



Iowa Local History: A Teachers Guide

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Introduction

Local history is the study of everyday life within a limited geographic area. Learning about a community and its people brings a reality to history often missing in the general textbook. Local history provides a positive learning experience for students. Guided carefully, students will feel the excitement of working with a variety of historical sources, gathering and organizing information, and drawing conclusions. As historian Carl Becker (a native Iowan) pointed out, all of us use historical inquiry in our everyday lives.

The handbook is designed to assist teachers and students in the study of local history. Included are suggested study topics, locations of historical resources, activities, an historical overview, and a list of sources. as a teacher, your goal is to help students place local history in proper perspective—to relate local history to contemporary state, national, and world events—and to help students understand their world. Careful scheduling is important for a successful local history project. Enough time must be allotted for students to gather information. Students will probably do much of their work outside the classroom, sandwiching their research time between other activities. Replies to written requests for information may be delayed. Classroom time might be devoted to planning, weekly reports, and evaluation of information as it comes in. If you have a choice, begin the local history project in the fall. This is the best time of year for out-of-doors field trips.

Sources

Working as historians, you and your students will use variety of historical sources; locating these sources will take some detective work. a preliminary survey of available sources will help you guide and assist your students during the project. Primary material is easier to find for recent history than for the nineteenth century. Many information-packed books and manuscripts may be found in the collections at the State Historical Society in Iowa City and Des Moines, and at the universities and colleges in the state. For teachers who live nearby, these institutions are gold mines of information. For most teachers in the state, however, the search for local history must be made within the community and county.

Not all of the sources discussed in the following pages will be found in every community. By checking with your local library, city hall, or historical and genealogical societies you will discover which sources are available, and you may plan your local history study accordingly.

Students should know the basic differences between kinds of sources in order to weigh the authenticity of the evidence they find in the course of their study. Primary sources are materials written, printed, or recorded during the period of time being studied. Secondary

sources are written by people who have studied primary sources and written down some generalizations.

Primary sources require special handling. If students visit libraries, city halls, or other repositories of such material, they should know the special procedures essential to using primary sources as well as the courteous behavior expected of any historical researcher. Only a pencil should be used for taking notes (ink of any kind leaves an unwanted permanent smudge on documents). Note paper should be placed on a desk or table, not on the document or record book from which information is being copied. Pages should be turned carefully. For large volumes, use two hands to prevent tearing the large pages; one hand to turn, the other to support the page.

A different kind of caution is exercised when using secondary sources. Students must realize that not everything in print is true or accurate. When a question arises about the authenticity of a secondary source, consider who wrote the material. Is this a person known to have good historical judgment? What primary sources did the author use? How long after the event was the material written? Historians have found stories full of error repeated over and over in print, one author after another copying the error from an earlier publication. No one bothered to check back to the primary materials. Errors are bound to creep into your work. It happens to the most careful historians. The important point is to make students aware of the problem of accuracy and to be careful about what they accept as fact. It is often appropriate to use "probably" or "may have been" when writing history.

Primary Sources

Personal Collections

Students' families or older residents of the community may have diaries, letters, account books, business records, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, or photo albums that will give much information about the past. Keepsakes and heirlooms can also tell about the way people lived in the past. When using old keepsakes, be certain to think about them within the context of their own time. Do more than just display these items as curiosities. Consider how history can be interpreted through their study. What do we learn from viewing a piece of handmade lace? Was it used to decorate homes or clothing? How difficult or expensive would it have been to purchase the item ready-made, if indeed it was available at all?

County Records

Teachers who reside in a county seat are fortunate because county court houses are full of local history sources. However, most court house employees are busy with their everyday responsibilities.

To obtain their assistance, it would be wise to call ahead, explain your project, and arrange for a convenient time to visit. Employees ordinarily will not do research for you but will help you find the records you need.

Among the many useful records at the court house are wills, probate records, court dockets, property records, birth, death and marriage records, professional and commercial licenses, as well as records of road and bridge construction. Old tax records are also sometimes available. Wills and probate records usually contain a detailed inventory of the deceased's possessions. Land sale records include names of the land owner and purchaser, a description of the land, and the price that was paid. Court records reveal the types of cases tried and the decisions made by the court.

There is no uniform method for keeping court house records, so a researcher will find much variation from one county seat to another. Beginning dates for record keeping also will vary, and some records will be missing entirely, perhaps destroyed by fire or discarded due to lack of storage space.

City Ordinances

City ordinances can contribute much to the overall picture of community life. They give us clues to the things people thought important in another time, and they can show changing attitudes over a period of years. For example, the ordinances for the City of LeMars in 1898 show an interest in protecting and preserving ornamental and shade trees in the town, a concern about the bicycle craze (speed was limited to six miles per hour), and the fear of contagious diseases such as scarlet fever, diphtheria, small pox, and cholera.

School records

Records of the school district may be difficult to track down. They may be at the county court house or at the school district offices. Sometimes they have been lost. Board of Education records can provide early schoolhouse locations and dates of decisions for new buildings. Grades and subjects taught, size of the enrollment, and number of teachers and their salaries may also be included.

Local Newspapers

Newspapers may be found in attics, basements, libraries, newspaper offices, or local historical societies. Some newspapers have been recorded on microfilm, and your local library may have copies of these. If not, microfilm copies may be available from the State Historical Society of Iowa through inter-library loan. Check with your librarian about this.

Early in the history of the state, newspapers were the main source of public communication. Almost every town or village had a paper. In the papers published between 1830 and 1860 the arrangement of news was quite different from modern newspapers. Papers usually consisted of four to eight pages, with the two outside pages often being reprints from other newspapers or national ads. Local events and politics were re-reported inside along with the weather and prices for products in agricultural areas.

You may notice a distinct difference in the quality of the news-print for old papers. Before 1880, newspapers were printed on paper with a high rag content. These remain in fine condition if they have been properly stored. Later, less expensive newsprint made of wood pulp was used, and the high acid content of this paper causes it to deteriorate quickly. It becomes discolored, brittle, extremely fragile, and must be handled with extra caution. Newspaper advertisements provide business, industrial, and economic information. What was available for people to buy? How much did a house or piece of land cost? What industries were located in the community? What sort of

work was available? How much did it pay? In what sort of social activities did citizens take part? Look at the entertainment section for movie titles, and at the radio and TV logs. What did people do for entertainment before these electronic inventions appeared? Did people tend to stay at home instead of getting together in large groups? Some communities had special newspapers or magazines published in foreign languages. This may be a clue to the earlier background of a significant percentage of the population.

Immigrant Guides

When the state was first opened for settlement, pocket-sized handbooks were published to aid travelers planning to immigrate to Iowa. These books aimed to both inform and attract newcomers to the state. Descriptions and locations of towns, climate, soil, crops, minerals, and employment opportunities were included. Because the purpose of these guides was to promote the advantages of the state, they present only the finer points of life in Iowa. References to severe winters, for example, will not be found there. Reprints of four of these old guides may be available at your local or school library: Isaac Galland's *Galland's Iowa Emigrant* (1840), John B. Newhall's *a Glimpse of Iowa in 1856*, John Plumbe, Jr.'s *Sketches of Iowa and Wisconsin* (1839), and *Iowa: The Home for Immigrants* (1870).

Gazetteers

The local library may have old gazetteers with information about specific communities in the state. R.L. Polk and Co. began publishing the *Iowa Gazetteer* in 1879 and continued yearly editions through the mid-1920s. A glance at the 1914-15 volume reveals the names of state officials, representatives, and senators. A map of Iowa shows railroad lines (including electric train service) that provided transportation for metropolitan areas.

Locations of communities, population statistics, business establishments, and photographs of buildings and industries were included. There is often enough information about businesses to reconstruct a downtown business district. Each description of a community begins with a comment about location in relation to the nearest railroad route, an indication of the railroad's primary importance to the community. In the section on occupations, the long list of milliners shows the prevalence of hats as a part of women's costume. The milliner's names reveal that this business was dominated by women.

Another gazetteer, probably not easily available but worth look for the *Iowa State Gazetteer* compiled by James T. Hair in 1865, includes a brief history and description of Iowa, township census returns for 1865, and a brief history of each county with description of communities. a wide range of information about railroad service, climate, school board districts, student enrollment, and teachers' salaries helps build an overall picture of the local scene.

Anniversary and Pioneer Day Speeches and Addresses

At the turn of the century old settlers or pioneer day celebrations were in vogue, and more recently, many communities have celebrated fiftieth and one-hundredth anniversaries. All of these occasions gave impetus to pamphlets, newspaper features, and speeches about the history of the community. These stories and orations are usually laced with boosterism; however, they do tell about everyday life and the role a community played in the development of the state.

Cemetery Inscriptions

Before visiting a cemetery, check with the custodian or town officials. Some cemeteries limit visitors or require advance permission. Ask about hours and visit the cemetery yourself in advance of your students. When the time for the actual visit arrives, students may need a reminder that the cemetery is a place for quiet and respectful behavior.

Cemeteries in current use are easily found. Some of these have been used continuously since the community began. Older, discontinued cemeteries (especially those in rural areas) may be located by contacting your local historical or genealogical society. Members of these organizations throughout the state have spent many hours tracking down out-of-the-way plots and re-cording the inscriptions from the tombstones. Some of this re-search has been published in *Hawkeye Heritage*, the quarterly publication of the Iowa Genealogical Society. The index may be purchased to determine if there is an issue that contains the sort of information you are looking for. Back issues may be ordered from the Society.

Oral History

Oral history is a valuable method of collecting historical information. Relatives, friends, and neighbors who have lived in the area for a long time can give a firsthand report on a wide range of experiences. People might recall the first automobile in town, when their first telephone or electric service was in-stalled, or their early use of the phonograph and radio. They can tell about changes in their lives caused by wars, depressions, and natural disasters. Senior citizen organizations exist in most communities and are another valuable source for local oral history. A quick check in the phone book under "senior citizen" or "recreation center" and a phone call will put you in touch with a group of willing participants. Oral interviews need special advance planning and require an interviewer who is pleasant and polite. Appointments for interviews, advance preparation of questions, and a classroom rehearsal are advised. Good planning helps prevent the general reminiscence that covers too many broad topics and leaves the student with-out enough specific material on his or her topic. A tape recorder is a valuable tool for oral history, but it is wise to take careful notes during the interview in case the recorder malfunctions or runs out of tape.

A note of caution: even the best human memories are fallible. Although an oral history session may yield a first-hand account of an event, the longer the lapse of time from the actual happening, the less reliable the memory is apt to be. Students should be cautioned about unsupported oral testimony.

Maps and Atlases

Maps have many uses. Topographical maps help students understand how geography influenced the location of early community sites. Early towns were located where transportation was close-by so settlers could market their products. Maps covering a span of years will show how the physical boundaries of a community have changes. Students should look for reasons why changes occurred. Did the community grow? Why did more people come? Was there a new industry? Did a railroad turn the community into a market town? With practice, students will learn to read maps "historically." Soon they will learn to locate main highways, bridges, railroads lines, rivers, metropolitan areas and ask, "What influence do these have on the lives of the people in the community?"

County atlases contain large, clear plats of townships and communities. Land owners are recorded on the maps as are the railroad lines, schools, churches, homes, and industrial buildings of a community. A good state atlas is the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa* by A.T. Andreas, first published in 1875. There were nine different editions, each published to emphasize one congressional district. All contain the same general information: maps of all the counties, portraits of prominent citizens, pictures and plats of cities and small towns, and pictures of buildings. The history of the state and counties is included along with a business directory.

It is important to know that those whose names appear in the directory paid for that privilege. The *Andreas Historical Atlas of Iowa*

was reprinted in 1970 in an edition including all the illustrations from the nine congressional district versions. The volume is reduced from the original size, so a magnifying glass is a useful tool when studying this edition.

Look for state, county, and local maps at the library, historical society, nearby college or university library, banks, real estate offices, or land title and abstract companies. Topographic maps are available from the U.S. Geological Survey. A free index to *Topographic Maps of Iowa* may be obtained by sending your request, including your name and address to Iowa Geological Survey, 123 N. Capitol Street, Trowbridge Hall, Iowa City, Iowa 52242. These excellent, colored maps show county, township, and section lines as well as altitude, land contours, streams, lakes, roads, houses, churches, school buildings, and railroad lines. Another fine source is *A Regional Guide to Iowa Land-forms* by Jean Cutler Prior. Written for classroom use, it can be purchased from the Iowa Geological Survey. The booklet is well illustrated with photographs, drawings, and maps.

City Directories

Call the local library to see if it has a city directory and ask the date the collection begins. If the directory is 20 or more years old, it will have information that helps to recreate a picture of your community and some of its changes. Directories contain resident's names, addresses, and occupations. Religious groups are listed. The advertisements reveal much about the business and economic life of the community. Changes in transportation and communication can be found as well. Directories for older cities in Iowa date from the 1850s and 1860s.

Illustrations

Pictures add a visual dimension to local history study. Family albums, old newspapers, and country histories are all sources for illustrations. Many old calendars have drawings of buildings and artifacts. Look at clothing worn in photographs, study styling and fabrics from the time of the photos and compare them with modern styles. What caused the changes in the kinds of clothing over the years? Was it fashion alone?

Local Museums

A trip to the local museum is useful if careful preparations are made before the visit. Students should be prepared to analyze the artifacts they see in order to answer questions about the past. If the local museum has collected a broad range of household utensils and tools, students should focus on artifacts from the period under study. What do these things tell us about the way people used their time and how they did their work?

Secondary Sources

County and Family Histories

County, local, and family history books are often available at local historical or genealogical societies and public libraries. Most county histories were written and published around the turn of the century and are useful for early history of an area. During recent years, many of these histories have been reprinted by historical and genealogical groups. In the 1930s, the WPA sponsored a Federal Writers' Project which produced updated histories for some Iowa counties. County histories can provide information about early conditions, customs, and industrial development. Be cautious—county histories were often commercial enterprises: residents of communities paid for the recognition they received. Usually these people were listed as prominent citizens, and often they were—but you must keep in mind

that some prominent citizens chose not to pay to appear in such histories and remain unknown unless found in other sources. Family histories vary in content. Some give only the listing of family members with dates for births, deaths, and marriages. Others are written to celebrate the family and may be less than objective or accurate.

Books, Articles, and Other Published Sources

This is not a comprehensive list of printed sources, but the following books and articles should be considered basic to the study of local history. They contain information on more than one topic of local history. The three publications of the Department of Public Instruction, probably in your school library, are good bibliographic guides. The best source book for beginning a local history study is *Discovering Historic Iowa* by LeRoy G. Pratt. This 313-page volume is arranged according to location. Included are lists of local historical societies, museums, parks, and historic sites. *Iowa History, A Guide to Resource Material* lists available materials according to the source. The guide includes titles of articles in *The Iowan* from 1952 through 1972. Sources are not arranged by subject, but a careful search may reveal an article related to your local area. *Iowa and Some Iowans* will provide a list of useful books and films. *The Pageant of the Press* by William J. Petersen contains pages from selected newspapers of 38 communities spanning the years from 1836 to 1961. Approximately three-fourths of the selections are from papers published before the turn of the century. The following communities are included: Albia, Belle Plaine, Bloomfield, Bloomington (Muscatine), Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Clarinda, Clinton, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Eddyville, Fairfield, Keosauqua, Lansing, Marshalltown, Mason City, Mitchellville, Muscatine, Ottumwa, Panora, Prairie City, Rock Rapids, Sidney, Sioux City, Storm Lake, Wapello, Waterloo, Webster City, and West Union.

Abandoned Towns, Villages and Post Offices of Iowa by David C. Mott is a reprint from *The Annals of Iowa*, volumes 17 and 18. Towns are arranged in alphabetical order by county, and location is given. Every two years the State of Iowa publishes the *Iowa Official Register*. It contains a wide range of information useful for local history study. Either your school or local library will have copies. The Register includes a brief history of the state with reference to some local areas such as locations of forts, early French settlements, and names of local Iowa heroes. Histories of the state educational institutions, operating budgets, and enrollments will be found. Population is given by county for the most recent United States census and the population of incorporated cities for the two preceding censuses. Election results by county, popular votes for President for the past 30 years, and Iowans who have served in the President's Cabinet are also included.

Topics for Study

After discovering what sources are available, you can decide which topics to study. If you have a full semester to devote to local history, a complete study from prehistoric time to the present may be possible. If time is limited, however, consider one of the two following approaches.

1. Choose a limited period of time and learn as much as possible about that period. In the past, much classroom time has been devoted to the pioneer period. It is a fascinating time in Iowa history and one that captures the interest of young students. There are, however, other equally interesting periods. For example, a Depression period study could include gathering information about every phase of community life from 1929 through 1941. Students might use oral history techniques to learn about social activities, methods of transportation and communication, and how people dealt with economic problems. Federal projects in the community could be described. Compiling as much information as possible, students

could then answer such questions as: How did the government projects help? How did families deal with little or no income? What businesses in the community failed? Piecing information together, life in the community during the Depression could be reconstructed.

2. Another approach is to choose one or more topics and research each one thoroughly from the pioneer settlement period to the present. This gives an excellent opportunity to observe changes and make comparisons. Help students think about the impact of change on the community. How did change affect the way people lived? How did it affect the entire community?

When the time comes to present study topics to the class, explain the possibilities for research in each area. A mimeographed list (or a list on the chalk board) from which to make a choice is, by itself, uninspiring to the average student.

An enthusiastic discussion about the subject areas and their potentials can make topics come alive as well as assist students in making choices that fit their interests. Your enthusiasm and motivation will be the key to a good start.

The following list of suggestions for time periods and research topics is not meant to be all inclusive. In your preliminary search for sources a subject not mentioned here may become an obvious choice for study and should be included in your local history project.

Geography—Topography—Natural Environment

Every student should have some understanding of the relationship between people and their environment before proceeding with any topic on local history. Throughout history, the community's geography, topography, and natural environment have influenced community growth and development and the lives of the inhabitants. Students should know how geographic conditions and natural resources determined where a community was established and the manner in which it grew.

Students should make maps showing topographic features such as streams and wooded areas, streets, residential areas, business centers, and manufacturing plants. Perhaps a stream divided the town or a high bluff created transportation problems. Discuss the influence of topography on the physical development of the town. Save the map for later reference.

Climate has influenced the way people live. For example, before the development of air conditioning, porches were considered an important architectural feature of a home, a place people could cool off on hot Iowa days. The porch also provided an opportunity for people to socialize with neighbors, a sharp contrast to the modern habit of remaining indoors in cool, air-conditioned homes. With the students, make a list of the influences climate has had on people in their town. As you do this ask students to think about where people lived and worked in all seasons of the year. Perhaps the natural environment around your community has changed. What plants and animals were originally there? If you are near a river or stream, what has happened to that waterway through the years? Communities in mining areas have witnessed drastic changes in the environment. How have these changes affected those who live there?

Demography

Population statistics tell much about a community. Census records include information about former place of residence, race, and nationality.

One way to indicate where early residents lived before settling in your community is to make a map of the United States and stretch

yarn or draw lines from your town to the state or country from which the earlier inhabitants came. Do the same for your present students' families and compare the maps. What are the differences in the patterns of mobility between the two? Is there a high percentage of people from one state, region, or country? If so, why? What effect did their presence have in the community?

Did the group make special contributions? Have any industries been established due to the special skills brought by these people? How many Iowa natives appear on each map? What tentative conclusions might be drawn from this information?

For another activity, use census information to make a graph showing population variations. Students can use the graph to ask questions. What caused the fluctuations? early upward trends might represent a great rush for new farm land. Later, a railroad line or new industry may have had a influence. If there is a population decline, look for causes and effects.

Transportation

Newer and better modes of transportation markedly changed the day-to-day existence of Iowans. Transportation determined which goods were produced and marketed, where people lived, and the frequency of social contact. early Iowa communities depended on water and horse drawn transportation for moving people and goods. Elaborate plans to improve Iowa's river navigation ended with the arrival of the railroads. In Iowa, railroad construction began in 1855; by 1867, the first railroad was completed across the state, and three more lines were completed within three years. Railroads soon crisscrossed the state so that no community was farther than 15 miles from a railroad line. Railroads reduced the time and cost of transporting both goods and people and provided a reliable means of year-round transportation. With access to more distant markets, agricultural production increased, and a wider variety of merchandise for purchase was made available. Because of these advantages towns competed with one another for the privileges of having a railroad depot. Occasionally, a town that lost out virtually disappeared. Check to see if there is a railroad depot in your town. Is it still in use? How long has the railroad line operated in your community? What sort of change did this make in the lives of the people? When did freight service begin? What goods were shipped? What products were brought to the town by rail? What replaced the railroad and when?

A local form of transportation on rails was the trolley. Some trolley lines were limited to in-town transportation, others were inter-urban trains connecting two or more cities. Find out if your community had a trolley. How did this form of transportation influence and change people's lives and therefore the community?

Automobiles and airplanes caused even more changes. With the advent of the auto, good roads were necessary, but they were expensive. Who did the people in the community think should pay the construction costs for better roads for automobiles? Was there any controversy about the routing of roads and highways?

As a project, make a chart showing the different types of transportation used in your community. Choose a specified number of miles and record how long it would take to travel the distance by different forms of transportation.

Sources for transportation information include city ordinances, city directories, old newspapers, timetables, schedules, and oral histories. Maps will show routes for highways and railroads. City and county histories also will have information on transportation.

Communication

During the early years of Iowa's history the primary means of spreading information was through newspapers. Papers were

the sources of local, state, and national news. Early newspapers were usually very politically oriented, often begun and supported by a political party. Newspapers acted as chambers of commerce, enthusiastically supporting local community growth and development. Local social events, tragedies, births, deaths, and marriages made up an important part of the news. The telegraph greatly speeded the rate at which news was brought to what were once isolated towns. After 1900, the telephone came into use. By the 1920s, radios could be found in most homes and, by the 1950s television sets. Mail service, too, changed over the years. In 1924, the first transcontinental air mail service across Iowa was begun.

How did the development of better communication affect your locality? What changes occurred in daily life and business? Did your community have more than one newspaper? How many are there now? What caused the change? Does your community have a radio station? When was it established? How has it influenced the lives of people in the community? Has there been a specialized magazine or newspaper published in your community? If it was discontinued, try to find out why. As an in-depth study, the technical refinements in different areas of communication will have great interest for some students. Go beyond just looking at the equipment; learn how it was used. For example, the mechanics of placing a phone call have changed considerably since the first days of telephone service. There was probably a central switchboard first, followed later by direct dialing.

Sources for communication history include newspaper publishers, the local telephone office, and postmaster. The public library may have editions of old newspapers. Recollections of old-time residents, particularly if they worked in communication areas, are also useful.

Business and Industry

The first small businesses in Iowa communities usually were related to the needs of the newly established agricultural settlement. A general store, hotel, blacksmith shop, or flour and lumber mills were usually among the first businesses established. Lawyers and surveyors also were among the first to offer services. As a town grew, tailors, shoemakers, coopers, and other artisans set up shops. Most towns were basically self-sufficient.

After the Civil War, changes in transportation and manufacturing caused a gradual shift from self-sufficiency to dependence on outside sources. Brand-name products, low in cost and manufactured elsewhere, replaced those of home-town industries. Ready-made clothing was available either at a local store or through a mail-order house. Because of outside competition many local industries eventually were forced out of business.

Find out which businesses and industries were a part of your community's history. No doubt some of them have disappeared. Why? There may have been many door-to-door services provided by the ice man, bakery wagon, vegetable vendor, or knife sharpener. If so, when? Why were they discontinued?

Iowa has always been an agricultural state. Agriculture may have greatly influenced the history of your community. What technological and scientific advances caused changes in agricultural methods? You will find that different crops were grown at different times. What factors influenced the choice of crops produced?

Farms, businesses, and industries provided jobs for many people. Find out about these working men, women, and children, what sort of work they did and what they were paid. Were working conditions an issue at one time?

Community and Neighborhood Development

To help form students' conception of the community at different times in history, post a map of the city or town in the classroom on which changes in the community can be shown. A large map marked with only the city limits and streets is best. Information can be placed on the map as study progresses, including changes in city boundaries, industrial, commercial, and residential areas. Every community has a development pattern. Usually, cities grow out and away from the original reason for existence. The might be a market place, industrial site, crossroads, or government center. A good way to find out about community growth is to walk around and look at the town. Take paper, pencil, and clipboard to record information. Begin in what you think to be the oldest part of town. First, look for clues to the reason the town was established. Then, look up at the old buildings to get above first floor remodeling. There may be dates at the top, over the door, or on a cornerstone. Remains of old painted signs on the sides of buildings may tell how that building was used in an earlier time. Make notes and sketches of architectural details that might help date buildings. Look down. Are there any dates in contractor's imprints on the sidewalk? You may want to make a rubbing of the mark left in the cement. Are there clues that at one time trolley tracks were in the streets? Find out when and why they were paved over. If there are excavations going on you will be able to determine the street surfaces of the past. Locate railroad tracks, industrial and residential areas. Record street names. They may give clues to either their use, location, or the people who originally lived there, for example, Market, Park, Center, Church, Mill, Division, Wilson, and Thomas. Abandoned buildings, too, are clues to the past. It would be unwise to suggest that students enter such structures, but often there are clues on or around the building that tell its past use. Is there an old smoke stack standing alone somewhere in the town? What sort of industry was there? Ask long time residents about it.

Architecture can give clues to age and character of the neighborhood. Home size might be a clue to the size of families or to economic conditions at the time the house was built. Not everyone lived in a grand old Victorian home similar to the ones being saved and preserved today. Look for moderate-size homes of the same period. They too have a special charm and are good examples of housing for the average family. Try to find out who designed homes: the builder, the owners, and architect? What building materials were used? What features once were standard on earlier homes that have now disappeared? There are few good source books for midwestern architecture, especially for the twentieth century. Three helpful sources are *Styles and Designs in Wisconsin Housing*, available from the University of Wisconsin Extension service, Marcus Whiffen's *American Architecture Since 1780 A Guide to Styles*, and "From Porch to Patio" by Richard Thomas in the July/August 1975 edition of *The Palimpsest*.

Cultural Development—Entertainment

Inhabitants of your towns developed cultural activities to enhance the lives of citizens. In the late nineteenth century, literary societies were a favorite cultural activity often bringing professional lecturers to the community.

Libraries sometimes operated as private associations until city fathers could be convinced to finance a free public library. In 1881, Andrew Carnegie offered to donate funds for public library buildings and many communities then found it possible to provide library services.

Music has played a prominent role in the cultural history of most Iowa communities. Bands, orchestras, and choral societies provided both artistic expression and entertainment for local citizens. Home town theatricals and pageants also were part of cultural activity. The pride of many a community was the opera house that provided a stage for

local and professional performances. Vaudeville, minstrel shows, lectures, opera, Chautauqua, the circus, and later, motion pictures, were all part of town life.

Try to find out who took part in or supported cultural endeavors. When was each activity popular? Was there a relationship to the educational opportunities or transportation and communication facilities of the time? Perhaps your community was home for an artist, writer or musician of local, state, or national renown. Was the environment of your community an influence on the artist's work?

Soon after settlement, county or agricultural fairs became a yearly occurrence. Fairs were held in Iowa as early as 1841 and were mainly educational in purpose. The fairs also took on a social aspect in a time when there were few opportunities for large gatherings of people. Following the Civil War, fairs continued their educational roles, but added a large dose of amusement and entertainment. After 1910, special fair grounds and well-organized programs were considered necessary, and entertainment became an important and permanent part of the county fair.

Special customs developed around the celebration of holidays. Find out what happened in the community or schools to celebrate Valentine's Day, April Fool's Day, Arbor Day, May Day, Memorial (Decoration) Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Veteran's (Armistice) Day.

Education

Education has always had high priority in Iowa, and schools of ten were established when a community was still young. Not all children attended, and universal education was slow to develop; but support for the establishment of schools was available in every Iowa township thanks to the Northwest Ordinance of 1785. Under the provisions of this law, 640 acres of land in every township were set aside to provide funds for the support of public schools. These "school lands" were generally sold or rented and the proceeds used for the stated purpose.

Public school board records may have information about the date each school in your town was built and how education was financed. Before the advent of public schools there were many private academies in Iowa. Private academies kept separate records which may be difficult to locate. In regard to the daily conduct of school, try to learn how teachers were trained, selected, and paid; how classrooms were furnished and arranged; what educational materials were provided and from what source; who attended school; and how long students attended classes. Look at school buildings for overall size, number of classrooms, and manner of heating and cooling. Were there facilities for other activities, a cafeteria, gymnasium, library, or music room? Some communities had religious schools. You may want to learn why these schools were established, who paid for them, and how they differed from public schools.

Recreation, Leisure, Social

During the early period of settlement social life often grew out of community gatherings such as church or school activities. In rural areas social diversion often had useful aspects. People created social events out of group work such as corn huskings and house-raising. Certainly this must have made the work seem less tiresome. As time passed, recreational activities took on a more leisurely guise.

Baseball was an early sport on both the amateur and professional level. Following the Civil War, teams existed in many towns all over the state. As rail transportation became available, intercity rivalries arose. Rules and equipment changed through the years. Find out if

your community had a team. Were the players home town boys? Who went to the games?

Bicycling was a popular recreation and form of transportation for men and women in the 1890s. Wheel clubs were formed and often the members campaigned for good roads and bike paths. Look for other activities that have been a part of everyday life in your community. Try to find out how much time people devoted to these activities.

Many organizations, serving every segment of the population, appeared over the years including service clubs, P.T.A., Granges, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and 4-H. When did these organizations begin? Was there a special need or purpose for the group? If the group still exists today, how has it changed? Did it have an influence on the community?

Government—Politics

Citizens of new communities most often established town governments based on past experiences in former communities with modifications to meet the demands of the new situation. Find out how your city government was organized and how officials were chosen. What kinds of services have citizens expected the city to provide? When did these services begin and how were they financed? Did city services increase or decrease?

The selection of the county seat location was often hotly disputed. To be chosen county seat was considered a guarantee of prosperity for any town. For example, the presence of the court house insured that people would come to town for legal business, and they were likely to shop while there. If you live in the county seat find out how our town won this much sought-after position. What influence did it have on the growth of the town? Perhaps you lived in a community that lost. How did this happen? Did it affect the growth of the community?

National political party affiliation had little importance during the early settlement years of Iowa. Candidates were chosen on the basis of personal characteristics and local issues. But after the national election of 1840, voters increasingly identified with political parties and chose candidates on a party basis. Look for the earliest influence of Political parties in your community. Perhaps a member of your community was active in state or national politics. Did his or her political activity have a direct influence on the community?

The Family

As a basic unit of the community, the family is one of the most important topics of study in town life. There are many areas of family life to pursue. Consider how marriages were arranged. Perhaps in very early days it was more a matter of mutual support than romance. Some marriages may have been arranged by parents. Look for changes in attitudes towards marriage and reasons for these changes.

Family size has varied over the years and census statistics may be used to document the fluctuations. The city or county may also have pertinent records. Look for reasons for variations. Help students understand the impact population changes may have on housing, schooling, and other services provided by the community.

What was the role of each family member? For what work was each member responsible? What work was shared? Who worked away from home? How much education did family members have? Did the family adhere strictly to a religious faith? What did members do for recreation at home; away from home? Who was the authority figure: the father, mother, both? For recent times, oral history is a good way to obtain this information.

A good way to organize information about the family is to recreate a day in the life of the family for a given year. Information from other study topics will help to reconstruct the activities of each family

member. As individual family members move through the day, give careful thought to the amount of time a given activity would take. How long did it take to walk several miles? Was doing the family laundry an all day affair? Some students might recreate a home in miniature, showing the appropriate household equipment and furniture for the time.

Health

Diseases were a serious problem to early Iowa communities. Cholera epidemics in the 1850s gave rise to laws intended to control spread of the disease. Communities took responsibility to protect the health of citizens. Find other laws passed that were concerned with the health of the people. What remedies for illness were used in the home? How were illnesses and injuries treated by professionals? How did the progress of medicine change life in the family and the community? Were these changes taking place in other parts of Iowa and the nation? The City Hall will have records of health ordinances. One source on local epidemics is the local cemetery. Many deaths within a relatively short time may indicate an epidemic.

Religion

Most Iowa communities have several religious denominations. What denominations are found in your town? Was there ever a religious group that was dominant in your locality? Perhaps your community is one that was founded by people seeking refuge from religious intolerance elsewhere or creating a religious experiment. Finally, ask what part religion has played in the history of the community.

When your local history project is completed, consider sharing your experiences and information. A receptive audience waits beyond the classroom, within your own school, school district, and community. Local historical societies, women's clubs, and service organizations are particularly interested in the activities of young people and will welcome a well-prepared program based on your final results and methodology. For your students, such a presentation serves to underscore the importance and worth of their work.