Origin
While under construction in 1860, the Farm House was the only building for miles around on the expansive farmland of Story County, Iowa. As the Iowa Agricultural College and Model Farm developed, the Farm House became the campus’ cultural hub. Students working at the Model Farm came to the house to receive their daily assignments. It was also the first home to many farm managers, deans of the Agriculture College, and their families during the early years of the college.

Restoration
The Farm House received the honor of being designated a National Historic Landmark in 1965. When the last resident, Dean of Agriculture Floyd Andre, moved out in 1970, work began to preserve and develop the home into a museum. The house was restored to reflect its first fifty years, 1860 to 1910. Funding for the project came from public and private donations as well as a federal grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Farm House Museum formally opened on July 4, 1976 in honor of the nation’s bicentennial.

Today
University Museums is composed of the Farm House Museum, the Brunnier Art Museum, the Christian Petersen Art Museum, the Elizabeth and Byron Anderson Sculpture Garden and the Art on Campus Collection. The Farm House Museum and its collection of art and historic objects are utilized by classes and programs across Iowa State for educational and cultural enrichment.

Major Events
- 1846: Iowa becomes the 29th state
- 1858: Iowa legislature establishes the Iowa Agricultural College and Model Farm
- 1860: Farm House construction begins
- 1864: Iowa legislature awards the Iowa Agricultural College 30,000 acres from the Morrill Act
- 1869: Iowa Agricultural College officially opens
- 1891: Dean Wilson and family move into the Farm House
- 1897: Dean Curtiss and family move into the Farm House
- 1898: Electricity is extended to the Farm House
- 1948: Farm House used for home management courses
- 1965: Farm House is named a National Historic Landmark
- 1970: Dean Floyd Andre moves out of the Farm House
- 1976: Farm House Museum officially opens
- 1983: University Museums established
- 2010: Farm House Museum celebrates 150th anniversary
Notable Residents

Adonijah Strong Welch's (1821-1889) family lived in the Farm House during the initial months of his term as the first president of the Iowa Agricultural College, from fall of 1868 to spring of 1869. Dr. Welch had accepted the presidency while serving as a U.S. Senator from Florida, and only stayed in the Farm House long enough to see his family settled and to deliver the school’s inaugural address. After finishing his senatorial term, Dr. Welch served as president of the college from 1869 to 1883, and is credited with playing an active role in developing the early campus. His wife, Mary B. Welch (1841-1923), was a key figure in the college's Department of Domestic Economy, serving as its organizer and head from 1875 to 1883.

Seaman Asahel Knapp (1833-1911) and his family lived in the Farm House from 1880 to 1885. Knapp worked as farm manager and head of the new Department of Practical and Experimental Agriculture from 1880 to 1883, then served as the college's president until 1884. While living in the Farm House, Knapp began drafting a bill that would provide for a federal program of agricultural experiment stations. That bill inspired the Hatch Experiment Station Act, which was passed by Congress in 1887. Seaman Knapp's wife, Maria Knapp (?-?), ran the Farm House's boarding business, renting out rooms to students and faculty.

A native of Ayrshire, Scotland, James “Tama Jim” Wilson (1835-1920) first rose to national prominence through his work in the Iowa legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives, serving three terms in each. In 1891, Wilson was appointed to the Iowa Agricultural College, where he lived in the Farm House and worked as an agriculture professor and the experiment station director. Wilson is credited with reviving and revamping both the Farm House and the agricultural program during his six years at the college. In 1897, U.S. President William McKinley appointed Wilson as his administration's Secretary of Agriculture. Wilson retained this position for four consecutive terms, serving under Presidents McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft.

Charles Franklin Curtiss (1863-1947) began his time at the Iowa Agricultural College as a student and, later, as the experimental station assistant under James Wilson. Upon Wilson's resignation in 1897, Curtiss was appointed agriculture professor and director of the experiment station; in 1902 he was promoted to Dean of Agriculture. In addition to publishing his influential work with the experiment station, Dean Curtiss promoted the college by developing student livestock judging competitions. Dean Curtiss's wife, Olive Curtiss (?-1943), is remembered for opening the Farm House to the college's students and faculty, frequently hosting luncheons and afternoon teas. Dean Curtiss and his family lived in the Farm House from 1897 to 1947, making them the home's longest residents.

Mary E. Atherly, Farm House: College Farm to University Museum (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995).

Farm House Museum

History of the Farm House

Additional information on the Farm House Museum and University Museums is available at the University Museums office - 290 Scheman building (2nd floor) 515-294-3342. Visit us online at www.museums.iastate.edu.

This fact sheet was researched and developed by Megan Bendixen, 2009-2011 Wayne and Eleanor Ostendorf Farm House Museum Undergraduate Assistant.