

# TIPS for STAGECOACH TRAVELERS



*Explorations In Iowa History*  
Project  
Price Laboratory School  
University  
of  
Northern Iowa  
Cedar Falls, Iowa

*Tips to Stagecoach Travelers* summarizes stagecoach services in frontier Iowa. This simulated travel guide contains stage schedules and fares. It advises passengers about the kinds of clothing to take on trips. It informs travelers about inns, hotels, and meals available at station stops. It warns passengers of some of the hazards in traveling through Iowa.

This guide describes the jobs of the stage crews as well as the coaches used by Iowa lines. It also outlines the importance of mail contracts to a stage company. Stage line and hotel advertisements from frontier newspapers and directories are included in the guide. From these the reader can infer competition among stage companies and hotels for the passengers' trade.

### DEPARTURE TIME

The stage schedules are printed in the leading newspapers. Study the schedules closely. Some stages run daily, with the exception of Sunday. Others leave only three days a week—Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Some leave only once or twice a week to isolated parts of Iowa.

Check the exact departure time when you buy your ticket. Many stage drivers like to leave early in the morning. Your coach may depart at 4 a.m. and certainly by 7 a.m. Drivers want to have as much daylight travel as possible. Night travel is unsafe. The night traveler is fortunate with a full moon on a clear night. However, most drivers avoid night trips.

### FARES

Stagecoach fares change from season to season. They vary from region to region. One stage line operating in a single area results in high fares. If two companies run coaches over the same road, then fares are reduced. The lowest fares average five cents a mile. The highest fares average ten cents a mile. Typical stage fares are given below:

<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>Fare</i>
Davenport	Dubuque	8.50
Iowa City	Des Moines	10.00
Des Moines	Council Bluffs	11.00
Keokuk	Des Moines	15.00
Burlington	Iowa City	7.00

## STAGECOACH STATIONS

Stations are located every 10 to 15 miles along the stage routes. At each station the horses are changed. When the stage arrives, the tired horses are unhitched. Fresh ones, already harnessed, are hitched in their places. The change is made in one or two minutes.

Meals are served at the stations. Many also have sleeping accommodations. Even a brief stop permits passengers to relax. You can get out of the stage and stretch. You will be able to drink fresh water. Each station stop has toilet facilities for both men and women.

The station agent and his family enjoy meeting the passengers. In isolated spots, the stage is their only contact with the outside world.



THE COACH

The new oval-shaped Concord coaches are now in Western service. They weigh 2,500 pounds and cost \$1,200-\$1,500. They are brightly painted. Olive green or vermillion red are the favorite colors. The panels are adorned with paintings of landscapes or noted historical characters. Nine passengers can be seated in them--3 passengers to a seat. They are made of hardwood, iron, brass, and oxbide leather. They are suspended on heavy straps of leather. Some firms use the Troy coach and the Celerity wagon. The Troy coach is solidly built and carries nine passengers. The Celerity wagon is lighter in weight. While not as good for daytime travel as the Concord, the upholstered seats of the Celerity are well-suited to nighttime travel. None of the coach styles, however, are suited to winter travel. There is no way to heat the stage. Heavy snow blocks their use for the months of January and February, if not December.

## CLOTHING

Stage travelers are advised to wear old clothing. Wear something you do not mind getting dusty, muddy, or wrinkled. Ladies will want calico or gingham dresses. Jackets or coats will be needed early in the morning, even in the summer. Winter travel calls for warmer clothing. Men should wear clothes suited for work. They may have to help put on a wheel or pull the coach out of a mudhole.

Ladies may wear a veil to keep out the dust. Men may want to use a bandanna over the nose.

In cold weather use a hot soapstone to keep your feet warm. Wrap yourself in a robe or buffalo hide. Put your hands in a warm muff. For an extra fee, the stage line will supply the soapstone and the buffalo robe.

Check with your stage line as to the amount of luggage you may take on board. It may vary from 25 to 60 pounds. If the stage has a heavy mail shipment, passengers may not take as much luggage.

## WARNING

Many stagecoach passengers are robbed while in unfamiliar towns. Thieves are found near stage depots, hotels, and taverns. Many even ride the stage waiting their chance to rob prosperous-looking passengers. Often the boys who take your baggage to a hotel will steal from you if you give them a chance. If you carry large sums of money, buy a money belt. You might secure your valuables in your luggage.



### THE FARMER'S HOME

*A New Hotel in Sioux City, Iowa*

The undersigned takes pleasure in announcing to the public generally that he has just erected and furnished one of the largest Hotel buildings on the upper Missouri, and that he is prepared to accommodate the traveling public in as good style as at any house west of St. Louis.

Boarders can be accommodated with good rooms, or have board without lodging.

No pains will be spared to render all comfortable who may stop at the "Farmer's Home," and reasonable charges may be expected.

The Hotel is located on Douglas Street, near the Steamboat Landing. Good stabling furnished for teams.

*Sioux City, July 9, 1859*

*J. Borsch*

## MEALS

The stage traveler will find many kinds of meals in crossing Iowa. Some of the cafes in Iowa's larger cities serve fine meals with exquisite cuisine. The patron will be served several courses including meat and game entrees, seasonal vegetables, salads, and delicious desserts. Usually fine wines are available. On the other hand, some of the stage stops serve coarser foods. The cooks never really know the exact time of stage arrival. They will pre-cook the food. The traveler can count on beans, mutton, potatoes, soup and bread. Sometimes the cook will fast fry ham and eggs.

Most meals cost 25 cents. The better restaurants will charge from 35 to 50 cents.

The stagecoach passenger will find ample spirits. Restaurants, taverns, and inns sell beer, wine, and liquor. Of late some tavern owners have refused to serve liquor to children, even though they still will serve beer and wine. Boys have to wait until they are 15 years old to buy liquor at Iowa taverns.

Each of the inns and taverns will have fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as pastries and candies to sell to coach passengers.



## OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS

Iowa's great cities and towns boast fine hotels, inns, and taverns. The stage driver will recommend a good place in the cities. Hotel rates include room and meals (supper and breakfast). Most hotels charge 50 cents a night. Des Moines, Burlington, Davenport, Dubuque, and Iowa City have fine hotels which charge \$1.00 per night.

Smaller cities and towns may have only one inn or tavern. A night's lodging and two meals will cost 50 cents. Be prepared for unpleasant as well as pleasant places. Not all beds are clean and free from vermin. You may choose to sleep on the floor. You are not likely to find a private room. In rural areas you may have to sleep in one large room with other passengers, the innkeeper and his family.

## YOUR STAGE DRIVER

The large stage companies, like Western Stage Company, or J.J. Frink Company employ many workers. The stage drivers get the most attention. They have the most exciting jobs. They are highly skilled men. The safety of the passengers depends on their driving ability. The handling of six, even four, spirited animals calls for great control. The driver holds the reins in his left hand. With his right he controls the slack and wields the whip. While turning, the lead team has to be coordinated with the swing (middle) team and the wheelers hitched to the tongue. The driver manages two or three teams at top stage speed of 8-9 miles per hour.

The driver of your stage will try to make your trip enjoyable. Sometimes he asks a passenger to ride on the box with him. You will find most drivers to be very intelligent. They are great conversationalists. They are glad to recall their many exciting experiences. Most are young men, under 30 years of age. Young boys look on them as heroes. Townspeople will treat them to drinks at local taverns. They are well paid for their work—some earn \$100 a month.



## ROAD CONDITIONS

Most stage routes in Iowa follow east-west roads. Few routes go north and south. Iowa roads follow the ridges and bypass wet or swampy land. Early pioneers cut out the roads with their heavy wagons. In rainy seasons, the roads are soupy. It is very easy for a stage to get stuck in the mud. Most stages carry a fence rail. It is used to pry the wheels out of mudholes. If the stage is stuck, passengers will have to walk. Sometimes their luggage is dumped overboard. Then you will have to carry it to dry land. There you can re-board the stage to continue your trip.

## MAIL CONTRACTS

The U.S. Post Office Department lets contracts with stage companies to carry the mail. Stage lines compete with each other for the mail routes. The mail contracts often set the schedules. Mail often means the difference between a profitable stage line and one that loses money. However, a heavy load of mail reduces the amount of luggage permitted to passengers.

## SPEED

Stagecoaches offer a fast service to the modern traveler. Most stages average five miles an hour. The main stage lines average eight, with some reaching nine miles an hour. Compare this with the 20 miles a day travel for a wagon. The road conditions affect the speed of the coach.

The Western Stage Company schedules a run between Iowa City and Des Moines (120 miles) in two days. The Frink Line makes a run between Keokuk and Des Moines (180 miles) in three days. However, in western Iowa, it takes three days to go between Crawford County and Council Bluffs, a distance of 70 miles.

### TABLE OF DISTANCES FROM IOWA CITY

#### South

Richmond . . . . .	19 miles	Keokuk . . . . .	91 miles
Washington . . . . .	30 miles	Albia . . . . .	120 miles
Brighton . . . . .	44 miles	Pella . . . . .	128 miles
Fairfield . . . . .	58 miles	Knoxville . . . . .	140 miles
Oskaloosa . . . . .	78 miles	Chariton . . . . .	150 miles
Ottumwa . . . . .	82 miles	Winterset . . . . .	200 miles
Keosauqua . . . . .	85 miles		

#### North

Solon . . . . .	12 miles	Cascade . . . . .	60 miles
Mt. Vernon . . . . .	20 miles	Vinton . . . . .	67 miles
Cedar Rapids . . . . .	27 miles	Waterloo . . . . .	80 miles
Marion . . . . .	31 miles	Cedar Falls . . . . .	88 miles
Fairview . . . . .	45 miles	Dubuque . . . . .	90 miles
Anamosa . . . . .	50 miles	Fort Dodge . . . . .	190 miles

#### West

Marengo . . . . .	34 miles	Boonsboro . . . . .	170 miles
Montezuma . . . . .	58 miles	Homer . . . . .	195 miles
Grinnell . . . . .	74 miles	Lewis . . . . .	280 miles
Newton . . . . .	91 miles	Council Bluffs . . . . .	280 miles
Keiths . . . . .	100 miles	Sioux City . . . . .	385 miles
Des Moines . . . . .	125 miles		

## STAGE CREWS

Stagecoach transportation provides jobs to many workers across Iowa. As a traveler you will first meet the station agent. He will sell you your ticket. He will tell you how much luggage you can take on the coach. You may obtain the stage schedule from him. The agent will advise you as to good hotels, taverns, and restaurants in Iowa's larger cities.

Stage lines hire horse tenders. These men hitch and unhitch the horses. They feed and water the horses. They take care of the animals. They are helped by livery boys who are responsible for cleaning the barns. The major companies employ their own blacksmiths and carpenters. The blacksmiths shoe the horses. They repair iron parts of the coach. Carpenters are used to fix wooden parts of the coach.

## TRAVELERS' REGISTER

Iowa City, Iowa

### ARRIVAL OF THE CARS

First Train From Chicago . . . . . 12.10 P.M.  
Second Train From Chicago . . . . . 9.45 P.M.

### DEPARTURE

First Train, leaves for Chicago at . . . . . 5.35 A.M.  
Second Train, leaves for Chicago at . . . . . 3.30 P.M.

Omnibuses leave the Stage Office and principal Hotels twice a day for the Depot of the M. & M. R.R. Co. on the departure of Trains for the East. Also they leave the Depot for Hotels and Private Residences on the arrival of Trains from the East.

Coaches leave the office of the Western Stage Co. on Iowa Avenue, as follows:

For Cedar Rapids, Marion, Waterloo and Cedar Falls Daily at 1 P.M.

For Marengo, Grinnell, Newton, Des Moines, Lewis, Council Bluffs, Omaha City, Sioux City and St. Joseph, Mo., Daily at 7 A.M.

For Washington, Mt. Pleasant, Brighton, Fairfield, Ottumwa, Chariton, Sigourney, Oskaloosa and Winterset, Daily at 7 A.M.

For Windham, Millersburg and Montezuma, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 5 A.M.

For Toledo, Marshall, Marietta, Eldora, Iowa Falls, Webster City and Fort Dodge, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 7 A.M.

## POST OFFICE.

Corner of Iowa Avenue and Clinton Street.

A.B. Stillwell . . . . . Post Master

Office open from 8 A.M. to 7 P.M. Open on Sunday from 8 to 9 and from 1 to 2.

## Sioux City and Ft. Dodge

### STAGE LINE

This well established and popular line is now running a Tri-weekly Stage between Sioux City and Fort Dodge. The whole route is furnished with new Concord Hacks of the most comfortable character, and stocked with first-class teams-while the drivers are experienced and attentive.

The Stations on the route are comfortable and well supplied with everything which can conduce to the comfort of the traveler.

Any one going to Northwestern Iowa, Nebraska or Dakota from the East-or from these places East and desirous of economizing both time and money, will best consult their own interest by traveling this route.

*Schedule of Time.*-Leaving Sioux City Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays of each week-arrive at Fort Dodge the following Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, connecting there with the Stages running East to the Railroad at both Cedar Falls and Marshalltown.

Leaving Fort Dodge Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays of Each week. Arrive at Sioux City the following Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, connecting there with Stages for Fort Randall, Omaha and Council Bluffs.

JAMES J. OGG, Agent for Proprietor.

*Sioux City, Jan. 29th, 1861*

## PACIFIC HOUSE

COUNCIL BLUFFS..... IOWA.

THE UNDERSIGNED WOULD RESPECTFULLY call the attention of the traveling public and others, to the superior accommodations now provided at the above House. The large four story addition is now completed and thoroughly furnished with good new furniture, thus affording fifty-nine additional rooms for the accommodation of guests. The Table will always be supplied with the very best that can be obtained in this-market, and every thing about the House, will be arranged with a view to making guests comfortable and at home. Thankful for past favors so generously bestowed, the undersigned would assure the public, that by liberal prices, and a careful attention to the wants of his guests, to receive a continuance of public patronage.

JOHN JONES

*Council Bluffs, June 20*



UNITED STATES MAIL  
and  
EXPRESS LINE!  
between  
SIOUX CITY and FT. RANDALL  
And all Intermediate Points

LEAVES SIOUX CITY EVERY SUNDAY AND WEDNESDAY at  
5 o'clock A.M. and arrives Fort Randall every Tuesday and Friday at 7 P.M.

RETURNING--

Leaves Fort Randall EVERY SUNDAY and WEDNESDAY at 8 o'clock  
A.M., and arrives at Sioux City every Tuesday and Friday at 7 P.M.

Our facilities for the transportation of  
Passengers and Express Freight

are excellent and we respectfully solicit the patronage of the public. Charges  
reasonable.



ROBINSON HOUSE  
Council Bluffs, Iowa

THE UNDERSIGNED HAVING LEASED the above well-known HOTEL,  
takes this opportunity of presenting its claims to the traveling community.  
He has secured the most attentive and obliging HELP, and his TABLE will  
always be furnished with the very best the market affords. The most diligent  
attention will be given to insure the comfort, and to cater to the wants of  
all who may become guests. No pains or expense will be spared to make this  
a comfortable home for all who may either permanently or temporarily  
extend their patronage to it.

Charges moderate and regulated to suit the times.

There is attached to this Hotel, a commodious, well-secured BRICK  
STABLE, with an attentive hostler at all times in waiting.

JOSEPH WEIRICH

*Council Bluffs, October 24*

# New Stage Line

HAVING TAKEN A CONTRACT from Messrs. J. B. & W. Bennett, to convey the U. S. Mail, from the Platte River, near La Platte to Dakota, I am now prepared to carry passengers on this route.

Persons traveling through this region, will find this line a cheap and pleasant one. Running, as I do, in connection with the Messrs. Bennett, whose line extends from the Platte River via Nebraska City, regular and direct communication is thus opened from Minnesota to Kansas, through the fairest portion of Nebraska.

This is the nearest, cheapest and best route from Omaha and Council Bluffs to Dakota and Sioux City.

The points embraced in this route are as follows, to wit:—Omaha City, via Bellevue to Platte River and via Saratoga, Florence, Ft. Calhoun, De Soto, Cuming City, Tekamah, Decater, Blackbird, Omadi to Dakota.

H. D. JOHNSON



# EVERETT HOUSE,

Third Street, between Court Avenue and Walnut St.,  
DES MOINES, IOWA.

**A. MORRIS, PROPRIETOR.**

## **The Stages**

Arrive and depart daily, at this house, to and from all parts of the State.

THE EVERETT HOUSE IS NEARLY OPPOSITE  
THE LAW OFFICE OF DEWEY & TUBBY.

## **Stage Office,**

*On Iowa Avenue, between Clinton and Dubuque Streets.*

STAGES LEAVE FOR THE

*West*—For Ft. Des Moines and Council Bluffs, at 7 o'clock, A.M. and 1 o'clock P.M.

*North*—For Cedar Rapids and Dubuque, at 7 o'clock, A.M.

*Northwest*—For Cedar Rapids, Vinton and Waterloo, at 1 P.M.

*South*—For Washington, Oskaloosa and Fairfield, at 8 o'clock A.M.

OMNIBUSES RUN TO AND FROM THE CARS,  
carrying passengers either way. Persons in the city wishing to leave on the cars, will leave their address at the Stage Office.

**Chas. J. Tegde, Agent**

# WESTERN STAGE COMPANY.



**RUN IN CONNECTION WITH**

Des Moines Valley Railroad,  
Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific  
Railroad,  
Burlington and Missouri River Rail-  
road,  
Chicago and Northwestern Railway,  
Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad,  
Union Pacific Railroad,

**TO ALL POINTS IN**

Central, Southern, and Western Iowa and Nebraska.

*Office Third St., bet. Court Av. and Walnut.*

**E. S. ALVORD, President.**

**R. LOUNSBERRY, Superintendent.**

**E. W. SPARHAWK, Secretary.**

## 25 Important Events in Iowa's Stagecoach History

- Oct 1, 1837 U.S. Post Office Department authorized mail stage between Burlington and St. Francisville, Missouri.
- Jan 1, 1838 Three mail stage routes established between Burlington, Mount Pleasant, Davenport, and Macomb, Illinois.
- Feb 19, 1838 Dubuque residents petition U.S. Post Office Department for mail routes to Chicago, Milwaukee, and down the west bank of the Mississippi River.
- Dec 13, 1838 Iowa Territorial Legislature authorized a twice weekly mail stage between Dubuque and Davenport. H.C. Donaldson, Davenport, provided the service, but neither Congress or Legislature paid him for mail delivery.
- July 31, 1841 William Wilson, Fort Madison, lost his stage stables in a fire disaster with a loss estimated at \$1500.
- Nov 1, 1841 Semi-weekly stage service started between Burlington and Iowa City.
- July 1, 1849 First stagecoach arrived at Ft. Des Moines.
- Feb 1, 1850 Stage line between Dubuque and Delhi started.
- June 4, 1850 Frink, Walker & Co. carried mail to Ottumwa in four-horse coach.
- May 1, 1851 Frink & Co. sent tri-weekly coaches from Fort Des Moines to Council Bluffs and return.
- Nov 25, 1851 Frink & Co. set stage line from Keokuk to Dubuque and Galena.
- Jan 25, 1852 Frink & Co. started mail route from Keokuk to Muscatine.
- March 1, 1852 Frink & Co. began twice weekly service between Ft. Des Moines and Iowa City.
- April 29, 1854 John Frink & Co. announced close of operations in Wisconsin, Missouri, and Iowa.
- May 26, 1854 Western Stage Co. agreed to buy stage properties of Frink & Co.
- July 24, 1854 Martin O. Walker's Stage Line reached Dubuque from St. Paul, Minnesota.
- Jan 1, 1855 Western Stage Co. opened line between Burlington and Mount Pleasant.
- March 9, 1855 Western Stage Co. begins service between Council Bluffs and Sioux City.
- Nov 6, 1857 Western Stage Co. moved State officials from Iowa City to new State Capital at Des Moines.
- Dec 15, 1857 Western Stage Co. completed moving State Government and officials to Des Moines.
- Sept 21, 1860 Western Stage Co. began once a week route from Council Bluffs to Denver, Colorado.
- July 1, 1862 Western Stage Co. renewed tri-weekly service between Cedar Falls and Ft. Dodge.
- March 9, 1868 Western Stage Co. abandoned service between Council Bluffs and Sioux City.
- June 30, 1870 Western Stage Co. ceased operations in Iowa after 16 years.
- July 1, 1870 Caleb B. Lothrop operated stage line between non-railroad towns: Pella, Indianola, Winterset, Afton, Clarinda.