

CHAPTER FIVE

PARKS & CULTURE

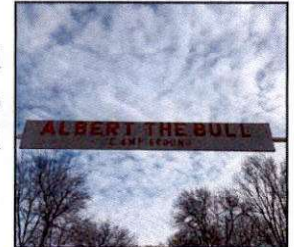


The extra amenities such as parks, recreational opportunities, and historic attractions are part of what makes a city home for a large number of people. Audubon County has a wide variety of resources available to both residents and visitors. The county's large number of historic, recreational, and cultural resources ensure that there is something for everyone of all ages to enjoy.

PARKS & RECREATION

Albert the Bull Campground

The Albert the Bully park has a modern campground with 40 hookups (30 amp and 50 amp), a shelter house with a fireplace, and electricity. The neighboring sports complex consists of a swimming pool, tennis courts, sand volleyball, track, baseball fields, and children's playground.



Legion Park - Audubon

Located on 814 East Division Street in Audubon, the Legion Park has shelter houses, playground equipment, modern bathrooms, and spacious grounds.

Bluegrass Park

Located on 400 Golden Street in Audubon, this park has a shelter house, playground equipment, and spacious grounds.



Audubon Golf and Country Club

This is a nine-hole course in Audubon with a banquet room (catering available) located on 520 South Division Street, Audubon, Iowa.

Audubon County Conservation Club

From May through October, the Audubon County Conservation Club has been the site of competitive trap and skeet shoots which are held twice a month on Monday evenings. Competitors and spectators are enthusiastic, even in the hot months. The Trap and Skeet Shoot Club is located a few miles south of Hamlin on the east side of Highway 71, formerly Isaac Walton Park.



Plow in the Oak Roadside Park

This park is located south of Exira on Highway 71. It is a five-acre park with a picnic area and is a good spot to access the T-Bone Trail.



Legion Park - Exira

The Exira Legion Park has a shelter house, baseball fields, tennis courts, basketball court, playground equipment, and modern bathrooms. In the city square you will find a large gazebo, fountain, table, benches, antique drinking water fountain, and much more.

“Old Glory Park”

Located in Brayton on Highway 71 north of Interstate 80 by three miles, this park has a shelter house, play equipment, and excellent access to the T-Bone Trail.

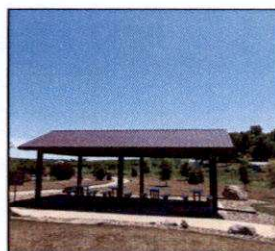


T-Bone Trail

The T-Bone Trail consists of over 20 miles of trails in Audubon County and into Cass County. This trail is used by bikers, walkers, and others who enjoy the easy accessibility of a smooth surface. The trail runs through the countryside along Highway 71. The trail begins at the Albert the Bull Park in Audubon and trails by Hamlin, Exira, and Brayton under Interstate 80 into Cass County.

Kimballton City Park

Kimballton City Park is located just off Main Street in Kimballton. The park is home to a replica of the Little Mermaid statue of Copenhagen, Denmark. The park is also home to a smaller sculpture garden and the Audubon County Freedom Rock. The park features a playground and shelter house for visitors to utilize.

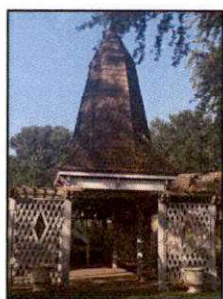
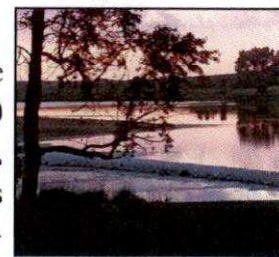


Randi Jo Munch Memorial Park

The Randi Jo Munch Memorial Park is located in Hamlin at the intersection of Highway 71 and 44. This park is a great place to access the T-Bone Trail. The Randi Jo Munch Memorial Park in honor of Randi who lost her life unexpectedly.

Littlefield Recreation Area

Littlefield Recreation Area is a 477 acre county park owned and operated by the Audubon County Conservation Board. The park is located east of Exira. The 70 acre lake is a popular fishing spot as it contains channel catfish, bluegill, crappies, largemouth bass, and carp. The lake is also a popular swimming spot. Littlefield has a campground with 100 modern sites, and all sites are utilized on a first-come, first-served basis with no reservations taken. Littlefield also has shelter houses which are reservable for private events.



Heritage Rose Garden

The Heritage Rose Garden is a rose garden which boasts over 195 varieties of roses, including winter-hardy types. The rose garden started when four women wanted to attract visitors to the town. Their idea was to plant roses on the town square, and they did. A restored church steeple provides a centerpiece for the garden; other decorative items, and benches have been placed around the area. The garden can be visited from dawn to dusk each day.

GOALS

Maintain existing facilities

Audubon County currently has a variety of facilities that are designed for all ages and physical abilities. Ensuring the maintenance of these is a top priority. Many of the parks are self-funded by community organizations and ensuring that the existing facilities are maintained is vital.

Action Items: - Budget for and staff facilities

Pursue additional amenities

Adding additional amenities as funding allows is essential to maintaining the high quality of life that Audubon County residents currently enjoy. Increasing the number of outdoor amenities at the parks would allow the county to continue to diversify the amenities it offers, helping it maintain the high quality of life it offers.

Action Items: - Consider general outdoor activities such as a frisbee golf course as funding becomes available
- Consider additional trail locations and activities along the trail
- Consider additional locations for campgrounds

Historic & Cultural Resources

Albert the Bull Park

In 1963, the Audubon Junior Chamber of Commerce made the plans for “Albert”. This statue would pay tribute to Operation T-Bone, as well as the state and nation’s beef industry. In choosing a name for the bull it seemed only fitting to name him “Albert” after Albert Kruse who originated Operation T-Bone.



There was one major stipulation in the Jaycees’ resolution to sponsor the project: that no solicitation of funds be made in the community. The project costs, estimated at \$30,000, were financed through various fund-raising activities and donations from agricultural industries across the nation.

“Albert the Bull” has been featured in several national magazines and newspapers, including “Remembering the Rock” in 2008. “Albert” was also in the movie “Beethoven’s 3rd” and mentioned on the television shows of “Jeopardy” and “West Wing”.



Audubon County’s Nathaniel Hamlin Park and Museum

The Audubon County Home Historic District, now known as Nathaniel Hamlin Park and Museum was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2015. The Historic District includes the following structures: the Audubon County Home, the Caretakers’ Cottage, the Meeting Hall, the Tenants Garage, the Wash House, the West Barn, the East Barn, the Machine Shed, the Country Schoolhouse, the Blacksmith Shop, the Elk Barn, and the

Elk Gazebo. Other parts of the site that contribute to the Historic Designation include the cemetery site, the cave, the reservoir, and fifteen windmills. The home and its additional structures were used to house indigent people of the county, which included the poor who couldn’t support themselves, as well as inebriates and the insane.

Today, the park is open year-round and allows for visitors throughout all seasons. The museum buildings are open on a regular basis from Memorial Day through September.

John James Audubon Birdwalk Park

Admire the ceramic tile mosaics inset in the brick sidewalks throughout downtown Audubon and the John James Audubon Park. They showcase replicas of Audubon’s prints from “Bird of America”. Walk the Walk in Audubon and you can find a collection of art work honoring the famed artist and naturalist John James Audubon, for whom both the town and county were named.



Kimballton's The Little Mermaid and Sculpture Park

Since 1978 a replica of the famous Little Mermaid statue of Copenhagen, Denmark has sat in the fountain at the city park a long way from her home in the sea. In 2013, eight different bronze sculptures depicting Hans Christian Andersen's famous tales graced the garden and can still be viewed today.



Audubon County's Freedom Rock

Since 2014, the Kimballton Park has been home to the Audubon County Freedom Rock. The Audubon County Freedom Rock showcases Kimballton's Danish Heritage through the Little Mermaid Statue holding both the American Flag and the flag of Denmark. The Mermaid holding both of the flags represents the many Danish American soldiers from the area that served our country.

The Freedom Rock incorporates many features from the county including the Heritage Rose Garden in Gray, Albert the Bull, the Plow in the Oak, and the Tree in the Middle of the Road. The Freedom Rock also includes John James Audubon who the county was named after, as he was the artist who created "The Birds of America." The rock includes John James Audubon's goldfinch which is the Iowa State Bird.

Kimballton Historic Properties and Districts

Within and immediately surrounding the City of Kimballton there are seven properties or districts on the National Register of Historic places. The Bennedsen, Boldt, and Hansen Building, located on Main Street was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. The building was previously the General Store, a barbershop, and Kirk's Cafe & Bakery. The property is a part of the National Register because it exemplifies the work of skilled Danish immigrant craftsmen in a Danish community utilizing materials manufactured by a local Danish immigrant-established industry. The building was constructed by Danish immigrants Niels Bennedsen (local mason), Hans P. Boldt (carpenter and manger of the Green Bay Lumber Company in Kimballton), and Hans P. Hansen (local carpenter) with materials manufactured at the Crystal Springs Clay Products factory situated at the south end of town.



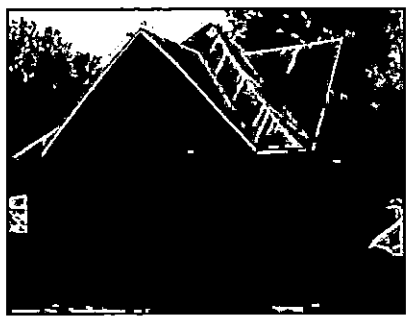
Another property on the National Register of Historic Places is the Immanuel Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church located on W 2nd Street between Esbeck Street and Alfred Street. The Church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. The Immanuel Danish Evangelical Church is significant due to its association with the Grundtvigian synod of the Danish Lutheran Church following the historic split within the church in 1894 and for its influence upon the growth and development of the Danish community of Kimballton. This property is the best representation of that historic synod in the Kimballton



Community and the two county area. The Church embodies the characteristics of Danish immigrant religious properties, exemplifies the work of skilled immigrant craftsmen, and physically symbolizes the influence of the Grundtvigian congregation in the Danish community of Kimballton. It is also among the

best preserved historic Danish churches in the two county area and is the only Grundtvigian church to survive. The church is still used by members of the Kimballton community on a weekly basis.

The Hans J. Jorgensen Barn located at the northwest corner of Highway 44 and Main Street was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. The property best represents the life and accomplishments of Hans J. Jorgensen who was instrumental in the origin and growth of the Danish community of Kimballton. Jorgensen was born in Aero, Denmark and worked as a farmer and stock raiser in Denmark before moving to Illinois in 1874. He worked in Illinois as a farmhand for four years before migrating to Audubon County where he purchased land and established his farmstead. He donated the land for the platting of Kimballton. In addition to founding the community, he served as the first postmaster, donated the land for the first school and church, served as the President of the Kimballton Investment Company, and was instrumental in the construction of the Kimballton Hotel and the securing of the Atlantic Northern rail line to Kimballton. Jorgensen played an important role in the establishment of the Landmands National Bank.



Kimballton has two districts located on the National Register of Historic Places. The Kimballton Commercial District and the Kimballton West 2nd - West 3rd Street Residential Districts were both placed on the National Register in 1995. Both of these districts were critical in the initial development of Kimballton. Both districts showcase architectural features which were prominent during the city's origination. The buildings from these two districts were constructed utilizing locally-manufactured brick, clay tile blocks, concrete blocks, among other building materials. These materials were manufactured in local manufactories, which were established and operated by Danish immigrants and first-generation Danish-Americans. Between the two districts, there are 104 structures included in the historic districts. On the right, a small portion of the residential historic district is shown on the top, and a small portion of the commercial historic district can be found on the bottom.



Another property of historical significance near Kimballton is the Hans M. Koch House. This house is located on the west side of Iowa Highway 173 one half a mile south of Kimballton. This property is also known as the Brickyard Residence. This property was built to serve as the manager's residence for the Crystal Springs brickworks as it was situated within close proximity to the yard itself. The property also exemplifies the work of a skilled Danish immigrant craftsman and the products of an important local building industry established by Danish immigrants. The Koch house may be particularly significant in this regard as it is the only known example of a brick gabled double-pile house in the two county area and as such, even more closely resembles the Danish form which was commonly constructed of brick.



The Bethany Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church is located one and a half miles north of Highway 44 and one mile west of Bluebird Avenue. The church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. The church is the best surviving representation of the United Church congregation in the region. The church was constructed by skilled Danish carpenter/cabinet maker, Nis P. Hjuler, and it exhibits distinctive interior elements associated with Danish decorative arts in the region. From 1898 to 1924, the Bethany Church served as an active and important congregation of the United Church synod. Today, the church is still in use.



Andrew P. Hansen Farmstead

The Andrew P. Hansen farmstead is located near Brayton in southern Audubon County. The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. The building has been deemed significant due to the dwelling and both barns embodying the characteristics of particular building trends associated with Danish immigrants, specifically the Four-Square house type, gabled walls dormer variant, and the Transverse-Frame and Midwest Three-Portal barn types. Andrew Hansen was born in Fyn, Denmark and immigrated to the United States in 1874. He purchased 40 acres of land in Audubon County in 1878. Hansen was important to the development of Audubon County as he acquired a large amount of farm land and would hire Danish immigrants on his farm. Hansen improved the original property to include “modern barns” and a home which was “strictly modern” having electric lights, hardwood floors, and “all other conveniences.”

John D. Bush House

The John D. Bush House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. The property is located at 219 N. Kilworth Street, Exira. The property is significant due to it being constructed by Danish immigrant carpenter Jens Uriah Hansen, who was the first Dane to settle in Audubon County and was responsible for the construction of a number of the early buildings, homes, and outbuildings in the Exira area. Of all the documented buildings that Jens Uriah Hansen built, the Bush house is the only one to retain such a high degree of structural integrity. It is the best representation of Hansen’s carpentry skills and is among the best examples of early Danish immigrant-influenced dwellings in the two county area.



Audubon County Courthouse - Original and Current

The original Audubon County Courthouse is located at the intersection of Washington and Kilworth Streets in Exira. The building served as the County Courthouse from 1874 to 1879, and is thought to be the first building erected in the county specifically for use as a county government facility. Audubon County was organized in 1855. In 1855, the county seat was located in the “paper town” of Dayton. However, few people were willing to purchase lots in Dayton, which caused for the relocation of the seat to move to Viola (now Exira). Disagreement over the location of the county seat was a favorite political pastime at the time, and Exira was challenged a number of times in the following years, and not until 1874 did Exira’s position seem secure enough

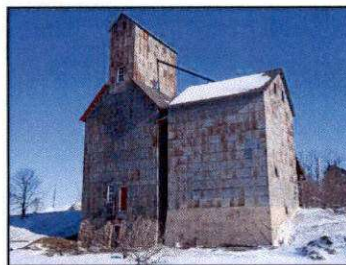


to warrant the construction of a real county government facility. That year, the building was erected. There continued to be disagreement over where the county seat should be located and in 1879, Audubon campaigned successfully for the relocation of the county seat. It has remained in Audubon ever since. The current county courthouse is located at 318 Leroy Street. Construction on the courthouse started in 1938 and was completed in 1939. It was one of ten courthouses built in Iowa during the federal Public Works

Administration program's operation. The courthouse located in Audubon on Leroy Street is still the current county courthouse and is in use today.

Audubon Public Library

The Audubon Public Library is a Carnegie Library which was constructed in 1912 by the architectural firm Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson from Des Moines. The Audubon Public Library is one of one hundred Carnegie libraries built in Iowa. The move to obtain Carnegie funding for a new public library began in March 1911 with a well-attended public meeting in the county courthouse. On April 16, 1911 673 votes were cast: 515 for the library and 142 against the library and a few "spoiled" ballots. By June 1911, the Library Board acquired land for the library building and by January 1912, plans were unveiled to the public. Construction began that spring and construction was finished by early fall 1912. The library was formally opened to the public on December 5, 1912. The library has not been altered in any significant manner since it was constructed. The library still serves the community in the same place it was originally built, over one hundred years ago.



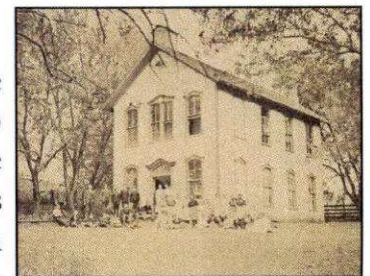
Ross Grain Elevator

The Ross Grain Elevator, located at 5940 Main Street in Ross was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2018. The elevator, office, engine, and scale house were constructed in 1881 by Captain Charles Stuart. The annex was constructed in 1900. The grain elevator, constructed of wood, has a stacked limestone foundation which is different from the poured concrete foundations found in a majority of other wood elevators. The structure is built

in a cribbed fashion which is known for its strength and expense as an enormous amount of lumber is needed. The Ross Grain Elevator is unusual that it was built into the side of a hill. The Ross Grain Elevator is located in the same place it was constructed 140 years ago.

Oakfield Academy

The Oakfield Academy was built in 1871 on the east side of Oakfield. The building was first constructed as a two-story building, but in 1935, the top story was removed and placed on the ground. This second story is where the one-room school house was originally from. Materials from what was originally the first story were utilized to construct local homes. The one-room school house was utilized until 1959, when the school closed. After its closure in 1959, the school house was used as a rental property where a family lived without water for a number of years. After the family moved out, the building was utilized as a chicken house and storage building. Now, the building is owned by Mel and Dorothy Gross and the couple is working to restore the building.



John James Audubon



The John James Audubon Plaza is home to a 20 feet tall, 8 feet wide stained glass clock. The clock features the exact universal time and is lighted at night. The plaza also has ceramic tile mosaics of Audubon's prints from "Birds of America." The mosaics are made by a native and nationally known artist, Clint Hansen.

The Audubon Post Office Mural is a 1930's art project in the Post Office that depicts John James Audubon and his party during their journey down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers along with the boatman and owners who stopped by for a little relaxation.



The entrance to the library hosts a large tile mural of John James Audubon and a Great Blue Heron designed by Judy Sutcliffe, Audubon native and nationally known tile artist. The library houses several John James Audubon prints and books; and has an origami mobile of over 1,200 paper cranes called "Free to Fly" by Linda Merk. The John James Audubon Cultural Center is part of the 1912 Carnegie Library.

Tree in the Middle of the Road

At the crossroads one mile west of Audubon and Exira township line at the point where this line intersects the Cass and Audubon County line stands a large, old cottonwood tree. Legend says that a surveyor was marking the line between Audubon and Cass Counties and only had a cottonwood sprout on hand. The sprout took root and grew into the massive tree it is today, becoming the intersection of the two roads.



GOALS

Highlight Audubon County's History

Audubon County's history and the history of its cities is still present today. Making historical information readily available at historical sites should be considered to widen the availability of historical knowledge. The numerous historical sites around the county could be part of a county-wide educational tour.

- Action Items:**
- Choose venues to showcase historical information
 - Continue to promote and safeguard the county's historic properties
 - Find resources to preserve historic buildings/sites
 - Promote future museum/cultural center development