

WALKING TOUR

1

Railroad Depot

1034 First Avenue

Built in 1898, this railroad station served as the depot for the St. Paul/Sioux City Railroad system. In later years, it was the depot for the Chicago/St. Paul/Minneapolis/Omaha trains, the Chicago/Northwestern railway system and today for the Union Pacific Railroad. The station used to have a separate building to its west which housed a restaurant that provided meals for travelers on the passenger trains. During World War II, the depot also functioned as the canteen for servicemen and women as they were passing thru town; it was staffed by local Red Cross volunteers, the Gray Ladies.



Before proceeding north on 10th Street, you can observe how 2nd Avenue runs west downhill, towards the lake. The hill used to be referred to as Creamery Hill due to the location of the E. O. Olson creamery at the top of the hill. Two grain elevators were also located in this vicinity, next to the train tracks, to allow for the convenient shipping of grain by rail.

2

Nobles County Bank

224 Tenth Street

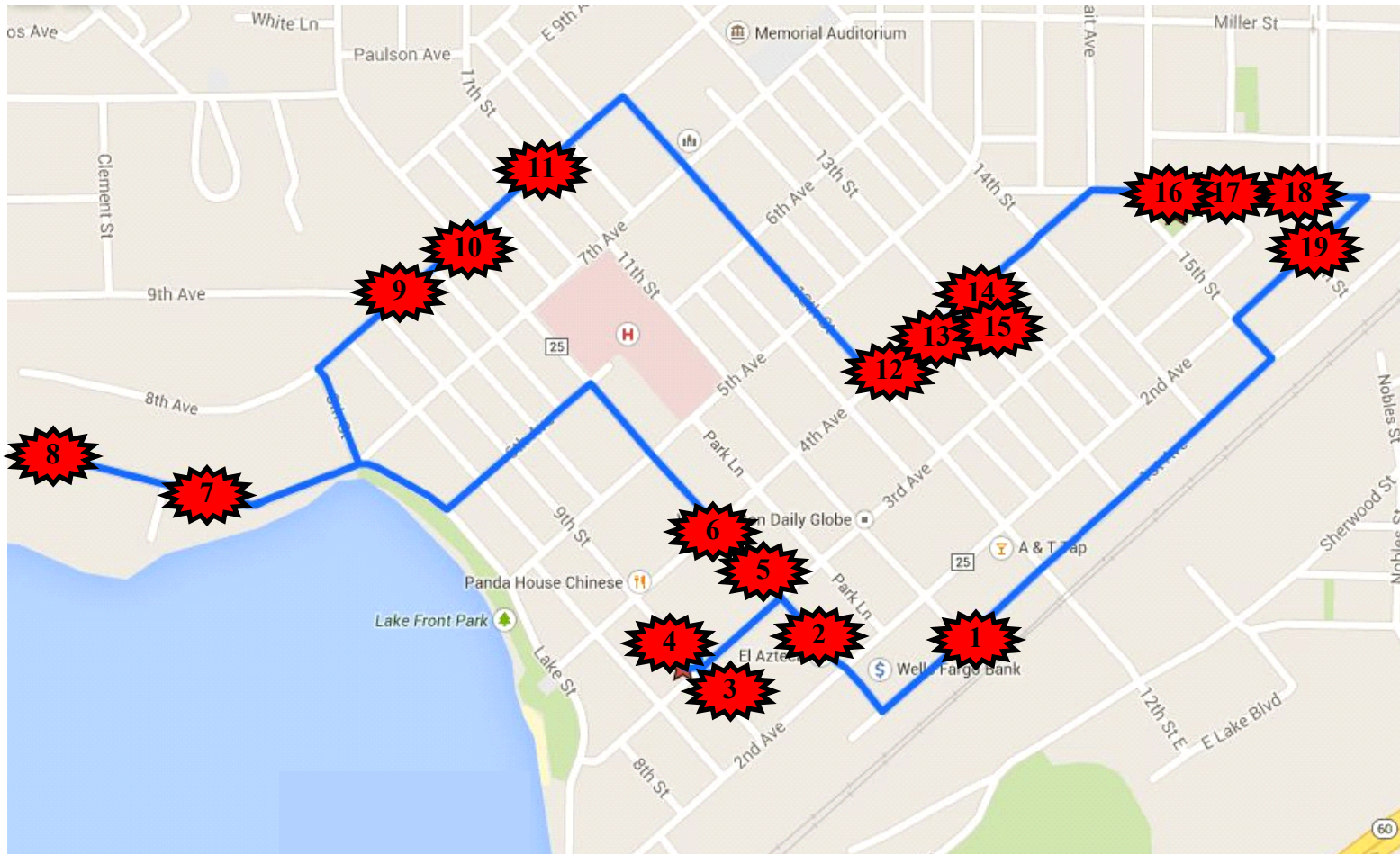
This building was the second to house the Nobles County Bank. The bank was first established in 1880 by Peter Thompson and George Day and was originally located on the NE corner of 10th Street and 3rd Avenue until it closed during the financial panic of 1893. It was reorganized during 1894-1895 under new owners. They did business in temporary quarters until this building was erected in 1899. In 1908, the bank was again “reorganized” under a national bank charter, becoming known as The Worthington National Bank.

3

Worthington City Hall

303 Ninth Street

The city hall building was constructed in 1934 at the height of the Great Depression. Worthington's mayor, E. J. Jones, believed such projects offered people employ-



ment opportunities during tough economic times. Because he thought the City had adequate financial resources, he opposed accessing federal monies through various government funded programs. After Jones left the mayoral office, the City became more proactive in seeking federal dollars to support public works projects.

For many years, this building also housed the City's police department and the municipal liquor store. Eventually, due to overcrowding, these departments were relocated to different facilities: the police station was placed in a joint facility with the county sheriff while the liquor store was moved to a vacant grocery store building on Diagonal Road.

4

National Guard Armory

225 Ninth Street

Formerly the National Guard Armory, this building was opened in 1923. It served as the headquarters for the Worthington National Guard unit. Before the U.S. formally declared war in 1941, the local unit was activated in 1940 and was sent to help defend the Aleutian Islands against a potential foreign invasion.

Due to its large open space, the armory facility also hosted a number of different community events over the years: agricultural shows, musical performances (e.g. Lawrence Welk, The Ronettes, Jimmy Soul), basketball games and public auctions. The building ceased operating as a National Guard armory when a decision was

made to combine the local unit with those in Luverne and Pipestone.

5

Hotel Thompson

302 Tenth Street

When the Hotel Thompson was opened in 1912, it was the largest and finest facility of its kind between Sioux City and Mankato. The hotel was named after its owner, Peter Thompson, who was over 70 years old at the time and viewed the hotel as a retirement project. He had originally come to Worthington in 1871 and had spent his working years in a variety of business enterprises, including a general store, farm implements, real estate, grain merchandising and banking.

The hotel building had four different levels. Over the years, the basement housed several different businesses: a pool hall, print shops, a shoe repair store and the studios of the KWOA radio station. The street level floor also housed a variety of businesses – Sterling Brothers Clothiers, Herbert Drugstore, Casareto's Ice Cream and Confectionary, C & L Variety Store, Ben Franklin Store, a barber shop, a realty business and a jewelry store. The Thompson Hotel also had a first floor dining room which was popular for noon lunches and Sunday dinners. The top two floors were dedicated to guest rooms and a banquet room where the Kiwanis Club used to meet. *(This building has been listed on National Register of Historic Places.)*

6

Citizens National Bank

326 Tenth Street

This building was the second location of the Citizens National Bank. It was completed in January 1902. Originally established in April 1901, the bank was temporarily located in a wood frame building on 4th Avenue until this building had been constructed. *(This building has been listed on National Register of Historic Places.)*



7

M. P. Mann Residence

604 Lake Avenue

This was the site of M. P. Mann's house. He served for years as the town's postmaster. His family was well acquainted with the family of Amelia Earhart, America's most famous aviatrix. From 1907-1911, the Earharts would spend a few weeks during the summer in Worthington as guests of the Mann family. They would stay with the Manns, but would eat many of their meals at the Twitchell House which was a boarding house located on the corner of 7th Ave and Lake St. Later in life, Amelia was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. In 1938, she was lost at sea while attempting to complete a solo flight around the world.

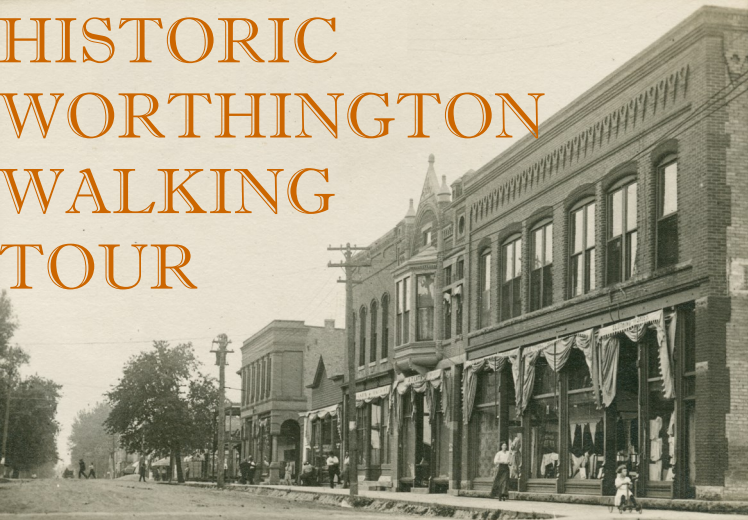
8

Chautauqua Park

400 Lake Avenue

Originally known as Lake Park, this community park was later renamed Chautauqua Park in recognition of the Chautauqua festivals which were held on this site from 1904 thru 1932. Affiliated with the national Chautauqua circuit, which originated in New York, these annual programs would feature a succession of speakers, dramatic plays and musical entertainment. Activities would be scheduled for 7 to 10 days, in the evenings as well as the afternoons, during July or August. Some of the most famous presenters to appear in Worthington included former President William Howard Taft, orator and perennial presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan and the Reverend Billy Sunday.

The band shell and some of the recreational areas were developed and constructed by area youth who were em-



WORTHINGTON HISTORY

Worthington's birth as a community was largely influenced by a series of decisions made far from its boundaries. Shortly after the Civil War, the federal government revised the Homestead Act to allow former Union soldiers to fulfill their homestead residency requirements by substituting their years of military service. The allure of free land, up to 160 acres per claim, prompted many Civil War veterans to relocate to the Worthington area. In fact, by 1873, just one year after Worthington's official settlement date, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) local Stoddard Post boasted the largest membership (125) in the entire state.

Two years earlier, before Worthington was actually settled, the officers of the St. Paul/Sioux City Railroad had decided to locate a station here for the trains they intended to bring to the southwest corner of the state. They were attracted to this site by the two Okabena Lakes, which would offer a water source for their steam engines, and by the presence of trees surrounding the lakes. The railroad president, E. F. Drake, preferred this location and the Okabena name for the planned station and the town that would surely be established.

Finally, in 1871, a group of people from Toledo, Ohio, organized a settlement company known as the National Colony Company. Under the leadership of Professor Ramson Humstion and Dr. A. P. Miller, the Colony sought to locate a townsite where people could succeed while abiding by their code of strict moral standards, particularly the abstinence from alcohol. They chose the Worthington site due to its fertile soil, ample undeveloped prairie lands, the available lakes and the newly planned railroad. The Colony's activities to relocate people to this location helped to provide a critical mass of residents. Ultimately, it was Dr. Miller's mother-in-law's maiden name, Worthington, for whom the new town was named.

they recruited a "traveling" priest to say mass in their family home on a periodic basis. The Nobles County Historical Society has the original altar in its collections. Early in his hardware business, Davis made considerable money by taking two wagon loads of hardware to South Dakota to sell equipment to miners after gold was discovered in 1874.

The home's next owners, Frank and Ada LaPachek, donated this dwelling to the Nobles County Historical Society as part of their estate settlement. It included hundreds of furnishings, including artifacts from the LaPachek's many travels. Even though the Society ultimately decided to sell the building, it kept many of the LaPachek's original items, including the ornate iron fence which surrounded their property; the fence is now located at the Society's Pioneer Village.

16 George D. Dayton Spec House

1515 Okabena Street

This house was part of George Dayton's real estate developments, built in the 1890's. The residence was owned at different times by several of Worthington's early business leaders.

17 Fire Station

Triangle Park

This site was the location of a small fire station which was built to serve the fire safety needs of this side of town. The station included a hose cart and other equipment to put out house fires.

18 George D. Dayton Residence

1543 Okabena Street

George Draper Dayton moved to Worthington from New York in 1883 to look out for the financial interests of Eastern investors. He lived in town for seven years before building a new home at 1311 4th Avenue. This was one of his family's earlier dwellings which they sold in 1889, before moving into their Georgian Colonial Revival house the following year.

19 Altman Sietsema Residence

1522 Second Avenue

This house was originally constructed in 1915. It was a model home built on plans and with materials purchased through a mail order company, possibly Sears and Roebuck. The original owner was Altman Sietsema, who worked as an engineer for the railroad. He paid \$2,500 for the early pre-fab house which included the lot. Peter Johnson, a local carpenter, was hired to build the house which was shipped by train in bundles and crates.

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Depression. Other WPA projects in Worthington, besides blocks of sidewalks, included a large sewer line which ran north of Oxford Street and was dug mostly by hand.

12 Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church

1200 Fourth Avenue

Now known as the First Lutheran Church, this church was built in 1910, making it the oldest house of worship in the city of Worthington. The parish was originally organized by a large contingent of Swedish immigrants. Today they continue to celebrate their Scandinavian heritage by sponsoring an annual smorgasbord dinner featuring lutefisk, lefse and Swedish meatballs.

13 J. D. Humiston Residence

1214 Fourth Avenue

This property was purchased by J. D. Humiston in October 1885. The Humiston family was one of the most influential in Worthington's early years. John was involved in a variety of businesses during his work career: a hardware store, banking and a farm implement business. In 1888, J. D. Humiston sold the house to Harry Humiston, his nephew, who owned the property until 1899.

14 George D. Dayton Residence

1311 Fourth Avenue

This Georgian Colonial Revival home, designed by Wallace Dow, was built for George Draper Dayton, perhaps Worthington's most famous resident. It was constructed over a 4-month period, from June thru October in 1890. The Dayton family lived in this dwelling until they relocated to the Twin Cities in 1903 to pursue other business interests.

Following the Dayton era, the house served as the primary residence for two other influential families – the Smallwoods and the Cashels. Ruth Cashel eventually turned the building into a nursing home; later she converted it into a boarding house when she could no longer meet nursing home regulations. Eventually, she forfeited the property for failure to pay the real estate taxes. M. J. Gjertson paid \$12,500 for the dwelling in a property forfeiture sale.

In 2001, Historic Worthington, Inc. bought the property from M. J. Gjertson's daughter for \$150,000. The Historic Dayton House now operates as a community gathering place, including a bed and breakfast inn for overnight guests. *(This house has been listed on National Register of Historic Places.)*

15 Henry Davis Residence

1302 Fourth Avenue

This house was originally built in the late 1880's for Henry Davis, one of Worthington's early hardware dealers. Davis and his wife Anna were active in the Catholic faith. Since no Catholic parish had been established locally,



ployed through the National Youth Administration (NYA). The NYA was a public works program established as part of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal response to the Great Depression. Many community events and band concerts have been staged in this park over the past 100 plus years.

9 Nobles County Courthouse

907 Eighth Avenue

This building, constructed for \$1,124 in 1877, served as the county's first courthouse. It was originally located in the center of the downtown block where the current county government center is located. This courthouse building also included the county's jail which consistently had one of the highest escape rates in the entire area, necessitating the construction of a separate jail on the corner of 9th Street and 3rd Avenue. The replacement jail was actually built before a new courthouse was erected a few years later.

10 W. I. Humiston Residence

723 Tenth Street

This house was originally located on the northeast corner of 10th Street and 5th Avenue. It was owned by W. I. Humiston who operated one of Worthington's prominent hardware stores where the Daily Apple Store (formerly Schafer's) is now located. The house was moved to its current location in 1919 as part of a downtown development project. The vacated lot was leased to Standard Oil Company for the development of a gas station.

11 WPA Sidewalk Stamp

N.E. Corner of Eighth Avenue & Eleventh Street

The WPA (i.e. Works Progress Administration) stamp on the sidewalk indicates that this was one of the public works completed by local workers employed through the WPA. The WPA was established as part of the President Roosevelt's New Deal response to the Great

