

1. BLAND BOULEVARD-Southwest edge of Independence. Named for Jonathan Bland in 1930, gardener at the Mental Health Institute for 18 years. Bland planted 300 green ash trees, 30 feet apart that created a shady canopy. These types of trees are short lived and have since been removed. In 1891 C. W. Williams constructed “The State Road to the Hospital” as a buggy route to access the Mental Health Institute. The trolley tracks on First Street caught the buggy wheels and shocked the horses’ hooves causing accidents.

2. MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE-West city limits. The Hospital for the Insane opened in 1873 and began serving 173 patients. In March 1969 the Cromwell Children’s Unit was completed. The architectural beauty of the MHI building has placed it on the National Register of Historic Places. Tours are available by appointment (319) 334-2583.



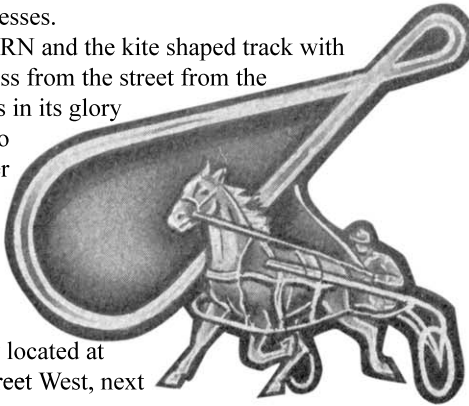
3. THE RUSH PARK COMPLEX-1890 First St. West. “The Lexington of the North”

RUSH PARK MANSION- This home was built for Charles W. Williams, who owned the world famous Allerton and Axtell race horses. Much of this private residence has been restored to the 1890’s period. Williams built a kite-shaped race track, the Gedney Hotel and a trolley system to accommodate race fans.

CARRIAGE HOUSE-1826 First Street West, which was originally located west of the mansion. In later years it was moved closer to the highway and has housed several businesses.

RUSH PARK SHOW BARN and the kite shaped track with grandstand were located across from the street from the mansion. Harness racing was in its glory in Independence from 1889 to 1894. Because of high trainer fees, exorbitant entry fees and the financial panic of 1893, the track closed. The barn was razed in 1998.

THE STABLE- of the famous trotter, Axtell, is now located at Rush Park Motel, on First Street West, next to the mansion.



TROLLEY SYSTEM and **GEDNEY HOTEL**-The trolley system was installed by Williams to bring racing fans from the Illinois Central Depot on the north end of town, down Second Avenue to First Street where it turned west and ran to Rush Park and to MHI. A nickel purchased a round trip ticket. Williams built the Gedney Hotel to accommodate the trainloads of race fans, located south across the street from the Post Office. The hotel burned in 1945.

4. BON AIR STOCK FARM-1825 218th Street. J. F. Martindale purchased this farm from C. W. Williams. Martindale raised thoroughbred horses and brood mares, which were all of the Hambeltonian and Membrino breed. On April 20, 1899 the stock barn was hit by lightning and burned to the ground, killing brood stock, calves and pigs.

5. STONE HOUSE-901 8th Ave. NW. This home built for Dennis Cooley cost \$500 in 1852. It is one of the two stone houses still standing in Independence.

6. FIFTH WARD PARK-Corner of 6th Ave. and 3rd St. NW. Formally know as Fargo Park, this is one of the many fine parks in the city. On early maps parks were designated as public squares.

7. COLONIAL STYLE HOUSE AT 609 FIRST STREET WEST-Edward Cobb, a livestock buyer and farmer, established his farm and small home on this site in the early 1850’s. When the Western Stage Company established stage service to Independence in 1854, his place became a “natural” stage stop. Cobb then built a larger home, this is the building you see today. It was a stage stop for six years. The Colonial Inn Motel cabins were built in 1940.

8. THIRD WARD PARK-Corner of Fourth Ave. and 6th St. SW. The Asa B. Clarke families settled here in 1854 and entered land in what is now Third Ward, where they built their homes. Albert Clarke deeded the land, which included the homesteads to Independence.

9. SCHOOLHOUSE-507 Seventh Ave. SW. In 1855 a small red brick school was built. It is now a private residence and has since been resided.

10. WAPSIPINICON MILL-First Street West. The west side of the river was originally the village of New Haven. The New Haven Mill was constructed in 1853-1854. The present brick structure was built from 1867-1870 by Samuel Sherwood, millwright and miller. It served the area for over 100 years as a flour mill. It is on the National Register of Historic Places and an “Affiliate site of Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area”. The mill is open mid May through mid September, Tuesday through Sunday 12-4 PM with a volunteer on site. The mill was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Greenley to the Buchanan County Historical Society in 1976.



11. WAPSIPINICON RIVER PARKS-

VETERANS PARK-First Street West, along the Wapsipinicon River. The park adjoins the mill site enhancing the picturesque setting. In 1886 the Water Works was established providing water and electricity for the community. It was demolished to create the park. In 1987 the park was dedicated to “All Veterans of Buchanan County of all Wars”. The serenity of a riverside park along the impressive Avenue of Flags is an appropriate backdrop for Memorial Day ceremonies. The gazebo was completed in 1988 and is used for community band concerts.

LIBERTY PARK-Across the street, south of the mill, on property donated by the Paul Grief family. In the brick structure houses a replica of the Declaration of Independence.

BRIMMER PARK-First St. East, along the Wapsipinicon River. The park is named after Frank Brimmer who served as City Clerk from 1956-57, Forth Ward Councilman from 1972-79, mayor from 1980-92 and again from 2002-. The park was dedicated in 1992.

RIVER WALK PARKS-The green space was made available following the 1999 floods when homes were destroyed and the city bought the properties. The recreation trail, picnic area and band shell were built to beautify this area.

12. MUNSON BUILDING-2nd St. NE. This structure was built by laborers in 1893 funded by Perry Munson and donated to the city for use as a library and community center. The French Renaissance Revival style of architecture has placed this building on the National Register of Historic Places. Mrs. Rufus B. Clark died in 1848 and was buried in front of the library. She was the first woman to live and later die in Independence. The Library Association was established in 1869. The State of Iowa passed a law empowering cities to raise money for libraries with a levy of one mill per dollar. Independence was the first city in the state to use the law.

13. ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH-202 2nd Ave. NE. This the oldest church in Independence still serving it’s congregation. The corner stone was laid in 1863 and the brick veneer was added in 1873. Frank Megow, a member of the church and owner of the Star Foundry, designed the iron railings on the steps.

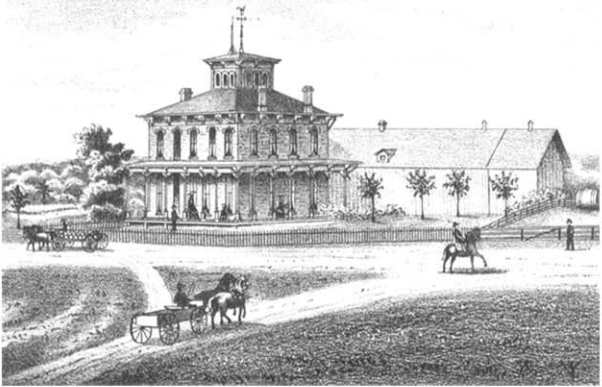
14. ST. JOSEPH’S PAROCHIAL SCHOOL-510 Second Avenue Northeast. St. Joseph’s German Catholic Church completed their parochial school in August of 1898 at a cost of \$3,000. The St. Josephs church and parsonage were located just north of the school. The school building is of frame and veneered with Gladbrook pressed brick. It is 40 by 32 feet. The basement contained the cellar, winter chapel and furnace. On the first floor there was a school room, 31 by 16 feet, a large entrance hall, kitchen, dining room and parlor. Located on the second floor were a school room the same size as on the first floor and three sleeping rooms. The attic was 40 by 32 feet and nine feet high and could be used for storage or a sleeping room. Three Sisters of the St. Francis Order were placed in charge of the school. The first enrollment numbered fifty-two pupils with both German and English taught.

15. ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD DEPOT-Highway 150 North. The railroad arrived in Independence on December 12, 1859. In 1892 the railroad commission erected the current brick passenger depot. The station was the starting point of the trolley built by C. W. Williams. Some of the notable persons who visited were Tom Thumb and wife, Susan B. Anthony, Presidents McKinley and T. Roosevelt, Carrie Nation, and John Phillips Sousa and his band. The depot and baggage building were moved to it’s current location in 1996 and restored by Buchanan County Tourism. The depot is open during summer months (Friday, Saturday, Sunday) as the Buchanan County Tourism Information Center

16. INDEPENDENCE FAIRGROUNDS- The first notice of the county fair appeared in the Independence Civilian July 23, 1857. The first fair and racing site was located where the Presbyterian Church now stands at 115 Sixth Avenue Northwest. The second site was located at the Rush Park Complex. Today’s existing 30 acre site was purchased from Thomas Scarcliff in 1891 by the Buchanan County Agricultural Society. Fairs were popular because of the livestock, produce, canned and baked goods and the novel thrill shows popular during the first half of the 1900’s. A race track was a necessary part of the fair grounds as Independence was always a hot bed for racing. Racing changed its diet from oats to gas in the 1960’s but horsepower still draws racers and their fans from all over Northeastern Iowa. In 1965 the Independence Motor Speedway was built where the old race track ran, with the front stretch running in front of the grandstand. The 3/8 mile dirt track is home of five classes of IMCA race cars and can draw as many as three thousand dedicated race fans each Saturday night during the summer.

17. BREWER HOUSE-804 Eighth Avenue Northeast. This home built of native limestone circa 1856 was the home of the first doctor, Edward Brewer. His marriage to Anne Hathaway was the first in the county. He was clerk of court and also served as Independence's first postmaster.

18. SEELAND BREWERY-1010 Fourth St. Northeast. This was the smaller of the two breweries located in Independence. Christian Seeland of Baden, Germany established the Seeland Brewery in 1859 and produced 2,000 barrels of beer annually. The brick home was erected in 1873 at a cost of \$7,000 near a woodland stream. This is now a private home. The brewery's fine copper kettle had a capability of 25-barrels. The mesh tub was a solid specimen of cooperage white patent copper. The three arched cellars were adapted for storage and fermentation of lager. There was a malt house and icehouse, the latter holding 250 tons of ice. The quality lager was shipped over a radius of 40 miles. Mr. Seeland was born in 1822 and died in 1888. He was buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

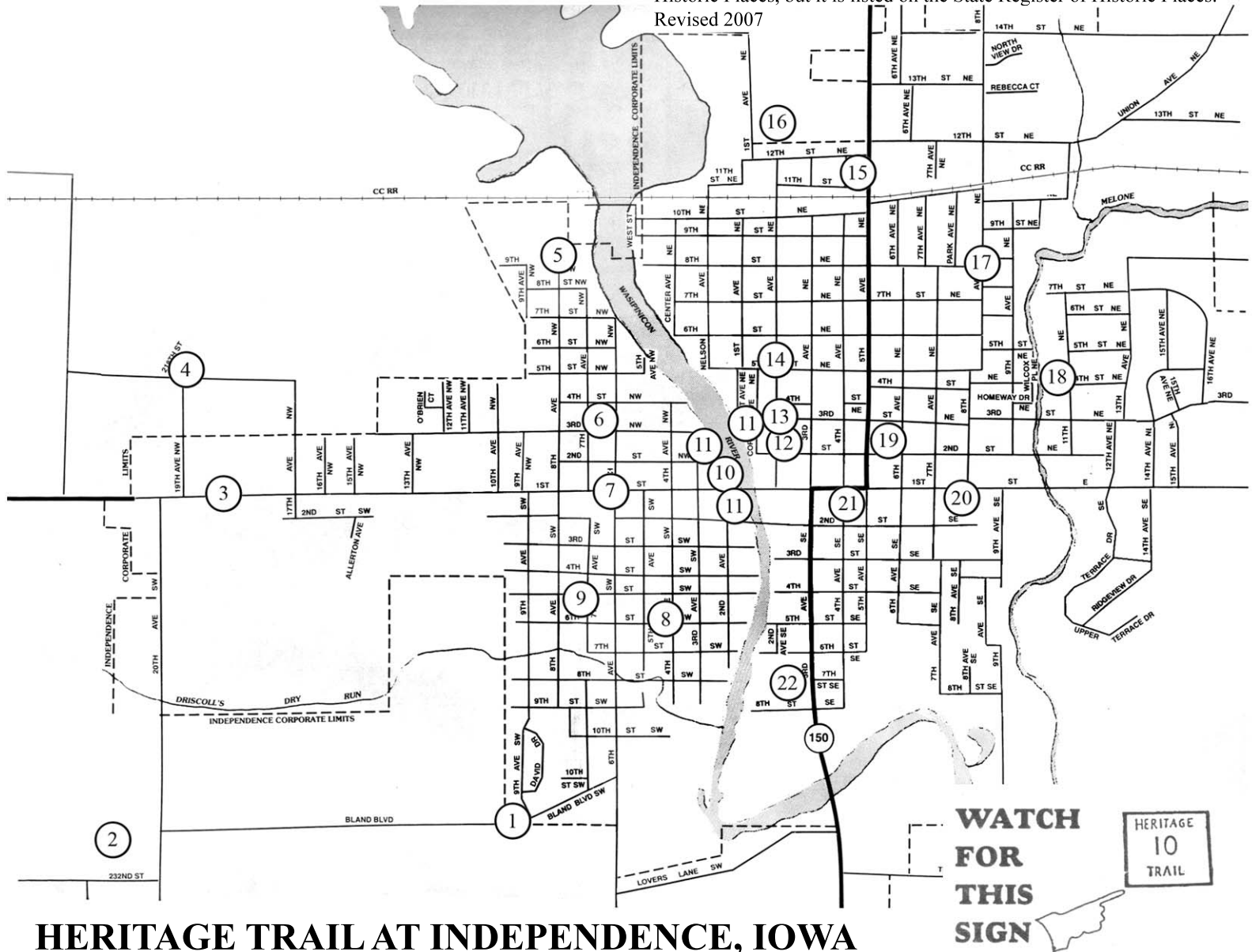


19. BUCHANAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE-210 Fifth Avenue Northeast. In 1857 the first courthouse was commissioned by the Honorary O. H. P. Roszell, and others. In 1869 a jail was built and in 1870 the sheriff's home was completed. The courthouse became the meeting place of the Early Settler's Association. The cornerstone for the current building was laid on September 20, 1939, with completion in 1940. In 1976 the Buchanan-Independence Safety Center was constructed for joint use by the Sheriff's department and the city police. A scale model of the Statue of Liberty was erected in 1950 upon the 40th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America.

20. DANIEL S. LEE MANSION-817 First Street East. David J. Roberts built the Lee home in 1867-68 at a cost of \$12,000. Lee was born in Fennesse Co., New York in 1817. In 1852 he was admitted to the bar of the Iowa Supreme Court and then established a law practice in Independence in connection with the real estate business. In 1855, Mr. Lee and others, established the first bank in Independence. Lee's fortune, along with the bank, was lost in the Panic of 1857. Lee was the first from the county to volunteer for the Civil War and was unanimously elected captain of Company E of the Fifth Regiment of the Iowa Infantry. In 1864, he was elected first mayor of Independence and in 1869 he served in the Iowa Legislature. He died in 1878. Through the years the home was the first hospital, nurse's quarters, hospital office and later a nursing home. The many additions have been removed and now the Buchanan County Historical Society is renovating the building. The garden arbor was constructed by Dr. John Flage in 2006. The Buchanan County Master Gardeners and Independence Garden Club helped to beautify the flower gardens.

21. CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH-114 Fourth Avenue Southeast. The church seating 300 people was built in 1869 with a wood spire and iron bell. The C. W. Williams family were members and Mr. Williams purchased the organ for Sunday school in 1890. Mrs. Williams's funeral services were held here in Feb. of 1909 with her husband preaching the sermon. After the collapse of his racing empire, Williams became a successful evangelist minister. The church disbanded in 1915 and the bell was donated to the Immanuel Lutheran Church. Ownership was transferred to the Memorial Association in Independence, then to the E. C. Little Post No. 54, and the Women's Relief Corp. No. 154. In 1919 the Sheehan-Tidball Post No. 30 of the American Legion became the occupants and remains there today.

22. OAKWOOD CEMETERY-Highway 150 South. The original cemetery, established as "Oak Grove" in 1864, due to the enormous oak trees on the grounds. Oak Grove became Oakwood prior to the establishment of the Oakwood Cemetery Association in 1901. The 11 acre cemetery was deeded in 2005 to the city of Independence. The wrought iron fence constructed in 1873 and cemetery urns, vases and settees were all fashioned by blacksmith, Frank Megow, of Star Foundry. Along the north fence stands the Edwards Angel monument created by J. J. Lundy, an Independence stonecutter. When the Oak Grove cemetery was established many families moved their loved ones from the Independence Cemetery located south of St. John's Cemetery. The oldest date in the cemetery is 1843 and the oldest headstone is 1848. There are over 6,000 stones in the cemetery. Through a quirk in federal law, cemeteries cannot be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but it is listed on the State Register of Historic Places. Revised 2007



HERITAGE TRAIL AT INDEPENDENCE, IOWA

The Heritage Hiking Trail was established by the Buchanan County Historical Society in 1972 in conjunction with the Quasiquicentennial celebration. This guide will give you an introduction to the rich and unique history of our community. We thank the Buchanan County Historical Society and BCHS President Leanne Harrison, who was instrumental in getting the trail started.