

Iowa City Walking Tour

Created by Bill Whittaker, August 2025

View Map: <https://www.midwestarchaeology.org/annual-meeting/ICWT>

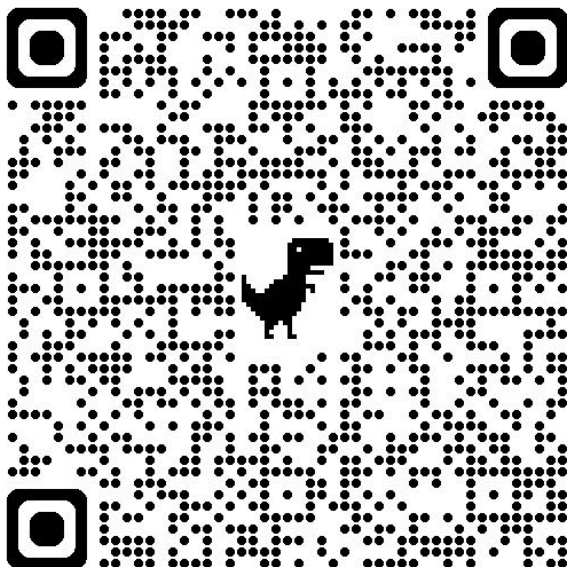
Stop	Name	Description
1	Graduate Hotel	2025 Joint meeting of Plains Anthropological Society and Midwest Archaeology Conference.
2	Tornado path	2006 a F2 tornado tore through town, decimated this block. Historic house at 335 S. Clinton St (1881) had just been granted a demolition reprieve a few days before it was destroyed by the tornado. The most significant loss was the 1878 St. Patrick's Church.
3	Voxman School of Music	Artifact display 1st floor. 2013 excavations included stone foundation with tube glass trade beads, privy full of wine glasses and lamp glass.
4	Lost Business District	Now the Old Capitol Town Center Mall, a large 19th c shopping and hotel district demolished in the 1970s. Burkley Hotel was famous haunt of writers. In the 1830s 500 Indians reportedly camped about here, scene of a duel.
5	Pedestrian Mall	This historic intersection was gutted by urban renewal in the 1960s to 1980s. The
6	Donnelly's Tavern	119 S Dubuque, famed hangout for writers 1960s–70s. Nonextant.
7	Franklin Printing house	1856, remnant of antebellum downtown, housed 19th c newspaper offices
8	Davis Drug Store	1859–1911 M.W. Davis had extensive artifacts and natural history displays at his drug store, the first museum in Iowa. Davis was a founder of SHSI and led the first systematic archaeology in Iowa. Store burned 1912, replaced by historic Jefferson Hotel.
9	21 S Dubuque	Excavations in the basement in 1911 found a pot of gold and a human skull, building dates to 1874–1876
10	Prairie Lights	1978, one of the last independent new book sellers. Location previously site of a literary society café which hosted readings by Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, Sherwood Anderson, and E. E. Cummings.
11	Hero George Andrews	In 1873 George Andrews, an African American volunteer fire fighter, killed on duty when the Market Hall burned. "He was the bravest fireman in the city."
12	Ten Eyck Cabin	1839 first US residence in Iowa City. Gov. Lucas stayed here. Nonextant. Spot where 1907 postcard made
13	Bridge for Iowa	Built 2000, designed by Siah Armajani to evoke Iowa's historic covered bridges and railroad truss bridges. The newer Biology Building East was the location of old Close Hall, where in 1896 was first collegiate five-on-five basketball game in US history.
14	Sciences Library	One of many Proudfoot buildings (1902), was designed around a human cadavar dissection theater.
15	Phillips Hall	Former scene of a large collection of Quanset Huts in the 1940s and 1950s, where returning GIs lived while attending UI. Philips Hall's 1965 facade might have been designed to resemble a punchcard
16	Klondike Bill	Famous photo taken here of beloved transient man with dog-pulled wagon, Dec. 1, 1911.
17	Old Capitol Museum	Displays of the 1840s capitol, early University. Built by John Rague, who built the Illinois Old capital and UW-Madison Bascom Hill buildings
18	Iowa Hall	Museum of Natural History includes extensive artifacts from around state. Part of MacBride Hall, which also houses Anthropology
19	Hubbard Park	Sign. Excavation of a working-class neighborhood in 2014 included some Woodland material and Indian trade goods.
20	Memorial Union	Excavation in 2011 led to the documentation of features buried in the 1990s.
21	Halsey Hall	Built as a women's gym in 1915, reminder of Iowa being first western college to admit women in 1855. Exterior used in old TV series Coach.
22	Calvin Hall	Finkbine, the same architect of the Iowa Capitol in Des Moines, built this in 1885 next to the Old Capitol. Moved here in 1905.
23	Slavery in Iowa	in 1841 at the National Hotel, only recorded sale of enslaved in Iowa, later Chauncey Swan Hotel, later Pursel House Hotel, nonextant, location now Gilmore Hall.
24	Park House Hotel	1852 hotel, became St. Agatha's Female Seminary in 1862–1909. preserved and restored after a long fight.
25	St. Mary's Church	1841 church one of oldest buildings in city, founded by Indian Missionary Sam Mazzuchelli and Mathias Loras
26	Beer Cave	Extant large 19th c beer cave made news when revealed in 2019.
27	Grace and Rubie's Restaurant	209 N Linn, a restaurant 1976–1978 that only allowed women; subject of T. C. Boyle's 1977 story "Woman's Restaurant."

Stop	Name	Description
28	Hamburg Inn 2	Restaurant visited by many presidents, writers such as Allan Gurganus, John Cheever, John Irving
29	Tennessee Williams II	Williams also lived here as a student. Demolished ca. 2013.
30	Haunted Bookshop	1847 house, now large used bookstore.
31	Fox Head	Ancient dive bar frequented by writers associated with the Iowa Writers Workshop such as Vonnegut. A saloon here 1892, but also a feed shop in 1899. Ruined by fire ca. 1905, rebuilt as bottling works. Fox Head since 1934.
32	Nicking House	Built 1854, very rare sandstone house.
33	John's Groceries	1848 storefront opened as J. W. Lee's grocery. Subsequently it was a hose house (fire station), offices, a saloon, and a cigar factory. In 1933 became a grocery again, the E. E. McGuire Grocery, John's grocery store has been here since 1948.
34	Artifacts Antiques	Large, well-curated antique store
35	Bostick House	1851, early town hall and Civil War recruiting center
36	Stuit Hall, Old Hospital	Surviving remnant of original UIHC. The main hospital complex, later called Seashore Hall (1899), was demolished 2018. Stuit Hall, 1918, originally the isolation unit, is all that remains of the original hospital complex. The Hospital moved across the river in 1931.
37	State Historical Society library	Understaffed, excellent library, where digital newspaper scanning began
38	Iowa Avenue	Planned as a promenade spanning from Capitol to a governor's mansion, capital moved to DM before the governor's mansion was built
39	Eastlawn Arch	Architectural remnant of the former home of the OSA, demolished 1999.
40	Davis Hotel	Boerner-Fry 1899 pharmaceutical and perfume factory, hotel 1922–1972
41	Farmer's Market	Saturday morning
42	Elk's Lodge	Exposed foundations of the 1909 Classical Revival BPOE Hall. Historically late use of rough-cut limestone foundations were used in Elk's building. In 1967 converted to restaurant and offices. Recommended for NRHP in 2018, demolished in 2019.
43	Press-Citizen building	1937 Art Deco beauty, note the bas relief over entrance.
44	Post Office Point	In 1916 Charles Keyes, the founder of Iowa archaeology, recorded his only site in Iowa City, a Snyders point found while the old Post Office was under construction in 1904. Expanded in 1931 to current appearance.
45	Englert Theatre	Built in 1912 as a mixed-use theater. Rebuilt after 1926 fire, primarily as a movie theater. Divided in the 1980s into two screens. 1999–2004 became a non-profit theater, extensive renovations.
46	Commercial College and City Hall	Built 1880–1883, these storefronts housed a private school offering training in office work. The old city hall was to east, demolished 1962.
Farther Out		
100	Original Depot 1856	Between 1856 and 1860 anyone who wanted to travel to the West had to disembark here.
101	Close Mansion	Built 1874 by local factory owners. Some of their linseed factory buildings remain on the other side of Gilbert, now restaurants. Renovated in the 1980s.
102	Iowa OSA	1959 A&P grocery building home of OSA since 1998.
103	Purington Paver house	Only house I know of anywhere made of paving brick, 1920. A holdout lot amid huge apartment blocks, the apartments to the west demolished pre-Civil War brick cottages.
104	1898 Depot	Passenger depot, not used since the 1960s
105	1860 Railroad Bridge	Between January 1856 and August 1860 Iowa City was the farthest west anyone could travel by rail, making it the US frontier. Wagon trains and the Mormon Trek began from the Iowa City area for this reason. The current bridge dates to 1901.
106	County Courthouse	1901. Fourth courthouse, second at this location
107	Iowa House	Literary rental house, John Cheever, Raymond Carver, Tennessee Williams, and Henry Coulette lived here. 421 S Capitol, demoed ca. 1974.
108	Stanley Museum of Art	Artifacts from around the world, strong African collection.
109	Hydraulic Lab and Power House	Both built 1928 in grand Art Deco style, the Hydraulics Lab has maintained its original form well. The power plant's original core is still largely intact, buried beneath numerous additions.

Stop	Name	Description
110	Iowa Field	1895 stadium. Famously, freight trains ran under the grandstand. Prone to flooding, replaced by Kinnick Stadium in 1929.
111	Wooden Capitol/ Kenney's Tavern	125 S Clinton, 1940s–1960s counterculture, writers, and Black students, Philip Roth wrote about in Esquire 1962. In 1841 Walter Butler built a large wooden inn to be used as temporary state capitol, moved 1856.
112	Tennessee Williams I	Williams lived here ca. 1937–1939, demolished by the UI in 2019.
113	Flannery O'Connor	Flannery O'Connor and later Gail Godwin lived in Bowman House
114	Pagliai's Pizza	The 1875 Slezak-Holub-Skarda building was a Bohemian dance hall before becoming a pizza parlor in 1962. Suggestions to demolish the building in 2023 met with opposition, its fate is still uncertain.
115	New Pioneer Cooperative	Founded 1971, New Pi is a survivor of the 1960s–1970s counterculture. The building was originally the Big-B Master Market (1951-1957) then the Me Too Grocery (1957-1970s). New Pi moved here in 1977.
116	Northwestern Bell Telephone building	The 1970s ugly façade hides a handsome 1929 brick building.

References

- Anonymous. 1883. *History of Johnson County, Iowa*. No publisher listed, Iowa City, Iowa.
- Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867–1970
- Hibbs, Bob. 2010. *Postcard History Series: Iowa City*. Arcadia, Charleston South Carolina.
<https://history.icpl.org/>
<https://www.iowaheritage.org/>
- Light, Alan, Digital Photograph Collection
- Mansheim, Gerald. 1989. *Iowa City: An Illustrated History*. Donning Company, Norfolk, Virginia.
- Scott, John B., and Rodney P. Lehnertz. 2006. *The University of Iowa Guide to Campus Architecture*. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City.
- Soucek, M. Joan (editor). 1990. *A Literary Walking Tour of Eastside Iowa City*. Division of Continuing Education, University of Iowa, Iowa City.
- Ungs, Robert, Digital Photograph Collection
- Weber, Irving 1975–1998. Irving Weber's Iowa City. <https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/node/27997>
- Whittaker, William E. 2014. *The Archaeology of Iowa City*. *Newsletter of the Iowa Archeological Society* 64(3 & 4):2–12.
- Whittaker, William E. 2016. More Odd Archaeology: What Lies in the Comic Book Store Basement? *Newsletter of the Iowa Archeological Society* 66(3&4):6–7.



Scan QR code to open the Google map on your device