

# Council Bluffs Railroad History

For over 150 years railroads have played an important role in the history of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County and Omaha, NE. The growth and unique character of the region was shaped by the construction of the railroads during the 19th century which were also responsible for settling much of Pottawattamie County and Omaha. The railroads retained their importance into the 20th century as Council Bluffs became the nation's 5th largest rail center. And while the hey-day of rail travel may be gone, railroads remain a vital part of our community today.

The effect of railroads on Council Bluffs was extraordinary as the city grew from an isolated town on the Missouri River with a population of about 2,000 in 1860 to a bustling city of just over 10,000 residents a decade later. By 1870 Council Bluffs had become the 5th largest city in Iowa. By 1883 Council Bluffs boasted eight railroad depots and roundhouses and six freight depots along with 51 livery stables and 31 hotels. That year the city's residents were also introduced to running water, electric lights, and standardized time.

The lure of jobs with the railroads brought many people, including immigrants, to Council Bluffs. The Irish who came to Council Bluffs during construction of the Union Pacific's Transcontinental Railroad were soon joined by immigrants from other European countries. Railroad land companies were particularly influential in promoting the immigration of farmers from Europe to turn the wild prairies of Pottawattamie County, and Nebraska and Kansas, into productive fields. At the same time, Railroads were laying out new towns along their railroad lines. One such town was Minden, IA which was almost entirely settled by German immigrants.

The city and the region continued to prosper because of the railroads and by World War II began, 21 different passenger trains stopped in Council Bluffs from 6 different railroads! Many of these trains also carried troops and goods from one coast to another. It was this ease of transport that made the railroads instrumental in supporting the United States military both in Europe and in Asia.



**JOURNEY** *to*  
**THE PAST**

# Programs and Tours

Union Pacific Railroad Museum • The Historic General Dodge House • RailsWest Railroad Museum

Book your tour through the Outreach Coordinator.

## Union Pacific Railroad Museum

The Union Pacific Railroad Museum is a beautiful and flexible Museum setting destination for your group. You are welcome to come and teach your own lesson in the exhibit halls, or choose one of the more structured experiences below. Even if you would just like to use the Museum for your own lesson, without a guide, please contact the Outreach Coordinator to schedule a time. Each tour below features one or two objects for the students to interact with as well as the hands-on exhibit areas. You are welcome to combine a program with a scavenger hunt, or an activity brought from the classroom. Even if you would just like to use the Museum for a “teaching moment”, please contact the Outreach Coordinator to schedule a time.

### **This is MY Museum: Preschool -1st grade.**

This fun and fast paced tour talks about everything you need to know to be successful in a Museum environment. Students will tour the entire Museum looking for “clues” to Museum Manners. Includes a “trip” on our Locomotive Simulator. Ask about the optional “what happens when I touch it?” experiment! Students will experience all of the hands-on aspects of the Museum as well as learn about trains along the way! 30 min. 30 student maximum group size. First and Second Floor.

### **Great Plains, Bison and Tank Towns:**

In this tour see what came before railroads. Recognize Native American names and places that surround our community. Learn about Great Plains tribes and discuss cultural borrowing. See how communities developed along railroads. 30-45 min. First Floor only.

### **Time, Telegraph and Trains:**

Examine the difference between transportation before and after the railroads. Explore the concepts of time zones and communication. Finally contrast and compare the different challenges experienced by the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific as they joined a nation together! 30-45 min. First Floor only.

### **Westward by Rail:**

This interactive tour explores the technological advances made during westward expansion and their impact on history. How did supply and demand influence the settlement of peoples in the West? What are the economics of railroad building? 30-45 min. First and Second Floor. Teacher's Guides are available at [www.uprrmuseum.org](http://www.uprrmuseum.org)

### **Rail Talk:**

Sit down with retired UP employees and find out what life was like working on the railroad. See if you can follow whistle signals in our “move the train!” game. Great for Scout groups and summer programs! 30-45 min. Comes with a special booklet.

## The Historic General Dodge House

The Historic General Dodge House offers a variety of tours and programs, designed to engage students and give them a meaningful and memorable experience in this great historic home. The programs have been designed to offer students “hands on” opportunities in an otherwise “hands off” environment. Your experience can be customized to fit your needs and group size.

### **The Meaning of Underwear:**

Contrast Victorian life with modern day life through clothing. A selection of students will try on the successive layers of men's and women's clothing from the Victorian era over their street clothes. Tasteful and lively discussions on the purpose of each layer of clothing and what clues they give us about Dodge family life, Victorian Society and our own. Students will discuss the role of women in society, Amelia Bloomer and her contributions to the dress reform movement, the differences in children's clothes in Victorian society, and will be encouraged to imagine themselves dressed appropriately as they exit the Dodge House. 1-1.5 hours. Includes a short movie about General Dodge and a walk through the Dodge House.

### **A Servant's Life:**

Walk in the steps of a servant in the Dodge household and view life from their eyes. Take the servants staircase, carry in the afternoon tea, and try your hand at the Victorian way of doing laundry or polish the silver! A very hands-on approach to the ideas of class and work in the 1870's. Discussions of immigration, employment and expectations of the working class in Victorian America. 1-1.5 hours. Includes a short movie about General Dodge

**Keeping up with the Dodge's:** *Appropriate for older students (Jr. HS and up)* Students will learn about our community's history while assuming the identity of people who lived in, worked at, or visited the Dodge House! Walk through the Dodge House as your character! End up in the Ballroom for hand's on activities and see if you, kept up with the Dodge's! Identities will be sent out prior to the class visit so that students can engage in research about the people that they will portray. 1-1.5 hours. Includes a short movie about General Dodge  
Teacher's Guides are available at [www.dodgehouse.org](http://www.dodgehouse.org)

## RailsWest Railroad Museum

The RailsWest Railroad Museum offers a variety of educational programming all set in this charming 1899 restored Rock Island Depot. This Museum also boasts a large model railroad layout as well as a rail yard full of railcars and locomotives to explore. \* The programs listed below are interactive, fun and engaging and appeal to a wide variety of learning styles.

### **All About Trains!:**

Learn the difference between passenger and freight trains in this fun, fast paced tour. Children will see where people waited for their trains and walk inside real train cars! Ring the bell on a locomotive and operate a real model train. Comes with a fun handout to remember their trip! 30 Student maximum group size. Pre-school to 1st grade 30-40 min.

### **Railway Mail Service:**

At one time, Council Bluffs was the largest mail center in the Nation! Come and see how things worked when mail was sorted on train cars! Lift a real mail bag, sort mail on the real mail car, and operate the mail crane. Take home your own envelope that you “hand-cancelled” from a Rock Island Railway Post Office. 45 min. Students should be able to read or be paired with a good reader for this program.

### **Station Agent and Depot:**

See this center of the community come to life! Learn about the jobs at the Depot and what role they played in the community. Look behind the scenes at the Ticket Agents Office, try out the telegraph, and learn all about why Depots were so important! 30 min- 45 min

\*outside exhibits dependant upon fair weather

**JOURNEY** *to*  
**THE PAST**

# Maps and Directions

Union Pacific Railroad Museum • The Historic General Dodge House • RailsWest Railroad Museum

## Union Pacific Railroad Museum

200 Pearl Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503  
(712) 329-8307  
[www.uprrmuseum.org](http://www.uprrmuseum.org)  
**Parking:** Pearl Street

## The Historic General Dodge House

605 Third Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503  
(712) 322-2406  
[www.dodgehouse.org](http://www.dodgehouse.org)  
**Parking:** 3rd Street

## The Historic General Dodge House

16th and South Main Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503  
(712) 323-2509  
[www.thehistoricalsociety.org/Depot.htm](http://www.thehistoricalsociety.org/Depot.htm)  
**Parking:** Lane between depot and rail yard

## Council Bluffs, Iowa



**JOURNEY** *to*  
**THE PAST**

# Field Trip Admission

To arrange a field trip, please contact the Outreach Coordinator.



## Teachers:

Teachers are always free at all locations with a valid school I.D.  
Come ahead of time and check out these great venues!

## All three railroad Museum tour:

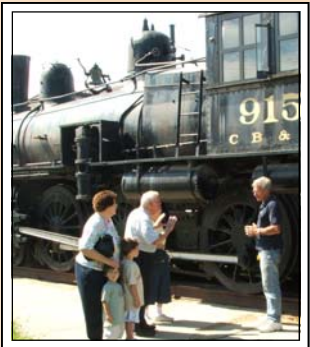
Choose one program/Tour from each Museum  
Length: 10 am – 2 pm, sack lunch site Bayliss Park or RailsWest  
Railroad Museum



## Admission:

Groups of 15 or over  
\$7 per student, \$9 per chaperone, teachers are free  
Groups under 15

\$9 per student, \$12 per chaperone



Tour any one or two Museums separately!  
Contact the Outreach Coordinator for prices and information  
on separate admission.

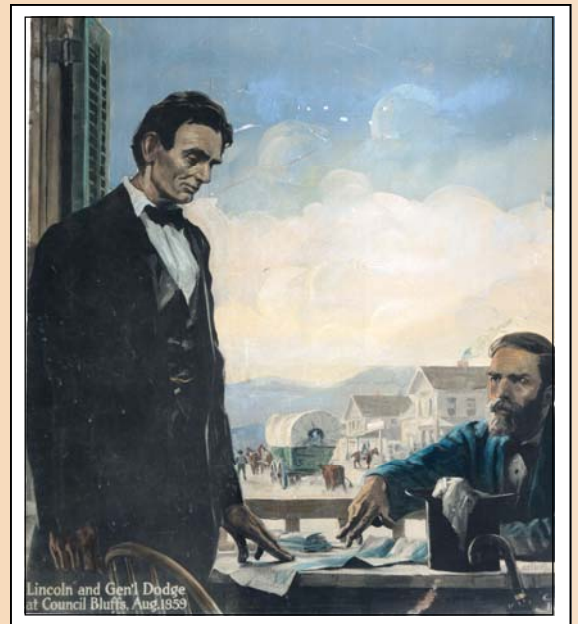
**JOURNEY** *to*  
**THE PAST**

# Historic General Dodge House

605 3rd Street • Council Bluffs, IA 51503 • (712) 322-2406 • [www.dodgehouse.org](http://www.dodgehouse.org)



- Site consists of many stairs
- Gift Shop
- Limited bathroom facilities



General Grenville M. Dodge has been called the “greatest railroad builder of all time” due to his role as Chief Engineer for Union Pacific during the construction of the first transcontinental Railroad and his subsequent railroad career which spanned the globe. Born in the east, he first saw Council Bluffs while making a railroad survey and was so captivated by the West that he made this city his home in 1853. His participation in the Civil War was marked with outstanding military success. He was associated with many influential people of his day, including President Lincoln, General Grant and Jay Gould. His last years were spent at his home in Council Bluffs where he died in January 1916.

## Need more information?

Units are available hardcopy, or available on the website! Each unit comes with an extensive bibliography for further research, activities and discussion options.

- General Dodge's Victorian Life
- Dodge: Railroad Builder
- General Dodge in the Civil War

**JOURNEY** *to*  
**THE PAST**

# RailsWest Railroad Museum

16th Avenue & South Main Street • Council Bluffs, IA 51503 • (712) 323-2509  
[www.thehistoricalsociety.org/Depot.htm](http://www.thehistoricalsociety.org/Depot.htm)



- Site consists of some stairs; small step into the Depot, stairs to model train and into railcars
- Limited bathroom facilities
- Possible picnic site

The RailsWest Railroad Museum, housed in the historic Rock Island Depot, illustrates first hand Council Bluff's rich railroad history. The restored depot was originally built in 1899 for the Chicago Rock Island and Pacific Railroad (the "Rock Island"), one of 15 rail lines serving Council Bluffs. It is the last survivor of a half-dozen passenger depots which at one time dotted the Council Bluffs landscape. The last Rock Island passenger train pulled out of the depot on May 31, 1970. Engineer Grenville M. Dodge surveyed the westward route of the Rock Island Railroad to Council Bluffs in 1853. Years later, Dodge would survey the route west from Council Bluffs that enabled the city to become the eastern terminus of the transcontinental railroad.

Experience real railcars and locomotives, step back in time in the beautifully restored Depot and enjoy the extensive HO scale model train display.

## Need more information?

Units are available hardcopy, or available on the website! Each unit comes with an extensive bibliography for further research, activities and discussion options.

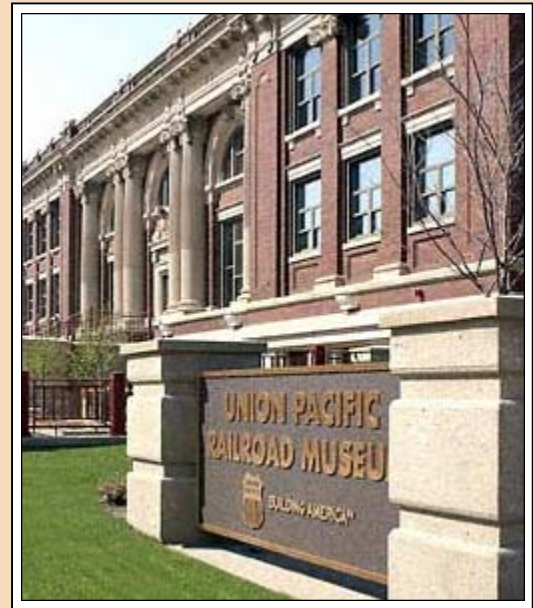
- The Railway Mail Service
- A Railroad History of Council Bluffs



**JOURNEY** *to*  
**THE PAST**

# Union Pacific Railroad Museum

200 Pearl Street • Council Bluffs, IA 51503 • (712) 329-8307 • [www.uprrmuseum.org](http://www.uprrmuseum.org)



- Two floors of Museum exhibits
- Handicapped accessible
- Elevator
- Gift Shop

With the signing of the Pacific Railway Act in 1862, President Abraham Lincoln created Union Pacific Railroad and directed Union Pacific and Central Pacific to construct America's first transcontinental railroad from Council Bluffs, Iowa to Sacramento, California. The route was completed in 1869 with the driving of the final spike—the golden spike. From that moment, the Transcontinental Railroad would forever change the landscape, and the very fabric of, our nation.

From steam power to Diesel Hybrids, signal lanterns to remote control, at the Union Pacific Railroad Museum, you'll discover how railroads helped lead America's technological revolution.

## Need more information?

Units are available hardcopy, or available on the website! Each unit comes with an extensive bibliography for further research, activities and discussion options.

- Native Americans and the Iron Road
- Settlement of the West
- The Transcontinental Railroad

**JOURNEY** *to*  
**THE PAST**

# OFF SITE PROGRAMMING

## Journey to the Past without ever leaving your classroom!

**\$40**

**Train Song:** *Preschool-K.* Read the children's book Train Song, examine a real rail and spikes and play a train whistle game for "whistle talk" Alternative book is "Blind Tom" for older children; 1st-2nd grade. Blind Tom talks about building the transcontinental railroad from a horses perspective!

**\$80**

**The Meaning of Underwear:** Welcome a Victorian Lady, and her maid, into your group and watch the meaning of underwear unfold. Talk about each layer of clothing and its purpose as these Victorian characters get ready right before your eyes! Introduce Amelia Bloomer and the dress reform movement and learn some icky facts about beauty in the 1900's!

**\$45**

**Track Down Lincoln: Abraham Lincoln in Council Bluffs:** Through the use of an interactive scavenger hunt and primary documents, experience "Track Down Lincoln" and re-create Lincoln's footsteps through Council Bluffs and the beginning of his special relationship with Grenville Dodge.

**\$60**

**The Transcontinental Railroad:** Interactive Power point presentation on the construction of the railroad from UP's perspective. Images from the UPRR archives, a section of the transcontinental rail, advertisement brochure for settlers and Dodge's final telegram from Promontory Summit.

**\$50**

**Mind your Manners:** *Preschool.* Read the book "Mind Your Manners BB Wolfe?" and then use the felt board to show proper names and places of a table place setting. Sing the "tea pot song" and "Come have a tea party with me"

**\$40**

**Let's get dressed:** *Preschool.* Read "Stop Those Pants" and then use the felt board to dress felt dolls in Victorian clothes. Have kids examine their own clothes at each step. Sing a color wearing song, and "Button, Buckle, Zip and Ties" songs about getting dressed.

**\$60**

**Costumed presenters:** Have Amelia Bloomer, Buffalo Bill or a Union soldier come to your site and speak! All bring objects and anecdotes to help you understand everything from women's rights & bison conservation to what a soldier called his hat in the Civil War! Bring History to Life!

### New programs released every year!

*Many off site programs can also be requested on your field trip. Most programs are flexible as to length.*

### Contact (402) 501-3841 or [plabout@upcontractor.up.com](mailto:plabout@upcontractor.up.com) to book a program.

*At least two weeks notice is required for all off-site programs. Payment is required in advance. Please provide 2-3 available dates and times for scheduling. Locations more than 15 miles from Council Bluffs will incur a mileage charge of \$0.40 per mile. Prices are for groups of 15-35 students.*

**JOURNEY** *to*  
**THE PAST**



# Traveling Trunks

Traveling trunks are available for schools to use through both AEA 13 and Omaha Public Schools media services. Each kit includes photographs, books and objects that bring history to life!

## AEA 13:

- The Transcontinental Railroad
- Settlement of the West
- Native Americans and the Iron Road
- Grenville Dodge's Victorian Life
- Dodge: Railroad Builder
- General Dodge in the Civil War
- Abraham Lincoln: Self Made in America



## Omaha Public Schools:

- The Transcontinental Railroad
- Settlement of the West
- Native Americans and the Iron Road

To check out or to request trunks, please contact your AEA 13 or Omaha Public School media services representative directly.

Check back frequently for new trunks and updates!

**JOURNEY** *to*  
**THE PAST**

# Volunteer Opportunities

With the Education Programs



**WE NEED YOU to bring history to life!**

## Opportunities

- Teacher packet development
- Program development
- Curriculum development
- Program teaching/facilitation/tour guide
- Creating props
- Program preparatory work
- Craft project development
- Content research
- Teacher Advisory Council

## Audience:

- Adults
- Families
- Home Schools
- School tours
- Scout troops
- Youth Groups

Contact the Outreach Coordinator for more information.

**JOURNEY** *to*  
**THE PAST**