

# Road Trip!

We ended up in the Cedar County “slammer”.  
Honest, Sheriff...it was all in good fun!

By Jerry and Paula Wiebel

WELL, we did it again—proved that you can toss a dart at an Iowa map and spend a fun-filled day in just about any county on which the dart lands.



But we have a confession to make about our Road Trip to Cedar County. We cheated a bit.

You see, we figured there was so much to do and see that there'd be no way we could pack it into 1 day. So we started the night before—with supper at Herb N' Lou's Pizza in West Branch. It was recommended in our *Directory of Iowa's Best Ma & Pa Restaurants*, and we didn't want to miss it.

Good thing, because the “Herb Heaper” pizza, the specialty of the house, was worth the drive halfway across the state.

FYI—if you go there, don't ask for Herb or Lou because they're not there. West Branch is the birthplace of Herbert Hoover, and the pizzeria borrows its name from our 31st president and his wife, Lou.

## Started the Morning on a Sugar High

Friends of ours from the Quad Cities area had told us, “If you go to Cedar County, you have to stop at Tiffany's Tipton Bakery for their crescent doughnuts.” They make a point of stopping there every time they pass through town.

So the first thing the next morning, we drove to Tipton, the county seat, and found the bakery on the main drag through town. What a treat!

The bakery dates back to 1928. Several years ago, Tiffany Meinert took over and carries on the tradition of the “Tipton Bakery Crescent”. It's a light, fluffy crescent-shaped doughnut featuring a whipped icing filling and topped with powdered sugar.

We're talking lots of I-don't-care-if-I-get-it-all-over-my-shirt powdered sugar. Talk about starting our day on a sugar high!

**LARGER THAN LIFE** was Iowa's Herbert Hoover. At his presidential library, life-size dioramas depict his career, including gold mining.



**NOT MUCH ELBOWROOM** in the former jail, as retired sheriff Keith Whitlatch demonstrates. Imagine trying to sleep on those bunks!

Tiffany told us the crescents are made from an old Norwegian recipe. They have an international flavor for another reason—there's a map on the wall with pins representing people from all over the world who've dropped in for a crescent, or have ordered them. Tiffany says she's shipped them as far as Australia, Afghanistan and South Korea.

Next stop was the Old Cedar County Jail—earning a spot on the National Register of Historic Places as the last “mom-and-pop” jail in Iowa. It's also the official museum for the Iowa State Sheriffs and Deputies Association.

The six-prisoner jail was built in 1892—and amazingly, was used until 2001. It's attached to the former sheriff's residence, which dates back to 1855, so the sheriff could keep an eye on the inmates and his wife could feed them.

## Historic Hoosegow

Our Cedar County Hawk-Eye, Keith Whitlatch, is the retired county sheriff, and he met us at the historic hoosegow to show us around. The quaint little lockup depicted in Andy Griffith's *Mayberry*, this place is not!

There's a four-bunk cell, plus a two-bunk maximum-security cell. The bunks are little more than steel shelves attached to the walls. And there's about as much elbowroom as on a submarine.

Adding to the confined feeling is a steel-plate “lid” covering the cells to prevent prisoners from escaping, although several have tried.

Keith tells of the time two prisoners used three hacksaw blades that had been smuggled in to cut through two bars on a window.

Another time, an inmate—a stranger in town—was caught after burglarizing the house of a local dentist. He overpowered the jailer, and because nobody knew him, he made his escape by joining the posse looking for him!

Despite those jailbreaks, Keith says, “If there was a tornado heading for Tipton, this is where I'd want to be. This place is built solid.”

However, we couldn't help but ask Keith: “With the cramped

quarters and that low, steel ceiling, didn't this place get hot in the summertime?"

With a wry smile, he explained that the jail was finally air-conditioned in the early 1990s, after a prisoner took the county to court for inhumane conditions. "But we made the prisoners pay for it," he chuckles, "by garnishing the wages of those who were out during the day on work release!"

The Old Cedar County Jail is open to visitors from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the first Saturday of each month. Or you can arrange group tours by calling Keith at 319/329-1785.

### Collection of Grant Wood Lithographs

After making our own jailbreak, we headed to the Carnegie Library in Tipton, which boasts an impressive collection of original Grant Wood artwork—21 lithographs and two oil paintings, to be exact.

Wood is normally associated with paintings like *American Gothic*, *Young Corn* and *Arbor Day*, and we were surprised to learn that he did a number of black-and-white lithographs toward the end of his career.

Among the collection in the library is a lithograph entitled *Family Doctor*, Wood's last artistic work. He used his own doctor as a model—the same doctor who referred him to the University of Iowa hospital when he became ill in November 1941.

There, doctors found inoperable pancreatic cancer. Wood

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*"The bunks are steel shelves  
attached to the jail cell walls..."*

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signed copies of this lithograph in his hospital room, where he died a couple months later at the age of 50.

So we learned a lot about Iowa's most famous artist, who was born not far from Tipton, up the road in Jones County.

We wanted to stop at the Cedar County Historical Museum but ran out of time. Too bad, because we'd heard there's an exhibit there about the Cedar County "Cow Wars".

Yep—a moo brouhaha. In 1929, Iowa had passed a law that required all dairy and breeding cattle to be tested for tuberculosis, which could be passed on to humans through infected milk.

Farmers were wary of the test, and if their cows were found to be infected, those cows had to be destroyed. By 1931, local farmers were putting up so much resistance that the governor sent in 1,800 of the Iowa National Guard to quell the rebellion that had prevented veterinarians from traveling from farm to farm to do the testing.

### Hoover Library's a Must-See

From Tipton, we made our way back to West Branch to spend the afternoon at the Herbert Hoover Historical Site and Presidential Library and Museum. Every Iowan ought to go there and learn about the 31st president of the U.S.

We'd been to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library at Hyde Park, New York (where the Hoover legacy wasn't treated too kindly, by the way). In our opinion, the Hoover birthplace and library are nicer and more informative.

The Great Depression occurred on Hoover's watch as president, and he often is blamed for it. But that's largely a bum rap. In fact, he was warning of excesses in the economy 5 years before the stock market crash, when he was U.S. Secretary of Commerce in the Calvin Coolidge administration.

The Historical Site includes Hoover's birthplace, a humble 14- by 20-foot cottage where the family lived for several years. He would later say, "This cottage where I was born is physical

proof of the unbounded opportunity of American life."

The site also includes a replica of the shop where his father was a blacksmith, and the actual Friends meetinghouse where Hoover learned Quaker principles of honesty, hard work, simplicity and generosity.

Hoover's father died when Herbert (they called him "Bert") was 6, and his mother died when he was 10. Eventually, he was sent to live with an uncle in Oregon.

The presidential library and museum picks up from there—with a number of life-size dioramas and exhibits covering Hoover's impressive career.

He earned a degree in geology from Stanford University, and that's where he met his wife, Lou, also a geology major who was born in Waterloo. Together they traveled the world, as Hoover worked as a consultant in the mining business.

### A Self-Made Millionaire

In the early 1900s, Hoover had gained the reputation as the "doctor of sick mines". By the age of 28, he was making \$33,000 annually and was reportedly the highest salaried man of his age in the world.

A millionaire by the time he was 40, and having been raised in the Quaker tradition, Hoover retired from mining and embarked on public service for the rest of his life. And therein lies his lasting greatness.

Europeans were starving as a result of the ravages of WWI. It was so bad that sawdust was mixed with flour to stretch scarce supplies, trees were stripped of bark, and even dogs and cats were eaten.

Hoover orchestrated the massive U.S. relief effort and, thanks to his administrative skills, is credited with feeding 350 million people in 21 countries.

After his presidency, he served as chairman of the Boys Clubs of America and was instrumental in the founding of children's welfare organizations CARE and UNICEF.

A couple of interesting facts about Hoover as president: He canceled the traditional inaugural ball, thinking people expected him to get right to work early the next morning.

Hoover was one of two presidents to give his entire presidential salary to charity. The other was John Kennedy.

We spent several hours in the presidential library and museum—and could have spent more. But it was time to head for home.

It was another fun Road Trip, and with the accomplishments of Herbert Hoover still playing in our minds, we drove home feeling mighty proud to be Iowans. 🏠

**FROM THIS WHITE HOUSE...to the White House.** The tiny Hoover birthplace is evidence of the 31st president's humble start in life.



Side Note: "A man is no better than what he leaves behind." —Cecil B. DeMille