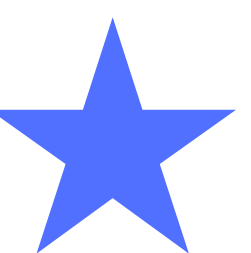


Villages of Van Buren County

History scavenger hunt



We invite you to explore the Villages of Van Buren County and learn about our county's unique history! Complete the scavenger hunt at your own pace, correctly answer 14 of the 15 questions, and you will be entered in a drawing. Local glass artist Tim Blair of Bloom and Bark Glass Blowing Studio and Bentonsport potter April Ziegler of Iron & Lace each have designed a unique work of art to celebrate our nation's 250th birthday that will be given in a drawing to two successful scavenger hunters! We thank First Iowa State Bank, Libertyville Savings Bank, and Wells Hometown Drug for providing the funding for this project. This activity is brought to you by the Van Buren County Historic Preservation Commission.

There are several ways to submit your entry (one entry per participant)! You can email a photo or a scan of your answer sheet to vbchpc@gmail.com. Or you can drop it off at the Villages Welcome Center at 809 1st Street in Keosauqua.

Entries must be received by October 31, 2026 at 11:59pm to be eligible for the drawings.



Bentonsport

Bentonsport originally had four churches. One of them, the Presbyterian Church, shown here was constructed in 1855 and is in the Gothic Revival style of architecture. Today, how many churches still stand in Bentonsport?



Birmingham

The local American Legion Post built this log cabin in Birmingham's city park in 1923. Community members, including veterans of World War I, donated materials and labor for its construction. The front door of the log cabin has an unusual door knocker. What does the inscription on the door knocker say?



Bonaparte

The Auntie Green Hotel (1847) opened just a few years after Bonaparte was platted. The one-and-one-half story building at the rear may have been the residence of John and Mary Green who operated the hotel. This building was donated to the Historical Society by Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Cummings in what year? Hint: this date is on the building.



Cantril

This hall was built in 1902 in a rural part of Des Moines Township and was used as a polling place. It has been moved twice in its history—once in 1991 and a second time in 2006. Displayed at the front of the building is a bell from the Cantril School. What are the dates on the bell?



Douds-Leando

Fraternal organizations were important to a community's social life and welfare. Examples are the Knights of Pythias, Masons, Knights of Columbus, Eastern Star, and Odd Fellows that emerged in Iowa in the 1800s. This building in Douds was constructed by which fraternal organization? Hint: the stone at the top of the building has the organization's full name.



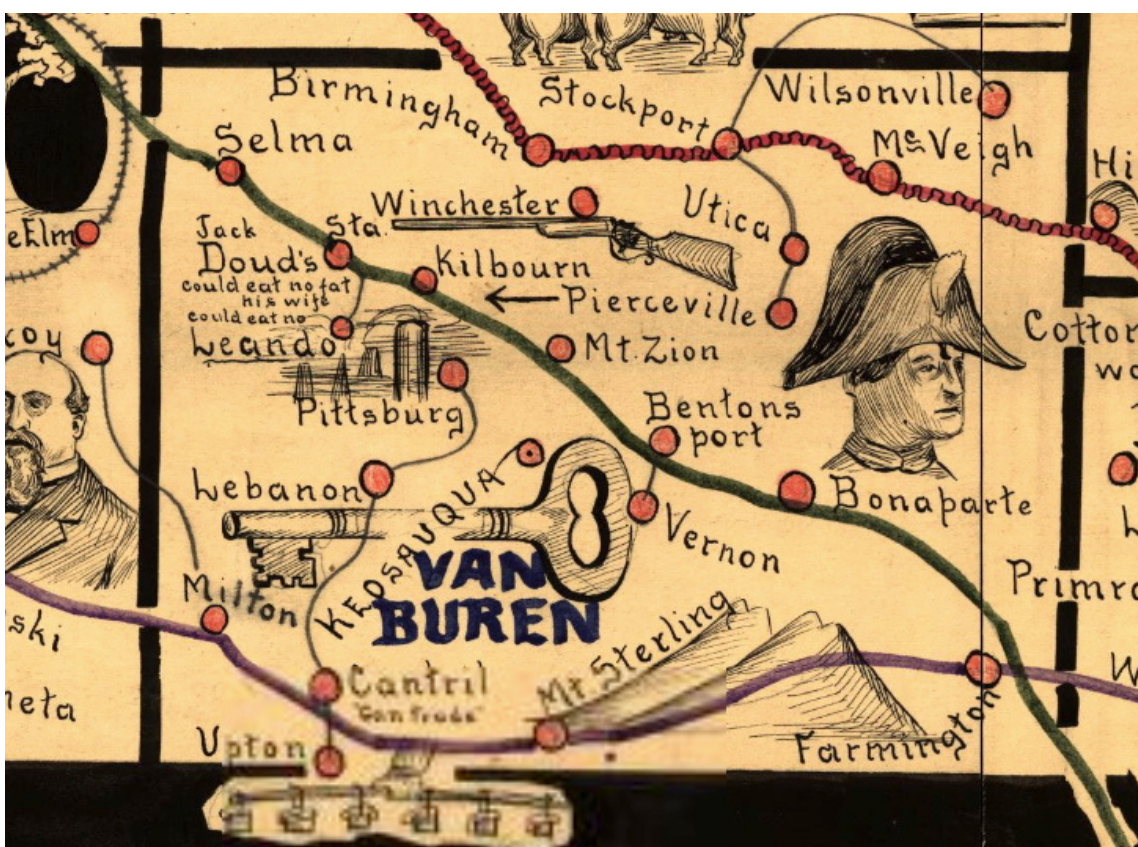
Farmington

When it was established in the mid-1800s, the First Congregational Church stood as a cornerstone of faith and community in Farmington. The congregation was known for its support of abolition. Today, the building is operated as the Pioneer Museum, where the story of the county's early days continues to be told. The stone outside the Pioneer Museum has the name of Geo. Stirling, school board president. What are the other two names on this stone? Hint: Taking a photo with your cell phone camera makes the lettering more legible.



Keosauqua

Standing proudly since 1840, this courthouse is the oldest in Iowa and one of the oldest continuously used courthouses west of the Mississippi River. It has witnessed generations of history, from early county decisions to modern-day governance, and remains a symbol of the county's enduring spirit. What happen at the courthouse in 1977? Hint: it is on a plaque by the doors.



Lebanon

Lebanon, shown in the lower left hand corner of this map, is at the crossroads of J40 and V64. A modular house constructed of fiberglass in an unusual shape was built here n 1972. What is the shape of this house and its house number? Hint: the house number is on the blue 911 sign at the end of the driveway. This house is visible from the public right of way. Please respect the privacy of this private property owner.



Milton

The Presbyterian congregation built what is now known as Heritage Church c. 1900. This brick building was used by Presbyterians until 1940 and in 1950 was purchased by the Church of Nazarene. The Heritage Society bought it in 1974 and now operates the building as a local history museum. Notice the bell tower with its decorative brickwork. How many crosses decorate the bell tower?



Mt. Sterling

The congregation that constructed the United Methodist Church traces its beginnings to the 1830s, when early settlers gathered for worship in homes. In 1870, Methodists and Presbyterians joined together to build a church, reflecting a strong sense of community. After the original structure was lost in a fire, a new church in the Gothic Revival style was built in 1903. Unfortunately, the building has deteriorated and is no longer in use. The historic church bell has been moved to Harness Cemetery east of town on Nova Ave., where it continues to honor the congregation's legacy. Can you still ring the bell today?



Pittsburg

The cemetery near Pittsburg is the final resting place of Voltaire Twombly who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his valor during the battle of Fort Donelson in 1862. Twombly was one of the first Iowans to receive this award. After the Civil War, he returned to Van Buren County and served as county treasurer and mayor of Keosauqua. From 1885 to 1891, he was the state treasurer. Look for his gravestone, one of the tallest in the cemetery. How many other family members' names are also inscribed on the stone?



Selma

This log cabin is believed to date to c. 1846 and was originally located seven miles east of Selma. It was moved to its current location in 1969 as a preservation project and sits in a park in the center of Selma. Selma wasn't the original name of this town. What was Selma's original name? Hint: it is on a sign near the cabin.



Stockport

Once a bustling route along the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, the Peavine Line played a vital role in connecting small towns to the rest of the country. Today, the depot museum preserves Stockport's history and railroad legacy, showcasing how trains brought goods, people, and economic opportunity to southeast Iowa. The museum recently acquired a caboose for its collection. What are the numbers on the caboose?



Vernon

The iron wagon bridge over the Des Moines River opened in 1887 linking Bentonsport and Vernon previously connected only by a ferry. The Bentonsport bridge is a type known as a pin-connected Pratt Through Truss, named after the inventors Thomas and Caleb Pratt. Its structural system is based on horizontal, vertical and diagonal members. While the bridge is currently partially closed, it is scheduled to be repaired and reopened in 2027. There is a sign at each end of the bridge. What does the sign on the Vernon side say?

When you are done, there are several ways to submit your entry. You can email a photo or a scan of your answer sheet to vbchpc@gmail.com. Or you can drop it off at the Villages Welcome Center at 809 1st Street in Keosauqua. After hours, drop it through the mail slot on the side of the building marked Folk School.

Entries must be received by October 31, 2026 at 11:59pm to be eligible for the drawings. Winners will be contacted the first week of November.

Have fun exploring Van Buren County!

Bentonsport: How many churches still stand in Bentonsport today?_____

Birmingham: What does the inscription on the door knocker on the log cabin say?_____

Bonaparte: What year did Mr. and Mrs. Cummings donate the Auntie Green Hotel? _____

Cantril: What are the dates on the bell in front of the former Des Moines Township Hall?_____

Douds-Leando: What fraternal organization constructed the building in Douds?_____

Farmington: What are the names of school board members on the stone in front of the Pioneer Museum?_____

Keosauqua: What happened in 1977 at the courthouse?_____

Lebanon: What is the unusual shape of the house in Lebanon?_____

Milton: How many crosses decorate the tower of the Heritage Church?_____

Mt. Sterling: Can you ring the bell today?_____

Pittsburg: How many family names are inscribed on Voltaire Twombly's gravestone? _____

Selma: What was Selma's original name?_____

Stockport: What is the number on the caboose next to the depot?_____

Vernon: What does the sign hanging from the old iron bridge on the Vernon side say?_____

Bonus question: Who is Van Buren County named after? _____

Your name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

