

## Between the Rivers: An Iowa Photo Album

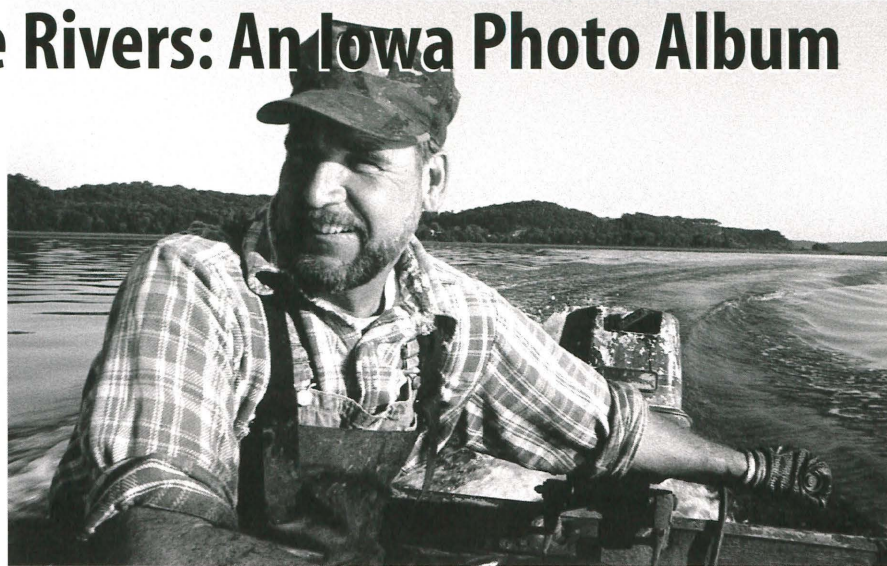
The Upper Mississippi River, on Iowa's eastern edge, connects Iowans with riverside residents in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Missouri. River activities and occupations, such as towboating, boatbuilding and handling, rope work and net-knitting, commercial fishing, fish cooking and smoking, and clamming, have remained important in maintaining the area's distinctive culture.

A well-known commercial fishing family from Dubuque, the Duccinis can trace their life fishing on the river for several generations. John Duccini is the spokesman for the family:



*John Duccini maneuvers a hoop net for catching Mississippi catfish and perch off the side of his boat.*

Photo by Janet Gilmore, courtesy Illinois Arts Council / Mississippi River Museum, Dubuque, IA



*John Duccini steers his open flatboat on the Upper Mississippi.*

Photo by Janet Gilmore, courtesy Illinois Arts Council / Mississippi River Museum, Dubuque, IA

### The Mississippi River

"It's like a wonderland, because you'd go out early in the morning, and you'd start seeing different movements on the river. You see maybe a deer standing on an island, a beaver swimming across or a [muskrat], then all of a sudden, you might see ducks, geese, all different kinds of wildlife, and I see that on a daily basis after forty-five years out there.

"We know the river like we know our back yard, like a farmer knows his land. We know where the islands were, where the current is, which way the current, the back eddies, are, the snags, the deep holes.

"A lot of that stuff is passed on [from] generation to generation, the fishing secrets on the river is passed on. And that's why the fishing business is such a cutthroat business, because nobody wants to give [away] their little secrets about how they catch fish.

"You learn to respect the river, because she will take you if you don't. You got to respect it, and you'll enjoy the river.

"I enjoy my work, and in fact it isn't even work. There's a whole lot of work to it, but if you enjoy what you're doing, I don't know if you could classify that as your livelihood. I think that's why farmers do what they do.... You are your own boss...."

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Quotes and comments taken from folklorist Janet Gilmore's fieldwork report and her interview with John Duccini in his home in Dubuque on November 30, 1995.



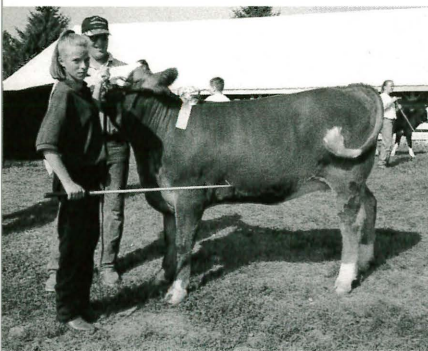
## Iowa State & County Fairs

Every August, for ten days, the Iowa State Fair takes place at the State Fairgrounds on the outskirts of Des Moines. Livestock judging; flower, farm-gadget, and machinery shows; music performances; the State Fair Queen Pageant; amusement rides; booths with abundant portions of food; and much more can be enjoyed at this event. Beginning in late summer and running into autumn come county fairs across the state, featuring local flavor and a predominance of 4-H exhibits and displays from young people.



*The midway at the Iowa State Fair.*

Photo by John Clark



*Kerryann Mehmen takes second place in the Simmental breed competition in a 4-H presentation at the 1995 Bremer County Fair.*

Photo by Charles Carlin



*Prize-winning produce is on display in the Hy-Vee Agriculture Building at the Iowa State Fair.*

Photo by Rachelle H. Saltzman



*Food stands at the Iowa State Fair.*

Photo by Catherine Hiebert Kerst



## Iowa Music-Making

Iowa is a state where home-grown community music-making is vibrant and alive. People gather in homes to make music together, in community centers or schoolhouses for dance

parties, in religious settings to sing their praises, at regional or ethnic festivals, at fiddlers' jam sessions, or at municipal band concerts in the park.



*The Washington Municipal Band gives a summertime performance.*

Photo by  
Michael Zahs



*The Waring Family gathers weekly to play bluegrass at Gene Waring's home in Jessup. Photo by John Berquist*



*The Mt. Olive Baptist Church Choir performs at their weekly Wednesday night prayer meeting in Sioux City. Photo by Rachelle H. Saltzman*



*Gordon MacMasters plays the saw for friends in his home near Decorah. Photo by Pete Reiniger*





*Bill Ohringer runs The Nosh, a kosher deli and food store in West Des Moines.*

Photo by Janice Rosenberg

## Iowa Food

Iowa is a place where the sharing of food is relished in family and community gatherings of all kinds. In nearly every neighborhood there are cafés where large country breakfasts, cinnamon rolls, pie and coffee, and meatloaf and mashed potatoes are served

throughout the day. The fall brings community harvest festivals, with their abundance of Iowa produce and meat. As Iowans become increasingly diverse in cultural background, ethnic restaurants specializing in Middle Eastern, Asian, and Hispanic menus have sprung up across the state. And at home, Iowans gather around the table to celebrate family, friends, and heritage.



*A sign welcoming visitors to Bergen's County Diner in Traer.*

Photo by Pete Reiniger



*Community dinners are served at the Old Threshers Annual Reunion held in Mt. Pleasant each fall.*

Photo by Erin Roth



*La Bacamm prepares a traditional Tai Dom specialty.*

Photo by Erin Roth



## Iowa Community Events

Large-scale Iowa community events range from political precinct caucuses to livestock auctions, from rodeos to local girls' high school basketball games. People in both rural and urban communities take part in a multitude of events, gatherings, and celebrations that communicate attachment to place and engagement to one another and that cut across ethnic, religious, economic, and social boundaries.



*Girls' barrel racer Latona Lord performs at the 1995 Sidney Championship Rodeo.*

Photo by James Svoboda, JJJ Photo

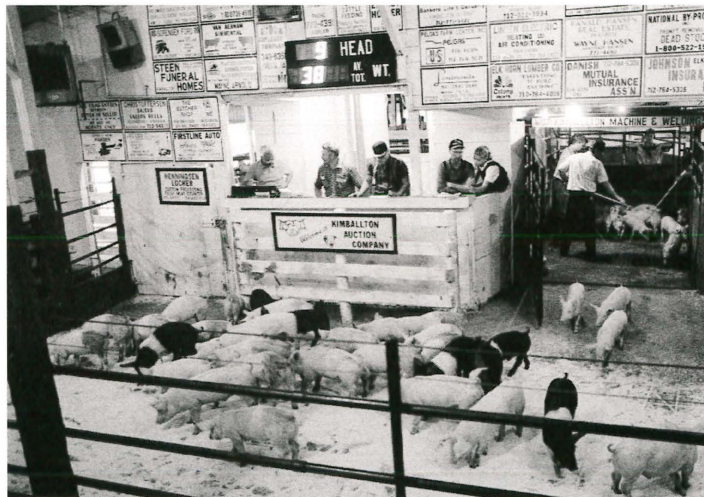
*Spectators and fans cheer their team on at the 1996 State Girls' Basketball Tournament at Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Des Moines.*

Photo by Rachelle H. Saltzman



*Residents of Windsor Heights in Des Moines attend the Democratic Party Caucus, February 12, 1996.*

Photo by Rachelle H. Saltzman



*The Kimballton Livestock Auction is run by Verner Hansen and his son Wayne Hansen.*

Photo by Gregory Hansen





The Missouri River traces the westernmost border of Iowa; across it lie South Dakota and Nebraska. The river also marks a cultural boundary between the farmer-urbanites to the east and the plainsmen to the west.

From the beginning, the Missouri River was an uncooperative partner of boaters, with its strong currents, mud, sand, and ever-changing channels. Mark Knudsen traveled on the river with Bill Beacom, a seasoned Missouri River towboat captain.



## The Missouri River

“As we ride along, [Bill describes] ways of reading the water and what it is telling the careful observer. The boils in the river indicate an underwater obstruction. In this particular location the boil may last for just minutes as the river pushes the sand away, only to resurface a few feet or yards away and perhaps start the process all over again.

“And it is not that simple, either. There are so many surrounding conditions that it is not possible to say that the boil is doing only that. You gradually learn to interpret what you

see and then relate it to what is going on around in a larger sense, and try and figure out what is [being] communicated to you by the river. Bill goes on to point out dark streaks and what they can mean, little shiny spots on the water, little ripples that, combined with other things, can mean something else. [This] is why it takes ten years to become a fair to middling pilot.

“One of many Beacomisms relating to reading the river is, ‘Information is not intelligence until you check it out.’”

*Quotes and comments are from notes Iowa field-worker and river researcher Mark Knudsen took in November 1995 on Captain William Beacom’s towboat, the Omaha.*

*Crew members of the Missouri towboat Alice wire barges together.*

Photo by  
Mark Knudsen