



INTERPRETIVE PLAN

SILOS & SMOKESTACKS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA
America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership

Where the Story of American Agriculture Comes to Life.™

SILOS & SMOKESTACKS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Interpretive Plan



Prepared For
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An Affiliate of the National Park Service

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ABSTRACT

The story of agriculture in Iowa is the story of American agriculture and the expanding capacity of the American farms to feed the nation and the world. The Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area, comprised of 37 counties in northeast Iowa, was formed to support the interpretation of the region's heritage to its residents and visitors. Silos & Smokestacks does so by supporting and working to strengthen interpretive attractions and sites in their efforts. The goal is to build a balanced and cohesive interpretive presentation across the heritage area. This Interpretive Plan presents the approach and means Silos & Smokestacks will use to achieve this goal.

The Interpretive Plan gives Silos & Smokestacks a tool to effectively work with its partners. Partners are well represented in the Silos & Smokestacks organization, from the Board of Trustees, the main executive body of the heritage area, to the Partnership Panel which acts as a steering committee. Almost all of the heritage area's projects and programs are developed to provide technical and financial support for partners. Participation by partners is voluntary.

One of the main goals for the heritage area is the creation of a cohesive interpretive experience across the region. To this end, the *Interpretive Plan* presents a thematic structure that can be used by partners to align their interpretation with each other. The structure consists of major themes and subthemes of the region's historical development, including the following:

- *The Fertile Land* looks at the prehistory and natural history of the region.
- *Farmers and Families* examines the people who farm the land.
- *The Changing Farm* looks at the evolution of farms over time.
- *Higher Yields: The Science and Technology of Agriculture* discusses the revolutions in agriculture.
- *Farm to Factory: Agribusiness in Iowa* explores the evolution and role of agribusiness in shaping the character of the region.
- *Organizing for Agriculture: Policies and Politics* looks at the efforts made by Iowans to shape their own destinies.

The interpretive structure helps guide the delivery of information to residents and visitors. The *Interpretive Plan* also presents recommendations on how to

developed strategies for shaping the experience people have beyond the interpretation. Silos & Smokestacks wants the exploration of the heritage area to be meaningful, memorable, and satisfying. It is a goal for the heritage area that residents and visitors can easily orient themselves, learn to read the landscape, experience coordinated interpretive programming, and are provided with the means for independent discovery of the resources of the region. Overall the experience should be fun for everyone.

The Interpretive plan goes on to describe who is and will be experiencing the heritage area. These include residents, repeat visitors, students, travelers on motorcoach tours, heritage travelers, families traveling together, niche travelers, recreation seekers, international visitors, business travelers, through travelers, travel writers, guidebook editors, travel associations, and distance “visitors.” Specific recommendations are provided for how to reach out to each audience, to attend to the specific interests of each group.

The heritage development effort is largely driven by the projects Silos & Smokestacks will be undertaking with the support of its partners. In many cases, partners themselves will undertake certain projects with funding support from Silos & Smokestacks. The grant programs are a primary mechanism by which Silos & Smokestacks implements the *Interpretive Plan*. Projects for which partners will apply for funding will be measured against the interpretive plan. Those most closely in line with the intentions of this plan will be funded.

The *Interpretive Plan* presents and prioritizes a long list of projects to be undertaken. While the prioritization suggests a phasing schedule, the main intention is to focus the efforts of organizations, including Silos & Smokestacks, that have limited (if any) staff, budgets, and capacities. Four priority categories were established.

- Ongoing Projects are those that are currently underway;
- Core projects are those that Silos & Smokestacks and its partners will undertake as soon as possible;
- Needed Projects are important, but partners, not Silos & Smokestacks, will take the lead on implementation; and
- Supplemental Projects are intended to enhance the range of activities available for visitors, improving the long-term sustainability of the heritage area, but these projects are low priority.

The projects were categorized in the following manner:

Ongoing Projects

- *Graphic Identity*
- *Strategic Investment Areas*
- *CampSilos Educational Website*

- *CampSilos Excursions Website*
- *Farm-to-Table Tours*

Core Projects, Lead by Silos & Smokestacks

- *Sign Design Guidelines*
- *Gateway Signs*
- *Wayfinding Signs*
- *Community Identification Signs*
- *Place Identification Signs*
- *General Brochure*
- *Thematic Brochures*
- *Periodical Newsletter*
- *Exhibits at Partnering Organizations*
- *CampSilos Online Professional Development Workshop*

Needed Projects, Lead by Partners

- *Heritage Byway Signs*
- *Information Signs and Kiosks*
- *Interpretive Exhibits*
- *Regional Brochures*
- *Heritage Byway Brochures*
- *Field Guide*
- *Community Interpretation by Partners*
- *Geographic Clusters of Partners*
- *Thematic Clusters*
- *Heritage Byways*
- *Best Practices Workshop Series*
- *Lectures, Roundtable Discussions, and Forums*
- *Events*
- *Passport Program*
- *Made in Iowa*

Supplemental Projects

- *Audio Tour (revision)*
- *Children's Activity Book*
- *Community Interpretation*
- *Oral History Program*
- *Living History Characters*
- *"Dealer Days"*
- *"Farming in the News" Exhibits*
- *"Future Farm" Exhibit*

For a full listing and discussion of the projects, please turn to Chapter 7 – Implementation.

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Chapter One INTRODUCTION



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The story of American agriculture is fascinating, touching every aspect of the story of America, itself. Most Americans, though, may not appreciate the far-reaching impacts, the interesting personages, social issues, and the

technological advancements that have played role in the ongoing development of this heritage. And yet, this story is one of the main chapters in the history of America's wealth and world leadership. This, then, is the challenge: how can the people of 37 counties in northeast Iowa convey the breadth and scope of that story, in a meaningful and compelling way, so that many visitors will seek out this place to enjoy and learn from the interpretive attractions, communities, and landscapes of this splendid place?

If efforts succeed, tourism will increase as a part of the economy, encouraging diversification from a base of farming and manufacturing. Moreover, the region's children will have opportunities to learn in new and exciting ways, and the quality of life will benefit from the programs and events that grow from this effort.

Rising to meet this challenge is the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area, recognized by Congress, with a mission to coordinate interpretive efforts of attractions, sites, and communities across this region in telling the story of American agriculture. This interpretive plan will provide a framework for collaboration with partners and for facilitation of future interpretation projects.



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

Interpretation presents stories about the region's heritage, connecting people—residents and visitors—with places.

Silos & Smokestacks

Silos & Smokestacks, designated as America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership of Northeast Iowa, is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Waterloo, Iowa. Its main role is to support the interpretive and educational efforts of attractions and sites in the heritage area. As a National Heritage Area, Silos & Smokestacks can undertake its tasks with financial and technical support from the National Park Service. It will operate as a collaborative foundation, seeking opportunities for partners to work together and providing grants to help implement projects. Participation by partnering attractions, sites, and communities is completely voluntary. Silos & Smokestacks will strive to be a forum for cooperation, a cheerleader for key projects, and a supporting hand for organizations wanting to improve their interpretive and educational programs.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

Grain elevators are the region's skyscrapers. Standing tall, these structures are a visible reminder of the connection between agriculture and agribusiness.

Interpretive Mission of Silos & Smokestacks

The interpretive mission of Silos & Smokestacks is to ensure that residents and visitors alike have the opportunity to learn of the significant contributions that the people and the land of northeast Iowa have made to America's agricultural and agriculture-related industrial legacy. Currently residents know that agriculture and agriculture-related industries were the dominant force in Iowa culture. However, how many understand the role that Iowa's agriculture has played in world events? How many know of Iowa's role in America's agricultural legacy? How many know that a man named John Deere built the first steel plow, and that it was this technological advancement that allowed farmers to break the prairie and plant crops in the dark soils of the Midwest? Well-developed interpretation can help residents and visitors explore this region's heritage, gain deeper understandings of the heritage, and reflect on their experiences.

The heritage area currently exists as a disparate collection of attractions and sites that offer interpretation on a variety of topics related to agriculture. Overall, these attractions tell most of the story of Iowa agriculture, but the presentation is uneven from

The interpretive mission of Silos & Smokestacks is to ensure that residents and visitors alike have the opportunity to learn of the significant contributions that the people and the land of northeast Iowa have made to America's agricultural legacy.

county to county. Silos & Smokestacks is in a position to present an interpretive vision for the heritage area. Supporting and building on each attraction's initiatives, Silos & Smokestacks will encourage balanced, cohesive interpretation across the heritage area.

Scope of the Project

In the spring of 2001, Silos & Smokestacks retained John Milner Associates, Inc., assisted by Compass, Watson Heritage Strategies, and Brian Clark



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

In towns like Eldora, rural and town life intersect on the main street.

Associates, to develop an interpretive plan for the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area. An interpretive plan steering committee was established to work with the consultants. The committee included representatives interpretive and educational organizations in the heritage area, local private sector participants, and governmental offices at the local, state, and national levels, including the Iowa Department of Transportation, and the National Park Service, through its Midwest Regional Office. This interpretive plan offers a starting point for collaborative interpretation across

the region. Four workshops were conducted over seven months with heritage area attractions and partners representing a range of interpretive expertise. The workshops were organized to encourage conversations between the consultant team and the workshop participants, and among the participants, themselves. The goal was to obtain input for a plan that is flexible enough to serve the needs of a great variety of attractions and solid enough to enable Silos & Smokestacks to undertake projects and achieve results.

Participants in the workshops included a substantial number of representatives from existing interpretive attractions, and individuals familiar with the region's agricultural heritage. In addition, a representative of the State Historical Society of Iowa and representatives from potential new facilities also participated. The aim was to have a group that simultaneously could address what should be interpreted conceptually and how interpretation might be collaboratively implemented.

General Approach

The intention of the interpretive plan is to give Silos & Smokestacks and its partners the framework work effectively together. The partners will retain primary responsibility for presenting the interpretation. Silos & Smokestacks will help facilitate the enhancement of interpretation across the region, working with and supporting the attractions and sites. This approach builds upon the strong foundation of existing attractions and sites and their efforts to build a compelling experience of agriculture in Iowa.

Goals for the Interpretive Program

At present, people traveling through the heritage area may have questions about the landscape they see. What are the different crops in the fields, what are the different farmstead buildings used for, and why are so many of the fields square? They may not know about the rich heritage, the revolutions of agriculture, or the stature of Iowa agriculture in world food markets. The purpose of this interpretive plan is to propose educational and interpretive strategies that will help the residents and visitors find the answers to such questions. The following goals for the interpretive plan were used in developing and refining the interpretive strategy for the heritage area.

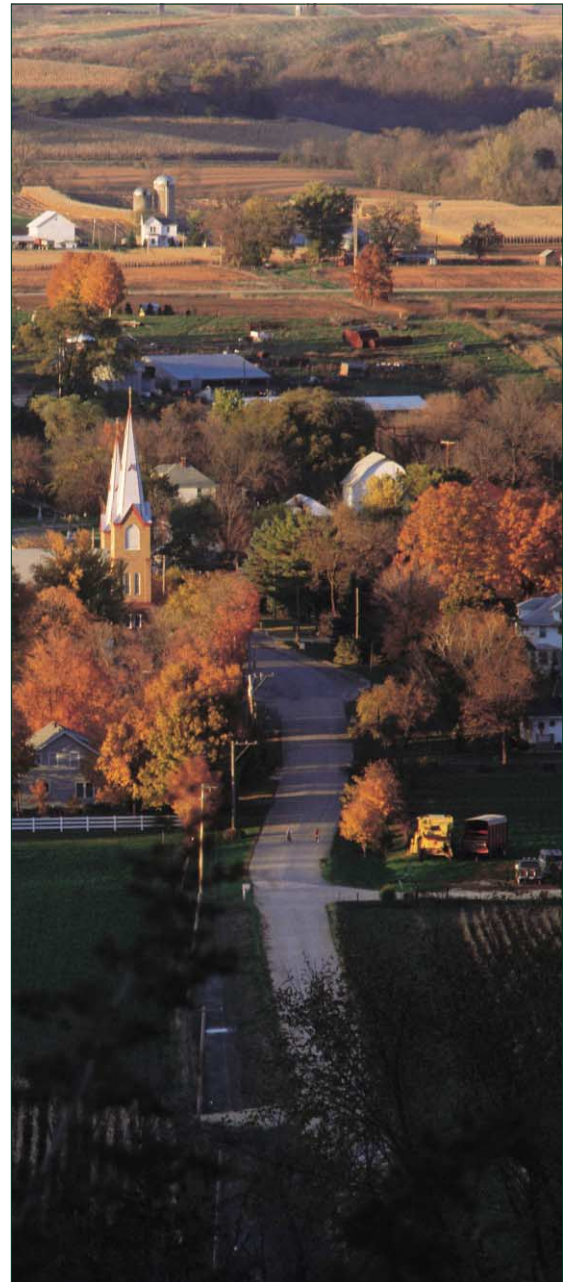
The interpretive plan for the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area will provide:

Dynamic Vision...

Offer a dynamic vision of how the stories of the national heritage area could be told using the historic resources and dramatic landscapes of northeast Iowa as the stage—a vision that will inspire interest, excitement, and commitment to implementation among Silos & Smokestacks partners.

Focus...

Provide guidance to the Silos & Smokestacks Board of Trustees and Partnership Panel in setting priorities for activities to be supported within the heritage area. Silos & Smokestacks will undertake projects and



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

The towns of northeast Iowa present excellent opportunities for interpreting the economic, civic and social structures of farming communities.



Photograph: Silas & Smokestacks

This scarecrow couple helps make a visit to the Cedar Valley Arboretum and Botanic Gardens more interesting and fun.

encourage projects undertaken by others that support the enhancement of the heritage area.

A Recognizable Presence...

Raise awareness of offerings of heritage area partners among residents and visitors.

Fun, Surprise, and Suspense...

Make the experience of the heritage area fun, surprising, and compelling them tell their friends about it and perhaps return for a repeat visit.

Capitalize on the special, rural character of northeast Iowa as a way to attract the attention of residents, travelers, and the media.

Movement...

Link interpretation and programs among heritage area partners to encourage visitors to travel to multiple destinations.. Due to the large size of the heritage area

and the complexity of the story of agriculture, visitors will need to visit many attractions and sites to obtain a well-rounded understanding of the story.

Community Involvement...

Provide opportunities for building community commitment and support for the heritage area and its partners. Since many of the attractions and sites have grown from community efforts, such as county historical society museums, many communities are involved in preservation and interpretation. Other communities have valuable experiences to offer visitors and residents. Public outreach and community support will be important to the implementation of the plan and ongoing interpretive efforts.

Flexibility...

Improve the flexibility of the interpretation to meet the diverse needs of the heritage area.

Organization of the Plan

The first two chapters of this plan describe Silos & Smokestacks, the organization responsible for facilitation of heritage area development. Chapter One introduces the organization and reviews its goals for interpretation. Chapter Two provides background information that describes Silos & Smokestacks, its Partnership Panel, and the elements of the interpretive system described in this plan: attractions, sites, and the landscape.

The next three chapters present the proposed framework for action. Chapter Three describes the interpretive themes of the region that encompass the broad trends of the region's heritage. Chapter Four identifies the desired visitor experience: what visitors will feel, do, think, and remember by visiting the heritage area. What visitors experience is as important as what they learn. Chapter Five discusses the audiences that Silos & Smokestacks can target for marketing and for interpretation development. Effective storytelling begins with an understanding of who is listening, watching, and participating.

The last chapter, Implementation, presents information on the proposed actions that Silos & Smokestacks will take and proposed actions that it should collaborate with its partners to take. Silos & Smokestacks will strategically target its efforts to these actions.

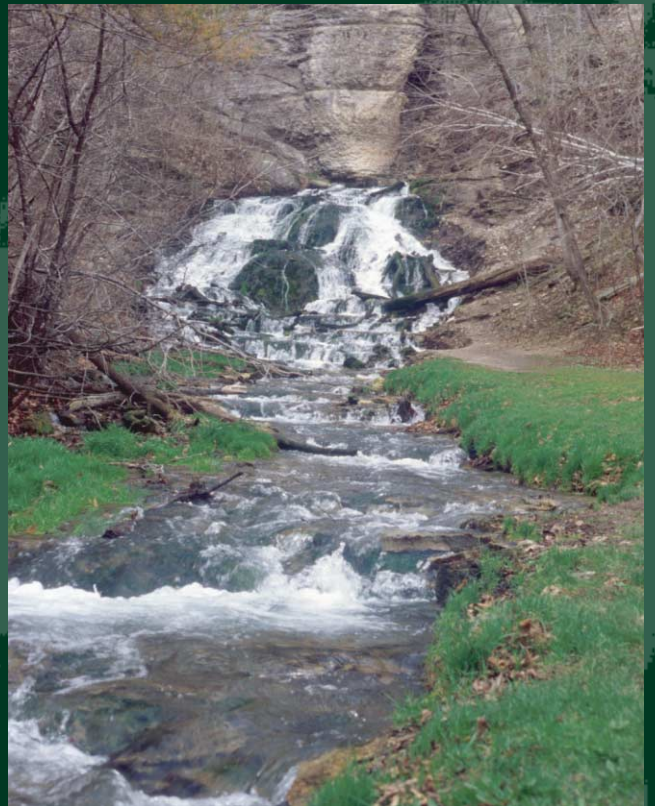


Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

Working with Silos & Smokestacks, site and attractions in the heritage area can maintain, expand, and develop new projects and programs. Collaboration is the key to success.

Chapter Two

OVERVIEW OF SILOS & SMOKESTACKS



CHAPTER TWO

OVERVIEW OF SILOS & SMOKESTACKS

The history of American agriculture is a history of hard-working people producing goods from their own labor. The Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area follows this tradition by supporting the self-reliance of its partners—the attractions, sites, and communities of the region. “Partner” is the key term because all work undertaken in support of the heritage area is based on voluntary participation, all parties on an equal footing with one another. Like the evolution of a successful agricultural system in northeast Iowa, the success of this partnership depends upon the collaboration and support of everyone involved.

Working alongside these partners is Silos & Smokestacks, an organization that depends upon the strength of its partners and is devoted to enhancing their efforts. This chapter describes the foundation of heritage development in northeast Iowa: the Silos & Smokestacks organization, the partners, and the landscapes in which all of the stories of the region are set.

The Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area

History

Heritage development in northeast Iowa grew out of the recognition that the region, with its many resources, has a unique experience to offer its residents and visitors,



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

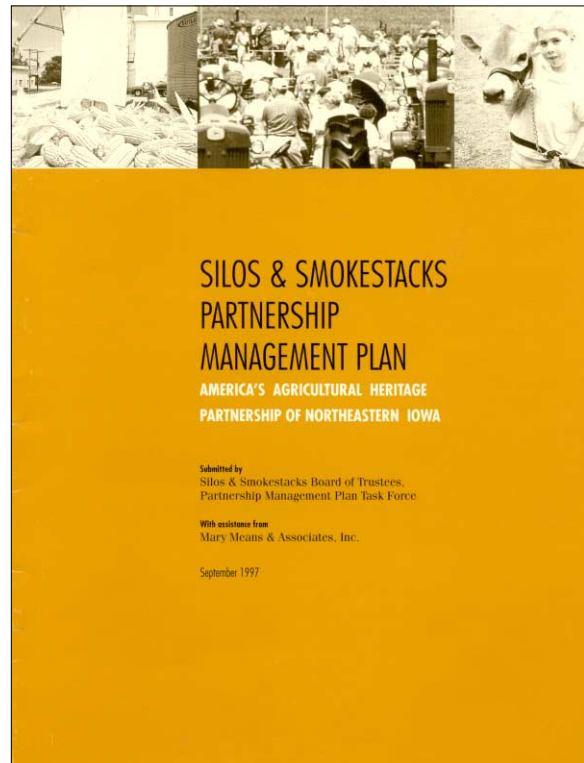
Interpretation programs can connect docents, residents, and visitors, creating opportunities for shared learning.

above and beyond the offering of any one site. Starting in Waterloo and Cedar Falls, early partners undertook the mission of developing a comprehensive way to convey Iowa's agricultural story. Their efforts soon expanded to 17 surrounding counties and later to 37 counties. All told, the national heritage area covers a region of more than 20,000 square miles. This widening of mission and scope came with the understanding that Iowa's agricultural story is not confined to a few communities. Only a critical mass of sites, communities, and landscapes, taken as a whole, could tell the story of American agriculture in Iowa in a way that is both comprehensive and compelling.

Silos & Smokestacks, a private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was created in 1991 to recognize, preserve, and promote the region's heritage. In an inventory done in cooperation with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Silos & Smokestacks identified dozens of sites that could help to tell the story of American agriculture. Since its inception, Silos & Smokestacks has attracted the interest, participation, and support of elected and appointed officials, business and community leaders, local and state tourism and economic development professionals, members of the farming community, and residents. And today, after ten years of activity, Silos & Smokestacks stands on solid ground for further development

Legislation

Responding to the inventory and other early activities, Congress passed Public Law 103-138, authorizing the National Park Service (NPS) to analyze the feasibility of heritage development in northeast Iowa. The study, entitled *Special Resource Study, Cedar Valley, Iowa*, and completed in September of 1995, found that the resources and heritage of the region were nationally significant and identified several alternative approaches for their interpretation and management. In October of 1996, Public Law 104-333 codified some of these recommendations by linking Silos & Smokestacks with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and calling for the preparation of a partnership management plan. The Secretary of Agriculture signed the resulting plan, *Silos & Smokestacks Partnership Management Plan*, on July 8, 1998. It sets forth the structure of management and the relationship of Silos & Smokestacks with its partners. It describes their respective roles and responsibilities in terms of opportunities, and in the process, confirms the partnership among Silos



The Silos & Smokestacks Partnership Management Plan presents the foundation for coordinated improvements in interpretation, visitor experience, and partner development.

& Smokestacks, the USDA, the NPS, the state of Iowa, and a host of other sites and attractions. Silos & Smokestacks is the connecting element of a

regional partnership network, collectively known as America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership, that includes federal, state, and local agencies, private enterprise, professional associations, and volunteer organizations.

Though Silos & Smokestacks was assigned to work with the USDA, after a time it became apparent that the heritage development efforts were more in line with the national heritage area program operated by the NPS. The Omnibus Parks Technical Corrections Act of 2000 authorized designation of the region as a national heritage area, placing it in the ranks of the other national heritage areas across the country.



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

Farming is a major component of the nation's heritage. With fewer people engaged in farming, this heritage will fade without the efforts of educational and interpretive venues such as those in northeast Iowa.

Finances and Funding

With designation as a national heritage area in 2000, Silos & Smokestacks has access to a Congressional authorization of up to \$1 million annually and up to \$10 million total until the federal designation expires in 2012. For the organization to receive this funding, Congress must appropriate actual funds each year (an "authorization" is only a promise of a maximum amount, if any). Further, Silos & Smokestacks must match the funding dollar for dollar with non-federal funds it has earned or raised. This fundraising is part of a larger effort for the organization to become self-sustaining within the next ten years.

The Organizational Structure of Silos & Smokestacks

Silos & Smokestacks operates by building a coalition of supporters and partners to undertake regional initiatives. Achieving this requires the efforts and drive of dedicated staff supported by a bank of expertise provided by Silos & Smokestacks partners. Silos & Smokestacks can draw aid and guidance from its partners, starting with its Board of Trustees, and the advisory body known as the Partnership Panel. *Ad hoc* subcommittees and individual partners pitch in as needed for specific projects.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees comprises progressive leaders of the region. Members offer solid experience, insights, and networks to be employed as necessary to achieve the ambitious agenda Silos & Smokestacks has set. The board represents a cross-section of the region's leadership, with members drawn from major local corporations, private-sector professionals, municipal officials, state agencies, local education institutions, and the farming community.

Partnership Panel

The Partnership Panel, formed in October of 2000, is an advisory body representing a cross-section of the heritage area's partners. Federal, state, and local public entities are represented, as are the region's prominent interpretive facilities and several private entities that play important roles in the heritage area. The guidance offered by the Partnership Panel is invaluable, as the panel provides an influential forum for refining programs and developing strategies for future endeavors.

The Partnership Panel represents:

- Prominent interpretive facilities
- Private sector professionals
- Tourism professionals
- Iowa State University
- University of Northern Iowa
- Farm Bureau
- State agencies
- National Park Service
- USDA

Strategic Partnerships

The *Silos & Smokestacks Partnership Management Plan* established a framework for making investments among the partners of the heritage area. It created a multi-level approach that would allow partners to self-select into working relationships with Silos & Smokestacks that best suit their needs. Potential partners can apply to become a **Strategic Investment Partner (SIP)**, or if sites in geographic proximity choose to work together in a collective partnership, they can apply to become a **Strategic Investment Area (SIA)**. SIAs have a representative management organization coordinating efforts of SIA members. Entities interested in becoming partners, but which lack the means to participate fully as an SIP, can join Silos & Smokestacks as an **Affiliate Site**, or as a **Point of Interest**. The first two designations are described in the *Silos & Smokestacks Partnership Management Plan*, the latter two are new designations that were developed at the end of 2001.

In 1998, Silos & Smokestacks began to develop a pilot SIA, known as the Country Heritage Community (CHC), in Winneshiek, Allamakee, Clayton, and Fayette Counties. With technical and financial support from Silos & Smokestacks, and financial support from the R. L. McElroy Trust and others, CHC began to undertake a variety of projects. The most successful was the annual Maize Maze, a labyrinth of corn rows, now imitated as a popular summer farm entertainment across the country. A heritage byway was established, the *Little Tour on the Big River*, accompanied by a brochure that includes interpretive information and a map of the sites and communities

along the Mississippi River. CHC launched a series of tours of farms and communities called “Living an Iowa Farm Experience” (L.I.F.E.) Tours. These are coordinated motorcoach tours with step-on guides that aim to capitalize on the variety of farm experiences available in the four counties of the SIA. The CHC website, www.silosandsmokestacks.org/chc, provides information on the SIA and its upcoming farm tour packages, events, and programs.

The second SIA, the Central Iowa River Partnership (CIRP), was designated in August of 2001. The focus of the SIA is the communities along the Iowa River, a historic lifeline through the region, and the railroad communities such as Ackley. These communities are collectively located in Franklin, Hardin, and Wright Counties. The CIRP is developing its heritage strategies.

Key Terms

SIA: A collection of attractions, sites, and communities joined together under a new management entity for the purposes of coordinated interpretation, programming, and marketing. The new entity is created to work with Silos & Smokestacks and to undertake independent programs.

SIP: an attraction, site, or community that has joined Silos & Smokestacks as a partner committed to supporting and being supported by Silos & Smokestacks.

Affiliate Site: an attraction, site, or community that enrolls in a partnership with Silos & Smokestacks.

Point of Interest: an attraction, site, or community enrolled in the minimum level of partnership with Silos & Smokestacks.

Also in August of 2001, the first set of SIPs were designated. These include the Amana Heritage Society, Amana; the Fossil & Prairie Park, Rockford; the Hartman Reserve Nature Center, Cedar Falls; the Mississippi River Museum, Dubuque; the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, Cedar Rapids; the University of Northern Iowa Museums, Cedar Falls; the Living History Farms, Urbandale; the Grout Museum District, Waterloo; and The History Center, Cedar Rapids.

As the SIA, SIP, and similar programs become more fully implemented, Silos & Smokestacks will direct most of its efforts to entities that participate. Throughout the rest of this interpretive plan, the term “Partner” denotes an entity that has become part of an SIA, or has been designated an SIP,

Affiliate Site, or Point of Interest. In this manner, a “Partner” is distinguished from a “Potential Partner,” which is an organization within the heritage area that can provide interpretation or visitor experience, but has not joined in a formal partnership with Silos & Smokestacks. Each Potential Partner is encouraged to participate as a formal Partner.

Potential Partners

Self-sustainability depends in large part on the partnerships Silos & Smokestacks forges with attractions, sites, and communities, and local, state, and federal entities. Currently, all attractions, sites, and communities are considered potential partners in the development of the heritage area.

Partnership is becoming a more formal arrangement, requiring a Memorandum of Understanding stating terms and benefits of participation. Interested organizations will have the opportunity to become a Partner voluntarily with Silos & Smokestacks. Such a partnership can offer an exchange of ideas, expertise, advice, encouragement, marketing, funding, and support. Here are the definitions of the kinds of potential partners with which Silos & Smokestacks is currently working:

- **Attractions** are the primary interpretive and visitor experience venues in the heritage area. These include public and private, for-profit and nonprofit organizations that provide visitors with an educational or recreational experience. These include museums, visitor centers, nature centers, historic places that are open to the public, and parks, among others.
- **Sites** are the significant resources—whether structures or landscapes—where history took place. These may or may not be open to the public. Such places help to round out the visitor experience by providing occasional access to authentic historic or other significant resources. Interpretation is not the primary focus of these places but the experiences available there support the interpretation offered elsewhere.
- **Communities** undergird the other two types of partners. Quite simply, communities are where the people are: they are the living generators of heritage, and they contribute to interpretation of that heritage. The sites and attractions celebrate the communities, who supply visitors in return.
- **Government entities** are potential partners in different ways. These partners provide financial support and technical assistance for the heritage area itself, in addition to the other types of partners.

Becoming a Partner:

Currently all attractions, sites, and communities are considered potential partners. To become a partner, each entity will have to apply for designation as part of an SIA, as an SIP, an Affiliate Site, or as a Point of Interest.

Diversity is the main characteristic of the group of potential partners available to Silos & Smokestacks. Across the heritage area’s 20,000 square miles, there are more than 200 organizations. They range from small community historical societies with no paid staff to well-funded, high-end facilities that offer a multitude of visitor experiences and enjoy much community support. Some organizations have been around for decades, and others do not yet exist formally outside of a vision held by a few enterprising people. This diversity suggests a great range of needs, in terms of what Silos & Smokestacks can provide for them, but they also represent the great opportunity available in the heritage area.

These organizations collectively possess a great wealth of knowledge and expertise: knowledge of the region’s heritage and expertise in the interpretation of that heritage. This is knowledge and expertise that can be shared among the partners for the mutual benefit of all, and thus to the benefit of the heritage area as a whole. Silos & Smokestacks will provide the forum and impetus for collaboration. Organizations that need help with

building membership may be able to offer advice on planning exhibits. Others that may need help developing brochures may be able to provide advice on building a board of trustees. Silos & Smokestacks is well positioned to build the necessary links among its partners and help each take advantage of the collaboration that is possible.

Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks



Rural towns are the central gathering places of communities. They are also gathering places for visitors. Heritage tourism can help spur downtown revitalization.

Silos & Smokestacks will use its national heritage area status and funding support to help build the interpretive and educational capacity of the partners, helping them to deliver well-organized visitor experience opportunities, and to build their strength in operating their organizations, attracting visitors, and ensuring member participation and community support. For this, Silos & Smokestacks offers its partners access to funding and technical support that might not otherwise be available.

As a requirement for partnership, each prospective entity will prepare a concise heritage interpretation plan similar in concept to the heritage development strategy required for SIAs. The heritage interpretation plan will explain how the site fits into the heritage area, what themes are to be addressed, how themes are to be presented, and how linkages to other sites are to be implemented.

Key Programs

Targeted Investments: Grants

In order to help SIAs, SIPs, Affiliate Sites, Points of Interest, and potential partners improve their interpretive and educational efforts and build their own programs and projects, Silos & Smokestacks has developed several grant programs. This will, in essence, give funds to those who currently provide interpretation and visitor experience. Silos & Smokestacks will institute three grant programs: a general grant fund to which any organization in the heritage area can apply, and programs to which only SIPs and SIAs can apply. The general grant program, to be offered annually, was inaugurated in the spring of 2001. The response among sites was tremendous. Thirty-eight projects were proposed with a total value of more than half a million dollars. Using criteria that focused on development and enhancement goals for the

heritage area, the Partnership Panel selected thirteen projects for the \$150,000 program. Grant programs for SIPs and SIAs will be implemented in coming years as funding becomes available. The general grant program will be the model for subsequent grant programs: funding will be offered to support projects that are directly tied to goals for the heritage area. This interpretive plan, paired with the *Silos & Smokestacks Partnership Management Plan*, states the intended actions to be supported and undertaken by Silos & Smokestacks. Future grant programs will evaluate grant proposals based on their applicability to projects and programs listed here.

Programs

Recognizing the marketing and informational potential of the internet, Silos & Smokestacks launched its website at www.silosandsmokestacks.org in 1999. The site provides basic information on the region and specific information about partners, events, educational programs, and upcoming tours. It also provides partners with important administrative information on grant programs and other resources that Silos & Smokestacks makes available for partners. Two important links on the site, and a third in development, take users to the webpages for Camp Silos, an educational site for area school children and teachers; Camp Silos Excursions, a site focusing on partners and tour itineraries; and ProResources, an online document clearinghouse.

- **Camp Silos** is an educational website that encourages children to learn about the development of American agriculture and how it affects their lives. For teachers, it provides interactive lesson planning that conforms to the national standards for teaching history, science, technology, information literacy, and language arts. The site provides information on America's agricultural heritage that meets these standards, allowing teachers to adapt lesson plans to their own curricula. The website will offer links to sites with online workshops for teachers on professional development.
- **Camp Silos Excursions** is a website under development that will provide teachers with lesson plans, background information and web links to the cultural and historical resources of the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area. The site directly links the physical resources of the heritage area's tourism sites with web-based student activities and teaching lesson plans utilizing motivational graphics, photos, and games. Access will be provided to digitized information about Iowa's art, artifacts, and documents. The intention is for the site to become a learning resource for classroom

2001 Grant Program Criteria:

- Addresses goals of Silos & Smokestacks.
- Project timeline.
- Builds regional capacity for economic, social, environmental, or educational opportunities.
- Educational benefit.
- Demonstrates collaboration.
- Ability to attract visitors.
- Shows a plan for sustainability beyond two years.
- Feasibility and impact.
- Contribution by others (matching funds).
- Plan for evaluation.

teachers in Iowa and throughout the world.

- **ProResources** is an online clearinghouse for information on the heritage area. The site provides teachers, tour operators, museum personnel, interpreters, and others with documents prepared by Silos & Smokestacks to help them learn about the region and plan trips to the heritage area. The documents available on the site will change over time to meet the evolving needs of Silos & Smokestacks. Current documents include *Touring for Success*, a checklist to aid tourism professionals and laypeople interested in developing tours that help tell the story of American agriculture, and *Country Heritage Community Field Trip Guide*, a field trip guide for teachers and students that features field trip activities to historic and natural attractions, museums, and educational opportunities.

While the main role of Silos & Smokestacks is to support its partners in their efforts, thus building the capacity of the region, another important role is to

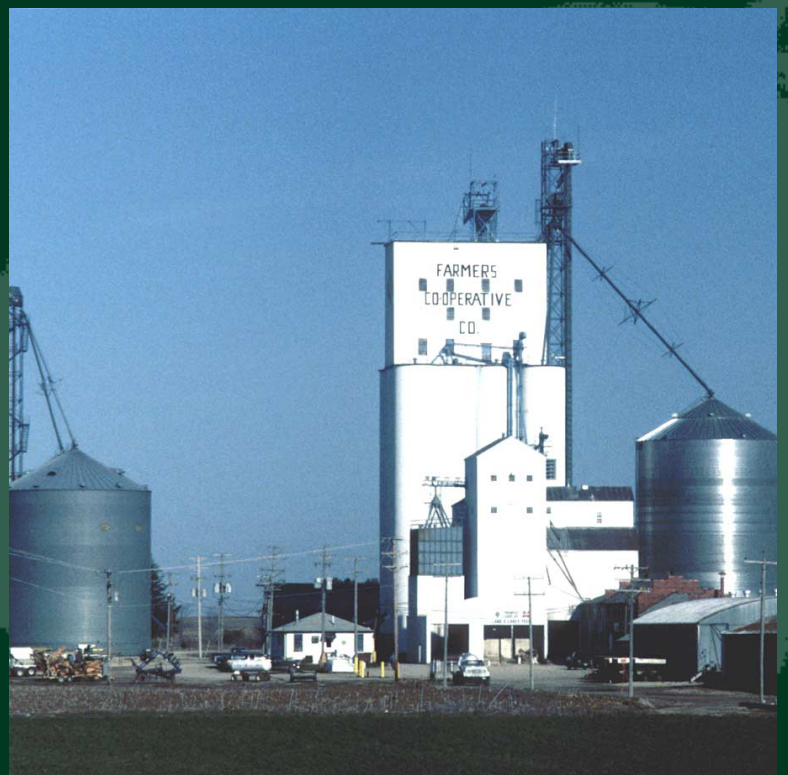
bridge the gaps between sites and to provide general support for all sites equally. The grant programs described above relate to the first role. Most of the recommendations in this Interpretive Plan support both roles. Silos & Smokestacks has been working on both roles simultaneously. An important project for supporting the attractions, sites, and communities of the region is the launching of the Camp Silos website, described above.



This image from the CampSilos website shows the types of high-quality learning and instruction opportunities available through Silos & Smokestacks.

Chapter Three

SIGNIFICANCE AND THEMATIC STRUCTURE



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Photograph: Archives of the Ireton Historical Society

Plows turned under vast stretches of the prairie in the 1800s, exposing the topsoil to erosion. Today, no-till farming and prairie reconstruction are helping to preserve topsoil and the long-term fertility of the land.

Silos & Smokestacks presents the following discussion of the landscapes of the heritage area, its significance, and the thematic structure. These are presented to provide the basis for development of interpretation across the heritage area. The landscape allowed and guided everything that has happened in northeast Iowa. The statement of significance identifies why the heritage of this region is important to residents of the region, state, nation, and world. The thematic structure presents the primary themes of historical development, and the accompanying subthemes flesh out the stories around the heritage.

The Landscape

The landscape of the 37-county region was created by two episodes of water, in various forms, inundating the region. The first was the deposition of sedimentary rock when much of the Midwest was covered by inland seas. The second was the deposition of glacial drift (deposits of clay, silt, sand, gravel, and boulders) resulting from successive glacial events occurring during the most recent ice ages. In some locations this drift is more than 300 feet thick.

Today, the land continues to change as rain and surface water wear away the surface, exposing older rock formations. These factors contributed to the three general types of landforms found today: the Des Moines Lobe in the western portion, the Iowan Surface in the central portion, and the Paleozoic Plateau in the eastern portion.

“While mountain peaks and canyon depths boldly hail us with rugged, colorful proclamations of their origins, Iowa’s land quietly narrates its geological legends for those who stop to listen.”

- Jean C. Prior, *Landforms of Iowa*, 1991.

The Des Moines Lobe, named for the part of the state affected by the most recent glacial event, is characterized by level terrain, fresh glacial drift, bands of knob-and-kettle terrain (irregular, glaciated landscape of disconnected mounds and poorly drained depressions), and poor surface drainage creating natural lakes, bogs, and marshes. The Iowan Surface region is characterized by gently rolling terrain, thin loess (windblown silt with minor amounts of sand and clay) over glacial drift, and karst topography (topography of sinkholes, caves, and subterranean drainage) with stepped erosion surfaces. In the south-central portion, the land exhibits the isolated oblong hills and drainage patterns known as the Paha Ridges. In the east, the Paleozoic Plateau is made of bedrock-dominated terrain, plateau-like uplands, deeply entrenched valleys, and karst topography with dissected terrain (a landscape carved by a network of streams, dividing the land into hills and valleys).

Across these landforms cut numerous streams and rivers, each draining into the Mississippi River. Most of the rivers tend to run parallel to each other from the northwest to the southeast with tributaries entering at right angles. Towns tended to form along these rivers at falls and rapids that hindered water-borne travel further upstream but supported milling operations. Overland transportation of goods and people began and ended at these towns, linking roads and wagons with rivers and boats.

These towns were the transition points that linked into the network of regional transportation that was river-based early on, but which was later supplanted by railroads.

Overlain upon the topography were the flora that enriched much of the glacial drift and dominated most of the landscape: tallgrass prairie. Covering



A core component of interpretation is demonstrating the interconnectedness of agriculture, agribusiness, and industry. Facilities, such as the Dairy Center of the Northeast Iowa Community Based Dairy Foundation, located near Calmar, demonstrate these connections in interesting and informative ways.

Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

most of northeast Iowa, tallgrass prairie species contributed to the rich loamy soils that proved ideal for growing maize and other agricultural products. Such prairie lands occupied much of the open ground. Trees and shrubs filled the moist, protected ravines and lowlands. Settling into the region after the last glaciers, these species dominated the landscape for thousands of years. American Indians learned to use the landscape to their advantage, hunting and producing goods that supported their lifestyles.

With the introduction of European styles of agriculture, and later, mechanized practices, humans began to effect a wholesale change upon the land. Prairie lands and drained wetlands were plowed for cultivation, and woodlands were timbered. Today, upwards of 90 percent of the land is in active cultivation. Close to 100 percent of the land has been affected by human activity, contributing to the dynamic processes that have shaped the landscape we see today.

Statement of Significance

The heritage of Silos & Smokestacks exemplifies the dominant trends of American agriculture, trends that underlie the expanding capacity of American farms to feed the nation and the world. As the heart of the American tallgrass prairie, northeast Iowa's terrain includes some of the planet's most fertile soils. This terrain varies from the gently undulating landscape in the central and western portions of the region to the hills, bluffs, and steep valleys in the vicinity of the Mississippi River.

Centuries of occupation have further influenced this landscape. American Indians established villages and agricultural fields along the river

corridors for hundreds of years while using fire to manage the prairie uplands for hunting. Following initial contacts in the 1700s, settlers of European descent spread rapidly through the region in the mid-nineteenth century. Through technological change, expanding capabilities, and hard work, peoples of diverse backgrounds established themselves upon a vast expanse of farms, turning northeast Iowa's fertile lands into one of the most agriculturally productive regions of the nation.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

Most of northeast Iowa was once covered with a thick blanket of long- and short-grass prairie. The region's natural history is the foundation of the Silos & Smokestacks story.

The story of agriculture in northeast Iowa is the story of America's rise to become a world leader of food production. The goal of expanding production is being achieved through the application of Iowan materials, labor, and energy. This has led to revolutions in farming effected by technological advances, changing markets, and improvements in processing and transportation. Industries grew and evolved, driving changes on the farm, creating new agricultural products, and expanding the region's urban centers. Northeast Iowa has become a leader in agriculture and agribusiness, supplying markets across the nation and around the world.

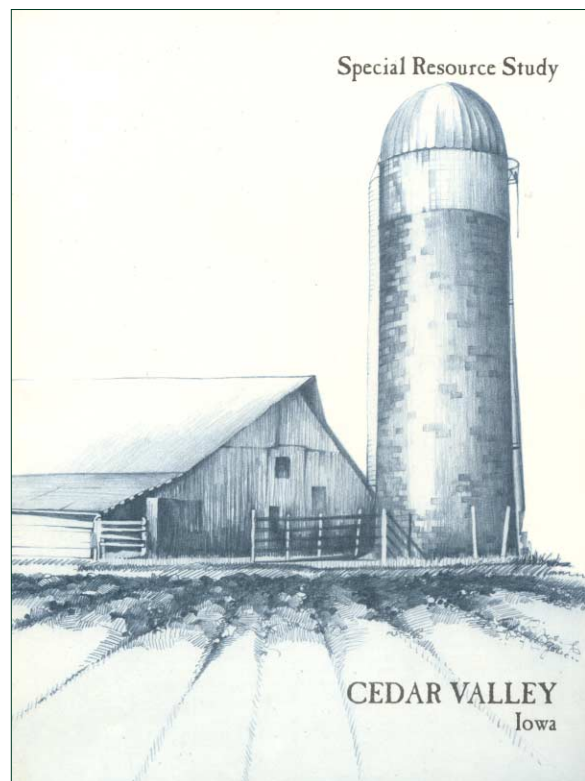
Throughout this evolution in agriculture, farm families and farm communities have created a culture that became a popular vision of rural American life in the 1900s. Today, this vision lives as agriculture continues to be affected by the spirit and endeavors of the people of the Silos & Smokestacks region.

Thematic Structure

The interpretive model for the thematic structure described here, was chosen from many models available. It offers a blend of broad discussions of the major trends and specific information that attempts to present the history thoroughly. This model was chosen because it works well with the interpretive partnership that Silos & Smokestacks is building with the region's attractions, communities, and sites. Because participation by Partners is voluntary, the structure is flexible enough to accommodate a great variety of interpretive goals. Because interpretation is already in place the structure needs to be specific enough to show how existing interpretation can fit into the structure.

The themes and subthemes presented below are the primary messages that interpreters should attempt to convey to visitors. This structure, crafted in the four interpretive planning workshops held in the late spring and early summer of 2001, will be useful to attractions with varying degrees of sophistication and funding, serving both professional and avocational interpreters.

The *Special Resource Study, Cedar Valley, Iowa*, conducted in 1995, identified four principal interpretation topics: The Amazing Science of Agriculture, Agriculture as a Way of Life,



The Special Resource Study: Cedar Valley Iowa, prepared by the National Park Service, discusses ideas for the conservation, development, and interpretation of the region's agriculture-related resources.



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

The black, fertile soil made Iowa what it is. Interpretation will draw the connections between the human efforts and the natural assets of northeast Iowa.

Organizing for Survival, and Crops from Field to Table. In the course of the workshops undertaken for this plan, it was determined that the interpretive structure should be broader in its scope and more inclusive. Since 1995, the heritage area has grown to include 37 counties, offering a greater variety of interpretable stories and resources. The interpretive structure presented below includes the study topics, builds upon them, and adds new components.

The information that formed the basis of the interpretive structure below has been developed through the help and support of a number of interpretive specialists in the Silos & Smokestacks region. For further information on the history of the region, consult the bibliography at the end of this chapter.

Theme I – The Fertile Land

Theme Statement: Working the lands of northeast Iowa has fostered a connection between humans and the earth.

Key Concepts: The varied terrain of northeast Iowa has some of the most fertile soils in the world. Formed by the effects of climate, water, and plant communities, this terrain and its soils support the ongoing development of a rich and productive agricultural landscape. Human habitation is imposing its patterns upon the land, forever changing it.

Subthemes:

- **Landforms** – The landforms of northeast Iowa continue to change as water carves the sedimentary deposits of limestone and shale into wide, shallow valleys in the western and central sections of the region, and hills and deep ravines in the eastern section.
- **Prairie** – Born of climate and of fire, the ocean/desert of tallgrass prairie restricted settlement until it was broken. The resulting soil is ideally suited to the types of agriculture—both prehistoric and historic—that have been practiced here for centuries. Non-prairie lands and habitats, wetlands in particular, have allowed other opportunities for farming, logging, and mining.
- **The Grid** – The imposition on the land of a geometric system gave order to the irregularity of the prairie, fueling rapid settlement. The grid also formed the basis for the extensive farm-to-market road system. The rivers and their varied topography break the grid across the region.
- **Communities** – As the agricultural landscape developed, communities formed at key locations, influenced by the availability of milling, processing, transportation, and power.

- **Farms** – Farming is an intensive activity that has forever changed the landscape of Iowa. Changes in farming have resulted in changes to the farm landscape.
- **Weather** – Farming depends on the weather in ways few other industries do. Good weather can bring wealth, but years of bad weather can bring ruin.

Theme 2 – Farmers and Families

Theme Statement: Farm life and farming culture present images, at once nostalgic and ever-changing, of middle America and the values the nation espouses.

Key Concepts: The people of northeast Iowa have created a popular American vision of rural culture, evolving out of a great variety of disparate pioneer and ethnic experiences. Adapting to life on the prairie required farmers to develop a frugal outlook balanced by ingenuity.

Subthemes:

- **American Indians** – In Iowa, American Indian cultures combined cultivation of floodplains along river valleys with seasonal hunting, fishing, and gathering.
- **Early Settlement** – Encouraged by federal policies and international pressures, settlers flocked to Iowa by riverboat, prairie schooner, and train for the opportunity to till virgin land.
- **Ethnicity** – Early non-native settlers from diverse backgrounds tended to adopt an upper Midwestern culture upon settling in northeast Iowa. Nonetheless, some ethnic traditions survive today, providing fine-grained distinctions between cultural groups. Residents who have come to northeast Iowa more recently tend to display an interest in retaining their cultural identities.
- **Rural Character** – Living on the land requires an outlook that is at



Rural life centers around the home. The lives of average farmers are central to the story of agriculture, as interpreted at the Lindbergh House in Ackley.

Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

once conservative, innovative, and competitive. The rural character of Iowa is tied to the rhythms of the land—weather, seasons, planting, harvesting—and its people are known for honesty, hard work, and moral values. This character survives though fewer and fewer people are farming.

- **The Family Farm** – The family is the central organizing unit of farm life, with distinct gender and generational roles. These roles blur, however, when farm tasks require it.
- **Cultural and Social Life** – In rural communities, farm families meet in schools, churches, co-ops, general stores, depots, and fairs to strengthen ties and preserve identities. These places reflect the similarities and also the differences between the various social groups.
- **Non-farm Iowa** – The number of people farming Iowa's fields continues to decrease. As the role of agriculture decreases as a primary social influence, the population and its culture are adapting.
- **The Image of Iowa** – Iowa culture has been and continues to be viewed as a mythic example of rural American life. This image is nostalgic, and largely inaccurate. The origins, evolution, and continuing propagation of this image reveal characteristics of the American psyche.

Theme 3 – The Changing Farm

Theme Statement: The role of agriculture in American life and psychology has evolved as changes in farming technique and technology transform the relationships between farmers, consumers, and the land.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

Many farmers are diversifying into other crops. Iowa now has a small, burgeoning wine industry.

Key Concepts: Farming has evolved as innovations continually alter the relationships between people and the land, and between farmers and consumers. A persistent concern for farmers is obtaining good prices for their efforts. The practice of farming and the experience of living and working on a farm are continually changing to meet new demands.

Subthemes:

- **Products** – The crops and livestock produced on the farm have changed with changes in markets, products, yields, and returns. An early emphasis on a variety of grains gave way to the production of corn for livestock in providing the maximum yield for farmers. Now, market pressures, vertical integration of production, and new types of

value-added agriculture continue to transform farming. Farms are becoming more specialized, leading to a greater variety of farm types. At the same time, the varieties of individual products (e.g., corn) decrease as farmers focus on newer, more productive varieties and abandon older ones.

- **The Labor of Farming** – The labor required in working the land has decreased over time. The techniques that reduce labor and increase yields are almost always favored over those that do not. Though sometimes skeptical of change, farmers adopt new techniques when proven to be beneficial. Improvements in techniques and technologies have changed the daily life of farming.
- **Farmsteads** – The organization of farmsteads has changed over time. The types of and relationships among farmhouses, barns, outbuildings, gardens, windbreaks, and other elements of the farmstead have evolved with changing uses and increased specialization.
- **Farmland** – The use of farmland evolves as farmers employ new technologies, change crops, and enlarge fields to increase production and serve new markets.
- **Markets** – Markets, the source of survival for farms, are ephemeral, changing year after year, affected by competition, changes in consumer demand, and changes in farm policies.
- **The Future of Farming** – Changes and advances in farming are raising economic, environmental, and social issues that will affect the future of farming, the future of Iowa, and the role of agriculture in the nation and the world.
- **Iowa and the World** – From the immigrants who continue to settle here to the world markets in which Iowa products are sold, the farms and farming families of the region are indelibly tied to changes around the world.
- **Conservation** – Advancements in the understanding of the effects of farming on the land have revealed trends in farming practices and methods that threaten the future viability of Iowa's farmland. In response, farmers have deployed a variety of techniques to conserve their soils, their water supplies, and their way of life.



Photograph: John Mihner Associates, Inc.

Several laboratories across the region explore new techniques for expanding production. Many are open to the public.

Theme 4 – Higher Yields: The Science and Technology of Agriculture

Theme Statement: Improvements in science and technology—employing the farmers’ ethic of trying to receive the best return for their efforts—have yielded revolutionary expansions in productivity.

Key Concepts: Advances in technologies, for the farm and for getting products from farm to market, have been a constant feature in the efforts

to expand production and expand markets. The first three agricultural “revolutions” came with improvements in machinery, crop and animal husbandry, and chemical research. Transportation improvements and rural electrification have expanded markets and reduced the difference between rural and urban lifestyles. Today, a fourth revolution is emerging, adapting the genetic makeup of plants and animals through biotechnology. Each of these revolutions has also come with costs: environmental, social, and economic.



Photograph: Rod VanderWerf

Mechanization forever changed the farming landscape, enabling farmers to plant and harvest larger fields with less labor.

Subthemes:

- **Machinery** – The steel plows that broke the prairie and other laborsaving machinery greatly expanded both the amount and productivity of arable land in the country, increasing national grain production and ushering in the first agricultural revolution.
- **Hybridization** – Controlled pollination allowed farmers and researchers to select preferred characteristics in crops to increase the quality and quantity of produce sent to market.
- **Science** – Developments in chemical, life, and earth sciences have improved farming techniques, bringing higher yields from soils that had been farmed for more than a century while creating new issues and challenges.
- **Tractors** – From the early Hart Parris to the latest John Deere, tractors replaced animals as the beasts of burden, expanding the size of fields that could be farmed with less labor.
- **Power and Energy** – The availability of energy has played an important role in shaping the agricultural landscape of Iowa. Electrification wired rural towns and farms and brought rapid changes in life patterns on and off the farm. Dams harnessed rivers for mills and factories, adding industry to the farmlands. The

introduction of coal later transformed these industries.

- **Genetics** – Genetic engineering, the splicing of DNA to produce custom-designed varieties of crops and livestock, is fostering another rapid expansion in production, ushering in a fourth agricultural revolution, and generating questions and controversy.
- **Sustainability** – Each advance in science and technology has been an attempt to improve, or at least address, the sustainability of agriculture on the land. Each advance, however, has led to new issues that will have to be addressed, possibly by subsequent advances.

Theme 5 – Farm to Factory: Agribusiness in Iowa

Theme Statement: Farming and the processing of raw agricultural goods into finished products has grown from local networks serving local consumers to a multi-billion dollar industry knitting together farmers, farmlands, markets, and consumers around the world.

Key Concepts: Changes in American agriculture has often directly related to changes in American industry. The industry of agribusiness is a key example: Agribusiness has kept pace with the expansion of agricultural production. At times, industry has spurred this expansion, providing farmers with seed and equipment and processing the goods that farmers produce. Many contemporary Iowa companies were developed during a time when smokestacks punctuated the skylines of the major towns and cities across northeast Iowa.

Subthemes:

- **Field to Table** – Farming requires secondary industries to convert farm products into consumer goods. A complex, multi-tiered network of transportation systems, processing plants, laboratories, co-ops, and retailing chains has evolved to support this conversion. These networks have grown into a multi-billion dollar industry.
- **Early Industries** – Before the development of an international agribusiness network, farm products were processed locally to serve local, regional, and national communities. Capacity was limited,



Turning raw goods into retail products, Quaker Oats, in Cedar Rapids, is a giant among processing plants. Agribusiness corporations such as this help connect Iowa farms with the world and diversify region's the labor market.

Photograph: John Mihner Associates, Inc.

reflecting the limited production levels of the farms. Advances in transportation, refrigeration, and processing expanded markets that could be served by Iowa's crops.

- **Transportation** – Advances in transportation have altered the relationships between farms and markets, affecting the types of crops farmers plant and expanding the markets farmers can reach.
- **Today's Giants** – John Deere, Quaker Oats, Pioneer, Cargill, ADM, Amana Appliances, and Maytag have become major national and international entities producing retail goods using Iowa's products and labor.
- **Local Foods** – Even as the vast agribusiness network has arisen, there are growing attempts to connect farmers directly with consumers, called the local foods movement. Farmers' markets continue an ancient tradition associated with farming and rural life, and new initiatives seek to connect restaurants and other providers with local producers.

Theme 6 – Organizing for Agriculture: Policies and Politics

Theme Statement: In response to the changing roles of agriculture in American life, farmers have employed a great variety of strategies to protect and sustain their lifestyles and livelihoods.

Key Concepts: Policies of the state and federal governments have shaped the efforts to feed the country and keep farms in operation. Farmers have participated in shaping these policies through organizations that have lobbied for farm-friendly regulations, sought to control prices, and disseminated information on developments in farm practices.

Subthemes:

- **The Need to Organize** – Agriculture is an industry that is vulnerable to dramatic fluctuations in price. To counterbalance this, farmers have long practiced cooperation and collective lobbying to help keep crop prices and land values stable.
- **Farmers' Organizations** – Organizations such as the Grange, the Farmer's Alliance, Farm Bureaus, National Farmers Organization, and cooperatives have helped give farmers collective strength to improve their lot. Extension service agents and clubs, such as 4-H, help disseminate new information and techniques to help farmers grow more for less cost. Collective efforts such as the Farmer's Holiday Movement demonstrate efforts farmers may make to protect their interests.
- **The US Department of Agriculture** – Iowa farmers have benefited from a close relationship with the Department of Agriculture. Four Secretaries of the Department of Agriculture have been from Iowa.

- These men helped shape policies to benefit the farming community.
- **US Farm Policies** – Over the years the demands on American farmers have changed, and, in response, US farm policy has changed. Despite these changes, two goals continue to guide decisions: keeping food costs low and keeping farms in operation.

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Chapter Four VISITOR EXPERIENCE



CHAPTER FOUR

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

What will visitors learn, do, and remember from a visit to the Silos & Smokestacks region? This chapter describes the critical elements of the visitor experience that Silos & Smokestacks and its Partners will address as they undertake the actions recommended in this interpretive plan.

Interpretive attractions, programs, and materials should orient visitors to the region, engage them emotionally, and reinforce their understanding and appreciation for its heritage and significance.

To be meaningful, memorable, and satisfying, a visit to the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area should include the following:

Early Information

It should be easy for visitors to obtain information about the Silos & Smokestacks region as they plan their trips. Information should tell visitors what there is to see and do, help them coordinate available activities with their personal interests and schedules, and direct them to additional information on the region, attractions, and services. Silos & Smokestacks

should be the “brand” by which northeast Iowa is known.

Branding can be achieved through the repeated use of a specific set of graphic images that relate to Silos & Smokestacks. If consistently used, more and more prospective visitors will understand that Silos & Smokestacks encompasses this region.

They will start searching for materials on Silos & Smokestacks, and will recognize it when they start planning trips or when they encounter the logo on Partner brochures. (More information on the graphic identity is presented below and in Chapter Six.)

Upon entry to the Silos & Smokestacks region, visitors should encounter a clearly defined and easily understood wayfinding system.

Orientation

Upon entering Silos & Smokestacks, visitors should be introduced to the region and its significance and themes, as well as to special regions, attractions, communities, services, and programs. Significance and themes must be presented early in a way that sets the context for a wide array of possible experiences. Primary messages, the basic ideas that a visitor should learn from the themes explained in Chapter Three, should be repeated in a variety of forms at multiple venues.

Wayfinding

Upon entry to the Silos & Smokestacks region, visitors should encounter a clearly defined and easily understood system of signs, publications, and online materials announcing the visitors' entry to the region and directing them to key sites and significant regions. The system would employ the graphic identity of Silos & Smokestacks that will unify sign systems and interpretive material throughout the region. (A "graphic identity" includes color, format, logo, font, and other aspects of the "look" of a heritage area's signs and all other marketing materials.) Because of the large size of this region, the heritage area's wayfinding system must be creative, clear, consistent, and efficient. Because the wayfinding system will be developed over time, the plans should be flexible.

Reading the Landscape

Central to the visitor's experience of the Silos & Smokestacks region will be an introduction to the landscape. Visitors should be encouraged to "read" the natural and cultural elements of the landscapes through which they will pass, to enhance their appreciation of what they see. The heritage area's themes can be conveyed in part through the observation of cues in the landscape. The exercise of reading the landscape will lend meaning to travel between sites and communities within the heritage area.



Photograph: Rod VanderWerf

Iowa's beautiful agricultural landscape will be interpreted so that its patterns and features are understandable to visitors and residents.

Coordinated Interpretive Programming

Innovative and engaging interpretive programming entices visitors to seek out multiple venues for interpretation. At a variety of locations, visitors should have opportunities to learn about the major interpretive themes described in Chapter Three. Silos & Smokestacks Partners will continue to provide visitors with interpretation specific to their sites, but should also develop interpretation that ties their sites to other attractions and to the heritage area as a whole. Each site should demonstrate how its interpretive focus fits into the overall interpretive context of the heritage area.

Independent Discovery

Flexibility of circulation, programming, and interpretation will allow visitors to move at their own pace and in their own direction. Preferred routes and coordinated packages can guide visitors' choices, but offerings by Silos & Smokestacks and its Partners should also ensure that visitors are able to design and discover fulfilling experiences on their own.

Mix of Activities

Visitors should be encouraged to engage in a variety of activities in addition to visiting designated attractions. Opportunities for recreation, shopping, and entertainment should be a part of the mix, and require attention as the visitor experience is developed. Cultural events, religious services, art festivals, and musical performances are already generally open to visitors, and are also an important part of the mixture that is to be the visitor experience in the region. As they implement programs described in other chapters, Silos & Smokestacks and its Partners must also emphasize the importance of providing a well-rounded, enjoyable experience based upon the region's high quality of life.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

Encountering the sights, sounds, and smells of farm life is an integral component of a Silos & Smokestacks experience.

On the Farm

Central to the experience of Silos & Smokestacks is a visit to an active farm using contemporary farming techniques. This will provide the opportunity for visitors to experience the sights, smells, and realities of today's farm life, and appreciate the daily routines, pleasures, and hardships. A variety of farms should be made available for visitation, representing differences in production, crops, techniques, culture, and location. Demonstration and heritage farms should also be available to balance interpretation between modern and historic practices and products. As these opportunities are created, safety for visitors and for the farm must be maintained.



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

Hands-on demonstrations can be a fun way to put residents and visitor to work and teach them about farm life.

Farm Communities

The communities within the Silos & Smokestacks region must be an integral part of a visitor's experience, providing the greatest opportunity for visitors to connect with residents. Crossroad hamlets, towns, and cities should provide integrated and easily accessible interpretation for visitors and residents, illustrating the themes of the heritage area from each community's perspective. The region's communities are the places where visitors can access services essential to a rewarding experience: regional fare, regional products, and regional hospitality.

The Future of Farming

Visitors should think about and discuss the future as well as the heritage of farming. Exhibits and other media will encourage visitors to consider the future, a central issue for the farms and farm communities. It is on everyone's mind, and visitors will be brought into the discussion. Having visitors participate in the discussion may help aid the development of farming and farm policies.

Farm-Oriented Industries and Businesses

The businesses and industries associated with agriculture are a fundamental part of the region and should be a part of the Silos & Smokestacks experience. In addition to providing material and financial support, these businesses and industries can offer interpretation, both on-site and through sponsored exhibits. Visitors should see the industries that support agriculture, such as the assembly of tractors and equipment and the testing and production of seed; industries that process agricultural produce, such as oatmeal, corn, and soybean products; businesses intimately associated with farm life, such as the co-op; and specialty businesses.

Iowa Grown, Iowa Made

Visitors should have opportunities to take home a memento of Iowa, such as an agricultural or craft product, and to enjoy products from farms in the Silos & Smokestacks region. Eating establishments that prepare locally grown goods should be highlighted for visitation. Shops, farmers' markets, bakeries, seed retailers, garden expositions, auctions, and other events that can provide such opportunities should be promoted. Gift shops and other stores featuring Iowa products and souvenirs should be available at a variety of locations throughout the region.

Fun

Visitors should have fun while in the Silos & Smokestacks region. The potential for visitor enjoyment should be explicitly addressed in the development of activities and programs. Hayrides and maize mazes are good examples of fun, heritage-related activities.

Departure

Visitors should depart with the desire and intent to make a return visit and to recommend the heritage area to others as an interesting and fulfilling visitor experience. Upon leaving, visitors should be well aware of the range of experiences available and the other sites and attractions within Silos & Smokestacks that they would like to visit in the future.

Chapter Six begins to describe projects to be undertaken or supported by Silos & Smokestacks, and each demonstrates an attempt to incorporate components of visitor experiences listed above. This chapter presents these components to bring them to the minds of Partners. When possible, Partners should try to incorporate these ideas in their own projects and programs irrespective of the participation of Silos & Smokestacks. This list

may inspire attractions to think about how visitors will engage the interpretation and activities offered.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

These corn driers mark a beginning point in the regional distribution and processing network that takes kernels of corn from Iowa and delivers them to communities across the country as the sweeteners used in many of our food products.

Chapter Five AUDIENCES



CHAPTER FIVE

AUDIENCES

A goal of Silos & Smokestacks is to help expand visitation to all related attractions and interpretive sites within the region. Different types of visitors will seek different experiences and have different expectations from a visit to a heritage area attraction, site, or community. The interpretation to be developed and enhanced through Silos & Smokestacks is expected to meet and exceed these expectations, providing a more satisfying and enriching experience than visitors had anticipated.

The analysis of existing and potential audiences has another benefit, however, in addition to tailoring interpretive offerings to a variety of visitors. Some of the audiences identified here are also potential sources of additional visitors, during their travel to the Silos & Smokestacks region, or at a later date. Interpretive materials and exhibits, carefully designed, can serve the dual purpose of showcasing and thus marketing the region's offerings.



Photograph: John Mihner Associates, Inc.

The architecture and layout of communities in the heritage area reflect the philosophies and interests of those communities. This is clearly evident in the Amana colonies. Interpretation can highlight the approaches communities have taken, revealing civic priorities, economic initiatives, and social structures.

This chapter presents general information on the people traveling in Iowa. This type of data was not available for northeast Iowa alone. This information illuminates the next discussion of the specific audiences because research like this can be used to tailor educational, interpretive, and marketing programs. Further research will be needed to understand the specific needs and interests of patrons regarding specific places. The overview of potential audiences examines the types of groups that can likely be expected to come to

Partner attractions, sites, and communities. A recommended approach accompanies each audience discussion, providing issues to keep in mind when developing programs.

Characteristics of Iowa Visitors

The best indications of the kinds of audiences that Silos & Smokestacks and its Partners will have come from research from the travel and tourism industry. A survey of visitors to Iowa welcome centers in 2000, sponsored by the Division of Tourism, indicated that when compared to the 1999 survey from the same period, April to October, there was a 12 percent increase in visitation. Per-day spending increased by 5% to more than \$165. Forty-nine percent of travelers came from Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and South Dakota. Families accounted for 55 percent of travel parties. Forty-seven percent of all travelers were traveling for vacation, and travelers visiting friends or family made up 30 percent. Pleasure travel, including visits to friends and family, as well as outdoor recreation and entertainment, accounted for 70 percent of Iowa travel. Homes of friends and family accounted for 17 percent of lodging options. Nineteen percent stayed at state, county, and private campgrounds.

Characteristics of travelers in Iowa in 2000:

- Total number of trips taken decreased 1.7 percent from 1999 to 2000.
- 52 percent visited friends or family.
- Shopping was the most popular travel activity.
- Per-trip spending decreased 13 percent between 1999 and 2000 to \$192.
- Average travel party size was 2.1.
- 37 percent of travelers stayed in a hotel, motel, or B&B
- 68 percent of travelers originated their trip from Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.
- 9 percent of travelers visited historical places and museums.
- 11 percent of travelers undertook outdoor activities

- from TravelScope, US Travel Data Center

Further characterization is provided in the box at left. This research reveals useful insights into the average traveler, insights that can be developed into marketing and interpretive strategies. For example, the average age of travelers is 47, which suggests that a large portion of travelers are “baby boomers.” (The math does not necessarily bear this out, since an “average” can contain a number of high and low counts, but it is a fair guess based also on national demographics.) Interpretation focusing on the evolution of the farm could emphasize farming of the 1950s and 1960s, connecting the interpretation with the audience through their memories of their childhoods.

Where possible, the recommended approaches presented below are based on the market research cited above. The quality and quantity of available research data is limited, but could be expanded through combined efforts of

heritage area Partners. The development of interpretive programs and projects by Partners will require more in-depth understanding of particular targeted audiences.

Potential Audiences

The following discussion of potential audiences is listed in order of priority, suggesting how efforts can be directed toward various groups. At the end of each section a recommended approach is given to help illustrate how new or enhanced interpretation could be developed to reach target audiences.

Residents

Heritage tourism is commonly seen as visitors from out of town or out of state. This perception is only partially accurate. In fact, a large portion of visitors to sites that attract heritage tourists are often residents of an area. For Silos & Smokestacks, residents are the primary audience. Residents of a community often take their heritage for granted, even though they have the most to gain from improving their understanding of the heritage. Improved understanding can deepen community pride and increase civic spirit, and lead to investments that prove even more attractive to visitors, for greater economic results. To that end, all interpretation within the heritage area should be developed with local residents in mind. Projects that encourage local knowledge and awareness of the community should be given high priority.

- **Recommended Approach:** Residents will often have a basic understanding of the heritage of the region, but frequently take their heritage, attractions, communities, and sites for granted. Interpretation should build upon this basis to avoid being perceived as too elementary for resident audiences and place it in a larger context to highlight its significance and bring it to life. Connections should be drawn between what the resident is more familiar with and what may be new information.

Repeat Visitors

One audience that should not be overlooked consists of those who have already visited attractions, sites, and communities in the heritage area. This audience is often likely to visit again, especially if they learned from and enjoyed their visit. If they can be encouraged to return, they may become continuing visitors and will bring friends, families, and others with them on subsequent visits.

- **Recommended Approach:** While improvements in interpretation can induce visitors to return, this is more of a marketing issue. The attractions and sites should collect names and addresses of attendees for mailing promotional materials and announcements about changes and improvements in the educational and interpretation offerings. Understanding who has been to an attraction or site is a general technique for developing strategies for their repeat visitation.

Students

Heritage area interpretive attractions look for ways to reach out to area children and teach them about their heritage. Similarly, local school districts search for ways to connect their students and their curriculum with real experiences in everyday surroundings. Linking heritage area attractions to local school districts is the central component of the educational mission of Silos & Smokestacks. The benefits of this approach include the possibility of drawing the interest and support of parents. The success with this audience at sites such as Living History Farms can be expanded through much of the Silos & Smokestacks region. College and university students are a potential subset of this audience. Their expectations for educational materials will be higher, more specific, and more thorough. Attention should be given to accommodating these expectations.

Another subset, but in the realm of adult continuing education, is the Elderhostel program, which develops educational trip packages, usually for late-middle-aged and senior patrons. Trips often involve visits to multiple sites with coordinated accommodations and meal services at area restaurants. The program is well respected and operates nationwide.

- **Recommended Approach:** The CampSilos and CampSilos Excursion projects provide a strong first step in providing information to students and teachers. These projects are based upon an understanding that schools will respond to educational materials developed in accordance with local and national standards and that help make meeting those standards easier and fun. This approach can be extended to web-based



In the Silos & Smokestacks region, the state's central welcome center shares quarters with the Living History Farms, one of the heritage area's premiere interpretive venues. Balancing public and private efforts is the hallmark of heritage development in northeastern Iowa.

Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

curricula and research tools for college students, and can be further extended to non-web-based tools.

Travelers on Motorcoach Tours

A growing force in heritage tourism is the motorcoach industry. Tour operators book motorcoaches to travel cross-country. These may be traveling short distances for day trips, or they may visit the region as one part of an extended, multi-destination trip. The operators organize and market specific itineraries that involve a variety of activities for the patrons. A benefit of the bus-tour audience is that the number of visitors is high compared to the marketing effort expended, while the duration of the visit is often short. For some attractions and services the income from tour operations may be higher than that gained by marketing to more diffuse audiences.

- **Recommended Approach:** Motorcoach audiences tend to be older, seeking interesting but pre-packaged activities. Motorcoach tours have become a popular focus of the visitor bureau industry, and marketing efforts should be closely coordinated with state, regional, and local visitor bureaus. The focus of the tours can vary depending upon the tour package developed, but they often visit scenic and historic places, major regional tourist attractions, and entertainment venues. Opportunities for this in the heritage area should be marketed directly to tour operators.

The main interpretive issue is flexibility of exhibits and presentation. Because tours are on schedules, patrons may not have the freedom to stay long at any one site. The interpretation will have to be able to hit the main points for visitors in the facilities, but also have materials that can be taken off site for a more leisurely perusal. The ability to provide high-quality visitor services, especially dining and restrooms, is essential.

Heritage Travelers

A substantial and growing number of people are seeking interesting communities and authentic heritage experiences. Heritage travelers tend to be older and are probably traveling without children. They are interested in the quality of the entire experience: travel, lodging, dining, and shopping in addition to visits to attractions. This audience is likely to have selected the Silos & Smokestacks region as a destination



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

By the end of the 19th century, mills dotted the landscape along the waterways. Today, only a handful survive. Thanks to the Franklin County Historical Society, efforts are underway to preserve and interpret the outstanding Wapsipinicon Mill in Independence.

based on their own research. They are motivated to learn about the people of the area and experience what the region has to offer. Heritage travelers will appreciate the efforts made to enhance the communities and resources of the region. They are likely to have the experience of visiting other heritage sites, come with certain expectations, such as “white tablecloth” dining, and understand the broad trends to which the heritage of Silos & Smokestacks relates.

- **Recommended Approach:** Heritage travelers are looking for a variety of experiences and for a more in-depth understanding of a site and its heritage than the typical visitor. Interpretation should include a variety of materials that can collectively convey a great depth and breadth of information. Plus, interpretation and exhibits should be created to allow for a variety of activities and visitor experiences. This audience will also be interested in taking home authentic mementoes. Consumer goods should be available that are based closely on historic tools, artifacts, recipes, and techniques. High-quality visitor services, including lodging and dining, are an essential part of the visitor experience.



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

Educational programs, such as those at the Living History Farms in Des Moines, make history come alive.

Families Traveling Together

Families may enter the Silos & Smokestacks region to visit a cluster of attractions, often traveling on multiple-day trips. They may also be traveling to visit friends and family in the region. The challenge of families is providing the range of activities that each member of the family will find satisfying.

- **Recommended Approach:** The focus for interpretation to families should be on farm families and their life on the farm. Gender and generational roles are important aspects of the story, and different members of the family audience may be attracted to these aspects. Men may be more interested in machinery and the labor of farming. Women may be more interested in the domestic, economic, and social issues. Children are likely to be interested in farm animals and the life of children on the farm. Programming that simultaneously addresses each of these is more likely to engage a variety of interests regardless of who comprises the family units.

Families are likely to gather information on sites to be visited in advance from the internet and from visitor guides and publications. Special events, tour itineraries, or a travel package offering a variety of activities might capture their attention during planning.

Niche Travelers

Niche travelers have specialty interests and are willing to travel to explore their interests. Farm implement enthusiasts and farm toy enthusiasts fall into this category. Some niche travelers make a point of visiting as many National Park Service sites as possible. Such travelers are likely to know their area of interest in considerable detail, and they want to be able to see authentic artifacts relating to their interest. Of all the potential visitors, niche travelers will be most likely to travel extensively through the region seeking out specific experiences.

- **Recommended Approach:** Niche travelers will likely demand detailed interpretive materials, such as longer publications, more complete guides, collections of photographs and postcards, and additional information on the internet. These travelers are also likely to be critical of inaccurate or uninteresting interpretation, but conversely, will often praise work well done and may join membership programs offered by sites, to continue receiving interesting information. Theme-related conferences, perhaps held at local colleges, might attract regional and national audiences. Specific groups representing niche travelers should be identified and marketing should be tightly targeted.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

State parks, such as Pine Lake State Park near Eldora, offer many opportunities for hiking, canoeing, picnicking, and camping. Such activities compliment sight-seeing and auto-touring.

Recreation Seekers

Recreation seekers will hunt for the region's parks and natural areas. This heritage area contains high-quality natural resources that are currently enjoyed by a small segment of the local population. The region's parks, rivers, lakes, and forests can generally accommodate many more users. Unlike most types of visitation, recreation often requires specialty equipment that can be rented or purchased locally, where available. This may pose opportunities for

secondary development of outfitters, recreational equipment sales outlets, and the like.

- **Recommended Approach:** Promoting opportunities for eco-tourism, hiking, biking, water sports, fishing, and hunting can build visitation by

this audience. Interpretation emphasizing the interconnectedness of natural heritage with the region’s history and farming heritage may help convert recreation travelers into heritage travelers. Projects such as the Iowa River Greenway and the Prairie Pathways trail network are incorporating interpretation into their plans for hiking and water trails. Close coordination with recreational attractions and local visitor bureaus should be undertaken in marketing to recreational audiences.

International Visitors

International tour operators provide a growing audience for travel within the United States. These travelers often want to see “the real America,” and Silos & Smokestacks, as the heart of the Midwest, provides a great opportunity for these visitors to experience the farms that feed the nation and the world. They are likely to have knowledge of John Deere and to have consumed Quaker Oats products.

The area’s institutions of higher learning also attract visiting students, professors, and researchers from around the world. These visitors will be interested in seeing how farming techniques are put into practice and to understand the historical context for the development of these techniques.

- **Recommended Approach:** Existing Partners in the heritage area should pool information on the extent of international visitation in the region. Marketing efforts to international visitors should be developed in close cooperation with state and regional tourism professionals and other national heritage areas. Local hosts for international visitors will provide an important entrée into existing patterns of foreign visitation. Such hosts should be contacted.

The key challenge in attracting international visitors is trying to encourage people who know little about the region and, possibly, little of the language, to be interested in the interpretation offered in the heritage area. Where possible, wayfinding projects and interpretation should incorporate internationally accepted symbols to help engage non-native English speakers. Brochures can be printed, in limited quantities, in other languages. Silos & Smokestacks can keep a list of interpreters who can be called on for use with tour groups. Silos & Smokestacks can also market the heritage area in agricultural trade magazines and journals that



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

Demonstrations such as this in Franklin County provide residents and visitors the opportunity to see how and why things were done they way they were.

have international distribution, and participate in and co-sponsor international agricultural exhibitions.

Business Travelers

Trade shows, expositions, and fairs attract people who are engaged in the business of agriculture in a variety of ways and are interested in how farming is practiced in Iowa. They are an ideal audience for heritage interpretation. A subset of the trade show audience is visitors from around the world, as discussed above. Interpretive material should be available at the venue that ties the major themes of the show with appropriate themes of the heritage

area, and which provides enough information to entice this audience to visit related nearby sites. With sufficient advance notice, local museums might mount special exhibits that appeal to these visitors.

Industries not tied to agriculture bring in other travelers. These individuals may be in the area for short periods or for extended stays. Such visitors may or may not be aware of interpretive sites nearby or events that may be occurring in the evenings or on weekends. Business travelers frequently wish to learn about the area they are visiting, and often search for interesting dining and lodging experiences.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

Attractions such as Usher's Village, a reconstructed townscape outside of Cedar Rapids, demonstrate interest and investment in living history presentations. Such efforts can be supported by Silos & Smokestacks.

- **Recommended Approach:** Business travelers may not have much time to spend leisure travel, and their exposure to Iowa culture may be limited when not in meetings or conventions. An approach to providing interpretation for business travelers is to take the interpretation to them by providing literature, exhibits, and community interpretation in the locations where they will be, and to let them know of sites they can visit quickly and easily. Brochures and guide books can be made available at convention centers and large business-oriented hotels. Such materials will reflect the local life, a factor that sometimes influences future investment or commercial activity. In addition, quality visitor services (restaurants, bars, entertainment venues, and others) are important for business travelers and can be a vehicle for providing local flavor and interpretation.

Through Travelers

Through travelers have other destinations in mind. Sign systems marking entry to the region and wayfinding signs highlighting attractions near the major interstates can inform these travelers about the Silos & Smokestacks region. The several hours of driving needed to cross the region afford great opportunities to market the area and entice travelers to return in the future. Amenities, such as restaurants and hotels, provide further opportunities to reach these travelers.

- **Recommended Approach:** The best way to catch the attention of through travelers is to focus on the places where they may stop and on the major corridors they may be using. Effective methods include installing eye-catching displays in welcome centers, erecting gateway and directional signs along the highways, and placing brochures in key locations in hotels and restaurants. The intention is to give through travelers a taste of what is offered in the heritage area, and encourage them to stay a little longer or to return at a later date.

Travel Writers, Guidebook Editors, and Travel Associations

This audience provides information that others use to make travel plans. With an increasing array of tourism destinations nationwide, and an increase in competition, the influence of this audience may play a larger role over time in the decision-making by potential visitors to the heritage area. The goal is to encourage them to come only after the heritage area is ready to receive them. They should see a well-organized heritage area with coordinated interpretation and wayfinding systems. The attractions, sites, and communities can offer much, presently, but the connective infrastructure recommended in this plan is not yet in place. They should see a well-organized and well-interpreted heritage area that allows them to write with enthusiastic recommendations (travel articles that fail to do this usually do not get past magazine and newspaper editors and into print).

- **Recommended Approach:** Initially, special effort will be needed to heighten name recognition and gain entrée into informational outlets. As soon as high-quality interpretive programming is widely available, travel professionals should be invited for a first-hand look at Silos & Smokestacks attractions. Personal contact will play an important role in this effort. The level of current visitation to some attractions in the region suggests that those attractions are well-known entities. Expanding awareness to the surrounding attractions can be built upon the good

Some consumers of the Silos & Smokestacks heritage tourism product may never enter northeast Iowa. They may “visit” by conducting research of the region for their scholarly or amateur interest, seeking out or randomly encountering information that is disseminated outside the region.

reputations enjoyed by existing attractions.

Distance “Visitors”

Some consumers of the Silos & Smokestacks heritage tourism product may never enter northeast Iowa. They may “visit” by conducting research of the region for their scholarly or amateur interest, seeking out or randomly encountering information that is disseminated outside the region. A growing number of people are exploring the internet and experiencing places they will never visit. Others may use printed material or encounter festivals or events held in other places, but sponsored by Iowa-based organizations and corporations. The international reputations of firms such as John Deere will help attract this interest. Silos & Smokestacks has already begun to address this audience through its website and by mailing tour and interpretive material upon request. This effort should continue with an intention of coaxing distance visitors to become visitors over time.

- ***Recommended Approach:*** It may seem self-evident that there is one preferred approach for addressing non-visitors: to try to coax them into becoming visitors. Non-visitors should be reached through the internet, publications, and word of mouth. Various kinds of information, publications, websites, and all other means by which someone outside of the heritage area might learn about the region, should be developed with the intention of coaxing people to visit, explore, and want to know more.

Chapter Six

OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS



CHAPTER SIX

OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS

Interpretation of the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area requires a flexible program that can be adapted to the wide variety of sites and circumstances existing throughout the heritage area. The goal of Silos & Smokestacks and its Partners in undertaking this Interpretive Plan is to provide visitors with a seamless interpretive experience throughout the region. The interpretation that visitors encounter should relate individual attractions, sites, and communities to the region as a whole while focusing upon the interesting and unique aspects of each.

The role of Silos & Smokestacks is to coordinate, facilitate, and apply resources to the interpretation that will take place at individual locations. The responsibility of individual attractions, sites, and communities is to work within the thematic structure of the heritage area, to serve as host and orientation points for the heritage area, and to establish and promote linkages to other heritage area attractions.

Elements of a Successful Implementation Strategy

The implementation program for Silos & Smokestacks must have elements that can be implemented in the short term, will have a visible impact, and are realistic in terms of available resources. These should contribute to the development of more long-term projects, which should continue to enhance and deepen the overall interpretation of the heritage area, while drawing more visitors and enabling greater sustainability for Partners. Finally, the implementation program must be able to attract funding from new business, non-profit, and governmental sources. The following are elements of a basic interpretive strategy that include both short-term and long-term projects. Phasing, priorities, and organizational issues are addressed in Chapter 7, together with more detailed instructions about carrying out these projects.

Partners will work within the thematic structure of the heritage area, serve as hosts and orientation points, and establish and promote linkages to other partners.

Sign Systems

Silos & Smokestacks will develop a coordinated sign system serving a variety of purposes within the heritage area. The signage system will have a recognizable graphic identity coordinated with other Silos & Smokestacks initiatives. The purposes of the various signs to be a part of this system are to raise visitor and public awareness of the heritage area, assist visitors in navigating the heritage area, and provide an additional, outdoor presentation of interpretive information. Flexibility and creativity will be a hallmark of this program in order to achieve a comprehensive system that will include signs in the public rights of way and signs on private property.

A. Sign Design Guideline Program – A set of design guidelines is currently being developed by Silos & Smokestacks to serve as the basis for design of all of the sign types discussed below. The guidelines will be based on the graphic identity created for the heritage area (for an explanation of “graphic identity,” see the project description below). The design guidelines will provide a menu of sign types that can be selected and adapted for a variety of uses. Flexibility will be a key characteristic in the design, allowing for long-term use and use for a great variety of needs. Design guidelines will be developed for each of the sign types listed below. As project needs dictate, specific sign types will be created and fabricated according to the design guidelines for that type.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

Many communities offer limited interpretation of their historic resources. These efforts can be expanded and enhanced with the financial and technical support of Silos & Smokestacks.

B. Gateway Signs – Gateway signs will be installed along major highways at the entrances to the National Heritage Area. Smaller signs will be installed at selected secondary entrances. The gateway signs will announce, in effect, that the visitor is “now entering the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area.” The signs will be designed in accordance with the Silos & Smokestacks graphic identity, but will also comply with applicable state and federal highway requirements.

C. Wayfinding Signs – Wayfinding signage will direct visitors to significant attractions, sites, and communities within the Silos & Smokestacks region. The signage will be a system with three or four different sizes and formats as appropriate for the message and the circumstances. Criteria will be established to determine which sites and locations will be signed

as well as the appropriate number, location, and frequency of wayfinding signs. The signs may or may not have distance information. For road traffic, signs may be similar in size to existing DOT wayfinding signs. For pedestrians and cyclists, signs would be smaller. Where required (because of their location in highway rights of way or for other reasons), these signs will also comply with applicable state and federal highway requirements.

Current regulations for signs in the public right of way do not allow for much variation from standard DOT information and direction signs. Signs for the heritage area will either be designed within these guidelines, or if necessary, the regulations may need to be altered to support the heritage area sign system.

Participation in this program will only be open to Partners of Silos & Smokestacks, SIAs, SIPs, Affiliate Sites, and Points of Interest. If necessary, due to overwhelming demand, further criteria may be needed to limit participation to those Partners most closely aligned programmatically to the goals and thematic structure presented in this interpretive plan.

D. Community Identification Signs – Community identification signs will serve as gateway signage for participating communities. The signage may be coordinated with interpretive presentations within the communities.

E. Place Identification Signs – Identification signs for individual attractions and sites will serve as “place-makers” by indicating that sites are related to the region’s heritage and to Silos & Smokestacks. The signage appropriate for different sites will vary but will be coordinated through established guidelines. At attractions with existing identification signs, signifier—logo, small sign, plaque, badge—will be used to identify the site as a Silos & Smokestacks-affiliated attraction. SIPs should, as appropriate, use a more prominent sign, banner, or logo announcing their participation. A site that lacks its own sign may choose to use a Silos & Smokestacks-designed sign to demonstrate a strong affiliation with the heritage area and raise its profile.

F. Heritage Byway Signs – Wayfinding sign systems will be needed along the corridors designated as heritage byways. Such signs will may consist of a combination of wayfinding signs, indicating the appropriate course for travelers to take, and place and community identification signs, indicating important places along the byway.

G. Information Signs and Kiosks – Information signs and kiosks will be provided for exterior installation at appropriate locations by sites and communities. The information signs and kiosks will provide contextual

interpretation about the region and will provide maps and information about the heritage area, Strategic Investment Areas, and related sites.

General information on the heritage area will be standard for all signs and kiosks, and information on the region in which the signs will be located will be standard to all signs and kiosks in that region. The location of signs and kiosks can be marked on other wayfinding materials, linking the wayfinding network to specific locations.

H. Interpretive Exhibits – A system of interpretive wayside exhibits in a Silos & Smokestacks format will be available to provide outdoor interpretation at affiliated sites and communities. At locations with existing outdoor interpretive systems, Silos & Smokestacks-sponsored interpretation can be in the site’s existing format but will be expected to include the Silos & Smokestacks logo. The location of interpretive exhibits can be marked on other wayfinding materials to tie exhibits to the wayfinding network.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

Outdoor exhibits are an effective way to provide interpretation. Kiosks, such as this four-panel example at the Rockford Fossil and Prairie Park, can be relatively inexpensive, but can reach many people.

Communication and Publications

Communicative media and publications serve a variety of purposes, the most important of which is establishing the heritage area’s presence and presenting its activities. Such materials will, among other things, display and reinforce the Silos & Smokestacks graphic identity, introduce themes and Partners to residents and visitors, link Partners and interpretation, and provide residents and visitors with activities while they travel across the region. The following communicative media and publications are designed to fulfill this purpose through a variety of means. Some will be undertaken by Silos & Smokestacks on its own. Others will be undertaken by Partners with support from Silos & Smokestacks.

A. Graphic Identity – Silos & Smokestacks is currently developing a graphic identity for use throughout the heritage area. A graphic identity includes color, format, logo, font, and other aspects of the heritage area’s “look.” This graphic identity will help establish the region as a recognizable brand or tourism product that visitors will remember and associate with the quality of the Silos & Smokestacks experience. All

Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks



High-quality exhibits speak for themselves, compelling visitors and residents to learn, remember, and return.

materials produced in association with Silos & Smokestacks, including printed material, online materials, and signage, should use the Silos & Smokestacks identity. Its imagery should be easily recognizable, aesthetically pleasing, and unique from other tourism attractions. The graphic identity may use graphic elements that have been previously developed and should be established as soon as possible.

B. General Brochure – A general brochure will be produced by Silos & Smokestacks and will present the heritage area as a whole. The brochure will introduce the

heritage area, present the heritage area's primary themes, provide a map of the region, and identify key interpretive Partners that currently provide a high level of visitor service. The brochure should be produced as soon as possible.

C. Regional Brochures – Regional brochures will be developed to present and market particular regions within the heritage area. Designated SIAs will be featured, though other areas may also be presented as appropriate, such as approved clusters of sites and communities that are working together within a particular region (see discussion of these clusters in the project described on page 6-6 below).

D. Thematic Brochures – Thematic brochures will highlight specific themes and the connections between themes, providing interpretation and identifying sites that offer linked interpretation related to that theme. Examples could include brochures on mills and mill communities (Themes 1, 2, and 4), and brochures on the evolution of farm tools (Themes 3 and 4).

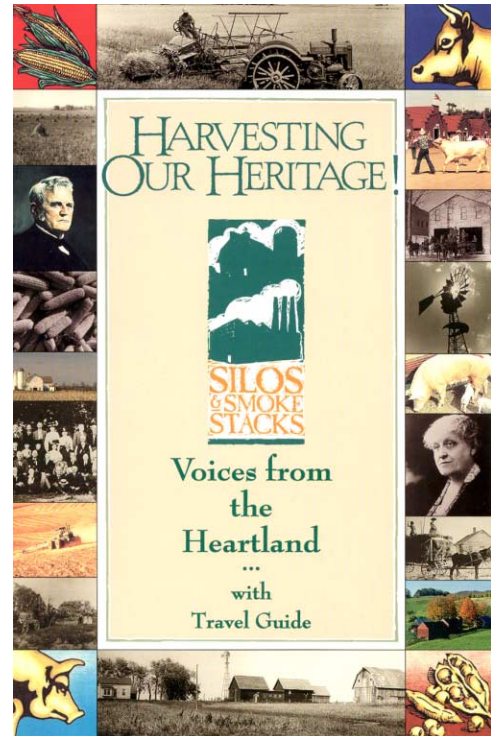
E. Heritage Byway Brochures – Brochures will be prepared for designated heritage byways within Silos & Smokestacks. The existing “Little Tour by the Big River” brochure is an appropriate model for content and approach. (For more on heritage byways, see page 6-6.)

F. Newsletter – A periodical newsletter will be published by Silos & Smokestacks to keep Partners, public officials, contributors, tourism and economic development specialists, and others informed of developments pertinent to the heritage area. The newsletter will help publicize information about the heritage area and its Partners and will serve as the primary vehicle for informing Partners and the public about programs, grant information, events, and other news.

G. Field Guide – A field guide will help visitors read the landscape of Northeast Iowa and can be used to present expanded interpretation related to Silos & Smokestacks themes. Sections of the guide may present a historical overview and address topics such as geography, settlement patterns, transportation routes, farmstead layouts, vegetation and field patterns, community layouts, architecture, equipment, and other features of the landscape that visitors can identify as they travel.

H. Audio Driving Tour (revision) – The existing audio tour, created soon after the development of the *Silos & Smokestacks Partnership Management Plan*, now contains out-of-date information and will need to be updated. This cassette package could be produced as a companion piece to the field guide, or it can developed as an independent medium for delivering interpretation of the region’s heritage in an entertaining narrative format. The set of tapes and CDs could be developed for the region as a whole and for specific sub-regions.

I. Children’s Activity Book – An activity book can help present the interpretation of heritage area themes in a form enjoyable to and easily grasped by children. The activity book could help keep children occupied during long drives across the region. The book might include identification games that would be both fun and informative.



Voices from the Heartland was the first audio tour. The tour package of cassette tapes and Travel Guide was an early implementation project following the completion of the Partnership Management Plan.

Interpretation

A. Exhibits at Partnering Organizations – Silos & Smokestacks will help interested Partners develop limited-scale exhibits that present introductory information about the heritage area, presenting key themes, and orienting visitors to attractions, sites, and other opportunities to enjoy the heritage area. The exhibits will be customized to the needs and circumstances of each partnering site and will feature the Silos & Smokestacks graphic identity. The exhibits will introduce the heritage area, . The exhibits will provide additional detail about the themes and contextual information related to the specific Partner where it is located. Each will explain how the interpretive focus of the Partner relates to the heritage area as a whole and how the Partner is linked to other Silos & Smokestacks Partners.

B. Community Interpretation by Partners – Silos & Smokestacks will promote the interpretation of communities by Silos & Smokestacks

Partners in that community. In this program, these Partners will assume responsibility for coordinating interpretation of their communities with additional local Partners. Guidelines and matching funds will be provided by Silos & Smokestacks. Implementation and presentation will be the responsibility of the host site and its Partners and will vary by community. Suggested examples of communities that might be interpreted by local attractions include Decorah, the Amana villages, Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Dubuque.

A current example is the Prairie Pathways interpretation project for the trail network along the Cedar River valley. Led by a collection of Potential Partners, including the Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments, Black Hawk County Conservation Board, the cities of Cedar Falls and Waterloo, the Grout Museum District, and Silos & Smokestacks, the project will install interpretive exhibits along 60 miles of trails through the central portion of the heritage area.

Interpretive Partnerships

The great number of Potential Partners spread across the heritage area presents many opportunities for building relationships between attractions, sites, and communities. These can be either geographically oriented or thematic. The purpose is to encourage the voluntary coordination of activities between Potential Partners in a flexible manner to support the region-wide efforts of Silos & Smokestacks. Some of the following efforts have already begun to be developed. Silos & Smokestacks will support further development. These partnerships will foster the development of packages offering thorough interpretive experiences for residents and visitors.

A. Strategic Investment Areas – The creation of Strategic Investment Areas is well documented within the management plan for Silos & Smokestacks, as discussed in Chapter Two. The preparation of Heritage Development Strategies for each SIA is required and will prove to be critical components for their success. Country Heritage Community and the Central Iowa River Partnership are poised to prepare Heritage Development Strategies.

B. Geographic Clusters of Partners – Silos & Smokestacks will encourage the cooperation of partnering sites in linking their interpretation. Clusters of sites that are in geographic proximity to each other will prepare a joint Heritage Interpretation Strategy to show how they intend to provide collaborative interpretation. Guidelines for such a strategy will be developed later. The requirements for collaborative interpretation by clustered sites will be significantly less than that required for SIAs. Clusters may be possible in the Cedar Rapids area, Waterloo-Cedar Falls, Des Moines, the Dubuque-Dyersville area, and the Boone-Ames area.

C. Thematic Clusters – Silos & Smokestacks will encourage collaborative interpretation between sites that present interpretation on similar themes. Thematic clusters may not be in geographic proximity, but will present related information and identify the locations of partnering sites. Themes such as “Farmers and Families” and “Farm to Factory” present options for organizing thematic clusters. For example, clusters could focus on subthemes of Ethnicity, Cultural and Social Life, and Field to Table. Funding support from Silos & Smokestacks will be through the grant programs.

D. Heritage Byways – The Silos & Smokestacks management plan endorses the creation of heritage byways. Heritage byways may be created to link sites, communities, clusters of sites, and SIAs. In addition, they may be created on their own merit, simply because they provide an interesting and rewarding experience. Examples could include thematic byways such as the industries along the Cedar River, or visitor experience-oriented byways that could include farm types that relate to specific topographic regions, such as dairy farming in the northeast.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

The museum for the Floyd County Historical Society, like museums in other counties, interprets local history with local artifacts. The new annex, at right in the photograph, holds a large collection of tractors, many of which were developed and built in the heritage area.

Education

The educational mission of Silos & Smokestacks is central to its efforts. Silos & Smokestacks is committed to providing learning opportunities for residents and visitors of a great variety of ages and backgrounds. This includes school programs, online programs, distance learning, and continuing education, among other objectives. The following list includes some programs that are underway and others that will need to be developed with the help and support of many Partners.

A. CampSilos Educational Website – Silos & Smokestacks has supported the development of a children’s website called CampSilos. Designed to tell the story of American agriculture and built around four web-based learning modules, the content of the site is drawn from and consistent with the six Silos & Smokestacks themes. The student section includes fact summaries, reading activities, educational games, problem-solving experiences, primary source materials, historical documents, and links to

online supplementary resources. The teacher section provides links to national standards, goals and objectives, lesson plans, and additional resources. The website can be found at www.campsilos.org.

B. *CampSilos & Smokestacks Online Professional Development Workshop* – Silos & Smokestacks will sponsor an online professional development workshop supporting the effective application of the CampSilos website to the classroom environment. The online workshop will provide participating teachers with an overview of CampSilos and an opportunity to develop personal action plans for implementing selected teaching resources in their classrooms including integrating activities with the Iowa History curriculum.

C. *CampSilos Excursions Website* – This website will provide teachers with lesson plans, background information and web links to the cultural and historical resources of the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area. CampSilos Excursions is an outgrowth of the CampSilos educational website.

CampSilos Excursions will directly link the physical resources of the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area tourism sites with web-based student activities and teaching lesson plans utilizing motivational graphics, photos and games. Access will be provided to digitized information about Iowa's art, artifacts, and documents. The intention is for the site to become a learning resource for classroom teachers in Iowa and throughout the world.

Because learning modules showcasing Iowa's contributions to America's agricultural legacy will be accessible to teachers anytime, anywhere, CampSilos Excursions will greatly extend the outreach opportunities of Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area.

As a component of the CampSilos Excursions website, Silos & Smokestacks will sponsor an online professional development workshop supporting the effective application of the CampSilos Excursions web-based curriculum resources to the classroom environment.

E. *Best Practices Workshop Series* – Silos & Smokestacks will co-sponsor a series of workshops for its Partners on "Best Practices" for interpretation-related activities such as, but not limited to, exhibit design, education techniques and methods, museum development and management, and research. The workshops will be designed to assist educational coordinators, docents, and curators at sites and attractions within the region when planning interpretative and educational programs and coordinating outreach efforts to residents and community leaders. A special focus will be educational materials for schools.

Workshop materials will include a variety of manuals outlining principles of best practices in interpretive program development, and museum education. By providing this training, heritage area sites will raise the overall level of the field trip experiences for school children, as well as all visitors.

In support of this effort, Silos & Smokestacks will put information on these workshops on their website. This will aid workshop participants and others who may not be able to attend. Online materials will include printable manuals outlining information such as the best practices in museum education to support local school districts.



Photograph: John Milner Associates, Inc.

Museums, such as the Hardin County Farm Museum, serve as repositories for historical artifacts and as highly visible icons in the landscape. These stand to benefit from technical and financial support made available through Silos & Smokestacks.

F. Lectures, Roundtable

Discussions, and Forums – Silos & Smokestacks can establish a program of disseminating information and spurring open discussion through lectures, roundtable discussions, and forums devoted to key topics related to agricultural heritage. Topics could range from agricultural lifeways to key developments in the history of farming to the future of the changing farm. The program can be co-sponsored by the Farm Bureau, a local university, or any other organization that focuses on adult education.

Pilot Programs

Pilot programs are those type of activities that can be tested in one location before being replicated across the region. Currently, such programs as farm tours have proven success rates and will prove to be good models for other locations. Other programs, such as community interpretation, do not yet have track records. Such a program will need to be tested in one or more pilot communities before it is undertaken elsewhere. Silos & Smokestacks will help support the experimentation of new programs and the replication of proven programs.

A. Farm-to-Table Tours – Tours will be conducted throughout the heritage area to present the connections between farms, agribusinesses, and consumers. Special emphasis will be placed on interpreting the evolution of farm life, farm types, and farming techniques. Tours will stop at a

variety of farms, farmers' markets, farm service centers, co-ops, grain elevators, mills, processing plants, auction houses, and other related places.

This pilot program, known as the L.I.F.E Tours (Living an Iowa Farming Experience) has begun to be implemented in the Country Heritage Community SIA and may be replicated elsewhere. If the model proves to be suitable for replication, guidelines and procedures will be created to assist in establishing tours in other areas. Incentives will be developed to encourage farm families and agribusinesses to participate in the program. Precautions will be taken to allay concerns about farm-to-farm contamination.

B. Community Interpretation – Communities that present an experience of a historic Iowan town can be interpreted with limited signage and printed materials coupled with friendly guides and docents. Communities may apply to participate and will be required to match grants for project costs. Grant funding would be based on the project's ability to improve interpretation and the delivery of visitor experience as presented in this plan. Other grant guidelines apply. Applicant communities should see grant application guidelines for more detailed information.

One potential partnership structure for community interpretation is the pairing of a community with a nearby interpretive facility. The community would benefit from the expertise the facility could provide, and the facility could undertake such a project as a part of their public outreach programs.

C. Events – Silos & Smokestacks will co-sponsor events with Partners to celebrate agricultural heritage across the region. Events will take place in a variety of locations through local initiatives. Silos & Smokestacks-sponsored events should be related to the primary themes of the heritage area and should feature Iowa objects, crafts, foods, and activities.

Potential Programs

The following preliminary list of programs is intended to initiate a discussion of what actions, projects, and programs may be developed by Silos & Smokestacks and its Partners. This is not an exhaustive list. Other proposed programs not listed here may be implemented as well.

A. Oral History Program – With fewer people farming, the farming lifestyle is fading into history. Some of this heritage can be captured

before it is lost through undertaking oral history projects. A primary component of the effort should be the recording of actual voices. This effort will be Partner-led, with Silos & Smokestacks providing financial support through its grant programs. Silos & Smokestacks can sponsor collaborative meetings for Partners to develop project guidelines. Learning institutions in the region might be approached to spearhead such a project and provide support and training of staff and volunteers, as necessary. By whatever means this endeavor is funded, supported, or led, it will likely be extensive, requiring a great degree of effort and commitment. Depending upon the level of interest among Partners, this project can be undertaken across the region to achieve a comprehensive view of the public memory of farming, or it can be a strategic exercise to learn about a particular region, community, industry, or farm type. Because of how large a project such as this can become, specific goals for the project will need to be clearly defined.

B. Living History Characters – Living history presentations have been proven to be effective interpretive tools. Many entities in the region currently offer living history programs for their visitors. Other entities may not be able to support a living history program, but may have use for characters to augment special programs or events. Silos & Smokestacks can encourage and support volunteers who wish to create and portray living history characters. Such characters would participate in these special programs and events when their character supplies an appropriate component to the interpretive presentation.

C. “Farming in the News”

Exhibits – A presentation of news stories on farming issues can be presented in an exhibit or kiosk structure placed in communities, at sites, and in appropriate farm-related establishments. The exhibit could be set up as a stand-up newspaper. It would feature ongoing news stories related to specific topics, features highlighting new developments, and a ticker with produce prices updated frequently, if not instantaneously. It may be in print format or video format or a combination of both. Information would be gathered from print media and online media and continually maintained.



Photograph: John Miher Associates, Inc.

Hands-on interpretation can often be the most effective way of story-telling. Accurate and compelling living history experiences will be remembered long after interpretive signs are forgotten.

D. *Passport Program* – A “passport” booklet or card can be created that residents and visitors will have stamped as they travel from place to place within the heritage area. Booklets could organize attractions, sites, and communities by themes or types of potential experiences available at each location. The passport program will encourage travelers to visit multiple venues and multiple examples of a type of site. Sites participating in passport programs could offer incentives for passport holders to visit their site, such as discount entry fees, or coupons for items from their gift shops.

E. *“Made in Iowa”* – Northeast Iowa is a productive region, and its products deserve to be highlighted and celebrated. Silos & Smokestacks staff will maintain a list of producers of goods and crafts in the region that can sell products. Silos & Smokestacks Partners will be encouraged to sell these products at their venues. Exhibits featuring the variety of Iowa products could be developed in association with the initiative.

F. *“Future Farm” Exhibit* – The future of farming is a question that on many people’s minds. For non-farmers, this issue may not be a question at all. An exhibit that explores the issues raised regarding soil fertility, over-production, genetic bio-engineering, and others can both enlighten non-farmers to the issues and enroll them in the dialogue about where things are going and where things should go. Such an exhibit places all of the other interpretation offer in the heritage area into a contemporary context.

Chapter Seven

IMPLEMENTATION



CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLEMENTATION

Silos & Smokestacks expects this interpretive plan to be the primary vehicle through which it will engage Partners, allocate resources, and pursue funding for the short term and over time. Partners of Silos & Smokestacks should review the plan, discuss potential projects with other Partners and Silos & Smokestacks staff, and identify ways in which they wish to participate.

All of the projects listed in Chapter Six and further discussed in this chapter have been designed to fulfill the goals of this interpretive plan, building upon the statement of significance, focusing on the themes, incorporating components of the visitor experience, and targeting specific audiences. As it encourages Partners to undertake projects, Silos & Smokestacks will continually refer to Chapters Three through Six to ensure compatibility with this interpretive plan. These chapters are the road maps to successful integration of interpretation and visitor experience.



Photograph: John Mihner Associates, Inc.

The Seed Savers Exchange merges heritage preservation and commercial enterprise. The non-profit organization stockpiles seeds of heirloom plant varieties, many of which are made available for purchase. Tours of their farm are also available.

This plan is intended to be broad in its programmatic options and flexible in its manner of implementation. Plus, it is expected to support the mission, goals, interests, and capabilities of individual partnering sites. The potential project and programs envisioned for the heritage area and outlined in Chapter Six are divided here into four categories: ongoing projects, core projects, needed projects, and supplemental projects. These categories suggest an order of priority, but the order is dependent upon the resources Silos & Smokestacks can deploy for

implementing specific actions, and it is dependent upon the willingness of Partners to undertake projects based on their needs and abilities. A timeframe for commencing projects is suggested here, but not the amount of time or level of effort required to complete the projects. The amount of time required to implement projects is expected to vary between three months to several years, and the costs to vary between a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands of dollars. Information on recommended project priority and duration is summarized, in part, in Table 7.2: Project Priority and Duration, and in greater detail in the project worksheets that follow in this chapter.

Criteria for Categorizing Projects

The criteria used to categorize projects and set priorities within each category are oriented toward helping Silos & Smokestacks target its resources and efforts, and supporting Partners that wish to undertake projects based on their available resources and efforts. Projects were placed in categories according to criteria shown in Table 7.1: Criteria for Categorizing Projects.

Table 1: Criteria for Categorizing Projects

Category	Criteria
Ongoing	Project is currently underway. Project helps maintain the momentum of Silos & Smokestacks. Silos & Smokestacks is the lead entity undertaking the project.
Core	Project to be undertaken soon. Project begins to establish the heritage area concept in the minds of residents and visitors by marking boundaries and raising the profile of Silos & Smokestacks-oriented activities. Project should be undertaken heritage area-wide. Silos & Smokestacks is the lead entity undertaking the project with partner participation.
Needed	Project should be undertaken soon. Project broadens awareness of the heritage area, demonstrates participation by partners, and builds the foundation for further program development. Partners are the lead entity undertaking the project. Therefore, the project depends upon support and willingness of partners.
Supplemental	Project should be undertaken when resources and support are available. Project builds the capacity of partners and Silos & Smokestacks to provide a compelling visitor experience and strengthens the long-term sustainability of the heritage area. Depending on the project, either Silos & Smokestacks or partners will be the lead entity.

Ongoing Projects

Silos & Smokestacks is currently engaged in implementation of several of the projects outlined in this interpretive plan. In some cases, the course of the projects has been influenced by the interpretive plan process. These ongoing projects are important initiatives that should receive the heritage area's full

support as a continuing effort. Recommended ongoing projects include the following:

Sign Systems

- Sign Design Guidelines

Communication and Publications

- General Brochure
- Graphic Identity
- Periodical Newsletter

Interpretive Partnerships

- Strategic Investment Areas

Education

- CampSilos Educational Website
- CampSilos Excursions Website

Pilot Programs

- Farm-to-Table Tours

Core Projects, Driven by Silos & Smokestacks

Core projects are those that Silos & Smokestacks and its Partners will undertake as soon as possible. In most cases, these are either region-wide projects that will benefit all Partners, or projects that will immediately engage Partners with Silos & Smokestacks initiatives. It is anticipated that resources currently available to Silos & Smokestacks, including grant programs, will in large part be allocated to assist Partners in implementing these projects in addition to the ongoing projects listed above. Core projects include the following:

Sign Systems

- Gateway Signs
- Place Identification Signs
- Information Signs and Kiosks

Communication and Publications

- Thematic Brochures

Interpretation

- Exhibits at Partnering Organizations

Education

- CampSilos Online Professional Development Workshop

Needed Projects, Driven by Partners

The main intention in distinguishing certain projects as “needed” is to establish a comprehensive presence for Silos & Smokestacks in the region through the efforts of Partners, and to build the foundation for future work

by both Partners and Silos & Smokestacks. Implementation of these projects is largely dependent, however, upon the interests and initiative of Partners. Depending upon voluntary interest and available resources, some Partners or groups of Partners may begin to implement projects in the coming year. Others may wish to wait several years. It is anticipated that “needed” projects will always be in the works, since many must be replicated by many Partners and communities. Setting priorities for these projects will also depend upon the level of available resources to both Silos & Smokestacks and its Partners. Recommended projects include the following:

Sign Systems

- Wayfinding Signs
- Community Identification Signs
- Heritage Byway Signs
- Interpretive Exhibits

Communication and Publications

- Regional Brochures
- Heritage Byway Brochures
- Field Guide

Interpretation

- Community Interpretation by Partners

Interpretive Partnerships

- Geographic Clusters of Partners
- Thematic Clusters
- Heritage Byways

Education

- Best Practices Workshop Series
- Lectures, Roundtable Discussions, and Forums

Pilot Programs

- Events

Potential Programs

- Passport Program
- Made in Iowa



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

Educational programs reach out to schoolchildren providing a landscape context for their lessons.

Supplemental Projects

Supplemental projects are designed to enhance the range of activities available for visitors, improving the long-term sustainability of the heritage area. These projects maintain momentum by allowing the Partners and Silos & Smokestacks to roll out new projects over time. Like the projects listed immediately above as “needed,” implementation of long-range projects will also be largely dependent upon the interests of Partners. Some of these projects could be implemented by individual Partners or SIAs. Others,

however, are region-wide and could be implemented by Silos & Smokestacks as resources are available, once “core” projects are well-established and “needed” projects are underway as appropriate. While Silos & Smokestacks and its Partners may choose to implement one or more of these projects relatively soon, especially on a pilot basis, they should be considered of a lower priority than projects listed above. Recommended supplemental projects include the following:

Communication and Publications

- Audio Tour (revision)
- Children’s Activity Book

Pilot Programs

- Community Interpretation

Potential Programs

- Oral History Program
- Living History Characters
- “Farming in the News” Exhibits
- “Future Farm” Exhibit

Roles

As mentioned in other chapters of this interpretive plan, Silos & Smokestacks expects to play a facilitating and coordinating role in the heritage area, with much of the actual implementation of projects being undertaken by partnering sites, attractions, and communities. Under the guidance of the Board of Trustees, the Partnership Panel will play a strong role in identifying priorities, allocating resources, and maintaining quality control. In this role, the Partnership Panel will rely heavily upon the work of Silos & Smokestacks staff.

Technical assistance network, providing a structure for supporting the enhancement of interpretive offerings of Partners and site including upgrading exhibits, professional development, monitoring visitor experience.

Staffing

Through limiting its role to facilitation and coordination in the majority of projects that will support interpretation in the heritage area, Silos & Smokestacks hopes to maximize the role and responsibilities of Partners and to maximize the financial resources available to the actual implementation of partnership projects. Notwithstanding, it must be understood that the number and scale of projects that can be undertaken at any one time will be limited by the availability not only of financial resources, but also staff time. Staff must be able to facilitate projects effectively and manage grants and

other administrative duties associated with Partners' projects.

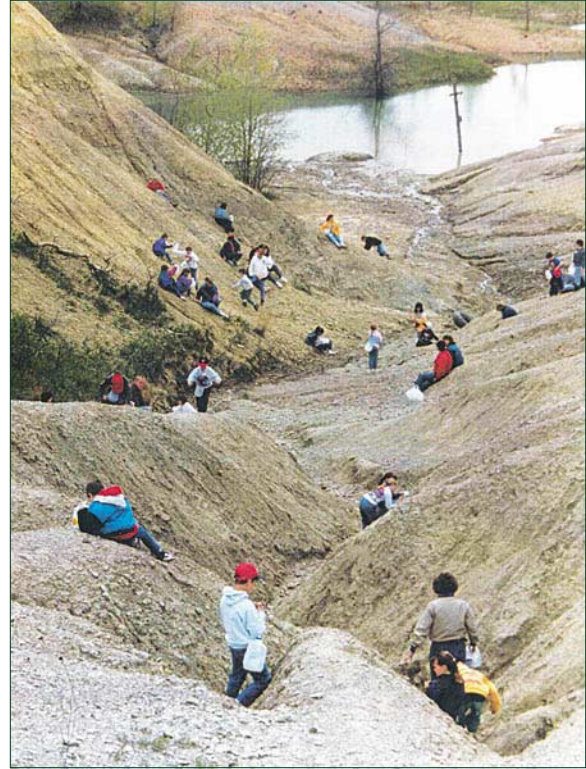
The quality of projects that are implemented by Silos & Smokestacks and its Partners is of paramount importance to the success of the heritage area. In undertaking projects, it is essential that qualified staff are assigned to the work and that their workload allows enough time for management and implementation.

Implementation Recommendations

In the companion document to the Interpretive Plan, each of the projects described in Chapter Six are presented in worksheet format. The worksheets outline the recommended steps for implementing each project. These recommendations will serve as a guide and starting point for implementation. The recommendations should be considered flexible and can be modified to accommodate changing circumstances, experiences, and desired outcomes. It is recommended that these worksheets be updated as needed with new information as it becomes available. It is further recommended that worksheets be added as new projects are anticipated or developed. Table 7.2 provides a quick reference on projects.

Project Decision-Making

The projects listed above have been categorized for how important the project is to the mission of the heritage area and its appropriate timeframe. An additional level of analysis is needed to determine how each project should be implemented. Basically, which projects should be supported first? This presents different issues for each type of project. For example, for the Gateway Sign project, decisions will need to be made about where the first few signs should be installed. This decision-making differs from that needed to determine, for example, which Partners will undertake the interpretation of their communities. In that example, Partners themselves will determine when they bring projects forward, and the competition process will underlie decision-making. Silos & Smokestacks, its Partners, and its Potential Partners will have to establish a decision-making process for each project based upon available resources, interest, and need. Need should be based on this interpretive plan.



Photograph: Silos & Smokestacks

The Rockford Fossil & Prairie Park, in Floyd County, offers one of the few places in the world where visitors are encouraged to hunt for fossils in the large, exposed Devonian-era fossil beds.

Table 2: Project Priorities

Project Name	Category
Sign Systems	
Sign Design Guidelines	Ongoing
Gateway Signs	Core
Wayfinding Signs	Needed
Community Identification Signs	Needed
Place Identification Signs	Core
Heritage Byway Signs	Needed
Information Signs and Kiosks	Core
Interpretive Exhibits	Needed
Communication and Publications	
Graphic Identity	Ongoing
General Brochure	Ongoing
Regional Brochures	Needed
Thematic Brochures	Core
Heritage Byway Brochures	Needed
Periodical Newsletter	Ongoing
Field Guide	Needed
Audio Tour (revision)	Supplemental
Children's Activity Book	Supplemental
Exhibits at Partnering Organizations	Core
Community Interpretation by Partners	Needed
Interpretive Partnerships	
Geographic Clusters of Partners	Needed
Thematic Clusters	Needed
Heritage Byways	Needed
Strategic Investment Areas	Ongoing
Education	
CampSilos (CS) Educational Website	Ongoing
CS Excursions Website	Ongoing
CS Online Professional Development Workshop	Core
Best Practices Workshop Series	Needed
Lectures, Roundtable Discussions, and Forums	Needed
Pilot Programs	
Farm-to-Table Tours	Ongoing
Community Interpretation Events	Supplemental Needed
Potential Programs	
Oral History Program	Supplemental
Living History Characters	Supplemental
"Farming in the News" Exhibits	Supplemental
Passport Program	Needed
Made in Iowa	Needed
"Future of Farming" Exhibit	Supplemental

The information presented in Chapters Three through Five must be applied to all decision-making. Primacy should be given to components of projects that directly address specific elements of this plan. For example, new interpretive signs that focus on the themes and subthemes presented in Chapter Three should take precedence over new signs that interpret other themes and subthemes. Further, Partners that demonstrate that their projects address under-represented themes should receive greater consideration. Such analysis will be further supported by new criteria for the Silos & Smokestacks grant programs that directly correspond to this interpretive plan. Because this interpretive plan does not evaluate individual sites and their relationships to the themes and other aspects of this plan, the application process will be especially important. Partners will need to demonstrate, based on their own research, how their projects support this plan.

The grant programs are a primary mechanism by which Silos & Smokestacks implements this plan. Projects for which Partners will apply for funding will be measured against the interpretive plan. Those most closely in line with the intentions of this plan will be funded.



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