

Mystery Geocaching - Lansing Walking Tour



Provided by the Friends of Pool 9 (friendsofpool9.org) in cooperation with the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge/McGregor District.

This tour is designed as a great way to learn how to use a GPS unit while exploring some of the historic buildings in Lansing, Iowa.

The coordinates listed below should get you within 40'-50' of the target site. At the sites, you should be able to find the answers to the questions. Your final set of coordinates will help you return to your starting point.

What are the rules for Mystery Geocaching?

Have fun trying to figure out the clues, but always be respectful of other people's property. This tour is a great way for you to explore the town's history and the people and/or businesses that have played a role in our development. We hope you enjoy it!

What will you need?

A GPS unit. You may use your own and enter the coordinates found with each clue or you can check out a GPS unit from the Lansing Public Library. These units have the coordinates preset on the Waypoint menu page and were found utilizing the WGS84 Map Datum. They are identified as L1-L12. It is best to run these points in sequence.

The **Clues** on this sheet.

Pencil or pen to record your answers.

Optional – a digital camera. For fun, take pictures of yourself on the tour. If you send us your pictures, we will try to put them on our website.

Starting Point – Corner of N 2nd Street and Main Street, Lansing, Iowa.

Here are your coordinates and clues!

L1 – N 43 21.741 W 91 12.941

The first stop on this tour is a US Geological Survey Marker. This marker is set into the wall of a building. Look carefully for the brass cap. What is the elevation of this marker? _____ What year was this Survey Marker placed here? _____. These survey marker's are located through out the country and help to identify important corner sections of townships and unique topographic features, such as the summit of a mountain. We are not sure why this one has been set in the side of this building. Typically they lay flush with the ground, instead of on their side like this one.

L2 – N 43 21.704 W 91 12.996

This building was made from a material that was quarried nearby. Do you know the name of the material? _____ Keep an eye open along your tour. You may see this material used again. It was typically used when it could be quarried nearby to reduce the cost of transport. It is considered a very durable material for building.

L3 – N 43 21.709 W 91 13.123

This is one of Lansing's oldest buildings, originally built from 1861 through 1866. What was the building originally used for? _____ What is it used for today? _____ The Kerndt family name has been associated with the Lansing business community since 1849 when Herman Kerndt immigrated to America. Many members of the Kerndt family have taken an active role in Lansing's public life over the years.

L4 – N 43 21.651 W 91 13.247

This building was built in 1864. What was it used for? _____ This building was in operation for 108 years, finally closing its doors in 1973. It is hard to believe, but this building was originally built for \$5,000. The ceilings on the first floor are 12' high and on the second floor they are 14" high. Carpenters used native oak and white pine for the doors, windows and interior. The doors are 8 foot tall and 2" thick!

L5 – N 43 21.568 W 91 13.178

If you have navigated properly you should be standing in the middle of a big field. What is it used for today? _____ In some old pictures taken of Lansing in the 1800s, this area appears to have been used as a rafting facility for the early lumber mills.

L6 – N 43 21.514 W 91 13.130

You are about halfway through your tour, you should be crossing a _____? The tour is headed to the south part of town. This part of town is separated from the rest of town by a natural feature. What is it? _____

L7 – N 43 21.333 W 91 12.715

Allamakee County was established in 1847. There are two different theories on the naming of the County. The first one states that the county is named after a fur trader and trapper whose name was Allan Makee. The second theory states that Allamakee is simply an Indian name in origin. This structure served as the County's first _____? What type of architecture is this building an example of? _____

L8 – N 43 21.276 W 91 12.726

This home is named after one of Lansing's beloved native sons. What is the name of this building? _____ It was named in honor of Charlie Verdon, who along with his brothers and sisters grew up in this home. Charlie had moved to Davenport, IA and worked in the Oscar Meyer Meat Packing Plant until his return to Lansing in the late 1960's. Upon his return he opened a small (14') jon boat rental business at the north end of the Lansing Fish Market property. He was known affectionately all around town as "Uncle Charlie". He never married and loved kids, often giving them their candy bars and pop free.

After his death the home was used by family members coming back to Lansing to enjoy the river, and was eventually bought by Jay Hisel. Jay completely remodeled the interior of the house and even exposed that portion of the house (the back side nearest the hill) that was made from the houseboat (or boathouse) that Grandmother Florence lived on as a child. Jay rented it out and gave it the name "Uncle Charlie's Cabin". For many years he played Santa Claus at Christmas, and was loved by all!

L9 – N 43 21.299 W 91 12.661

The area in front of you was once the home of the Lansing Fish Market. The original buildings have been torn down but this _____ fed by an artesian well still remains. The Lansing Fish Market was founded by the Ehrlich family in 1914. It was called Lansing Fish and Fur. The Ehrlich family ran the market until 1952, then it was sold to Stoller Fisheries of Spirit Lake, IA. Harold Verdon was the manager of the Fish Market from 1965s until he retired in 1985. The market was closed by Stoller Fisheries in 1989. Brennan Construction Company of Lansing bought the property and it lay in disrepair until the turn of the century. Eventually it was burned by the Lansing Fire Department and a Lansing Historic Landmark was lost forever.

John Verdon relates that it hurt deeply to see the old icon reduced to ashes. Literally thousands of pounds of carp, buffalo, sheepshead, catfish, suckers, bullheads, dogfish, eel, etc. rough fish were shipped to eastern markets weekly, by truck when he worked there in the 1960-70's. Lansing fish were prized in the eastern markets because they were in such perfect condition, packed in golf ball-sized chunks of river ice cut from the river the winter before. The great floods of 1965 took out the ice house and the fish market had to install an ice-making machine. It made "flake ice" and it wasn't the same, but the reputation for Lansing fish was well established and the market thrived. The water level in Lansing during the flood of 1965 reached 22 feet. This was 15 feet above normal and it covered the railroad tracks.

The fish pond was constructed by the Ehrlich family to hold carp and "fatten" them up for eastern markets. It was twice the size it is today and extended to the south end of the Weymiller property. A rock dike exists today where the south end of the pond rock wall was located. They actually were early pioneers of fish farming. The cold artesian water and farm grains fed the carp seemed to give them a better taste. I remember seeing "live rail cars" parked on a side-track next to the market, at the north end of the pond. The fish were seined from the pond and loaded into the live-cars and taken to Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. There were at least two artesian wells emptying into the pond, one on the northeast corner and one on the northwest corner. They continue to add thousands of gallons of cool, fresh water to the pond every day.

L10 – N 43 21.627 W 91 12.820

This building is currently the home of the Lansing? _____ Originally this building was home to the Lansing Fish Rescue and Lansing Fish Hatchery. Both activities were managed by the Iowa DNR. What years did the DNR operate here? _____ Prior to the construction of the Lock and Dam system, it was common for backwater lakes to be cut off from the supply of fresh water coming from the River. In many areas people could actually walk all the way across the River during the driest part of summer. When the water was low and the fish were stranded they would start to suffocate from the lack of dissolved oxygen in the water. DNR staff members would seine the fish in these isolated lakes and move them into the main channel where they could survive to see another summer drought.

L11 – N 43 21.716 W 91 12.869

The building in front of you is the next to last stop on our walking tour. This building was originally built in 1868 and operated as the Kerndt Brothers Grain Elevator and Warehouse. Just imagine what it might have been like to see a paddlewheel steamboat docked out front loading grain, taking on firewood and delivering goods to the community. Today this building is home to the _____ gift shop and the _____ Museum. The museum is run by local volunteers and is open on most holiday and special event Saturdays from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM during the summer season. There are many historic photographs of early Lansing history including Mississippi River fishing, clamming, buttons, and many other things. Displays include early Lansing development as a river town including steamboats, commercial fishing, the pearl button industry, and ice harvesting.

L12 – N 43 21.729 W 91 12.898

We hope you enjoyed this tour and invite you to try another one on our website. If you follow this final set of coordinates you should find a log book. This log book has the answers to the questions from your Mystery Geocache. It also has space for you to share a little about your adventure with everyone. It would be fun to know what city you live in and some of the things you saw while you were out on your tour. If you have ideas or suggestions for other tours, be sure to tell us your ideas.

If you have access to a boat you may want to consider trying one of our Mystery Geocaches that are set up in Pool 9 of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. You may find the clues to these on our website at: friendsofpool.org