



Take a stroll through our scenic 1800's village and explore pioneer life in 12 authentic buildings. Each building is restored and filled with interesting artifacts and informative displays depicting the rugged years our immigrant settlers spent taming the Iowa prairie.

Leave behind the stress of today's world and savor the family values, hard work ethic and unpretentious lifestyle of an earlier age.

1 Welcome Center

Friendly, knowledgeable staff members are eager to answer your questions and direct you to the exhibits you're most interested in. Perhaps your first stop will be the quilt galleries in the Welcome Center. There you will see the vibrant colors and patterns of Amish quilts. At the English Quilt Gallery, you'll find the traditional patterns and exquisite hand quilting from the late 1800s to early 1900s. Before leaving the Welcome Center, you may also want to view the Holy City display in the Gem & Mineral room.

2 Church

At this charming Country Church, a faithful member harvested walnut lumber from his own land to make the church's altar. He seasoned the lumber for 15 years before he felt the time was right to begin his beautiful carvings. We invite you to sit in the curved pews and think of the many contributions the people made. They offered their hands and hearts to build places of worship like this for their communities. This country church served the rural community from 1867-1984.

3 Wash House

Monday was “wash day,” a day of hard work and diligence. There were heavy buckets of water to carry to the Wash House. The crank had to be turned around and around to agitate the wash load. Since there was no spin cycle in these early machines, the heavy, wet clothes were wrung out by hand. Electric power couldn’t have come too soon for the hard-working women who operated these machines.

4 Joetown Well

Tired horses drank deeply at the Joetown Well, known as the “16 mile stop”, on the long stagecoach journey from Iowa City to Oskaloosa. The passengers also welcomed a little rest in the shade and a cool drink from the Joetown Well. A splash of cool water on the face must have felt like a luxury after a dusty, bumpy stage coach ride.

5 Wahl House

This Midwestern Victorian Home is an iconic example of those built in 1892. Notice the wood burning stove in the kitchen. The stove was the center of every rural home. There the family warmed their hands, cooked their meals, and preserved enough food for long Midwestern winters.

6 Wahl Museum

Take a step back in time in this 4800 square foot building, you will be guided thru the different pioneer communities that were here before Kalona including the Meskwaki Indians, how Kalona got the acceptance of the railroad which is where our town began, changes of communication and transportation over the years and stories of our local businesses from 1879 – 1940’s.

7 Log House

As you view the Log House, it will be easy to appreciate the challenges of daily living in the 1800s. Comfort was not the first priority in the life of a pioneer. For instance, trundle bed mattresses were often stuffed with dried grass and supported by stretched ropes. The supporting ropes had to be tightened often. This gives meaning to the words, “Sleep tight; don’t let the bed bugs bite.” This cabin is one of only a few remaining pioneer homes in this area.

8 School House

The School House hosted many much-anticipated yearly spelling bees. Students and families gathered in this one-room schoolhouse, excitedly waiting for the big bee. One teacher taught all the grade levels in one room. Students received instruction that was appropriate for living a better life as a pioneer on the prairie.

9 Post Office

The Post Office still has its original tongue & groove wooden walls. And if these walls could talk, “Oh, the stories they would tell.” From 1914 to 1988, townspeople came to the Post Office to pick up their mail. It was common for people to take time to sit down with the postman and discuss the happenings of the day.

10 General Store

Most settlements had a General Store. It was a place to purchase items that couldn't be made at home. There was a little something for all members of the family there. The shopping concept modeled by general stores like this one is the forerunner to today's mega department stores.

11 Train Depot

At the Train Depot, it was common to see people standing in line to buy tickets. Some shop owners rode the train to Chicago to attend trade shows and replenish supplies. Farmers accompanied their livestock to the stockyards. Students traveled by train to Iowa City to go to college or to other towns for sporting events. Trains were used to visit relatives who lived far away. The significant Depot was the first building in this area. The town of Kalona formed around it, businesses sprung to life and neighborhoods created. To celebrate the Train Depot's importance, it is placed in the Center of the Kalona Historical Village. Its placement represents the creation of the town of Kalona and the creation of the Kalona Historical Society.

12 Loom House

The soft, rhythmic whir of the spinning wheel can be heard in the Loom House when Grace, our resident spinner, is making her beautiful textiles. Although Grace doesn't actually shear the sheep to get the wool for her projects, she does answer your questions and show you first-hand the process of weaving at the Loom House. When Grace is not scheduled visitors can view the impressive looms, other tools and beautiful woven textiles.

13 Grandpa House

The Grandpa House is usually built close to the family home. In their senior years, the grandparents are able to continue their enjoyment of farm life near their families. From this quaint, smaller living space, they can enjoy their grandchildren and help with some chores on the farm while living in a quiet space of their own.

14 Buggy Shop

This Buggy Shop was constructed in 1929 by Sam T. Miller for his father Uriah. Building the buggy in the lower level and hoisting to the second floor for painting was no small feat. Buggies like the ones built here continue to serve as the main transportation for the Amish community.

15 Line Shaft Building

The Line Shaft Building houses the machinery of early community grain mills. The grain mill was vital to every farming community. Farmers cooperatively built this one in 1880. They brought their harvested grain to grind into cornmeal or flour, which were staples in the farmers' diet. During the annual Kalona Fall Festival visitors can witness the process of milling grain in action and purchase freshly ground cornmeal.

16 Water Tank & Windmill

The first trains chugging through Kalona were steam powered. They needed water to operate, just like our cars need gas. Water tanks like this were constructed every 7 miles so the train could fill up before it "ran out of

steam.” Towns formed around train stops with water tanks. Many of these towns (like Kalona) are still alive and thriving today. The Water Tank you see serves as a reminder today of times past along the railroad route.

17 Agricultural Museum

The antique farm tools and machines you see here seem primitive when compared to the giant machines of today. Your observant eyes can track today’s sophisticated machinery back to these early agricultural implements. Think of how much work can be accomplished today compared to the heavy demand of labor associated with these primitive machines. Many small steps have been taken to develop today’s modern machines and technology from the simple, primitive tools displayed.

18 Iowa Mennonite Museum and Archives

The Iowa Mennonite Museum and Archives features artifacts, archives, books and stories from the Mennonites and Amish in the Kalona area—and throughout Iowa. Guides are available to tell the stories of the first Amish and Mennonite settlers. They can answer questions like, “What’s the difference between the Amish and the Mennonites?” or “What do the words, Amish, Mennonite or Anabaptist even mean?” They are also glad to show visitors around the museum.

Visitors will find displays on the theology, history, and current practices of the Amish and Mennonites in Iowa. In addition, you may browse various collections in the museum. Or you might enjoy the museum’s collection of women’s bonnets and coverings, and quilts. There is an “industry” room featuring a giant loom, a treadmill for animals, a man-powered lathe, and an extensive display about the historic Twin County Dairy. You can also see a “Mennonite” bedroom, living room, and kitchen.

The Archives house many historical documents including personal collections, pastoral recollections, and diaries. They also contain other primary source materials, genealogical books, periodicals, and a lending library of Amish/Mennonite/Anabaptist theology and history. Archivists are happy to accommodate researchers doing local and/or Mennonite history and aspiring genealogists.

The Iowa Mennonite Museum and Archives is owned and operated by the Mennonite Historical Society of Iowa.

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