

1857 STAGECOACH ACCIDENT

The Iowa City-Newton-Fort Des Moines Stagecoach Route was established in 1844 as a transportation link between the state capitol in Iowa City and Fort Des Moines. It was the first stagecoach route legally defined by the state legislature and was designed to serve as a supply route to the dragoons stationed at the Fort. The route served that purpose until 1869 when the Rock Island Railroad was extended westward to Des Moines.

In 1855, Anthony Yant, Larnerd Case, and Simon Doran were commissioned by the state of Iowa to survey the stagecoach route from Newton to Fort Des Moines. Yant, one of the earliest settlers in Polk County, had purchased land near Little Four Mile Creek a year earlier. The original surveyors map shows that the route passed just south of present day 9th Street NW in Altoona and went on to cross Little Four Mile Creek at a point east of 10th Ave NW. It bisected Yant's property.

In November of 1857, when the state capitol was moved to Des Moines, a stagecoach transporting the Treasurer's safe along the Newton to Des Moines route became mired in a slough near Four Mile Creek during a blizzard. The safe contained all the state of Iowa's cash and was marooned out in the open for several days and nights. When the storm stopped, and the ground was frozen enough to support the safe, it was hauled away on a large bobsled drawn by ten yoke of oxen.

A monument marking the location of the stagecoach accident is located along the bike path that runs through the Altoona Greenbelt park east of 10th Avenue between Fourth Street SW and Adventureland Drive.