



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024 - 6:30 P.M.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
110 N. POPLAR STREET, WEST BRANCH, IOWA
Council Quorum May Be Present

<https://zoom.us/j/829677991> *or*
dial in phone number 1-312-626-6799 with Meeting ID 829 677 991

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approve Agenda/Move to action
 - a. Approve minutes from the October 18, 2023 Historic Preservation Commission meeting.
4. Elect and Approve _____ as Chairperson of the West Branch Preservation Commission. /Move to action.
5. Elect and Approve _____ as Vice-Chair of the West Branch Preservation Commission. /Move to action.
6. Elect and Approve _____ as Secretary of the West Branch Preservation Commission. /Move to action.
7. Public Hearing/Non-Consent Agenda. /Move to action
 - a. Review and approve Tura Lura Co sign permit for 109 N. Downey St. Suite 3
 - b. Review and authorize Iowa SHPO recommended changes to West Branch's Certified Local Government application to the Iowa Arts & Culture office.
8. Discussion –
 - a. Updates on Traver's Rest historic nomination research.
9. Comments from commission members
10. Adjourn

West Branch Historic Preservation Commission Meeting

Wednesday, October 18, 2023 @ 6:30 pm

City Council Chambers

Present: Peggy Herman, Lou Picek, John Fuller, Dana Gafeller, Liz Seiberling, Karen Suchomel. Adam Kofoed, City Administrator, was also present. Mundi McCarty, Hoover Presidential Foundation, TJ Cappel, National Park Service, John Proeller, owner of the Hoover House was also in attendance.

Minutes: Moved by Lou, 2nd by John to approve the July 19, 2023 minutes. All I's.

Public Hearing/ Move to Action: Reviewed and Authorized a Certified Local Government application sent to the Iowa Arts and Culture Department by the City Administrator. All I's.

Adam explained that the draft application is before the Iowa Arts Council for review and they will provide comments back to the City. The formal application will then be submitted after receiving the review of the draft application.

Discussion: 102 West Main Street Sign Review

John Proeller wants to replace the signs that are already attached to the Hoover House with new marine grade plywood with a different font, either white on black or black on white. The signs are on the east side of the building and the south side of the building. No new holes will be drilled as the angle irons are already attached to the building. His wish is to leave the old signs up through the winter and replace them in the spring. Moved by John, seconded by Liz to allow the signs to stay until the end of the year and then for John to return in the spring to the Preservation Commission with a new sign permit with a full description of the new signs.

Discussion: Review Historical Preservation Plan Goals

Traveler's Rest, member training, grant writing, one educational event per year that the Commission hosts, maybe in conjunction with the Heritage Museum. Moved by Lou, seconded by Dana to ask the City for \$500 for seminar costs, training of members, etc, for the Preservation Commission for the next budget year. All I's.

Adjourn: Moved by Lou, 2nd by John to adjourn meeting.

SIGN PERMIT APPLICATION

BUSINESS Tura Lura Co
 (full business name)
109 N Downey St Suite 3 WB
 (street address of business) 52358

APPLICANT Erika Christianscu
 (name)
717 Arlington Drive IC 52245
 (permanent address)

PROPERTY OWNER Brooke Ventures
 (name)
312 East 4th St West Liberty 52776
 (permanent address)

COMMISSION:	RECEIVED _____
	REVIEWED _____
	NOTIFIED _____
BUILDING OFFICIAL:	DATE APPROVED _____
	PERMIT NUMBER _____
	DATE ISSUED _____

Intended date of installation 2/6/24
 Linear foot of building frontage ~~xxxxxx~~

TYPE OF SIGN(S): applied to façade window
 projecting
 fixed post
 movable (sandwich board)

Will sign be illuminated? No If so, describe means of illumination:

Attach detailed description and sketch of proposed sign.
 INCLUDE:

- EXACT MEASUREMENTS 1ft H x 2ft L
- LOCATION ON BUILDING OR RELATIONSHIP TO BUILDING Left Window centered
- LETTERING STYLE see attached, six caps
- COLOR SAMPLES see attached, champagne gold
- MEANS OF SECURING MOVABLE SIGNS N/A

The Preservation Commission would like to work with you in the development of signs that compliment your property and the Historic Downtown District. If you wish to consult with the Commission before finalizing your design, please contact the Chairperson for the schedule of meetings.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION: _____

REQUEST FORM

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 109 N Downey St Suite 3

This is to request that the above described property be included in the West Branch Preservation Signage District. I understand that inclusion in this district involves meeting the standards for signs set forth in the West Branch Preservation and Design Ordinances.


Property Owner or Authorized Person

1/2/24
Date

TRAVELBAGS.



REQUEST FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

MEETING DATE: January 17, 2024

AGENDA ITEM: Review and authorize Iowa SHPO recommended changes to West Branch's Certified Local Government application to the Iowa Arts & Culture office.

PREPARED BY: Adam Kofoed, City Administrator

DATE: January 9, 2024

BACKGROUND:

The following comments were made from the Iowa SHPO Office to our CLG Application:

- District Recommendations:
 - Change definition of "West Branch Historic District" to buildings located in the historic district versus all buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
 - Combine "historic" and "preservation district" into one district.
 - Define nearby properties in "West Branch Underground Railroad Preservation District".
- Permit Requirements Recommendations
 - Feel the permit requirements are too broad.
 - Suggest taking out window decals in the signage requirements.
 - Add photographs and a statement to the application.
 - Add number of calendar days to the city's required response time to permit applications.
- Powers of the Commission Recommendations:
 - Add the following into the last subparagraph "Cooperate with the federal, state and local governments in the pursuance of the objectives of historic preservation."

ORDINANCE NO. 799

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION FOR THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH, IOWA; PROVIDING FOR THE RECOGNITION AND PROMOTION OF HISTORIC SITES AND DEFINING POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION.

BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of West Branch, Iowa:

Section 1. Amendment. The Code of Ordinances of the City of West Branch, Iowa, is hereby amended by adding and incorporating Chapter 25 entitled "Historic Preservation," which reads as follows:

"25.01. PURPOSE AND INTENT.

The purpose of this ordinance is to:

- a. Promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the recognition, enhancement, and perpetuation of sites and districts of historical and cultural significance;
- b. Safeguard the City's historic, aesthetic, and cultural heritage by preserving sites and districts of historic and cultural significance;
- c. Stabilize and improve property values;
- d. Foster pride in the legacy of beauty and achievements of the past;
- e. Protect and enhance the City's attractions to tourists and visitors and the support and stimulus to business thereby provided;
- f. Strengthen the economy of the City;
- g. Promote the use of sites and districts of historic and cultural significance as places for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the people of the City.

25.02. DEFINITIONS.

- a. Commission. The City of West Branch Historic Preservation Commission, as established by this ordinance.
- b. Historic District. An area which contains a significant portion of sites including archaeological sites, buildings, structures, objects and/or other improvements which, considered as a whole, possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and
 1. embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or
 2. that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

3. is associated with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of our local, state or national history; or
4. possesses a coherent and distinctive visual character or integrity based upon similarity of scale, design, color, setting, workmanship, materials, or combinations thereof, which is deemed to add significantly to the value and attractiveness of properties within such area.
5. is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
6. has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

c. Historic Landmark. A site including archaeological sites, object, structure or building which,

1. is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
2. is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
3. embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents a work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
4. has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

d. Districts



1. “West Branch Historic District” consists of any building in West Branch that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. All of the terms of this chapter apply to property located within the West Branch Historic District. (See Map included in the Appendix to this Code of Ordinances.)

2. “West Branch Preservation District” consists of all of those properties located within the West Branch Historic District, together with all of those properties in the West Branch Preservation District, as shown on the map included in the Appendix to this Code of Ordinances. The provisions of this chapter relating to signs apply to property located within the West Branch Preservation District. Any properties adjacent to a district, may be included in the West Branch Preservation District upon application of the property owner to the City Office. (See form of application in the Appendix to this Code of Ordinances.)

3. “West Branch Underground Railroad Preservation District” consist of any building or site in West Branch known to be affiliated with the underground railroad; or is a nearby property or site affiliated with the West Branch Underground Railroad. (See Map included in the Appendix to this Code of Ordinances.)

25.03. WEST BRANCH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION.

- a. The Commission shall initially consist of (not less than three, 3) members who shall be residents of the City.

- b. Members of the Commission shall be appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the City Council. Members shall demonstrate a positive interest in historic preservation, possessing interest or expertise in architecture, architectural history, historic preservation, city planning, building rehabilitation, conservation in general or real estate.
- c. The original appointment of the members of the Commission shall be, three for two years, and two for three years, from January 1 following the year of such appointment or until their successor is appointed to serve for a term of three years.
- d. Vacancies occurring in the Commission, other than expiration of term of office, shall be only for the unexpired portion of the term of the member replaced.
- e. Members may serve for more than one term and each member shall serve until the appointment of a successor.
- f. Vacancies shall be filled by the City according to the original selection as aforesaid.
- g. Members shall serve without compensation.
- h. A simple majority of the commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
- i. The Commission shall elect a Chairman who shall preside over all Commission meetings and elect a Secretary who shall be responsible for maintaining written records of the commission's proceedings.
- j. The Commission shall meet at least three (3) times a year.

Because the West Branch Historic Preservation Commission has a strong interest in liaison with organizations that have a special affinity with local history, the Commission may recommend to the Mayor and Council that up to three Ex. Officio (non-voting) honorary members be appointed to the Commission by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the City Council. These Ex. Officio (non-voting) honorary members may be representatives of the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum and the Hoover Presidential Foundation.

25.04. POWERS OF THE COMMISSION.

- a. The Commission may conduct studies for the identification and designation of historic districts and landmarks meeting the definitions established by this ordinance. The commission may proceed at its own initiative or upon a petition from any person, group, or association. The Commission shall maintain records of all studies and inventories for public use.
- b. The Commission may make a recommendation to the State Historic Preservation Office for the listing of a historic district or landmark in the National Register of Historic Places and may conduct a public hearing thereon.
- c. The Commission may investigate and recommend to the City Council the adoption of ordinances designating historic landmarks and historic districts if they qualify as defined herein; and
- d. Provide information for the purpose of historic preservation to the governing body.

- e. Promote and conduct an educational and interpretive program on historic properties within its jurisdiction.
- f. Other Powers. In addition to those duties and powers specified above, the Commission may, with City Council approval:
 - i. Accept unconditional gifts and donations of real and personal property, including money, for the purpose of historic preservation.
 - ii. Acquire by purchase, bequest, or donation, fee and lesser interests in historic properties, including properties adjacent to or associated with historic properties.
 - iii. Preserve, restore, maintain and operate historic properties, under the ownership or control of the Commission.
 - iv. Lease, sell, and otherwise transfer or dispose of historic properties subject to rights of public access and other covenants and in a manner that will preserve the property.
 - v. Contract, with the approval of the governing body, with the state or the federal government or other organizations. Cooperate with the federal, state and local governments in the pursuance of the objectives of historic preservation.



25.05. PERMIT REQUIRED. It is unlawful for any person to begin new construction or to make any external alteration or repairs, including signs, in any manner whatsoever to any building within the confines of the Historic District, or to install or change a sign within the Preservation District, without first obtaining a permit as provided herein. Permits may be found and turned in at the City Office.

25.06. APPLICATION. Applicants for permit under this chapter must file with the City Administrator an application in writing on a form furnished for such purpose, which shall give the following information:

1. Name of applicant and property owner.
2. Permanent address of applicant and full address of property owner.
3. A detailed description of the nature of the proposed construction, external alteration and/or repair to the building.
4. A drawing or sketch of proposed construction or external alteration.
5. The intended start and finish dates for alteration and/or repair.

(See the Appendix to this Code of Ordinances for Permit Application Form.)

25.07. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW AUTHORITY. The City Administrator or designee and the Historic Preservation Commission Chair, will have authoritative review rights on window decals that meet design standards. The Historic Preservation Commission will be the appeal board on window decal administrative review.



25.08. INVESTIGATION AND ISSUANCE.

1. Upon receipt of application for permit under this chapter by the City Administrator or designated alternate, the application shall be checked for compliance with the City of West Branch Building Codes within five (5) days. It shall also be referred upon receipt to the Chairperson of the West Branch Preservation Commission.
2. Applications for construction, alterations and/or repairs not in compliance with City of West Branch Building Codes will be returned to the applicant with a complete explanation of changes necessary for compliance.
3. Upon receipt of application, the Chairperson of the West Branch Preservation Commission shall call a meeting of said Commission. The Commission shall approve or disapprove the application by majority vote based on the *Basic Standards for the Restoration and Rehabilitation of Historic Structures, Standards for Signage Design and Display, Checklist and Example of Prohibited Signs. (See Appendix to this Code of Ordinances.)* The application and a report of Commission action shall be returned to the Mayor within ten (10) calendar days from date of receipt.
4. Upon receipt of the application and report from the West Branch Preservation Commission, the City Administrator or designated agent will issue a permit to authorize construction, alterations and repairs receiving approval of the Commission. The permit shall be issued within twelve (12) calendar days from the date of the application. The permit fee shall be \$10.00.
5. Upon receipt of an unfavorable report from the West Branch Preservation Commission, the City Administrator or his or her assigned agent will notify applicant of the rejection and the reason therefor. The applicant will also be informed in the same notification that the rejection can be appealed through the Council at the following regular meeting, or that a revised application may be submitted to the Commission for review.
6. The Council shall serve as an arbitrator on all appeals. The Council shall decide within 30 days of an appeal. An appeal of the decision of Council, if any, must be made with the Clerk of District Court within 60 days of the decision of Council.

25.09. VIOLATION. Any person violating any provision of this chapter shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor; if such violation continues, each day's violation shall be considered a separate offense.

25.10. NONCONFORMING SIGNS. All signs installed or displayed on September 9, 1991, are allowed to remain. All signs installed or displayed subsequent to September 9, 1991, and all future signs, including replacements or modifications, must fully comply with this chapter. Variances may be granted upon showing of undue hardship. Before any variance is granted the following conditions must be shown to be present: the sign must be located outside a building and must display a trademark or symbol recognized State-wide or nationally.

25.11. AMENDATORY PROVISIONS.

The City may amend this ordinance to meet any unforeseen circumstances which may affect the duties and responsibilities of the Commission.”

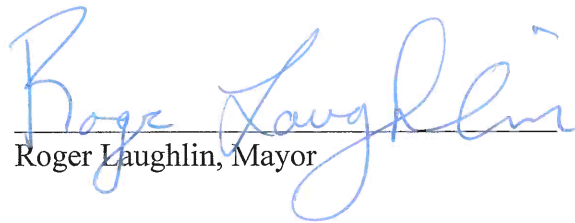
Section 2. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its publication as by law provided.

Section 3. All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with the provisions of this ordinance are hereby repealed.

Section 4. If any section, provision or part of this ordinance shall be adjudged to be invalid or unconstitutional, such adjudication shall not affect the validity of this ordinance as a whole or any part, section, or provision thereof not adjudged invalid or unconstitutional.

Passed and approved this 7th day of November, 2022.

First Reading: October 3, 2022
Second Reading: October 17, 2022
Third Reading: November 7, 2022



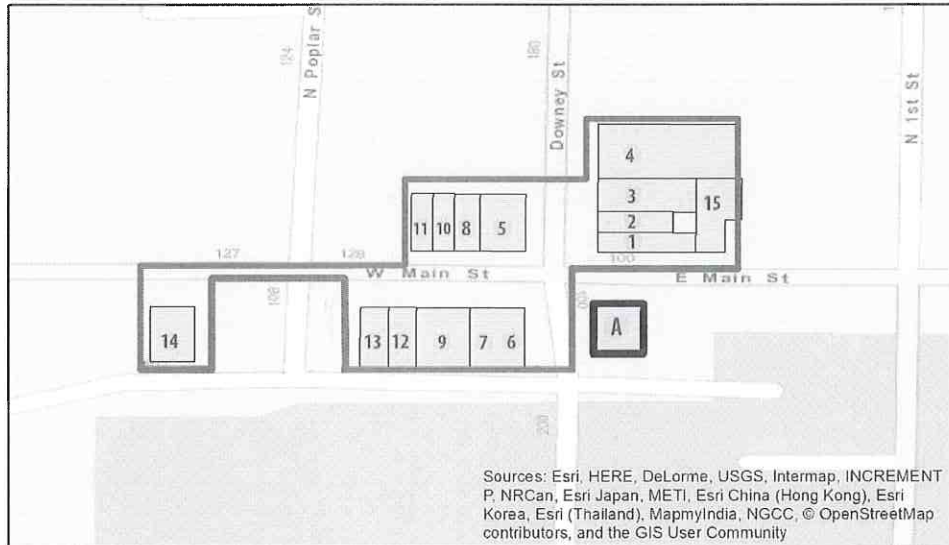
Roger Laughlin, Mayor

ATTEST:



Leslie Brick, City Clerk

West Branch Preserved Historic Buildings



Legend

- Preserved Buildings
- Historic District
- Preservation District

0 0.025 0.05 0.1 Miles



Building Legend

1. Citizen's Savings Bank (1908)
2. Leech Building (1912)
3. Leech-Gruwell Garage (1911)
4. Opera Block (1895)

5. Old West Branch State Bank (1916)
6. Crook's Hotel/Hoover House (1870)
7. West Branch Bank (1875)
8. Veterans Memorial Building (1947)
9. Union Block (1895)
10. Patterson-Leech Building (1890)

11. Gruwell-Crew Building (1894)
12. Earliest Citizen's Savings Bank (1898)
13. Grinnell Building (1869)
14. Enlow Building (1904)
15. Rich and Bailey Block (1895)
- A- Albin-Douglass Building



Red: West Branch Underground Railroad Preservation District, selected property is known as Townsend's Traveler's Rest.

Traveler's Rest



Peter Hoehnle, PhD

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site

November 2023

“Traveler’s Rest” is the historic name of a property located at 738 E Main Street in West Branch, Iowa. The property was owned by James Townsend, an early settler of West Branch and a well-known antislavery advocate. Townsend operated an inn in the house for several years. Among Townsend’s guests was abolitionist John Brown. Townsend may also have used the property as a station on the Underground Railroad. This paper will synthesize the available historical material about this historic property.

James Townsend was born on September 13, 1811, in Knox County, Ohio, the son of Thomas (1781-1859) and Elizabeth Speakman Townsend (1785 – March 9, 1817).¹ In Ohio, Townsend was a farmer, living near Fredericktown, a village in central Ohio, 50 miles northeast of Columbus. He married Susanna B. Rodgers (October 13, 1811 – February 18, 1882) on June 16, 1835, and the couple had four sons: Israel Lewis (1839-1921), Jesse Rogers (1841-1919), Timothy Wesley (1844-1912) and William Edgar (1851-1933).² The 1850 census reported that Townsend was a farmer owning real estate worth \$1,400.³

In a biographical sketch, Townsend’s son, Jesse, described him as “a model man on many lines...optimistic, hopeful and joyful; a lover of music [who] made home bright with song and smile.”⁴ The younger Townsend recalled his father as a “pronounced anti-slavery advocate” whose home served as a station on the Underground Railroad, recalling:

our Knox County log house was one of the main stations on the Underground Railroad, and many a weary, frightened Canada bound

¹ His obituary in the *West Branch Times* gives his date of birth as September 11 (“Obituary.” *West Branch Times*, October 13, 1904.)

² Other sources list the marriage date as June 18, 1835 (State Historical Society of Iowa Iowa Freedom Trail Grant Project Biographical Form, James Townsend)

³ 1850 Federal Census for Middlebury, Knox County, Ohio, dwelling number 85,

⁴ Dr. Jesse R. Townsend, “Sketch of the Life of James Townsend,” <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34245787/james-townsend>, accessed on August 30, 2023. Dr. Jesse Rogers Townsend (1841-1919) was a missionary and a dentist.

fugitive, found shelter and comfort under the Townsend roof and my mother's sweet ministrations of love and Christ-like sympathy."⁵

Jesse Townsend recalled the stories and "plantation songs" shared by the fugitives with the family. He also recalled one freedom seeker who

was hotly pursued by his master and was in hiding in the wheat bin of our barn, and as he received the platter of breakfast which mother had sent him, he drew a large dagger knife from his belt which looked decidedly war-like to a Quaker, and in answer to the question whether he would use it if overtaken by his master, replied "Wal, taint my disposition to mislist [molest] nobody; but if he try to take me back, I don't know what I won't do."⁶

The younger Townsend stated:

It took courage to act as agent on this night transportation of bondmen, guided by the pole star to the land of freedom. But I am proud that my father faltered not even in the face of danger, and was never harmed in his labor of love for the fleeing bondmen.⁷

James Townsend's brother, William (1809-1892), a potter, migrated to eastern Iowa in 1851 and sent back "glowing accounts of the county" that influenced James to relocate to the new state in the west with his family.⁸ The family left Ohio in a caravan that included the Griffith Lewis and Joseph Gibson families.

Townsend purchased a tract of farmland in Section 5 of Springdale Township from Isaiah Morris and his wife Mary Ann on June 14, 1853. This tract had been acquired by Morris from the United States government on July 22, 1851. Morris had been farming the land when William Townsend first arrived in the area. It is possible that the house now known as "Traveler's Rest" was originally built by Morris as

⁵ Dr. Jesse R. Townsend, "Sketch of the Life of James Townsend,"

⁶ Dr. Jesse R. Townsend, "Sketch of the Life of James Townsend." James Townsend, himself, may have been referencing the same man when he told a story at a birthday celebration late in life: "Father Townsend related an interesting incident of his experience in the underground railroad business with a black man who carried a long carving knife" ("Pasadena, Cal." *West Branch Times*, September 24, 1891.)

⁷ Townsend, Sketch of the Life of James Townsend."

⁸ According to his son, Charles, William Townsend first went to Iowa to look for land in 1851, then returned to Ohio and brought his family west in late August or early September of 1852 (Charles Townsend, "Sketches of the Life of William Townsend," *West Branch Times*, September 10, 1925.)

his farmhouse.⁹ By 1860 Townsend was able to report to the Federal census-taker that he owned real estate valued at \$3,300 and a personal estate of \$560.¹⁰

In his sketch of his father's life, Jesse Townsend did not reference any continued Underground Railroad activity once his father had relocated to Iowa, although he did mention that he came to know John Brown, "The acquaintance with John Brown and his men began when they came from Missouri with a load of slaves en route to Canada, over the Underground Railroad."¹¹

Although Jesse Townsend did not report on his father's Underground Railroad activity in Iowa, John Yount Hoover, who knew Townsend well and referred to him as "Uncle James," recounted:

Here in the dear old home many a poor fugitive from the land of slavery found a safe retreat and were clothed and fed until in some mysterious way they were helped on their way to a home beyond the reach of danger. Here John Brown found a quiet resting place, and all the comforts of life that Uncle James' farm and home could provide, and much of the time from the spring of 1857 until the autumn of 1859 was spent by this old pioneer in the death struggle for the liberation of the poor down-trodden African slave.¹²

A local tradition about Traveler's Rest is that Townsend's property included "a tunnel leading from under his cellar, from which slaves might escape in time of danger."¹³

According to James Townsend's nephew, Charles, William Townsend was also involved in the underground railroad activity. As the younger Townsend stated in a brief biographical sketch of his

⁹ William Townsend's son, Charles, in an account of his father's life mentioned Morris "who lived on the farm afterward owned by Uncle James Townsend." Morris owned several tracts of land in the area, but Townsend specifically ties him to the land occupied at a later date by his uncle. (Charles Townsend, "Sketches of the Life of William Townsend," *West Branch Times*, September 10, 1925).

¹⁰ U.S. Federal Census, Springdale, Cedar County, Iowa, dwelling number 1121.

¹¹ Townsend, "Sketch of the Life of James Townsend."

¹² J.Y. Hoover, "Obituary," *West Branch Times*, October 13, 1904.

¹³ Edith Wilson, "A Story in the History of My Community Cedar County's Contribution to the Abolition of Slavery." *West Branch Times*, April 24, 1924. Wilson's account is the only published reference located to the legend of the tunnel.

father: "He like Uncle James was greatly interested in the freeing of the slaves and had stock in the "Underground Railroad" and frequently sheltered slaves in his house in Iowa."¹⁴

Approximately a dozen homes in the Springdale and West Branch area were said to have been stations on the Underground Railroad. Many of those who helped freedom seekers headed north were, like Townsend, members of the Religious Society of Friends ("Quakers"). Among those individuals near West Branch who harbored freedom seekers were Moses Varney of Springdale Township, Dr. H.C. Gill of Springdale and William Maxson of rural Springdale.¹⁵

Beyond his work as an agent of the Underground Railroad, James Townsend was also a friend and associate of the abolitionist John Brown. The story of John Brown's stay at the Townsend farm, Travelers' Rest, was first recorded in an 1866 article in *The Annals of Iowa*:

It was then, as indicated above, in the autumn of 1856, that John Brown first visited the Pedee Settlement of Cedar County. As he alighted from his mule....in front of the "Traveler's Rest," which was the name of the little frame tavern kept by Mr. James Townsend, in West Branch, the old man asked the landlord if he had ever heard of John Brown of Kansas notoriety, -- a simple introduction, from which sprung an intimacy the closest and most confiding. The Quaker landlord thereupon proceeded to chalk John Brown's hat and mule, and both John and his beast were ever after on the free list at the "Traveler's Rest," and it would have been difficult to say who was the better entertained, the guest disposing of the buckwheat cakes and sorghum of the jolly red-faced Quaker, or the host devouring the thrilling incidents of the Kansas war related by Brown.¹⁶

The 1878 *History of Cedar County, Iowa* presented a slightly expanded version of the story.

Townsend was alive at the time, and, although it is not so indicated by the author, may have provided the details of the story:

¹⁴ Charles Townsend, "Sketches of the Life of William Townsend," *West Branch Times*, September 10, 1925.

¹⁵ "The Civil War in Iowa: John Brown, Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in Cedar County" [driving tour] (West Branch: Hoover Library Association, n.d.

¹⁶ Frederick Lloyd, "John Brown Among the Pedee Quakers. Chapter I", *The Annals of Iowa* 4(2), 669-670.

In the Fall of 1856, John Brown, with his four sons, left for the East, by way of Nebraska, stopping at Tabor, Fremont County, Iowa. Thence he traveled in company with one son, riding a mule and leading a horse. In this way he first entered the “Quaker” settlement of Cedar County. Wherever a settlement of Friends was to be found, there John Brown was sure of kind treatment. Springdale was one station of the noted “underground railroad.” He stopped at the “Traveler’s Rest,” the only tavern in West Branch, kept by James Townsend, probably in December, and dismounting, astonished the genial landlord by asking: “Have you ever heard of John Brown, of Kansas?” Without replying, Mr. Townsend took a piece of chalk from his vest pocket and, taking Brown’s hat, marked thereon a large X; replaced the hat; deliberately marked Brown on the back thus, “XX”; then placed a broad X on the back of the mule, and said, “Just put the animal into that stable and walk right into the house; thou art surely welcome.” Such was the first reception of the hero of Harper’s Ferry, in Cedar County. There, at the “Traveler’s Rest,” John Brown ever after found a home, without price, as often and as long as he chose to remain, for he was always a welcome guest. The old house still stands, though the sign of the “Traveler’s Rest” has long since disappeared, and Mr. Townsend still lives at the old homestead.¹⁷

Townsend became one of Brown’s confidants, and when the latter returned to the area in the winter of 1857 – 58, Townsend was evidently one of the people in whom he confided his plans for a raid on the federal arsenal at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia.¹⁸ Townsend would later claim that Brown ate his last meal before departing for the east at Traveler’s Rest.¹⁹

¹⁷ *The History of Cedar County, Iowa* (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1878), 372.

¹⁸ “Early in the winter of ’57-’58 Brown for the fifth time visited the Quaker settlements of Cedar County determined, as it now appears, to spend the winter there in preparation for his Harper’s Ferry raid, the plan of which he then disclosed to some of his trusted friends – James Townsend, John H. Painter, Dr. H.C. Gill, Wm. Maxson [sic], and probably others” (Frederick Lloyd, “John Brown Among the Pedee Quakers, Chapter II,” *The Annals of Iowa* *The Annals of Iowa* 4(3), 712; Clarence Ray Aurner, *A Topical History of Cedar County, Iowa* (Chicago, S.J. Clarke Publishing Company: Chicago, 1910) 413)

¹⁹ Hiram A. Reid, *History of Pasadena Comprising An Account of the Native India, the Early Spanish, the Mexican, the American, the Colony, and the Incorporated City Occupancies of the Rancho San Pasqual, and its Adjacent Mountains, Canyons, Waterfalls, and Other Objects of Natural, Artificial, Old Historic or Modern Interest: Being a Complete and Comprehensive Histo-cyclopedia of All Matters Pertaining to this Region; With Copious Index for Reference* (Pasadena, Ca: Pasadena History Company, 1895) 325.

At some point prior to 1878, Townsend ceased to operate his home as an inn. In his later years, Townsend became a vocal advocate for prohibition. After the death of his first wife, Susanna, February 18, 1882 Townsend married Elizabeth Gouger on March 29, 1883.

In 1882 Jesse R. Townsend, the son of James Townsend, advertised that he was practicing dentistry from his father's home.²⁰

On June 7, 1883, the West Branch *Local Record* noted that "Uncle James" had made some improvements to his home, at the corner of Main and Fourth streets. These alterations included "a new summer kitchen and wood house.... on the east adjoining the main building which has lately been refinished and painted on the inside in the best of style and all completely furnished with first class furniture." "Uncle James," the author concluded, "lives at home and knows how to enjoy his situation."²¹

The Townsends sold their West Branch property to William W. Penrose on August 3, 1887.²² In retirement, Townsend lived in Pasadena, California where he counted among his friends Owen Brown, a son of John Brown. When Brown died, in 1889, Townsend was one of his pall bearers.²³

While in Pasadena, Townsend participated in a reunion of abolitionists at which he "gave some interesting items of his connection with Brown and his men and of his early experience as conductor on the underground R R."²⁴ A party was held to celebrate his eighty-eighth birthday, in 1899, at which "the

²⁰ "Dentistry," *West Branch Local Record*, August 10, 1882.

²¹ *West Branch Local Record*, June 7, 1883.

²² "Abstract of Title to Tract in SW cor. SE1/4 of Sec. 5, T. 79N, R. 4 W, 5th PM. Com 9 rds E, 93 by 10 rds."

²³ Reid, *History of Pasadena*, 325

²⁴ "Abolitionists Reunion," *West Branch Times*, November 20, 1890.

aged abolitionist.... related many instances of slavery days including the workings of the “underground railway.”²⁵

Townsend’s second wife, Elizabeth Gougar Townsend, died on January 4, 1892.²⁶ Townsend continued to live in Pasadena until 1901 when he moved to Iowa City to live in the home of his son, Timothy at 12 South Linn Street.²⁷ Timothy, and his brother, Israel were both pioneering Iowa photographers.

James Townsend died on October 8, 1904, in Iowa City, at the age of 93, He was buried in the West Branch Cemetery, not far from the graves of President Herbert Hoover’s parents, Jesse and Hulda.

The Townsend property in West Branch remained in the ownership of William Penrose until April 12, 1892, when he conveyed it to J.C. Crew.²⁸ On June 15, 1893, the West Branch Times reported:

The old homestead building on the farm east of town, so long occupied by Jas. Townsend has been moved by J C Crew the present owner down the hill near the corporation limits, to give room for a new modern residence which will soon be built. The old house has an interesting history, it was the hospitable stopping place for the traveling home seeker in the pioneer days of Iowa, and one of the most important stations on the underground railroad which extended from the far south into Canada.²⁹

J.C. and Carla R. Crew conveyed the property to Jane F. Dyher on March 19, 1901. Dyher was born in 1845 in England. She died in 1933.³⁰ Dyher conveyed the property to Harriet Bolger on February

²⁵ *West Branch Times*, October 19, 1899 (reprinting a news item from the *Pasadena Star*). Among those present at the party were Mr. and Mrs. Henry Thompson. Mrs. Thompson was a daughter of John Brown.

²⁶ State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa Freedom Trail Grant Project, Biographical Form, James Townsend.

²⁷ J.Y. Hoover, “Obituary,” *West Branch Times*, October 13, 1904. The former location of the Townsend family home is now a parking garage in downtown Iowa City.

²⁸ “Abstract” This was Jonathan Clarence Crew (August 5, 1859 – July 4, 1927). Crew was a well-known stock man and farmer (“J.C. Crew, West Branch, Dies Suddenly,” *Davenport Democrat and Leader*, July 6, 1927. Clara Rebecca Ball Crew was born on October 6, 1863 in Cedar County and died on October 22, 1949

(<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/114111788/clara-rebecca-crew>, accessed September 6, 2023)

²⁹ *West Branch Times*, June 15, 1893.

³⁰ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/115293310/jane-dyher> (accessed on September 6, 2023)

1, 1909.³¹ Harriet Dolan Bolger was born in 1833 in Washington County, Ohio. She married Michael Bolger who died in 1875. Bolger was 25 years the senior of his wife.³² Bolger died intestate, and, after some legal action, the land was sold to Thomas A. Moore on September 12, 1914. Moore was born in 1875 and died in 1954. He was married to Birdie E. Moore who was born in 1892 and died in 1971. The Moores sold the property to Daniel David Fellers on March 13, 1922. Fellers was born June 13, 1863, in Wing, Illinois and died on September 8, 1931, in West Branch.³³ In 1933 Lucinda Fellers transferred the property to Cedar County, which held it for several years until selling it to Minard Thomas for \$425 on June 15, 1942. Thomas was born in Saskatchewan, Canada in 1911. He came to the United States with his parents as a child. He married Leanna Brown in 1936. In later years, Thomas served as a rural mail carrier, on the local school board, and as mayor of West Branch.³⁴

On December 5, 1944 Minard Thomas conveyed the property to William Kohl. Kohl and his wife, Carol, conveyed the property to Lawrence Charles "L.C." Rummells on September 25, 1945. Rummells, a local banker, was born on November 6, 1901, in Downey, Iowa and died on September 26, 1990.³⁵ Rummells, in turn, sold the property to Kenneth Luther and Verlene R. Herman on April 3, 1946. The property has remained in the Herman family ever since. Kenneth Herman was born on November 29, 1917, in Nebraska and died on July 15, 2000, in Iowa City. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Verlene Ruth Lincoln Herman was born on October 23, 1920, in Bennett, Cedar County, Iowa and died on August 28, 2016, in West Branch.³⁶

³¹ Jane Dyher was born in 1845 in England and died in 1933. She is buried in the West Branch Cemetery (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/115293310/jane-dyher>, accessed September 6, 2023).

³² <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/52209757/harriet-bolger> (accessed, September 6, 2023)

³³ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/118073926/daniel-david-fellers> (accessed on September 6, 2023)

³⁴ "William Thomas" (obituary) *The Muscatine Journal*, March 10, 2003);

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/115696429/william-minard-thomas> (accessed on September 6, 2023),

³⁵ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/116438793/lawrence-charles-rummells> (accessed on September 6, 2023)

³⁶ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/116350700/kenneth-luther-herman> (accessed on September 6, 2023); <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/169180793/verlene-ruth-herman> (accessed on September 6, 2023).

Appendix

The following poem, written by an anonymous “Old Settler,” appeared in the West Branch Times in 1895. This poem highlights Brown’s visits to Traveler’s Rest. The idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation are preserved as printed in the original.

Reminiscence of JOHN BROWN and his men at West Branch (Written for the TIMES by an old settler.)

Among the many little towns
That dot Iowa’s fertile plains,
Stands the quaint old town, West Branch
With narrow streets and muddy lanes.

In the south-west of old Cedar
Along the Wapsienonoc [sic] vale,
At the rise of muddy water
Within the township of Springdale.

Stands this old historic village
Founded on the good old plan,
When the strife for human freedom
Was running high throughout the land.

When the wild deer roamed the prairies
And the wolf lurked for his prey,
When the winds pierced our dwellings
Still holding undisputed sway.

Found by the Friends’ called Quakers,
Stalwarts in every cause of truth,
Friends to every name and nation
Black or white, in age or youth.

Founded in the early fifties
When our country for lust or gold,
Bound and scourged four million people
And God’s own image bought and sold

Moved by pity for the bondman
Old pioneers oft lent a hand,
In rescuing the fugative [sic]
And send them on to freedoms land.

By a kind of mystic railroad
Deep under ground the track was laid,
On this line were frequent stations
Where the fleeing bondman staid

Staid in garret, barn or cellar
Through the long and fearful day.
Covered by the welcome darkness
Pursued their long uncertain way

On a hill near by the village
Lived an agent of that line
“Travelers Rest” was the inscription
A new devise for tavern sign.

Queer old joker was the landlord
All his guests he sought to please.
By his funny jokes and stories
Slave and master were both at ease.

Slave pursuers at his [illegible]
He joked with marry [illegible] glee
With the darkies in the hay mow
His funny jokes were just as free.

Thus sped the time till many a slave
Had passed this station on the road
To the mystic land of freedom
To Afric’s bound and telling hord.

At length John of Kansas fame,
Stacked his arms at “Travelers Rest”
With seven young men from battle fields
All valler [sic] tried by sorest test.

At this the Friends’ were deeply tried,
For Christ’s disciples cannot fight,
Trust they in the great avenger
Who ever doeth all things right.

But some joined with Captain Brown
And promised him material aid.
To free the slaves by force of arms
And thus the plot and plan was laid.

Then comet like he went his way
 In search of men or other means.
 But left his men to watch and wait
 While matured his daring schemes.

All winter staid the soldier boys.
 Draze [?] comrads [sic], true and battle tried.
 In lecture course or free debate
 They joined with true and manly pride

As winter nights we gathered around
 A friendly neighbour's [sic] glowing hearth
 Realf inspired by sacred muses
 Gave forth his sweet impassioned verse

For Kansas stugling [sic] to be free
 Invaded by Missouri bands
 Who drove the settlers from their homes
 To establish slavery on their lands

Two years or so had sped away
 Eventful years and full of zest,
 When Old John Brown and daring band
 Came driving in at "Travelers Rest"

Two wagon loads of goods and arms
 Taken from the brave Quantell
 And near a score of contrabands
 Who'd bid their masters a glad farewell

They soon moved on to old Springdale
 And quartered in the same schoolhouse
 Where once the boys joined in debate
 And gravest themes of state discussed.

The slaves and arms were soon sent east
 But Brown and his associates staid
 No doubt to arrange their future plans
 To make their last and crowning raid.

They advertised at auction sale,
 Made Aaron Elliot the auctioneer
 Who sold the wagons, mules and goods
 But old John Brown would interfere.

Gentlemen, he said, the mule is good
 But in the title a slight defect
 However they brought as good a price
 As anyone might well expect.

Scenes of grandure [sic] and their uses
 Inspiring to the heart and mind
 Was the theme of his last lecture
 While so-journing in our land.

In the Yankee Corner school house
 Preimeval [sic] seat of district lore
 Old John Brown, of Osawatome [sic]
 Came late and listened at the door.

On the morrow all was silent,
 All were gone, we knew not where
 But surmised that they were raiding
 Somewhere in the Kansas war.

A large and nicely bound blank book
 Taken in some guerrilla raid,
 Tho' the title was poor, or no title at all
 A very good price by the Esq. was paid

The inscription on the frontice [sic] page
 With pen and ink in the Captain's hand
 In round clear cut, old fashioned style
 So plain a child might understand.

The docketts of the justice court
 Now fill the pages of this book
 And as a relic of bygone days
 On the writers shelf, now finds a nook.

So runs my dream; for dream it seems
 For in those days that tries the soul
 Memory fails to record events
 That in such quick succession roll.

But few are left to tell the tale
 And so lv'e [sic] tried to do my best
 To tell the children of West Branch
 Of times thru which old settlers past

John Brown has gone to reap rewards
 And so are all his martyred men,
 One only son is living still
 And he is near the settling sun.

The landlord near the Golden Gate
 Is waiting to be ushered in
 To where no fetters bind the slave
 All free indeed as by the Son.

Appendix: Illustrations

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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA; C

CERTIFICATE }
No. 4224. }

To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting:

WHEREAS *Isaiah Morris, of Cedar County, Iowa,*

has deposited in the **GENERAL LAND OFFICE** of the United States, a Certificate of the **REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE** at *Iowa City, Iowa,* whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said

Isaiah Morris according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820, entitled "An act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for the *South West quarter, of the South East quarter, of section number five, in Township number seventy nine North of Range number four West in the district of lands subject to sale at Iowa City, Iowa, containing forty acres,*

according to the official plat of the survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the **SURVEYOR GENERAL**, which said tract has been purchased by the said *Isaiah Morris*

NOW KNOW YE, That the **United States of America,** in consideration of the Premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress, in such case made and provided, **HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED,** and by these presents **DO GIVE AND GRANT,** unto the said *Isaiah Morris*

and to *his* heirs, the said tract above described: **TO HAVE AND TO HOLD** the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said

Isaiah Morris and to *his* heirs and assigns forever

In Testimony Whereof, I, Millard Fillmore
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these Letters to be made **PATENT,** and the **SEAL** of the **GENERAL LAND OFFICE** to be hereunto affixed.

Given under my hand, at the **CITY OF WASHINGTON,** the *ten*th day of *March*
in the Year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and *fifty two* and of the
Independence of the United States the *Seventy six*th.

BY THE PRESIDENT: *Millard Fillmore*
By *M. P. Fillmore* Sec'y.
E. S. Terry RECORDER of the General Land Office.

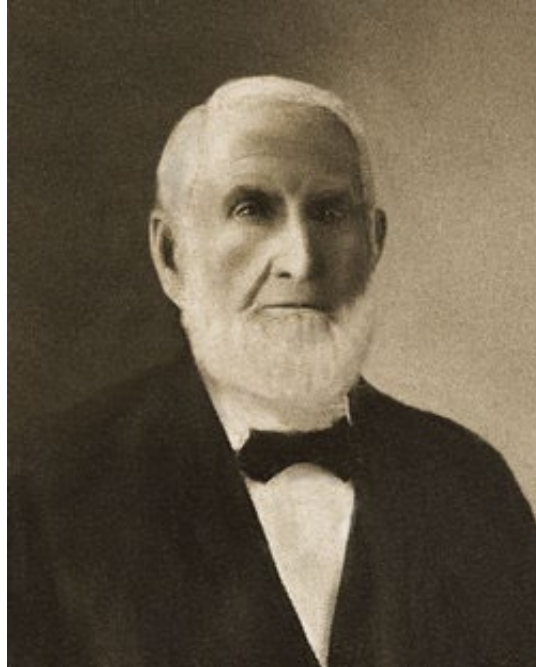
Isaiah Morris's patent for the farm that he later sold to James Townsend and that became the site of Traveler's Rest.



A 1911 view of Traveler's Rest (Herbert Hoover NHS).



James Townsend (Source: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34245787/james-townsend/photo>)



James Townsend (Source: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34245787/james-townsend/photo>)



James Townsend's Gravestone, West Branch Cemetery (Source: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34245787/james-townsend/photo>)



Distant portrait of James Townsend (standing in open barn doorway). Woman in carriage might be Susanna Townsend. Barn may be associated with Traveler's Rest. Stereoview by T.W. Townsend, Paul Juhl Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.