

THE IOWAN

WINTER RAPTORS ARRIVE

**"STORM LAKE"
THE MOVIE**

**GRANT WOOD
ROAD TRIP**

**UNIQUE IOWA
VACATION
RENTALS**

**EMERGING
IOWA
ARTISTS**



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GRANT WOOD ROAD TRIP

A colorful fence in Anamosa surrounds the "God Bless America" sculpture, a large rendering of the couple depicted in Grant Wood's "American Gothic" painting. (Photo by Brian Abeling)



ON THE COVER

The Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) is a small accipiter that frequents bird feeders to hunt for small birds. Story begins on page 26. (Photo by Jay Gilliam)

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features

10 STAYING ALIVE
by James Baggett
Pulitzer Prize winner Art Cullen and his family deliver the news to their Iowa farming community through their newspaper The Storm Lake Times—come hell or pandemic—and there's a new film that documents their daunting journey. We spoke the filmmakers about the experience.

16 GRANT WOOD ROAD TRIP
by Brian Abeling and Ira Lacher
Iowa's most celebrated visual artist won't soon be forgotten in his home state. His legacy exists in many locations you can visit in eastern Iowa.

26 WINTER RAPTORS
by Jay Gilliam
At this time last year, we profiled Iowa owls. For this issue, we take a look at a variety of raptors that winter in our state. These include the Sharp-shinned Hawk, the Northern Harrier, the Merlin, the Prairie Falcon, and many other species.

38 STAY YOUR WAY: UNIQUE VACATION RENTALS
We combed the state and curated the options for some of the most unique vacation rentals out there. No need to head to the mountains to learn to fly-fish or glamp in a fancy canvas tent when there are affordable experiences here all within a half-day drive.

48 IOWA ARTIST FELLOWS
The Iowa Arts Council has named five artists—from Ames, Des Moines, Dubuque and Waterloo—to be a part of annual program that helps artists advance their careers

departments

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GRANT WOOD ROAD TRIP

Iowa's most celebrated visual artist won't soon be forgotten in his home state. Here is a curated guide to eastern Iowa Grant Wood destinations (even including a rest stop on I-380)

Photography by Brian Abeling Text by Ira Lacher



You can pose for selfies at the American Gothic House in Eldon.



ELDON AMERICAN GOTHIC HOUSE

Almost a half century separated the construction in 1881 of what was known as the Dibble House, for its builder, Eldon livery stable owner Charles Dibble and his wife, Catherine, and its initial viewing by artist Grant Wood, who visited the tiny southeast Iowa town to attend an art exhibition in 1930. Coming upon the “pretentious” country house along a drive during the festival, the artist asked his driver, John Sharp, to pull over so he could sketch it. The rest is an icon. Rumblings to move the house to a more accessible location were squelched after the house was listed in the National Register of Historic

Places in 1974. It’s on the grounds of the American Gothic House & Center, which includes a history of the house and painting, and other items. Don’t leave without getting a photo of you and your companion in quintessential “American Gothic” clothing, which the museum provides. *300 American Gothic Street, Eldon, 641-652-3352. Center open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday–Saturday, from 1 p.m. Sunday. House open for tours 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. the second Saturday of each month, April to October. Free.*



MOUNT VERNON AMERICAN GOTHIC BARN

Arguably the largest version of “American Gothic” not displayed in a museum stands east of Cedar Rapids off Highway 30. The property owner commissioned local middle school art teacher Mark Benesh to paint the barn, on the south side of the highway after it curves just west of Cedar River Road and right before the entrance to

Palisades-Kepler State Park. To the structure’s adjacent sides, Benesh added scenes of iconic Iowa countryside. When you stop to photograph it, be aware that it’s part of a working farm. The driveway is narrow, so you may have to struggle a little to get back on the road. But as they say, good art is meant to challenge.



STONE CITY

In 1932, Grant Wood and gallery director acquaintances Edward Ronan and Adrian Dornbush founded an art colony in the tiny unincorporated hamlet of Stone City, off county road E28, four miles west and north of Anamosa, Wood's hometown. The community would become known for its limestone, which it continues to ship around the U.S.; as well as an art colony, which lasted just two years, succumbing to financial difficulties. Ultimately, the town gained fame as the namesake for Wood's first major landscape painting, which depicts a Willy Wonka-esque landscape of curvy hills and puffed-up trees. (You can view it in the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha.) The town's main attractions today are its many preserved sandstone homes. But you'll also find this replica of the actual American Gothic house in Eldon. The false-front metal building was designed to shelter the ice wagons that are rolled out each September for the annual Stone City Festival.



I-380 REST AREA

When you're driving northbound I-380 just south of Cedar Rapids and you need the pause that refreshes, come in and set a spell. David Dahlquist, who designed the High Trestle Trail Bridge artwork, came up with this setting that includes Gothic windows of the style seen in the American Gothic house; hay-bale-look-alike benches; replica ice wagons; and terrazzo floors leading to a tile mural in the style of Grant Wood's "Stone City" painting, separating the men's and women's restrooms. You won't need signs pointing you the right way. *I-380 Northbound, north of Shueyville and southeast of the Eastern Iowa Airport.*





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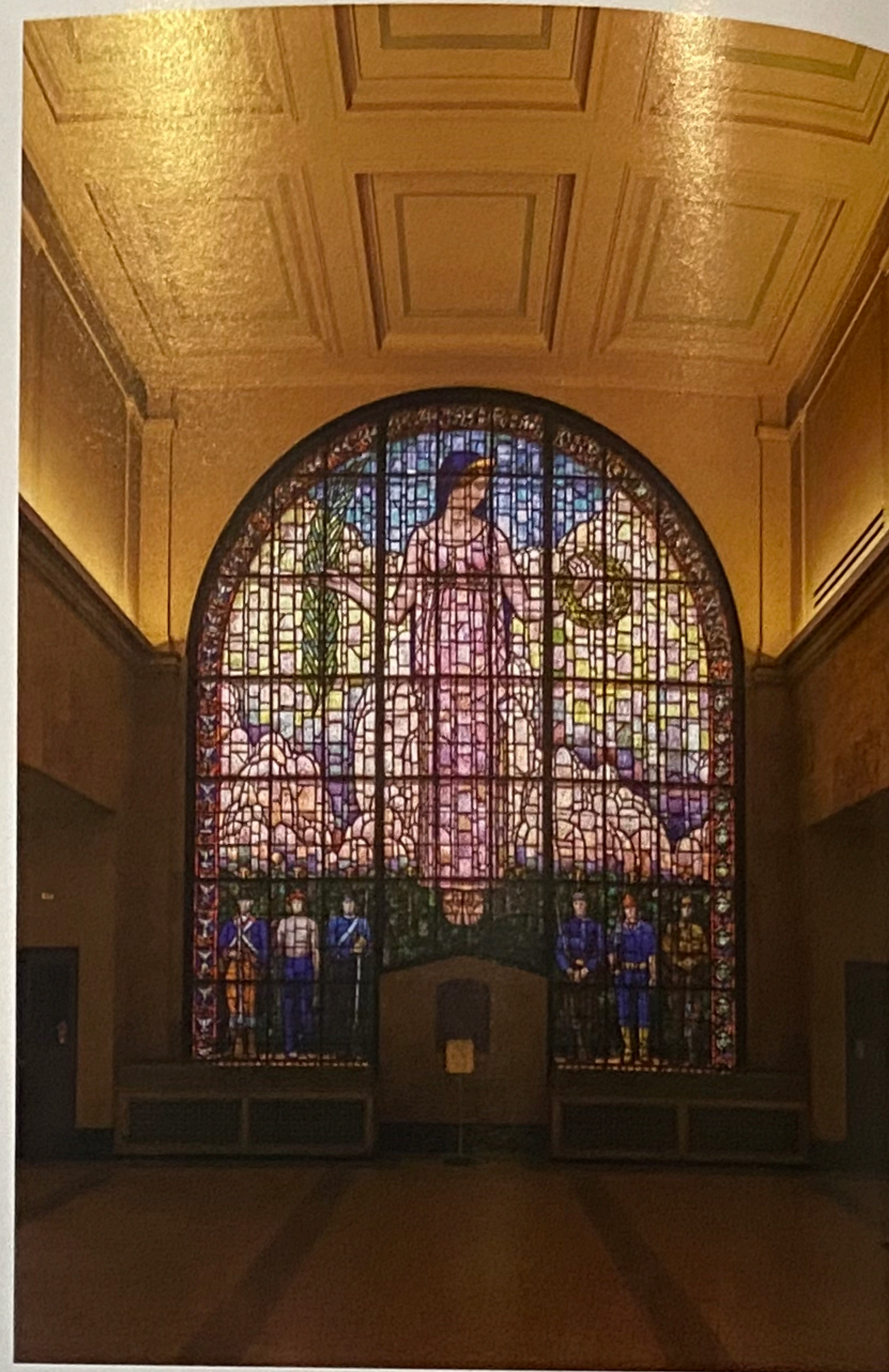
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CEDAR RAPIDS MUSEUM OF ART

In one of the almost 130-year-old museum's largest first-floor galleries, you can explore the breadth and depth of Wood's career, which ended with his death in 1942. Among the pieces are "Door to 5 Turner Alley," which the artist constructed in 1924, using painted wood, fabric, glass and, wrought iron. That address was fictional, but Wood used it for the loft studio he constructed and worked in beginning in 1924, and where he painted "American Gothic." It's three blocks from the museum, which, in 1989, returned to its original home in a former Carnegie Library, refurbished with a 42,000-square-foot addition following a \$10 million fundraising campaign. *410 Third Street Southeast, Cedar Rapids, 319-366-7503. Open noon to 4 p.m. Tuesday–Wednesday and Friday–Sunday, till 8 p.m. Thursday. \$8, \$7 for 62-and-over and students, \$4 children 6–18, free for 5 and under.*



CEDAR RAPIDS VETERANS MEMORIAL BUILDING

Four years before she modeled for "American Gothic," Nan Wood Graham agreed to pose for her brother, Grant, a relatively unknown artist who had been commissioned to design a stained-glass window for the new beaux-arts Cedar Rapids Veterans Memorial Building, opening in 1928. The focal point of the main hall, Graham, in her Grecian robe and blue mourning veil, stands two thirds of the way up the 24-foot-high Memorial Window, constructed of 10,000 pieces of German-made stained glass and lead. Following the flood of 2008, the municipal government moved out of the building, but it continues to exhibit veterans memorabilia dating from the Civil War, and is available to rent for special occasions. *50 Second Avenue Bridge, May's Island, Cedar Rapids, 319-286-5038. Available for viewing Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or by special appointment. Free.*



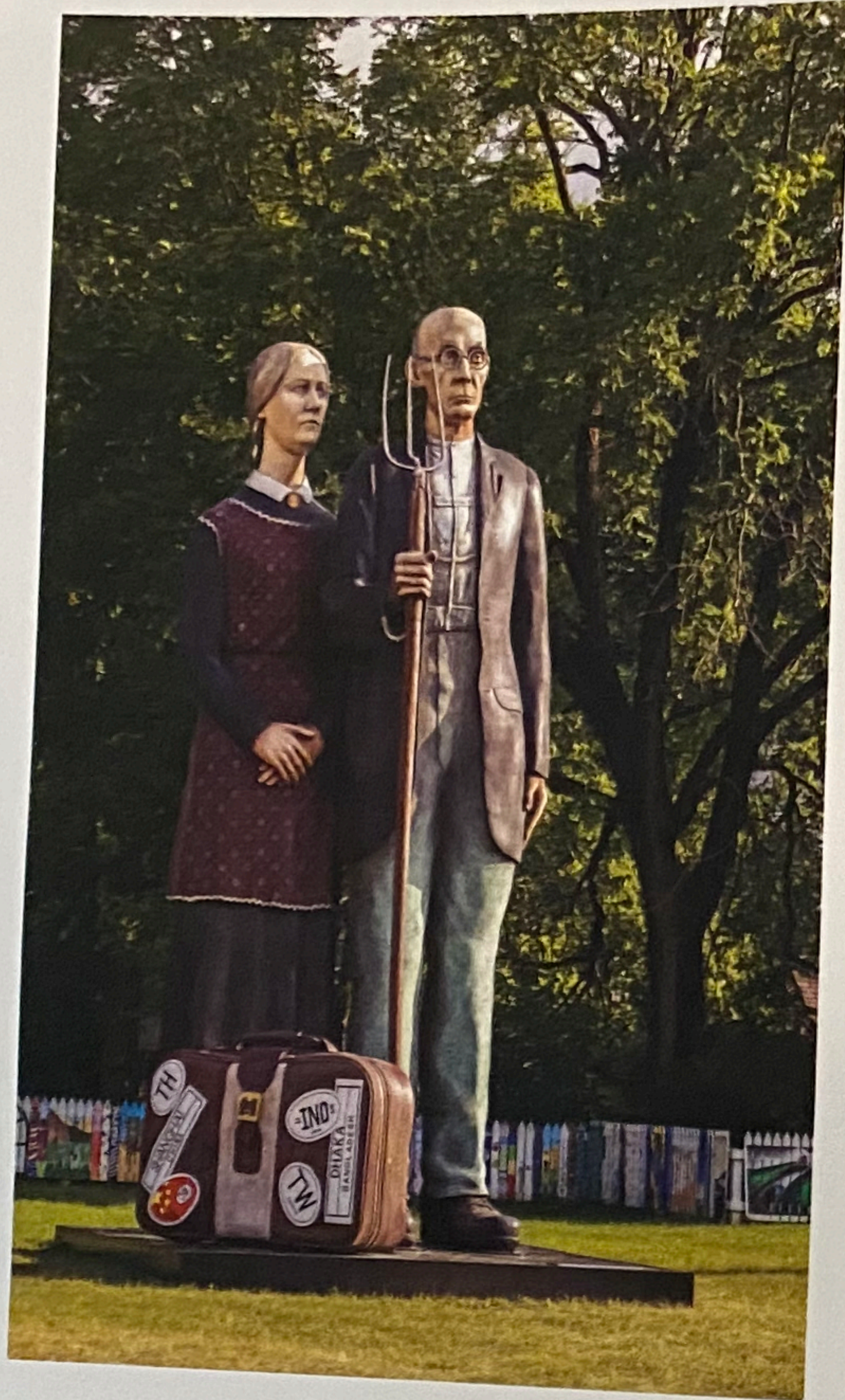
GRANT WOOD SCENIC BYWAY

Iowa-64 meanders languidly for 80 miles between Stone City to the Mississippi River, traversing farms, wetlands, limestone bluffs, historic sites, recreation, eclectic shopping, and places to eat and stay. Rustic Iowana, including three state parks, melds with attractions including a prison museum neighboring the Anamosa State Penitentiary, as well as the National Motorcycle Museum. Recall Grant Wood's artistic heritage at the Grant Wood Art Gallery in Stone City, and contemporary artworks at galleries in Bellevue and Maquoketa, site of the Maquoketa Art Experience.



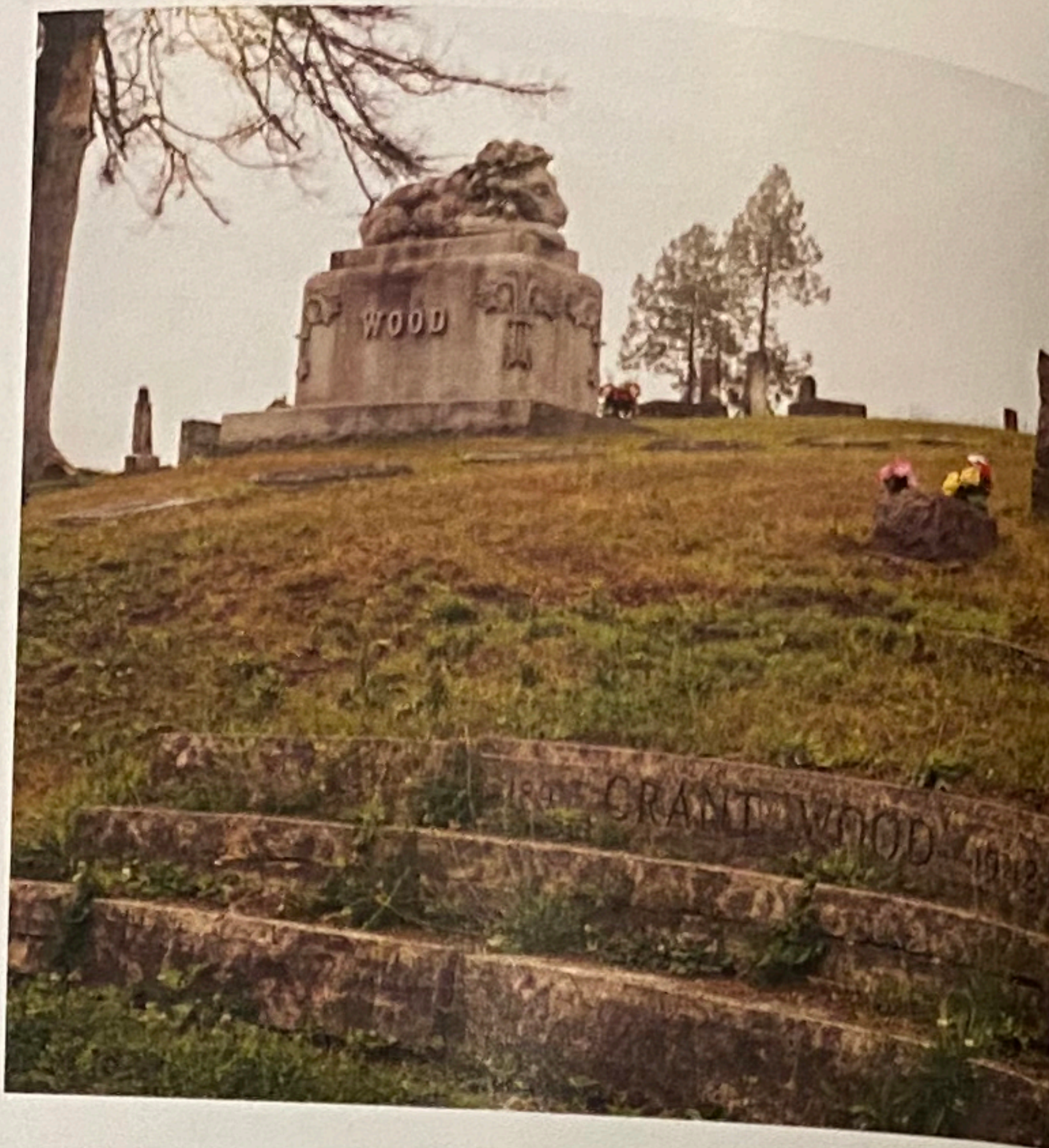
ANAMOSA ANTIOCH SCHOOLHOUSE

For five years, beginning in 1896, Grant Wood attended classes in this one-room frame structure, three miles east of Anamosa, and constructed by local builder Edward M. Harvey in 1872. The functioning school was dedicated to Wood in 1947 and renamed Grant Wood School, closing as an educational institution in 1959. The building and adjacent outhouse were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2001. The community celebrated Wood's 125th birthday in 2016 there by re-creating a school day, complete with slates and chalk. *3 miles east of Anamosa off Iowa-64. Open Sundays, 1 to 4 p.m., June through October 15.*



ANAMOSA
 “GOD BLESS AMERICA” STATUE

John Seward Johnson II constructed giant-size statues. The heir to the Johnson & Johnson fortune became a mild sensation when his “Double Check,” a rendering of a businessman in New York City’s financial district, was photographed smothered in dust and scars from the 9/11 attacks. But Johnson also created “God Bless America,” a 25-foot-tall reproduction of the “American Gothic” duo, plus a giant suitcase adorned with travel stickers (depicting, according to the artist, who died in 2020, where American jobs have vanished). After an initial stint in Anamosa, and trips to Peoria, Illinois, and Chicago, the statue has returned to Grant Wood’s hometown, catty-corner from the Main Street Carwash. City leaders hope to transition it from its rental status to permanent resident.



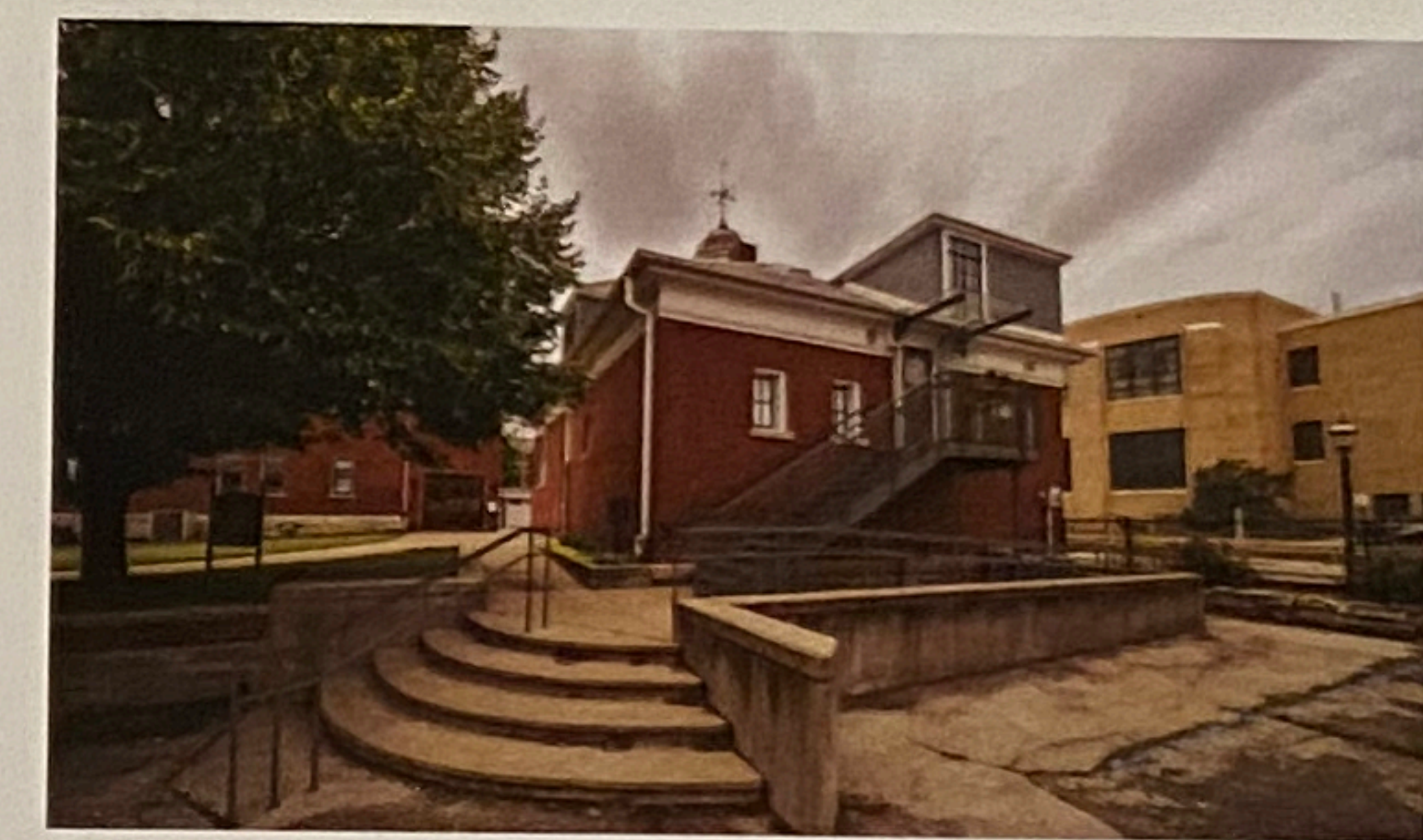
ANAMOSA
 RIVERSIDE CEMETERY

Not quite 51, Grant Wood died of cancer in 1942 and is buried in this memorial park, styled like a traditional English garden. It overlooks the Wapsipinicon River, just west and south of Wood’s birthplace, Anamosa. This statue marks the resting place of much of the Wood family, including his mother, Hattie, and his sister, Nan Wood Graham, the model for “American Gothic.” But you have to work a little to find the artist’s plot: a simple, polished granite block, which you reach by ascending three stone steps, etched with his name and years of birth (1891) and death. A gold star marks his status as a veteran of World War I. 310 South Elm Street, Anamosa. Look for signs.



ANAMOSA
 GRANT WOOD GALLERY

This nondescript storefront in downtown Anamosa is Grant Wood Central, in Wood’s hometown off the Grant Wood Scenic Byway. While you won’t be able to view Wood originals, which hang in larger galleries in larger communities, you still can view prints, and purchase Woodiana such as coffee mugs, note cards, and postcards. If you still hunger for more, head over to the nearby tourism center. 124 E Main Street, Anamosa, 319-462-4267. Open Thursday–Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free-will donation requested.



GRANT WOOD STUDIO
 CEDAR RAPIDS

On the second floor of a modest red-brick-and-wood 19th-century carriage house in Cedar Rapids, a young man painted a work that would define his legacy and that of Iowa for all time. Wood, who was born and spent his early life in Cedar Rapids, moved briefly to Chicago to study art but returned to his hometown in 1916, and moved into this studio, at the fictitious 5 Turner Alley, to live and work in 1924. While you’re here, visit the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, which owns and operates the studio, and houses the largest selection of Grant Wood works. 810 Second Avenue Southeast, Cedar Rapids, 319-366-7503. Open noon to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, docent-guided tours April–December. Free.