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## Iowa's eight state historic sites open for travel and tourism season

**DES MOINES** – Iowa's eight state historic sites open for the travel and tourism season over the Memorial Day weekend, offering Iowans unique and "historical" vacation experiences.

Overseen by the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), the historic sites present authentic stories of Iowa's history and pre-history, and include a frontier cabin, American Gothic House, Native American villages, a blacksmith shop, homes of two former Iowa governors and a visitor's center in Council Bluffs where settlers converged before continuing westward on the California, Oregon, Mormon, and Lewis and Clark trails.

"Iowa's historic sites showcase our rich history and serve as point of pride for the state," said Susan Kloewer, administrator of DCA's State Historical Society of Iowa. "I invite all Iowans and all visitors to Iowa to experience these historic sites and to connect with their authentic stories about the state's past."

This year, travelers and tourists can pick up a new State Historic Sites map at any Welcome Center in Iowa to guide their trips, including visits to the following highly anticipated programs and activities at the American Gothic House in Eldon and the Montauk Historic Site near Clermont:

- **American Gothic House – Eldon, Iowa**  
SHSI is opening the interior of the [American Gothic House](#) for public tours 10 a.m.-4 p.m. every second Saturday of the month through Oct. 10. Admission is free and no reservations are required. Dates are May 9, June 13, July 11, Aug. 8, Sept. 12 and Oct. 10. The house was, of course, the backdrop for Grant Wood's iconic and internationally-renowned painting, "American Gothic." [More information.](#)
- **American Gothic House Center – Eldon, Iowa**  
The American Gothic House Center will open "American Gothic in Stitches: Quilts Inspired by the famous painting" exhibition June 1-Oct. 18 in Eldon, Iowa. The exhibition features nine works by skilled quilters from around the world who have created their own masterpieces influenced by the famous painting. An opening reception will take place Friday, June 5, 4:30-6:30 p.m. with Grant Wood's baby quilt on display courtesy of the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art. Admission to the exhibit is free. [More information.](#)
- **Clermont Museum – Clermont, Iowa**  
Visit the Clermont Museum on Friday, June 12, for a new exhibit, "A Blue Ribbon Fair: William Larrabee & the ISF Interpretive Panels," about former Iowa Governor William Larrabee and his herd of Brown Swiss Dairy cattle. In 1885, Gov. Larrabee became the first person to introduce the breed to the Iowa State Fair. The exhibit showcases ribbons, trophies and certificates he earned at state fairs in Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota, and other shows. [More information.](#)
- **Montauk – near Clermont, Iowa**  
Montauk, the home of former Iowa Governor William Larrabee and his wife, Anna, will present programs and activities related to the "Blue Ribbon Fair" exhibit. More information will be announced as it becomes available. [More information](#) for location, hours and tours.

Following is a list of additional [historic sites](#) in Iowa:

- **Abbie Gardner Sharp Cabin – Arnolds Park, Iowa**  
The site where 13-year-old Abbie Gardner was an eyewitness to one of the few violent conflicts between European-American settlers and American Indians in Iowa (what became known as the 1857 Spirit Lake Massacre). [More information](#) for location, hours and tours.
- **Blood Run National Historic Landmark – Lyon County, Iowa**  
Occupied from 900 A.D. to about 1720 A.D. by the Oneota culture and, later, the Prairie Sioux, the site was a major intertribal and ceremonial center. Surveys have identified burial mounds and village sites. [More information](#) for location, hours and tours.

- **Edel Blacksmith Shop – Haverhill, Marshall County, Iowa**  
Journey into the past to a uniquely preserved blacksmith shop exactly as German immigrant Matthew Edel left it the day he died. Edel, a skilled blacksmith and inventor, operated the shop until his death in 1940. [More information](#) for location, hours and tours.
- **Plum Grove Historic Site – Iowa City, Iowa**  
Visitors enjoy a tour of the home of Iowa's first Territorial Governor, Robert Lucas, and Friendly Lucas, his wife. The seven-room Greek Revival house is constructed of local brick. The National Society of Colonial Dames of America furnished the home with authentic pieces representative of the 1844-53 period. [More information](#) for location, hours and tours.
- **Toolesboro Indian Mounds – Toolesboro, Iowa**  
The Hopewellian mounds at Toolesboro are among the best-preserved and accessible remnants of an ancient culture flourishing from around 200 B.C. to 300 A.D. The five-acre site includes several large surviving mounds, an education center and a prairie demonstration plot. [More information](#) for location, hours and tours.
- **Western Historic Trails Center – Council Bluffs, Iowa**  
Prepare for an adventure along the western historic trails, and receive an orientation for trips north following the Lewis and Clark Trail or for trips west following the routes of early travelers on the Oregon, Mormon and California trails. [More information](#) for location, hours and tours.

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*The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs and its three divisions – the Iowa Arts Council, Produce Iowa-State Office of Media Production and the State Historical Society of Iowa – empower Iowa to build and sustain culturally vibrant communities by connecting Iowans to the people, places and points of pride that define our state. The department's work enables Iowa to be recognized as a state that fosters creativity and serves as a catalyst for innovation where the stories of Iowa are preserved and communicated to connect past, present and future generations. [www.culturalaffairs.org](http://www.culturalaffairs.org).*