

The History of Osage

A Brief History of Osage, Iowa: A Town Rooted in Community Spirit

Pioneering Roots (1850s - 1860s)

Osage's history dates back to the mid-1850s when the first plans for the town were set in motion. Dr. Moore, an early settler, initiated the town's layout in 1854, naming it after his eldest daughter, Cora, although this name was never officially recorded.

Founding and Growth (1850s - 1870s) In 1855, a gentleman named Mr. Gibbs arrived from Massachusetts, representing wealthy investors from both Massachusetts and Connecticut. He convinced Mr. Orrin Sage, a prominent banker from Ware, Massachusetts, to invest in this budding community. Mr. Sage's significant contribution of \$2,000 and 600 acres of land to the Library Building Fund led to the town's name being changed to Osage in his honor.

In the winter of 1855-56, Dr. S. B. Chase, from Decorah, acquired land in the southwest part of the area. In the spring of 1856, he formally laid out the present City of Osage. Dr. Chase adopted a simple naming convention for the streets, with east-west streets generally named after trees and north-south streets numbered. He also took the initiative to plant maple trees along the streets, giving Osage its enduring nickname, "the City of Maples."

Historic Architecture (1870s - 1900s) Dr. Chase's legacy continued with the construction of an elegant residence and office on Free Street in 1869. This historic house still stands today, serving as apartments. A decade after Dr. Chase's passing in 1891, Free Street was renamed

Chase Street to commemorate his significant contributions to Osage. Many of Osage's businesses today occupy structures built in the 1870s, showcasing the town's rich heritage. The current City Hall, formerly the Sage Library Building, was constructed in 1910, thanks to a generous \$10,000 donation from Andrew Carnegie. The original library building was constructed in 1876, situated just half a block west of the current City Hall/Sage Library structure. Today, a Subway sandwich shop occupies the ground floor of this historic building, and the date of 1876, along with "Sage Library," can still be seen in the concrete and brickwork of the second story.

Historic District Recognition (1966): Due to the well-preserved downtown buildings and their historical significance, the State Historical Society recognized a three-block area on Main Street as the "Osage Commercial Historic District" in October 1966.

