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INTRODUCTION

In 2023, the Muscatine County Historic Preservation Commission (MCHPC) received a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant to complete a Survey of Transportation Development in Muscatine County, a project recommended in the Planning for Preservation report that was completed in June 2017.¹ The purpose of this project was to research and develop historic contexts related to the history of transportation development in Muscatine County – from river travel and road improvements to railroad building and airport development – and to identify and document historic county resources (outside the corporate limits of the City of Muscatine) related to these contexts for future preservation projects.

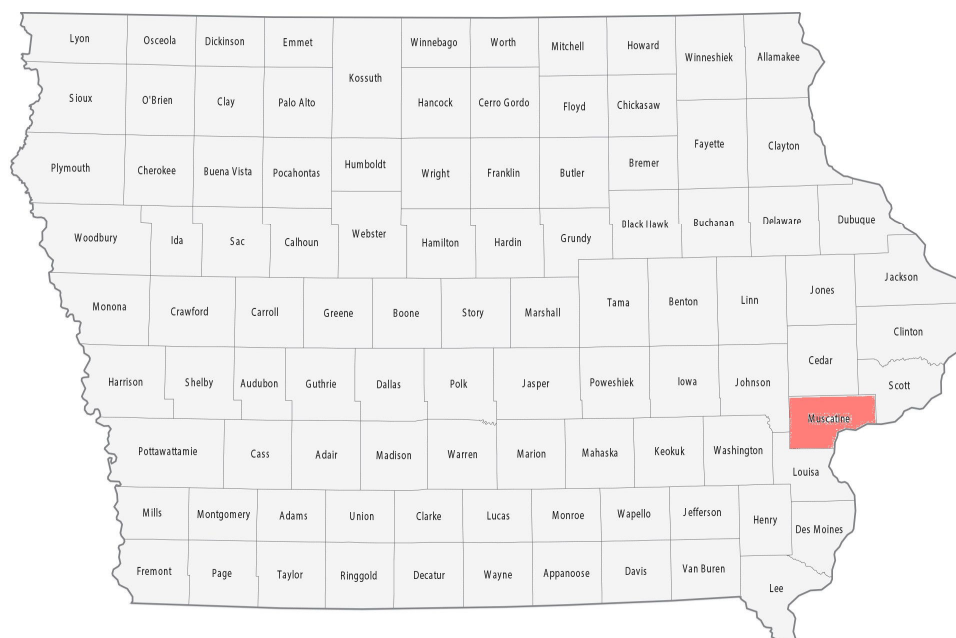


Figure 1. Project Area - Muscatine County, Iowa

Muscatine County is located in southeastern Iowa along Iowa's eastern border in a prominent bend in the Mississippi River (Figure 1). Unlike most of Iowa's rectangular-shaped counties, the curve of the river channel here influenced the shape of the Muscatine County, and thus it has only 14 townships instead of the more usual 16 townships. The Mississippi and Cedar rivers channels also determined the shapes and sizes of Muscatine County's townships. Unlike the typical Iowa township with 36 one-mile square sections, the smallest township in Muscatine County has only 18 sections, and not all of which are one mile square.²

The 14 townships in Muscatine County include (from top right to bottom left): Fulton, Wilton, Moscow, Goshen, Wapsinonoc, Montpelier, Sweetland, Bloomington, Lake, Pike, Fruitland, Seventy Six, Cedar, and Orono. Bloomington Township was much larger originally, with its south half later subdivided into Fruitland Township. The modern cities and towns in the county include the county seat of Muscatine, Stockton, Wilton, Moscow, Atalissa, West Liberty, Nichols, and Conesville. Other historical communities have included: Adams, Ardon, Cranston, Bayfield, Fairport, Fruitland, Montpelier, Petersburg, Pleasant Prairie, New Era, Rainbow, Schmidt, Summit, Sweetland Center, and Port Allen, and some of these have disappeared completely.

¹ Rebecca Lawin McCarley, *Planning for Preservation in Muscatine County, Iowa*. Prepared for the Muscatine County Historic Preservation Commission, (2017).

² Leah D. Rogers, *Historic Country Schools and Churches Survey, Muscatine County, Iowa*. Report prepared for the Muscatine County Historic Preservation Commission and State Historical Society of Iowa (2021), 1.

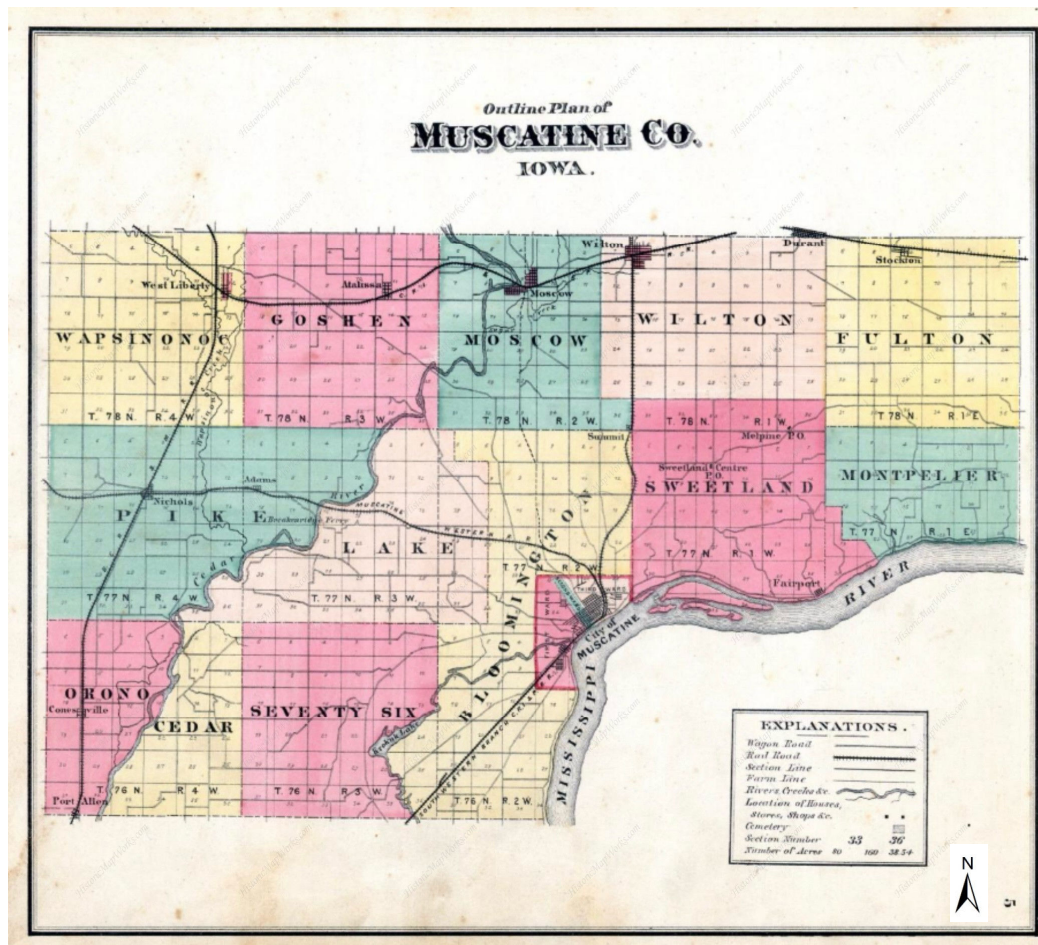


Figure 2. Muscatine County and Townships, 1874. Source: Harrison & Warner 1874 – Historic Map Works website

Methodology and Project Activities

The overall structure of the Survey of Transportation Development for Muscatine County project had three main phases: 1) researching historic contexts related to transportation development in Muscatine County, particularly focusing on the evolution of transportation arteries; 2) identification and reconnaissance survey of resources related to transportation history in Muscatine County, and selection of 20 resources for more intensive Iowa Site Inventory form documentation; and 3) the preparation of the survey report, complete with survey results and recommendations, and 20 site inventory forms.

Rebecca McCarley of Spark Consulting in Cedar Rapids started this project in May 2023. She met with key members of the Muscatine County Historic Preservation Commission (MCHPC) online on May 10 to discuss project organization and structure. She planned and publicized the first public meeting, and completed and submitted the research design to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which approved the research design on June 5. She headed the countywide public meeting – attended by nine people – on June 12, 2023, and presented information on historic preservation and the survey of transportation development in Muscatine County, and provided training on research methods for the MCHPC and volunteers. Attendees provided information on known historic transportation resources in the county, and this information was collected and compiled into a

spreadsheet to be further expanded with information collected at town hall meetings by the MCHPC over the next two months and through initial research.³

In late August 2023, Jennifer Price of Price Preservation Research took over the project from McCarley as principle investigator and consultant and oversaw the research and reconnaissance survey phases of the project. The consultant attended all commission monthly meetings in 2023 to keep the project focused, provide guidance in research and field survey methods, and assign members to specific townships for research, field investigation, and resource photography. The commission members uploaded their survey notes and photographs to the Google Drive project folders in December 2023. In January 2024, the commission made its final selections for the 20 historic resources to be documented in Iowa Site Inventory Forms.

In January and February, the consultant started processing and analyzing the results of the reconnaissance survey and outlined the draft report. In late February, she began preparing the Iowa Site Inventory Forms, many of which would provide in-depth historical information for the historic contexts. By early April, the 20 site forms were complete and uploaded to the Google Drive project folder for review by commission members. Writing the report began in earnest.

At the May 2024 Muscatine County HPC meeting, the consultant presented preliminary results of the transportation survey. The consultant continued to work on the draft report, which, along with the draft site forms, was submitted digitally on June 17 to the SHPO (via E-SHPO) and the Muscatine County HPC. The consultant requested a month's extension to the project at the June 18 Muscatine County HPC meeting to give SHPO and commission members time to review the draft report and site forms and for the consultant to make corrections, changes, or additions to the final report and site forms.

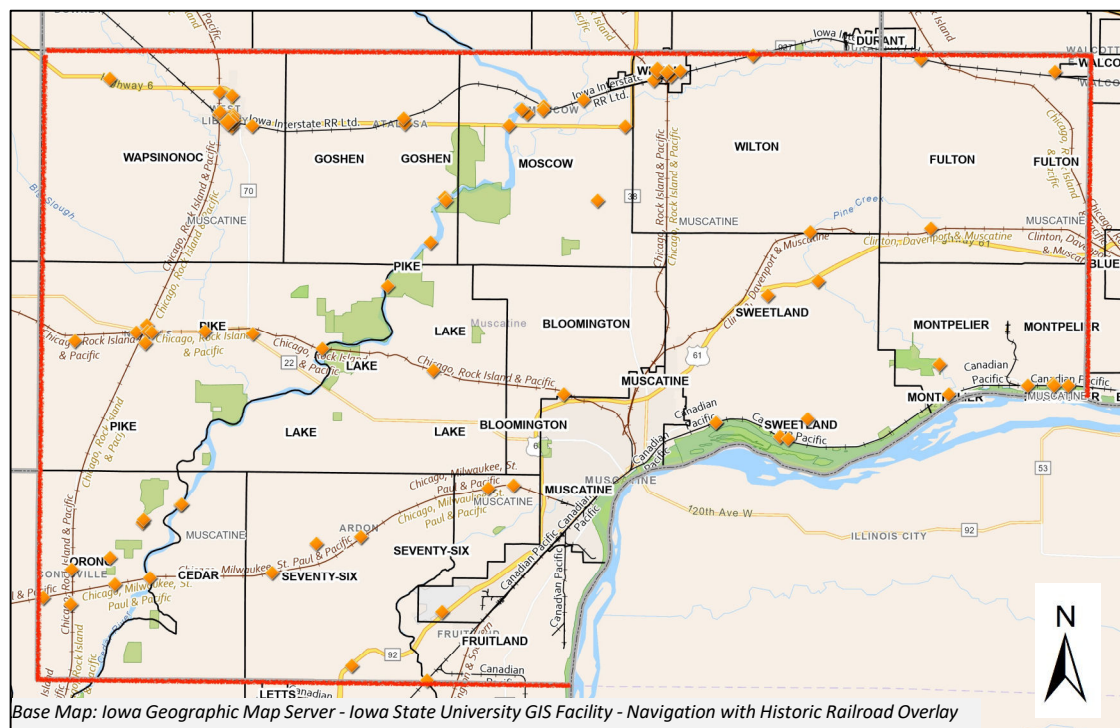


Figure 3. Project Map – Survey of Transportation Development in Muscatine County, Iowa, showing locations of the 93 historic resources (orange diamonds) identified during the reconnaissance survey.

³ Rebecca Lawin McCarley to Jennifer Price, via email, August 17, 2023.

HISTORIC CONTEXTS: TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT IN MUSCATINE COUNTY

A detailed historical summary of the growth and development of Muscatine County, including transportation, was set forth in McCarley (2017), and the contexts that affected the establishment of schools and churches throughout the county, including roads and railroads, can be found in Rogers (2021). The following historic contexts include information from those two previous county-wide studies as needed for background and specific localized information, but focus solely on the transportation types and factors that played roles in the history and development of transportation in Muscatine County, outside of the city of Muscatine. The contexts cover Cedar River steamboat travel, wagon and stagecoach roads, Cedar River ferries and early bridges, registered auto routes, federal and state highways, major county roads, railroads, and air travel. The contexts also discuss how transportation development affected the establishment and growth of towns and the county, in general, and specifically how transportation supported-businesses and commercial services evolved to accommodate evolving transportation means and methods. Where possible, the history of specific road alignments have been identified and documented, either through luck or more usually relying on nominations and studies of smaller slices of Muscatine County history, as well as road history enthusiasts, who have been sharing their work online for years. Other road histories are described more generally, as following the same general route of an earlier cross-county road, as the historic names of many early local roads remain either lost or beyond the scope of research for this project. NOTE: The following historic contexts are both chronological and based on transportation type, therefore contexts will overlap in time period.

The 19th Century: Moving Inland for Settlement and Trade

The Cedar River as an Inland Transportation Route

River transportation, particular by steamboat, on the Mississippi River was of early and great importance to the to the development of Bloomington (later Muscatine), and became crucial to the city's lumber industry.⁴ Sometimes Mississippi steamers made stops at the smaller river towns of Muscatine County, like Fairport and Montpelier, to deliver items too large for railroad transport or to transport passengers on pleasure excursions from Muscatine.⁵ The main waterway Muscatine County outside of the City of Muscatine, however, was the Cedar River, a major tributary of the Iowa River, the latter flowing into the Mississippi River between Toolsboro, Louisa County, Iowa, and New Boston, Illinois.

The Cedar River meanders through the western townships of Muscatine County diagonally, entering at a point two miles west of the middle of the north boundary line northeast of Moscow. Its course meanders to the southwest, and exits the county one and one-half miles east of the southwest corner. The Cedar River forms the boundaries of four townships: Cedar and Orono, and Lake and Pike.

⁴ The early river and steamboat history of the city of Muscatine is well-documented in Rebecca Lawin McCarley, *Downtown Muscatine Commercial Historic District*, National Register Nomination, 2006.

⁵ For example, *Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal*, November 19, 1881: In 1881, the steamboat Evansville transported a corn crib on a barge from LeClaire to the new Rock Island depot at Montpelier. As the *Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal* reported: "Today the steamer Evansville brought a corn-crib 120 feet long, 12 feet high and 12 feet wide, from LeClaire on a barge, and took it to Montpelier on the new river railroad, where it will be placed about half a mile from the station. It was built at Le Claire last winter, for the Davenport glucose company, and the corn with which it was filled then has just been shelled, and the crib is removed to another corn region"; "Moonlight Excursion," *Muscatine Evening Journal*, June 29, 1858: "Last evening, hearing 'strains of sweet melody' from the direction of the ferry landing, we walked down to see what it meant, when we found as gay and good looking a company of 'brave men and fair ladies' as could be collected anywhere, all ready for a 'moon-light excursion' to Fairport on the ferry boat Decalion"; also "Excursion To-Night," *Muscatine Evening Journal*, July 31, 1860: "All who can enjoy the luxury of a ride on the river by moonlight, in gay and joyous young company, should embrace the opportunity which will be afforded by the trip of the Decalion to Fairport to-night."

In 1839, a reporter for Burlington's *Iowa Patriot* newspaper, gave an assessment of the Cedar River's navigability by steamboat:

The Cedar river has rapids in Linn county about 120 miles from the Mississippi, to which point it is supposed to be navigable. It is a broad stream, and a few weeks from writing this had ten feet of water in depth; but with a sandy bottom, liable to be obstructed with bars.

These two streams [Des Moines and Cedar rivers] are the only ones in the settled part of the territory, whose course is wholly within it, that are considered navigable to any considerable extent for steam boats.⁶



Figure 4. As this map shows, the Cedar River (shaded blue) from the mouth of the Iowa River up to Cedar Rapids was considered part of the navigable Upper Mississippi used for steamboat travel. Source: Merrick 1908

Navigation of the Iowa and Cedar Rivers by steamboat began during Iowa's late territorial era. It was the only form of inland transportation that provided a comfortable passenger experience – in stark contrast to stagecoach or wagon travel – and also the only way to transport large amounts of cargo to towns and villages not located on the Mississippi River.

⁶ *Iowa Patriot* [Burlington], July 18, 1839.

Steamboats making runs between St. Louis, Burlington, and Cedar Rapids entered at the mouth of the Iowa and turned north into the Cedar River at Columbus Junction, the junction of the Cedar and Iowa rivers. From there, steamboats could travel up the Cedar River as far as Cedar Rapids (the rapids being an early obstacle to further travel north), and one of the first steamboats – the *Maid of Iowa* – to navigate the Cedar River arrived there in 1844, two years before Iowa's statehood.⁷

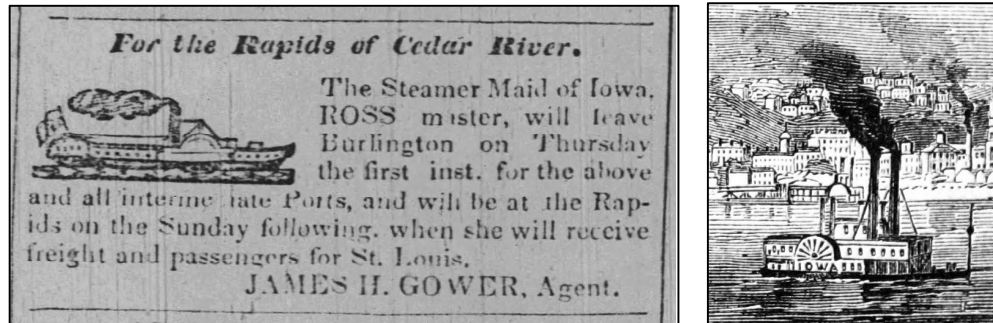


Figure 5. Left - Advertisement for the steamer *Maid of Iowa*, the first steamer to ply the Cedar River all the way to "the Rapids," the future site of Cedar Rapids; Right – engraving of *Maid of Iowa*. Sources: Left - *Muscatine Journal*, August 2, 1844; Right - Our Iowa Heritage at <https://ouriowaheritage.com/our-iowa-heritage-steamboats-a-comin/> - 2024

According to B.L. Wick's history of early steamboating on the Cedar River, the first large Mississippi River steamer to ply the river from the mouth of the Iowa River to Cedar Rapids was the *Maid of Iowa*, piloted by Captain Charles Ross. The steamer arrived in Cedar Rapids in August 1844, carrying "a number of settlers and also a party of Mormons came as landseekers."⁸ Over the next decade, many large and small Mississippi steamers regularly navigated the Cedar River carrying passengers and freight as far as Cedar Rapids, "and quite a trade had been established between St. Louis, Keokuk, Burlington and this part of the state."⁹ The steamers *Black Hawk* and *Cedar Rapids* regularly operated between St. Louis and Cedar Rapids.¹⁰ In 1903, the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* interviewed former riverboat pilot Willis Vance, who gave detailed stories about his days piloting big Mississippi River steamers, like the *Black Hawk*, up the Cedar River:

The "Black Hawk" was not enabled to make over three or four round trips per week between Cedar Rapids and Waterloo and often not so many, depending largely upon the stage of the water. It was customary for her to leave the dock not far from where the water works pumping station is now located, at 7 o'clock in the morning and if the water was low and she was heavily loaded would not sight Waterloo until the evening of the following day. She had all the freight she could carry and usually there were a number of passengers. Pilot Vance said that navigation of the Cedar north of here was accompanied often by many delays and vexations. In low water a sandbar was not infrequently encountered, causing a delay of many hours. There were no other boats to give the signal of "distress" to, so the Black Hawk had to back off, or spar over the low places, shift the freight from one side to the other and get out of shallow water, the best way she could. On the way up she was run during the night time but not on the return trip on account of the current.¹¹

The *Iron City* was a big Mississippi steamer that made trips between St. Louis and Cedar Rapids in periods of high water. According to Pilot Vance, "she was a stern-wheeler of great power and had double-decks," able to navigate the Cedar River before the Moscow Railroad bridge was built in 1855. Pilot Vance also worked on the *Uncle Toby* as a cabin boy. This was another big Mississippi steamer that made trips between St. Louis and Cedar Rapids, but only during high water, requiring four or five days for the one-way trip. According to Vance, "[s]he was a large craft, a double-decker with a tonnage of 400. She was a side-wheeler and drew four or five feet of water when

⁷ "Steamboating on Cedar River in the Old Days," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, May 23, 1925.

⁸ L.A. Brewer and B.L. Wick, "Early Steamboating on the Cedar River," *History of Linn County, Iowa: From Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*. Volume I (Chicago: The Pioneer Publishing Company, 1911), 425.

⁹ Brewer and Wick, "Early Steamboating on the Cedar River," 425.

¹⁰ William H. Thompson, *Transportation in Iowa: A Historical Perspective* (Ames, IA: Iowa Department of Transportation, 1989), 9: "The *Black Hawk* became famous on the Cedar River, running between Cedar Rapids and Waterloo, and in 1858 made scheduled trips from Cedar Rapids to St. Louis."

¹¹ "Early Steamboating on the Cedar River," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, January 31, 1903.

loaded. The *Uncle Tobey* was the last of the large Mississippi River steamboats to make her way up the Cedar River to Cedar Rapids in 1853.¹²

Steamboat travel on the Cedar River was possible only during high water – to carry them over natural obstacles – and above-freezing temperatures.¹³ In 1854, for example, a steam ferry boat was enlisted to carry material to the construction site of the first railroad bridge over the Cedar River, a wooden truss bridge at Moscow. The steamboat failed to reach the site due to very low water that year.¹⁴

FAILED AGAIN.-The steam ferry boat Eagle, freighted with material and fixtures to be used in the construction of the railroad bridge at Moscow, attempted to ascend Cedar river last week, but without success, the water having again fallen.-The boat returned to this place Monday afternoon, and discharged the cargo, which will be hauled to Moscow in wagons.¹⁵

After the Moscow railroad bridge was completed, steamboats suddenly needed lower river levels or lighter boats to fit beneath it. This happened to the steamer *Cedar Rapids* in July and August 1858:

The little steamer "Cedar Rapids," bound up from St. Louis to Cedar Rapids, was waiting at the M. & M. R. R. Bridge [at Moscow] yesterday for a fall of water in the river. It will have to wait some time, as the water is within from four to five feet of the bridge.¹⁶

CEDAR RIVER. - This stream is reported to be higher than at any time since the Flood in 1851.-The bottoms are overflowed and corn fields destroyed. The little steamer "Cedar Rapids" passed up this week. At Moscow she let down her chimneys to pass under the railroad bridge, but her cabin was still about two inches too high and she had to load down to get through.¹⁷

On subsequent trips, the *Cedar Rapids* found it "frequently difficult to get under the bridge at Moscow, so a quantity of sand was taken on board . . . to weigh the steamer down sufficiently to get under the bridge, when the weight of the cargo was not sufficient."¹⁸

Besides the Moscow Railroad Bridge, ferries and dams also posed obstacles to river travel. Cedar River steamboat pilot Captain E.H. Thomas described in detail in his memoir, *Life on the Mississippi*, how he outsmarted the ferrymen and dam builders on his trips up and down the Iowa and Cedar rivers:

We also had some trouble with the mill companies and the ferrymen on these streams. A mill company attempted to build a light rock dam across the Cedar at Moscow, and we stopped the enterprise with a court injunction. A great many of the ferrymen on both rivers, insisted that they were not navigable streams, and that we had no legal right to come up there with a steamboat. They would very often refuse to lower their lines. We found that we would be compelled to make an example of some of these ferrymen. Upon the bows of the steamer, and barges we placed three heavy cutters. They were made of steel and so arranged that they would slide up on one of the ferry lines and cut it square in two parts. There were probably 50 of these steel wire cables strung across the two rivers. When our cutters were ready, we sent a notice to all of the ferry men, that when they heard the signal, one long whistle, they must lower and sink their cables in the river so that we could pass over them. We found but two victims. We cut one cable on the Cedar and one on the Iowa. Hearing of these two disasters, the rest of them lined up and we had no further trouble with the ferry lines.¹⁹

¹² Brewer and Wick, "Early Steamboating on the Cedar River," 425.

¹³ "Early Steamboating on the Cedar River," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, January 31, 1903.

¹⁴ *Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal*, July 14, 1854.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Steamer up the Cedar River," *Weekly Davenport Democrat*, August 21, 1858.

¹⁷ *Muscatine Evening Journal*, July 23, 1858.

¹⁸ Capt. E.H. Thomas, "The Iowa and Cedar Rivers," *Life on the Mississippi*. Accessed at Iowa History Project at IAGenWeb website <https://iagenweb.org/history/burlingtonpost/chpt4.htm> - 2024.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Despite such obstacles, Capt. Thomas considered, in his experience, the Cedar River a navigable stream. Thomas recalled his 26 round trips by steamboat with passengers and pulling two loaded barges on the Iowa and Cedar rivers, and reported “the average stage of water to have been 3 ½ feet,” only running aground on a gravel bar once. He considered his “record of trips made and the freight and passengers carried, demonstrated to a certainty that the Iowa and Cedar rivers were navigable streams and the movement to close them” had failed.²⁰

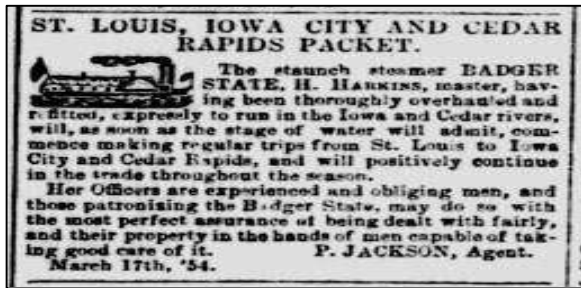


Figure 6. 1854 advertisement for the steamboat *Badger State*. As one of the steamboats that plied the Cedar River, the *Badger State* made regular runs to St. Louis (the closest major regional market), and to Iowa City and Cedar Rapids. Source: *Muscatine Tri-Weekly Journal*, July 3, 1854

An effort to completely avoid the fluctuations of the Cedar River’s water levels came early in Muscatine County history, when Iowa’s Territorial Legislature in 1838 commissioned a survey to determine the path and feasibility of building a navigable toll canal between Mad Creek in the city of Bloomington and the village of Moscow on a bend in the Cedar River. The survey was conducted under the direction of R.C. Tilghman, and produced “A Map and Profile of a Survey for a canal from Bloomington on the Mississippi River to Moscow on the Cedar River.”²¹ An act was passed by the territorial legislature incorporating the Bloomington and Cedar River Canal Company in 1839, and after construction was complete and Iowa was admitted to the Union, the canal ownership would be transferred to the state of Iowa. Nothing, however, ever came of this project, although it was resurrected several times between 1865 and 1940, with the latter studies focusing on dams and water power rather than navigation.²²

Steamboating on the Cedar River represented a very short period in the history of Muscatine County transportation history, from 1844 to about 1860, just five years after the arrival of the first railroad in Iowa and Muscatine County in 1855 and before the outbreak of the Civil War. The expansion of railroad networks from there ended the Cedar River as a viable inland transportation and shipping route.²³

The brief Cedar River steamboat era was likely made possible at all by coinciding with “years of abundant river flow.”²⁴ As Brewer and Wick explained in their 1911 History of Linn County, Iowa:

That the channel of the river was more narrow, and that the rivers were deeper, and free from the mud and the sand, which have now accumulated due to the tilling of the soil. Then the river banks were lined with trees, which protected the water from the rays of the sun, and the sloughs were filled with water all summer on account of the high grass, and all these sloughs, creeks, bayous, supplied the river with water during all seasons of the year, which is now not the case. “All the water which fell in those days found its way into the river, which is not true after the ground became cultivated to any extent, so that it has been figured out that only about a fourth of the water finds its way into the river. This, of course, may be one of the reasons why steamboating was possible fifty years ago and is not now.”²⁵

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Territorial Papers of Iowa, January 1, 1838, p. 67; Roll 31, Target 21, Entry 11, National Archives Microfilm Publications. Accessed at NewspaperArchive.com – 2024.

²² “The Moscow Canal,” *Muscatine Journal*, December 31, 1889; “History of the Canal - Moscow Project Took Definite Shape in 1839,” *Muscatine Journal*, November 29, 1904; “Ask Congressmen to Push Canal Project – Proposed Waterway to Connect City and Cedar Rapids,” *Muscatine Journal*, February 19, 1908; “Moscow Canal Was First Proposed Here 94 Years Ago – Project Still Awaits Start – Waterpower Feasibilities Seen by Some of Earliest Settlers,” *Muscatine Journal and News Tribune*, June 24, 1933; “Council Asks Briefs after Dam Hearing,” *Muscatine Journal*, February 6, 1940.

²³ “Steamer Black Hawk Plied Cedar River to Waterloo in 1858, But Navigation Soon Ceased, Will Never Be Resumed,” *Waterloo Courier*, July 19, 1933.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Brewer and Wick, “Early Steamboating on the Cedar River,” 426.

Belief in the navigability of the Cedar River, as Capt. Thomas maintained, persisted, making periodic declarations by the state and federal government of the river's unnavigability necessary. On May 6, 1870, the United States Congress passed an act declaring the Iowa River and its tributary, the Cedar River, "not a navigable river or a public highway."²⁶ In 1884 and 1910, Army Corps of Engineers reports "concluded that the improvement of the Cedar river by the United States was not justified in the interests of navigation."²⁷ In 1894, a river and harbor act stated, "In order to provide for water transportation on the Cedar river connecting with the outside world, it would be necessary to improve not only the Cedar but that portion of the Iowa between the mouth of the Cedar and Toolsboro."²⁸ Finally, in 1933, the Army Corps of Engineers surveyed the Cedar River for potential improvement for navigation, and found it to be "uneconomical."²⁹ During their survey, engineers found "many present obstructions to navigation," including "21 bridges between the city limits of Cedar Rapids and the mouth of the Iowa," and all of these structures "allow clearance for only the smallest river craft."³⁰ This survey appears to have ended the question regarding the Cedar River as an inland transportation route.

Early Roads and Stagecoach Travel

"Almost all highways are the result of generations of people following a pathway," writes historian Marlin R. Ingalls, and the federal and state highways and county and local roads were originally pathways that developed into the routes that connected the cities, towns, and villages of Muscatine County, and in turn, connected Muscatine County to the rest of Iowa, the Midwest, and the nation. These pathways were, as Ingalls continues, "frequently begun as Native American trails. As exploration, military control, trade, and settlement made inroads these general routes became trails for pioneer migrations. The introduction of federal mail routes in Iowa in the mid-nineteenth century formalized a number of the more heavily traveled cross county trails into roads."³¹

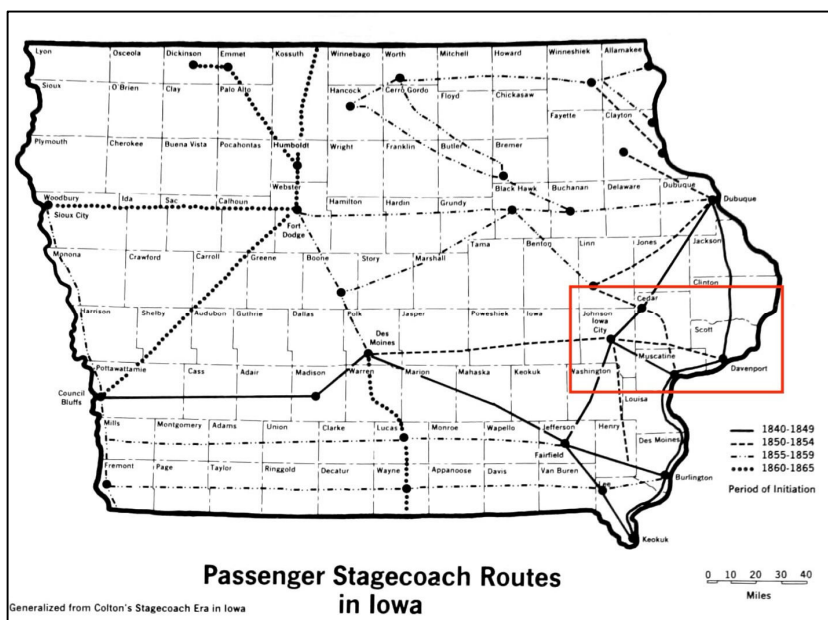


Figure 7. Major passenger stagecoach routes in Iowa in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The Davenport to Muscatine, Muscatine to Iowa City, and Muscatine to Burlington Routes operated from 1840-1849. Muscatine was the closest Mississippi River port to Iowa City. The Muscatine to Tipton and Davenport to Iowa City Routes operated from 1850-1854. Source: Thompson 1989:8.

²⁶ *Waterloo Courier*, July 19, 1933.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Marlin R. Ingalls, *Iowa's Historic Automobile Roads A National Register Study of Pre-1948 Arterial Highways*. Prepared for Primary Roads Project NHS-61-4(55)-19-70 Muscatine County, Iowa. Project Completion Report, Volume 32, Number 16 (Highway Archaeology Program, University of Iowa, 2009), 157.

In 1838, just one year after the first mail stagecoach began operating in Iowa between Burlington (second capital of the Territory of Wisconsin in 1836) and St. Francisville, Missouri, the original land surveys for Muscatine County showed timber in the river and creek valleys and the rest of the county in open prairie. The survey maps showed the locations of cabins and settlements hugging these timber-rich waterways and little to no settlement elsewhere. The mapped location of cabins and other settlements at the time clustered in the timber and along the waterways, with little or no settlement out on the open prairie.³²

After the Territory of Iowa was organized in 1838, more than 200 acts were passed “authorizing not only establishment of roads but also legislating the organization of townships and township roads. These defined the duties of supervisors, determined the labor that each male between the ages of 21 and 50 was to give to road work, the fines for refusal to work, and the taxes assessed for construction and maintenance.” After Iowa’s statehood in 1846, the settled areas of the state “were covered with a network of roads running in every direction and connecting the principal cities and towns.”³³

Because Iowa was a “public land” state mostly subdivided into rectangular townships and sections, a number of counties took advantage by declaring all section lines to be public roads, thus reserving the right-of-way before public land became private property.”³⁴ Road administration was initially handled by the township and county governments, with the township initially being the more important of the two. State roads were authorized by the state legislature, with the only new feature being the granting of authority to private corporations to build graded and plank roads, charging tolls fixed by county commissioners.”³⁵

Early settlers often followed the same trails used by Native Americans that bypassed creeks and swamps, redefining these trails by cutting deep ruts into the soil with ox carts and wagons. Stagecoach routes generally followed the same trails, which gradually became the well-traveled primary roads connected to mail stage stops (10-mile stations), towns, and villages.³⁶ One of the most popular routes that was established in 1838 was the Burlington-Davenport line, which traveled 80 miles in 27 hours.³⁷ The route took stagecoaches from Burlington north through Grandview in Louisa County, then followed the curve of the Mississippi River shoreline through Bloomington (later Muscatine) and east to Davenport.

Morton M. McCarver won the contract for the mail route from Burlington to Davenport – 81 miles in 37 hours – which began running in January 1838, with stops at post offices in Jacksonville (Yellow Springs), Florence, Black Hawk (Toolsborough), Wapello, Harrison, Grand View, “*Mouth of Pine*”, *Muscatine (Bloomington)*, *Geneva, Wyoming, Iowa (Montpelier)*, and Clark’s Ferry (Glendale/West Buffalo). This route connected at Stephenson (Rock Island County, Illinois) with a stage line to Galena, Illinois, which linked with the Chicago stages at Dixon’s Ferry.³⁸

Seven stagecoach lines operated out of Davenport between 1837 and 1856, two of which crossed Muscatine County: 1) Davenport through West Liberty to Iowa City, operated by Frink & Walker and Beers & St. John; 2) Davenport to Blue Grass, along the river to Muscatine, operated by Western Stage Lines. The stage line from Davenport to Iowa City cost anywhere between 5 and 10 cents per mile depending on competition and season, and took 10 hours at an average speed between 5 and 8 miles per hour.³⁹

³² Rogers. *Historic Country Schools and Churches Survey*, 3: “This type of environment before 1860 provided pioneers with the fuel and building materials needed from the timber and a parcel of land along the timber/prairie margin that could be more easily broken for cultivation. During this early period, the thick prairie sod was an impediment to settlement away from the timbered area until John Deere’s scouring plow began to be mass produced after the Civil War. This type of plow was able to turn the prairie sod with greater ease. After that, the prairies began to quickly fill up with settlement because this was the richest land for cultivation.”

³³ Thompson, *Transportation in Iowa*, 3.

³⁴ Thompson, *Transportation in Iowa*, 4.

³⁵ Thompson, *Transportation in Iowa*, 5.

³⁶ “Travel By Stagecoach,” Special Collections, Davenport Public Library, 2022. Accessed at <https://blogs.davenportlibrary.com/sc/2022/07/16/travel-by-stagecoach-read-beyond-the-beaten-path/> -2024 (hereafter Special Collections, DPL 2022).

³⁷ Thompson, *Transportation in Iowa*, 6-7.

³⁸ Special Collections, DPL 2022. Author emphasis to highlight stops in Muscatine County.

³⁹ Special Collections, DPL 2022.

In 1839, when Iowa City was designated the capitol of the Territory of Iowa, a federal mail route was needed between the Mississippi River to the new seat of government. In the 1840s to 1850s, the arrival of packet ships and stagecoaches was a nexus of activity along the riverfront in Bloomington (Muscatine), the nearest point on the Mississippi River to Iowa City.⁴⁰ The Beers and St. John Company, a livery operator in Bloomington, was awarded the federal mail contract. The road created from Muscatine to Iowa City became an important early transportation route, known as the Muscatine-Iowa City Road, or Iowa City Road, for short. The Beers and St. John Company soon established a small inn and tavern (TR-WA-14) along the route in 1839, built and operated by Egbert T. Smith.⁴¹ It was located west-northwest of the current town of West Liberty, at the point where the stage routes and roads from Muscatine to Iowa City and Davenport to Iowa City crossed. The inn operated until the first railroad in Iowa was completed from Davenport to Iowa City in 1855.⁴² Montpelier, situated along the Mississippi River road, was served from the 1850s by a weekly stage operating between from Davenport and Muscatine.⁴³ Sweetland Center in Sweetland Township, located six miles northeast of Muscatine, was served by the stage line from Muscatine to Davenport on the upland road that would become the Muscatine-Blue Grass Road, or Telegraph Road.⁴⁴

Plank roads – roads literally built of wooden planks – were a short-lived and shortsighted idea to provide hard-surfaced roads paid for by tolls. First developed in Russia and Canada, plank roads were promoted as a solution to muddy roads, a perennial problem in Iowa. The first plank road project authorized in Iowa was partially located in Muscatine County. Authorized by the Second General Assembly, “the initial project in 1849 was to be 94 miles of graded toll road from Bloomington (Muscatine) in Muscatine County to Tipton in Cedar County, and on to the county seat of Benton County (later described as Vinton).” Part of this road was built within the city limits of Muscatine.⁴⁵ From 1849 to 1851, “the General Assembly authorized nearly 600 miles of plank roadway in the state.” Two more plank roads were planned in Muscatine County in 1851. These included the 104-mile Muscatine to Oskaloosa via Washington toll road in 1851 and the 40-mile Muscatine to Iowa City toll road, also in 1851. A few plank roads were built in the city Muscatine. In reality, however, no more than 50 miles of plank roads were actually built in Iowa. Not only were plank roads devastating to precious forest resources along their routes, the average toll for a wagon drawn by two horses was 2½ cents per mile, a steep sum few wanted to pay. Also, Iowa’s first railroad – the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad – was built from Davenport to Iowa City and from Wilton to Muscatine in 1855 and only expanded from there. As a result, the era of the plank road in Iowa ended by 1860.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Irving B. Richman, *History of Muscatine County, Iowa*. Volume 1 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1911), 310.

⁴¹ This stagecoach inn is listed on the National Register. See Marlin R. Ingalls, *Beers and St. John Company Coach Inn*. National Register of Historic Places Nomination, February 2016.

⁴² Ingalls, *Beers and St. John Company Coach Inn*, 7-1; McCarley, *Planning for Preservation in Muscatine County; West Liberty Sesquicentennial Committee* (WLSC). *Rolling into the Future, West Liberty, 150 Years, 1838-1988* (West Liberty, 1988), 2 (hereafter WLSC); Map of town and sites WLSC, 4; Richman, *History of Muscatine County*, 409: The village of Liberty was built on the early mail and stage road from Davenport to Iowa City. The stage route was located north of core of current town, and included a general store, post office, and stage stop. It was named after Liberty, Ohio, by Simeon Bagley who owned the first inn and tavern in 1840 at the north end of Elm Street. The stage lines of Frink & Walker and Beers & St. John were key means of transportation until railroad arrived. In 1850, Frink & Company operated a line from Rock Island to Dixon in 24 hours.

⁴³ Richman, *History of Muscatine County*, 213.

⁴⁴ Richman, *History of Muscatine County*, 231.

⁴⁵ “Proceedings of the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors,” *Muscatine Journal*, October 6, 1870: “Petition for an appropriation of a sufficient amount to build a bridge across Mud creek on ‘Old Plank Road’ leading from Muscatine to Tipton.”

⁴⁶ Iowa DOT, *Discovering Historic Iowa Transportation Milestones* (Ames, IA: Iowa Department of Transportation, c.1999), 7; Thompson, *Transportation in Iowa*, 5: “The method of plank road construction consisted of laying stringers of black walnut six inches square on the graded road surface. These were embedded in the earth road base and across them were placed oak, pine or hemlock planks two to three inches thick and eight feet long with no uniformity in width. The lumber, cut from nearby forests, was unseasoned. Ordinarily, the planks were fastened to the stringers with iron spikes or handwrought wooden pegs. Earth was then packed around the stringers and between the planks for a firm base and to prevent deterioration. The devastating incursion on the stands of hard woods used for what proved to be temporary hard-surfaced roads was a wasteful exercise of resources, especially when considered in terms of the later scarcity and value. During the years 1847 to 1853, 14 different organizations were granted authority to build graded and planked roads, totaling almost 600 miles. Probably no more than 50 miles were built.” See also Ben Hur Wilson, “The Boom in Iowa [Plank Roads],” *Palimpsest* 15/9 (September 1934): 298-306.

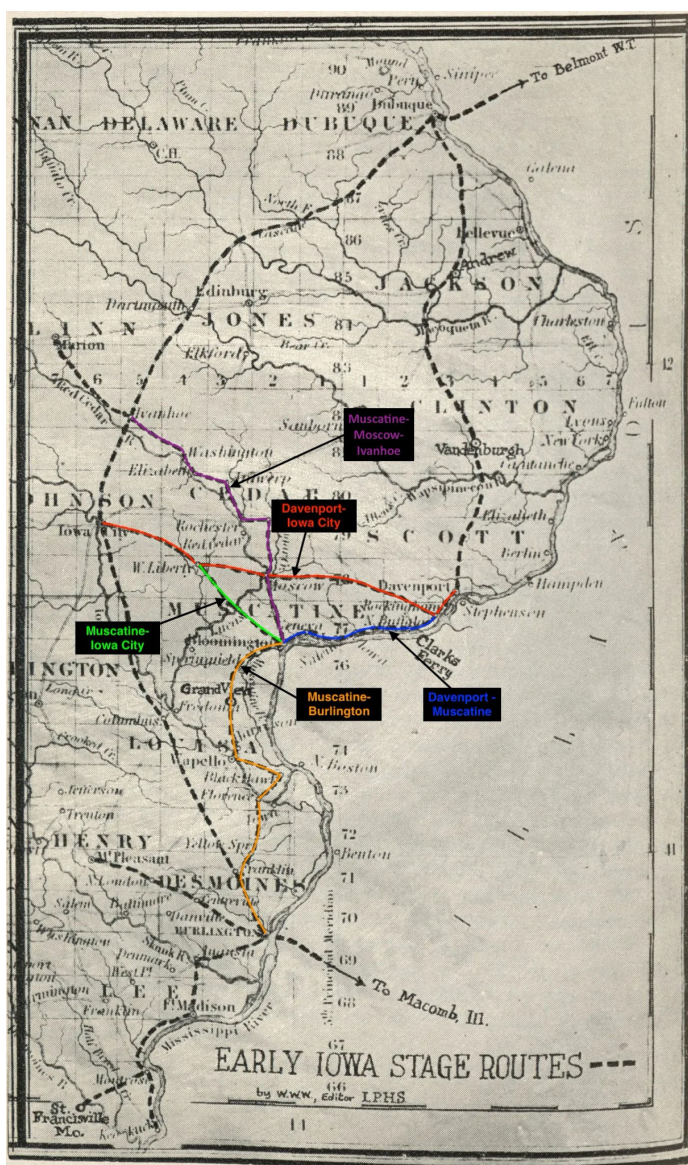


Figure 8. This map of Early Iowa Stage Routes, 1839, shows Bloomington (Muscatine) as an important crossroads and the stage routes crossing Muscatine County in several directions. All of these stage routes endured and developed over the next 135 years, becoming important roads and highways in and through Muscatine County. Source: Colton 1960

Development of the Important Cross-County Wagon Roads

As Muscatine County was gradually settled and towns platted, early primary routes radiated east, northeast, north, northwest, west, and southwest from the city of Muscatine, connecting the county seat with towns, villages, and rural neighborhoods. These early transportation routes (some early stage routes) between the county seat and satellite towns became the framework of the county's twentieth-century primary road system. Many of these early connecting roads were known by the name of a Cedar River ferry crossing, including Lord's Ferry Road, Coble's Ferry Road/Breckenridge Ferry Road, etc. Others like Lucas Grove Road, were named for the schools and rural neighborhoods through which they passed. In the early twentieth century, these early connecting roads were improved during the Good Roads Movement, and subsequently developed into county trunk roads, state highways, and US highways.

The Davenport-Iowa City Road - a.k.a. Old State Road extended roughly east to west through the northern tier of townships. It was one of the county's earliest stage routes that endured and developed throughout Muscatine County history well into the next century. Extending from the Scott County line east through Fulton, Wilton, Moscow, Goshen, and Wapsinonoc townships, this road remained a well-utilized route from Davenport through

Muscatine County to Iowa City. The trajectory of this early route was generally followed by the county's first railroad, the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad in 1855, and was part of one of the first Good Roads "highways" across Iowa, the River-to-River Road.

Muscatine-Iowa City Road - a.k.a. Iowa City Road, traversed Bloomington, Lake, Pike, Wapsinonoc townships and crossed the Cedar River at Overman's Ferry, then Tice's Ferry, and, after 1897, on the Tice Bridge. This early route was comprised of a number of local roads linked together that later became part of one of the first Good Roads routes in Muscatine County – the Muscatine Branch of the River-To-River Road – and later the first leg of the Muscatine-Des Moines Short Line, before becoming County Trunk Road "W" in the late 1920s.

Muscatine-Davenport Road - a.k.a. Muscatine-Montpelier Road and River Road crossed Sweetland and Montpelier townships along the north bank of the Mississippi River. This was an early stage route that made stops at the earliest and mostly nonextant settlements of Geneva, Wyoming, Fairport, and Iowa (later platted as railroad station Montpelier).

Muscatine-Blue Grass Road-Davenport Road - This wagon road was built by 1852 and passed through Bloomington, Sweetland, Fulton Townships on its way to Blue Grass and then Davenport in Scott County. Known as Telegraph Road and the Upper River Road, it followed the dry upland prairie ridges between Davenport and Muscatine, going through the villages of Sweetland Center in Sweetland Township and Pleasant Prairie in southern Fulton Township. This road remained an important transportation artery, and in the early twentieth century, it was part of two Good Roads routes – the I-O-A Short Line and Blue Grass Road – then State Highway 22, and finally US Highway 61.⁴⁷

Muscatine-Grandview Road – This road began as the "Road to Burlington," which was the Muscatine-Burlington stage route as shown on the Colton Early Stage Route Map (Figure 8), and it ran along the same route as the present road.⁴⁸ Known also as the Island Road and Grandview Road, this road headed southwest out of Muscatine through Fruitland Township on its way to the town of Grandview in Louisa County. In the early twentieth century, this road was part of the I-O-A Short Line and the Blue Grass Road, then State Highway No. 2, and finally US Highway 61.

Muscatine-Cone Road - Known as Lord's Ferry Road by at least the 1860s, this road passed through (Bloomington, Fruitland, Seventy-Six, Cedar, and Orono Townships, linking the city of Muscatine with the town of Conesville. It was carried over the Cedar River first by Lord's Ferry, then Brown's Ferry, then by the first iron bridge over the Cedar River – the McKeown Bridge – in 1879. On the west side of the Cedar River, the road also crossed Pike's Creek and Gedney Lake, both of which required early bridges. In the late 1920s, this road became County Trunk Road "C."

Muscatine-Wilton Road - This wagon road extended north from the city of Muscatine through Bloomington, Wilton, and Moscow Townships mainly along the township line between Moscow and Wilton townships to the town of Wilton Junction. This road became State Highway 38 in the late 1920s.

Muscatine-Nichols Road - This road was comprised of several sections of roads – including Lucas Grove Road, Coble's Ferry Road (later Breckenridge Ferry Road), Simpson Road, and Ijam's Road (a.k.a. Elephant Swamp Road; Muscatine-English River Road) – that zigged and zagged west-northwest through Bloomington, Lake, and Pike

⁴⁷ Jan Olive Nash, *Early Farmsteads along U.S. Highway 61: Traveling Back in Time, Part B: Muscatine County*. Historic Property Studies for Iowa Department of Transportation (Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, Iowa, February 2000), 2.

⁴⁸ Marlin R. Ingalls, *A Phase I Historic Architectural Survey of Primary Roads Project F-61-4(55)–20-70, a.k.a. PIN 92-70040-1*. Historic Architectural Supplement to Project Completion Report, Volume 15, Number 63 (Highway Archeology Program, University of Iowa, 1992), 10.

Townships, crossing the Cedar River first on Coble's Ferry, later known as Breckenridge's Ferry.⁴⁹ In 1895, Breckenridge Ferry Road and the former ferry were removed from the Muscatine-Nichols Road after the completion of the Simpson Bridge in 1895 about one mile and a half downstream. The road to Nichols relocated to Simpson Road (a road built in 1870) in sections 20 and 21 in Lake Township.⁵⁰ All four of these early local roads comprised the Muscatine-Nichols Road, which in the late 1920s became County Trunk Road "M," and later the west half of State Highway 22 from Muscatine west-northwest through Nichols.

Ferry Crossings and the First Wagon Bridges over the Cedar River

The Cedar River was the biggest obstacle to overland travel in Muscatine County, affecting east-west travel for settlement, trade, and mail in five townships – Orono, Cedar, Lake, Pike, Goshen, Moscow – in the western third of the county. Because of this, ferries were crucial for transportation and communication in early to mid-nineteenth century Iowa, and as such a general law regulating ferries on the waters of the Territory was passed in 1838, right around the time William Hendrickson started a ferry crossing at Moscow, one of the oldest settlements in Muscatine County. Applicants for ferry licenses were handled by the Court of County Commissioners, forerunners to boards of supervisors. Historian Jacob Van Der Zee explains the early laws governing Iowa's ferries:

In the first place, it was provided that no person could "keep a ferry across any stream except the Mississippi, without having first obtained a license from the Court of County Commissioners." The applicant for a license had to give "notice, by advertisement, set up in at least three places in the township or neighborhood where the ferry is proposed to be kept, twenty days prior to the sitting of the Court, of his intention to apply to such Court, for a license to keep a ferry." When the applicant had complied with these requirements the court was authorized to grant a license upon the payment of from two to fifty dollars annually by the proprietor of the ferry" for a term of time not exceeding five years." However, ferries could not be established within one mile of each other. Of course in all cases the consent of the owners of the land on both sides of the water way had to be secured by mutual agreement prior to the establishment of the ferry.⁵¹

The duties of ferry keepers were expressly laid down by the statute. Every person who obtained a license must "provide and keep in complete repair, a good and sufficient boat for the safe conveyance of persons and property, and when the river or creek, over which the ferry is kept, is passable, shall, with a sufficient number of hands to

⁴⁹ Lucas Grove Road was part of the Muscatine-Nichols Road, and was established at least by 1857 (*Muscatine Evening Journal*, August 1, 1857, is the first mention in the Muscatine County online newspaper archives). It was likely so-named for the landowner Samuel Lucas, as well as the early territorial governor, Robert Lucas, who once owned Lucas Grove School, located in Section 25, and the surrounding rural neighborhood of Lake Township through which it passes (Rogers. *Historic Country Schools and Churches Survey*, 161). This early county road led west out of the city of Muscatine through Bloomington and Lake Townships. Simpson Road was a local road near W.H. Simpson's property in Section 16 of Lake Township. It became the new road over the Cedar River, replacing Coble's Ferry Road/Breckenridge Ferry Road, when the Simpson Bridge was completed in 1895, approximately where the suspension bridge had been built in 1851 ("Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors," *Muscatine News-Tribune*, July 11, 1894). In 1856, the central section of Pike Township was covered with what was then known as the Elephant Swamp, a terrace remnant of a wetland that existed during the last Ice Age, and the cause of the boggy river bottom land that, once drained, made for prosperous farming (Charlene Nichols Hixon, *Nichols: A History of the Town and People of Pike Township, 1884-1984* ([Nichols, IA], 1984), 107). In early 1856, three gentlemen – Joseph H. Ijams, J.G. Wallingford, and James M. Ripley – began soliciting subscriptions from area landowners, including Samuel Nichols, to build a wagon road from Muscatine through Johnson County to the English River in Washington County. Nichols was a subscriber and stockholder of Ijams' road project. This road, initially referred to as the Muscatine and English River Road and later the Elephant Swamp Road, would provide the region with a shortcut across the Elephant Swamp, which had until that time been a hindrance to travel. Samuel Nichols, an early settler who came to Muscatine County in 1840, settling in Pike Township on the eastern edge of this swamp, recognized early on that the swampy land in this area would one day be profitable, and he became a prosperous landowner in Pike Township. The Samuel Nichols House was listed on the National Register in 1978. The Examining Road Committee for the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors, which included Samuel Nichols, declared it "a splendid road and will afford a great facility to the traveling community." The name of the road evolved over time, from Ijam's Road to Ijam Road, Igem Road, and finally Ijem Street and Ijem Avenue ("Veni, Vidi, Vici," *Muscatine Evening Journal*, May 22, 1856; "Who Knows?" *Muscatine Evening Journal*, August 11, 1856; "Elephant Swamp Conquered," *Muscatine Evening Journal*, November 12, 1856; "Elephant Swamp Road Completed," *Muscatine Evening Journal*, November 28, 1856). Joseph H. Ijams, a Maryland native, cattle trader, Iowa City resident, and superintendent of this and a number of other regional road projects, became so thoroughly associated with this particular road that when the contractor Joseph Middleton completed the road in late 1856 to the satisfaction of everyone along its route, the road gradually came to be known as "Ijams' Road." "Fourteen years later, Benjamin Nichols platted the town of Nichols Station, incorporating Ijams' wagon road into the town plat as "Ijem Street." (Jennifer A. Price, *Ijem Avenue Commercial Historic District, Muscatine County, Iowa*, National Register Nomination, 14).

⁵⁰ *Muscatine Semi-Weekly News Tribune*, September 14, 1897; see Plat Map of Lake and Pike Townships, Huebinger Surveying and Map Publishing Co, 1899; "Notice... Simpson Road," *Muscatine Evening Journal*, October 29, 1870.

⁵¹ Jacob Van der Zee, "The Roads and Highways of Territorial Iowa," *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 3/2 (April 1905), 188-189.

work and manage the boat, give due attendance from daylight in the morning until dark in the evening, and shall moreover at any hour in the night or day (that the creek or river can be passed) when called upon for that purpose, convey the U.S. mail or other public express across said ferry." The penalty for non-performance of these duties was the payment of a fine, which, however, was not to exceed twenty dollars for each offence.⁵²

Table 1. Cedar River Ferry Licenses Issued in Muscatine County, 1842 To 1873

FERRY LICENSE	ISSUED TO	DATE	PAGE	NAME OF RECORD
Cedar River Ferry at mouth of Wapsie	Lewis Layman	6 Apr 1842	41	Com. Record "B"
Cedar River Ferry at Boggs ferry	Elias Overman	18 Apr 1842	45	Com. Record "B"
Ferry Rates over Cedar River established	-----	4 Oct 1843	116	Com. Record "B"
to keep ferry over Cedar River at Boggs ferry	Elias Overman	3 Jan 1844	129	Com. Record "B"
to keep ferry over Cedar River known as Powsheck Ferry	L. J. Lockwood	5 Jan 1844	132	Com. Record "B"
across Cedar River at pt. opp. house of Thos. C. Dowell for 12 years	Thos. C. Dowell	5 Jul 1847	118	Com. Record "D"
Ferry Rates on Cedar River changed	-----	5 Jul 1847	118	Com. Record "D"
granted for 1 year to keep ferry across Cedar River	Thos Carroll	7 Jul 1848	67	Com. Record "D"
granted for 1 year to keep ferry across Cedar River	Enoch Overman	7 Jul 1848	67	Com. Record "D"
to keep ferry over Cedar River at Moscow	James Portes	3 Jul 1849	126	Com. Record "D"
over Cedar River to Oct 3, 1850	Enoch Overman	1 Jul 1850	188	Com. Record "D"
license renewed for ferry across Cedar River	Nathan Odell	8 Oct 1850	211	Com. Record "D"
license renewed for ferry across Cedar River	Enoch Overman	8 Oct 1850	211	Com. Record "D"
to run a ferry across Cedar at Moscow	Henry Lange	5 Apr 1853	2	County Judge "A"
at Carothers ferry Cedar River	Robert Behran	4 Apr 1854	41	County Judge "A"
for 4 years to operate a ferry across Cedar River at Moscow	Henry Lange	2 May 1859	404	County Judge "A"
for 4 years to operate a ferry across Cedar River at Cedar Bridge Road	Abner Coble	2 May 1859	405	County Judge "A"
ferry License granted [no other details listed in index]	Harry Graham	5 Jan 1866	537	Minute Book "A"
Charter granted and accepted by the Muscatine Ferry Co.	Muscatine Ferry Co.	2 Jun 1868	93	Minute Book "B"
granted to Henry Lange of Moscow for 10 years	Henry Lange	4 Jun 1868	106	Minute Book "B"
over Cedar River at Odell Road	Edw. Brown	8 Jun 1869	177	Minute Book "B"
over Cedar River	Abner Coble	19 Oct 1869	218	Minute Book "B"
at Cobels Ferry	H. Breckenridge	6 Sep 1871	377	Minute Book "B"
at Moscow	Henry Lange	14 Jan 1873	472	Minute Book "B"

Source: Muscatine County Board of Supervisors Minutes Index, Book One, Muscatine County Auditor's Office, Muscatine, Iowa. Obtained from Muscatine County IAGenWeb at <https://iagenweb.org/muscatine/articles/cedarriverferrylics.htm> - 2023.

Furthermore, it was provided that the County Court should fix the ferriage rates for every ferry. The ferry-keeper was required to "post up at the door of his ferry house or some conspicuous place convenient to the ferry" a list of the rates of ferriage. In case a ferry was established without authority, a fine of not more than thirty dollars was imposed. For receiving higher rates than allowed by law, a ferry operator was fined a sum not exceeding ten dollars.⁵³

Lange's Ferry and the Moscow Wagon Bridge (Moscow Township) - The town of Moscow was located on the what was called "the Old State Road," also known as the Davenport to Iowa City Road. This was an important territorial road that stretched across the upper tier of townships in Muscatine County, and passed through the

⁵² Van der Zee, "The Roads and Highways of Territorial Iowa," 189.

⁵³ Van der Zee, "The Roads and Highways of Territorial Iowa," 189-190.

towns of Stockton, Wilton, Moscow, Atalissa, and West Liberty. At Moscow, the Cedar River immediately presented a major obstacle that required a ferry to carry traffic from the east to the west bank and vice versa. Henry C.T. Lange, a German immigrant, moved into Moscow from his Moscow Township farm in 1852, and bought the ferry business from William Slater.⁵⁴ He also “started a small store with the usual adjunct of the times ‘wet goods,’” which likely referred to alcohol.⁵⁵ Shortly thereafter, Lange placed an announcement in the *Iowa Democratic Enquirer*, a Bloomington newspaper, letting the public know that had taken over the Ferry at Moscow, and that “His boat is large, new and safe, and is propelled by means of a rope.”⁵⁶

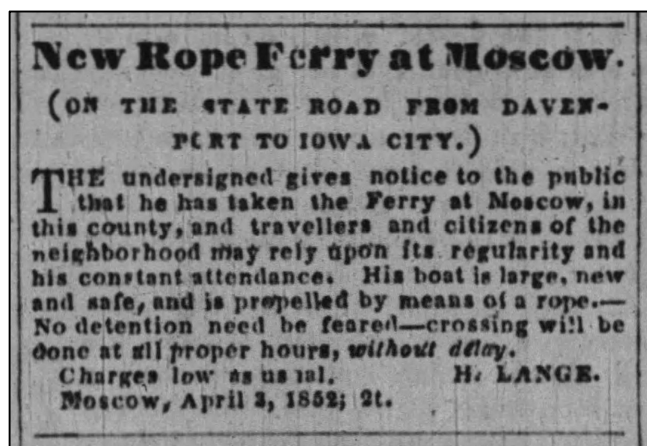


Figure 9. In 1852, Henry Lange placed an ad in the *Iowa Democratic Enquirer*, a Bloomington newspaper, letting readers know that he had taken over the Ferry at Moscow, and that “His boat is large, new and safe, and is propelled by means of a rope.” Source: *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Bloomington), April 3, 1852

In 1859, the County judge granted licenses for two ferries across the Cedar River, one of which went to Henry Lange’s ferry at Moscow.⁵⁷ As county settlement grew, traffic on the Davenport - Iowa City Road increased, and thus Lange periodically requested ferriage increases from the Board of Supervisors. In 1869, he asked for his license to be altered to reflect increased fares for crossing a wagon and two horses (25 cents); and for crossing a wagon and four horses, mules, or oxen (40 cents). The license was so altered.⁵⁸ In 1873, Lange asked the Board of Supervisors for a ferriage increase in his license, this time for “droves of cattle, horses and mules, of 50 and under.” The change was granted (*Muscatine Evening Journal*, January 21, 1873).

In 1876, according to his listing in Caffee’s Muscatine County Directory, ferryman Henry C. T. Lange had “a splendid new boat, fifty-six feet long, by thirteen feet, five inches wide, thirty-two inch gunwale, with iron railing.” The directory also claimed “this ferry is the best crossing between Cedar Bluffs and the mouth of the river, and with a first-class boat makes it to the advantage of passengers to cross at this point.”⁵⁹ By 1879, Henry Lange had been operating the Moscow Ferry for 27 years, and was well-known throughout Muscatine County. The 1879 *History of Muscatine County, Iowa*, featured his biography, one year prior to his death (Western Historical 1879:667). After Lange’s death in February 1880, a Mr. Miller, or Mueller, took over Lange’s Ferry and operated it until the Moscow wagon bridge was completed in 1885 (*Muscatine Journal*, February 9, 1880; *Muscatine Journal and News Tribune*, December 30, 1953).

⁵⁴ In 1849, James Portes obtained a license to operate a ferry over the Cedar River at Moscow. See Table 1. Portes may have been William Slater’s predecessor, although Slater’s name does not appear on the list of ferry licenses in Table 1.

⁵⁵ *Muscatine Journal*, April 5, 1901.

⁵⁶ *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Bloomington), April 3, 1852.

⁵⁷ *Muscatine Journal*, May 13, 1859.

⁵⁸ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, January 15, 1869.

⁵⁹ A.E. Caffee, *Muscatine County History and Directory, 1876-77* (Muscatine, Iowa: Mahin Brothers Printers and Binders, 1876), 133.



Figure 10. An example of a rope ferry with “comfort station” on opposite shore. This was the basic operation of Lange’s Ferry after he took over for William Slater in 1852. Source: Revolutionary War Journal website

Unlike the McKeown Bridge built at the Lord’s Ferry crossing in Cedar-Orono Townships, the Moscow wagon bridge was not built at Lange’s ferry crossing. Instead it was built downstream from both ferry crossing and dam, and the Davenport-Iowa City Road was relocated to River Street at the south limits of Moscow. If the bridge had been “placed on the site of the present ferry where some want it that the expense of building the approaches alone will exceed the legal appropriation for the entire work; while at the proposed sight [sic] the bridge will extend from high bank to high bank and a minimum outlay will be required to complete the approaches. Besides, all know that Cedar bottom along the line of the old highway is a good part of the year overflowed or otherwise impassable.”⁶⁰

The prospect of the new wagon bridge at Moscow was welcomed by the editors of the *Wilton Review*, especially as it meant the end of the old ferry crossing: “Ferrys [sic] and fords have had their day, and the driving public have for a long time been going long distances out of the way of a direct line of travel to reach river bridges. We gladly welcome the prospect of the early building of a bridge at Moscow.”⁶¹ The Moscow Wagon Bridge carried over the Cedar River the Davenport to Iowa City Road, the River-to-River Road, until US Highway No. 32 was rerouted south well south of Moscow. The bridge was removed in 1941, leaving only the stone masonry piers.⁶²

Bogg’s Ferry/Saulsbury’s Ford – Saulsbury Wagon Bridge (Lake-Pike Townships) - In 1842, Elias Overman was granted a ferry license to operate Bogg’s Ferry at the location later known as Saulsbury’s Ford.⁶³ His license was renewed two years later.⁶⁴ In 1874, no road or bridge existed at this point on the Cedar River, known as Saulsbury’s Ford. According to pioneer settler W.G. Holmes, John Conkling and later a Mr. Lockwood operated a ferry here in the 1840s-1850s.⁶⁵ After the McKeown Bridge at Lord’s Ferry Crossing was completed in 1879, the Saulsbury Bridge was to be the second iron truss bridge to be built over the Cedar River, this one so named for the point on the river known as Saulsbury’s Ford. This location was chosen after heated debate between this site and Tice’s Ferry (formerly Overman’s Ferry) crossing further upstream in Goshen Township.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ *Wilton Review*, December 4, 1884.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Cedar River Ferry at Boggs ferry, ferry license granted to Elias Overman 18 Apr 1842, page 45, Board of Commissioners Record Book “B”; “The Early Settlement of Moscow and Vicinity,” reprinted from *Wilton Review* in *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, September 19, 1879: mentions “Boggs’ Ferry [now called Saulsbury’s ford].”

⁶⁴ “To keep ferry over Cedar River at Boggs ferry,” Elias Overman, 3 Jan 1844, page 129, Board of Commissioners Record Book “B.”

⁶⁵ Harrison and Warner, *Atlas of Muscatine County, Iowa* (Clinton, Iowa: H.J. Toudy & Co, 1874); *Muscatine Journal*, November 26, 1880.

⁶⁶ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, May 16, 1879; *Muscatine Journal*, April 3, 1880.

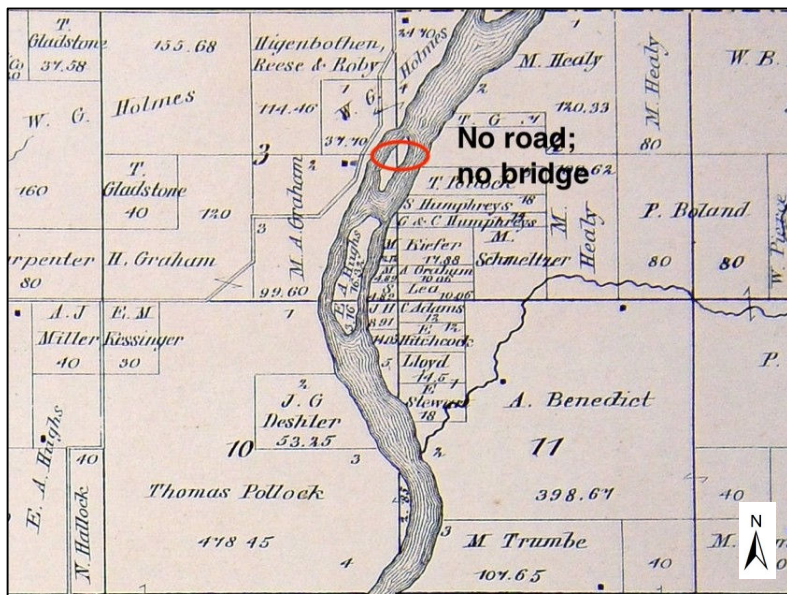


Figure 11. In 1874, no road or bridge existed at this point on the Cedar River, known as Saulsbury's Ford. According to pioneer settler W.G. Holmes, John Conkling and later a Mr. Lockwood operated a ferry here in the 1840s-1850s (see *Muscatine Journal*, November 26, 1880). Source: Harrison and Warner, 1874

Out of 14 bid proposals for the Saulsbury Bridge, the King Bridge Company of Cleveland Ohio eventually won the contract for the superstructure, the same company that built the McKeown Bridge. J.B. Locke of Vinton, Iowa, won the contract for the substructure, and W.B. Gillett, of Columbus City [Junction], Iowa, received the contract for the foundations and approaches.⁶⁷

The stone for the piers was dressed in the Anamosa quarries and delivered by rail to Ives Station (later known as Bayfield) in Lake Township.⁶⁸ The iron truss superstructure was also delivered to Ives Station (Lake Twp), where it sat for more than a month waiting for the completion of the piers, which were delayed by high water.⁶⁹ By August, the piers were complete and the iron Pratt through truss was being built.⁷⁰ By November 16, 1880, the bridge was nearly completed. It was declared "a beauty in appearance and very substantially built."⁷¹

It affords the Journal immense satisfaction to announce the completion of the second bridge over the Cedar river—one, too, located at a central point, only eight and a half miles from this city, and calculated to be of great benefit to the people of the county. . . The people of Muscatine county are hereafter to be more homogeneous and harmonious by means of bridges over the chasm that has heretofore divided them, and the time is near at hand when they will wonder how they got along so many years without these bridges.⁷²

Three years after the completion of the bridge, county residents were deeply unhappy about the "barbarous condition" of the Saulsbury Bridge Road.⁷³ Thomas R. Gladstone of Goshen Township took charge of the project, and by fall 1886, through subscriptions and volunteer labor, "a new road has been built down the bluff, and so ditched and planked and tiled as to constitute the best of thoroughfares and a permanent improvement. The bridges throughout the bottom have been given firm and solid approaches. Four new crossings have been built over waterways. The whole road has been newly graded and thoroughly repaired. There is likely to be no more

⁶⁷ *Muscatine Journal*, March 26, 1880.

⁶⁸ *Muscatine Journal*, May 7, 1880.

⁶⁹ *Muscatine Journal*, August 14, 1880.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Muscatine Journal*, November 19, 1880.

⁷² *Muscatine Journal*, November 26, 1880.

⁷³ *Muscatine Journal*, November 27, 1883.

complaint about this road.”⁷⁴ By 1914, Saulsbury Road was designated part of the county road system by the State Highway Commission.⁷⁵

The bridge was lengthened in 1935 with “the construction of 100 ft. H.T. extension on westerly end and 90 foot H.T. with 28 ft. I-Beam approach as extension on easterly end of the Saulsbury Bridge crossing the Cedar River.” By then Saulsbury Road was known as County Trunk Road ‘W.’” In November 1935, the work was complete and the bridge reopened. The new bridge provided for increased waterway: the west end had been lengthened 100 feet, and the east end, 116 feet. The new floor is laminated wood construction and covered with an asphalt surface.”⁷⁶

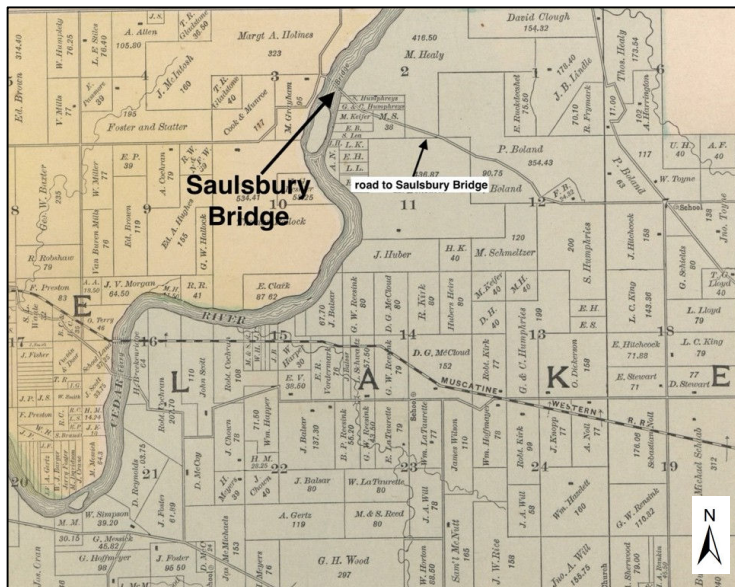


Figure 12. A road leading to the east side of the Saulsbury Bridge had been built by 1884, as shown on the 1884 Plat Map of Lake Township. This road became known as the Saulsbury Bridge Road, and later just Saulsbury Road.
Source: O.C. Haskell, 1884

The Suspension Bridge (Lake and Pike Townships), 1851 - The first bridge over the Cedar River was a wooden suspension bridge (the first and only such bridge in Iowa). The bridge was erected in 1851 in Lake and Pike Townships near the future site of Coble’s/Breckenridge’s Ferry. Muscatine was in 1850 a growing river town of 2,540 people, and city and business leaders thought a Cedar River bridge would help draw trade from the interior of Iowa. The Muscatine, Washington, and Oskaloosa Road and Bridge Company was incorporated to finance a Cedar River bridge and stock was sold to the merchants and residents of Muscatine and to the farmers in western Muscatine County. Arrangements were made with N. L. Milburn, an inventor and contractor from Paducah, Kentucky, to erect his patented wooden suspension bridge over the Cedar. This structure was supposed to be much more durable than the Remington arch bridge. So completely did Mr. Milburn gain the confidence of the directors in his integrity and in the merits of his plan that he was not required to furnish bond but was urged to proceed with the construction of the bridge with all possible dispatch,” even recommending both Milburn and his bridge to other communities.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Muscatine Journal*, October 15, 1886.

⁷⁵ Iowa State Highway Commission. *Official Map of Muscatine County, Showing County and Township Road Systems*. Ames: State Highway Commission, 1914.

⁷⁶ *Muscatine Journal and News Tribune*, July 16, 1935; *West Liberty Index*, November 21, 1935.

⁷⁷ Bruce E. Mahan, “Bridging the Cedar,” *Palimpsest* 4/9 (September 1923), 308.



Figure 13. Muscatine County's Suspension Bridge, the county's first bridge built over the Cedar River, was constructed near Coble's Ferry crossing in Lake Township, noted on the 1851 Township Map of Iowa. Source: Henn, Williams & Co. 1851

Indeed, the bridge was, in appearance, all that its admirers claimed. On each bank stood two high square towers reaching ninety feet above the surface of the river. These towers were five feet square, each side being the width of four logs which had been squared and bolted one to another with big iron bolts. The logs, perhaps twenty feet long and over a foot square, were of tough, hewn oak and were placed end to end, jointed at the middle of the adjoining log. The bases of these towering piers were sunk in the ground on the banks almost as deep as the bed of the river but no stone was used in the foundation to make them more secure. Between each pair of towers extended heavy, six by six inch cross braces high enough above the road so as not to interfere with travel. Heavy wire cables supported the driveway of the bridge, which was twenty-one feet wide at the piers and narrowed to twelve feet in the middle. The driveway spanned the river in a graceful arch, high enough in the center to allow the small steamboats to pass under. The wire cables came together in bundles at the top of the square towers then extended downward toward each bank and were fastened to logs buried several feet in the ground as anchors. Long approaches on trestle work sloped up to the twin towers on either side, joining the driveway at a point fifteen feet above the bank of the river. On each side of the long approaches was a plain wooden railing while an ornamental railing of wooden cross-pieces extended along the sides of the high arched driveway. Including the approaches, the total length of the structure was said to be twenty-one hundred feet and the span between the piers was six hundred and fifty-seven feet. All who saw the bridge praised the beauty of its design and marvelled [sic] at its strength."⁷⁸

Joseph Bennett, president of the stock company funding the project, triumphantly rode across on horseback the nearly completed suspension on April 3, 1851. Just 24 hours later, a terrific storm tore the bridge apart. By then, Milburn was onto another project and never returned. The suspension bridge was never rebuilt.⁷⁹ According to the *Lone Tree Reporter*: "For years the rusting cables and rotting timbers of the bridge lay along the banks of the Cedar, mute monuments to the hopes of the investors."⁸⁰ The "Suspension Bridge" was included on the 1851 Henn, Williams & Co. Township Maps of Iowa, and it was still marked on the 1857 map, four years after being destroyed in a storm. As with plank road fever, suspension bridge fever died out in Muscatine and Muscatine County with the construction of Iowa's first railroad through Muscatine County in 1855.

Coble's Ferry/Breckinridge's Ferry and the Simpson Bridge (Lake and Pike Townships) - The Coble's Ferry site (later taken over by Breckinridge) was a ferry crossing that carried wagon, stage, and foot traffic on the Iowa City Road over the Cedar River. It was located at or near the site of the failed Suspension Bridge in 1851. In 1859, Abner Coble first received a ferry license "to operate a ferry across Cedar River at Cedar Bridge Road" at this location for four years. Coble petitioned for a new license in 1869 and was granted one by the board of supervisors.⁸¹ In 1871, H. Breckenridge took over Coble's Ferry, being granted a license by the board of

⁷⁸ Mahan, "Bridging the Cedar," 312-313.

⁷⁹ Mahan, "Bridging the Cedar," 313-314.

⁸⁰ "Bridging the Cedar," *Lone Tree Reporter*, October 4, 1923.

⁸¹ Abner Coble, 2 May 1859, page 405, County Judge Book "A", Muscatine County Administration Building, Muscatine, Iowa; *Muscatine Evening Journal*, October 23, 1869.

supervisors.⁸² He was still operating the ferry in 1880, according to that year's federal census. By 1885, Breckenridge had quit the ferrying business.⁸³ It is unknown if anyone took over Breckenridge's ferry business after 1885.

Landowners in the vicinity of the ferry lobbied for years for a bridge over the Cedar River at or near this ferry crossing. The building of the failed suspension bridge in 1851 so near this ferry crossing surely caused many to believe the board would grant funds for a new bridge at some point. In 1879, for example, S.H. Smith made an impassioned plea for the first iron bridge over the Cedar River to be built at Breckenridge's Ferry, where a bridge "will accommodate the most people," and where the first bridge had been built:

Geographical observation plainly and says Breckenridge's or near there—for the reason that the objective point, Muscatine, is still south of all three of them—Tice's, Saulsbury's or Breckenridge's. . . [N]early all living west and south of West Liberty can make the distance much shorter by coming by Nichols or near there. Any one with half an eye can see this, while the entire township of Pike would be in line of this route. Two entire townships, Wapsinonoc and Pike, would be completely accommodated, and all west of them, by the Breckenridge Ferry route, where the old bridge was built. One bridge at Breckenridge's will accommodate two-thirds of our county, besides being on the direct route from Riverside, Lone Tree, across Elephant swamp on the Ijam road that has cost the county thousands of dollars.⁸⁴

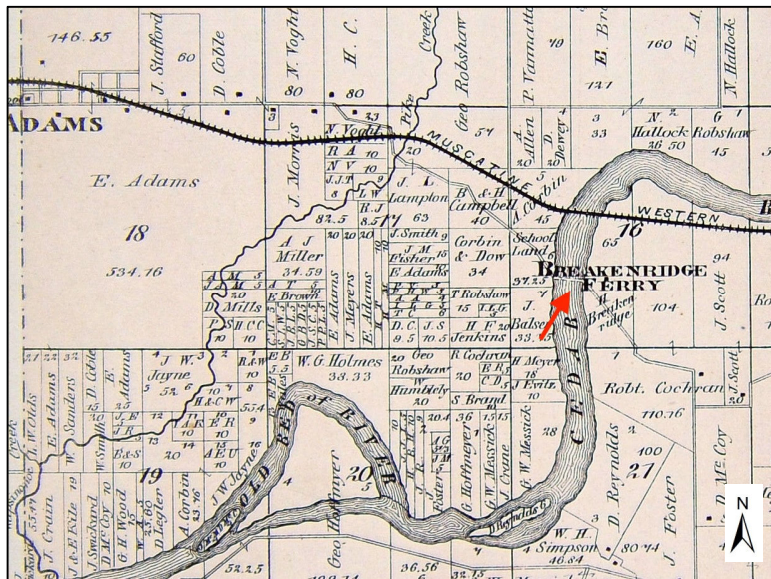


Figure 14. Breckenridge Ferry shown on the 1874 Plat Map of Lake and Pike Townships. Source: Harrison and Warner 1874

After the Lord's Ferry location in Cedar and Orono townships won the first Cedar River bridge, the Breckenridge Ferry lobby tried again in 1880: "A petition was . . . read asking that said bridge be located at what is known as the site of the old "Cedar Bridge," [suspension bridge] near Breckenridge's ferry. Remarks were made in favor of this site by Robt. Cochran, when the Board adjourned till 7 o'clock p. m."⁸⁵ Nothing came of this attempt, as Saulsbury Ford location was chosen for the second bridge over the Cedar. A *Muscatine Journal* editorial in 1891 made yet another case for a bridge near Breckenridge's Ferry: "I notice in last evening's JOURNAL that the farmers in the vicinity of Breckenridge's Ferry are about to ask the "honorable Board of Supervisors to build a bridge at that point over the Cedar river— which may be very much needed."⁸⁶

⁸² H. Breckenridge, 6 Sep 1871, page 377, Minute Book "B", Muscatine County Administration Building, Muscatine, Iowa.

⁸³ US Federal Census, 1880; Iowa State Census, 1885. Obtained from Ancestry.com – 2024.

⁸⁴ "THE CEDAR BRIDGE. An Argument for its Location a Breckenridge's Ferry," *Muscatine Journal*, May 27, 1879.

⁸⁵ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, January 16, 1880.

⁸⁶ *Muscatine Journal*, May 22, 1891.

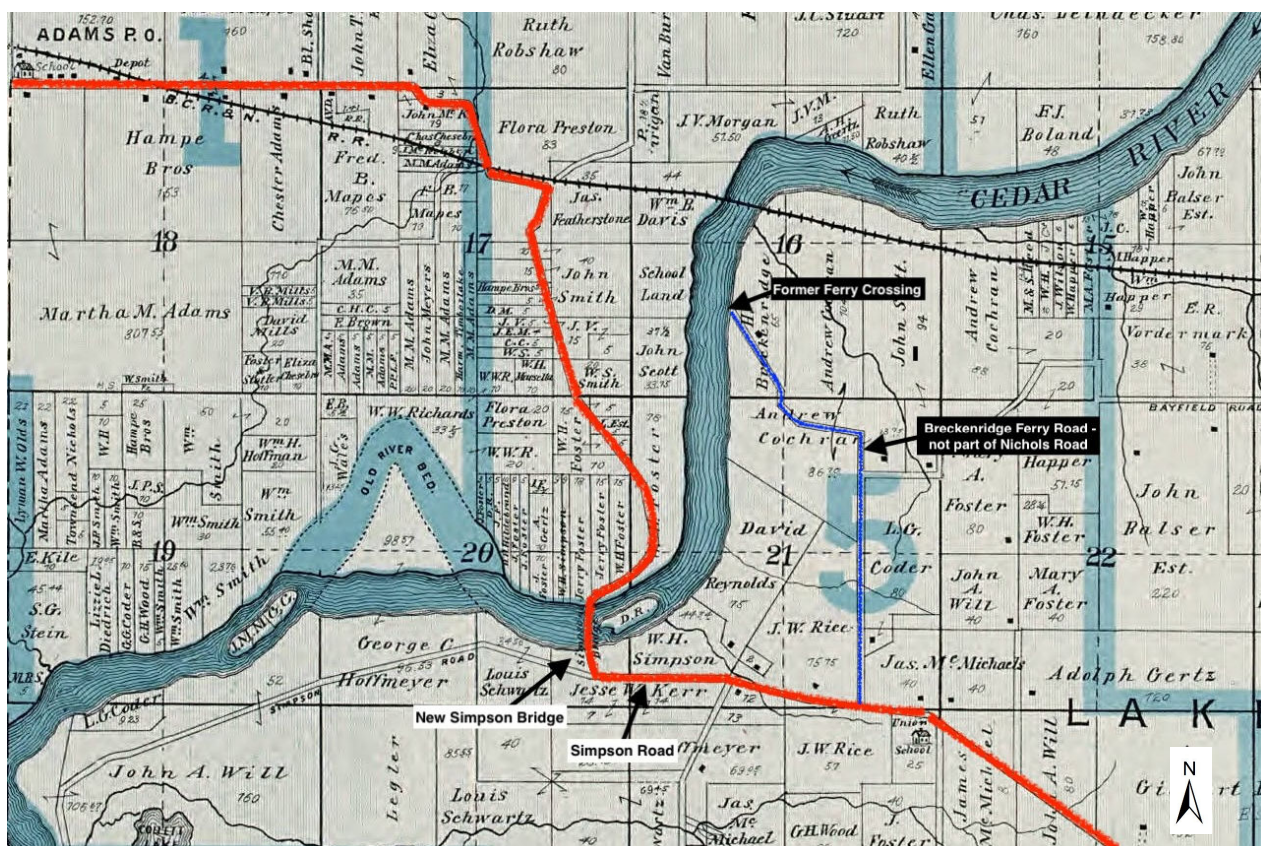


Figure 15. New route of Muscatine-Nichols Road on the 1899 Plat Map of Lake-Pike Townships: Lucas Grove Road to Simpson Road over new Simpson Bridge (1895), Breckenridge Ferry Road no longer part of route. The bridge was built in Section 20, about a mile downstream from Breckenridge Ferry in Section 16. The road on the west side of the Cedar River at the old ferry crossing was vacated.
Source: Huebinger Surveying and Map Publishing Co, 1899

More than three decades lapsed before another Cedar River bridge was built near Breckenridge's Ferry. In 1891, the board of supervisors put the matter to a vote, which failed.⁸⁷ The matter came again before the board in 1894, and the supervisors finally approved a new Cedar River bridge at the old suspension bridge location below the old Breckenridge's Ferry crossing.⁸⁸ The contract was awarded to the Indiana Bridge Company. First called the Breckenridge Bridge, it was later named the Simpson Bridge.⁸⁹

Lord's Ferry Crossing and the First McKeown Wagon Bridge (Cedar-Orono Townships) - Beginning in the 1850s, perhaps earlier, a ferry crossing over the Cedar River was established in the southwest corner of Section 2 of Cedar Township. This crossing was first known as Lord's Ferry, named for Lord family who owned land on the west side of the river in Orono Township. Later it was called Brown's Ferry, named for Hugh P. Brown, who operated the ferry and owned land in the southwest corner of Section 2. The road the ferry served on either side of the river came to be known as Lord's Ferry Road, and it connected Muscatine with the town of Conesville in the southwest corner of the county.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors," *Muscatine Journal*, November 13, 1891.

⁸⁸ "New Iron Bridge over Cedar River," *Muscatine Semi-Weekly News Tribune*, May 2, 1894.

⁸⁹ "The Breckenridge Bridge," *Muscatine Journal*, March 2, 1895; *Muscatine Semi-Weekly News Tribune*, June 12, 1895.

⁹⁰ Harrison and Warner, *Atlas of Muscatine County, Iowa*, 1874.

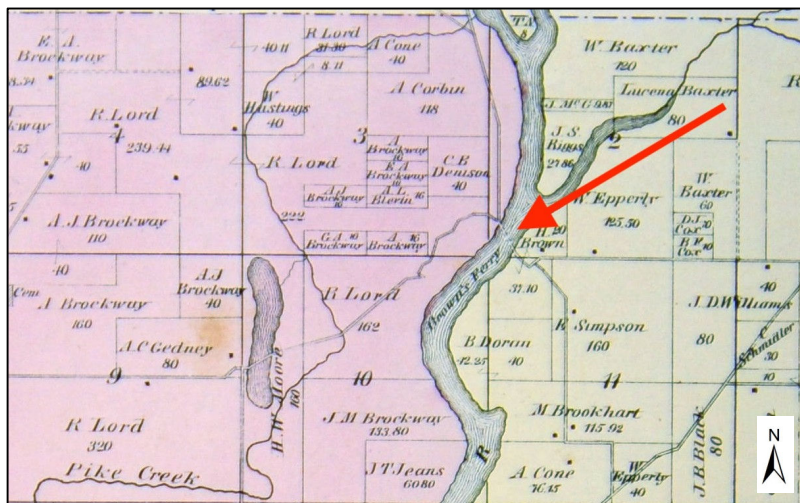


Figure 16. 1874 Plat Map showing location of Lord's Ferry (aka Brown's Ferry) and nearby Lord family landowners for which the ferry was named, before the 1879 McKeown Bridge was built. H. Brown, who owned the land at the southwest corner of Section 2, was the first to operate a ferry at this location as early as the 1850s. Source: Harrison and Warner 1874

After several attempts to bridge the Cedar River at various locations had failed to last longer than a year or two, plans to bridge the Cedar River with its first iron highway bridge gained steam in 1879. Locations for a bridge at either the Lord's Ferry Crossing or the "Saulsbury Ford" further north in Lake Township were debated. The Lord's Ferry Crossing was eventually chosen by county engineer J.E. Lyman as the most cost-effective location for the construction of the first Cedar River Bridge. The contract for the 4-span iron Pratt through truss superstructure was let to the King Bridge Company of Des Moines. The contract for the stone masonry piers and abutments went to J.B. Locke of Vinton, and the contract for the approaches went to H.H. Hines of Muscatine. The total cost of the bridge was \$19,327. The bridge was delayed over a month by a shortage of iron, but it was finally completed and accepted by the Board of Supervisors on December 26, 1879. The McKeown Bridge, as it was called, made Lord's Ferry Road (known also as the Muscatine-Cone Road) one of the important transportation arteries in the county. The bridge served Muscatine County for the next 71 years and would be the last of the nineteenth-century though truss iron bridges over the Cedar River to be replaced.⁹¹

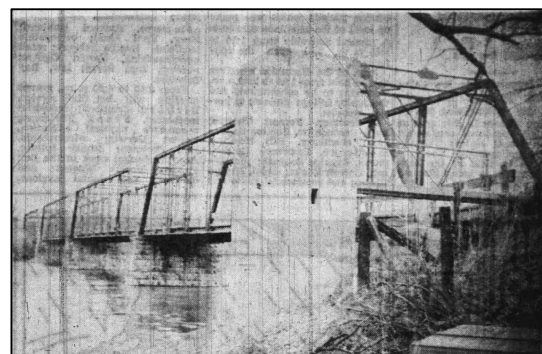


Figure 17. View of the 1879 McKeown Bridge just one year before it was replaced in 1951. The Pratt Through Truss superstructure was dismantled in 1952, leaving just the stone piers. Source: *Muscatine Journal*, April 1, 1950

Overman's Ferry/Tice's Ferry/Tice Bridge (Iowa City Road, Goshen Township) - Operated by Enoch Overman beginning in 1848, Overman's Ferry provided travelers on the Muscatine to Iowa City Road crucial ferrying service across the Cedar River. The ferry served travelers on foot and on horseback and all kinds of animal-drawn vehicles, including horse-drawn wagons and teams of oxen. Using a large flatboat, Overman plied back and forth across the Cedar River. Overman was on call 24 hours a day and even had his own post office. In 1866, Overman sold his property and the ferry business to Benjamin Tice and his oldest daughter, Martha Tice, who had moved from Boston to Muscatine County. Martha Tice took charge of the ferry business, first changing the name

⁹¹ *Muscatine Journal*, April, 23, 1879; *Muscatine Journal*, June 13, 1879.

to Tice's Ferry.⁹² According to information given by Martha Tice Devore in a 1953 interview a few years before her death:

A windlass turned by hand provided the power to pull the ferry boat back and forth across the wide stream. The boat ran on pulleys along a cable stretched between large oak trees on each side of the river. Martha Tice helped operate the boat from the time she was old enough to turn the windlass until she married Hiram Devore." During the winter months when the channel froze over, axes were used to break ice and keep path open for the ferry. . . .

Travelers along Penn Avenue road, which earlier had been known as Overman Ferry road, would ring a bell, shout and call when they reached the southwest landing until someone would come over to pick them up. The Tice home frequently served as an inn for weary travelers who arrived at nightfall and stayed over until the next day before resuming their journeys.

At the time the ferry was in operation, there was a blacksmith shop and store building located at the landing.⁹³

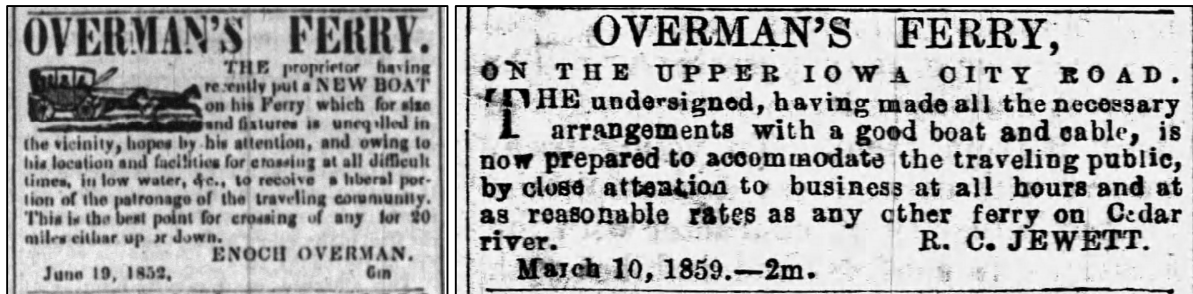


Figure 18. Left - Advertisement for Overman's Ferry, 1852, "the best point for crossing of any for 20 miles either up or down. -Enoch Overman;" Right - After Enoch Overman died in 1859, R.C. Jewett took over the ferry operation on the "Upper Iowa City Road," 1859. Sources: Left - *Muscatine Journal*, September 8, 1852; Right - *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, April 22, 1859

Overman's Ferry was so well known and used it had its own post office. After the Tices took over in 1869, the ferry landing included a blacksmith shop and a store.⁹⁴ In 1897, the Tice Ferry Bridge was built at this location, and it carried the Iowa City Road over the Cedar River until 1966.⁹⁵

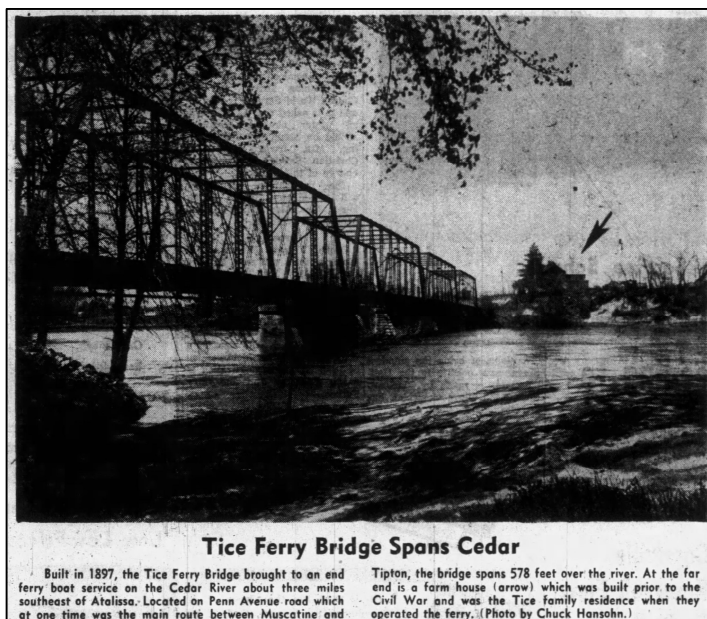


Figure 19. The Tice Ferry Bridge was built at the Tice Ferry crossing in 1897. The Pratt Through Truss bridge was removed in 1966, when the Dougherty Bridge was completed downstream. Source: *Muscatine Journal*, April 28, 1960

⁹² Ada Smith, "Ferry Once Plied Cedar River Where Tice Bridge Now Stands," *Muscatine Journal*, April 28, 1960.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Cedar River Bottoms Bridges – Gedney Lake Bridge and Pike Creek Bridge

The Cedar River itself was not the only obstacle to travel. A network of lakes and streams surrounded the river, known as the Cedar River bottoms and, together with the river, caused seasonal flooding and road washouts. The lakes and streams of the Cedar River bottoms required bridges too.

Gedney Lake Bridges – One of these Cedar River bottoms bodies of water was Gedney Lake, so named for the landowner, A.C. Gedney, on whose land the lake was located – Section 10 of Orono Township, about one mile west-southwest of Lord's Ferry crossing on the Cedar River. The first Gedney Lake bridge is shown on the 1874 Plat Map of Orono Township, which carried Lord's Ferry Road over the lake.⁹⁶ The first bridge was washed away during a spring flood in early 1884, thus the 1884 Plat Map of Orono township shows no bridge over Gedney Lake.⁹⁷ Plans for a new bridge were begun soon after.⁹⁸ The new wood and iron bridge over Gedney Lake was nearing completion in early 1885, but some were skeptical about the design. Nevertheless, the bridge held up for the next 44 years.⁹⁹

The spring of 1929 brought another flood to the Cedar River bottoms, this time threatening the 1885 Gedney Lake Bridge.¹⁰⁰ In 1929, the board of supervisors awarded A.F. Johnson of Lockridge, Iowa, the contract to build the new Gedney Lake Bridge replacement (ISIF #70-0018141). The bridge design called for two 40-foot approach spans added to the 110-foot span contracted the previous fall for a total of 190 feet. The board of supervisors made tentative plans to use the old bridge elsewhere in the county road system rather than dismantle it.¹⁰¹ In September 1929, bridge contractor A.F. Johnson started work on the concrete piers for the new 110-foot high Pratt Through Truss Bridge over Gedney Lake.¹⁰² The new bridge was completed in 1930.¹⁰³

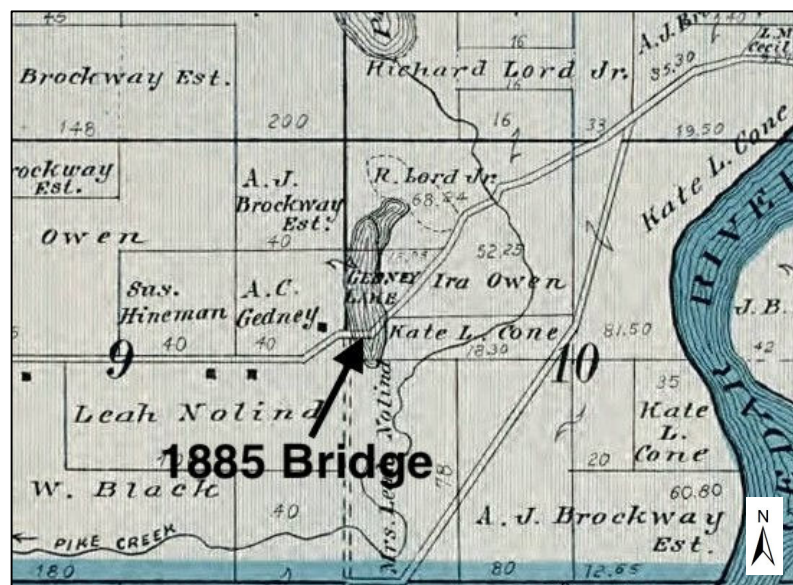


Figure 20. The 1899 Plat Map of Orono township show the 1885 bridge carrying Lord's Ferry Road over Gedney Lake. Source: Huebinger Surveying and Map Publishing Co, 1899

⁹⁶ Harrison and Warner, *Atlas of Muscatine County, Iowa*, 1874.

⁹⁷ O.C. Haskell, *Haskell's New Indexed Atlas of Muscatine County, Iowa* (Des Moines, IA: O.C. Haskell), 1884.

⁹⁸ *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, April 4, 1884.

⁹⁹ *Muscatine Journal*, February 5, 1885.

¹⁰⁰ *Columbus Gazette*, March 21, 1929.

¹⁰¹ *Muscatine Journal*, May 21, 1929.

¹⁰² *Muscatine Journal*, September 7, 1929.

¹⁰³ *Muscatine Journal*, September 8, 1976: After the new bridge over Gedney Lake was completed in 1974, the old alignment of County Trunk Road C (County Road G-28) would be vacated along with the 1930 Gedney Lake Bridge. By the late 1970s, the 1930 Gedney Lake Bridge area had been turned over to the Muscatine County Conservation Department to be developed for public recreational access.