that it was “Built in 1846 by Mormon craftsmen going to Utah.”

## MORMON PIONEER TRAIL

The Mormon exodus of about 13,000 Latter-day Saints from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Kaneshville (Council Bluffs), Iowa, took place over several months of 1846. Visitors can see several Mormon historic sites in Van Buren and Davis counties. Interpretive panels document events that occurred there.

### **1** Des Moines River Ford, Bonaparte

Brigham Young and the “Camp of Israel” forded the Des Moines River at Bonaparte Mills, Iowa, on March 5, 1846.

They passed through Bentonsport and Keosauqua before they were bogged down by spring mud at Richardson’s Point.

### **2** Bentonsport National Historic District

Bentonsport’s flour and sawmills served farmers and riverboats. Many Latter-day Saints found employment here, including in constructing the Mason House Inn.



Des Moines River Ford in Bonaparte

# MORMON PIONEER TRAIL MAP



- |   |                                      |  |                                     |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Des Moines River Ford                  | <b>3</b> Van Buren County Courthouse | <b>5</b> Richardson's Point                    | <b>7</b> Drakesville Park           |
| <b>2</b> Bentonsport National Historic District | <b>4</b> Ely Ford                    | <b>6</b> Davis County Historical Complex cabin | <b>8</b> Moravia Historical Complex |



**3 Van Buren County Courthouse, Keosauqua**

As the Latter-day Saints passed through Keosauqua, townspeople requested that William Pitt's Nauvoo Brass Band give a concert. The band played at the courthouse at Keosauqua on March 10, 1846. One of the challenges was that the band was camped 10 miles away at Richardson's Point, a three-hour journey. The appreciative audience requested they

give concerts on two additional evenings, giving them desperately needed money and goods.

**4 Ely Ford, Lacey-Keosauqua State Park**

A stone monument proclaims Ely Ford as a Mormon Crossing. However, most immigrants in summer and fall 1846 crossed the river at Pittsburgh just north of Keosauqua where the river bottom is more stable and the current less turbulent.



**5 Richardson's Point**

Brigham Young's camp waited miserably in the mud from March 7-18, 1846, before the trail west became passable. The first deaths occurred here: an immigrant man and a 15-month-old child.



**6** Davis County Historical Complex cabin, Bloomfield

The historical complex includes a log cabin built for local settlers by Mormon laborers, who looked for work while the Camp of Israel waited out the spring mud at Richardson's Point.



*A panel at the Davis County Historical Complex in Bloomfield interprets the work of Mormon craftsmen, such as this log cabin.*

**8** Moravia Historical Complex

A panel in this outdoor museum interprets the Mormon migration from 1846 to the late 1860s.



*Drakesville is the point where summer and fall Mormon groups followed a new route.*



*"The Road to Zion" panel in Moravia interprets the Mormon migration.*



According to local legend, this limestone structure south of Eldon was built as a lockkeeper's house.

## LOWER DES MOINES RIVER WATER TRAIL

Established in 2002, the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail was the first state-recognized water trail in Iowa. The trail traverses 41 miles of the Lower Des Moines River between Eldon and Farmington. The river flows through lowland forests, passing some of Iowa's oldest towns dating to the 1830s, and Lacey-Keosauqua, Iowa's second oldest state park, established in 1921. Bluff tops and terraces above the river have numerous mounds and archaeological

sites that are evidence of prehistoric cultures that once thrived here.

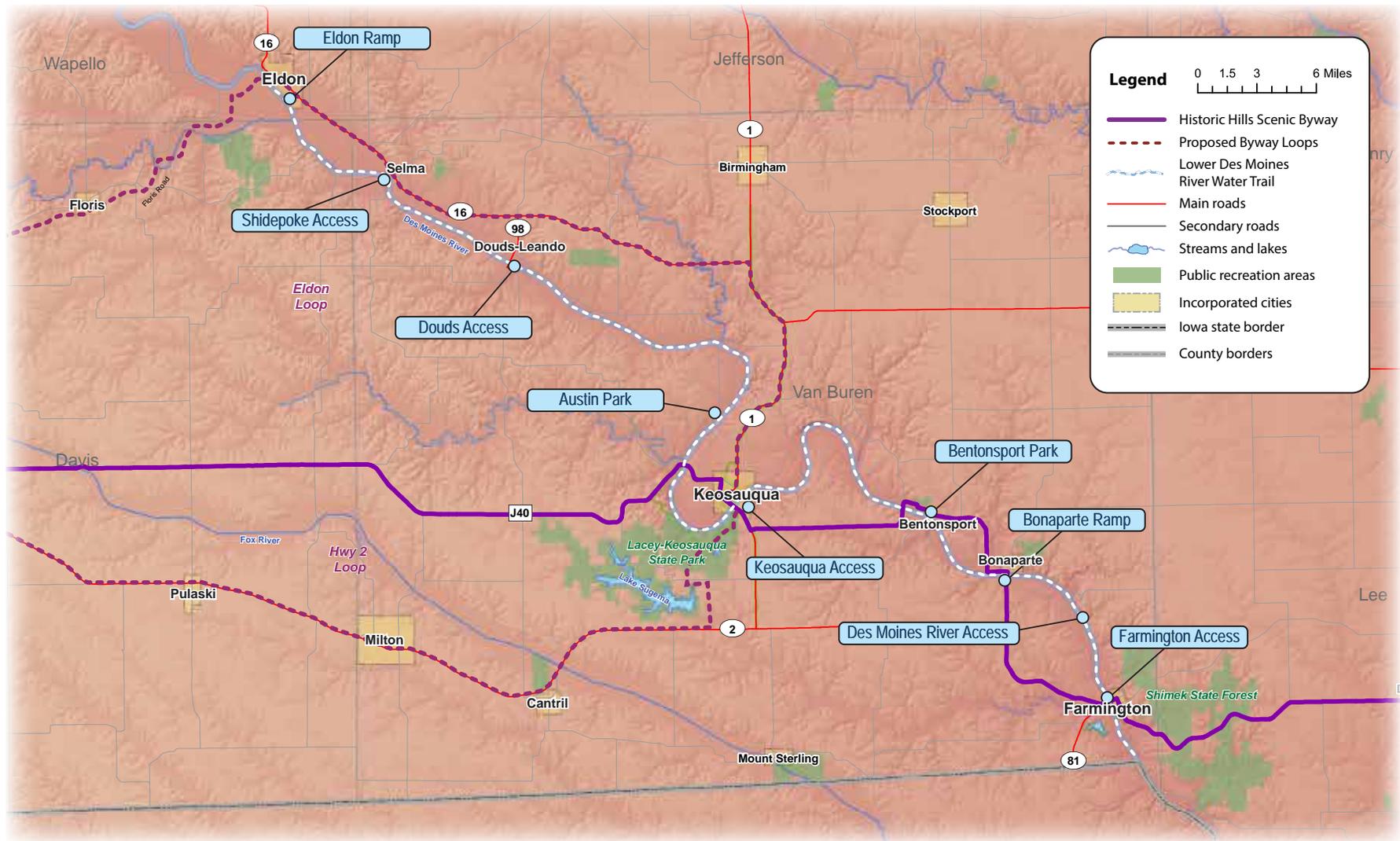
A comprehensive guide, "Lower Des Moines River Water Trail" is available from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The 50-page book, "A River of Unrivaled Advantages: Life Along the Lower Des Moines River" documents the natural and cultural history of the water trail. It is available in electronic format from [publications.iowa.gov](http://publications.iowa.gov).



The Bentonsport Bridge, now a foot bridge, is the oldest truss-span bridge over the Des Moines River.

# LOWER DES MOINES RIVER WATER TRAIL MAP



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# CHAPTER 5

# THEMES AND MESSAGES



Scenery on J40 near Bloomfield.

# THEMES AND MESSAGES

A framework of themes and messages is essential for planning interpretive media and for placing interpretive resources into a meaningful context for visitors. Themes are the important ideas that organize the messages that we wish to communicate about the Historic Hills Scenic Byway. Once these important concepts are identified, decisions can be made about what site resources and media are most appropriate to tell these stories.

The theme statement, which is the main idea of an interpretive opportunity,

should contain universal concepts, intangible meanings that have significance to almost everyone. These are the ideas, values, challenges, relationships, needs, and emotions that speak to the human experience.

Compelling interpretive themes link tangible resources to visitors' interests. Interpretation is most effective

when media and other interpretive opportunities allow visitors to grasp the meanings expressed in themes and relate them to their own lives. Visitors may not be able to repeat the themes we write, but if they are provoked, inspired, or can relate the information to something within their experience, we have succeeded.

## Organization of Themes and Messages

- A **primary theme** expresses the main idea that ties together the stories of the Historic Hills Scenic Byway. To provide a cohesive visitor experience, all interpretation should relate to this holistic theme.
- **Sub-themes** split the primary theme into several more specific and workable ideas. These broad story lines guide visitors to discover deeper meanings and relationships among the byway's resources.
- **Messages** break down the broad sub-themes into specific, discrete stories that can be told with interpretive media and programming.

*Meek's Mill & Bonaparte Retreat, Bonaparte*



## PRIMARY THEME

The Black Hawk Purchase of 1833 opened a flood of settlement that surged up the Des Moines River and spread across the forest and prairie landscape of southeastern Iowa, where communities preserve their historic character and natural beauty.

## SUB-THEME 1

**The Historic Hills Scenic Byway exhibits evidence of the long prehistoric and historic Native American occupation of the area and subsequent settlement by Euro-Americans.**

### Messages:

1.1 Burial mounds and museum artifact collections are tangible evidence of prehistoric archaic and Woodland Indian cultures that lived along the Des Moines River for

thousands of years. Archaeological investigations have documented several occupation sites along the river. Lacey-Keosauqua State Park has several hilltop mounds along the river.



*Native American burial mounds in Lacey-Keosauqua State Park overlook the Des Moines River.*

- 1.2 The Sauk and Fox (Meskwaki) are closely related Algonquian tribes. European colonization and the fur trade caused disruption that led to their westward migration. After the Fox Wars of 1712 to 1730 with France, the Fox relocated to the mouth of the Rock River on the Mississippi. There they were joined by the Sauk and established a large village called Saukenuk.
- 1.3 The Ioway (Baxoje) is a Siouan tribe that lived in river valley villages throughout what is now Iowa. They planted corn, beans, and squash in the fertile valley soils. By the late 1600s they were engaged in fur trapping and trading with the French and English. In 1784, their numbers decimated by smallpox, about 800 Ioway settled along the Lower Des Moines River. Their main village in the early 19th century, known as Iowaville, was where the North West Company established a trading post.

1.4 A 1925 State Historical Society paper, "The Fur Trade in Early Iowa," included the following report:

“The 'Ayouwais,' a tribe of some eight hundred Indians located about forty leagues up the river 'Demoin,' annually consumed merchandise valued at thirty-eight hundred dollars for which they gave in return six thousand dollars-worth of deer skins principally, and the skins of the black bear, beaver, otter, grey fox, raccoon, muskrat, and mink.

1.5 The Louisiana Purchase led to the 1804 Treaty of St. Louis, in which the U.S. persuaded a few Sauk and Fox leaders to cede their Illinois lands. In 1829 the U.S. government ordered the tribes to vacate their Illinois lands, including Saukenuk, and relocate west across the Mississippi River. This infuriated many leaders, including Black Hawk, who was born in Saukenuk in 1767.

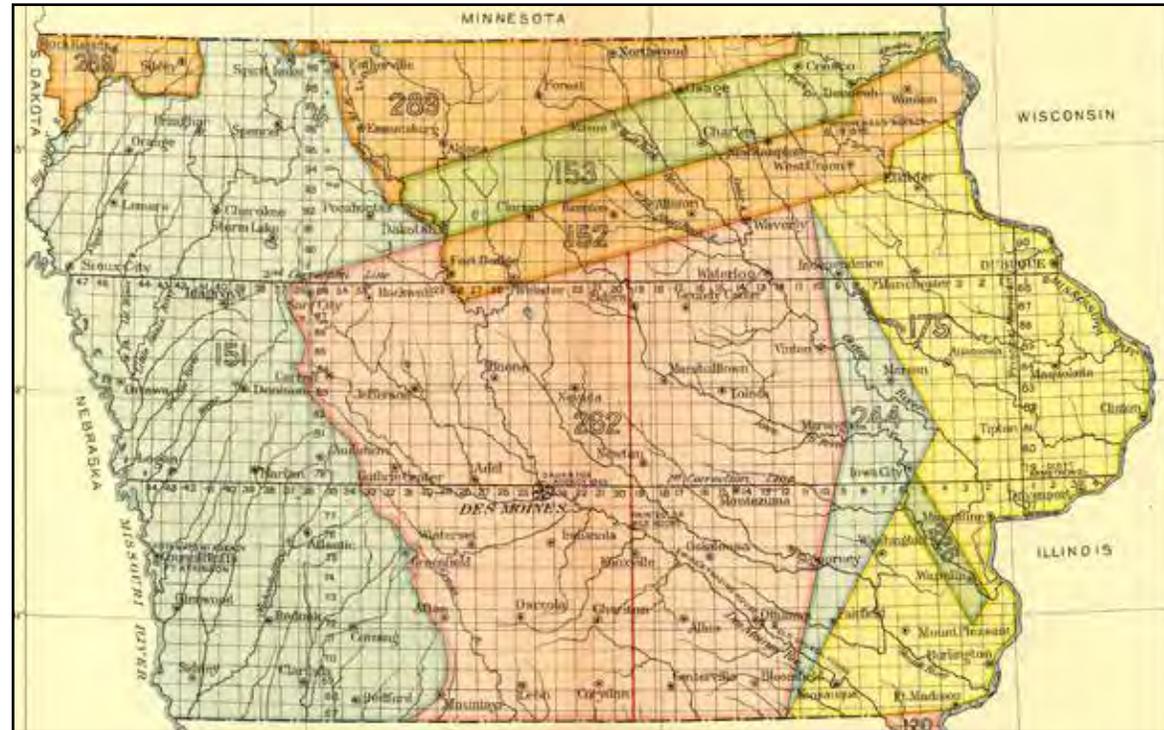
1.6 The Ioways split their allegiance during the War of 1812, some supporting the British and others the United States. After the war, they signed a peace treaty with the U.S. government. They departed Iowaville in 1824. The Sauk and Fox occupied the site after their departure.

1.7 In 1832, Black Hawk led about 1800 people into Illinois to re-establish a village on the Rock River. Illinois militiamen and U.S. Army troops pursued them in a series of skirmishes known today as the Black Hawk War. Black Hawk's band was massacred as they attempted to cross the Mississippi at Bad Axe, Wisconsin.



Chief Black Hawk

Photos courtesy of Library of Congress



Indian land cessions in Iowa. The Black Hawk Purchase of 1833 included parts of Lee and Van Buren counties. The second Black Hawk Purchase of 1837 added land to Van Buren County. The Sauk and Fox Cession of 1842 opened Davis, Appanoose, and Wapello counties to Euro-American settlement.



Chief Black Hawk's memorial at Iowaville Cemetery.

- 1.8 The defeat of the Sauk and Fox precipitated the ceding of their Iowa lands. The first Black Hawk Purchase of 1833, the second Black Hawk Purchase of 1837, and the Sauk and Fox Cession of 1842 opened southeastern Iowa to Euro-American settlement.
- 1.9 "In 1838, just before Black Hawk moved to his lodge on the Des Moines, James G. Edwards, editor of the *Fort Madison Patriot*, suggested that the people of Iowa call themselves Hawkeyes to preserve the chief's memory. The people of Fort Madison and Burlington, accustomed to seeing Black Hawk on his frequent visits to their towns, adopted the name and it was soon in general use." (Source: Van Buren County History Book)
- 1.10 Kentuckian James Jordon established trading posts on the Des Moines River, trading with the Sauk and Fox. In 1835 he settled in Iowaville. After the second Black Hawk Purchase, he platted the town of Iowaville and established a farm. He befriended Black Hawk, who had a lodge near his home. Jordon visited Black Hawk shortly before his death and promised to bury him following Sauk customs.
- 1.11 Black Hawk returned to Iowaville a national celebrity and died Oct. 3, 1838. He was buried on James Jordan's farm in a traditional sitting position, dressed in a soldier's uniform, with all the medals given to him by President Andrew Jackson.
- 1.12 In 1839, Dr. James Turner of Lexington robbed Black Hawk's grave and boiled the flesh off the skull for display. Fearing retaliation, Turner and his family fled to St. Louis. The skull (and possibly his entire skeleton, according to some accounts) came under the care of Iowa's Governor Lucas and was placed in the Burlington Geological and Historical Society museum. However, the museum and remains burned in an 1855 fire.
- 1.13 According to another account, a skeleton later attached to Black Hawk's skull could not have been that of the old chief because it was the skeleton of a shorter man (Black Hawk had stood 5 feet 11 inches tall). Consequently, his skeletal remains (minus the head) might still be in Iowaville Cemetery at the grave site that marks his burial place.

## SUB-THEME 2

The Black Hawk Purchase of 1833 opened southeastern Iowa to settlers who created new lives for themselves by establishing towns and farms along the Des Moines River.

### Messages:

- 2.1 “The government land surveys in Iowa, conducted from 1836 to 1859, began in the southeastern corner of the state and proceeded to the northwest corner. The system established the one-mile grid system of roads as the land was developed and roads were opened on the section lines.” (Source: Iowa DOT)
- 2.2 Settled in 1833, Farmington is the oldest village in Van Buren County

and along the byway corridor. This was one year after the Black Hawk War, which forced the Sauk and Fox to cede their eastern Iowa lands. The county’s first seat, it was a major center for milling, manufacturing, and trading.

- 2.3 William Meek and Dr. R.N. Cresap established Bonaparte in 1837, naming it Meek’s Mill. Meek, an admirer of the Emperor, renamed it Bonaparte in 1841. A sister town of Napoleon was planned across the river but never developed. A river mill complex, powered first by a wing dam and in 1846 by a stone lock and dam, created a booming community.



This 1840 map illustrates the survey of the First Black Hawk Purchase lands (1832) and Second Black Hawk Purchase lands (1837). Lee and Van Buren counties were among the first in Iowa Territory opened for settlement.

Major floods and a fire caused the mills to shutter and the population to decline. Recent restorations and businesses aimed at tourism have sparked a renewal for the historic town.



Downtown Bonaparte



*The Hancock House in Bentonsport was photographed in a 1934 Historic American Buildings Survey. The town's historic shops and homes have been restored.*



*The Van Buren County Historical Society preserved and furnished the Moughler Log Cabin. The cabin was moved to the Pearson House Museum in Keosauqua.*

*Courtesy of Library of Congress*

- 2.4 Bentonsport, platted in 1839 and named for Missouri Sen. Thomas Hart Benton, became a thriving mill town and steamboat port. Its population was 1,000 before floods, fire, and railroads led to the closing of mills and the town's decline. Bentonsport was declared a National Historic District in 1972 as "one of the few unchanged villages in America." Restored to their 1840s appearance, the shops, homes, and the riverfront ambiance offer a sense of life 150 years ago.
- 2.5 Located in the "Great Bend" of the Des Moines River,

Keosauqua became a county seat with the establishment of Van Buren County in the Iowa Territory in 1838. Keosauqua is a Sauk and Fox word meaning "bend in the river."

- 2.6 Davis County, organized in 1844, was named in honor of Garrett Davis, a U.S. Representative from Kentucky. Three commissioners appointed by the Territorial Legislature laid out the new county seat. They each proposed a name and drew "Bloomfield" from a hat.
- 2.7 Several log cabins preserved by local historical groups with period furniture provide tangible connections to the life of early settlers. This includes cabins in Drakesville, Keosauqua, Selma, and Bloomfield.
- 2.8 Early settlers quickly established churches in their communities. Mars Hill Log Church, built in 1850, is one of the oldest churches on the byway and includes original hand-hewn benches. The cemetery includes the grave of Civil War Medal of Honor soldier John Donaldson.

2.9 The Unionville United Methodist congregation was organized in 1846 and constructed their church in 1856. It is the oldest active church on the byway.

2.10 The First Congregational Church of Farmington, constructed in 1848, now is the Pioneer Museum and home to the Pioneer Historical Society.

2.11 Settlers placed a high priority on education, establishing schools and academies throughout the region. Travelers can see many historic

schools along the byway that are preserved to remind people of their heritage.

2.12 Rural schools with original furnishings can be seen at several locations along the byway. They are tangible connections to the life of schoolchildren in early Iowa.



Troy Academy, established in 1850 as a “seminary of learning,” was Iowa’s first Normal School to train teachers for country schools.



Ellis School at Keosauqua’s Pearson House Museum Complex “preserves its original desks and pot-belly stove. It appears ready for rural students and the teacher to ring the bell for class to start” (Villages of Van Buren source)



The Unionville United Methodist bell, removed from the tower in 2012, is original to the building. It tolled out the end of the Civil War and World War I and II. It still calls parishioners to worship.

Courtesy of Greef Store Museum, Bentonsport



A bird's-eye view of industries along the river in Bentonsport, taken about 1860 from the Vernon Mill across the river.

Courtesy of Christopher Wahren Fine Photographs



The steamer Charles Rogers disembarks passengers on the Des Moines River in 1858. This little steamer made regular trips from Keokuk all the way to Fort Dodge.

## SUB-THEME 3

Historic Hills Scenic Byway traces the evolution of transportation from riverboats to trains to vehicles, which made possible the development of towns and industries.

### Messages:

3.1 Pioneers tended to settle along rivers, which offered the best means of transportation rather than crude tracks or roads into the interior.

Steamboats ran the major rivers and tributaries, offering somewhat regular service for passengers and freight. They played a significant role in the

development of river towns and cities. (Source: W.H. Thompson)

- 3.2 Initially, keelboats and canoes were the means of transportation on the Des Moines River. In September 1837, the first steamboat, the S. B. Science captained by S. B. Clark, brought a load of goods up the river to Keosauqua in Van Buren County. Soon, small steamboats began plying the river up to Racoon Forks (present day Des Moines).
- 3.3 Steam transportation fueled dreams of prosperity and boom, and between 1838 and 1840, Van Buren County doubled in population. Mills and factories powered by water lined the banks of the port towns of Farmington, Bonaparte, Bentonsport, and Keosauqua.



Completed in 1852, the lock walls and dam shoulders in Bonaparte are the only ones remaining of the Des Moines River Navigation Company System.

3.4 In 1846, Congress authorized a Des Moines River Land Grant for developing navigation on the Des Moines River, with the sale of public land along the river to finance lock and dam construction. The plan called for 28 locks and eight dams to make the Des Moines River navigable from its mouth to the Raccoon Forks (at Des Moines). But these ambitious plans were never completed due to floods and financial problems fueled by fraud.

3.5 A historian described navigation of the Des Moines River as an “idle dream rudely shattered by the coming of the iron horse.” The first death knell came in 1855. The newly formed Des Moines Valley Railroad began grading a right-of-way from Keokuk to Bentonsport.

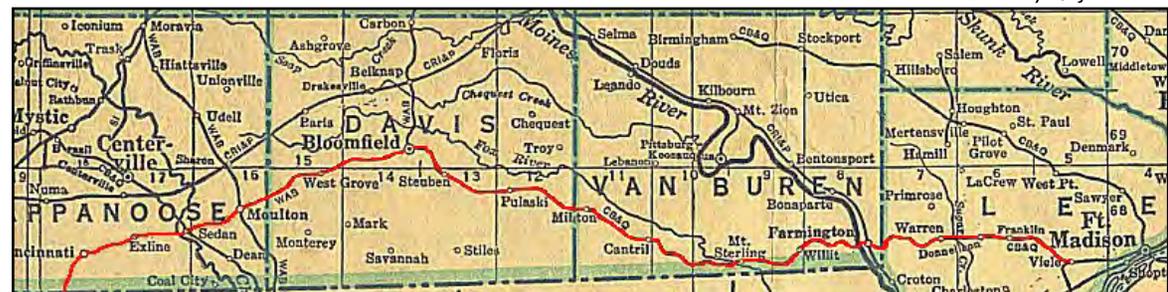
3.6 In 1857, the Iowa General Assembly asked the Des Moines Navigation Company to “cease and desist all work in the lock and dam project and to relinquish claims to all land not yet conveyed to it.” The General Assembly donated the land grant to the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines & Minnesota Railroad Company.

3.7 In 1866, the railroad reached Des Moines. That same year, the General Assembly voted to declare the Des Moines River as unnavigable.

3.8 Railroads made possible the development of farms and communities away from the rivers. In 1867, the first railroad traversed the state to the Missouri River. By the early 1870s, railroads had significantly altered Iowa’s economy as a commercial farming state. Citizens along potential railroad

routes were excited because the railroad meant an economic boom for farm communities. Competition was often intense between small communities where railroad companies were planning routes. Some towns materialized overnight, while others towns bypassed by the rail line slowly disappeared.

3.9 Beginning in 1871, the Burlington and Southwestern Railroad traversed the four-county border of Missouri and Iowa from Fort Madison through Bloomfield before turning south into Missouri. Towns on the line, now byway communities, thrived with the new connections to world markets.



Courtesy of sjcook.com

The Burlington and Southwestern rail line came through southeastern Iowa in 1871. Towns along the route prospered.



*The Depot Museum celebrates Eldon's railroad history.*

- 3.10 Cantril began when L.W. Cantril offered right-of-way and land to the Burlington and Southwestern in exchange for a station in a town he had platted. Cantril built and operated the first store.
- 3.11 Towns along the new rail lines thrived while those bypassed declined and even disappeared. Iowaville was one town that withered away when the nearby town of Independent (later named Selma) was included on the Des Moines and Keokuk line.
- 3.12 In 1870, the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad established an important junction when it crossed the Des Moines and Keokuk line. Eldon incorporated at this junction in 1872, soon developing into a thriving railroad town. The Eldon Depot Museum honors this history.

3.13 Branch lines reached out to farm communities, connecting them to markets in Chicago and St. Louis. In 1881, the state offered a \$500 bonus if a narrow-gauge railroad operated by the Chicago, Ft. Madison, Burlington & Quincy Railroad would enter the junction that would become Stockport by January 1, 1882. A boxcar served as a depot until 1890 when the men of the neighborhood volunteered to move the depot from the defunct town of Longview to Stockport. The new town incorporated in 1887, and prospered when the line changed to standard track in 1891. Stretching from Ottumwa to Fort Madison, the C. B. & Q gained its nickname "Peavine" from the winding route it took across four southeastern counties. The line served Stockport until the late 1970s. The original depot is preserved as the Peavine Line Depot and Museum.

3.14 The head of the Wabash railway, Jay Gould, was described as "a greedy, shrewd speculator, adept at seizing railroad companies and draining them to acquire others at incredible profits." It was Gould's desire to add Des Moines to his

holdings. Prominent businessmen in Des Moines joined Gould to form "the Wabash syndicate." In 1881 they incorporated the Des Moines and Saint Louis railroad, which was to span 68 miles from Des Moines to Albia. In 1899, to fill the need of a direct route between Moulton and Albia, the 28-mile link was completed. The Wabash Combination Depot was constructed in Moravia on that link. It is one of the two remaining standard plan wooden Wabash depots in Iowa.

3.15 With farm-to-market road and vehicle improvements, rail branch lines became obsolete. By the 1970s most were abandoned. No rail lines currently exist in the byway corridor.



*Nearly unaltered on the exterior and interior, the depot preserved in the Moravia Historical Complex represents the typical small town railroad station built during the peak railroad years.*

## SUB-THEME 4

The 1846 Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois is a story of perseverance and survival in crossing Van Buren and Davis counties on their trek to religious freedom in Utah.

### Messages:

- 4.1 The “Camp of Israel” under the leadership of Brigham Young, consisting of about 500 wagons and 2,500 men, women, and children, set out from their first winter camp at Sugar Creek on March 1, 1846.
- 4.2 The wagon train traveled along the north side of the Des Moines River until, on March 5, they reached a shallow, rocky, river bottom at Bonaparte that they could ford.
- 4.3 Bogged down in the spring mud, on March 7 the wagon train made a temporary encampment at Richardson’s Point, 10 miles west of Keosauqua. It is here that they buried Edwin Little and James Tanner, the first two to die on the trek, a grave site that is now part of the byway.
- 4.4 During the 11 days at Richardson’s Point, William Pitt’s Brass Band

played concerts in Keosauqua in exchange for money and supplies.

- 4.5 Some immigrants stayed in communities along the Mormon Trail and took jobs to fund their journey west. Skilled stonemasons who had worked on the Mormon Temple and other Nauvoo edifices constructed several buildings in Bentonsport, including the Mason House Inn and Mormon House. These, as well as a Mormon-built log cabin at the Davis County Historical Complex in Bloomfield, are byway attractions.

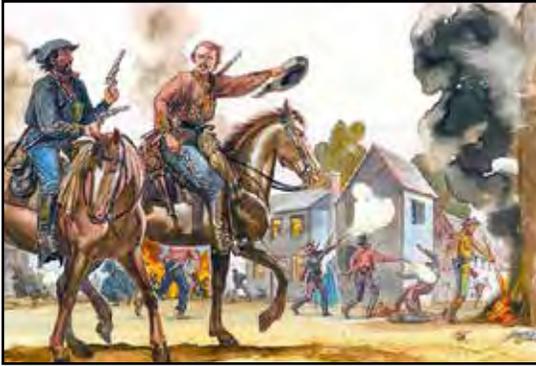


The byway crosses the Des Moines River in Bonaparte at the site where the Mormon wagon train forded the river.



Artist C.C.A. Christensen’s 1878 painting Crossing the Mississippi on Ice depicts Mormons fleeing from Nauvoo, Illinois, across to Iowa in 1846.

## SUB-THEME 5



*Guerrilla warfare occurred in Missouri for most of the Civil War.*

Southeastern Iowa bordered the hotly contested Missouri slave state where the Underground Railroad brought slaves to freedom and local militias protected citizens from Missouri Confederate Guard units and pro-Confederate “Bushwhackers.”

### Messages:

5.1 Slaves entered southeastern Iowa through Farmington, Keosauqua, and Bloomfield. Safe houses provided by abolitionists provided protection and passage to Chicago and Canada and freedom. Those who transported slaves needed great courage and conviction. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 provided for punishment of anyone who hindered the return of escaped slaves. Salem, Iowa was a main “depot,” and the Pearson House in Keosauqua and

Mason House Inn in Bentonsport were stations on the Underground Railroad.

5.2 Guerrilla warfare occurred in Missouri for most of the Civil War. Bands of pro-South men would hunt and kill Union soldiers and pro-Union civilians. These “Bushwhackers” had no affiliation with the Confederate Army, although some had official sanction. Common tactics included dressing in stolen Union uniforms, ambushing individuals, families, and smaller army detachments, or raiding farms to steal supplies, food, and anything else of value. William Quantrill and William (Bloody Bill) Anderson led the most notorious bands, which included infamous outlaws Jesse and Frank James and Cole Younger.



*The Pearson House Museum tour includes compelling stories of abolitionist Franklin Pearson’s participation in the Underground Railroad.*

5.3 On October 12, 1864 Jim Jackson, described as “one of Missouri’s more notorious Confederate guerrilla commanders with a reputation for terror,” led 12 guerrilla Bushwhackers into Davis County, Iowa. The raid coincided with an invasion of Missouri led by Confederate General Sterling Price, who was attempting to retake Missouri for the Confederacy. Jackson had been employed (as were other guerrilla groups) to “create a distraction.”

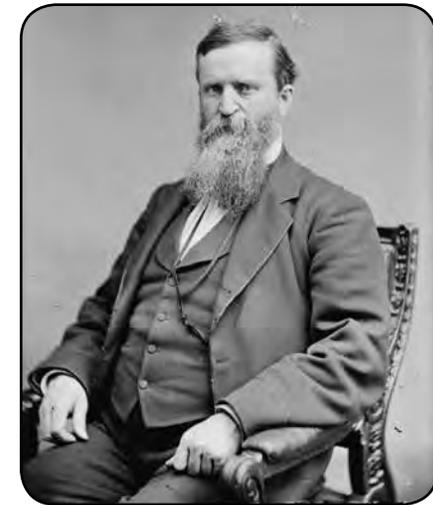
5.4 During a 12-hour spree, Jackson’s men raided several farms, taking money, horses, and prisoners, and breaking any guns they found. Jackson murdered Ebenezer Small and Captain P.H. Bence, Union soldiers home on furlough, and farmer Thomas Hardy because he refused to turn over his horses.

5.5 The raid coincided with the Davis County Fair in Bloomfield. Hearing of the raid, the fair disbanded and a militia was organized under the leadership of Colonel J.B. Weaver. As the “day of carnage” closed, the militia on their tracks, Jackson released the prisoners and disappeared into Missouri.

5.6 Following the raid, Colonel Weaver was placed in charge of 100 mounted men to patrol the border night and day and arrest any suspicious characters. There were several incidents and many arrests in the months before the war ended in May 1865. At war’s end, Jim Jackson attempted to escape to Illinois but was captured and executed by Union militiamen in Audrain County, Missouri.

5.7 A monument at Shooters Roost, 5 miles south of Bloomfield, marks the spot where Thomas Hardy was murdered.

*Courtesy of Library of Congress*



*General James Baird Weaver*



*In 2005, the Davis County Guerrilla Raid Society dedicated this monument to the raid. In 2010, the society completed marking 34 points along the terror trail where the raiders stopped to rob, kidnap, and kill civilians.*



Keosauqua's GAR Park includes an 18-foot monument engraved with the names of Civil War veterans.

5.8 The Battle of Athens, which occurred August 5, 1861, was the northernmost skirmish of the Civil War west of the Mississippi River. Secessionist Missouri State Guardsmen, numbering 2,000, attacked a Missouri Union Home Guard regiment of 330 men. Outnumbered but better trained and equipped, the Union forces chased the Confederates off and captured many abandoned horses and arms.

5.9 The Keokuk Rifles, a militia unit from Keokuk, arrived during the Battle of Athens and fired across the river at the Confederates. The Confederates fired cannon shells across the river, striking the depot in Croton, Iowa.

5.10 Keosauqua's GAR Park has an 18-foot limestone monument erected soon after the Civil War and also displays four cannons from the war.



Croton Civil War Park memorializes the northernmost Civil War skirmish west of the Mississippi River. The Battle of Athens State Historic Site across the river includes tours of historic houses and interpretation of the battle.

## SUB-THEME 6

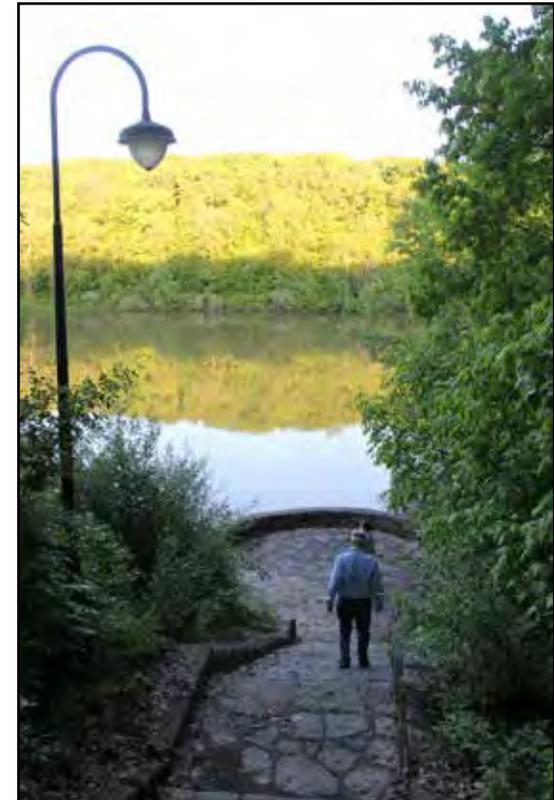
The Historic Hills Scenic Byway traverses the steeply rolling Southern Iowa Drift Plain, where a diverse landscape offers rich habitat for wildlife and a variety of recreation opportunities.

### Messages:

- 6.1 The Southern Iowa Drift Plain landform, glaciated hundreds of thousands of years ago, is deeply carved by water, creating a hilly landscape. Deep streams in major valleys make possible large water impoundments like Rathbun Lake.
- 6.2 The byway route bisects the 9,148-acre Shimek State Forest, Iowa's third largest state forest. This largest contiguous forest in Iowa is the core of the Shimek Bird Conservation Area, part of the nationwide effort to protect dwindling populations of birds. Extensive recreation facilities including hiking and equine trails, stocked fishing ponds, campgrounds, and hunting opportunities.
- 6.3 Lacey-Keosauqua State Park, established in 1921, is Iowa's second oldest state park. The park borders

the great "Horseshoe Bend" of the Des Moines River, and at 1,653 acres is one of the largest and most picturesque of Iowa's state parks and recreation areas. Visitors can explore nature, geology, archaeology, and history while camping, hiking, or driving through the park. The park, adjacent wildlife area, and Lake Sugema Recreation Area form the core of the Lacey-Keosauqua Bird Conservation Area.

- 6.4 The Breeding Bird Atlas lists 134 species that are likely to breed in the byway corridor. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources lists 38 bird "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" likely to breed in the byway corridor. The byway, particularly in the two Bird Conservation Areas and 12 wildlife areas, is especially rewarding for travelers who list birds as a hobby or are simply interested in birds.



*A massive stone walkway leads from a bathhouse to a 30-acre man-made lake. These were among the extensive park developments completed in Lacey-Keosauqua State Park by the Civilian Conservation Corps, President Roosevelt's Forest Army.*



Courtesy of Iowa Science Interface

Volunteers combine pleasure with service on a Project Aware cleanup of the Lower Des Moines Water Trail. (Courtesy of Iowa Science Interface)

Courtesy of Honey Creek Resort State Park



- 6.5 The Lower Des Moines River Water Trail offers paddlers and boaters opportunities to fish, watch wildlife, and explore historic river towns on 53 miles of the river between Eldon and Farmington.
- 6.6 Rathbun Lake, created by damming the Chariton River, has 11,000 acres of water and 22,900 acres of public land. Eight parks and two marinas make this a favorite playground for Iowans.
- 6.7 County Conservation boards within the byway corridor manage parks and wildlife areas offering a variety of recreational opportunities for byway travelers.

Honey Creek Resort State Park on Rathbun Lake is Iowa's first destination state park offering outdoor recreation with luxury accommodations.

# SUB-THEME 7

Historic river towns and Amish and Mennonite communities along the byway create a culture where a slower pace of life is reminiscent of an earlier era.

## Messages:

7.1 The Villages of Van Buren, noted for their lack of fast-food establishments and stoplights, attract tourists seeking a slower pace of life and more authentic experience.

7.2 The Des Moines River towns of Farmington, Bonaparte, Bentonsport, and Keosauqua preserve their historic ambiance “untouched by time,” and “the peace and tranquility of small-town life.”



Dutch Country General Store in Bloomfield serves Amish needs and is popular with tourists.

7.3 The Davis County Amish settlement is one of the largest Amish communities in Iowa. Amish farms, with their horse-drawn equipment and clothes drying outdoors, add a nostalgic charm to the byway.



Horse-drawn buggies and farm equipment are common sights on the byway.

7.4 “Although Mennonites and Amish have common 16th century roots, their lifestyle practices distinguish the two sects. Amish men have untrimmed beards and hooks and eyes in place of buttons on outer garments; horse and buggy transportation; horse-drawn implements for farming; plain and distinctive dress; and no electricity in homes. In contrast, most contemporary Mennonites are indistinguishable from modern society. Mennonites believe in simple living, but do not express that simplicity by separating from society as the Amish continue to do.” (HHSB Corridor Management Plan)

- 7.5 John C. Krehbiel, his wife, and son, of Butler County, Ohio, arrived in Fort Madison in 1839 and established the first settlement of Mennonites east of the Mississippi near Donnellson. This Anabaptist sect came to America to escape extreme persecution. Mennonites from Germany arrived in the area in 1850 and established Zion Church in Donnellson. A historical marker in Donnellson Railroad Park documents their history.
- 7.6 Mennonite families operate three establishments that cater to or work cooperatively with Amish and are popular with tourists: Dutchman's



- Store in Cantril, Milton Creamery in Milton, and Dutch Country General Store in Bloomfield.
- 7.7 Davis County Tourism Corporation promotes more than 90 Amish businesses in a map and guide distributed in the Davis County Welcome Center.
- 7.8 Villages Folk School in Keosauqua provides learning experiences in traditional arts and crafts, fine arts, nature study, and skills relating to the home. Visitors can experience arts and crafts of earlier times at Bonaparte Pottery National Historic and Archaeological Site and several shops in the Villages of Van Buren.

- 7.9 Several agricultural attractions are located in the byway corridor, including Appleberry Orchard (Iowa's oldest orchard), Harvestville Farm, Trimble Parker Historic Farmstead

*Zion Mennonite Church in Donnellson, rebuilt in 1909, serves the oldest Mennonite congregation east of the Mississippi River, established in 1850.*



*Bonaparte Pottery makes utilitarian pieces using the original 19th century molds.*

District, and Morris Park, a museum with several historic buildings and farm-related artifacts.

- 7.10 Barn quilts represent the agricultural character of the byway corridor, and Davis County provides a driving tour guide with interpretation of each barn quilt.

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# CHAPTER 6

# INTERPRETIVE MEDIA



Viewing a byway interpretive wayside exhibit at the Keosauqua Riverfront Trail.



Visitors view an interpretive panel about the Mormon migration at the Davis County Museum Complex in Bloomfield.

## INTERPRETIVE MEDIA

Heritage interpretation is a communication process that guides visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes.

The Historic Hills Byway has a rich natural and cultural heritage. The Ioway tribe, the namesake of the state of Iowa, lived on the Des Moines River near what was once Iowaville. It is the home of Iowa's first European settlers. Mormons fleeing persecution and headed for Utah passed through this region. Slave sympathizers set up stops along the

Underground Railroad, while Iowa's only action in the Civil War occurred here. State parks and the largest state forest, a state water trail, and other natural sites allow visitors to explore southeastern Iowa's natural history. The stories associated with the byway are expressed in greater detail in Chapter 5: Themes and Messages. The techniques used to communicate interpretive messages are referred to as interpretive media.

Well-planned interpretive media can open windows of revelation to visitors who seek to find their own personal connections and meanings in these resources. Part of the reward in traveling a beautiful scenic byway is the sense of discovery in exploring a new and exciting place and the feeling of growing emotionally and intellectually in the process.

Interpretive media takes many forms. Wayside exhibits, trail signs, brochures, websites, audio tours, apps, and visitor center exhibits are some of the ways we attempt to help visitors find their way and enjoy their experiences. Visitors' lives are enriched as they discover personal meanings regarding these resources.



Lacey-Keosauqua State Park interprets its history as a Civilian Conservation Corps work camp.

# EXISTING INTERPRETIVE MEDIA

A variety of interpretive opportunities are already available for travelers on the Historic Hills Scenic Byway. The recommendations in this chapter should supplement and enhance these existing facilities and programs.

## Welcome/Visitor Centers

Along the route there are two visitor information centers that distribute byway tear sheets, and staff are available to answer questions about the byway:

- **Van Buren County Welcome Center:** This center in Keosauqua is home to the Villages of Van Buren, Villages Folk School, and McCoy Historical Museum. The focus is on the Villages of Van Buren, but staff also provide byway and regional information.
- **Davis County Welcome Center:** Located in Bloomfield, the center's focus is on the Amish experience, the top attraction in the county. This official Iowa Welcome Center also provides regional and byway information.

## Historical Museums

Several museum complexes have indoor and outdoor exhibits, artifacts, and experiences, lending credence to the "Historic Hills" name. The following sites are open regularly and are available to byway travelers.

- **Davis County Historical Complex, Bloomfield:** The 1866 Dr. William Findley home is the centerpiece of a complex that includes a Mormon-built log cabin, Livery Barn, Wheeler Ridge School, and Savannah Christian Church. The home and barn contain large artifact collections and exhibits.
- **Bonaparte Pottery:** Built in 1865, this is the only historic pottery building remaining in the state of Iowa.
- **Bentonsport National Historic District:** A downloadable walking tour guide booklet interprets the town as a living museum.



*The Amish horse and buggy display at the Davis County Welcome Center emphasizes the importance of the Amish experience for tourists.*



*A mural in the Livery Barn at the Davis County Historical Complex depicts the 1864 Civil War raid into Davis County.*



A trail leads alongside the rail line at Eldon Depot Museum to an abandoned bridge on the Des Moines River, where panels interpret early railroad and Eldon history.

- **Pearson House Museum Complex, Keosauqua:** The complex includes the 1847 Pearson House, Ellis School, and Moughler Log Cabin. Tours are available.
- **American Gothic House Center, Eldon:** This house made famous by Grant Wood's painting draws visitors from around the globe

- who want to discover the history of the artist and his iconic painting. They also can don costumes based on the painting and create their own portrait in front of the house.
- **Depot Museum, Eldon:** The town, founded on a major railroad crossing, celebrates its roots with a museum in the old Rock Island train depot. The depot houses artifacts and exhibits on railroad history. Outside, several restored pieces of rolling stock invite exploration.
- **Airpower Museum, Blakesburg:** This aviation museum includes a collection of antique aircraft and exhibits items pertaining to the historic development of aircraft.
- **Moravia Historical Complex:** The centerpiece of the complex is the Wabash Depot, which is open for tours on Sundays in summer. The complex includes the Fairview Church and School and other outbuildings and displays.
- **Pioneer Museum, Farmington:** This museum is housed in the second oldest Congregational Church west of the Mississippi River. It houses historical artifacts and is home to the Pioneer Historical Society. It is open during special events, weekends, and by appointment.

Exhibits at the American Gothic House Center in Eldon interpret Grant Wood's life and the history of the house, as well as the many ways his iconic painting has been parodied and reimagined over time.



## Nature Centers

Three nature centers along the byway interpret the rich natural resources of the region:

- **Pioneer Ridge Nature Area, Bloomfield:** This Wapello County Conservation center includes exhibits on wildlife, prairies, and other Iowa ecology. Staff offer environmental education programs.
- **Honey Creek Resort State Park, Moravia:** This state park resort includes an Activities Building that was designed by Iowa State University students to be a net-zero energy facility, using solar and wind energy. An on-site naturalist offers nature and recreational programs daily throughout the summer and four days a week the rest of the year.
- **Rathbun Fish Hatchery, Moravia:** This state-run fish hatchery is open weekends for self-guided tours of the rearing operation and exhibits.



*Pioneer Ridge Nature Area north of Bloomfield has a nature center that highlights Iowa's natural history.*

*The Activity Center at Honey Creek Resort State Park near Moravia is the hub of daily nature and outdoor recreation programs. Guests also can check out family field packs for self-guided birding, tracking, and invertebrate investigation activities.*





The Lower Des Moines River Water Trail has Villages of Van Buren kiosks at each access point, including in Farmington (above).



Shimek State Forest provides rustic kiosk bulletin boards at each of its access points.

## Kiosks and Wayside Exhibits

Kiosks are informational as well as interpretive. Their purpose is to give an overview of a resource or site and interpret its natural and cultural history and significance.

A wayside exhibit is an outdoor panel that interprets a specific site or feature. They provide meaningful insights that enrich the visitor's experience.

Several sites along the byway display interpretive kiosks and wayside exhibits. The style of the materials, design, and messages vary from site to site. Unified design and messaging for future byway kiosks and wayside exhibits will visually tie the media together for travelers while



The Iowa Mormon National Historic Trail uses standard National Park Service wayside exhibits to interpret each significant site, like this one in Blakesburg.

also organizing the diverse stories into holistic themes.

Shimek State Forest, the three state parks along the byway (Wapello, Lacey-Keosauqua, and Honey Creek), and the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail all have kiosks to provide visitors with information, maps, and brochures.

Attractions such as the American Gothic House Center and the Depot Museum, both in Eldon, use outdoor wayside exhibits to interpret resources.

Byway travelers also encounter a few families of unified wayside exhibits along the route, including several National Park Service waysides about the Mormon National Historic Trail, and a series installed by the Villages of Van Buren to interpret the history of each community.



Several communities in Van Buren County have panels interpreting their history.

## Conservation Innovation Grant Panels

Wayside exhibits for Iowa's scenic byways were developed in 2015 through a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) project. The goal of the project was to develop a cohesive, statewide set of interpretive panels along 10 of Iowa's byways to describe how Iowa's agricultural producers are utilizing conservation systems.

The designs for the panels and metal bases originate from standards developed by Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters for the Iowa Byways Interpretive Master Plans project.

Two CIG wayside exhibits were developed and installed along the Historic Hills Scenic Byway:

- **“Formed Under the Sea,” Riverfront Park, Keosauqua:** This wayside exhibit next to the Des Moines River interprets Iowa's geologic origins and the importance of protecting the soil through agricultural conservation practices.
- **“Rooted in the Soil,” McGowen Recreation and Wildlife Area, Bloomfield:** The second CIG wayside exhibit is east of Bloomfield in McGowen Recreation and Wildlife Area. It interprets the history of Iowa's prairies, from the days when they dominated the landscape to the value of adding prairies back to the landscape today.

CIG wayside exhibits were installed along the river in Keosauqua (above) and at McGowen Recreation and Wildlife Area in Bloomfield (below).



An easy-to-use tear-sheet map of the byway, with color-coded descriptions of attractions on the back side, is available at businesses, museums, and welcome centers along the byway.



The byway website is part of Travel Iowa website.

## Print and Digital Media

Many sites and attractions along the byway produce brochures and other promotional publications. Pathfinders RC&D promotes the byway with a Historic Hills brochure. Pathfinders also produces a tear-sheet map that lists byway attractions on the back.



Many attractions on the byway also have their own websites. The Historic Hills Scenic Byway website is part of the larger Travel Iowa website.

A general brochure introduces the byway and highlights areas of interest.

# WAYFINDING

Wayfinding, the ability of travelers to negotiate a byway route and find attractions, is the basis for positive visitor experiences. Without effective wayfinding, visitors cannot access attractions and may become frustrated with their entire byway experience.

To navigate successfully, travelers look for directional signs along the road and other visual cues. Byway stakeholders should regularly analyze the effectiveness of wayfinding and address confusing areas.

Overall, the 112-mile Historic Hills byway route is easy to follow as it passes through the major communities. The attractive, uniform Iowa byway logo signs are recognizable and well placed along the route. However, the byway corridor resources and attractions, identified as including all within 10 miles either side of the main route, require considerable effort to locate and often require out-and-back forays off the route.

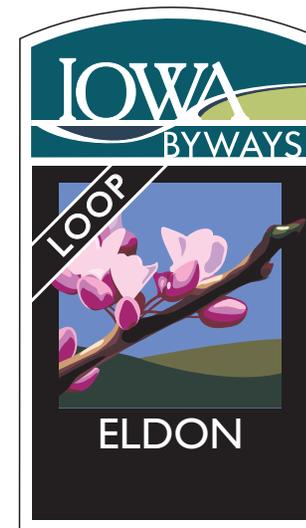
The following recommendations can improve the wayfinding experience throughout the corridor.



*Official byway attraction signs would direct travelers to information centers, experience hubs, wayside exhibits, and other core resources of the byway.*

## Recommendations

- **Designate Loops:** Create two loops (described and mapped in Chapter 4: Resources) to link the majority of attractions within the byway corridor but not on the main route. These loops, marked with byway “loop” signs, will greatly improve organization of resources and wayfinding.
- **Official Byway Attraction Signs:** Work with the Iowa Department of Transportation to develop a system of byway attraction signs that guide

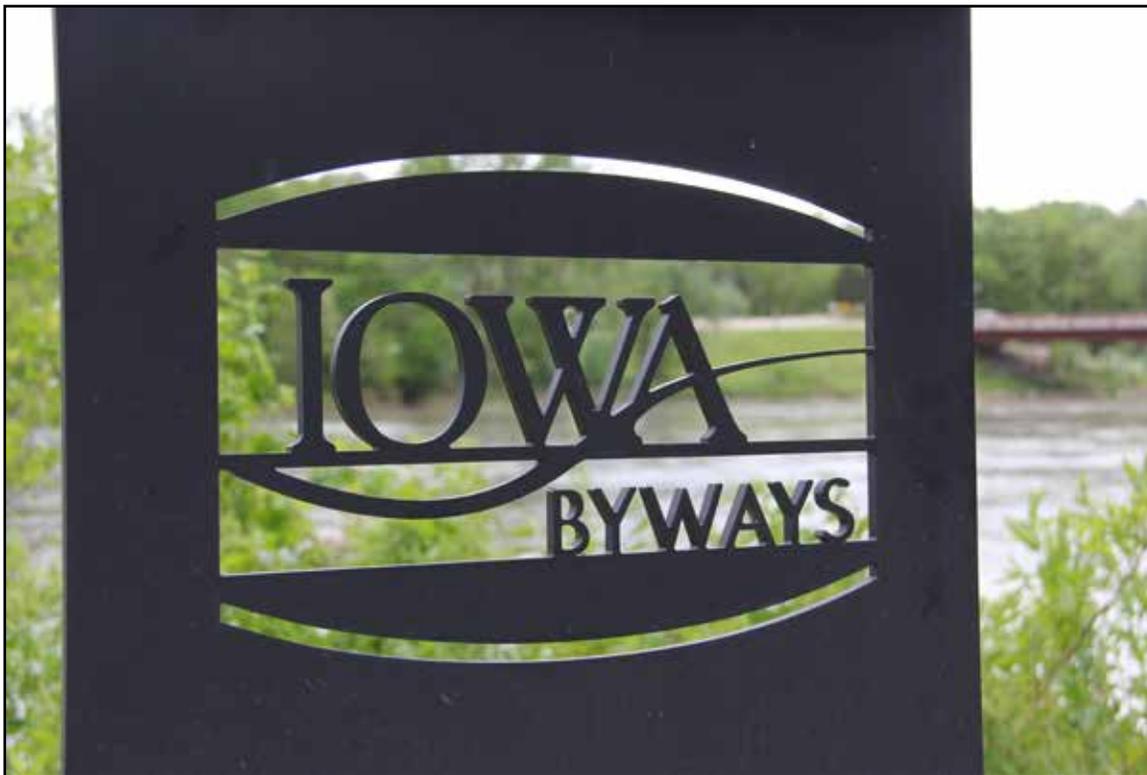


*Clearly designated loops for the routes to attractions along to the Des Moines River north to Eldon and along Highway 2 would make navigating the byway more logical.*

travelers to primary resources associated with the byway, such as wayside exhibits, experience hubs, information centers, scenic overlooks, and other sites. The signs can be developed with a slightly modified version of the DOT “Destination/ Guide Signs” standards. The addition of the Iowa Byways logo designates it as an official state byway sign and provides visual unity with byway route identification signs and media.

- **Travel Guide:** In lieu of the tear sheet that includes all corridor resources, develop a byway travel guide booklet that separates resource maps and descriptions into the Eastern Region, Highway 2 Loop, Western Region, and Eldon Loop, with additional maps for the Lower Des Moines River Trail and the Mormon Trail. Develop **inset maps** that guide visitors to resources within each major community (see pages 153-156).

- **Online Media:** Include directional information and interactive maps in all online media such as websites, mobile tour websites, and apps (see pages 138-148).
- **Experience Hubs:** Place easily recognizable experience hubs in prominent locations along the route to serve as focal points that draw the attention of travelers and provide orientation to local interpretive resources and media (see pages 110-120).
- **Integrate Online and Traditional Media:** Place the byway website address and QR code on all traditional media such as experience hubs, exhibits, and publications.



*Two wayside exhibits on the byway developed through the Conservation Innovation Grant have the Iowa Byways logo on their supports, branding these signs as part of the Historic Hills experience.*

# PLAN MEDIA HOLISTICALLY

Interpretive media can help visitors discover underlying meanings and appreciate the historical reasons for the cultural landscape that surrounds them.

## **Connect to Universal Concepts:**

Organize media to interpret the unique personality of each community so travelers can see the shared human qualities of seemingly different cultures. Universal concepts such as life and death, parenthood, adolescent rebellion, freedom of speech and religion, and other humanizing commonalities help visitors make emotional and intellectual connections to byway resources.

## **Brand and Unify the Experience:**

Visually coordinate the color palette, fonts, and other design elements to create immediate recognition by travelers. Cross-reference media so a visitor can access information that will connect them to related stories, resources, and other media. For instance, publications should direct readers to websites, wayside exhibits, and audiovisual tours, and vice versa.

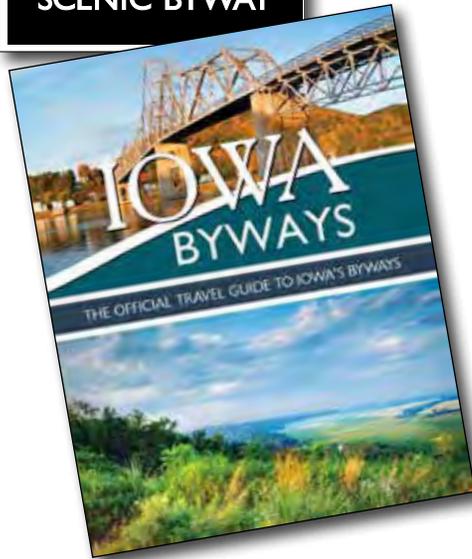
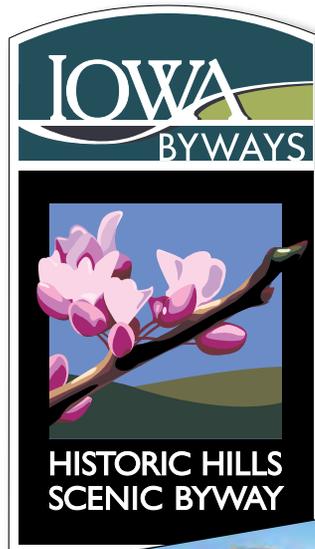


*Media in its many forms will connect visitors to the historic and cultural character of the byway.*

## **Diversify Delivery Techniques:**

Multiple delivery approaches help in communicating successfully with travelers of many ages, interests, backgrounds, and motivations. Weather and seasons require offering alternative forms of media.

**Be Accessible:** To communicate with the greatest number of people, incorporate a full spectrum of learning styles such as auditory, visual, and tactile. Develop media to connect with a variety of travelers including tourists, bus tours, commuters, and families.



*Following a set of design guidelines, as has already been done for the Iowa Byways, creates a family of media that is instantly recognizable as belonging to the state's scenic routes.*

## CREATE A DISTINCTIVE VISUAL IDENTITY

The complex landscape of any road corridor has conflicting visual components that distract travelers from the byway experience. To be successful, interpretive efforts should capitalize on the recognizable icons and strong features of the area's sense of place.

The colors and curves of the media graphics, the selected construction materials, and even the fonts need to be unified with each other and reflect the character of the rivers and villages of the byway. What may seem like redundant design elements to the planning team will be reassuringly familiar to a byway traveler.

The Iowa Department of Transportation has already developed a strong identity for Historic Hills Scenic Byway and the Iowa Byways program. Road signs are unified across the state's byways in their artistic style. An accompanying Iowa Byways guide creates a unified family of byways. The media recommendations that follow build on the existing design work to further the byway's interpretive goals.

### Visual Identity Through Design

- The colors used on the byway logo should serve as the palette for other media.
- The Historic Hills Scenic Byway and Iowa Byways logos should be replicated on all publications, interpretive signs, and online media for optimal exposure and recognition.
- Apply unified design standards to all frames and supports for signs, experience hubs, and wayside exhibits.
- Apply consistent graphic elements such as type style and sizes, color palette, and artistic approaches.

## Unified Design Standards

To increase recognition and to provide a more cohesive experience for travelers, all media should be graphically and visually unified. The use of unified and repeated colors, fonts, logos, and other graphic elements will combine media into a family of recognizable byway features. The following suggestions should be considered in the design of future media.

### Color Palette

A standard set of colors unites media, highlights important messages, and evokes feelings about a site or an organization.

In 2010, the Iowa Department of Transportation Office of Media and Marketing established logos and color palettes for all Iowa byways and for the overall Iowa Byways brand. Brand descriptions and regulations are described in the “Iowa Byways Brand Guidelines” documents prepared for each byway. According to the document, “the brand is ultimately the program’s public identity intended to create awareness of the program and its benefits and to encourage and enhance the visitor’s experience on Iowa’s scenic byways.”

### Historic Hills Scenic Byway: Media Color Palette

Dark Red 1 CMYK= 70,100,90,0	Pink 2 CMYK= 20,60,0,0	Twig 1 CMYK= 0,10,20,0	Dark Green CMYK= 100,90,0,0	Black CMYK= 0,0,0,100	White CMYK= 0,0,0,0
Curved headers, footers, drop caps	Curved header accent lines	Curved header accent lines, tint boxes	Subheadings, captions	Main text, captions, credits	Text over dark colors, photo borders
Dark Red 2 CMYK= 80,100,100,0	Light Green CMYK= 10,0,20,0	Medium Green CMYK= 70,60,90,0	Twig 2 CMYK= 20,40,60,0	Blue CMYK= 60,40,0,0	
Headings	Additional family colors				

The color palette established as part of the logo designs should be repeated in byway media. The rolling green hills in the logo background and the pink, lavender, and dark red hues of the Eastern redbud tree blossom reflect the byway landscape. The palette offers a good variety of contrasting colors that can be used to unify media. If other colors are needed, they should complement this family of colors.



*Historic Hills publications feature the beautiful redbud blooms.*

## Historic Hills Scenic Byway: Recommended Typography

### CHELTENHAM BT

Main titles and headings

*BrushTip Travis*

Headings and subheadings, handwriting  
(quotes, photos)

### Garrison Sans

Main text

*Garrison Sans Italic*

Photo captions

*Garrison Sans Italic*

Photo credits

## Typography

The design and selection of letter forms creates the personality and readability of blocks of type on interpretive media. Each typeface expresses personality and sets a tone that reflects the organization or the message that is being interpreted, so it should be selected purposefully.

Combinations of various styles can add an interesting hierarchy to the media design and help create specific personalities for each message. Fonts can appear lighthearted and fun, informal, businesslike, old-fashioned, rustic, or legalistic. They can seem difficult to wade through or look easy to read.

Stylized fonts attract attention for titles and short headings but can be burdensome to read in longer texts.

On the Iowa Byways logo, the typeface for “IOWA” is a derivative of Cheltenham BT set in all caps. The original typeface was manipulated to blend with the abstract graphic representations of hills and valleys. The recommended font for main titles and headings on most byway media is **Cheltenham BT Bold**, evoking the timeless nature of the Historic Hills region and creating consistency between media.

**BrushTip Travis** is an informal script font that provides contrast to the more formal fonts. It serves a similar purpose as the “History in Bloom” font used alongside the curving line in the Iowa Byways guide. These types of fonts welcome viewers and invite them to explore interpretive media. BrushTip Travis is recommended for some titles and headings, such as on wayside exhibits, for subheadings, and to emulate handwriting. It can add an informal handwritten style to photographs or quotes.

Simple, familiar fonts work best for longer text that require more reading. **Garrison Sans** is recommended for the main text on byway media. Garrison Sans is used in the Iowa Byways publication, and it is also similar to Gill Sans, which is the font used on the byway logos. It is a sans serif font that is easy to read. Garrison Sans also works well for photo captions and credits.

A **hierarchy of type sizes** is also important to emphasize the relative significance of various messages. Typically, a main title is the largest size, followed by subheadings, main text, captions, and credits.

## Repeating Graphic Elements

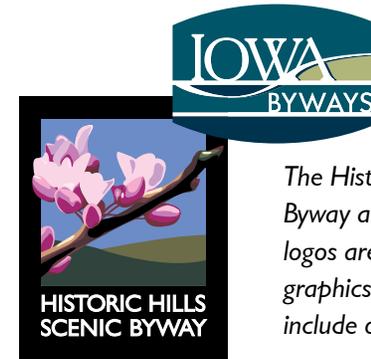
Another important factor that contributes to a unified design style is the use of repeating graphic elements. These elements, in combination with the color and typography schemes, develop a unique identity for the byway.

The Historic Hills Scenic Byway and Iowa Byways logos are essential graphic elements that should be included on all byway media, from interpretive signs and publications to digital websites and apps. They provide a unified brand for the byway and for the Iowa Byways program.

According to the Iowa DOT, “the colors and curves in the Iowa Byways logo are an abstraction of the undulating Iowa landscape. Individual logos for the individual byways in the Iowa Byways program were developed in an intentionally simple graphic style so as to appear as a recognizable and memorable graphic theme, descriptive of the character and experience of the byway, and as a safe and effective wayshowing tool when displayed on signage.”

Other repeated graphic elements on future interpretive media will reinforce the already existing design identity. These include:

- Curving header bars comprised of gently interwoven contrasting dark, medium, and light colors from the Historic Hills Scenic Byway color palette. The curve is reminiscent of the wave pattern in the Iowa byways logo.
- Faded light blue backgrounds with a gradient on interpretive media.
- White, snapshot-style borders for photos, tilted slightly, and with drop shadows.
- Tint boxes with rounded corners and drop shadows.
- Large focal point images to draw attention.
- Byway website addresses and QR codes that link to the Iowa Byways website.



*The Historic Hills Scenic Byway and Iowa Byways logos are essential graphics elements to include on all media.*



*Curved header with faded blue background, byway logos.*



*Snapshot photo effect with white feathered borders, caption, tilt, and shadow.*

## INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCE HUBS

Experience hubs are thematic kiosks that orient byway travelers to significant regional attractions and stories. To be effective, they must be prominently placed in public places where motorists will see them. Unlike staffed welcome centers, they are on duty 24 hours a day throughout all seasons and weather. They have the ability to capture the attention of travelers passing through the region.

Kiosks dispersed throughout the byway will serve the greatest number of travelers. Highly visible sites with adjacent parking are essential. It is important that “Byway Information” road signs alert travelers as they approach these kiosks.

Experience hubs installed at natural entry points to the byway corridor can provide opportunities for introducing impromptu travelers to the scenic byway. The western (Honey Creek Resort State Park) and eastern (Donnellson Highway 2) byway entries are important introductory points. The American Gothic House Center in Eldon, a major destination attraction, is another key introductory point.



*The most effective experience hubs are those installed in highly visible areas where visitors naturally gather, like this one with a maritime theme along the Door County Coastal Byway in Wisconsin (Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters design).*

# Experience Hub Concept Design: Front Side (Bloomfield)



## Experience Hub Design

The byway identity will benefit from a consistent, recognizable pattern of design for all interpretive media. These designs will brand the media as relevant to byway travelers. Experience hub design consistent with other Iowa scenic byway structures helps travelers associate and identify similar patterns as they travel Iowa's byways.

Each kiosk structure should:

- Exhibit a unified design with all other interpretive media.
- Reflect regional themes through unique graphics cut into the steel frame and through the messages included on each panel.
- Be highly visible to travelers, but not overpower existing agency and site entry signs at welcome centers, parks, and attractions.
- Appear rustic and durable in rural sites, but be formal enough to fit into urban settings.
- Appear elegant, but be economically produced.
- Be easily replaced, modified, or repaired.

## Materials

Construction elements such as wooden timbers, weathering steel, and limestone block bring a substantial feel and authenticity to the structure. The strong combination of wood and metal appears organic while also being vandal-resistant and low-maintenance. The limestone base connects to prominent bedrock of the Historic Hills Byway region.

## Curved Steel Header

A curved, weathering steel header at the top of the hub presents a graceful rustic look and provides a surface for cut-out symbols and scenes to interpret the stories of the Historic Hills Scenic Byway. Each hub can have its own unique cut-out designs, such as rolling hills and rows of crops, Amish buggies, steamboats, and other symbols that represent each byway region.

## Interpretive Signage

Each experience hub will exhibit four interpretive panels—two panels on each side of the structure:

- **Byway Overview:** The first panel introduces the byway and explains what makes it unique. It includes a map of the byway, photos, and brief

text that reveals the character and uniqueness (themes) of the byway.

- **Three Regional Panels:** The six-county byway corridor is divided into four regions: Eastern Region, Western Region, Highway 2 Loop, and Eldon Loop. The Eastern and Western regions on the byway route each have a panel. The remaining panel encompasses the two loops.

Detailed maps of attractions within each region use symbols that identify each as historical and archaeological, scenic and natural, cultural, or recreational in nature.

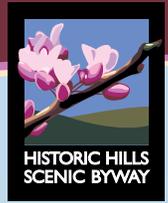
The order of the four panels on the hub varies by region. The byway overview panel placed next to the region in which the hub is located aids the reader in identifying nearby attractions.

The panels are 36"-by-36" and would be produced with ½"-thick high-pressure laminate installed on weathering steel backing. This affordable material allows for full-color, high-resolution signs that are resistant to damage and vandalism. A 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating is standard.

# Experience Hub Concept Design: Back Side (Bloomfield)



# HISTORIC HILLS SCENIC BYWAY

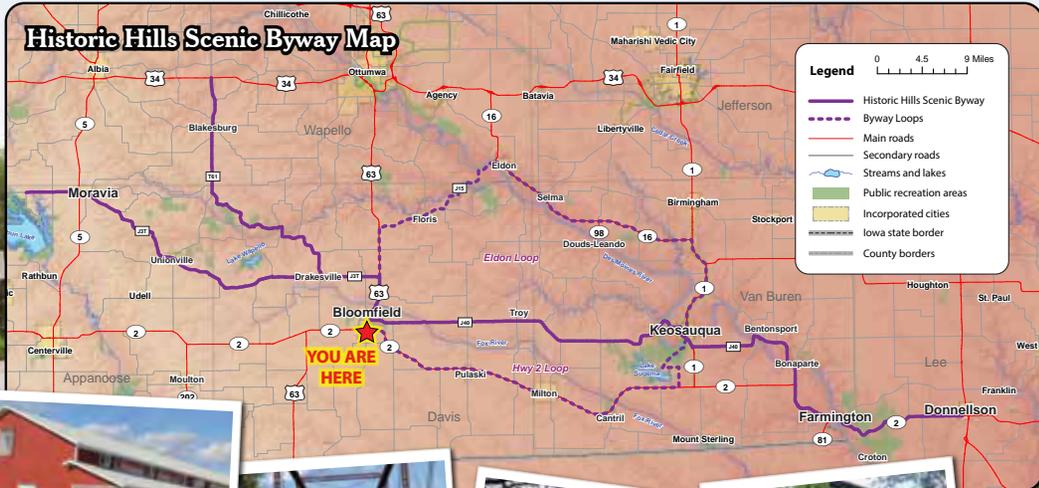


## Explore Historic Southeastern Iowa

Touring this byway is a journey back into old Iowa. Discover the hill country that was the historic home of the loway tribe, Chief Black Hawk, and Iowa's first European settlers. Visit old steamboat port towns, Iowa's oldest courthouse, Civil War and Underground Railroad sites, and trace the Mormon Trail. Immerse yourself in the natural beauty of three state parks, a state forest, the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail, and many other recreation areas.



The American Gothic House Center in Eldon celebrates Iowa artist Grant Wood and his iconic painting. The white house with the Gothic window still stands. Many of Wood's paintings depict southeastern Iowa.



Davis and Van Buren counties have a large Amish population. Dutch Country Store near Drakesville is a popular stop.



Bentonsport, a historic district on the Des Moines River, retains its 19th century character.



Lacey-Keosauqua is one of Iowa's largest state parks. Ely Ford marks a Mormon river crossing.



Historic buildings like the courthouse in Keosauqua, the oldest in Iowa, harken to Iowa's settlement.



www.iowabyways.org



### Experience Hub

### Overview Panel Concept (Bloomfield)

The first panel of each experience hub will provide an overview of Historic Hills Scenic Byway and its unique characteristics. A map displays the entire byway with an obvious "You are here" symbol. Major communities, roads, and streams are identified.

36"

## Experience Hub

### Western Region Panel Concept

Adjacent to the Overview Panel, this panel will interpret the particular region in which it is located, including its unique characteristics and some of the “must-see” attractions with photos and captions. An enlarged map of the region shows the primary resources and uses a “You are here” symbol. This panel would be repeated on each experience hub, although the region featured adjacent to the Overview Panel would change depending on the hub’s location.

# Western Region

## Parks and Amish Farms



**A Simple Way of Life**  
Byway travelers share the route with buggies and pass many Amish farmsteads and businesses in the Drakesville and Bloomfield areas.

**B**eginning in Bloomfield, the Davis County Courthouse and Historical Society Complex are must-see stops. Then venture past Amish farms that make up one of the largest such communities in Iowa. Explore nature at two state parks and other recreation areas. Follow the Mormon Pioneer Trail as it passes through towns steeped in early Iowa history.





The Davis County Welcome Center in Bloomfield offers travel advice and also sells local crafts, books, and souvenirs. The center is housed in a 1910 Sears and Roebuck home.



Built in 1878, the Second Empire architecture of the courthouse features a Kimberly ball and a Lady of Justice at its peak.



The historical complex in Bloomfield preserves five historic buildings, including Dr. William Finley's 1844 home, a Mormon-built log cabin, the Livery Barn museum, a school, and a church.



Lake Wapello features a 330-acre lake with a stone boat and bathhouse built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the '30s.



The oldest church in Appanoose County was built in 1856. Its bell saved the town from fire when a depot burned down in 1890. It also tallied the end of the Civil War and World War I and II.



This museum tells the history of aviation through models, engines, propellers, photos, and original art. Many of the antique aircraft on display are regularly flown.



This historical complex celebrates James Lloyd Stevens, local author of tales of lumberjack Paul Bunyan. The grounds also include the 1909 Wabash Railroad Depot and an 1894 chapel.



This is Iowa's first "destination state park," offering luxury accommodations with a variety of recreational activities on Rathbun Lake.



## Experience Hub

### Byway Loops Panel Concept

Adjacent to the Eastern Region panel on the second side of the kiosk, the Loops panel interprets some of the “must-see” attractions with photos and captions. An enlarged map of the region shows the primary resources and uses a “You are here” symbol. This panel would be repeated on each experience hub.

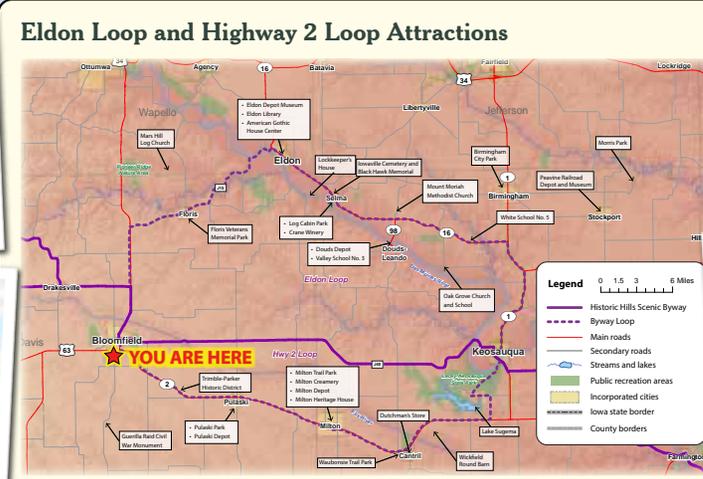
# Byway Loops

## The Heart of the Hills



**Lacey-Keosauqua State Park**  
The loop traverses Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. Enjoy nature, see ancient Native American burial mounds, and marvel at Civilian Conservation Corps stone structures.

Follow loops that circle through the heart of the byway. The Highway 2 Loop traverses picturesque Lacey-Keosauqua State Park and Lake Sugema, before rolling through scenic farm country and the communities of Cantril, Milton, and Pulaski. The Eldon Loop follows the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail to Eldon, historic land of the Ioway tribe and Sauk Chief Black Hawk.



**Eldon Loop and Highway 2 Loop Attractions**



**Dutchman's Store**  
A Mennonite family operates Dutchman's Store in Cantril and offers "pretty much everything you need to run a small farm or homestead." The shop is one of many area Mennonite businesses.



**Milton Creamery**  
Milton Creamery uses milk from cows pastured on local Amish farms to make award-winning Prairie Breeze cheese.



**Civil War Monument**  
The Guerrilla Raid Monument marks "12 hours of terror" inflicted by Missouri "Rebels and Bushwhackers" on October 12, 1864. This is the site where raiders murdered farmer Thomas Hardy.



**Mans Hill Log Church**  
Mans Hill Church near Floris was built in 1850 by pioneer settlers. The grounds and cemetery are on a picturesque bluff.



**Eldon Depot Museum**  
Eldon honors its heritage as an important railroad junction. The 1870 Rock Island Depot Museum includes rolling stock on the abandoned tracks and an overlook of the Des Moines River.



**One-Room Schools**  
Valley School No. 3 in Memorial Park in Douds-Leando is among several remaining one-room schools along the loop. It was used from 1928 to 1966 and has been restored with period furnishings.



**Iowayville Cemetery**  
The cemetery overlooks a historic Ioway tribal village site along the Des Moines. A gravestone memorial honors Chief Black Hawk.



**American Gothic House Center**  
See the original house that inspired Grant Wood's American Gothic. Try on costumes to re-enact the dour couple in front of the home, and discover the history of the painting in the center.

## Recommended Experience Hub Sites

Since experience hubs are intended to alert travelers to nearby attractions, they should be centrally located where travelers already gather—where they are searching for amenities and at sites where there are significant stories to experience. These hubs are prominent enough to draw first-time visitors and to capture the attention of potential new audiences passing by.

Seven locations are recommended for experience hubs representing the entry points and major regions of the byway.

### Donnellson: Highway 2 or Harvestville Farm

The byways' eastern entrance is in Donnellson, but there are few suitable areas for a kiosk directly on the byway. Harvestville Farm is a good alternative



Harvestville Farm on Highway 2 is a popular stop just a couple of miles east of the byway gateway in Donnellson.

as it is on Highway 2 just east of the byway entry and is a significant byway attraction.

### Bentonsport: Greef General Store or Community Entrance

Bentonsport, designated as a National Historic District, is a major attraction in the Villages of Van Buren and on the byway. A location near Greef General Store and Information Center would attract visitors exploring the downtown on foot. An alternative would be at the byway entrance to the community.



An experience hub and pull-off parking area near the entrance to Bentonsport, or at Greef General Store, would orient visitors to the many attractions in this National Historic District.



*Van Buren County Welcome Center in Keosauqua is one of two visitor information centers along the byway. A byway experience hub would introduce visitors to the route.*

### **Keosauqua: Van Buren County Welcome Center**

Ideal kiosk locations are in conjunction with a visitor information center where travelers can get personalized information to assist them in exploring the byway. An experience hub should be sited outside the welcome center in Keosauqua.

### **Bloomfield: Davis County Welcome Center**

This second welcome center on the byway is another natural place for an experience hub.



*The City Park in Blakesburg, a byway entry town, is directly on the route and is an easy location for travelers to get out and view an experience hub.*

### **Blakesburg City Park**

Blakesburg is the northern entry community on the T61 spur. City Park, directly across from the community museum, is on the route and the best location for a kiosk.



*Davis County Welcome Center in Bloomfield is a natural location for an experience hub.*

### Eldon: American Gothic House Center

The center is the most visited destination attraction in the region and is ideal for introducing the byway to a new audience. An experience hub should be placed in an unobtrusive area adjacent to the parking lot.

### Moravia: Entrance to Honey Creek Resort State Park or Moravia Historical Complex

The recently approved byway extension moved the western entry from Moravia to Honey Creek Resort State Park. A turnout with an experience hub at the “Begin” byway sign would attract park visitors and introduce the byway as a possible day-trip experience. As an alternative, consider the Moravia Historical Complex, a developed attraction directly on the J18 route.



*Moravia Historical Complex, which includes the Fairview Church, is near the western terminus of the byway.*



*American Gothic House Center is a major visitor draw in the region. A Historic Hills experience hub would offer the byway as another recreational opportunity.*



*The entrance to Honey Creek Resort State Park is the western end of the byway. An experience hub here would introduce resort guests to the byway as a local attraction.*

# WAYSIDE EXHIBITS

Wayside exhibits are interpretive panels placed along roads and trails to help visitors understand the stories and meanings of a resource or landscape. Photos, illustrations, and concise messages attract and hold a viewer's attention as they learn the stories of a site.

Wayside exhibits are an effective medium to communicate with visitors because they are always available regardless of season or weather. When installed next to the objects or sites that they interpret, they can immediately answer a visitor's questions. They are a direct and non-intrusive method to connect people with significant stories along the byway.

The best wayside exhibits present messages that are visual, concise, active, and multisensory. See the "Creating an Effective Message" box to the right for best practices when writing and designing signs.

Wayside exhibits should tell site-specific stories that bring a resource to life and place it into a context, connecting it to universal concepts that are relevant to everyone.

Current technologies offer numerous possibilities for enhancing interpretive panels. They can be cut into innovative shapes. Push-button audio devices with digital recordings can tell captivating stories using firsthand accounts and sound effects. Tactile elements, such as models and textures, can be added to provide a sensory experience. QR (quick response) codes can be incorporated for quick access to websites and multimedia content.



*This wayside exhibit along the Illinois Route 66 byway represents the period of significance for the road. (Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters design)*

## Creating an Effective Message

1. Communicate visually with photos and graphics.
2. Most visitors will look at an interpretive panel for only a few seconds. Apply the 3-30-3 Rule, a hierarchy that provides 3-second, 30-second, and 3-minute message levels.
3. Use simple words, concise sentences, and short paragraphs.
4. Describe with concrete nouns and active verbs. Avoid adverbs and adjectives.
5. Relate to the reader with familiar terms, personal pronouns, metaphors, and quotes.
6. Provide multisensory involvement with tactile and audio devices.



## Wayside Exhibit Design Recommendations

Wayside exhibit panels developed for Historic Hills Scenic Byway should incorporate the following design elements.

**Unified design:** Structures should match the same style as the experience hubs so they are readily identified as part of the byway's family of signs. This should include:

- Weathering steel supports with thematic cut-out graphics similar to the experience hubs. The top arch should have unique images based on the theme of the panel (Bonaparte pottery, 1800s village life, train cars, and steamboats). The Iowa Byways logo should be used on the supports to unify these wayside exhibits with those installed as part of the Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) panels project fabricated in 2015.
- Replication of colors, font styles, and graphic elements on the sign panels.
- Historic Hills Scenic Byway and Iowa Byways logos.
- Website addresses and QR codes to connect visitors to online content.

**Wayside exhibit concept design**  
(lowaville Cemetery)

# Lost Villages

As you gaze across this fertile valley, contemplate its significance in Iowa's history. Here were three villages that are now gone: the loway tribe, the Sauk and Fox, and the pioneer settlement of lowaville.



Sauk Chief Black Hawk portrait by George Catlin, 1832



## The Sauk and Fox

After the loway abandoned the village, the Sauk and Fox, including Sauk Chief Keokuk, occupied it. Beginning in 1833, after the Black Hawk War, the U.S. government forced the tribes to cede all eastern Iowa lands, including this village.



Mahaska 1824 portrait by Charles Bird King

## The Joway (Baxoje)

From 1765 to 1824, this land was the main loway village of more than 800. Imagine their scattered earthen lodges surrounded by fields of corn, beans, and squash. In 1824, Iowa Chief Mahaska White Cloud ceded their rights to this land and moved his tribe to a Nebraska reservation.

loway Chief Mahaska White Cloud realized that the tribe's survival required ceding their land and adopting Anglo-American customs. He traveled to Washington in 1824 and signed a treaty giving their land in exchange for cash annuities and farming implements.

Photo courtesy of Iowa Office of State Archaeologist



The old hotel in lowaville, photographed here in the 1930s, was the last remaining building in the dying village.



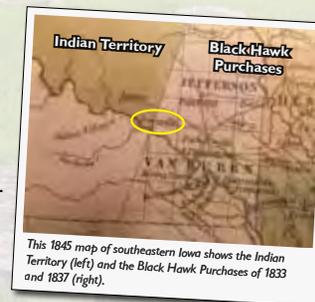
Pieces of loway pipes archaeologists recovered from lowaville.

## Chief Black Hawk's Remains

After the war and his imprisonment, Chief Black Hawk returned to this valley and built a lodge near his friend James Jordan. He died in 1838 and was buried near his lodge. A local man stole his head to display as a side-show curiosity, but it later burned in a fire. According to legend, the rest of his skeleton was reburied here in lowaville Cemetery.

## Jowaville's Rise and Fall

With dreams of developing a thriving town on the Des Moines River, James Jordan in 1838 laid out a town at the Indian trading post and called it lowaville. The steamboat port grew to a village of 200. Bypassed by railroads and inundated by floods, the post office closed in 1870 and the town slowly disappeared.



This 1845 map of southeastern Iowa shows the Indian Territory (left) and the Black Hawk Purchases of 1833 and 1837 (right).



www.iowabyways.org

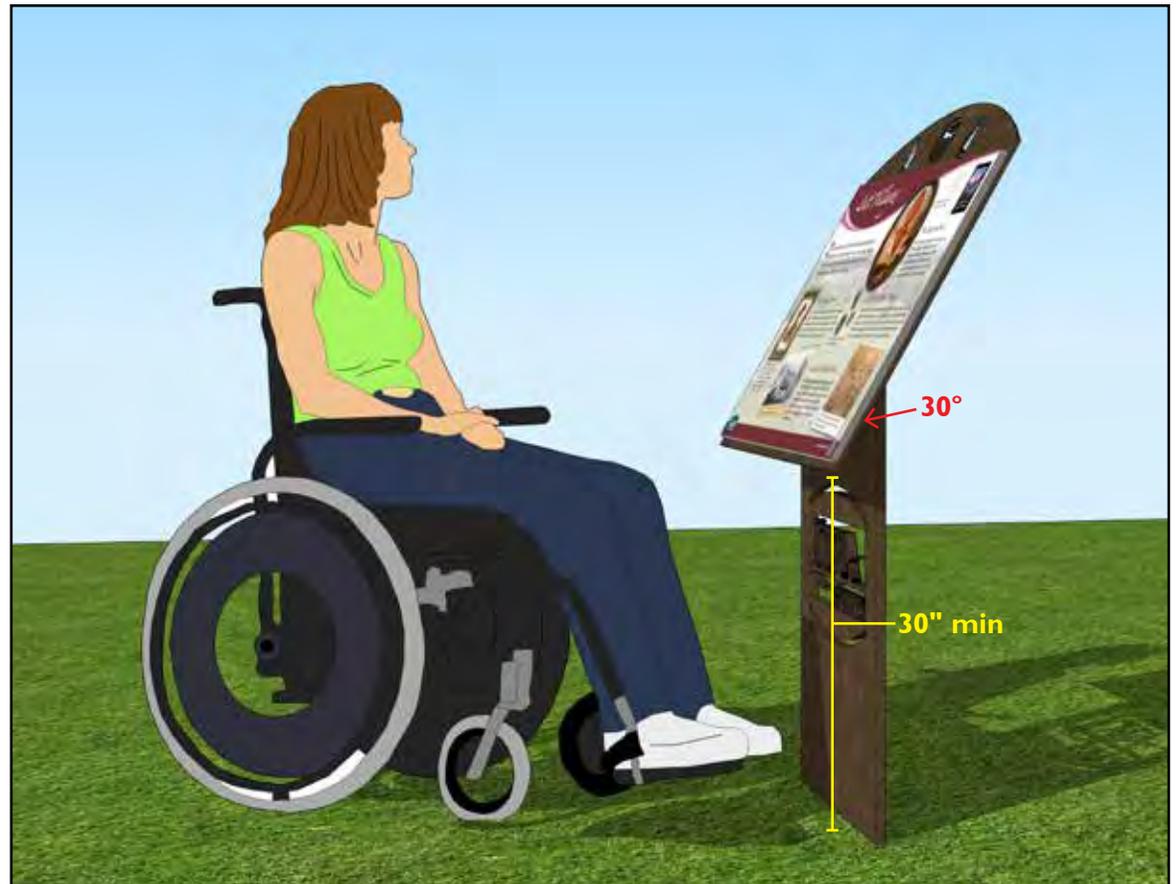


**Keep messages short:** As a rule of thumb, use no more than 60 to 70 words for the main message of a panel. See the “Creating an Effective Message” tips on Page 121 for more recommendations for interpretive writing.

**Panel materials:** High-pressure laminate (HPL) material is a durable plastic material that allows for full-color, high-quality images and text. It is resistant to graffiti and scratches. Fabrication companies typically offer a 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating.

**Size:** Wayside exhibit panels should be large enough to be noticeable and easily read, but not too large that they detract from the landscape. A recommended size of 24"-by-36" is appropriate for the byway.

**Installation:** Wayside exhibit panels should be installed at a 30 degree angle to the ground, which offers the best view to a standing or sitting person. They should be placed high enough above the ground, a minimum of 30 inches at the lowest edge, to allow a person in a wheelchair to get close.



*Well-designed wayside exhibits provide access for everyone.*

Wayside exhibit panel concept design (Iowaville Cemetery)

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Photo courtesy of Iowa Office of State Archaeologist



The old hotel in Iowaville, photographed here in the 1930s, was the last remaining building in the dying village.



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This 1845 map of southeastern Iowa shows the Indian Territory (left) and the Black Hawk Purchases of 1833 and 1837 (right).



www.iowabyways.org



36"

24"

## Recommended Wayside Exhibit Sites

Several sites along the byway have existing professionally designed and fabricated wayside panels, as documented on page 100. Future panels installed along the byway should apply standardized Iowa Scenic Byway designs to brand the byway and reassure travelers that these are relevant interpretive encounters.

The following sites and resources are recommended for wayside exhibits for these three reasons:



*Lock and dam remains in Bonaparte Riverfront Park.*

- There is no existing interpretation of the attraction or feature.
- The attraction or feature is integral to the themes and messages expressed in Chapter 5.
- Wayside exhibits are the best medium for interpretation.

### Donnellson Railroad Park and Museum

This panel should include historic photos of the town, especially the railroad.

Donnellson was named for the Donnell families who came to Lee County in 1839. In 1871, the Burlington and Southwestern



*Donnellson's depot in Railroad Park was once on the Burlington and Southwestern line.*

Railroad built a line that ran from Fort Madison through Donnellson and on to Farmington and Bloomfield before it turned south into Missouri. W.R. Donnell served simultaneously as the railroad agent, express agent, a merchant, and postmaster. The railroad operated until 1969, after which the depot and site were preserved as a park and museum.

### Bonaparte Riverfront Park

The remains of historic Lock and Dam No. 5 is the best tangible evidence of the Des Moines River steamboat era and the saga of the Des Moines River Navigation Company System. A panel with historic photos from the era would connect visitors to this compelling story of early Bonaparte. It should be located next to the remnants of the lock.



*Wayside exhibits at Bonaparte Pottery could serve visitors who stop when this attraction is not open.*

### **Bonaparte Pottery**

Three panels are recommended:

1. The history of this pottery, which operated from 1865 to 1896, and a map of the distribution of potteries on the Des Moines River would document the importance of stoneware to early settlers.
2. A photo tour of Bonaparte Pottery would serve visitors when tours are unavailable. It should include an illustration of the pottery as it appeared during its years of operation.
3. The discovery and preservation of this site is a compelling story, including the present-day use of original molds to make pottery for sale to visitors.



*A wayside exhibit in Bonaparte would include a map of historic buildings and period photos.*

### **Bonaparte Historic Riverfront District**

A map to the key structures in the district will aid tourists in locating points of interest. Significant places, including Aunty Green Hotel and Meek's Mill, should include historic photos and interpretation. A brief illustrated history of the community should include the origin of the town's name. This panel should be placed in an easily accessible site such as next to Meek's Mill (now Bonaparte Retreat).



### **Bentonsport National Historic District**

A panel interpreting the history of Bentonsport, richly illustrated with historic photos of the buildings that still exist, should be placed in a location easily accessible to visitors, perhaps near the footbridge to Vernon or near the historic Greef General Store. A tour booklet is available that describes 34 attractions in the district. A distribution box placed next to the interpretive panel is recommended.

*An interpretive panel in Bentonsport would include 1800s photos of homes and businesses that are still standing.*



*Pearson House's role in the Underground Railroad and in Van Buren County history would be interpreted on panels.*

### **Keosauqua Pearson House Museum Complex**

Two panels are recommended:

1. A photo tour of the home, Moughler Log Cabin, and Ellis School would offer visitors an alternative when docent-led tours are not available.
2. A panel relating the story of Benjamin Franklin Pearson as an abolitionist and "conductor" on the Underground Railroad would place the home in the context of the Civil War and the slave state of Missouri. Illustrations could include a map of key routes for runaway slaves through southeastern Iowa.

### **Troy Academy**

This 1850 "Seminary of Learning" and Iowa's first Normal School to train teachers has been restored to its original appearance. A panel should include period photos and document recent efforts to preserve the building.

### **Mars Hill Church**

The history of this circa-1857 log Baptist church is documented in an Annals of Iowa article. A panel would include stories of this pioneer church. These "quiet, simple folks... came from all directions..the Clarks, Smocks, Donaldsons, Rupes, Monroes, Pedens, Hales, Headys, and many on foot, horseback, in farm wagons, and perhaps some were riding in ox-carts, to offer up sincere prayers and praise to their Maker." Thirty-five church members served in the Civil War. Many of them, including one who received the Medal of Honor, are buried in the church cemetery. The building also served as a hiding place for escaped slaves from Missouri.

### **Historic Structures**

It is essential that preserved structures become part of the byway story and not just empty buildings. For example, Valley School No. 3 in Douds-Leando requires

theme-based interpretation to bring it to life. An interpretive panel, with stories and photos of the children and teachers who attended this school, would connect visitors to this school.

Some structures have existing interpretive panels. Panels are recommended for the following sites:

- Railroad Park Depot, Donnellson
- Christian Herschler Winery and Stagecoach Stop, Franklin
- Sharon Presbyterian Church and Cemetery
- Pioneer Museum/First Congregational Church, Farmington
- Wickfield Round Barn, Cantril
- Milton Depot
- Pulaski Depot
- Drakesville Mormon Cabin
- Mt. Moriah Methodist Church, Douds
- Valley School No. 3, Douds
- Oak Grove Church and School, Douds
- White School No. 5, Douds
- Peavine Line Railroad Depot, Stockport
- Weaver House, Bloomfield (focusing on the contributions of General Weaver)

# SCENIC OVERLOOKS

Scenic overlooks are popular attractions for byway travelers. Currently there are no official scenic overlooks on Historic Hills Scenic Byway. The Historic Hills Corridor Management Plan included a survey of the byway that identified two potential sites for development as scenic overlooks: at Pittsburgh on County J40 and on Sundown Lake on County J3T. This plan recommends a third overlook at Iowaville Cemetery.

## Pittsburgh Overlook

The Pittsburgh J40 site is northwest of Keosauqua, just beyond the northern edge of the “Great Bend” of the Des Moines River. It has a partial view of the Des Moines River Valley. An elevated viewing platform—ideally high enough to provide a view of the “Big Bend” of the Des Moines River—may be necessary to provide a satisfying vista. This view would present an opportunity to interpret natural and historical themes with the whole sweep of the landscape in front of travelers.

Two wayside exhibits, mounted on the railing of the platform, are recommended:

- One interpretive panel, illustrated with historic photos, would focus on Sub-Theme 3, the evolution of transportation from rivers to rail lines to roads. Steamboats fueled the initial boom in population and factories were powered by water. Keosauqua became the first port-of-call in 1837 when the S.B. Science brought a load of goods to the village. The development of a lock-and-dam system came to a halt with the coming of the Des Moines River Railroad in the 1850s. Today, no river or rail transport exists in the lower Des Moines River Valley.
- Another panel would focus on Sub-Theme 6, the Des Moines River Valley



*An elevated viewing platform at Pittsburgh would allow travelers to better see the Des Moines River. See the cover of this plan for a photo of the view.*

as a diverse landscape for wildlife and recreation. The panel would illustrate and interpret the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail, Lacey-Keosauqua State Park, and the two Bird Conservation Areas made up of the state park, Shimek State Forest, Lake Sugema, and adjacent wildlife areas.

Courtesy of Google Maps

Courtesy of Google Maps



An overlook at Sundown Lake between Unionville and Moravia would include interpretation of the Southern Iowa Drift Plain landform visible here.

## Sundown Lake Overlook

The proposed Sundown Lake site is on County J3T near Unionville. This viewshed also would be enhanced with an elevated platform, providing a view of the Southern Iowa Drift Plain landforms and the Sundown Lake watershed.

Two wayside exhibits, mounted on the platform railing, are recommended:

- One panel would interpret the Southern Iowa Drift Plain landform—hence the name “Historic Hills.” This landscape, glaciated hundreds of thousands of years ago, is deeply carved by water and characterized

by deep streams in major valleys, making possible large water impoundments like Rathbun Lake and Sundown Lake.

- A second panel would focus on agriculture and conservation. Grant Wood’s *Young Corn* (1931) illustrates how agriculture accommodates the landscape with a diverse mosaic of cropland, pasture, and forested groves.

## Iowaville Cemetery Overlook

Located on the proposed Eldon Loop, Iowaville Cemetery is located on a bluff above the Des Moines River Valley and would be an excellent site for a scenic



Grant Wood’s painting *Young Corn* illustrates how agriculture accommodates the landscape.

overlook. Location of the overlook would have to be respectful of the cemetery—perhaps a turnout along the cemetery entry driveway with a view of the valley.

A wayside exhibit concept design, “Lost Villages” is provided on page 125. This panel introduces the villages of the Ioway, Sauk and Fox, and Iowaville that occupied this valley but no longer remain.

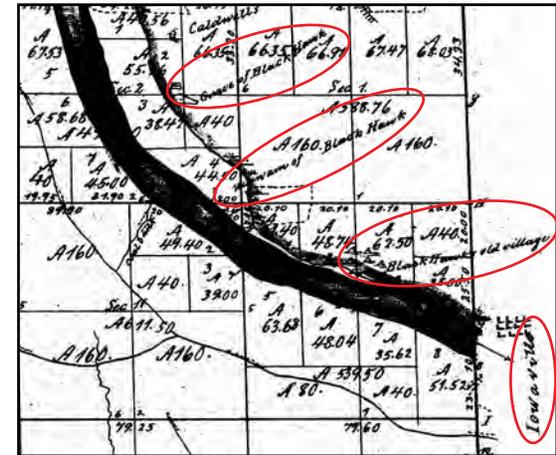
Additional panels would elaborate on the messages expressed in Sub-Theme 1:

1. Black Hawk is a significant figure in American and Iowa history. Born in Saukenuk on the Rock River, he was

a war chief of the Sauk who fought in vain to stem the tide of American settlers, including on the side of the British in the War of 1812. The Black Hawk War of 1832 resulted from his attempt to retake his ancestral village on the Rock River. After the war, Andrew Jackson met with the old chief in Washington, D.C. While there, he toured eastern cities, George Catlin painted his portrait, and he dictated his autobiography, which became a best seller. Black Hawk was a national celebrity when he returned to Iowaville to live out his days. The editor of the *Fort Madison Patriot* suggested that the people of Iowa call themselves “Hawkeyes” to preserve his memory. The circumstances of his friendship with James Jordan, his death, burial, desecration of his remains, and the mystery of whether his bones are in the burial plot in this cemetery, are compelling stories that would be included on this panel.

2. A panel on the archaeology of this location would include messages about prehistoric mound builders and the Ioway village site. Iowaville Cemetery includes seven middle

to late Woodland Culture mounds. The office of the State Archaeologist conducted a survey of the Ioway site in 2010. The Historic Hills Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (page 65) states that “the mounds in Lacey-Keosauqua State Park and at Iowaville Cemetery are the only visible on-site resources from prehistoric occupation” on the byway.



The 1843 survey of Davis County identifies the exact locations of the town of Iowaville and Black Hawk’s old village, wigwam, and gravesite (all circled in red).



Iowaville Cemetery provides a vista of the Des Moines River Valley overlooking the location of the villages of the Ioway, the Sauk/Fox, and Iowaville. An overlook should be placed near the cemetery entrance sign.



Welcome center touch-screen computer exhibits with associated printed media, like at the Great River Road Visitor Center in Prescott, Wisconsin, provide trip planning and interpretive opportunities for byway travelers.

## WELCOME/VISITOR CENTER EXHIBITS

Welcome and tourist information centers are important sites to display byway information. In addition to brochures and booklets, a touch-screen computer and associated display can alert travelers to the existence of the byway and help them plan trips to byway attractions.

Historic Hills Scenic Byway tourist information centers that could host this exhibit include:

- Davis County Welcome Center, Bloomfield
- Van Buren County Welcome Center, Keosauqua

Most other locations on the byway are less desirable because they have limited hours or are not places where travelers would seek byway information (museums, restaurants, courthouses, etc.). Some busy locations, such as the lobby at Honey Creek Resort State Park, can be considered in the future since they serve many travelers.

The purpose of a byway exhibit is to:

- Make visitors aware of the byway and its attractions.
- Facilitate impromptu planning for a trip along the byway.
- Heighten people's expectations with dramatic visuals of scenic attractions and dynamic events.
- Introduce the byway brand through its logo and characteristic fonts and colors.

### Design Recommendations

The exhibit will be designed small enough to fit inside welcome centers where space is limited, yet large enough to attract attention.

- The exhibit is topped with sculptural metalwork similar to the experience hub kiosks.
- A large map of the byway placed below the color header and logo introduces the byway and its main attractions. The map panel provides a short summary of the byway and includes a "You are here" symbol. Iconic photographs of landscapes and attractions encourage further discovery.

- A rack installed next to the map will hold byway brochures and travel guide booklets.
- A durable touch-screen computer provides digital information about the byway. For a unique perspective, users can press arrows to fly over the byway landscape, allowing them to discover each attraction as it appears.

A touch-screen is an ideal tool for a byway exhibit because:

- They take up little space in already crowded information centers.
- They are a durable, widely familiar technology.
- Information is presented with icons and symbols that are more universally understood than words.
- Visitors are empowered to seek their own information rather than asking staff who may be busy or not as informed about the entire byway.
- Information can be updated easily.

### Byway touch-screen exhibit concept design





A steel silhouette on Route 66 in Elkhart, Illinois, re-creates the day when child star Shirley Temple stopped for lunch. A wayside exhibit interprets this notable event. (Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters design)



Donnellson has several statues depicting children.

## BYWAY ARTWORK

Art appeals to our senses and emotions in ways that other media cannot. Thoughts and feelings can be conveyed to many ages and learning levels. Byway themes can be reinforced and embellished by creative artwork.

The media may be three-dimensional such as a sculpture, or two-dimensional such as a mural. Public art is usually made to last, but may be ephemeral to celebrate a community event or simply a form of artistic expression such as a chalk or sand painting.

Scenic byways invite travelers into their region and communities. Artwork can offer visitors insights into the history and culture of those communities and provide a welcoming aesthetic quality to streetscapes.

Public art is for everyone, as it is a form of collective community expression. It is placed strategically for viewing by a large number of people. It tends to be large-scale and visible from a distance.

## Sculptures

Because sculptures occupy space in much the same way as humans occupy space, we interact with sculpture in a different way than with two-dimensional art. Sculpture is tactile—one can touch it and feel its various textures and forms. Looking at a sculpture is a dynamic activity—the work changes as the viewer moves around it or at different seasons and time of day.

Sculptural pieces can be realistic or abstract concepts that express a community's sense of place. They can even be utilitarian such as a bike rack adorned with a metal eagle's nest.

### Existing Sculptures

Northeast Iowa RC&D received a \$75,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to develop and construct 10 public art pieces along Iowa's scenic byways. In 2017, Pathfinders RC&D and Villages Folk School in Keosauqua developed *Family Farm Art Tribute* as part of this grant. The sculpture is located on Highway 1 at the Van Buren County Fairground in Keosauqua. Additional funding was provided by an Iowa

Arts Council Arts Build Community grant, a Community Foundation of Van Buren County grant, and donations by community members and businesses.

At Lacey-Keosauqua State Park, the west gatehouse, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, has been converted into an interpretive pavilion with wayside exhibits and a life-size statue of a CCC worker that captures the emotion of Depression-era youth who served.

At the Davis County Welcome Center in Bloomfield, a sculptural horse-drawn carriage right along the byway promotes the area's Amish community.

Donnellson features several whimsical sculptures of children at play, including in Railroad Park and Westview Park. They convey a sense of small-town community that values family.



A CCC worker statue at Lacey-Keosauqua State Park.



Family Farm Art Tribute was installed in summer 2017 just north of Keosauqua near the Van Buren County Fairground as part of a grant to install art along Iowa's scenic byways.

### Weathering Steel Silhouettes

Life-size silhouettes made of weathering steel are unique sculptural elements that humanize a landscape, attract the attention of motorists, and reinforce the messages on wayside exhibit panels.

For example, **Pearson House Museum Complex** in Keosauqua has a complex history as a station on the Underground Railroad. A statue of slaves moving in the night would be accompanied by a

wayside exhibit panel to tell the history of the house and owner B.F. Pearson.

School children at play at **Valley School No. 3** in Douds-Leando will create a sense of liveliness reminiscent of the era of one-room country schools.

A depot agent signaling a train at **Eldon Depot Museum** would recall the

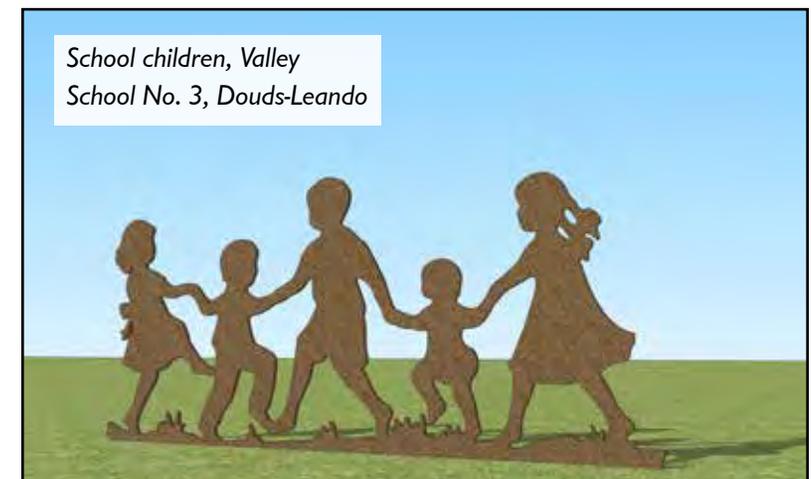
days when this town was an important railroad junction.

A miller handling a sack of flour at **Meek's Mill** in Bonaparte would let

visitors know that this historic building was once a bustling enterprise on the river.

A pottery worker placing stoneware pots in a kiln at **Bonaparte Pottery** would remind visitors that residents once depended on these local artisans for their housewares.

### Weathering Steel Silhouette Concept Designs



## Murals

Many towns have historic buildings with blank walls, either on the end of a block or where an adjoining structure was torn down. These large exteriors can be converted into artistic expressions of the community's sense of place.

Murals can provide simple decoration, but more often they illustrate local history or provide social commentary. These "through-the-windshield" interpretive pieces are a creative way to make the past come alive or to introduce the personality of a community.

### Existing Byway Murals

The mural on the side of the Eldon Depot Museum depicts a steam locomotive and relates the historical significance of the site. The Freedom Rock in Drakesville portrays community citizens who served their country.

### Mural Recommendations

Historic Hills Scenic Byway communities should be encouraged to identify "canvas" walls suitable for murals. Significant historical events that shaped the community are relevant subjects for murals.

The Walldogs is an organization that

specializes in creating community murals. The Walldogs movement began in Allerton, Iowa, when dozens of wall painters descended on the town to paint several historic murals. This group has since expanded worldwide.

**Bonaparte Historic District** has several walls suitable for murals. The Tugboat Transportation building, for example,

would be an ideal surface for a mural depicting town history. Mural subjects could include Joseph Smith and the Camp of Israel crossing the Des Moines River in this town; a steamboat passing through the lock and dam, Bonaparte Pottery as it appeared in the 1800s, and the river mill complex featuring Meek's grist, woolen, and pants mills.

### Mural Concept Design (*Tugboat Transportation building, Bonaparte*)





travel **IOWA**

TRIP IDEAS THINGS TO DO PLACES TO STAY CALENDAR OF EVENTS TRAVEL BY REGION

## Historic Hills Scenic Byway

ADD TO MY ★

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COMMUNITIES

- Bentonsport
- Blakesburg
- Bloomfield
- Bonaparte
- Danvers
- Drakesville
- Farmington
- Keosauqua
- Moravia
- Unionville
- Villages of Van Buren

INTRODUCING

This southeast corner of Iowa was the first to be settled by Europeans and the history is still being told. You can visit Iowa's oldest courthouse, the first church west of the Mississippi, the site of Iowa's only Civil War battle or trace the beginning of the Mormon Pioneer Trail. In the historic village of Bentonsport, merchants keep old craftsmanship alive in their specialty shops.

This area has a magnificent state forest, two state parks and Iowa's only resort state park. The southern Iowa forests are renowned worldwide for white-tailed deer hunting. The Des Moines River Water Trail has 10 access points for paddling and fishing. There is also horseback riding on the state forest and private trails.

Historic Hills is home to communities of both Mennonites and Old Order Amish. More than 100 Amish and Mennonite businesses thrive in the Drakesville and Bloomfield areas. You will often find yourself sharing the road with horses and buggies as you travel the byway.

This byway is 110 miles, winding through rolling hills, extensive forests and towns with no fast food restaurants to be found.

ATTRACTIONS

- Addie May Fudge & Antiques - Bonaparte
- Bearly Antiques - Keosauqua
- Bentonsport Artisan Co-Op - Bentonsport
- Bentonsport National Historic District - Bentonsport
- Bentonsport Presbyterian Church - Bentonsport
- Bentonsport Rose Garden - Bentonsport
- Bonaparte Pottery - Bonaparte
- Dutchman's Store - Cantril
- Historic Greef General Store - Bentonsport
- Honey Creek State Park - Moravia
- Indian Artifact Museum - Bentonsport
- Iron & Lace - Bentonsport
- Lacey-Keosauqua State Park - Keosauqua
- Lake Wapello State Park - Drakesville
- Milton Creamery - Milton
- Nature on First - Keosauqua
- Pearson House Museum Complex - Keosauqua
- Riverview Country Club - Keosauqua
- Shimek Speedway Go-Kart Track - Farmington
- Shimek State Forest - Farmington
- Twombly Museum - Keosauqua
- Van Buren County Courthouse - Keosauqua
- Van Buren County Welcome Center & McCoy

BREWRIES

- Christian Herschler Historic District Winery and Stagecoach Stop - Franklin

The existing Historic Hills Scenic Byway web pages have a clean and modern design that unify with the rest of the Travel Iowa website. However, they do not reflect the branding of the Iowa Byways program, reducing the overall visual identity that ties byway media together.



The Historic Hills Scenic Byway website should accommodate mobile devices' smaller screens. The messages and photos are reduced to a single column. To reduce clutter, the navigation menu is hidden under the dark red and white icon in the upper left, which is familiar to smartphone users. Clicking that icon brings up a menu with large buttons showing different navigation categories.

### Website Design Recommendations

The **website design** should be updated to encourage discovery and to reflect the unified design standards recommended in this plan. This would include:

- Unified font styles, colors, and graphic elements (like the curved header) reinforce the visual identity of all byway media.
- Incorporate dramatic and engaging photographs of scenery and attractions.
- On the home page, a rotating banner can switch photos every few seconds, representing different communities and seasons along the byway. An active phrase superimposed over each image can reinforce the interpretive themes.
- Social media options, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, should be available in the same place on each web page on the site. This encourages sharing and interaction.
- Contact information should also be available on every page of the site, providing opportunities for travelers to ask questions.
- Other engaging media, such as videos, experience hub locations, and

travel guides should be highlighted to encourage exploration.

- Design for viewing on mobile devices.

### Website Navigation Recommendations

The **website navigation** should be obvious and include links to pages that are most important to visitors planning their trip. Main navigation links include:

- **About:** Drop-down menu items can include a **general overview** of the byway, a **brief history** of its development, and **contact information** for more information.
- **Explore the Byway:** Drop-down menu items can include links to explore more about each of the **byway communities** and the **resource categories** (scenic and natural attractions, historic and archaeological attractions, cultural attractions, and recreational destinations).
- **Plan Your Trip:** Includes an interactive **byway map** to be used for planning and while driving the byway. Different icons can show the location of attractions and categorize them by topic—when a user clicks on an icon, they see a concise description and photo of the attraction, with a

# Historic Hills Scenic Byway Website Concept Design

Clear and obvious navigation categories link to the most important pages.

Dramatic, focal-point banner images change every few seconds to show different areas and seasons. Active phrases interpret the byway.

Logo, font styles, colors, and curved header replicate style of other media.

Snapshot images are informal and connect visitors to interpretive messages.

Upcoming events section highlights byway and community events.

Provide easy access to other types of digital media.

Contact information and social media icons displayed on every page.

Other printed media should be downloadable.

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link to a more detailed description. This section also can include **suggested itineraries** based on topics (attraction categories). It also should offer options to **Download the Byway Guide, Request Information, Iowa Road Conditions, Iowa Welcome Centers, Lodging Options, and Dining Options.**

- **Events:** Includes news stories and events that are specific to the byway or its communities. It is important to keep this updated to show that the byway is actively supported.
- **Gallery:** This heading links to various photo albums.

## Social Media

Along with using more traditional travel websites to research destinations, tourists also are turning to social media.

In a 2014 Google travel survey, about 83 percent of respondents said they use social networking, video, and photo sites to be inspired about travel destinations.

An active social media presence allows Historic Hills Scenic Byway to spread the word about current events and to interpret the byway's resources, while also serving as an information-gathering

tool for the byway board and staff to stay in tune with travelers' needs.

Historic Hills Scenic Byway has a social media presence on Facebook, Pinterest (allows users to "pin" images to boards), Instagram (sharing square photos with filters applied), and Twitter (sharing text messages limited to 140 characters).

Another opportunity is YouTube (sharing videos).

The major challenge with social media sites is keeping them updated and pertinent, but they can be well worth the time invested. They are inexpensive to communicate through, are instantaneous, and are easy to change or alter.



The Historic Hills Scenic Byway Facebook page includes regular postings and updates.

# MOBILE DIGITAL MEDIA

People are increasingly using smartphones and electronic tablets. In 2016, about three-quarters of adults (77%) owned a smartphone, up from just 35% in 2011 (Pew Research Center). About 50% of adults own a tablet computer, up from 10% in 2011.

Perhaps even more telling is that 92% of people between 18 and 29 own a smartphone, along with 93% of people living in households that make at least \$75,000 annually (2016 Pew Research Center).

In addition to the increased use in smartphones, it is important to note that use of other devices such as computers is remaining steady or declining, especially among younger adults. Smartphones have become the all-purpose technology. The implications for communicating about byways are staggering.

Travelers expect to stay connected and find information through social media sites, Internet searches, GPS navigation, apps, and other technologies that are constantly evolving. The increased use of personal mobile devices opens up a world of opportunities for sharing interpretive messages.

## Audio Tours

Audio tours have always been an effective method for interpreting messages along a scenic byway. Interpretive audio provides short clips of narration, sound effects, and music themed to specific sites along the byway.

Benefits of audio tours include:

- Hearing a human voice adds a personal character to the tour, something difficult to accomplish with other forms of media.
- Music and sound effects are powerful connections to different places and times.
- Travelers on scenic byways often have long stretches of time driving from one point to another, an ideal situation for listening to interpretive audio messages.

Audio tours have evolved from cassette tapes and CDs, with the Internet now providing a means for sharing audio (and even video) tours with a much wider audience through the use of mobile devices. Several forms of distribution are available, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.



Trail users on a bike trail in Rapid City, South Dakota use smartphones to scan QR codes on interpretive panels.



Cell phone tour for "Looking for Lincoln" sites in the Springfield, Illinois area.



*The Freedom Trail Audio Tour in Boston, Massachusetts can be downloaded to a mobile device prior to the visit.*

### Cell Phone Audio Tours

A traditional cell phone tour is a system where visitors call into a centralized phone number, enter a specific tour code, and listen to the interpretive message.

Benefits of a cell phone tour:

- The vast majority of U.S. adults today own a cell phone, 95% according to 2017 Pew Research Center data. The technology is very accessible to most people.
- It is easy to update audio messages in a centralized database as resources and events along the byway change.
- It allows for tracking visitors for marketing purposes. How many people are accessing messages? Which messages are they accessing? Where are they accessing them from?

Limitations of a cell phone tour:

- It requires a cell phone signal in order to work. Rural areas away from cell towers are not the best places for inclusion in the tour.
- Requires monthly hosting fees.
- May cost the user minutes depending on their cell phone plan.

### Podcasting/Downloadable Tours

Another method for distributing audio tour files is offering them online for users to download. This can be done through a podcasting feed (a user subscribes for automatic downloads) or posted on a website. Once downloaded, these audio files can be listened to on a smartphone or tablet, or transferred to a personal audio device, like an iPod or MP3 player.

Benefits of a downloadable audio tour:

- Messages can be downloaded before the trip for planning purposes.
- Depending on the size, files can usually be provided on an existing website for free.
- Messages can be recorded in-house and easily updated on the website.

Limitations of a downloadable tour:

- Users must be knowledgeable about how to download and transfer files.
- Audio and video files can take up large amounts of precious space on a mobile device, which may limit their use.
- Users typically will need to plan in advance to download the files before the trip; not a good choice for serendipitous travelers.

## Audiovisual Tour Apps

Using the power of personal smartphone and tablet devices, audiovisual tours combine sound, images, video, text, and interactive components to create rich interpretive experiences. They are ideally suited to byways, providing directions to nearby attractions and offering interpretation during long drives.

### Mobile Tour Websites

These websites specifically incorporate design that is more functional on the smaller touch screens of smartphones and tablets. When used for guided tours, they can blend text, photos, sound, and interactive buttons and links to other sites.

Benefits of a mobile tour website:

- Provides an interactive experience.
- Functions with all types of web-enabled mobile devices; just requires an Internet browser.
- No need to download files, as everything is streamed directly online.
- Relatively easy to create and update using standard website editing tools.
- Services can be added to the website to track visitor usage.

Limitations of a mobile website tour:

- Necessitates access to the Internet via a strong cellular signal or a Wi-Fi connection.
- Website programming is sometimes limited by layout, responsiveness, and tools. They don't always appear as polished or react as efficiently as apps.
- Design must be developed for a variety of Internet browsers, since some display content differently.

### Tour Apps

Apps are small digital programs provided through online stores like the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. An app is downloaded to a mobile device, providing quick access to content. Like mobile websites, apps use text, photos, and audiovisual components in engagingly interactive ways.

Benefits of a tour app:

- Encourages interaction.
- Provides almost limitless options for design and techniques.
- Can use the GPS feature of a mobile device to trigger site-specific messages or to list attractions near the user's current location.



*The Illinois River Road mobile tour website at [illinoisriverroad.org/mobile](http://illinoisriverroad.org/mobile) includes customizable searches for interests by community and a GPS-enabled "What's Near Me?" feature.*



*Alabama's Coastal Connection Scenic Byway has a free app that includes videos, events, a list of attractions, and a byway map.*



Visitors to J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife refuge scan QR codes on signs to view videos along an innovative “iNature Trail.”



Each iNature Trail panel at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge is thematic and features two QR codes: one that links to a video geared toward adults and the other geared toward children.

- Generally much faster and responsive than web-based media.
- Does not require Internet access to run (although some features of the app may require online access).

#### Limitations of a tour app:

- Apps must be downloaded and installed onto mobile device. Depending on content, this may take up a considerable amount of space.
- Multiple apps must be developed to reach the largest number of users. They are specific to a mobile device’s operating system.
- Apps must be updated every time a mobile device’s operating system is updated; high maintenance costs.

## QR (Quick Response) Codes

QR (Quick Response) codes consist of matrix bars that connect mobile devices to online media such as websites, audio messages, and videos. They can be added to publications, interpretive panels, or even objects and artifacts. A traveler uses the camera on their mobile device to scan a code with a QR reader app, which decodes the information and shows the online content.

#### Benefits of QR Codes:

- Quickly connects mobile devices to online resources without needing a URL.
- Can be created and printed on media for free.
- Online resources can easily be developed, changed, or updated at minimal cost.
- Different QR codes can be generated to link to different messages. A wayside exhibit might have one QR code for adults and one for children.

#### Limitations of QR Codes:

- QR codes require access to the Internet via a cellular signal or Wi-Fi.
- Traditional black-and-white QR may not fit the media design.
- Once created, a QR code will always link to the URL address that it is encoded with. If the online address changes, the QR code on all media also will need to be changed.

## Mobile Digital Media Recommendations

Historic Hills Scenic Byway has great potential for tapping into the mobile devices that most travelers bring with them on their byway journey. Cellular coverage can be spotty in some rural areas along the byway. Fortunately, there are digital media options that can be downloaded before the trip that do not require on-demand Internet access.

### 1. Create an audiovisual byway tour

An audiovisual tour is an ideal way to introduce travelers to the stories of the byway. Once developed, it can be distributed in multiple ways to reach the largest audience. Some ideas for development include:

- **Set a clear theme for the tour**, which assists in the collection of stories and interviews. For example, the story of the guerrilla raid south of Bloomfield is rich in universal concepts of life and death, hate and fear, the call to arms, and leadership in the face of panic and alarm. This tour can be used in two venues—as a tour of the actual raid route through Davis County, and at the raid mural at the Davis County Historical Complex.

- **Edit the messages down to their essence.** Choose messages that relate to universal concepts, those beliefs and ideas that mean something to everyone (love, family, tragedy, survival, etc.). These make the most interesting and engaging stories for visitors.
- **Keep messages short.** Leave the listener wanting more. Travelers will seldom listen to clips longer than 3 minutes. They are easily distracted by weather, traffic, and their companions. Short, dramatic messages will encourage visitors to engage in additional messages.
- **Record oral histories and interviews** with people who lived and worked along the byway, and those who have special expertise based on the theme. High-quality video recordings will provide the most flexibility for producing an audiovisual tour. An Amish elder could explain the religious origins of their simple way of life and plain dress. A Mormon history expert would illuminate the significance of the deaths at Richardson's Point.



*Conceptual rendering of a Davis County guerrilla raid tour app that would share GPS-enabled directions and audio and visual interpretive messages with byway travelers.*

## TWELVE HOURS OF TERROR



Scan the code above with your phone or tablet to follow the path of destruction left by Civil War guerrilla raiders in Davis County.

QR codes, like the sample above, can be added to existing media or made into separate signs. They link directly to the byway tour website.

- **Find music and sounds that will help bring the stories of the byway to life.** These make the tour more interesting and engaging. The sound of steamboats pushing up the Des Moines River, or of men at work throwing pots and kilns firing up in Bonaparte Pottery, adds a dynamic element that supports the narrative story.

For the “Twelve Hours of Terror” example, orders shouted by raid leader Jim Jackson and shots fired as Jackson murders farmer Thomas Hardy would bring the story to life. Shouts of alarmed citizens at the Davis County Fair as they organize a militia would amplify the feeling of panic.

- **Create a narrative storyline.** Narrators are often necessary to tell the story in a concise way and introduce the various oral histories and interviews.

### 2. Develop a Tour App

An app provides a great deal of flexibility for presenting the audiovisual tour. Messages can be offered in an audio or video format. If only audio is available, photos can be shown to enhance the message. The app should provide a map with tour locations

indicated and be linked to the user’s current GPS location. It can also be programmed to read a GPS location and automatically offer site-specific messages.

### 3. Develop a Mobile Tour Website

To maximize the audience base, a mobile tour website also should be created. Once an app is developed, it will be easy to take the text, audio, photos, and video from specific messages and make them available in other formats. A web page with links to the audio or video files provides options for users to either download the tour before their trip onto a mobile device or stream the messages while traveling, as long as a cellular signal is available.

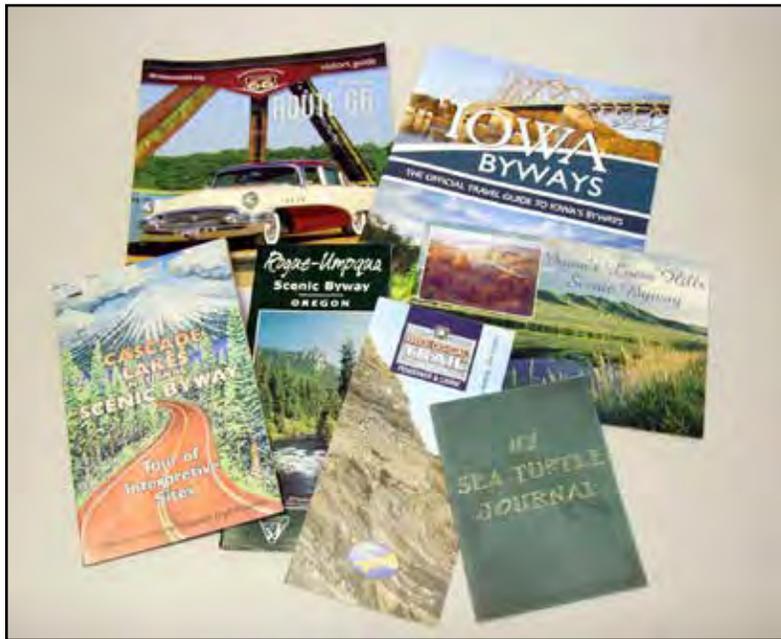
### 4. Add QR Codes to media

Once a mobile tour website is up and running, QR codes can link directly to specific online attraction web pages and audio/visual tour files. A user can simply scan a QR code with their mobile device, and interpretation will be streamed automatically. QR codes can be added to experience hub or wayside exhibit panels, travel guide and map publications, or welcome center exhibits to provide a more in-depth and interactive experience.

# PUBLICATIONS

While many travelers prepare for their trips using the Internet, there are many reasons to develop printed publications.

Although smartphone use is increasing, not everyone has one or prefers to use one as their primary means of planning a trip and navigating. A significant number of people like to have a printed publication that can be tucked in their pocket and is not limited by spotty cell phone coverage or low batteries.



*Interpretive publications can take many different formats, including brochures, maps, travel guides, and kids' activity booklets.*

Publications have take-home value and serve as placeholders and keepsakes of an adventure. They often are shared with others and have a longer life than digital media that pass fleetingly over a screen.

## General Byway Brochure

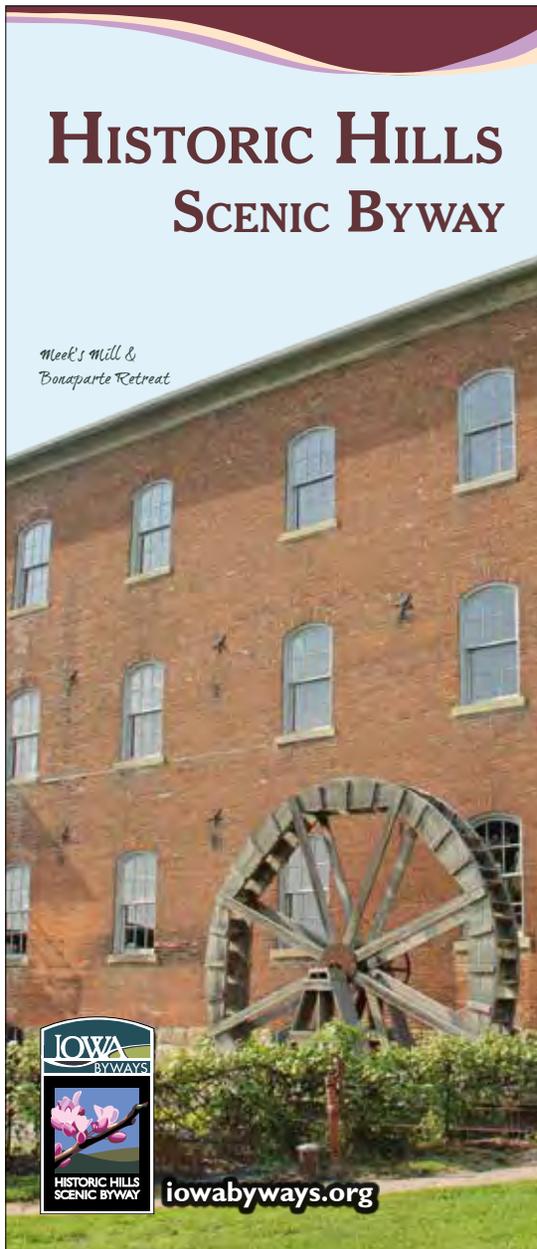
Brochures are a cost-effective marketing tool for byways because they reach casual travelers who are unaware of the byway. There are many travelers who do not plan a road trip in advance but look forward to a serendipitous adventure as they travel a new route.

A basic byway brochure should not attempt to do more than stimulate people to access more in-depth information online or at welcome centers. It should be bold and concise with a simple, clean design and dramatic images that highlight significant attractions and other byway media.

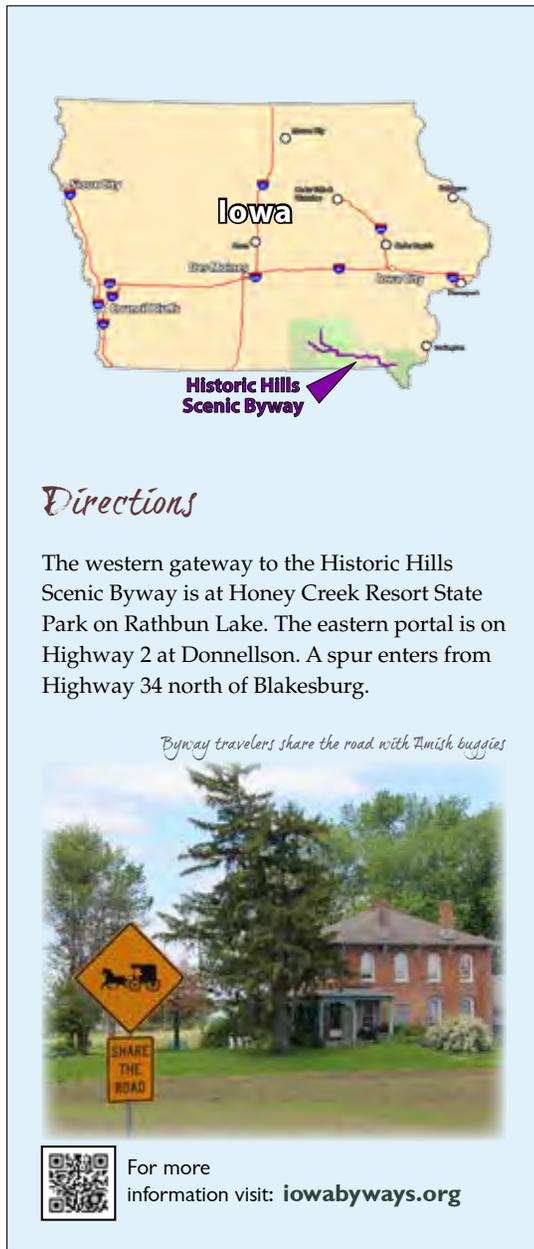
## Design Recommendations:

- **Size and folds:** An 11"-by-17" panel leaflet brochure is an effective layout for introducing the byway.
- **Design elements:** Colors, font styles, and graphic styles should be unified with other byway media (see "Unified Design Standards").
- **Front Cover:** Needs to be designed to be noticed in a rack with other brochures. An obvious "Historic Hills Scenic Byway" title should be visible above the rack holder. A dramatic focal-point photograph that represents the byway, like a photo of historic landmarks such as Meek's Mill, encourages readers to open the brochure. The byway logo unifies with other media.
- **Back Cover:** The back cover would be an ideal place to include a map of Iowa showing the location of the byway. Contact information will also be important here.
- **First Reveal:** When a reader first opens the brochure, another dramatic image draws the eye to a concise and active description of the byway.

# Historic Hills Scenic Byway Brochure Concept Design



Front Cover



Back Cover



First Reveal

## Eastern Region

Donnellson, home of Iowa's oldest county fair, welcomes byway travelers to farm country. Enjoy family-friendly activities at Harvestville Farm and Appleberry Orchard.

The old steamboat port towns of Farmington, Bonaparte, Bentonsport, and Keosauqua retain their historic ambiance preserved in National Historic Riverfront Districts. The absence of stoplights or fast-food restaurants adds to their charm.

Begin your visit to the Villages of Van Buren at the Welcome Center in Keosauqua. Each October the two-day Villages of Van Buren Scenic Drive Festival offers tours and activities for all ages.



Harvestville Farm, Donnellson



Historic Bentonsport Bridge over the Des Moines River

## Western Region

Bloomfield is the hub of the western end of the byway. Begin your trip at the Davis County Welcome Center. Take a guided tour of the Amish community and browse the country stores and craft shops.

Enjoy nature and outdoor fun at Lake Wapello State Park and Honey Creek Resort State Park on Rathbun Lake. Lake Fisher Park and McGowen Recreation and Wildlife Area near Bloomfield are great places to stretch your legs or enjoy a picnic. On the way to Rathbun Lake, explore history at the Moravia Historical Complex, featuring the Wabash Depot and Fairview Chapel.



Davis County Welcome Center, Bloomfield



Rathbun Lake, Moravia



Great-Blue Heron

## Byway Loops

Departing south from Keosauqua, the Highway 2 Loop meanders through Lacey-Keosauqua State Park, one of Iowa's oldest and most scenic parks. Highway 2 also connects the farm communities of Cantril, Milton, and Pulaski.

The Eldon Loop traverses scenic farm and forestland. Eldon is renowned for Grant Wood's *American Gothic* house. Pose in costume as the farmer couple at the house. Then take in the Eldon Train Depot Museum to learn about this historic railroad town. Turning south, the road passes through the historic village sites of the Ioway and Sauk and Fox war leader Black Hawk.



Lacey-Keosauqua State Park trails



American Gothic House Center, Eldon

Second Reveal: Regional Descriptions



## Byway Travel Guide

Historic Hills Scenic Byway is included in “Iowa Byways: The Official Travel Guide to Iowa’s Byways,” a full-color, 32-page booklet that measures 8.5"-by-11". The guide is organized by byway in a user-friendly format. The two pages devoted to the byway feature photos, a concise description of the route, a general map, and a brief list of attractions.

### Recommendations

While the existing travel guide is well-designed and easy to use, an updated and expanded interpretive travel guide specific to Historic Hills Scenic Byway would add greater depth to visitors’ understanding of the byway and enhance wayfinding.

**1. Organize the guide by community region:** Byway visitors may have limited time, with perhaps only a few hours or a day to explore the route. Organizing the byway guide by major communities and their surrounding regions will allow visitors to quickly and easily determine where to spend their time or to better understand the location where they have serendipitously arrived.

**HISTORIC HILLS**

*History in bloom*

**RECREATION**

- Des Moines River Water Trail, Eldon to Farmington
- Honey Creek State Park and Resort, Moravia
- Lake Wapello State Park, Drakeville
- McGowen Recreation and Wildlife Area, Bloomfield
- Lacey Keosauqua State Park, Keosauqua
- Shimek State Forest, Farmington

**HISTORY**

- Moravia Wabash Depot Museum, Moravia
- Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail, Donnellson to Centerville
- Pearson House Museum, Keosauqua
- Bentonsport National Historic District, Bentonsport
- Christian Herschler Winery and Stagecoach Stop, Donnellson

**CULTURE**

- Bentonsport arts and crafts shops, Bentonsport
- Bonaparte Pottery, Bonaparte

**BYWAY CONTACT**

Pathfinders Resource Conservation and Development, Fairfield  
641-472-6177 • info@pathfindersrscd.org  
www.pathfindersrscd.org

**Trace the footsteps of prehistoric people, European settlers and Mormon pioneers**

Don't be surprised to find yourself sharing the road with horses and buggies on the Historic Hills Scenic Byway. It's just one way of feeling you've stepped back in time on this 105-mile route winding through rolling hills, extensive forests and 20 towns with no fast food restaurants to be found.

Historic Hills is home to communities of both Mennonites and Old Order Amish. More than 100 Amish and Mennonite businesses thrive in the Drakeville and Bloomfield areas. Many are open to the public, including Milton Creamery where you can savor locally produced cheese and enjoy fresh "squeaky" curds that rival those from Wisconsin.

This corner of Iowa was the first to be settled by Europeans and the history is still being told. You can visit Iowa's oldest courthouse, the first church west of the Mississippi, the site of Iowa's only Civil War battle or trace the Mormon Pioneer Trail. In the historic village of Bentonsport, merchants keep old craftsmanship alive in their specialty shops, while selling beautiful works of art, crafts and handmade goods.

With a magnificent state forest, two state parks and Iowa's only resort state park, you'll find plenty to do outdoors. The southern Iowa forests are renowned worldwide for white-tailed deer hunting. The Des Moines River Water Trail has 10 access points for paddling and fishing. Horseback riding on the state forest and private trails is another popular activity on the byway.

Spend a day or more enjoying historic districts, wonderful scenery, quaint communities and one-of-a-kind businesses as you explore the Historic Hills Scenic Byway. Southern Iowa hospitality will greet you wherever you choose to go.

**Beautiful barn quilts adorn the countryside**

**Stroll across the Des Moines River**

Historic Hills Scenic Byway is featured in the “Iowa Byways: The Official Guide to Iowa’s Byways” booklet.

**2. Theme the attractions within the region:** Many visitors have specific interests. Byway attractions within each region can be further grouped into the categories developed in this plan: Scenic and Natural; Historic and Archaeological; Cultural; and Recreational. Themed itineraries that address visitor interests would provide focus to their trip-planning.

### 3. Design the guide to be consistent with Iowa Byways design standards:

The design should use the logos, fonts, and colors consistent with those described in this plan and with other interpretive media.

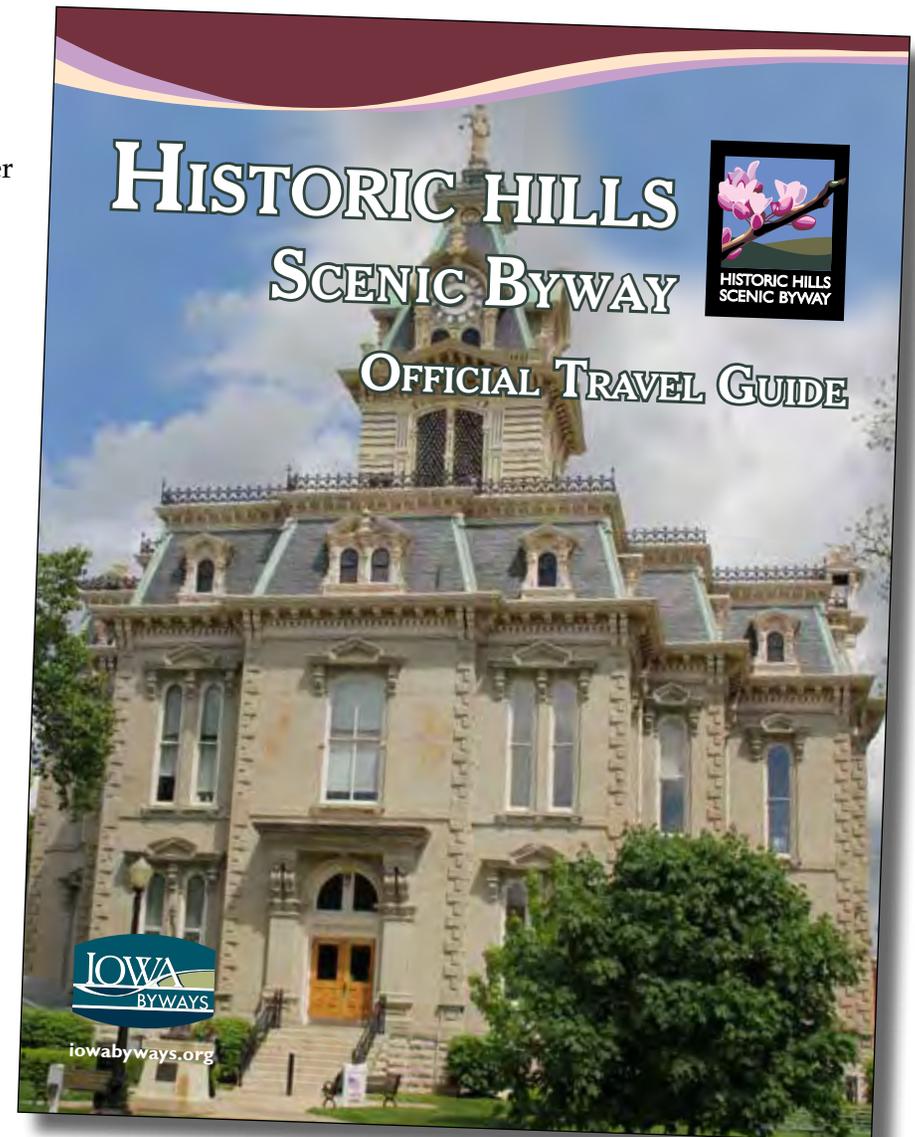
**4. Include maps of attractions that are more than approximations of their locations:** This would require adding specific roads that lead to each attraction. Currently, travelers must use an Iowa road map or GPS in addition to the guide or tear sheet to locate many of the attractions, and even then it can be difficult.

In the revised guide, each community region should be developed in the following format:

- An introduction to the community region that expresses its unique natural and cultural character.
- Maps that mark visitor centers, experience hub kiosks, and wayside exhibits in the region.
- Two or more pages (as many as needed) for maps and descriptions of that region's attractions in each of the themed categories: Scenic and Natural; Historic and Archaeological; Cultural; and Recreational

- Concise, lively descriptions of each attraction, with websites and phone numbers where visitors can find more information.
- Strong, focal point photos of key attractions and informal snapshot-type photos of other attractions.

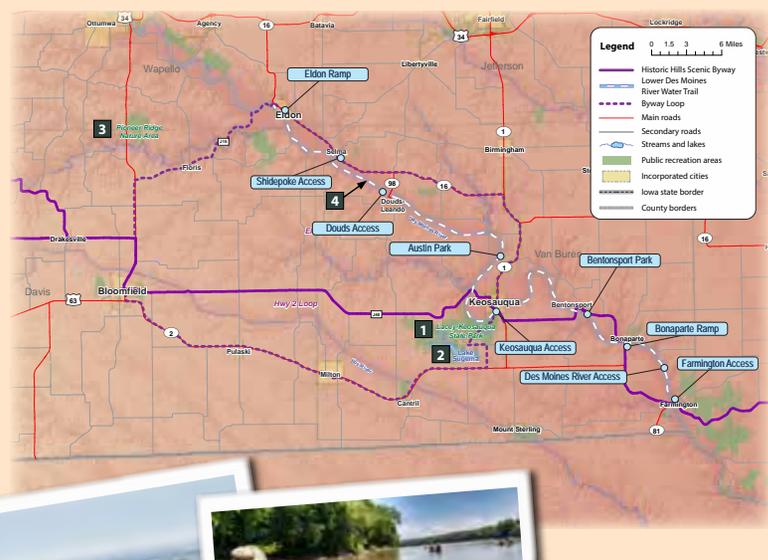
## Historic Hills Scenic Byway Travel Guide Concept Design (front cover)



# Historic Hills Byway Travel Guide Concept Design (Byway loops natural attractions)

## Natural Wonders

### Natural Wonders on the Byway Loops



## Byway Loops



### Explore nature in the heart of the hills

Departing Keosauqua, the Highway 2 Loop begins with a drive through Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. The park and adjoining lands form the core of the Lake Sugema Lacey-Keosauqua Bird Conservation Area that covers 51,000 acres along the Lower Des Moines River. This area and the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail are a nature lover's paradise.

- 1 Lacey-Keosauqua State Park:** Bordering the "Great Bend" of the Des Moines river, this is one of Iowa's largest and most picturesque parks. Hiking trails wind along cliffs shaded by old growth forest. Enjoy looking for birds, wildlife, and spring flowers. 22895 Lacey Trail, Keosauqua. Info: [www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/Iowa-State-Parks/ParkDetails/ParkID/610103](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/Iowa-State-Parks/ParkDetails/ParkID/610103) or 319-293-3502.
- 2 Lake Sugema:** Discover one of the best fishing lakes in southeastern Iowa. Surrounded by the Lake Sugema Wildlife Area, this is a great place for waterfowl and wildlife watching. From the trailhead at the campground, hike all the way to Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. 19640 Jersey, Keosauqua. Info: [www.vbcountyconservation.com/lake-sugema.html](http://www.vbcountyconservation.com/lake-sugema.html) or 319-293-3589.
- 3 Pioneer Ridge Nature Area:** This 1,000-acre nature area managed by Wapello County Conservation is being restored to native prairie and oak savanna. The nature center has interactive displays. A half-mile accessible trail includes a wildlife viewing blind overlooking a pond. An additional 12 miles of trails invite exploration. 1339 U.S. Highway 63, Bloomfield. Info: <http://conservation.wapellocounty.org/conservation-areas/pioneer-ridge-nature-area> or 641-682-3091.
- 4 Lower Des Moines River Water Trail:** This recreational route traverses 41 miles of lush forest lined with old cottonwoods and sycamores. Ancient geology is exposed on rock cliffs, and wildlife sightings are common. Paddle, Pedal & More in Bentonsport rents canoes that can be launched from Bentonsport Park or any of the nine access points between Eldon and Farmington. Info: [www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Water-Trail-Maps-Brochures](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Water-Trail-Maps-Brochures)



Lacey-Keosauqua State Park

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Families are a potential audience for Historic Hills Scenic Byway. Thematic activities that engage parents and children will create meaningful memories that will last a lifetime.

### Iowa Byways Junior Explorer Program

Similar to the Junior Ranger programs found in many parks, an Iowa Byways Junior Explorer program would be an activity-based experience with the purpose of encouraging families to explore the state's scenic byways.

Each byway would develop a kid-friendly activity guide that reveals the natural and cultural resources of a byway. The activities would be completed while traveling the byway. The guides would be made available at key locations along the byway, such as information centers and major attractions.

When children—with the help of parents or guardians—complete a certain number of activities, they would turn in their book at designated information centers, where a byway representative would look over the activities and talk to the children about what they learned. The

children would then take an oath, promising to continue exploring the state's scenic byways, respect and protect the resources, and share their experience with others. The children would receive a patch (or other item) declaring them an official Iowa Byways Junior Explorer.

The guides would be filled with fun games, puzzles, and coloring pages that entice families to discover southeastern Iowa. Some ideas include:

- A byway bingo game that encourages families to look for iconic features along the byway, like the American Gothic House, kayakers on the Des Moines River, Amish buggies, and one-room schoolhouses.
- A nature scavenger hunt that encourages the family to explore a trail or natural area.
- Stories and artwork created by children who live along the byway that describe their daily experiences (for example, living on a farm).

## Junior Explorers Activity Guide and Patch Concept Design



- Coloring pages depicting scenes from the Historic Hills byway.
- Crossword puzzles with Historic Hills region terms they may learn.
- Dot-to-dot puzzles of attractions they may see.
- A maze that follows the winding path of the Mormon migration.

## Explorer Discovery Pack

In association with the Iowa Byways Junior Explorer program, “Discovery Packs” filled with equipment and resources for young explorers could be made available to encourage more in-depth discovery along the byway. The packs could be borrowed from and returned to designated information centers.

Items in the packs could include: binoculars, hand lens, bug magnifying box, bug net, field guides, regional music CD, stargazing chart, field journal, and other essential exploration tools.

## Children’s Byway Audio Tour

An audio tour geared toward children is a unique way to tell the stories of the byway. When children provide the lively narration, it creates a personal connection with kids as they tour the byway. Many of the byway themes can be explored from a child’s perspective.

A girl might tell what it was like to walk to her country school, where all eight grades studied in one room, a pump was used for water, and an outhouse was the school bathroom. A boy might describe his experiences migrating along the Mormon Trail, sharing his fears and hopes for a new life in faraway Utah.

Singer-songwriters could be recruited to record a CD or downloadable compilation of children’s songs about historic farm life (like the threshing days), or running to meet the train as it pulled into the depot.



*A Junior Explorer Discovery Pack would be filled with hands-on tools and resources for exploring the byway as a family.*

## Family Passport Book: Concept Design

(Harvestville Farm page)



### Harvestville Farm

Get out of the car and have some fun in the large family play area of this fifth-generation working farm. In fall, pick your own pumpkin, find your way out of a corn maze, and take a ride on a horse-drawn wagon. When you get hungry, sample locally grown produce in the retail barn and eat at The Pitchfork Cafe.

Address: 1977 Highway 2  
Donnellson, IA 52625

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday,  
11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday  
May through September  
Weekends in spring and fall

Cost: Children, \$5 in summer; \$7 in fall.  
Adults and children under 2, free

Phone: (319) 470-1558

Web: [www.harvestvillefarm.com](http://www.harvestvillefarm.com)



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## Family Passport Book

A Family Passport booklet would encourage exploration of family-friendly attractions along the Historic Hills byway. The booklet could feature places such as Appleberry Orchard in Donnellson, Shimek State Forest, Dutchman's Store and Milton Creamery in Cantril, American Gothic House Center in Eldon, the Airpower Museum in Blakesburg, Pioneer Ridge Nature Area near Floris, and the three state parks along the route.

A passport book provides motivation to visit places that may otherwise be passed by or overlooked. The incentive to fill up the passport with stamps creates a goal for the family. Adults and children alike are engaged in the scavenger hunt to find the next stamping location. The booklet has take-home value, and each stamp represents a memory from the trip, an important connection to the byway experience.

The passport booklet is itself an interpretive opportunity.

It should be written in concise, personal, kid-friendly language that reveals the stories behind the Historic Hills byway resources.

A unique stamp design should be developed for each attraction that rewards travelers for their effort. Ideally, stamps would be located at attractions where people are available to answer questions and watch over the passport stations. However, self-service passport stations could also be developed for unstaffed areas or sites with limited hours.

## Thematic Play Areas

As any parent knows, finding play areas during a long drive is a priority. Byway travel involves long periods of sitting in a vehicle. Kids need breaks from the car ride to run and play. For families, play areas serve as focal points for stretching legs, eating snacks and meals, and using restrooms.

Typically, play areas along byways are serendipitous, standard playground equipment often associated with municipal parks. These are untapped, potentially powerful resources for engaging families with byway stories.



*A ship-themed play structure at Bayshore Park in Green Bay, Wisconsin, engages children in play and fantasy.*

Natural playgrounds are landscapes where children play with natural materials, such as logs, sticks, wooden blocks, boulders, stepping stones, gravel, sand, and water. This encourages children to use their imaginations while directly interacting with the byway landscape.

Historic Hills Scenic Byway should consider developing additional



*Playscapes, like at Railroad Park in Donnellson, can be designed to reinforce the themes of a byway, while providing a natural outlet for children's creativity and energy.*

interpretive play/rest areas along the route that reinforce the themes of the byway. For example:

- Develop a Des Moines River steamboat play structure for the riverside parks in Bonaparte and Bentonsport. Children could climb on the scaled-down riverboat, pretend they're a captain steering the boat through the locks, pull a cord that produces the (muted) sound of a

steam whistle, and dress in period costumes in a cabin.

- A climbing area with gentle slopes and flat limestone blocks similar to those on the lower Des Moines River.
- Concise interpretive signs incorporated into the play area can provide ideas for families to explore each play space together, along with related byway stories.

# MEDIA COST ESTIMATES

These cost estimates were developed in October 2017 based on quotes from multiple companies. They include

research, design, and fabrication/printing. The estimates are listed as broad ranges and should be used only for the

purposes of planning and fundraising. Actual prices will vary considerably based on the specifics of each project.

Media Type	Info	Rationale	Cost Estimate
Experience hubs	pp. 110–120	Highly visible way to orient travelers to regional attractions. Cost-effective where attractions are not routinely staffed.	\$15,000–\$20,000 each (Metalwork, timbers, limestone base, 4 HPL panels)
Wayside exhibits	pp. 121–128	Best way to communicate must-tell stories at significant sites along the byway where no other tools are available.	\$2,500–\$3,000 each (metal base with cut-out, 1 HPL panel)
Welcome/visitor center touch-screen computer kiosk exhibits	pp. 132–133	Valuable in alerting travelers to the byway’s existence and for trip-planning; small size appropriate for existing centers.	\$15,000–\$25,000 each
Byway artwork	pp. 134–137	Highly visible way to focus attention on a significant story or event on a roadside scale.	Highly variable based on type and artist. Steel silhouette statue: \$1,500 average Wall mural: \$10–\$35/sq. ft. average
Website design and social media development	pp. 138–142	Essential planning tool that reaches a large audience; is easily updated.	\$10,000–\$25,000 for development plus monthly hosting/maintenance.
Byway mobile tour website or native tour app	pp. 143–148	Ideal tools for incorporating sound and visuals to make stories come alive; convenient, easy to use, and encourage interaction.	\$8,000–\$50,000 for development plus monthly hosting/maintenance (\$200–\$500/month)
General byway brochure	pp. 149–152	Small publication that can be widely distributed to promote awareness of the byway.	\$2,500–\$3,000 per 10,000 copies (14"x17" size, full-color)
Travel guide booklet	pp. 153–155	A physical method for visitors to navigate the byway and discover its stories; not dependent on cellular service.	\$12,000–\$15,000 per 10,000 booklets (32 pages, 8.5"x11" size, full-color)
Iowa Byways Junior Explorer booklets	pp. 156–157	Keeps families engaged in the byway’s interpretive themes and encourages discovery.	\$8,000–\$12,000 per 10,000 booklets (20 pages, 8.5"x11" size, full-color)
Family passport books	p. 158	Provides motivation to visit specific sites along the byway and has take-home value.	\$5,000–\$8,000 per 10,000 booklets (20 pages, 6"x6" size, full-color) Stamps (1.25"-diameter): \$25–\$40/each

# APPENDIX



*The Lower Des Moines River in Bentonsport.*

# HISTORIC HILLS SCENIC BYWAY VISIONING MEETING RESULTS

On July 20, 2016, Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters conducted a visioning meeting with Historic Hills Scenic Byway staff and board members at the Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative in Bloomfield. The purpose of the meeting was to gather information about the places, activities, and stories that should be interpreted along the byway.

During this meeting, participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. **Attractions:** What are the important attractions along this byway that visitors should experience?
2. **Stories and Messages:** What compelling stories and messages make this byway unique?
3. **Audience:** What unique audiences visit Historic Hills Scenic Byway? What audiences *should* be targeted to visit the byway?
4. **Vision:** What is your vision of success for improving the visitor experience on the scenic byway?
5. **Research Recommendations:** Who are the key people we should interview and what are the

important resources we should acquire to learn about your byway?

The responses were recorded, organized, and sent to Pathfinders RC&D for review and dissemination. The final results are included below.

## Attractions

**What are the important attractions along this byway that visitors should experience?**

- Beauty of scenery and nature and wildlife in the area
- American Gothic House in Eldon
- Villages of Van Buren
- Agriculture
- Lacey-Keosauqua State Park
- Old Order Amish Community
- Old Livery Barn in Bloomfield
- Troy Academy – being restored, first learning institution west of Mississippi
- Mars Hill, log cabin church
- Bloomfield Historic Square and courthouse on National Register
- Wonderful people, friendly and helpful and kind, welcoming and willing to visit

- Rivers and prairies and oak savannas—rare habitats
- National Historic Districts, Bentonsport and Bonaparte
- Appleberry Orchard, an original Welch’s Orchard
- Mormon Trail, Richardson Point
- Log cabins in the area, some built by Mormons
- Drakesville Veterans Monument
- Drakesville and Floris Freedom Rocks
- Places to fish and hunt
- Lake Wapello State Park and its CCC buildings
- Shimek State Forest and Indian Lake Park
- Native American locations, Chief Black Hawk grave
- Dutchman’s Store in Cantril
- Moravia settled in 1851, depot design is one of two still in Iowa
- Carnegie Libraries along the byway
- Honey Creek Resort, a DNR facility in a lovely location
- Davis County Welcome Center was the first welcome center in Iowa, established in 1988, in a Sears and Roebuck house

- Pulaski Depot
- Golf courses along the byway
- Pioneer Museum in Farmington, in a church built in 1848, exterior and interior kept as original as possible, filled with pioneer items
- Berg building in Farmington
- Bonaparte Pottery, only standing pottery in Iowa
- Moravia Depot complex contains a church built in 1847. Also in the process of moving a country school to site. Wedding held there. Focused on country church weddings.
- Davis County Civil War marker
- Bed and breakfasts along byway, new ones in Bloomfield. One depicts a horseshoe barn, hosts weddings and reunions.
- Dutch Country Market
- Des Moines River
- Hel-Mart
- Camping
- Guerrilla raid
- Davis County Historical Society

## Stories and Messages

### What compelling stories and messages make this byway unique?

- CCC camps, and tie-in also to Grant Wood
- Farmington bed and breakfast
- Beauty and scenery
- Amish communities
- Agricultural industry, sharing roads with combines, all aspects of farming, diversity of farming practices, from Amish to corporate farms, even goat dairies
- James Stevens lived in area, Babe the Blue Ox interpretive sign about that
- Underground railroad, river, and Mormon Trail
- Civil War stories, guerrilla raid marker for Confederate invasion
- Weaver House, General Weaver
- Mormon Trail, from Nauvoo to Salt Lake City and the Mormon stories (some true and some not)
- Boundary between Missouri and Iowa, deciding the boundary and argued for 40 years before it was settled, river may have moved after boundary was surveyed.
- Natural history and geologic history of the area, and the natural setting

- History of trains through the area
- Grant Wood house
- Area has a real history of interest in the arts: painting, pottery
- Area full of history, the Honey War, Sullivan Line: somebody in Van Buren County stole a mile of Davis County

## Audience

### What unique audiences visit Historic Hills Scenic Byway? What audiences should be targeted to visit the byway?

- Car clubs and motorcycle clubs
- Tractor rides
- Families with young children
- Mormon travelers
- Target the fishing families (hunting is a little more select group) target the outdoor recreation enthusiasts who like biking, camping, hiking, and fishing
- Farmington Museum has already had hunting/fishing/camping enthusiasts (seeking rainy-day indoor activities) and motorcycle groups

- Target younger audiences, millennials. Younger people are coming to American Gothic House because it's experiential and interactive. If they are from an urban setting it's something new to experience.
- People interested in Amish community and woodworking shops. Davis County has largest Amish population in Iowa. People are looking for Amish businesses.
- Provide opportunities for handicapped people and think about accessibility.
- Bank club bus groups
- International travelers touring the Midwest
- International visitors coming to American Gothic House
- Visitors coming to research genealogy

## Vision

### What is your vision of success for improving the visitor experience on the scenic byway?

- Return visits, that visitors come back
- Getting visitors to stop and look at things while they are here. Getting visitors to come to the museums.
- Welcome visitors, be friendly and positive, and let them know about the whole byway and its attractions
- Visitors leave byway with all the information they need but have them wanting to come back for more
- More interpretation that visitors can gain without our sites being staffed. Many sites don't have volunteer resources to be open enough. More outdoor interpretation for visitors to access.
- More regular hours at businesses, especially during tourism season from May to October. Many businesses closed on Mondays but it's still a big travel day.
- Providing more and multiple marketing tools so that people can find things that of their particular interest. Marketing tools that target certain opportunities.
- Continuity of markers and messaging throughout the route, continuity of the visual identity.
- Museums provide more programs that tell about local history.
- More volunteers to provide more open hours at museums.
- More participation of volunteers and visitors.
- Van tours
- Front-line hospitality training for not only visitor attractions but also gas stations.
- Greater promotion of each other and that we can promote going to other communities for what to see.
- Potential for joint projects – example: golf course tour or other tours based on themes
- Repair of dilapidated buildings and properties along the byway and Main Streets
- "Our Iowa" tours, reaching out to broader tours
- Promoting DNR natural resources opportunities: state parks and state forest, to appeal to families and younger people seeking recreational opportunities
- Museums can promote next museum or attraction down the road and

preview its theme, entice travelers to keep exploring

- The museum brochure that includes a map should be handed out at the museums
- More interactives along the byway, to provide interest when attractions aren't open. Example: Games that children would have played at school, agricultural interactive attractions such as barns, hay bale
- Cross-marketing of antique stores
- Better signage for our attractions, to get people from byway to attractions
- Joint projects, hospitality training for everyone along the byway

## **Research Recommendations**

**Who are the key people we should interview and what are the important resources we should acquire to learn about your byway?**

- Elizabeth and David Collins and the Porchtime Bed and Breakfast in Farmington
- Michael Wagler, director of Main Street Iowa, a native of Bloomfield and is very versed in history of the area. He is also actively involved with Preservation Iowa.



