

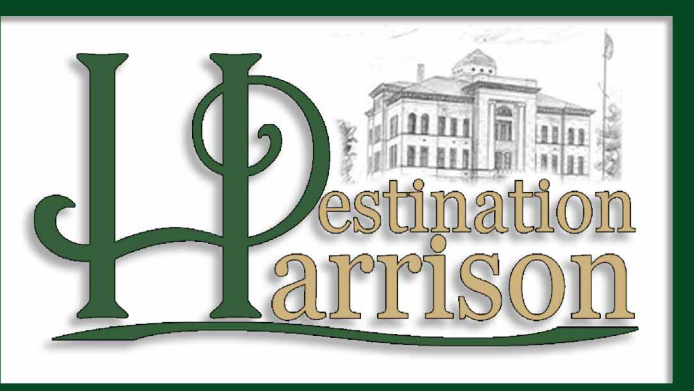
Harrison County Historically Speaking

Little Sioux, Iowa

WHY PRESERVE THIS BIT OF HISTORY?

This panel "Tells the Tale" of an era gone by... part of Harrison County's treasured past. By appreciating the importance of the past, we can continue working in the present to ensure future generations will respect and preserve the enduring history that is represented here. By working to connect our past with the present, the structures on this panel have been identified as being historically significant by Harrison County Tourism as part of ongoing efforts to preserve local history. It is 1 of 10 in a series of panels throughout Harrison County.

For a complete list of panels and locations, go to: <http://destinationharrisonia.com/historically-speaking.html>



Destination Harrison Interpretive Signage Project made possible by funding from the Dean J. King Family Foundation

Designed by Harrison County GIS & Mapping in conjunction with Harrison County Tourism

MURRAY HALL (also known as MURRAY GENERAL MERCHANDISE STORE)

Murray Hall housed a thriving general store on its ground floor and a second-floor meeting space used by GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) Civil War veterans and the local chapters of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows/Rebecca's, and the Woodmen and the Masonic/Eastern Star orders. By the 1970s, only the Masonic and Eastern Star chapters remained. They closed in the 1980s. However, the building continues to have an active life in community as a museum, a collection of family histories and photographs from those active in the community's formation and growth, and a meeting place for two historic preservation groups and the Senior Citizens' group. It also hosts community events including receptions and small parties.



The 1877 wooden building is a rare example of the two-story, "false front" or "boom town" commercial building style of the 19th century commercial buildings in the frontier towns of early Iowa. Its gabled roof is masked by a flat parapet to give the look of greater height.

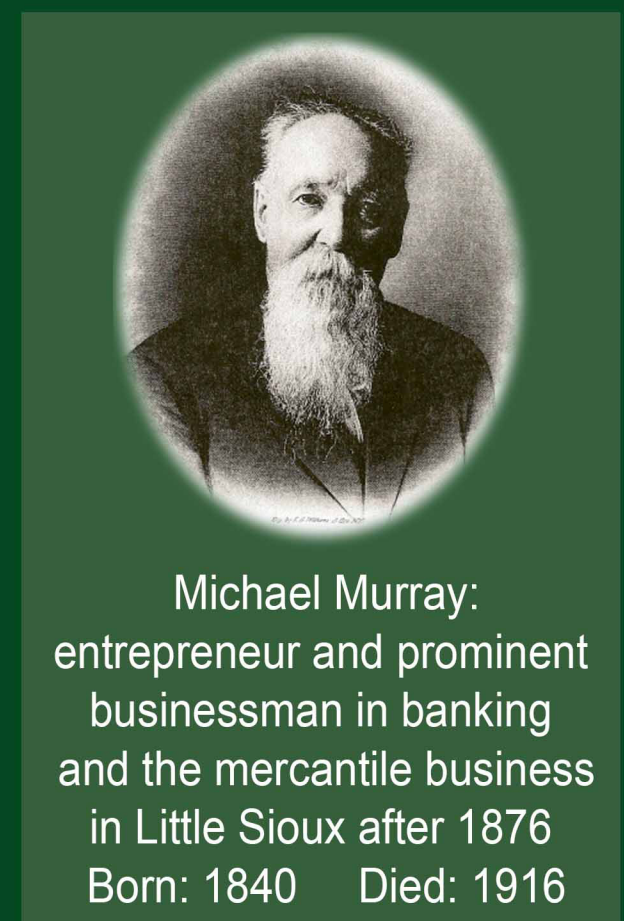
The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998. That listing on America's list of historic places worthy of preservation as part of our historic resources was earned by its local significance and by its rarity as a surviving example of the small town commercial buildings in Iowa's early history.

Why save these places? Buildings like Murray Hall provide 3-D pictures of another time. They also provide a civic identity. Their architectural designs save patterns of culture and the past. They are signs of the life, times, and ways of living in past times. Saving them is ecologically sound, since they preserve wood from trees of a size and strength no longer available. Saving these places saves their history plus saving demolition and construction costs, while not adding to our landfills.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of America's historic places judged worthy of preservation. A listing on the National Register formally recognizes a property's historical, architectural, or archaeological significance. The National Park Service conducts this national program that coordinates and supports efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archaeological resources for our and future generations.

MICHAEL MURRAY

Michael Murray, born in Scotland in 1840, followed his brother John to Harrison County. He carried mail on horseback, drove a stagecoach, established a trading post for the Overland Stage Company, and later worked for the Union Pacific Railroad. Returning to Little Sioux in 1868, he farmed land just outside town and purchased Benjamin Taber's mercantile business. In 1877, he erected the two-story mercantile building that was part of the town's early commercial life and its social life as well, since the upper story space hosted meetings of many groups.



Michael Murray: entrepreneur and prominent businessman in banking and the mercantile business in Little Sioux after 1876
Born: 1840 Died: 1916

The general store sold dry goods (cloth), "notions" (needles, thread, thimbles), furnishings, clothing, boots, shoes, hats, groceries, and crockery. It was one of five then operating in town at the town's peak in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. That was the time frame in which the town grew steadily, due to its location along a stage line and immigrant trail between Council Bluffs, Sioux City, and points west.

This postcard highlights scenes from the thriving little town as it was. The upper left picture shows Second St., part of the business district. The picture below is a view looking east on Mulberry St. with the Pierce Hardware Store on the left. The picture on the lower left is a view looking east from the bridge. The middle scene on the top shows a scene on the Little Sioux River. The upper right picture shows the Bonny House, a thriving hotel for "drummers" (salesmen) and travelers. Below it is a view of the bridge over the Little Sioux River. The picture on the lower right is one of the two-story public school building.

