



Building on the Past for Iowa's Future

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PRESERVATION IOWA ANNOUNCES 2026 MOST ENDANGERED PROPERTIES

Preservation Iowa has designated 6 properties in Iowa for 2026 Most Endangered Designations. Here are the 2026 Most Endangered Properties:

Holliwell Covered Bridge, Madison County
Meyers Farmstead District within Pleasant Grove Heritage Park, Lisbon, Linn County
White Springs Supper Club, McGregor, Clayton County
Riverton Chautauqua Pavilion, Fremont County
Trinity Church, Forest City, Winnebago County
100-102 N. Main Street, Conrad, Grundy County

Preservation Iowa's Most Endangered Property program began in 1995 and was implemented to educate Iowans about the special buildings and historic sites that are slowly and gradually slipping away from us. Over the past 30 years, Preservation Iowa has designated over 200 archaeological sites, commercial buildings, homes, churches, landscapes and a variety of other properties in over 70 Iowa counties.

The Most Endangered Properties program helps to bring to the public's attention the risks to a designated historic property and introduces owners of an endangered property to preservation advocacy and resources that can help preserve their historic property. Additionally, there have been interest groups who have been able to use the designation as a mechanism to leverage other financial resources to restore and preserve properties. For more information about the Most Endangered Program, check out Preservation Iowa's website at www.preservationiowa.org or contact Preservation Iowa at info@preservationiowa.org.

This press release includes additional information on each of the designated properties.



#1 Holliwell Covered Bridge, Madison County

Spanning the Middle River near Winterset, the Holliwell Covered Bridge is one of five remaining original covered bridges in Madison County. The bridge was completed in 1880 by Harvey P. Jones and George K. Foster at a time when timber truss bridges were practical and economical in areas where wood was plentiful. Having a roof and sides slowed the deterioration of the timber framework extending its lifetime. At 110 feet, the Holliwell Bridge is the longest of the extant Madison County covered bridges. It remains in its original location and carried

vehicular traffic until the mid-1980s. The bridge was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

Today, the Holliwell Bridge is a reminder of an era of wooden bridges before the widespread use of iron. Madison County's famous covered bridges, including the Holliwell, draw thousands of tourists each year. The Holliwell Bridge was also a filming location for the 1995 film The Bridges of Madison County.

Lacking substantial maintenance since the mid-1990s, the bridge's structural integrity has become compromised. The deteriorating truss members are causing the bridge to lean, and decay and erosion are taking its toll on the bridge's roof, floor beam supports and abutments. Without repair, the bridge will likely have to be closed to the public within the next 10 years.

The covered bridges are owned by Madison County and maintained by the Secondary Roads Department which is responsible for the upkeep of over 220 bridges leaving limited resources for the maintenance of a non-vehicular bridge. Over the past few years, the County has sought to find alternative funding for repairs to the bridge but has not yet been successful.



#2 Meyers Farmstead District within Pleasant Grove Heritage Park, Lisbon, Linn County

Jacob Meyers, the son of one of Lisbon's earliest settlers, bought this farmstead which sits on the town's outskirts in 1881. His son, John, eventually took over the farming operations until retiring in 1940. The Meyers family raised hogs, cattle, and dairy cows as well as crops. After 1940, the Meyers family retained

ownership but rented the farmstead and it continued to be operated as a farm. They sold the farmstead in the early 1980s with the new owners also utilizing it for agricultural purposes. The City of Lisbon purchased the property in 2018 with the intention of developing the farmstead into a park. Pleasant Grove Heritage Park Inc. purchased the farmstead from the city in order to continue to pursue the creation of an agricultural park and historic district. The farmstead was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2021.

Several agricultural structures remain on the farmstead dominated by the gabled or banked barn(c.1872) which originally housed hay, machinery, and livestock. The Pennsylvania type barn illustrates the "Pennsylvania Dutch" and German heritage of the early settlers of Lisbon. In the early 1900s, the basement was remodeled to include a modern dairy the equipment of which remains. At that time, the silo next to the barn was also added. The dairy operated until the late 1960s. The site also boasts an uncommon combination corn crib(above) and hog house(underneath) likely built in the 1890s. Both the barn and crib/hog house were damaged by a 1908 tornado and repaired, but they retain their original framing, foundations, and most of their original siding. A hay/feeder barn on the property was constructed from materials salvaged from a barn destroyed in the 1908 tornado.

The farmstead is currently part of the Pleasant Grove Heritage Park. All of the structures have significant deterioration and need substantial stabilization, repair, and restoration in order to make them

safe and accessible for visitors. While some funding has been received and some work has begun on the structures, there is an urgency for completion of the work. Unless the structures are restored within the City's timeline, the property will be declared a nuisance and the buildings will have to be demolished. If this occurs, the community would lose this valuable piece of Lisbon's agricultural history.

#3 White Springs Supper Club, McGregor, Clayton County

The White Springs Ballroom opened in 1936 on Hwy. 18 just west of McGregor. It was the idea of Archie Fritz who wanted to capitalize on interest in the white sand caves located in the cliff in the back of his property. The hand-hewn caves were originally built to provide cold beer storage for the West McGregor Brewery that began operation on the site in 1857 and operated until the late 1800s. As early as 1933, Fritz started work to make the caves accessible to visitors including hanging electric lights in the caves. The two-story building Fritz constructed on the foundations of the old brewery originally had a ballroom on the second floor and a tavern on the first floor. In the 1940s, ads in newspapers across northeast Iowa advertised the visiting bands for weekly Saturday night dances.



Erwin and Ethel Mann purchased the business in 1949. By the mid-1960s, the focus was more as a dining establishment rather than a dance hall and had been renamed the White Springs Supper Club. An article in the July 26, 1967 Arlington Progressive noted that Mrs. Mann was famous for her Hickory Smoked Barbeque Ribs. For decades, the White Springs Supper Club was a dining destination and a social gathering place for northeast Iowa. After Ethel Mann's death in 2004, there were a few attempts to continue the legacy of the supper club but today it remains closed and empty.

In addition to the Supper Club building, the site currently also includes the original sand caves, the brick house of former brewer Michael Klein (c. 1895) and a stone garage that was formerly a stable.

Since the closure of the supper club, the buildings on the property have fallen into disrepair and are in danger of being demolished. A portion of the roof of the former stable has already collapsed. The future of the property remains uncertain.



#4 Riverton Chautauqua Pavilion, Fremont County

This 12 sided pavilion sits atop a hill in the City Park at Riverton. The open air structure was completed in 1897 and intended to provide a stage for encampments of the newly founded Patriots of America. William Harvey founded the populist organization to advocate for returning to the free coining of silver and support political candidates favorable to that cause. Harvey is said to have put up \$500 toward the Riverton pavilion's construction. He reportedly chose Riverton because Fremont County had the greatest number of Patriots of America lodges of any county in the U.S. Yearly encampments of the fraternal organization were held in Riverton between 1897-1901. The order died out shortly thereafter.

Since then, the pavilion has hosted Chautauqua shows, Sunday School and church services, school graduations, May Day services and other community events. The pavilion was placed on the National

Register of Historic Places in 1976.

Significant repairs to the pavilion were done as a community bicentennial project in 1976. In more recent years, moisture and lack of regular maintenance has led to deterioration of the roof and supporting cedar posts.

The Riverton Hometown Pride group has lately taken an active role in preserving the pavilion. They received a Paint Iowa Beautiful grant in 2024 and a State Historical Society of Iowa Field Services grant to hire a consultant to evaluate the needs of the structure. That evaluation showed that there is much more that needs to be done to preserve this piece of local and U.S. history.

#5 Trinity Church, Forest City, Winnebago County

Reputed to be the oldest surviving structure in Winnebago County, this c. 1875 church retains the pews, altar, tin ceilings and flooring from when it was last used as a church. A basement was added to the structure in 1926. It was donated to the Winnebago Historical Society about 10 years ago and since then, it has hosted concerts and events and been rented out for other functions.

In recent years, however, the increasing maintenance needs of the church have become a significant financial burden for the Historical Society. One of the biggest concerns is water infiltration and the resulting mold in the 1920s basement. Since it is not currently used but once or twice a year, the Historical Society is considering its sale.



#6 100-102 N. Main Street, Conrad, Grundy County

For over a century, this downtown property has continuously served as a hub for local commerce and community activity in Conrad. Built in the early 1900s, this structure reflects the growth and development of Conrad during the early 20th century. The ornate façade is a blend of Romanesque Revival and Commercial styles and is representative of early 20th century commercial architecture in Iowa. Today, it houses a business office and a salon and spa on the ground floor and four occupied upper-level apartments. It continues to be a key structure to Conrad's Main Street.

In 2013, it was part of a downtown revitalization project that funded work on the front facade including new awnings, a storefront replacement, and replacement of missing decorative cornice pieces. But significant maintenance work is still required. The building is in need of extensive repointing especially on the side elevations to prevent moisture intrusion and stabilize brickwork. In addition, the windows need replacement.

The current owner is attentive to maintaining the architectural and historic integrity of the building, however, the costs to complete the needed work are formidable and not economically feasible for her at this time. Efforts to identify potential funding options are currently being explored by the owner and Conrad's Main Street.