
Section 1

Physical Attributes

Location

Buchanan County is located in the northeast quadrant of Iowa at latitude 42.48° N x longitude 91.89° W, covering an area of 576 square miles. State Highway 150 passes through the center of the county from north to south. US Highway 20 crosses the county just south of Independence. Interstate 380 is approximately sixteen miles west of Highway 150. Figure 1.1 is map of Buchanan County.

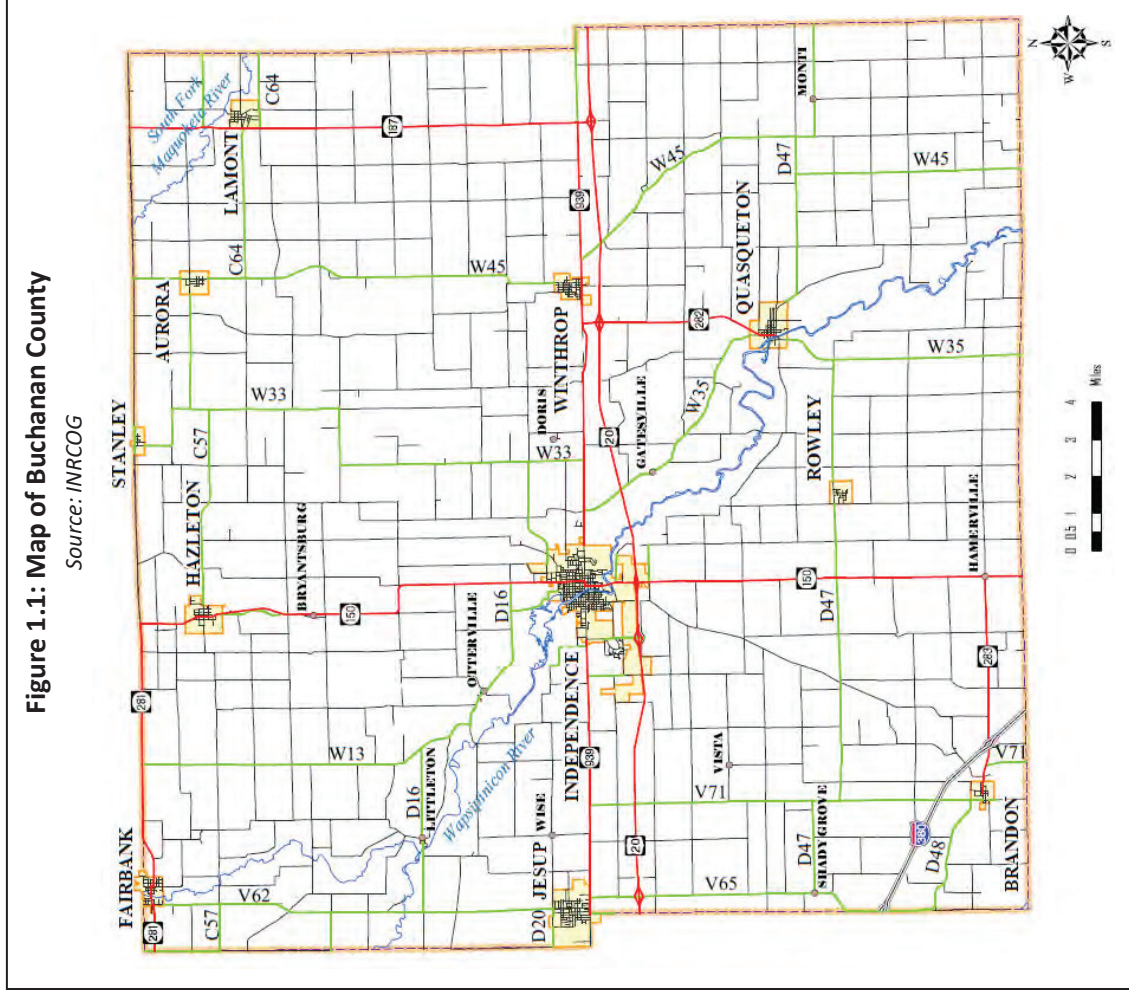
Topography

The terrain in Buchanan County is generally the undulating topography that characterizes the agricultural areas of northeast Iowa. There are a few areas of steeper than normal slope dispersed throughout the county adjacent to watercourses. The highest point in the county is located in the rural area south of Stanley and lies at approximately 1,163 feet above sea level. The lowest point in the county is located southwest of Brandon and lies at approximately 780 feet above sea level.

Historical Development

The first non-native settlers in Buchanan County were pioneers who arrived from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and the New England states. German, Irish, Swiss, French, Dane, and English settled in areas adjacent to the rivers and started new settlements. They were drawn by the rich soil to grow crops, trees to build homes, swift running water to power flour and saw mills, brick clay with abundant sand to make bricks and lime rock for making mortar, all items needed for the building of homes, farms, and retail development.

In 1842, William Bennett and family became the first non-native residents of Buchanan County at what is now known as Quasqueton. Other settlers that arrived that year were S.G and H.T. Sanford, Ezra Allen, Dr. Edward Brewster, Rufus Clark and Frederick Kessler and their families.



Buchanan County is believed to be named after President James Buchanan. The State Legislature appointed three commissioners who selected the City of Independence as the county seat. The Illinois Central Railroad arrived in Independence in 1859 creating an east/west rail corridor. That was followed by a north/south rail line the Milwaukee Division of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Minnesota Railroad.

The Wapsipinicon Mill, built in 1867 by Samuel Sherwood as a flour mill, later housed hydroelectric generators, generating power for the city of Independence. The mill was later used exclusively for the manufacture of livestock feed. The mill was a gift to the Buchanan County Historical Society by Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Greenley, and currently serves as a museum. The need for a second state “hospital for the insane” was identified and the hospital was built on land purchased by the citizens of Independence on three hundred twenty acres west of the community in 1873. The site is still in operation and is known as the “Mental Health Institute”.

Finally, an Amish settlement was established in 1914. This settlement has grown to a community with over 100 families living in Fairbank, Hazleton, Perry and Washington townships.

Transportation Systems

Two major highways serve Buchanan County: State Highway 150, which is a north/south route, and US Highway 20, which is an east/west route. Old US Highway 20, now Highway 939, also travels through the county and has now evolved into a secondary route due to the newly constructed US Highway 20. Other significant roadways serving Buchanan County include county roads V62, V71, W13, W33, W35, W40, W45, C57, C64, D47, D48 and State Highways 281 and 187.

Two railroads pass through portions of Buchanan County. The Canadian National Railroad is a Class I railroad and passes through the county on an east/west route and travels through the cities of Winthrop, Independence, and Jesup. The Canadian National Railroad operate a total of 558 miles of track in Iowa and employs 226 persons in Iowa. The main products transported on this railroad include coal, farm products, food products, chemicals, and miscellaneous mixed shipments.

The Iowa Northern Railroad, headquartered in Cedar Rapids, owns and operates a rail line that passes through the extreme northwestern portion of the county. The Iowa Northern has access capabilities to the Union Pacific and Canadian National Railroads.

The Independence Municipal Airport, is located in southwest Independence. The airport maintains a concrete runway which is 5,500 feet long. A total of 25 aircraft are based at the field, 22 single engine airplanes and 3 multi-engine airplanes. The airport sees an average of 27 aircraft operations daily. Of these operations, 66 percent are local general aviation, 33 percent are transient general aviation, and 1 percent is military.

The closest commercial airport is the Waterloo Municipal Airport, served by one airline and is located approximately 33 miles west of the Buchanan County seat of Independence. The Cedar Rapids Eastern Iowa airport is served by 5 airlines and is located approximately 45 miles south of Independence.