

Lehigh — A lovely river town



Huddled deep in the Des Moines River Valley, the town of Lehigh boasts of scenic woodlands and ample outdoor recreational opportunities.

The community is wedged between Dolliver Memorial State Park and Brushy Creek Recreation Area.

The Des Moines River cuts the community in two and provides some spectacular scenery.

Descending into the valley from the hill atop the west bank of the river is a downtown where Main Street is still a bustling place.

Also on the west bank is the Lehigh Historical Society Museum where the hard-working, blue-collar past of the community is kept highlighted.

Built on seams of coal and large deposits of clay and shale, Lehigh was originally called Slabtown. Settlers were drawn to the beauty of the area in the 1850s, but by the fall of 1860 the population had dropped to 16 people after a couple years of poor wheat crops. “Those who remained did so because they were unable to leave,” wrote



Basil Williams in the 1976 edition of “Webster’s Prairies: the Township History of the County.”

But the town hung on, making its way with timber, coal and clay. In 1880, it was renamed Lehigh.

On the east bank of the Des Moines is Lehigh Riverside Tavern and the Brushy Creek Outdoors Bait Shop. That’s also

the side of the river where logrolling competitions are held in June during the town’s summer festival — Lehigh River Days.

River Days highlights typically also include a parade, car show, flea market, street dance and community church service. This year, River Days will be held June 19-21.