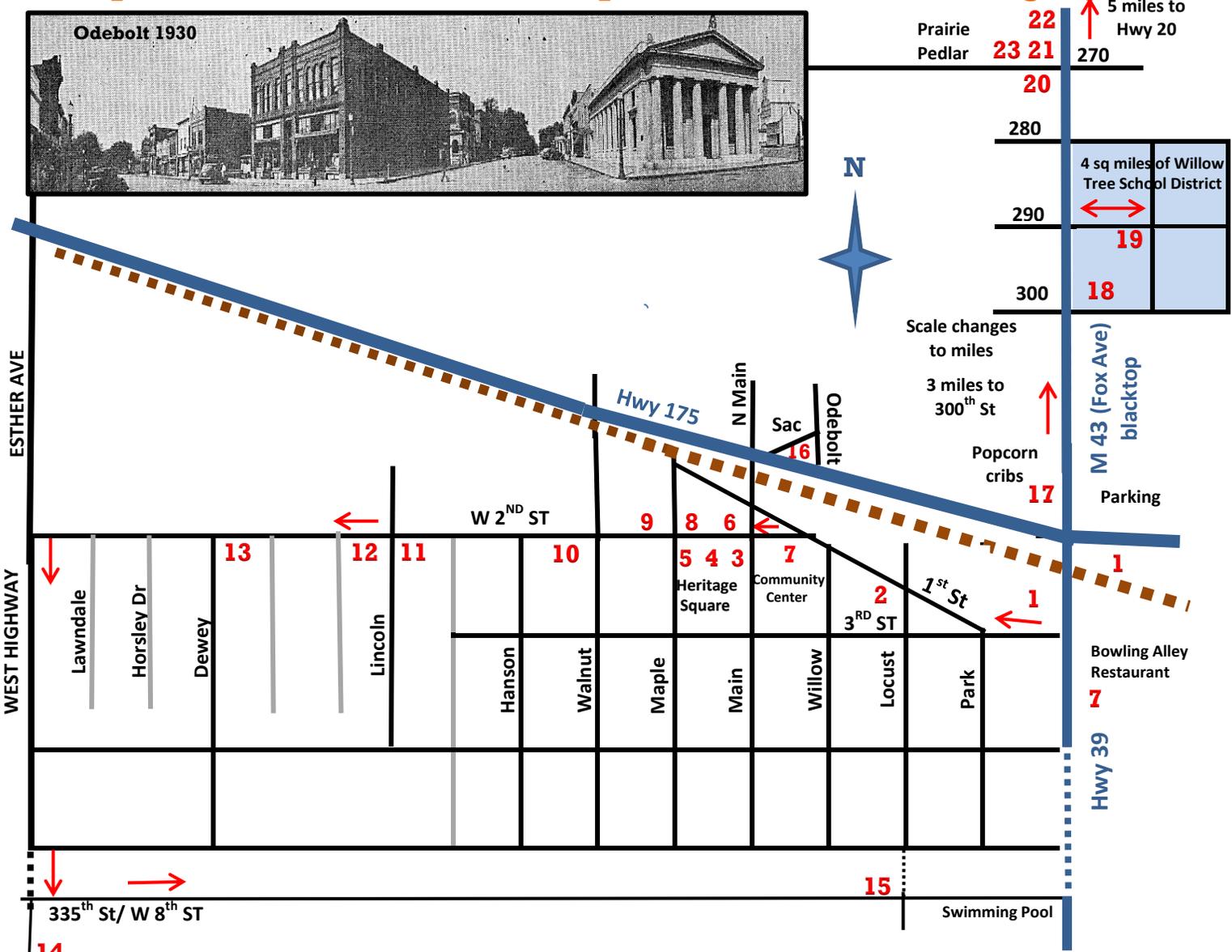
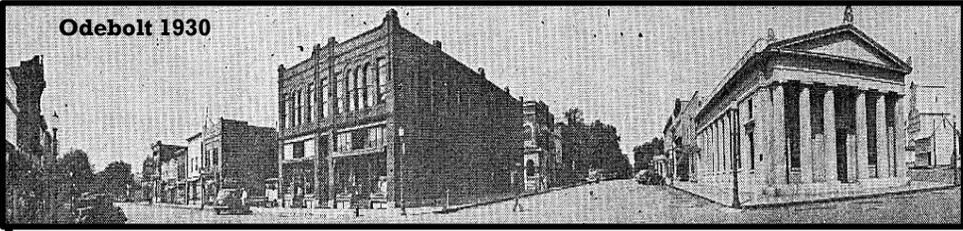


# DAY TOUR of Odebolt, Sac County, Iowa 2018

History of One Room Schools, Popcorn, Ranches, and much more!

**“Step Back into the 1800’s and Experience Iowa’s Rural Legacy”**



- 1) Early morning – try breakfast pizza or donuts and coffee/milk/juice at local quick food places – **Cubby’s or Sparky’s**. Tables available. Cubby’s is located at the Highway 175 and 39 intersection at the NE edge of Odebolt. Highway 39 ends and Blacktop M43 goes north to State Highway 20. Sparky’s is south of the railroad tracks, just off Highway 39.
- 2) Since you are fueled for a brisk walk, enjoy the paved **Memorial Walkway along the Odebolt Creek**. Look for downtown Odebolt Heritage Square Park signs on Hwy 39 and turn at Sparky’s corner. Take the right side of the “Y” which is 1<sup>st</sup> St. and immediately turn left on Locust St. Park your car near the gazebo. The walkway is a good 6 blocks one way. Rest on the benches and shady gazebos along the way.
- 3) Next, continue to downtown and the **Odebolt Heritage Square Park** at the corner of Main and West 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Walk around the green space park and admire the impressive **City Clock**, or sit in the shade of the **Outdoor Classroom** behind the **Iowa Rural Schools Museum**. Join in on a board game, three-legged races, croquet, or marbles while in the Classroom area on weekends from 2-4.

- 4) Next, step back in time when you visit the restored **Victorian style 1883 Willow Tree School that houses the amazing Iowa Rural Schools Museum**. Find yourself transported back into the life of a rural school classroom. Signage to read about collections, twelve audio stations and a 22 minute video documentary on Iowa's rural settlement and its 12,623 one room schools are available for a learning experience. Iowa arguably had the best statewide public school system, accessible to every child. The museum is open on Wed. 10-4:00; Sat. and Sun. 2-4:00 and by appointment. Call 712-830-8328.
- 5) Ask the school museum docent to visit the **1886 Peterson Pioneer House** next door that was home for Nils Magnus Peterson, his wife and 5 children. While the school was built by German immigrants, this home was built by Swedish immigrants. If you have an interest in viewing a very extensive **Private Collection of Antique Toys or a Collection of Glass and Pottery** at sites nearby, just ask the docent at the school museum to request a private tour (as available). It will require negotiating stairs.
- 6) Next, walk across the street and then go to the right, to the large limestone building with columns in the front at West 2<sup>nd</sup> St. and Main St. It was originally built in 1918 by the owner of the Adams Ranch and was known as the **Adams Ranch Bank, now known as 1<sup>st</sup> State Bank**. The lavish building interior bank lobby is restored to the original style and should not be missed. It was used as a set for the movie "Peacock" in 2010. Adams also built his private office and apartment in the back. To solve the problem of not needing to have a payroll for his 100+ workers kept at the Adams Ranch, Mr. Adams built 2.5 miles of cement walks from the Ranch to his back office door so his workers could walk to the bank to be paid. He also built a second cement walk from 3<sup>rd</sup> and Main that went east to what is now Highway 39 and then south to the Odebolt cemetery so residents could walk to it. Original pieces can be seen along the way and in front of the iron fence of the cemetery.
- 7) Enjoy lunch at the **Old Odebolt Bowling Alley Restaurant**, formerly the Time-Out Sports Bar and Grill, on Highway 39 two blocks south of Highway 175. It has excellent food including a good salad bar and seating for a bus tour. Bus tours can also arrange for a catered lunch at the Odebolt Community Center a block away from Heritage Square Park. Large modern bathrooms are available at the Center. The **Odebolt Community Center** has magnificent art work on its walls depicting historic buildings and history on the two largest bonanza farms in Iowa: 1) the Wheeler-Adams Ranch/Fairview Farm 1871-1963 with 10 sections, which was sold to Charles Lakin; and 2) the Cook Ranch/Brookmont Farm 1873-1909 with 12 sections, broken up and sold to family farmers until 1918. Also, see the popcorn story of Cracker Jack and Jolly Time that made Odebolt the "Popcorn Center of the World" by 1915.
- 8) After lunch, return to the **Heritage Square Park** for a tour of the **Odebolt Historical Museum** on the corner of West 2<sup>nd</sup> St. and Maple St. It is full of memorabilia of the recent and the not so recent past. You will learn more about the history of Odebolt. A restroom is located at the museum.
- 9) As you leave the Museum, focus your attention across the street to the west on the **Sac County Mutual Telephone Company**. The telephone company, started in 1898 by Clويد Smith for Odebolt and joined by Richland farmers in 1902 for rural service, is still operating today. Walk west on 2<sup>nd</sup> St. to the side of the building where you will find a posted sign that tells its history. Notice that Clويد Smith was also the founder of American Pop Corn Company in 1914 with its brand Jolly Time. Hop back into your car and head west on West 2<sup>nd</sup> St. for a drive-by tour of several interesting historic highlights noted by tour markers with more information.
- 10) As you cross Walnut St. look to the left for the **1904 Carnegie Library**. Helping to drive Iowa's focus on education, Iowa received the 4th highest number of Carnegie grants nationwide, and was the 6th highest state for the number of free public libraries built (101). Ida Helsell was the driving force in obtaining a Carnegie grant as President of the Odebolt Women's Reading Circle. Her husband

William A. Helsell was one of the first lawyers who helped plat Odebolt in 1877 on a half section of land donated by Mr. Wheeler and did legal work for buyers. Mr. Wheeler was successful in getting a train through Odebolt near his farm of 10 sections. However, when he could not convince residents to name the town "Wheeler" in his honor, he sold all of his holdings to W.A. Adams in 1898 and left the state.

- 11) Continue your drive west on 2<sup>nd</sup> St. and look on the left side before crossing Lincoln St. to see a **huge wood carving** of an American eagle with an American flag.
- 12) Pass Lincoln St. and look to the left to see the **Helsell Houses** each with a carriage stable for horses, carriages, and living quarters for the drivers. The nearest house was one of the earliest 2-story houses with a carriage house built in Odebolt in 1883. A second house was built by William A. Helsell and his wife Ida for themselves in 1909, allowing the original house to be used by their daughter. Their daughter Jessie married the son of W.A. Adams, W.A. Adams II in 1909. Later they moved from the original Helsell house to live in their new house built on the Adams Ranch. In 1919 Helsell sold the property to the Rueckheim Bros. (Cracker Jack Co) of Chicago for their manager to use. The last manager for Cracker Jack bought the house in 1974 from Borden Co. Borden had purchased Cracker Jack in 1964. Cracker Jack Division of Borden Inc. closed the doors on the Odebolt operation in 1984.
- 13) Continue on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. When you cross Dewey St. look to the left. Note the large brick structure that was the **Cracker Jack Company seed drying building**. Note the top design for great ventilation. Hundreds of screen boxes were used to dry the popcorn seeds before being put into burlap bags for transport to Chicago. Beyond the Cracker Jack building are several **animal wood carvings** such as moose and eagles.
- 14) When you come to the stop sign at the end of the street turn left on Esther Avenue and drive straight south on West Highway (Esther Avenue). The last mile is on gravel. You will be at the locked gate entrance of the **Historic Adams Ranch**. From here you can view the **original Adams Ranch farmstead with its own private water tower and mule barns**. The road goes diagonally to the center of the section. All roads on the Adams Ranch were lined on both sides with Elm trees. Many were planted by prisoners of WWII. The trees created lovely arches over all the roads making the Ranch memorable. Starting in 1957, Dutch Elm disease eventually killed all the elm trees along the roads.
- 15) Return to the corner on 8<sup>th</sup> St. and drive east. When you see a small house in back of the church on the left, turn into the church parking lot. Park and walk to the posted sign in front of the replica built in 1872 of a Swedish Stuga (farm home). Continue on 8<sup>th</sup> Street to Hwy39, turn left at the pool.
- 16) Drive north to the junction of Highways 175 and 39. Hwy 39 ends and the road becomes blacktop M43 heading north to State Hwy 20. Turn left on Hwy 175, drive to Sac St. and turn right into **Triangle Park, the original location of the Civil Defense Tower** during the cold war. Information and pictures are posted at the entrance of the picnic shelter.
- 17) Return to Hwy 175 on Odebolt St., turn left and drive east to the intersection of Hwy 175 and 39. You will see two of the six original **huge historic Cracker Jack corncribs** used to dry ears of popcorn. Turn north (left) on M43 and immediately into the first driveway on the right for parking. Odebolt has decorated the side of one of the cribs with some of the **Sac County Barn Quilt Designs** that you will see throughout the county. Read the sign about Cracker Jack before you continue your trip north on M43 (Fox Ave). August C. Petersmeyer, the son of a pioneer farmer who helped build the Willow Tree School, started a grain business in 1890 and shipped popcorn to Cracker Jack in Chicago. Cracker Jack later bought The **Petersmeyer Grain Business** in 1918 and later built 6 gigantic **Cracker Jack storage cribs** that Cracker Jack used until 1984.

- 18) Continue your drive north on blacktop M43 (Fox Ave.) for 4 miles. Along the way, note the distance of a mile between intersections and the signage for the **Richland #1/ Willow Tree School District area**.
- 19) At 290<sup>th</sup> Street, turn right and drive east one mile on gravel to the signage on the **original site of Willow Tree/Richland #1 School (1883-1959)** that is now farmland. Standing at the site, read the signage and experience the landscape view of the original farmsteads whose children walked to this school. Schools were located near the center of every 4 sq. miles of farmland so every child was within a 2 mile walk to school. Note the **1930's barn** on a nearby farmstead and if you are lucky, you might even see **Percheron draft horses**. Stories are told in the 1870's, that Jessie James stayed overnight in the barn south of the school and in a summer during the 1880s, a gypsy wagon train stopped and buried a small child in the SW corner of the school yard.
- 20) To finish your day, return to blacktop M43 (Fox Ave.) and turn north. Drive 2 miles. Look for a **Prairie Pedlar** sign at the corner of 270<sup>th</sup> St. Turn left and go  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile on gravel. While driving on the gravel, you will pass a sign on your left marking the first **popcorn field for Jolly Time** starting in 1914. George G. Colton, a farm manager on the Cook Ranch, is credited for growing the first field of popcorn in the area. Cloid A. Smith, purchased this land in 1913 from the Cook Ranch and started a competing company in 1914 called **American Pop Corn Co.** He built the company in Sioux City with its storage cribs and elevator in Schaller just north of Odebolt. By 1915 Odebolt produced  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the popcorn grown in the world to supply Cracker Jack and Jolly Time. Cloid A Smith and Richland Township farmers also started the **Sac County Mutual Telephone Co.** that brought telephone services to farms. The phones required use of Delco batteries charged by kerosene generators since electrical lines did not reach their farms until 1941.
- 21) Continue to the **Prairie Pedlar** on the right. It will certainly be worth your time and a little dust. Walk through the magical, themed gardens that have informative signage and identification tags. There are seven acres of many prairie plants, shrubs, trees, and arranged planters for sale through the early part of the spring and summer. Special features include a **blooming roof** on a shed, several choices of wedding venues, and a gift shop. Many spots are provided for you to linger and rest as you wander through the **fragrant gardens**. You can see more on their website [www.prairiepedlar.com](http://www.prairiepedlar.com).
- 22) Next, be amazed at the construction when you enter an historic, **original Sears Barn** that was ordered through a kit from the Sears and Roebuck catalog in 1943. This barn, now air-conditioned, is used for private parties, catered group events and receptions. Restrooms are available. Be sure to ask the owners Jack or Jane Hogue to tell you the story of this historic place. The Prairie Pedlar is open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm from April through October.
- 23) Also on the grounds, you will see the **Cook Township #8 School** that was built in 1927. It is a great example of the architectural style of Iowa's one-room schools rebuilt in the 1900s. These schools typically had many windows on one side and a basement with restrooms. Drive back to blacktop M43 (Fox Ave.) Turn south if you want to return to Odebolt and Highways 175 and 39 or north if you want to connect with State Hwy 20.

*You are welcome to come and take a driving tour on any day, even when the museums are not open. It will still be well worth your time to come and enjoy an interesting self-guided tour that provides a fascinating glimpse into Odebolt's rural history. Museums are open Memorial Day through October on Wednesdays 10-4 and Saturdays and Sundays from 2-4 and by appointment call 712-830-8328.*

Tour Groups may call the Rural Legacy Project at 712-830-8328 for full docent services and lunch arrangements. During regular business hours, individuals can stop by City Hall at 205 2<sup>nd</sup> St. to pick up a tour guide or discuss other options. Posted on [www.odebolt.net](http://www.odebolt.net) , [www.iowaruralschoolsmuseum.net](http://www.iowaruralschoolsmuseum.net) , and facebook @IowaRuralSchoolsMuseumOfOdebolt Please like us! 😊