

Welcome to the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway

The last 92 miles of the Wisconsin River flow freely from the hydroelectric dam at Prairie du Sac to the Mississippi River. Approximately 95,000 acres of land on each side of the river are designated as the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway.

Rules of the River

Leave No Trace

The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway depends on its users for respect and cleanliness.

Glass containers are prohibited within the Riverway. Transfer all food products from glass containers to sealed plastic containers, such as Tupperware or Ziploc bags before leaving home.

Please follow the "carry-in"/"carry-out" policy. Users must take the trash created during their stay out with them. Riverway law requires a waterproof container for trash for every vessel.

Toilet facilities are located at most landings. If you are camping within the Riverway, properly dispose of human and pet waste by burying waste six inches deep in sandy soil with vegetative cover. Bag up used toilet paper/hygiene products and either pack out or burn in campfire.

Use water to douse your campfire. Do not bury campfires as the sand will not extinguish the fire and it can continue to burn for hours or even days. Use up all charred firewood.

Exotic species are one of the biggest threats to our natural environment. Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment and remove any attached aquatic vegetation or animals before transporting. Don't move live fish away from waterbody where harvested and never release live bait into the environment.

State law prohibits anyone from bringing firewood from greater than 25 miles of the camp area where it will be burned unless purchased from a WI DAP certified vendor. Firewood can harbor pests such as emerald ash borer, gypsy moth and oak wilt that threaten the local forest.

Please be Careful

The Lower Wisconsin River seems lazy and slow but looks are deceiving.

Drownings can be prevented; wear a personal flotation device (PFD) when in or on the river. If you are not prepared to swim it, do not paddle or wade it. Only wade on the upstream side of sand bars. Avoid downed trees along shoreline as these 'strainers' can easily upset your watercraft.

Water levels can change with water management of upstream river events at the Alliant Energy Hydroelectric dam at Prairie du Sac. For current river conditions and links to water levels and weather forecasts go to <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/lands/lowerwisconsin/conditions>.

Camping is only allowed on islands that are accessed by watercraft. Make sure your watercraft is lathered or rinsed for enough inland before you go to sleep or it may not be there in the morning. Fireworks and chainsaws are prohibited.

Additional trail maps and updates are available at the DNR Lower Wisconsin State Riverway main web site at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/lands/lowerwisconsin/maps>.

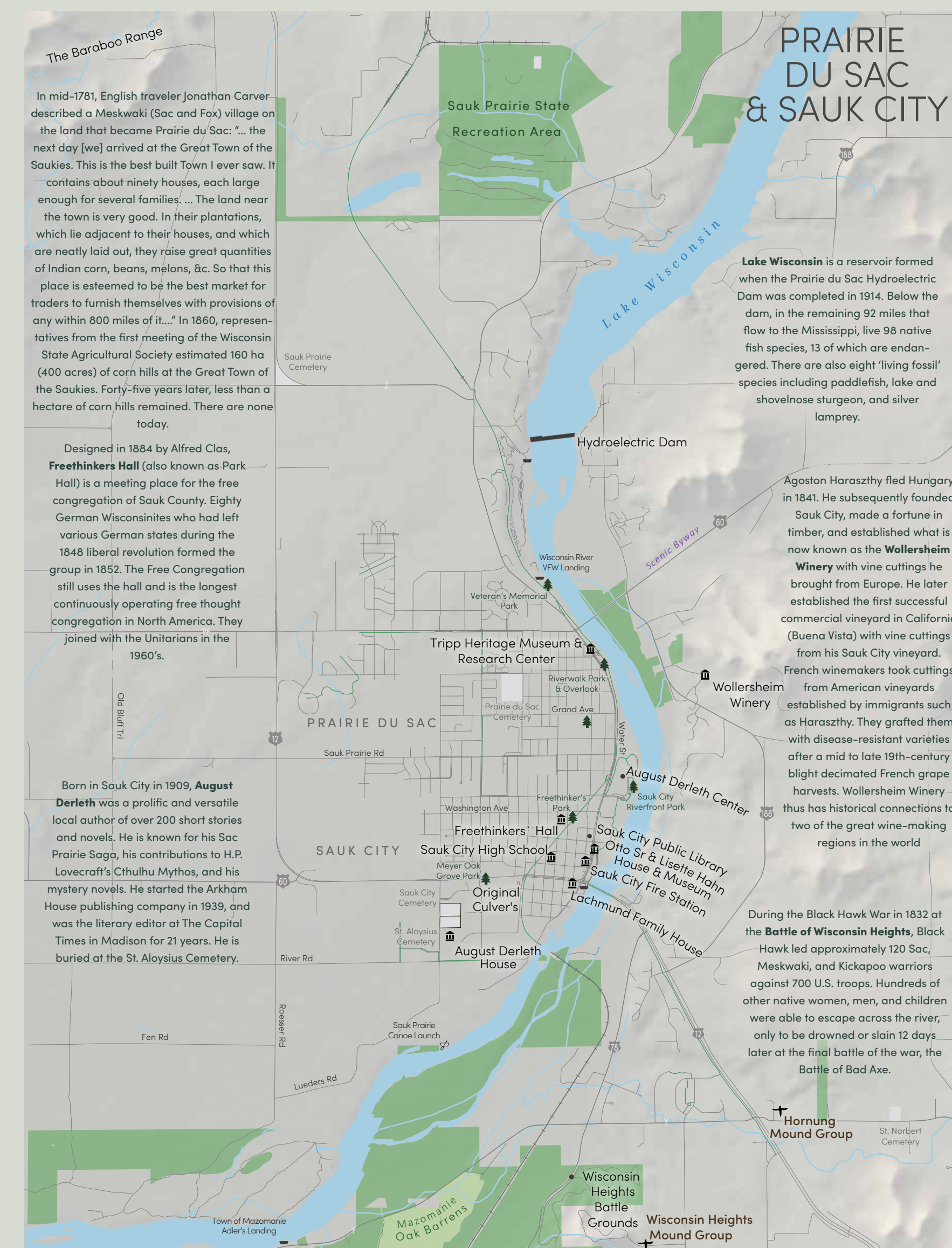


Mound Etiquette and Legal Protections

Approximately 20,000 mounds have been reported in Wisconsin, though fewer than 4,000 remain today. Ho Chunk and other native peoples built earthen mounds in Wisconsin to express physical and spiritual lifeways as well as resting places for the dearly departed. LWR visitors are expected to treat these earthen monuments -- these places of worship and remembrance -- with the same dignity and respect as their creators.

Visitors should not:

- Walk over mounds
- Camp on the mounds
- Picnic on the mounds
- Disturb, deface, or otherwise desecrate the mounds



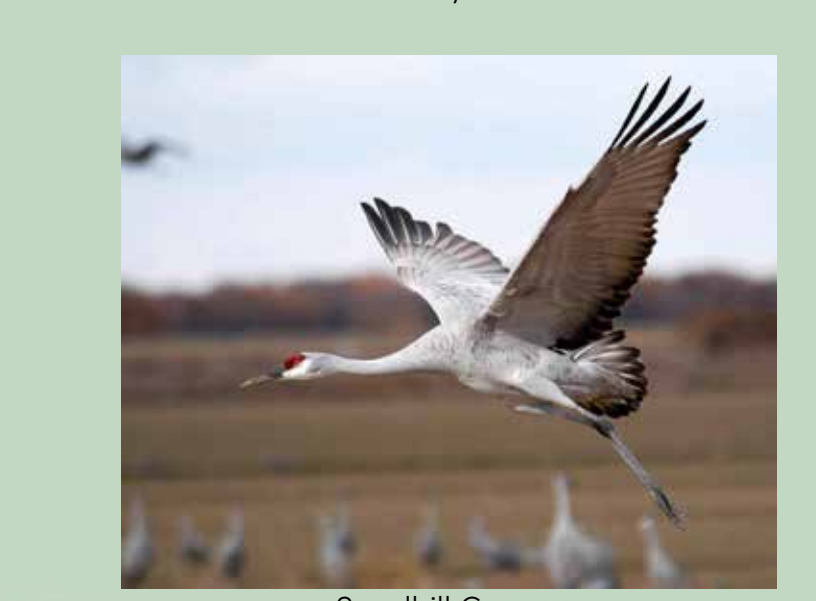
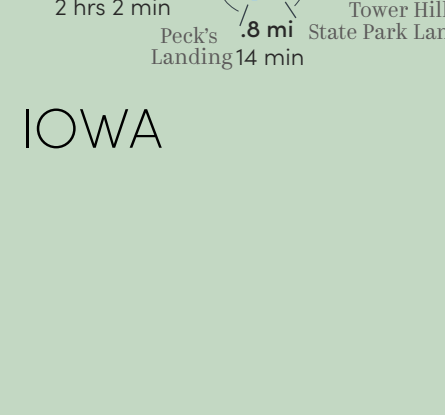
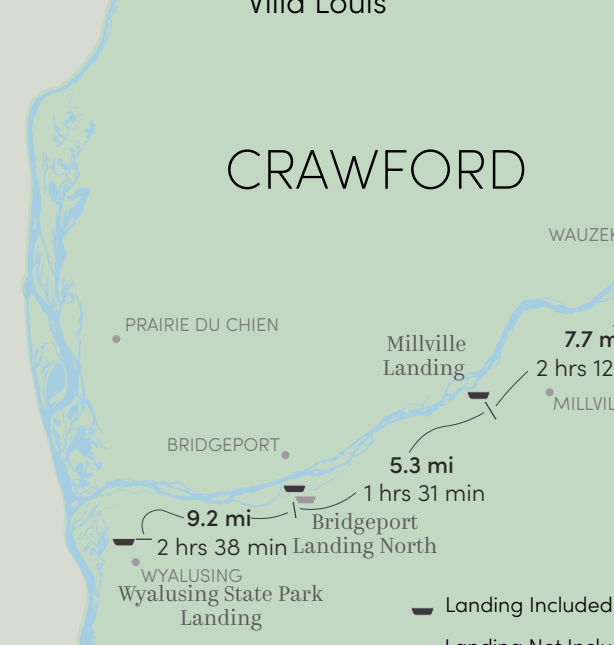
In mid-1781, English traveler Jonathan Carver described Meskwaki (Sac and Fox) village on the land that became Prairie du Sac. "... the next day [we] arrived at the Great Town of the Sauks. This is the best built town I ever saw. It contains about ninety houses, each large enough for several families. ... The land near the town is very good. In their plantations, which lie adjacent to their houses, and which are neatly laid out, they raise great quantities of Indian corn, beans, melons, &c. So that this place is esteemed to be the best market for traders to furnish themselves with provisions of any within 800 miles of it." In 1860, representatives from the first meeting of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society estimated 160 ha (400 acres) of corn hills at the Great Town of the Sauks. Forty-five years later, less than a hectare of corn hills remained. There are none today.

Designed in 1854 by Alfred Clas, **Freethinkers Hall** (also known as Park Hall) is a meeting place for the free congregation of Sauk County. Eighty German Wisconsinites who had left various German states during the 1840s liberal revolution formed the group in 1852. The Free Congregation still uses the hall and is the longest continuously operating free thought congregation in North America. They joined with the Unitarians in the 1860's.

Born in Sauk City in 1909, **August Derleth** was a prolific and versatile local author of over 200 short stories and novels. He is known for his Sac Prairie Saga, his contributions to H.P. Lovecraft's *Chthulu Mythos*, and his mystery novels. He started the *Arkham House* publishing company in 1939, and was the literary editor of *The Capitol Times* in Madison for 21 years. He is buried at the St. Aloysius Cemetery.

During the Black Hawk War in 1832 at the **Battle of Wisconsin Heights**, Black Hawk led approximately 700 Sac, Meskwaki, and Kickapoo warriors against 700 U.S. troops. Hundreds of other native women, men, and children were able to escape across the river, only to be drowned or slain 12 days later at the final battle of the war, the **Battle of Bad Axe**.

Wollersheim Winery with vine cuttings he brought from Europe. He later established the first successful commercial vineyard in California (Buena Vista) with vine cuttings from his Sauk City vineyard. French winemakers took cuttings from American vineyards established by immigrants such as Hanshuthy. They grafted them with disease-resistant varieties offer a mid to late 19th-century blight decimated French grape harvests. Wollersheim Winery thus has historical connections to two of the great wine-making regions in the world.



Legend

- Site on the National Register of Historic Places
- State Natural Area
- DNR Managed Land
- Cultural or Natural Point of Interest
- Mound or Mound Group
- Motor Boat Access
- Carry-In Boat Access
- Historic Ferry Crossing
- Historic Marker
- Park
- Stargazing Spot

BLUE RIVER to MUSCODA

Eagle Cave is Wisconsin's largest black onyx cave. A man hunting a bear along the river tracked it to the cave in 1843. It opened to the public in 1936 and now hosts guided tours and camping.

The **Orion Mussel Beds** occupy a narrow corridor of the Wisconsin River underlain by underwater sandstone ledges and/or a rock and gravel substrate that contrasts sharply with the shifting sands common elsewhere on the LWR. A diversity of mussels, invertebrates, fish, and insects are found here, 15 of which are classified as rare or threatened in Wisconsin. The Boyler/Twin Lizard mound group overlook the Orion Mussel Beds. The mounds here include three birds, one bear, two lizards, one conical, and eight linear mounds.

Alexander Hamilton's son, **William Hamilton**, moved to Wisconsin in 1827 to pursue lead mining. After starting a successful lead community south of the river called Hamilton's Diggings (now Wausau), he built a lead smelter in Muscoda and established a port, hoping the town would become a shipping center for the lead region. In 1849, Hamilton left Wisconsin and followed the gold rush to California.

Ho Chunk ancestors built hundreds of **effigy mounds** in the greater Muscoda area including one bird mound with a 400-meter (0.25 mile) wingspan. Most mounds have been destroyed since EuroAmerican settlement. However, one can still see effigy mounds at the Schaeffer and Shadewald sites, located along state roads 60 and 193 respectively, just across the river from Muscoda. Ho Chunk peoples had flourishing agricultural fields at Muscoda, or English Prairie as it was known in 1827, when EuroAmerican settlers arrived.

AVOCA to LONE ROCK

Avoca Prairie is the largest remaining wet prairie east of the Mississippi. The preservation of its natural vegetation such as rattlesnake master, prairie smoke, early panic grass, and bur oak is due to natural or deliberate fire, periodic flooding of the Wisconsin River, and hay mowing by settlers.

Richland City was once a bustling port for river commerce with a flour mill, a sawmill, and accommodations for travelers and lumberjacks. The city became a "ghost town" when the construction of the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroads bypassed Richland City. For both good and ill, the shift from river- to land-based transportation systems dramatically affected many communities along the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.

At **Battery Park** stands a Civil War memorial to the 6th Wisconsin Battery Light Artillery led by Captain Henry Dillon of Lone Rock. Next to the memorial is Dillon's Tailor Shop, a former Civil War recruiting station and the Grand Army of the Republic Hall. Other members of the Sixth included Oliver J. Burnham, and Jenkin Lloyd Jones (Frank Lloyd Wright's uncle).

In Lone Rock, a historical marker sign tells the story of **"Dr. Bertha"**, one of the first registered women doctors in the state, who served the community from 1902 to 1942. "Although travel was difficult and pay often non-existent she went out of her way to care for her patients. At one time she enlisted the services of a young pilot who had landed his plane in a field near Lone Rock. His name was Charles Lindbergh." Dr. Bertha tried to retire in 1940 in Avoca, but the town's only doctor left to fight in WW2, so she practiced there until her second retirement in 1953.

As written on a sign east of HWY 133, "At one time a massive piece of sandstone stood a short distance from the north bank of the Wisconsin River. The rock became a landmark for early river raftsmen and was known as the **'Lone Rock'** for which the town took its name. The rock was cut and used for basements and foundations in the village. What is left of the rock is located west of HWY 130 across from Brace Park."

SPRING GREEN

In the early 1830s, miners Thomas Shance and Malcolm Smith built a 180-foot tall wooden and stone lead shot tower from the top of the **Tower Hill** bluff to the Wisconsin River. At the top of the tower, workers poured molten lead (often from Mineral Point or Galena) through a perforated ladle to make droplets, which partially cooled on their descent before landing in a pool of water at the bottom. The process produced smooth spherical lead shot for shotgun shells. In the 1840s, Wisconsin's Southwest region produced half of the country's lead shot pellets. The lead shot boom brought prosperity to the town of Helena, but as the business languished, so did the town. Jenkin Lloyd Jones bought the land after the Civil War to make a retreat for ministers and their families. He willed donated the land to the State of Wisconsin.

Founded in 1880 by Randall Duk Kim, Anne Ochigirogo, and Charles Bright, the **American Players Theatre** (APT) is a professional theater of 14 core actors located on 110 acres of forest and meadows. APT puts on nine shows annually with a repertoire centering on Shakespeare and the classics. It has a 1,000-seat outdoor amphitheater and a 200-seat indoor Touchstone Theater and attracts over 100,000 audience members annually.

ARENA & MAZOMANIE

Within the **Ferry Bluff State Natural Area**, the sandstone hills of Ferry Bluff and neighboring Cactus Bluff are accessible by car and boat. Trails lead through ferns and forest to sandy south-facing prairie slopes, offering panoramic views of the river and Henry Creek. The bluffs are closed during winter to protect roosting eagles. In the 1800s, Moses and Peris Laws ran a cargo transport service using rowboats from the base of Ferry Bluff.

Southern-born William Brisbane built **Brisbane House** in 1866. When the slaveholder-turned-abolitionist moved north in 1853, he bought freedom for 33 people his family had enslaved. He served as a minister in Madison, a clerk at the state senate, and a chaplain in the Civil War. In 2021, Samantha Crowsner bought the property and converted it into an Airbnb while still maintaining some of the original features.