

History of Panora

www.cityofpanora.com

July 4 1851

Established in 1851, Panora is the oldest community in Guthrie County - Iowa. The unusual naming of Panora is discussed in an antiquated Iowa Guide created by the Federal



Writers' Project in the 30's. The guide notes that pioneers viewing the site of the present town from the hillside exclaimed, "What a beautiful panorama!" Later, when the town was platted, the word "panorama" was contracted to Panora.

Panora was the original county seat of Guthrie County for many years. Finally losing the battle to retain that status in 1876, Panora became the location for the Guthrie County High School using the empty courthouse as the first school building while the new building was being constructed in 1876.



Another beautiful but bigger county school (referred to as the "new" high school in the photo) was constructed on Panora's town square in 1897 and welcomed many students until the county school closed its doors in 1931. The building was then home to Panora and Panora-Linden High students before being replaced with a new building on the west edge of town in 1974. In 1991, the abandoned high school building, which was listed on the National Historic Register, was razed and replaced with a community center.

The old mills, another part of Panora's rich history, once nestled on the banks of the Middle Raccoon River. The Reese Mill, constructed in 1852, was the first mill in the state located west of Des Moines. No longer standing, the Lake Panorama Dam now sits approximately in the location of the old mill.



The second mill in Panora, the Lenon Mill, was constructed in 1861-62 by the Cline brothers and E. Robinson. In 1877, converted into a flour and grist mill by Lenon & Reynolds, it remained in operation through the early part of the 20th century. One original grinding stone remains in the location of the old Lenon Mill to mark its historic spot at Lenon Mill Park.

Panora is located in eastern Guthrie County along the old Panora Speedway (now Highway 44 and part of the Western Skies Scenic Byway) and the old Milwaukee Railway which is now the Raccoon River Valley Recreational Trail. Surrounded by the natural beauty of the Raccoon River Valley, rolling hills, and impressive woodland areas.



Panora also has numerous Victorian homes, several historical buildings (like the historic Hotel Panora which has been restored and is now home to the B-Hive Restaurant and Coffeehouse) and sites (like the Guthrie County Historical Village), and plenty of old-world charm to please any historical enthusiast.



To learn more about Panora or Guthrie County and its surrounding communities, please visit the Guthrie County Historical Village located in Panora. Along with a research library, the Historical Village has photos, newspaper articles, and many artifacts documenting the history of this area.

If you are looking for information about a relative who might have lived in this county, please contact the Guthrie County Genealogical Society:

Guthrie County Genealogical Society
PO Box 96
Jamaica IA 50128-0096