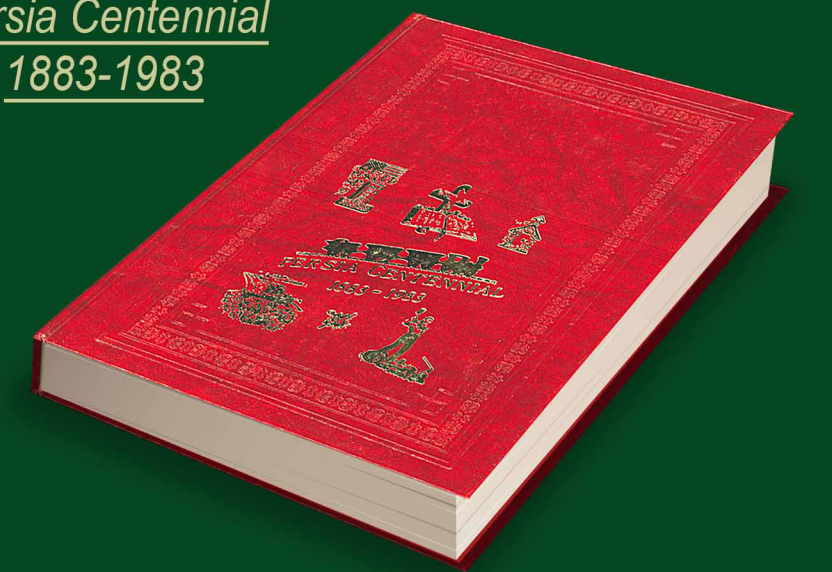




Persia Centennial
1883-1983



Harrison County Historically Speaking

Persia, 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.

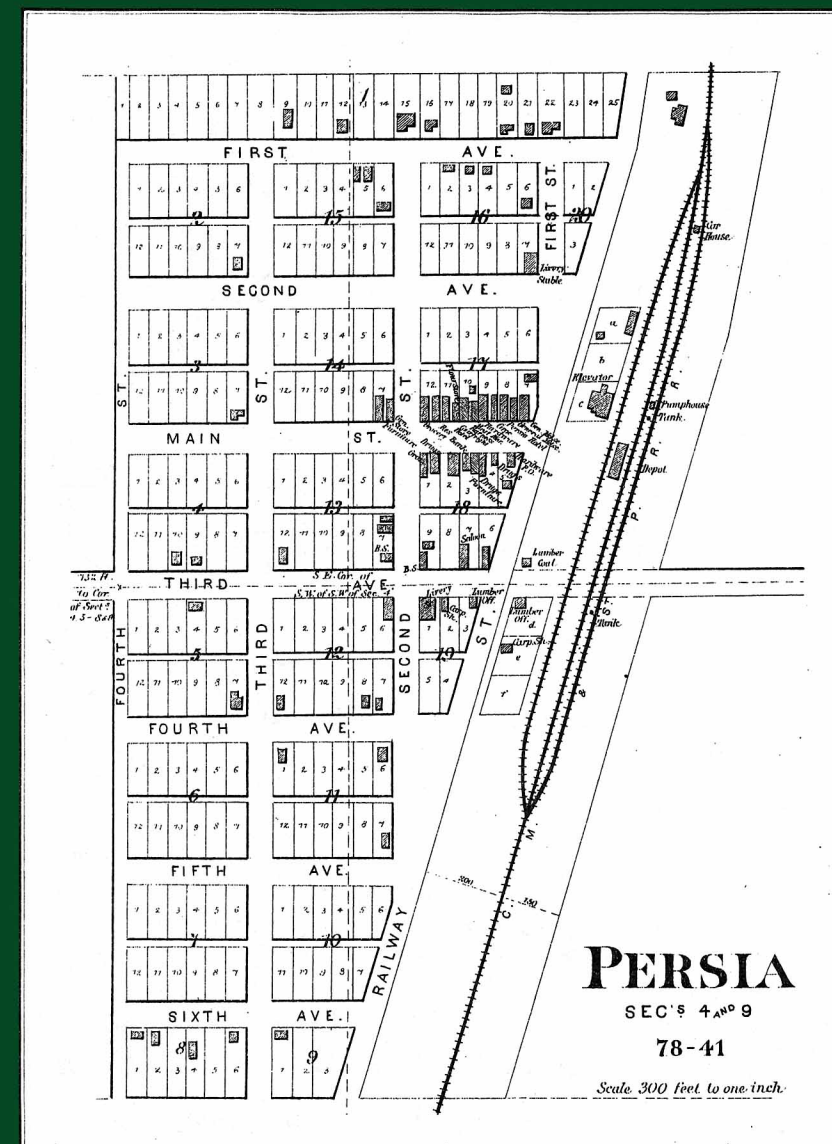
For a complete list of panels and locations, go to:
<http://destinationharrisonia.com/historically-speaking.html>



Destination Harrison
Interpretive Signage Project
made possible by funding from the
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Designed by
Harrison County GIS & Mapping
in conjunction with
Harrison County Tourism

PERSIA, IA HARRISON COUNTY - 1882



The Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railroad was built through the southeast corner of Harrison County in 1881. Subsequently, a small settlement began to emerge. The first building constructed was a blacksmith shop owned by Carl Pederson. Shortly afterward, another building was erected. This was the first grocery store owned by John McWilliams. In March, 1882, a hotel, the Allee House, was built by George A. Courtwright. However, the city of Persia wasn't officially platted and recorded until June 6, 1882 by L.C. and Alice Baldwin. It was one of the last towns established in Harrison County. It is located adjacent to Mosquito Creek, has some of the most fertile ground in the county, and is well suited for crop farming.

NAMING OF PERSIA, IOWA

There are differing accounts of how the town got its name. One version is that Persian immigrants worked on the railroad as it was being built through Washington Township. Another account recorded in the Persia Centennial 1883-1983 book was that a man by the name of David Persia, possibly a railroad worker, lived where the Persia water tower now stands and it was named after him. A third account is that a peddler in the region was said to have stated that the views of the area reminded him of his home in Persia and it was named after his homeland. Regardless of the real reason the name has drawn attention to the community. In 2012, a BBC documentary was made about the town and how it got its name. Area residents were interviewed.

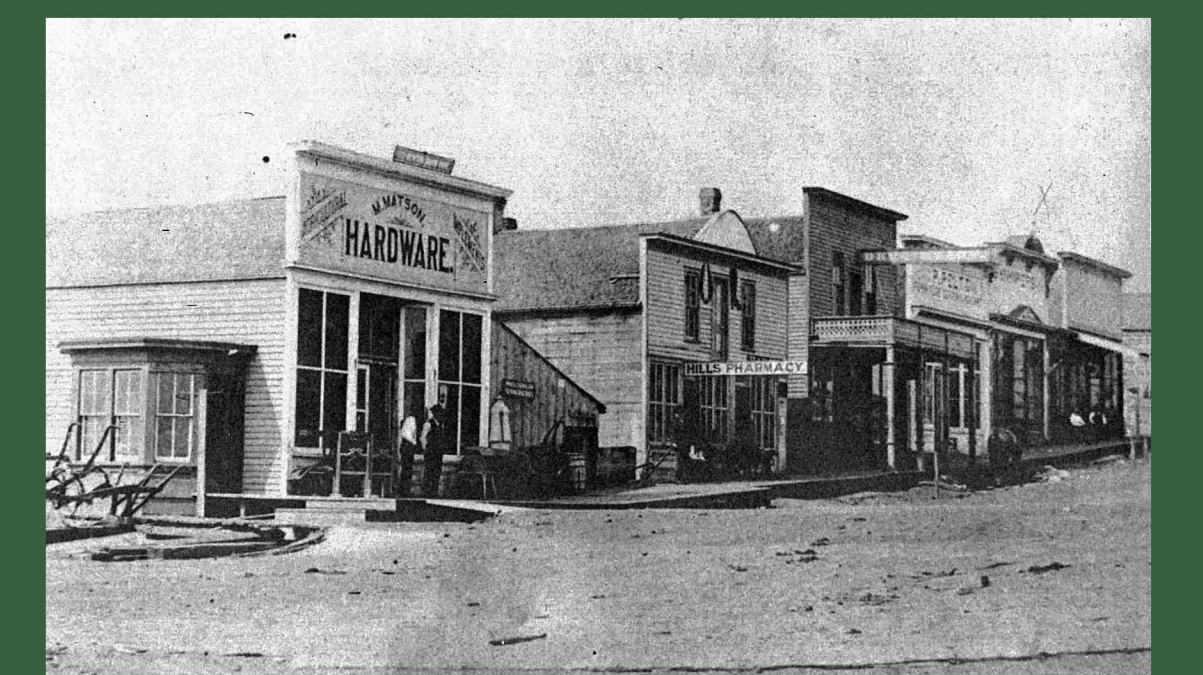
Back in 1975, C.W. McCall's Wolf Creek Pass album was released and in the lyrics of "Four Wheel Drive" Persia is mentioned. C.W. McCall made reference in several of his songs to three Harrison County local areas: Persia, Pisgah and Beebeetown.

PERSIA FIRE OF 1905

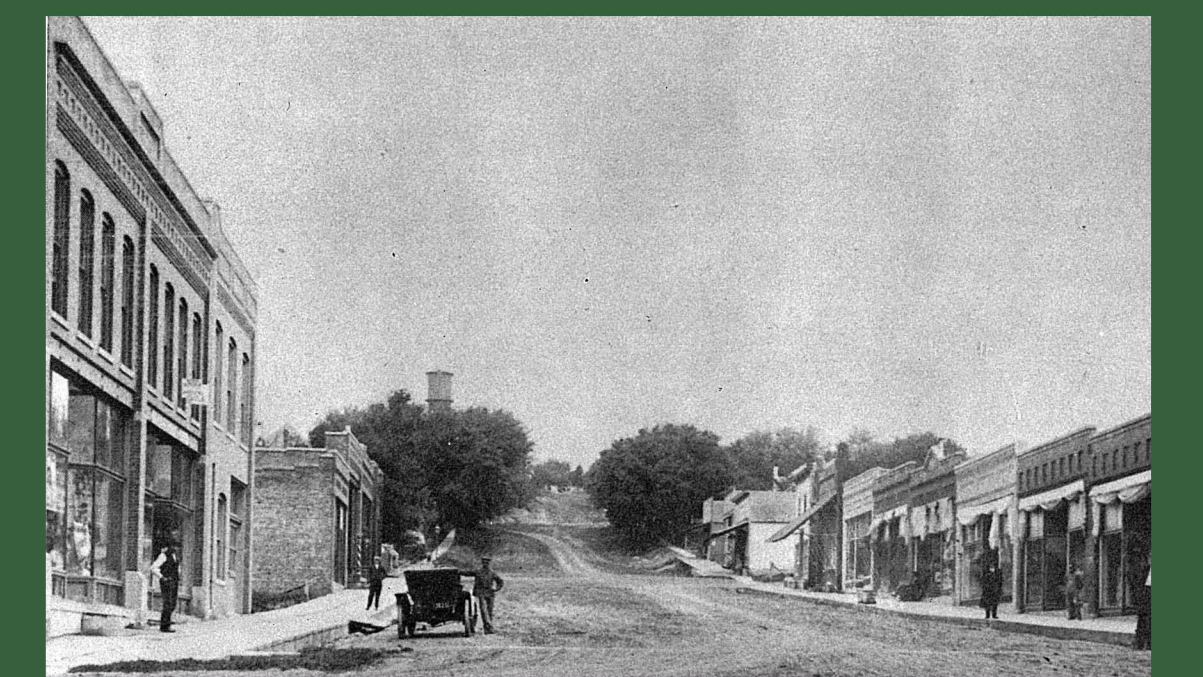
At 2:00 A.m. on April 19, 1905, a fire alarm was sounded by Herman Testroet, who discovered it burning under some kerosene tanks located in the southeast corner of the Willard Bros. Store. As the fire built due to the ignition of the kerosene, it quickly got out of control. A gentle breeze that evening made things even worse by spreading embers to the north side of the road. Because the wood in the buildings was so dry at this time, it wasn't long before both sides of the street were ablaze. Little could be done to extinguish this monster fire because there were no water works in the town at this time. Citizens, men and women alike, ran from building to building trying to save what property they could. In the end, the loss totaled \$50,000, with only about \$17,000's worth of property covered by insurance. This decimated many of the local business owners. Only eight of the original buildings comprising the Persia business district remained after the fire.

It was thought that the fire was set intentionally, but this could never be confirmed, nor could anyone explain why this would be done. However, prior to the discovery of the fire by Mr. Testroet, Miss Ethyl Lathrop discovered a fire behind the building owned by J.T. McCabe on the north side of the street. She put it out with a bucket of water and left to tell the owner. As she did, the fire either rekindled or reset in nearly the same location. It was discovered by Mr. Lathrop and once again extinguished.

Information taken from the
April 20, 1905 Persia Globe.
and submitted to the
Persia Centennial 1883-1983
by Clara Hamann.



Persia Iowa Circa 1897 Note wooden sidewalks & buildings. The town was destroyed by fire, April 19, 1905.



Persia, Iowa Main St. Circa 1915, after it was rebuilt.