

There are so many stories and people who make a community, like Donnelly, what it is today. This showcases just a snippet of them. It is impossible to capture them all.

Our goal is that you will find this tour to be an enjoyable outdoor activity, and educational as well. A tour, such as this, would not be possible without our research volunteers. We thank them for their hours of time and dedication. We would also like to acknowledge the past research of county historian Edna Mae Busch. Her compiled historical information is a valuable resource to Stevens County.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

*Stevens County*  
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*making history come alive*

**City of Donnelly**  
*Self-guided Walking Tour*

Some of the best historical artifacts are right before our very eyes. Take a walk back into time and learn a little bit about some people that helped structure Donnelly as we know it. The homes/structures on this tour were built by many of the folks who began businesses, churches, community organizations and were influential in helping Donnelly and Stevens County become a thriving place to live, work and play.



**PLEASE DO NOT ENTER PRIVATE PROPERTY AND OBSERVE ALL SAFETY RULES REGARDING PUBLIC STREETS AND ROADS.**

When the railroad came through in 1871, this town was called Douglas Station. It kept that name until 1877 when Ignatius Donnelly, well known politician, who owned land east of town, requested the change of the name to be in his own honor.



Ignatius Donnelly

For the first 6 years of its existence Donnelly had no law at all. For the next 23 years, it was governed by Donnelly Township. Donnelly was platted on December 8, 1871, but wasn't incorporated until June 1900.

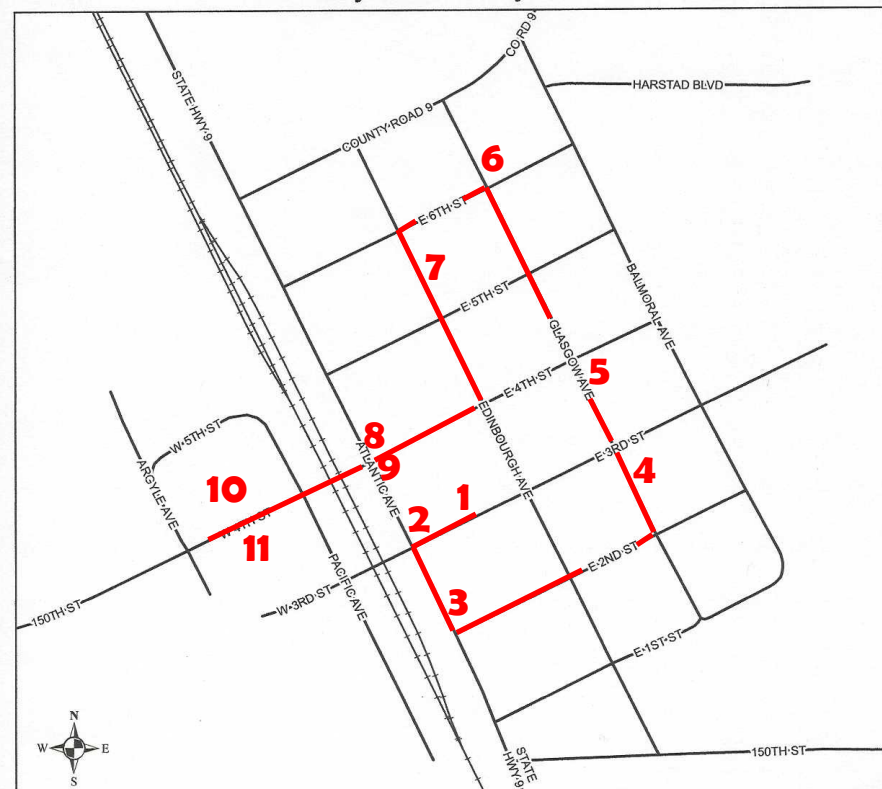
**1 Donnelly Community Hall  
107 E. 3rd Street**

This beautiful brick and masonry community building was constructed for the village of Donnelly by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The first event held here was the building dedication on May 12, 1937. Later that year, the famous Lawrence Welk Band was hosted here. The facility provided a much needed space for the community to hold indoor events for the town, as well as the school. The WPA helped make a small town dream come true at the same time providing much needed employment for the village. The Donnelly Hall has been used for plays, roller skating, movies, community meals and athletic events.

The Donnelly Community Hall is also the home of the city office.

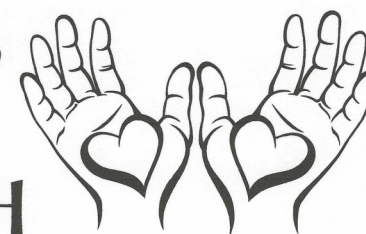


City of Donnelly



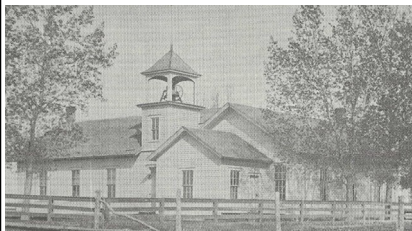
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**HANDS  
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## 10 Donnelly School - W. 4th Street

District #11 was organized in 1877 and met in the McGowan Store with Ida Borrill as teacher. Later a small schoolhouse was built that also housed town board meetings and church services. The photo below, left, is the 1st school after a later addition. In 1905, when a new school was to be built, battles ensued about which side of the railroad tracks it should be on. Donnelly school never housed high school students. They either went to Alberta or the West Central School of Ag in Morris. Arrangements were made in 1950 for 30 high school students to attend school in Morris. By 1971, the school in Donnelly closed.



Public School, Donnelly Minnesota, 1910's

## 11 106 W. 4th Street

This house is known as the "Old Tosney House". Farrel Tosney was the first mayor of Donnelly, elected in 1900, at the age of 80. Farrel and his wife eloped from Ireland when she was only 17 years old. They spent 16 years in Massachusetts before homesteading here in the 1870's. He brought his family to Donnelly in 1888 to this large house he had built in the village. They were one of the few families that had money when they came here. They were very used to having servants and it is said that Mrs. Tosney had never combed her own hair until she moved here. Hired girls were plentiful and the family did much entertaining. Many of the village children said they learned manners at her table. A daughter, Frankie, who had been both a teacher and a nurse, lived in this home until she died in 1955.



## 2 300 Atlantic Avenue

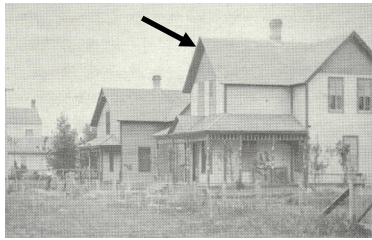
This building has had quite a history. As you can see above the pillars, the word BANK is still visible. This original brick structure of the State Bank of Donnelly stopped the further spread of the big town fire in 1916. In 1917, they added on and was one of the finest banks in the northwest. In 1926, an employee of the bank embezzled \$3250 and was given a prison term. The stock was soon sold to the Farmers & Merchants Bank down the street, and the bank soon merged with F & M and closed. Since then it has housed many businesses in whole or part. The Corner Café, Pearl Anderson's Antique Shop, Steve's North Forty, Someplace Else, Tommy's Bar, and now Place to Be.

Saloons, in general, have been the source of many stories here. Donnelly was known as a wild, rough frontier town in the early days. Kettle Olson opened the first saloon in the 1870's. When the first house in Donnelly was built, there were THREE saloons and later as many as ELEVEN. They were open all hours of the day and even on Sunday (much to the dismay of the wives). By 1915, the dry rallies were coming thick and fast, and in 1916 all the saloons in Stevens County were closed. But that did not stop the bootleggers and the "blind pigs" (illegal liquor saloons). Prohibition ended in early 1933 when the 18th amendment was repealed. It had been a failure and the liquor problem became worse. Donnelly was no exception. In the depression, when money was scarce, there is a story of a group of young men that traded chickens to get some beer from a bootlegger. Little did this bootlegger know that these young men took the chickens from his chicken coop!



### 3 206 Atlantic Avenue

206 Atlantic Avenue is known as the "Old McLaughlin House". Francis Joseph (F. J.) McLaughlin, a Canadian, came to Donnelly in 1890 as a grain buyer and land agent. He owned 1245 tillable acres. He took an active part in anything good for the community. He was postmaster 18 years, 15 years on the school board and served on boards of the Farmers & Merchants Bank, Donnelly Mercantile, lumber yard, elevator and creamery. He married Elizabeth Mullawney in 1890 and they had a son and three daughters. F.J. died of



"dropsy" (which we now know as edema due to congestive heart failure) on May 14, 1921, while he was visiting in Breckenridge. His body was brought back to Donnelly for a very large and well-attended funeral. All the businesses were closed while Donnelly paid last respects to this prominent man.

### 4 210 Glasgow Avenue

This is known as the "Hilla House". But then lots of homes in Donnelly could be called that, as well. John J. Hilla was a superb carpenter who built many houses and barns around Donnelly. It was said if you want something done in a hurry, have Johnny Hilla do it. The Donnelly Lumber Yard, organized in 1904, thrived when Johnny Hilla was running carpenter crews out of Donnelly. Johnny Hilla was also the mayor of Donnelly in years 1916 and 1922-24. He was very active in the community and well-known throughout Stevens County. Johnny and his wife, Carolyn, had ten children, with many descendants still living in the Donnelly area today.

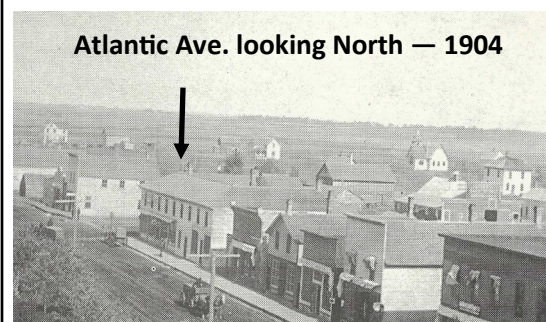


### 9 Corner of Atlantic and 4th/South side

On what is now an empty corner, once stood the Donnelly Hotel, built in 1877 by David Huddlestone. However, he went back to Germany for a visit and found a young lady to marry. When he brought her back to the United States, passport complications resulted. David already had a wife in Donnelly! She found out, sold the hotel and left.



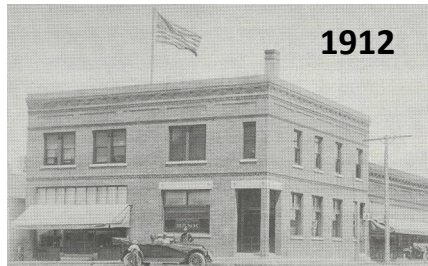
The most well-known owners of this hotel were Davis & Harrison. (They also ran a general store inside.) Ray Harrison was a good-looking young man and very well liked by the community. He came with S. H. Davis from Iowa when he was just 20 (1899) and they were known as prosperous and progressive merchants, credited for Donnelly's explosive growth at this time. Ray took an active part in the community, was village clerk and sang in the Presbyterian Church choir. Davis & Harrison hired a young woman, Meta Mahn, from Hector, to work at the hotel. Ray and Meta had a "fling", but then Ray decided to discontinue the relationship. Meta left town, only to return and see Ray with another woman. She decided that if she couldn't have him, no one would. In May of 1904, Meta Mahn shot Ray Harrison in his hotel room and then turned the gun on herself. Ray was still alive and Dr. Whittemore escorted him on the train to St. Mary's Hospital in Minneapolis where he died a few days later. Meta Mahn's body was laid out in the village hall. The next day the schoolmaster marched all the children down to view her body and see



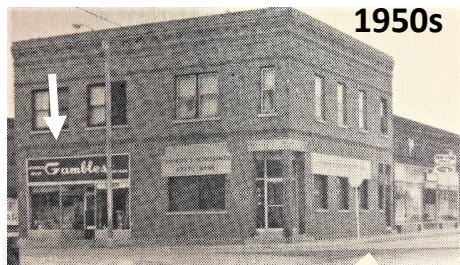
first hand the evils of sin. Meta left a suicide note stating that she wanted to be buried in one grave with Ray. This wish was not granted. Her body was shipped back to Hector.

## 8 400 Atlantic Avenue

What is known as the Farmers & Merchants Bank building, has gone through many transitions over the years. The bank began in 1912. Following the town fire of 1916, Iver Roan and Gus Overson rebuilt their general store in an L-shape around the Farmers & Merchants Bank. It was simply called "The Mercantile" and carried a complete line of groceries, clothing, dry goods, and had a waiting room and bathroom facilities for its patrons. The store was robbed many times and, as a result, Mr. Roan helped form a "Vigalante Group" in Donnelly, as these robbers were not getting caught. (This group was very effective and became well-known to area criminals as a group you did not want to "mess with".) Roan and Overson were business partners for 50 years.

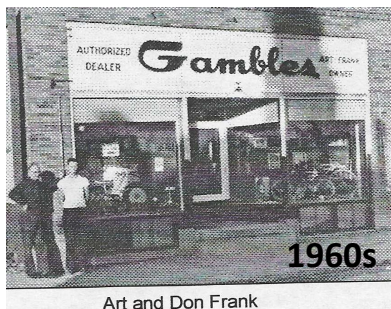


1912



1950s

The L-shaped mercantile later housed the Gambles Store. It was first started by J. E. Lundquist in 1940, and purchased by Art Frank in 1944. Don Frank purchased the Gambles business from his Dad in 1968. He continued until he went out of business in 1984. Until 1974, Iver Roan was still the owner of the building, when Don Frank purchased it from him. It was later sold to the F & M Bank in 1986. The Farmers & Merchants bank closed in 2012.



1960s

Art and Don Frank



2021

## 5 310 Glasgow Avenue

This was the original home of Dr. John Gooch Whittemore. He received his M.D. Degree from the University of Minnesota in 1903 and moved to Donnelly shortly thereafter. He married Anna C. Kloos, in 1911, and they had two sons, John Gooch Jr. and Charles.



During his 18 years of service in Donnelly and the vicinity, Dr. Whittemore endeared himself to the people of the community by the devotion to their welfare. It is said that no storm was ever too severe, nor the roads too bad, to keep Dr. Whittemore from giving attention to his patients. He even went to deliver a baby when he had a broken leg, the father carrying him over the snow banks. He was also known for giving liberally of his time and money to the community. He was a member of the Congregational Church, Masonic Lodge, Knights of Pythias, and the Modern Woodmen (a fraternal benefit society).

Dr. John Whittemore died from sarcoma, a rare cancer found in bone and soft tissue. His sons were only 7 and 8 years old when he passed. His son, Charles, went on to manage the Donnelly Lumber Yard for a number of years.

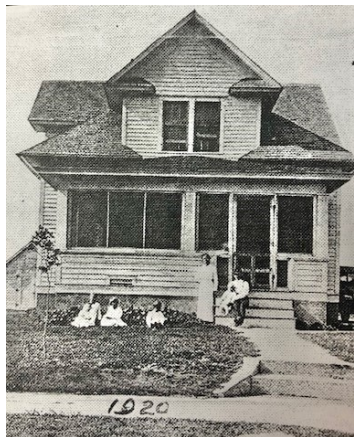
### Interesting side note:

Dr. Johnson was the next, and last, town doctor. He was known as the "chicken doctor", as he wanted to find a cure for worms in poultry. He kept chickens in his backyard to try different things on them. People were not fond of his working on humans AND chickens, so his patient load steadily decreased. He soon moved on to Wheaton.

## 6 301 E. 6th Street

This home was built by Chris and Annie Ersted soon after moving to Donnelly in 1912.

Christian C. Ersted was born in Skovstrup, Denmark in 1875, coming to the United States when he was 18 years old, settling first in Iowa. He married Anna Johnson in Ringsted, Iowa, 1905. Anna, who was born in Illinois in 1878, lived on a farm, with her family, near Seneca, Iowa. She worked for several years in Ringsted, Iowa, prior to marrying Christian Ersted. In 1906 the Ersteds moved to South Dakota. In 1909, another move, brought them to Stevens County and engaged in farming for three years. They moved to Donnelly in 1912. when the Farmers & Merchants Bank was organized. and Chris was employed there until his death in 1958, first as cashier and later as President. Chris was very active in the Golden Sheaf Mason Lodge and Knights of Pythias. Chris and Anna were members of Kongsvinger Lutheran Church. They were both very loyal and active members of the Donnelly community from 1909 until the time of their deaths in 1958 and 1975.



## 7 500 Edinborough Avenue

This house was built in the summer of 1913 by John E. and Hulda Peterson.

John and Hulda were married in Campbell, MN in 1899, moving to Donnelly shortly thereafter. John was a prominent merchant in Donnelly, owning a hardware store for many years. In 1927, he started a hatchery (in the hotel building) with his son, Dale. In 1934, they started a feed mill and a line of chicken feed called "Bud-Dale Feeds". John also served on the board and as president of the Donnelly State Bank, as president of the Donnelly Lumber Company, and was a leader in the organization and activities of the Stevens County Holstein Association.



He was village treasurer for several years and served on the Donnelly Board of education for 17 years. Hulda was also very active in business and community affairs in Donnelly for many years, and was well-known for her work with the Red Cross.