

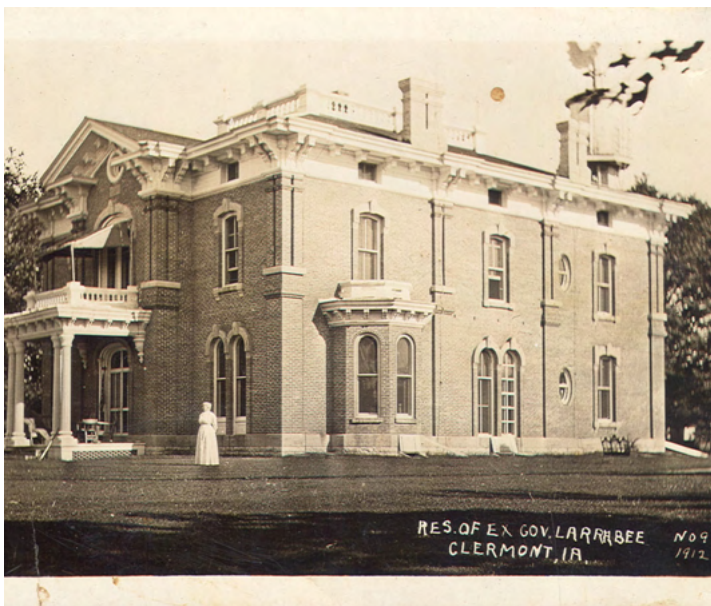
## National Historic Landmarks

### Montauk Historic Site

Built in 1874 on a hill overlooking the Turkey River Valley, **Montauk** was named by Anna Larrabee (wife of William Larrabee) for the lighthouse at the eastern end of Long Island, New York, that guided her sea-captain father home from his whaling voyages. It became the historic mansion and home of Iowa's 12th Governor William Larrabee. The Larrabee family lived on this rural estate from 1874 to 1965 and enjoy the unique and original furnishings. A widow's walk, like those used by the wives of sea captains to watch for ships, crowns the roof and gives a dramatic view of the Turkey Valley. Surrounded by over 100,000 pine trees that Larrabee planted, the 14-room mansion is built of brick molded of native clay and kiln at Clermont. On the 46-acre grounds, where once peacocks strutted and turkeys roosted in the trees at night,



are flower gardens and statues of Civil War heroes. Montauk was also a working farm with barns, farm animals, an orchard and grain fields. Montauk reflects the wealth and lofty status of its occupants. Larrabee traveled widely and decorated his home with curios and souvenirs. Visitors today can see Tiffany lamps, Wedgewood china, statues from Italy, music boxes from Switzerland, a large collection of paintings and thousands of books. Each room has a marble sink, and most of the rooms are filled with paintings, marble busts and statues. Still, Montauk is modest compared to the homes of other similarly prominent leaders of Iowa and the nation. This simplicity is a product of the Larrabees' conservative New England background. Because the house was lived in continuously for nearly 100 years, the furnishings and appliances reflect changes in technology and style over time. Newer furnishings mix with older ones: in the kitchen, for example, a 1900 wood stove stands near a 1950s dishwasher. The Larrabee family was progressive in its use of technology. The house was built with central heat, a recent innovation at that time. Other new conveniences were added as soon as they were available, such as the telephone in 1900 and electricity in 1910.



## National Historic Landmarks

### Surf Ballroom

The [Surf Ballroom](#) (also called the Surf) is a historic rock and roll landmark at Clear Lake, Iowa. The original Surf Ballroom was located across the street from its current location on the shores of Clear Lake. It officially opened for business on April 17, 1934, with a \$1.00 dance on a 90 by 120 foot hardwood dance floor. The venue also featured a roof garden for dancing outdoors, five lakeside windows and a boardwalk leading to nearby docks. The Surf was one of three such ventures for its developer, Carl J. Fox. He sold the three ballrooms in December of 1946 to Prom, Inc., of Chicago for a reported total of \$1,300,000.



Tragedy struck the Surf in the early morning hours of April 20, 1947, when fire destroyed the building. Plans for its replacement were quickly underway and a new Surf Ballroom was rebuilt across the street from the original location in what was the original venue's parking lot. The current Surf Ballroom reopened on July 1, 1948. The building project cost approximately \$350,000.

The Surf got its name (and motif) from the desire of the original owners to create a ballroom that resembled an ocean beach club. The murals on the back walls were hand-painted to depict pounding surf, swaying palm trees, sailboats and lighthouses. The furnishings were bamboo and rattan and the ambiance that of a sea island. The stage is surrounded by palm trees and the clouds projected overhead make it seem as if you were dancing outside under the stars. The likes of Count Basie, Duke Ellington and The Dorseys all made regular stops at the Surf. Back then, ballrooms were host to the primary form of entertainment – dancing. The 1950's saw the dawning of rock and roll, and artists like The Everly Brothers, Roy Orbison, Ricky Nelson, Little Richard, Jan and Dean and Conway Twitty all took the stage here. The Surf Ballroom was one of the first ballrooms in the state to feature rock 'n roll, and the big name rock acts featured here made it a "must-play" venue on the performance circuit.

The Surf is closely associated with the event known colloquially as "The Day the Music Died." This is when early rock and roll stars Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and J. P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson gave their last performances at the Surf on February 2, 1959, as part of the "Winter Dance Party Tour." After their performance, they were all tragically killed in an airplane crash shortly after taking off from the nearby Mason City Municipal Airport.

The ballroom also is associated with an anti-racial discrimination suit in 1954 with *Amos v. Prom*. This action was brought under the Iowa Civil Rights Act against the corporation, Prom, Inc., which operated the Surf Ball Room in Clear Lake. Following Prom's corporate policy, ballroom managers refused to admit several Black couples to a performance by Lionel Hampton. The Iowa Civil Liberties Union filed a friend of court brief with the federal court, successfully arguing for a broad construction of Iowa's Civil Rights Act.



On September 6, 2011, The Surf Ballroom was added to the National Register of Historic Places. In 2021, it was named a National Historic Landmark.