



1853 NEWTON STAGECOACH

In 1853, Eder B. Newton came to Guthrie County and was employed to lay out a stage road across Guthrie County—Iowa. The route was very similar to the trail used by previous westward travelers, like the forty-niners and Mormon handcarts. At this time, the stage line was owned and operated by Frink, Walker, & Company, out of Chicago.

Late in 1855, the Western Stage Coach Company bought the line. They put into use a line of 4-horse Concord stagecoaches, called “jerkies” painted in bright colors, that cost \$1,000 each. The stage could make three to four miles per hour in good weather, but also delayed for days in bad weather. Fares ranged from 5 to 7 cents per mile. With all of the land speculators traveling west, the stage company did an immense business. In 1868 the Rock Island RR was built in the southern part of the county and soon the stage business was abandoned.

In 1951, a small Guthrie County Tourism group placed homemade signs along the old stage route for the county’s centennial, but by 2005 most of the signs were missing or illegible. In 2008, William Frels, a member of Boy Scout Troop 127 in Guthrie Center, researched the route, gathered GPS coordinates denoting locations, had new signs created with funding from local businesses, and installed the 19 signs along the 29.4-mile route for his Eagle Scout Project. The additional history, including points of interests and photos, have been added by Kristine Jorgensen, Guthrie County Historical Village Curator and the signs are now managed by the Guthrie County Historical Village Foundation and the Guthrie County Conservation Board.

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THE ROUTE

SIGN #1

GPS Coordinates

41.586972, -94.241389

Elev. 1,032 ft.

The route starts at the Dallas County/Guthrie County line on 280th Road. This road links to Redfield, Iowa, and intersects with Wagon Road. The sign is on the **north side** of the road. Head west along 280th to continue on the stage route.



Points of Interest

Just west of the starting point, on the south side of the road, is a beautiful farmstead which was a stage stop, known as **Harbour Stage Station**. Traveling west on 280th Rd, near 280th Rd and Zero Ave, there is an old sign noting the location for the **Cummins Independent School, East Jackson District No. 1—1874-1955**. There is also a sign noting location of the old **Union Chapel** on the north side of the road.



Photo of Harbor Stage Station—1907

SIGN #2

GPS Coordinates

41.590092 -94.284569

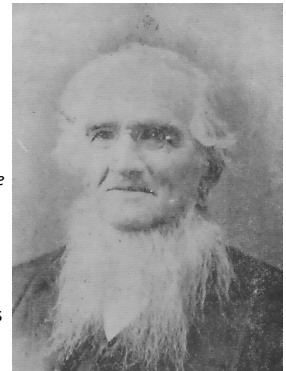
Elev. 1,054 ft.

The sign is located on the **southwest corner** of 280th Rd and York Ave. Continue heading west to stay on the stage route.

Photo of Benjamin Kunkle

Point of Interest

Traveling west on 280th Rd, near the intersection of 280th Rd and 280th St, there is a sign at the site of the **Kunkle Cabin, First permanent log home in Guthrie County, Iowa—1848**. The cabin, which is no longer standing, was built by Benjamin and Barbara Kunkle, who were the first permanent settlers in Guthrie County. Their first crop was 12 acres of corn and a small patch of potatoes.



SIGN #3

GPS Coordinates

41.601419 -94.299361

Elev. 1,052 ft.

The sign is located on the **northwest corner** of 280th Rd and Walnut. Continue heading west to stay on the stage route.

Point of Interest

Just east of this location, the first post office in Guthrie County was established. **Allen P.O.** was open for business on August 16, 1852 and the office was actually kept in the cabin of the postmaster, J. W. Cummins. The post office would move to Fairview (Morrisburg) in 1855, and later to Dale City.

SIGN #4

GPS Coordinates

41.601522 -94.318048 Elev. 1,062 ft.

The sign is located on the **northeast corner** of 280th Rd and Wagon Rd. To stay on stage route, turn left on Wagon Rd and head south 1 mile, then turn west on 285th St.

Photo of Morrisburg Cemetery



Point of Interest

Near the #4 sign, you will be where the little town of **Morrisburg** was once located. The only signs remaining of this ghost town are the cemetery and church. In 1855, James Moore and Jonathan Morris laid out a town with the name of Fairview. After realizing that name was already in use, the name was changed to Morrisburg in 1856. Morrisburg was an important stop on the Underground Railroad through Guthrie County. Wells McCool had a blacksmith shop in town and was a conductor on the "railroad." By 1870, bad luck struck. The railroad superseded the stage lines and did not go through Morrisburg. After the disastrous tornado on June 18, 1871, the town rapidly went to pieces. Some moved to Dale City while others moved on. Thus was the sad end of Morrisburg.

SIGN #5

GPS Coordinates

41.597498 -94.322889 Elev. 1,059 ft.

The sign is on the **northwest corner** of Wagon Rd and 285th St. Head west along 285th to continue on the stage route.

Photo of Lonsdale Woolen Mill



Points of Interest

Traveling west on 285th Rd, you will pass the former **Dale Valley Winery**, which is no longer open. It was also the new location for the Dale one-room country schoolhouse. Near 285th Rd and Victory Trail, you will enter the small, unincorporated town of **Dale City** and see two signs—**Post Office, Dale City, 1865-1883** and **Dale 1883-1922**. In 1862, the town of Dale City was laid out. That same year, Lonsdale & Kenworthy started a store at the Lonsdale Woolen Mills. This establishment was the beginning of the decline for Morrisburg, the small town just up the road. Dale's woolen mill was in operation for many years along the South Raccoon River but finally closed in 1917, when dyes from Germany could not be obtained due to WWI, and thus, the population of Dale city began to decline. The mill was sold in 1922 and moved away. Dale City was also an important stop along the Underground Railroad that passed through southern Guthrie County.



L: Dale City School and Church

R: Dale City Main Street. Lonsdale house on left and the General Store on the right.



SIGN #6

GPS Coordinates

41.597386 -94.371132 Elev. 1,063 ft.

The sign is located on the **northeast corner** of 285th St and Tank Ave. Turn north on Tank Ave to stay on the stage route.

Photo of Glendon Church



Alternate Route

The alternate route goes south on Tank Ave and turns west on 283rd St. Follow to Sycamore Ave and up through the ghost town of **Glendon**. In the late part of 1880, Glendon was laid out in northeastern Beaver Township by H. N. Ross and J. Early. The following year, the town added a post office to the growing number of mercantiles, trades, such as hardware and blacksmith, and even a hotel-restaurant. The railroad "switch" from Menlo passed through Glendon and if you look to the west of the town, you can see where the railway once was. As time passed, the population of this small community began to dwindle, as did most of the buildings and houses. The charming **Glendon Church**, which was built in the 1890's, is the only original town building still standing and has recently been restored.

SIGN #7

GPS Coordinates

41.608975 -94.371661 Elev. 951 ft.

The sign is located on the **northwest corner** of Tank Ave and 275th St. Continue heading west on 275th, which will turn into 270th St., to stay on the stage route.

Point of Interest

If you didn't take the alternate route (above), **Glendon** is located 1/2 mile southwest of here.

SIGN #8

GPS Coordinates

41.616079 -94.420553 Elev. 1,136 ft.

The sign is located on the **northwest corner** of 270th St and Quarry Lane. Continue heading west on 270th to stay on the stage route.

Photo of Main Street in Monteith—Ca. 1910



Point of Interest

The ghost town of **Monteith** is located 1 mile north of this location. In 1881, H.T. Reed laid out the town of Monteith on his land and the railroad built a depot. The Rock Island passed through Monteith several times a week on its way from Menlo to Guthrie Center. Interestingly, several of the businesses that sprung up in the town were actually moved from Leadville, a small-but-quickly-fading community that was located just a quarter of a mile south of Monteith. The original hardware store, seen in this photo, was moved in 1997 to the Guthrie County Historical Village in Panora, Iowa, and is now restored as a general store.



SIGN #9

GPS Coordinates

41.616183, -94.435000 Elev. 1,183 ft.

The sign is located on the **northwest corner** of 270th St and Quail Rd. To stay on stage route continue west on 270th.

Photo of Monteith Cemetery



Point of Interest

The [Monteith Cemetery](#) is located 1 mile north of this location. The historic cemetery was laid out on about 1 acre of land on the southwest corner of section 23 in the fall of 1882.

SIGN #10

GPS Coordinates

41.616217, -94.473517 Elev. 1,252 ft.

The sign is located on the **northwest corner** of 270th St and Oak Ave. To stay on stage route continue west on 270th.

Photo of Monteith Wildlife Area



Point of Interest

The [Monteith Wildlife Area](#) is located just east of this location. This wildlife area consists of 240 acres and is mainly used as a public hunting area with excellent habitat for upland game species, whitetail deer, and wild turkey. Guthrie Center, the county seat, is located just 1 mile west and 3.5 miles north of this area.

SIGN #11

GPS Coordinates

41.616183, -94.492800 Elev. 1,271 ft.

The sign is on the **northwest corner** of 270th St and State Hwy 25. Head west along 285th to continue on the stage route.

Photo of Old Stage Road, Sec 3, Thompson Twp.



Point of Interest

At certain times of the year, the [original stagecoach trail](#) is visible as a “cut” near the fence line in a field about 1/2 mile south and 1/4 mile west of this location. Guthrie Center is located 4 miles north of this point.

SIGN #12

GPS Coordinates

41.616183, -94.512367 Elev. 1,270 ft.

The sign is located on the **west side** of T-intersection of 270th St and Maple Ave. Turn south on Maple Ave to stay on the stage route.

SIGN #13

GPS Coordinates

41.609100, -94.512317 Elev. 1,282 ft.

The sign is located on the **southwest corner** of Maple Ave and 275th St. Continue heading west on 275th St to stay on the stage route.

Point of Interest

Traveling west on 275th St, you will see the sign [Site of Gopher Station, 1854](#). Because of the appearance of its sod-type houses, it was jokingly called Gopher Station, and the name stuck. Built by John Betts in section 4 of Thompson Township, this station turned into quite the prosperous hotel.

However, once the main stage line was removed to Panora, Guthrie Center, and Bear Grove in 1856, Betts realized this station would soon die so he quickly laid out the town of Wilmington on 15 acres with street names of his children. The plans for the town were abandoned when Dalmanutha, a mile and a half southwest, grew in size and Betts sold the land to William Anderson.

Before selling his land, Betts planted a grove of cotton woods near the station house and those trees remained for many years as the designation to the once-important stop. It is said that the trees could be plainly seen from Morrisburg on the east, and from the ridge near Worden's Station on the west.



SIGN #14

GPS Coordinates

41.586850, -94.548350 Elev. 1,335 ft.

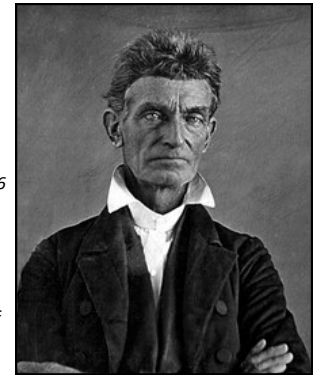
The sign is located on the **northwest corner** of Lock Trail and Koala Ave. Continue heading west on Lock Trail to stay on the stage route.

Photo of John Brown—Ca. 1856

Points of Interest

The ghost town of [Dalmanutha](#) and the Dalmanutha Cemetery are just west of this sign on Lock Trail. You will see signs [Dalmanutha, Post Office, 1863](#) and [1855 Site of Dalmanutha on Newton Stage Trail, 1870](#). In May of 1855, Aaron Coppoc sold his station at Oak Grove and hired Thomas Seeley to lay out the town of Dalmanutha. This was the junction of the Newton Stage Line and the old Mormon Trail. There was hopes that the railroad line would pass through the town but when it was laid out in the southern part of the county and the stage line was discontinued, the town was doomed. The Dalmanutha post office was discontinued in 1875.

The Porter Hotel, owned by John Porter and once located in Dalmanutha, was a well-known stop along the Underground Railroad and it is believed that the famous abolitionist, John Brown, stopped there on his way to Harper's Ferry. The platter that was used to serve John Brown during his stay at the Porter Hotel is on display at the Guthrie County Historical Village in Panora, Iowa.



SIGN #15

GPS Coordinates

41.583200, -94.567800

Elev. 1,325 ft.

The sign is located on the **northwest corner** of Lock Trail/295th St and Juniper. To stay on stage route continue west on 295th St. Looking west you can see the windmills.

Photo of Albert A. Benedict—Ca. 1900



Point of Interest

The [Safeside P.O.](#), which opened on October 29, 1897, was located just west of this location on the south side of the road. Albert A. Benedict was the first and only post master for this short-lived post office, which closed in 1904. The original post office boxes are located in the general store at the Guthrie County Historical Village, located in Panora, Iowa.

SIGN #16

GPS Coordinates

41.583183, -94.585950

Elev. 1,298 ft.

The sign is located on the **northeast corner** of 295th St and Indigo Ave. To stay on stage route, turn north on Indigo and follow around the corner. Road will turn into 287th St; continue west.

Point of Interest

Traveling north on Indigo Avenue, you will travel near the location of Oak Grove Station, built in 1854 by Aaron Coppoc, who was also actively involved with the Underground Railroad. In 1855, Coppoc sold this station and hired Thomas Seeley to lay out the town of Dalmanutha.

SIGN #17

GPS Coordinates

41.594150, -94.604933

Elev. 1,363 ft.

The sign is located on the **northeast corner** of 287th St and Hickory Ave. To stay on stage route, follow Hickory Ave on around to 280th St and continue west.

Point of Interest

Traveling west on 275th St, you will travel near the location of the Middle River Station, a “hotel” built in 1854 by George Worden, who had settled in the southeast quarter section of Bear Grove Township, and kept by Nathan Davis. This stop was also known as “Worden Station” and was an important stop along the stage line. Prior to being built, the Fort Des Moines and Kanesville stage route ran from Morrisburg to Hamlin’s Grove, a 35-mile journey without a stop.

It’s worth noting that the Middle River Station was not like the hotels of today. Life was quite different back then. For example, visitors came to visit the landlord and his family. “The bed provided was one of the sapling variety and double, extending entirely across one side of the house. They slept feet to feet, the guests in one end of this bed and the host and hostess in the other.” [History of Guthrie and Adair Counties, Iowa, 1884.](#) pg. 760. It would be several years before this primitive “hotel” would build a second story, allowing visitors their own space.

SIGN #18

GPS Coordinates

41.602150, -94.644050

Elev. 1,446 ft.

The sign is on the **northwest corner** of 280th St and Frontier Rd/“Adair Blacktop.” To stay on trail, continue west on 280th St.

Photo of Bear Grove Cemetery



Point of Interest

Town of Adair is 6 miles south of this location. Old town site of [Bear Grove](#) is located 3 miles NE of this location. Bear Grove, established in 1854, received its name from the numerous bear that lived in the adjoining woods. The town was located in a beautiful portion of Bear Grove township, known for its abundance of timber and fine prairie at hand, and was also a stop on the stage coach. At one time, the town was also known as “Huddleville” because of the numerous families that had arrived but were destitute in means so they had “huddled” together. Eventually, the stage coach was replaced by train and no tracks went to Bear Grove leading to the eventual end.

SIGN #19

GPS Coordinates

41.602200, -94.700750

Elev. 1,474 ft.

The sign is located on the north side of T-intersection of 280th St and Union Ave. Stage route travels into Audubon County. Go west and turn north on Bowman Ave to head to Hwy 44.

Point of Interest

Ghost town of [North Branch](#) is located 3 miles N of this location. North Branch was established in 1873. Its name, which was taken from the “north branch” of Troublesome Creek, was proposed by Stephen Shoesmith and voted upon and accepted at Sunday-school. The post office was established in 1874 and the town also had several stores.

The North Branch store was started by Baker and Shoesmith and provided many supplies and amenities, including eggs, butter, milk, and chickens purchased from locals, and in turn, sold to locals. A small building was constructed on the northwest corner of the store and used as a place to pick and dress chickens. Ike Ely would come from Guthrie Center to the store in North Branch once a week to dress chickens.

None of the original buildings or stores remain in North Branch, not even the North Branch store that was in business into the 1960s.



Photo of Bear Grove #4

Bear Grove #4, or the North Branch school, closed in 1956 and stood majestically in a field just to the west of where the town was once located up until 2014. Now it is a field with no signs that any school ever existed.



