

Open for historical site descriptions!

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The Larrabee Family

Clermont is located in Northeast Iowa along the picturesque banks of the Turkey River. What makes this quaint town truly unique is that it is teeming with sites of historical significance. In fact, nowhere in the surrounding area will you find a town with the opportunity to relive so much history. This is in large part due to the philanthropy of the town's most well known residents, the Larrabee family. Serving as the 12th Governor of Iowa from 1886-1890, William Larrabee was instrumental in reshaping the community of Clermont. Along with his wife, Anna, and their seven children, the family has left a legacy of historic sites, buildings and monuments still enjoyed by visitors and residents today. Visit Larrabee's vision of the "IDEAL SCHOOL," gaze upon his collection of ancient artifacts and iconic statues, hear the pipes of the world's largest kimball pipe organ or tour his 14-room Montauk Mansion. There are plenty of historical sites waiting to captivate your interest.



Governor Larrabee 1832-1912

"The Brick City"

While you tour this historic town, also be sure to notice the unusual number of brick buildings. As deposits of clay were found to be abundant along the Turkey River, Clermont enjoyed a thriving brickmaking industry from 1855-1942. During this time period, the brickyards in Clermont produced millions of red and white brick, hollow tile and concrete block, making the brickyards the most important employers to the area. Clermont brick went into buildings all over the region, but remain especially visible in structures located on Mill Street in downtown Clermont. The economic importance of the town's bricks as well as the aesthetic qualities of the community's architecture has resulted in this town being known as "The Brick City."



River Bluffs Scenic Byway



This 109-mile route does a "loop tour" across Fayette and Clayton Counties in Northeast Iowa. What makes this Byway special is that it passes through a truly unique region of the state that is a paradise for outdoors enthusiasts. Bypassed by the last glacier thought to have scraped and smoothed much of Iowa's land, this area of the state is distinctive and diverse. In fact, a common nickname for the area is "Little Switzerland" due to the towering bluffs, rolling valleys and green landscape that paints the countryside as far as the eye can see. The unique geology of the area has made this route a sought after destination for tourists and nature enthusiasts. The region is spotted with parks, nature centers, fishing hotspots, excellent campgrounds, trails, and water trail access points. Travel the River Bluffs Scenic Byway and discover a road of majestic features and outdoor exploration. Your road to adventure awaits. Travel Time: 4 hours. Visit our website at: www.iowabyways.org.



Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation & Development
 101 E. Greene St.
 Postville, IA 52162
 Phone: 563-864-7112
www.northeastiowarc.org



Clermont Historical Society
 505 Larrabee St.
 Clermont, IA 52135
 Phone: 563-425-5561
www.clermontia.org

*Historical guided tours are available upon request

Historical Walking Tour of Clermont



Presented by:
 The River Bluffs Scenic Byway

Historical Sites of Clermont

1. Heritage Farm Park

Heritage Farm Park offers a unique mix of recreational and educational activities that truly allow you to experience what life was like in the 18th Century. This 106-acre park features 10 miles of wooded trails, a petting zoo, campsites and a surplus of historical attractions worth exploring. Weekend tours and wagon rides are available June through August, Saturday and Sunday, 10am-5pm or by appointment. Tours are available by calling 563-419-8534.



The Appleman Barn



The 22x9 Foot Organ has 1,554 Tubes

10. Union Sunday School

Hear the amazing range of sounds produced by the world's largest pneumatic Kimball pipe organ. Built in 1896, this organ was donated to the historic 1863 Union Sunday School as a gift from Governor Larrabee to his daughter. A musician, Anna served as the church organist for 60 years until her death in 1965. This historic treasure continues to attract national and local organ enthusiasts. Concerts are held on the last Sunday of the month from April to November.



Historic Montauk Built in 1874

2. Montauk Historic Governor's Home

Take a journey into the past by visiting the home of Iowa's 12th governor, William Larrabee. Enjoy a guided tour to see and hear how the Larrabee family furnished and maintained this 1874 vintage brick and natural limestone mansion situated on 46 acres among 100,000 pines overlooking the Turkey River. Montauk is open May through August, Friday through Sunday, Noon-4 p.m. Tours are available by calling 563-423-7173.



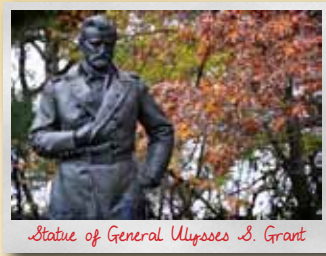
Hand-Painted Stage Backdrop of Clermont

11. Clermont Opera House

Constructed in 1912, Clermont's hub for entertainment served as host to silent movies, concerts, plays and dances until the mid 1940s. Today, the building is available for special events and features a backdrop with historical sites of Clermont painted on it. Tours are available by calling 563-423-5561.

3. Civil War Statues at Montauk

Tour the grounds of historic Montauk and you will find four larger than life statues of civil war heroes. Designed by George E. Bissell, the impressive life-sized statues of General Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, Admiral David Farragut and General Grenville Dodge are sure to leave a lasting impression. The grounds of Montauk are open daily.



Statue of General Ulysses S. Grant

12. Clermont Museum

Observe countless collections of historical interest by visiting the Clermont Museum. Built in 1913, this former location of the State Bank was converted into a museum to showcase significant items collected through Governor Larrabee's world travels. Find everything from geological collections and prehistoric fossils to ancient artifacts and weapons of war. Museum tours are available by calling 563-423-5561.



Life-Size Sculptures on Display

4. Historic Bandshell

Stroll through Clermont City Park and discover a historic bandshell made of Clermont brick. Take notice of the unusual planting of trees in the park. The planted maple trees form an X with the bandshell centered in the middle. The quaint city park also features sheltered picnic areas, grills and a new playground. Park hours are 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.



Historic Bandshell Built in 1920

13. Straight Story Lawnmower

Catch a glimpse of the 1966 John Deere self-propelled lawn mower used in the movie "The Straight Story." Inspired by the true story of Alvin Straight, the movie depicts a man who learns his brother has suffered a stroke and wishes to make amends. Not having a driver's license, the 73-year-old decides to make the 240-mile journey across Iowa on his riding lawn mower. Viewing this replica will give you an opportunity to truly appreciate Alvin's unusual excursion.



The Lawnmower that Traveled Across Iowa

5. Train Depot

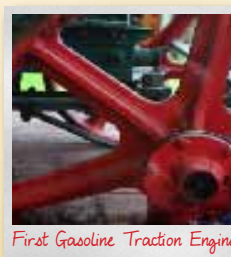
This historic depot was originally built by the Burlington Cedar Rapids and Minnesota Railway in 1872 and later suited the Rock Island division in 1903. For over 100 years, the railroad depot was considered the area's transportation hub for passenger and freight services. Take note of the messages in the red brick carved by railway passengers and how the building sits square with the world. Tours are available by calling 563-423-7173.



Old Rock Island Train Depot

14. Model A John Deere Tractor

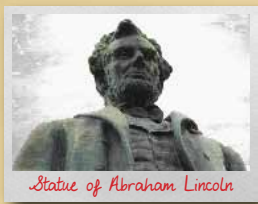
Set eyes upon one of the greatest models of tractors in agricultural history. The Model A John Deere Tractor was considered one of the best all purpose row-crop tractors of the era. The 1937 tractor on display is believed to be the first one sold in Clermont.



First Gasoline Traction Engine

15. Hart Parr Tractor

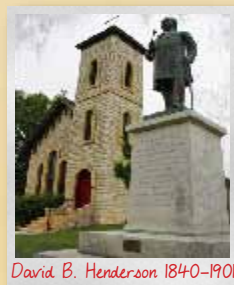
Displayed in a simple wooden building with large plate-glass windows, this rusted 1927 Hart Parr tractor is truly a unique piece of machinery. The manufacturer of the tractor, Hart Parr, is famous for having coined the term *tractor* when the company shortened the old name for the machines originally known as gasoline traction engines.



Statue of Abraham Lincoln

6. Lincoln Park & Statue

Wander through formal flowerbeds and view a handsome bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln by taking a walk in Lincoln Park. Erected in 1902, the monument sculpted by George E. Bissell serves as a tribute to the soldiers and sailors of the Civil War during 1861-1865.



David B. Henderson 1840-1901

7. David B. Henderson Statue

Visit the statue of the first Speaker of the House to represent a state west of the Mississippi River. Serving as speaker from 1899-1903, this longtime resident of Clermont was also a Congressman and Civil War hero. The life-sized bronze statue created by famous Scottish sculptor J. Massey Rhide in 1902 serves as a memorial statue to honor the life and achievements of David B. Henderson.

16. The Village Blacksmith Shop

See where the areas renowned blacksmith practiced his trade. Constructed in 1858, the blacksmith shop was owned by local legend Burkard Reigel from 1931-1967. Known for his work shoeing racehorses, Reigel's claim to fame is once shoeing 11 horses in 3 hours and 15 minutes. Be sure to stroll inside the newly constructed walkway to view Reigel's original tools and workspace as he used it.



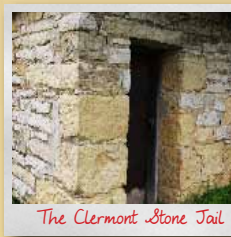
The Village Blacksmith Shop



1 of 3 Churches Constructed by Mrs. Vinton

8. Episcopal Church of the Savior

Built in 1867, this house of worship is one of three churches donated by Mrs. Frances Dyer Vinton in memory of her two children. Believing in the biblical phrase "Thy praise shall ring from shore to shore," Vinton constructed churches in Providence, RI, San Gabriel, CA and Clermont. Clermont was selected for being in the geographical center of the United States. Services continue to be held every Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m.



The Clermont Stone Jail

17. Stone Jail

Erected in 1852, the stone jail was used for incarceration until the 1920s. This tiny jailhouse featured one holding cell equipped with two beds. Although people were detained for crimes, the jail was most frequented by town drunks looking for a free place to spend the night.



Artifacts Related to the Regions History

9. Larrabee School

Gaze in admiration at the only school in Iowa completely donated to a community by a family. Believing children of Clermont were entitled to the best education to be had, both Governor and Mrs. Larrabee studied school buildings for over 15 years prior to constructing the "IDEAL SCHOOL" in 1913. Today, the structure houses the Clermont Historical Society Museum and public library. Museum tours are available by calling 563-423-5561.



Flour Mill and Electric Power Plant

18. Flour Mill & Power Plant

Visit one of the most significant buildings in Clermont's history. Built in 1854, this historic structure served as a grinding mill for the best wheat markets in the county. The mill was converted to an electric power plant in 1909, bringing electricity and heat to a major segment of Northeast Iowa. Although the Clermont plant closed in 1966, the company expanded its services to neighboring communities and became Interstate Power Company, known today as Alliant Energy.