Sac-Fox and Ioway Indian Battleground

12 It was on this flat prairie land between Eldon and Setma that the last great Indian battle between the Sac-Fox tribe and the Ioway tribe was held. On that day, in the approximate year of 1824, the Ioway had left their village and gone about 2 miles to a place where they raced their horses. Contrary to usual Indian custom, this battle took place in the daytime. The Sac-Fox were led by Pash-apa-ho and Black Hawk was one of his young warriors. Black Hawk took his band of young warriors to the village. While Pash-o-pa-ho led the ambush at the race course, the Sac-Fox held the advantage and won. The remaining Ioway lived under the tyranny of the Sac-Fox nation until the U.S. Government purchased their undivided interest in 1825.

Stone House

13 Around the year 1850, the U.S. Government decided to build locks every so many miles along the Des Moines river to keep it navigable for steamboats. This stone house, built for the locktender, still stands down by the river.

Site of The Jordan House

14 James Jordan came to Iowa from Kentucky in 1828 as an Indian trader. He owned more than 1,000 acres near where Wapello, Jefferson, Davis and Van Buren counties now join. Black Hawk was a longtime friend of Jordan. He died in the fall of 1838 while visiting Jordan. He died in the front yard of the Jordan house and was buried around back. Jordan buried the body according to the Indians' wishes, but later the skeleton was hauled off and exhibited as a sideshow curiosity. The Jordan house was a real show place in its day. The siding was hand hewn walnut, as was the interior trim. It had a tight spiraling staircase, eight large rooms and three fireplaces. In the summer of 1964 the house was dismantled, its skeleton exposed as was Black Hawk's.

Wapello County Fairgrounds

15 This is one of the oldest county fairgrounds in Iowa. It is interesting to note that the track where horses are trained and raced now is more than likely only a few miles from where the Ioway Indians raced their horses. One of the oldest buildings on the fairgrounds is the Art Hall. At one time, this was known as the Big Four Fair and this building was built in its unusual shape so the artwork of the people in each of the four counties could be exhibited in its own wing.

A Trail for All Ages

American Gothic Hiking Trail
Eldon, Iowa

Eldon, Iowa
Home of the American Gothic House

AMERICAN GOTHIC TRAIL
Sponsored and operated by the American Gothic Trail Committee, Incorporated

BOY SCOUT TROOP 22

Updated July 2011
Purpose of Trail
The main purpose of the trail is to promote physical fitness in the Scouting program and to learn more about our American Heritage.

Organized trail hiking is becoming one of the most outstanding phases of the Scouting program. Every year Scouting units plan for more hiking trails as a significant part of their Highlight program.

Troop 22 uses hiking as a major part of its physical fitness program. We wish to thank those who are responsible for the many organized trails which we have hiked. We wish to contribute the American Gothic Trail to all those who cherish the outdoors and our American Heritage.

How to Make Application For Hiking Trail
No application or briefing prior to hiking is necessary. You have several options as to the route you hike, all of which are along public roads. There are no markers. You do not have to take one designated route. Any 10 miles will qualify you for the patch.$1.00

Suggested routes are as follows. Eldon to Selma and return on either side of the Des Moines river. Either direction, Eldon to or from the Cliffland Access area north of Eldon along the Des Moines River.

Any questions you may have will be answered by writing to American Gothic Trail, P.O. Box 28 Eldon, IA 52554 or Telephone (641) 652-3510 or (641) 652-3472.

Trail Hiking Requirements
1. Open to all classes of Scouts, Explorers, Girl Scouts and Scouters. Any other organized group under adult supervision may hike the trail.
2. Proper uniforms are recommended and encouraged for all Scout units using the trail.

Recommended Hiking Equipment
Canteen of water, a sack lunch, and a first aid kit.

Hike Trail Fees and Awards
1. No registration, insurance, or other fees are charged. The Trail does not carry any accident insurance on hikers. It is each group’s responsibility to carry their own.
2. Those completing any 10 miles of the trail are eligible to purchase an embroidered patch. Cost of the patch is $3.00.
3. Gothic coffee mugs are available to everyone for $7.50.
4. Awards may be picked up prior to or after hiking at 511 W. Walnut or by mail to American Gothic Trail, P.O. Box 28, Eldon, IA 52554.
5. T-shirts are available for $14.50. Pre-orders are required, may be paid for when you pick them up.

Bicycle Patch
Those completing any 10 miles riding bicycle’s are eligible to purchase a special patch. The Cost is $3.00.

TWO TRAILS PATCH Everyone completing both, The American Gothic and Chief Wapello Trails are eligible to purchase a colorful embroidered special patch. These patches are available from either Trail Committee.

Facts About Eldon
Eldon has the following churches: Assembly of God, Baptist, Christian, Living Hope and Methodist. Food is offered at: Eldon Kwik Shop and Casey’s. The Trail Committee has on display at the Opera House a collection of reproductions of some of Grant Woods paintings.

Cindy’s Cafe
Cindy’s Cafe, formerly (Jones Cafe), 417 Elm St, Eldon, Iowa. Home cooked family owned full service restaurant w/ breakfast, dinner and lunch specials everyday. Open 7 days a week, 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. till 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. Good home cooking and friendly service. Owner, operators Norm and Cindy.

American Gothic Days
The Trail opened July 17, 1971. The following year Mayor J. L. Potts proclaimed the third week of June yearly as American Gothic Week in Eldon. For the first few years the festivities were planned by the Boy Scout and the Citizens in Action committees, then the Lion and Lioness Clubs until they disbanded. In recent years this yearly event has been carried on by G.A.T.E. The American ‘Gothic Area Tourism of Eldon’. Nan, Grant Woods sister was here to help us celebrate on three different occasions.

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS
WAPELLO COUNTY SHERIFF OFFICE
(641) 684 - 4350
911
American Gothic Trail Points of Interest

American Gothic Trail Headquarters

1. This building was constructed and is maintained by the Trail Committee. The purpose of the building is a central point for storage of equipment of all Scout units in Eldon. The building is 24' by 32' with a 16' by 24' meeting room.

The Eldon Depot

2. The KD Line was the first railroad into Des Moines about 1880. Rock Island built the depot in the late 1800's. The Eldon Depot was remodeled in 1946 and restored to its current condition in April of 2001. The Round house was moved across the river in 1946. The last passenger train ran through Eldon in February of 1968. The freight train ran until August of 1979. The Depot celebrates "Hobo Day and Feed" in October. Contact Steven Roe at 652-3281 for more information or join him for coffee Monday through Friday mornings at the Depot.

American Gothic House

3. While on a motor trip through southeastern Iowa in 1930, artist Grant Wood saw the Seldon Smith home in Eldon. He made a rough sketch on the back of an envelope of the Gothic arch, two long-faced people and a pitchfork. It was this window that gave the painting its name. He looked around his home area, Cedar Rapids, for models, but found that none of the farmers would fit his idea. Eventually, he persuaded his sister, Nan, and his dentist, Dr. B. H. McBeey, to be his models. It is interesting to note that the simple lines of the Gothic window are repeated in the lines of the three-tined pitchfork. The original painting hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago, but the house that expresses the simple life of a Midwestern farmer still stands in Eldon.

American Gothic House Center

Hours of Operation: 641-652-3352
May - September:
- Sunday - Monday: 1 PM - 4 PM
- Tuesday - Thursday: 10 AM - 4 PM
- Friday - Saturday: 10 AM - 6 PM

Oct. - April:
- Tuesday - Friday: 10 AM - 4 PM
- Saturday - Monday: 1 PM - 6 PM

Bus Tours Welcome! Please make reservations for groups of twenty or more.

Old Bearing Tree

4. Vandals have recently destroyed the remains of the huge elm. The bronze plaque that was attached to the tree reading: Bearing Tree recorded in the original Government Survey, 1846, has been placed on a concrete marker near where the tree stood. Near the base where this tree stood is a large rock buried which has the markings used by the surveyors when this part of the territory was laid out at the time Iowa became a State.

McHaffey Opera House

5. The McHaffey Opera House was built in 1891 by Irish immigrant David McHaffey. The opera house was on the New York circuit and presented the finest plays of the times. The Eldon High School held all the class plays and graduation ceremonies on the opera house stage until 1941. They even played their basketball games in the auditorium until a remodeling in the 1920's added permanent tiered seating that eliminated space for games. A projection room was added during the remodeling and silent films were shown. The ground floor was always used as shop space with the auditorium and stage on the second floor. The McHaffey Opera House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Library

6. A historical account of the Eldon Public Library states that early in the year of 1911 Andrew Carnegie granted the Building Committee the sum of $5,000 to erect a Library provided a suitable site was furnished and a pledge of $500 for support and maintenance was given. It was decided to appeal to the people of Eldon and their friends for donations for the purpose of purchasing a site for the building. The account goes on to state that "A vigorous campaign was instituted and on January 1, 1912, the present site was duly paid for and the deed delivered. On February 15, 1912, Mr. Carnegie increased his original offer to $7,500 with the condition that the pledge for maintenance and support be increased to $750, and with the assistance of the Board of Trustees of Washington Township, the committee was able to meet this condition. Plans were then approved on June 22, 1912 and the firm of Wetherell & Gage, Architects of Des Moines was awarded the contract. The Library Building was staked off and the contract for building was signed August 7, 1912. The cornerstone was laid and dedication was held May 9, 1913 at the Christian Church.

Sioc Cemetery - Indian Mounds

7. Located 3 miles southwest of Eldon, this is believed to be the only cemetery in the state, perhaps in the nation, where whites are buried in and on top of Indian Mounds. Grave rows go across two mounds about 25 feet in diameter located on the high point of the cemetery. Sioc Cemetery is named after the Vansioc family who lived nearby. The oldest dated stone is the Powell marker, dated 1845. The Powell family lived in Davis County on the Floris road.
Eldon Game Area

Located 3 miles southwest of Eldon, this public hunting and fishing game area has 703 acres of wooded area and several stocked ponds.

Vesser Creek

This area is a popular hunting ground for rock hounds and Indian arrowhead collectors. Many prehistoric dinosaur bones have also been found here. There have been reports of goki being found in the creek and one man found 78 pounds of pure copper ore. Another man hunted the creek for the correct hickory to make baskets while his wife panned gold in the creek and sold it to A. J. Davis who operated a whiskey distillery on the banks of Vesser Creek.

Old Log Cabin

This log cabin was originally located a few miles east of Douds, along Highway 16. It was dismantled and moved to Selma, then erected at the present location. This is not a replica, it is the original home like all the settlers lived in when this country was first settled.

Iowaville Cemetery

This is one of the oldest cemeteries west of the Mississippi River. Here you will find many stones of people born in the 1700's. One of the tombs is that of Daniel McMullin, date of death, August 18, 1841. On this stone is crossed arrow and tomahawk; McMullin was an early day Indian Trader under Government permit. This is only one of many interesting monuments that is found here. In 1970, just a short distance from here, an archaeologist found the location of the Ioway Indian village dating back to the early 1800's.

AMERICAN GOTHIC TRAIL
1. American Gothic Trail Headquarters
2. The Eldon Depot
3. American Gothic House
4. Old Bearing Tree Marker
5. The McHaffey Opera House
6. Library
7. Sioc Cemetery-Indian Mounds
8. Eldon Public Game Area
9. Vesser Creek
10. Old Log Cabin
11. Iowaville Cemetery
12. Sac-Fox & Ioway Indian Battleground
13. Stone House
14. Site of Jordan House
15. Wapello County Fairgrounds