

Stromsburg Scavenger Hunt and History Tour

September 2022

This trip around town takes a lot of turns and covers a pretty large area. It will not take you onto the highway or over any railroad tracks. This works very well if on a golf cart or bicycles.

Throughout the tour, some historical landmarks will be pointed out. Please pull over to the side if you stop to look for a clue or write in your answers!

Important clues to remember as you go:

- Go straight at Stop signs unless the directions say otherwise.
- Turn left at Yield signs unless the directions say otherwise.
- Several of the answers are addresses.
- If you go more than a couple blocks without turning or seeing the answer to a clue, return to the last answer you found and try again.
- Please do not enter anyone's personal property- all clues and answers are visible from the street.
- There are no objects to find and remove from their places- only to find and record on this paper.
- Golf carts are not to be driven on sidewalks.
- Obey all traffic signs and be very careful to watch for others on the street as you are looking around.
- Not every turn is mentioned...

Our tour begins and ends on Commercial Street, between 3rd and 4th. The history around this square alone could be its very own tour (and someday it might be!). To get things started, we'll just hit a few highlights while we're here.

On the south side, we see the Viking Center- now a community meeting and event space. The east half of the Viking Center was once the Opera House and at one time was the site of a recreation parlor with two bowling lanes in the basement.

On the northwest side we see the Post Office, standing where the original Economy Market was established in 1939. Between 1940- 1945 Economy was located where Ericson's ___ ___ ___ Hardware is today, then moved to its current location.

On the east side, Ericson's Cash Hardware- running since 1881- has changed hands, passed down generations and gone through a fire, renovations and relocations. Sterling Anderson, the current owner, has ran the business since 1954.

On the north side, about where the Polk Co. News is now, Mrs. L.H. Headstrom and her sister Jennie Wilson opened the first Millinery Shop in 1887.

The block that stands there now is the Wilson Block, built in 19___. John Wilson Sr. was from Sweden, known as John Fredrik. He changed his surname to Vigelius when he arrived in America for the Gold Rush. He embarked on a long voyage around South America. The captain advised him to simplify his name and it was then that he changed it to Wilson. He eventually landed in Stromsburg and with his wealth from the gold rush, he bought 900 acres of farmland in Polk Co.

On the west side of the square, the service station building on the north end of the block is where the Wilson Hotel once stood. A good portion of that west side is where Lewis Headstrom, Stromsburg's founder, built the first businesses in town. They burned in 1887.

On the northeast corner is the Victor Anderson building, built 1912- 1913. Once, the entire main floor was exclusively Victor Anderson and Sons Furniture. Now, as you travel north, you see The Townhouse, The Rose Colored Glass and _____ & Flowers, in that order... and we're rollin'...

To your left you see the Old Library, built in 1918. This Carnegie Library was the vision of the Stromsburg Commercial Club.

When you can see the horizon, make the next right.

Round stair and roses... who's tree did you drive under? _____

Turn left at pickles and mustard.

Three signs on one corner= turn right.

The lawn is decorated from one side to the other at 7 __ 1.

Turn left.

At the northwest end of this block is now a Bed and Breakfast. It was once a hospital, built by Dr. Flippin in 1910 and was relocated from 4th and Exchange to this site in 1997. This building has been a hospital, a funeral home, again a hospital and Hahn's Apartments. There hangs an old sign with the _____ and w _____.

U-turn!

Go Huskers! at The _____ ' _____.

Round, metal art no longer shines. The window by the front door is a _____ shape.

Turn right.

How many hoops in the 300 block? _____

Loose gravel! When you hit a wall, things go south.

Careful, now, trucks like to go fast and you are going east.

Stay along the wall but do a quick double-take and look past the dotted line.

508 707 _____ grey 157 435 501 black white grey black

Turn left at the light pole.

Five soldiers stand tall and just south, there are two soldiers more. The next house is _____.

Stop. Now, if you go straight here, you'll run into a bike. We'll go right but first- look to the far left, past 9th St. The Midwest Covenant Home celebrates 75 years this year! It began as an orphanage in 1912 by the Swedish Lutherans and has gone through many changes over the years.

To the right, the Stromsburg Housing Authority, or Swede Haven. The citizens of Stromsburg recognized the need for housing for low income elderly and special needs citizens and approved the building of a Federal Housing Project at the 1963 election. The 36 unit complex was ready for occupancy in 1965.

Following the curve of Swede Haven to the south... turn right after the red roof.

Who has a stop light? _ _ _ _ .

Where does Bambi live? The _ _ _ _ _ residence.

Take a left and go downhill, then up north you go.

At the corner of 4th and Eckley you find yourself in front of the home that Charles Morrill provided for his daughter, Minnie Morrill.

To the south, the site of the Central Bible Seminary of 1885- 1888. The 3-story brick structure was built by the Swedish Baptist denomination as its national school. It included a gym, chapel, classrooms and quarters for students. Many pastors trained here in the course of its brief existence. In 1889 it became the Bryant Normal & Business University. It was destroyed by fire on April 21, 1898.

A circle drive, then circles near the drive... Smile! You're on _ _ _ _ _ !

Turn left when you get home.

It took some convincing to pass a water bond issue for the purpose of fire protection. In the Aug. 1886 election, the bond issue, a \$5000 proposal, was defeated. Following the fire of July 1887 when the west side of the square "went up in smoke", Stromsburg citizens were persuaded. A new petition for a water system in the amount of \$12,000 was voted on in Sept. 1887 and passed with just one vote against it. Wells and standpipes evolved as Stromsburg grew. The current water tower was completed in the summer of 1985.

Must turn!

As always, _ _ _ _ _ to the left!

Just past the picket gate, the house is shaped like the letter _ .

Stop sign rule!

This time, go right at the stop sign.

It's a _ _ _ _ _ end to the right.

So many stop signs! Go left.

Quiz: You're passing the sight of the _____ turned _____.

A row of mailboxes but no houses... south past the trees and a little to the west is the site of the Charles Morrill homestead. Charles Morrill came to Polk County from Boone County, IA in 1871 and purchased 160 acres of land on the Blue River from the Union Pacific Railroad. The log cabin built in 1898 is still there and has been renovated and made a home again. He published a book in 1918, "The Morrills and Reminiscences," that devoted a few chapters to early Nebraska, Polk County and Stromsburg.

Move in the direction of the big red S.

Just some bikes, hanging out with their cousin the _____.

And to the right, a couple of brick houses made from bricks produced from Stromsburg brick yards. These houses were once home to railway crewmen when Stromsburg was “the end of the line”.

Go north, right up the center!

½ Yield rule... go straight!

Stop in front of the Stromsburg Library and imagine a lively Jr./Sr. High School, just across the street. Stromsburg’s school history begins in 1872. This building was built in 1929- 1930. 55 _____ face south.

Turning toward the square, you see NAPA or Rally _____ Parts just ahead on the north side. In 1909 J.W.Wilson built what was to become known as “The Big Garage” and leased it to the Swanson Bros Auto Co. They made and sold their own autos as well as sold and repaired Buicks and E.M.F.’s. This was likely the first real auto parts store in Stromsburg.

The End.

You have made it! Thank you for going on this adventure, we hope you enjoyed “the sights and sites” of Stromsburg, as Bob Greenwall says. The historic information in this tour was taken from articles written by Bob Greenwall (made possible by he and other local historians) and the History of Stromsburg 1872- 1997 book.

A bus tour takes place during the Swedish Festival each June. There are many sites that are not safely reached by a golf cart or distracted bicyclist and you will enjoy the while on this tour.

You will find this on the Resources page at StromsburgChamber.org to print and share.