The Flynn Mansion was built in 1870 at an approximate cost of $20,000. Census records show a brick mason living at the site during construction and suggest that the bricks for the house were made and fired on site. No architect has been identified for the house, but it was built in the Italianate architectural style. The Flynn house exhibits several Italianate style patterns including the bracketed cornices at the roof line, pillared porch columns, and heavily hooded arched windows. The low hipped roof is typical of Italianate styles as is the cupola tower. The cupola provided added ventilation to the house, allowing hot air to escape at night and setting up a convection to draw cool air in below.

The Flynn Barn was built using heavy timber frame construction on a brick foundation. Heavy timber frame construction uses mortise and tenon joints to hold the barn together. A mortise is a rectangular shaped hole cut into the beam. A tenon is cut at the end of the beam to fit into the mortise. A wooden peg called a trunnel holds the tenon in the mortise. The trunnel contributes little to overall strength of the joint. In the 1870s, builders assembled the barn in sections on the ground. Crews of men with poles and ropes raised each bent, a section of the framework, into position. As soon as the bent was in place, workers joined the new bent to the ones already standing.

The Greteman General Store was originally built in Willey, Iowa in the late 1880s by two brothers Frank and Barney Greteman. The store is typical of retail establishments of the time with front show windows, but no first floor side windows. Small town shops often had no warehouse or backroom stock space. All merchandise had to be stored on the main floor. Sidewalls of the store were covered with shelving and storage bins. Goods were even hung from the ceiling to save space.

The Church of the Land was constructed in 1983 by Living History Farms. Though new, the church represents a popular architectural style of the 19th century known as carpenter gothic. Intended to mimic European cathedrals, it is marked by the steep roofline, pointed arched windows and the arched pew designs.
1700 Ioway Farm

The Ioway make their homes out of natural materials and to suit specific purposes and seasons. The home or “chi” materials varied but generally the doors of every home faced east, each had a fire pit in the center. The head of the family and anything holy or sacred was positioned west of the fire in the home, and the homes housed an extended family of 6 to 10 members. The women usually constructed the homes. Bark lodges were located in the permanent villages near the gardens. Frames were made of various trees and coverings would consist of the outer bark of Elm or Walnut trees. The inner bark of the Basswood tree would be harvested to use for tying the framework together. The square bark lodge, or náhachi, would last about 10-12 years with a bit of repair done to it as needed.

1850 Pioneer Farm

The Log House and Barn at the 1850 farm are both modern reconstructions of period structures. Log homes are temporary structures that provide shelter for the first few years of living in a new location. For many settlers, this kind of housing was much different from what they were accustomed to back east where milled lumber and other construction materials were affordable and readily available.

Log houses often started out small. The size of the log house is sixteen by eighteen feet. It is an average size log house – typical sizes range from fifteen feet square to eighteen feet by twenty-four feet. The strength of a log house comes from the meeting of the logs in the corners. Each room sized square is called a “pen”. The 1850 house is a single pen home.

1900 Horse-Powered Farm

By 1900, new innovations in farm machinery had allowed Iowa farmers to expand their production and the amount of money they made each year. At the same time, railroad transportation made building materials more available and more affordable. Furniture, wall paper, lumber, and house plans could be ordered out of a catalog and shipped to the nearest depot. Larger farms and more milled lumber also allowed farmers to build bigger barns and more outbuildings on the farm.

Chákirutha

Another style of home the Ioway constructed was the oval cattail mat lodge, or chákirutha. This type of home tended to be used in the winter months. Cattails are hollow so they make a very good insulator for the winter months. This style of home would be built on an area of ground that had been mounded up in order to keep water from running into the home. The home would be about 8-14 feet wide by about 20 feet long. The frame of an oval style home would be constructed of willow saplings, bent over to meet each other, and tied together with basswood ties. Cattails were gathered during the summer and fall to use as a covering for this style of home. The cattails would be sewn together using bone needles and sinew to form mats. These mats were then tied over the willow frame in layers to create the cover of the home. The mats would be removed, rolled up, and stored away when the house was not in use.