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Article Summary: Aeschbacher summarizes the work of the Society since 1953. Considering the future, he anticipates the need for additional space and the demand for tourist attractions based on historical resources. (The annual report also includes a brief tribute to the late Louis A Holmes, former Society president.)

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Photographs / Images: Warren C Wood, newly elected Society President; Louis A Holmes, Society President 1959-1961; D W Aeschbacher, Society Director 1956-1963; visitors to the "Yesterday in Nebraska" displays at the state fair; Lincoln Junior League volunteers behind the scenes of the puppet show; Mrs George Lewis, Junior League museum guide; genealogical study group from the Lincoln YMCA meeting in the Reading Room; future teachers from the University of Nebraska learning methods of presenting Nebraska history; Mrs Lettie Gillett of the Museum Staff conferring with delegates to the 5<sup>th</sup> Nebraska Museums Conference; occupational levels at the Logan Creek site exposed by the archeological crew



Warren C. Wood, Gering. Our newly elected President.



Louis A. Holmes, President of the Society, 1959-1961.

The following resolution was adopted by the Executive Board at their May 18, 1963 meeting.

The Nebraska State Historical Society sustained a great loss in the untimely passing of Louis A. Holmes, member of the Executive Board since 1954 and President of the Society 1959-1961. To Mrs. Holmes and to the other members of the family we express our deepest sympathy.

A sincere student of the history of the American West, Louis Holmes was characterized by the vigor, the enthusiasm, the zest with which he approached any problem. At the same time he was capable of the painstaking and meticulous work of the scholar. Ten years of study and investigation are encompassed in his book, **Fort McPherson, Nebraska Territory**, completed shortly before his death.

His historical interests ranged through Indian and military history, fur trading, and agricultural frontiers. An active as well as an armchair historian, he was intensely interested in historic sites. He visited many that are well known and spent many hours locating places of which he had read or heard.

As an historian, as a lawyer, as a citizen, Louis A. Holmes was an outstanding Nebraskan.



Above—Dr. W. D. Aeschbacher, Director of the Society,  
1956-1963.

Below—Visitors to the Yesterday in Nebraska displays at the  
State Fair.





Above—Lincoln Junior League volunteers behind the scenes of the puppet show. Left to right, Mrs. Don Etmund, Mrs. Gerald Merritt and Mrs. E. M. O'Shea, Jr.

Below—Mrs. George Lewis, Junior League museum guide, conducting a school tour.





Above—A geneological study group from the Lincoln Y.M.C.A. meeting in the Reading Room.

Below—Future teachers at the University of Nebraska learning methods of presenting Nebraska history.





Above—Mrs. Lettie Gillett of the Museum Staff conferring with delegates to the 5th Nebraska Museums Conference.

Below—The archeological crew at the Logan Creek site in Burt County expose the occupational levels.



# THE NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN 1963

BY W. D. AESCHBACHER

TEN years ago, on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the meeting of a group of Nebraska citizens to organize our present Historical Society, James C. Olson, then Superintendent of the Society, summarized the development of the Society through seventy-five years as a part of his Annual Report. As I leave the Society after seven years, it seemed appropriate to now summarize the decade since 1953.

The report in 1953 was written in the present Society building, amid a considerable amount of confusion, as this building was occupied about July 1st of 1953 and dedicated in September. The building was certainly the achievement of that year; it had been looked forward to by the Society since before 1900, and a home in the imposing new edifice was a climax to many people's dreams.

The next year, 1954, saw another project of major dimensions involve the energies and activities of the So-

*Dr. W. D. Aeschbacher, Director of the Nebraska State Historical Society from 1956-1963, has resigned to head the Eisenhower Library at Abilene, Kansas.*

ciety; that was the Territorial Centennial celebration. This was the year of the Centennial Train Car Museum which traveled throughout Nebraska. These two years, 1953 and 1954, with the interest engendered by the new building and the Centennial, saw the Society grow in membership and in its impact on the state.

Comparatively, 1955 was a quieter year, but new achievements included the completion of the Great Plains Trilogy television series and a new program of exhibits at the State Fair. In 1956 the Fort Robinson project was opened to the public. Our research activities at the site of Fort Atkinson, started in 1956, eventually resulted in the formation of the Fort Atkinson Foundation and the acquisition of that historic site. In the summer of 1956 Dr. James C. Olson, a distinguished scholar and an able administrator, resigned as Director.

The year 1957 saw the beginning of archeological work at the Logan Creek site in Burt County, a site that has been worked four seasons with the completion of field work this summer. The last two years' work was financed by a National Science Foundation grant. We consider this site to be of major importance in reconstructing Nebraska's earliest history. In 1956 and 1957 the Society was introduced to national organizations, as it acted as host to meetings of the Mountain-Plains Museum Conference, the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, and the American Museum Association. The following year saw the publication of a valuable index-guide to our publications, prepared by Dr. John B. White.

By 1959 the microfilming program of the Society was altered to include a number of co-operative programs whereby some of the important daily newspapers and magazines currently published in the state and the *Omaha Bee* were included. The year also saw an extension of our activity at Fort Robinson as we acquired and opened for display the blacksmith and harness shops there. The next year the Society was again deeply involved in historical arche-

ology at Fort Atkinson and started excavations at Fort Kearny. A reorganization of our picture collection to make a much more usable and effective collection was also begun. The Woods Fellowships in Nebraska History were established, with the expectation that additional historical publications on Nebraska would result by our Centennial year.

After a number of years of preparation the historical markers program, organized under the auspices of the Society but operating under a council appointed by the Governor, showed visible progress in 1961. Other new kinds of activity for the Society, in the Nebraska Civil War Centennial Commission, the State Centennial Commission, and the Hall of Fame Commission, came by authorization or direction from the state government. A major television project, the Western Heritage Series, was developed in co-operation with KUON, the University of Nebraska television station.

The 1962 Annual Report called the attention of the membership to the increasingly critical need for additional space after ten years in the new building. Areas of new or exceptionally satisfactory activities included the restoration of the Bryan home, Fairview, in co-operation with the Lincoln Junior League and the Bryan Hospital Board, and the development of our highway salvage archeology program with financial assistance and co-operation from the State Highway Department.

In summary, through the ten years the membership of the Society had increased about forty per cent from 2150 to 2960. The Museum had grown from the original displays in the parent building to include major improvements to those displays, as in the reconstruction of the three Period Rooms, and to include almost as much display space and activity outside the building as in it. These displays are at Fort Robinson, Fairview, and at the State Fair. The Library has also grown. We had 24,876 volumes in 1953; 47,159 in 1963. The number of pictures has in-

creased from 53,677 to 71,970. In 1953 the Library was utilized by 1750 people, as compared to 4454 in 1963.

In staff the Society added, from the time the building was opened in 1953 to 1963, one part-time clerk and a part-time janitor in the administrative areas; an assistant museum director, a photographer, a half-time clerk, and a highway salvage archeologist in the Museum. Library staff assignments have altered but have remained at virtually the same size. The Annual Report in 1953 showed 17 full-time employees and 12 part-time or temporary employees. Our report as of June 30 showed 21 full-time and 13 part-time employees.

In 1953 a major effort by a dedicated staff made a new building a habitable and impressive home for the Society. By 1963 the resources of the building are being completely utilized. In space acquired at Fort Robinson, and in storage space acquired within the last year at the Mead Agricultural Experiment Station through the co-operation of the University, we have added considerably to the building resources of the Society. However, additional space for certain kinds of museum storage, additional museum exhibit space, and some major additions to our library and archives stack space are indicated in the immediate future.

Through the decade the same able and dedicated persons have guided the activity of the Society. Mr. Kivett has headed the Museum since 1949 and Dr. White has been in charge of the Library since 1950. Mrs. Winkelman came to the Society in 1953 to head the newly created Education Department. Dr. Danker joined the staff as archivist in 1952; Mr. Thomas became staff artist in 1956. Dr. Grange joined the staff as Curator of the Fort Robinson Museum in 1955 and became Assistant Museum Director in 1960. Miss Sally Johnson served as Curator of History from 1951 to 1960. In 1961 Richard Rowen assumed the position of Curator of History, and the Society suffered a tragic loss in his death early this year.

The Society has been fortunate to have this amount of stability and continuity in its professional staff, combined with the ability, ambition, and vigor of the individuals mentioned. In recent months we have lost a number of these people. Mr. Rowen was killed in an automobile accident in January. Mrs. Winkelman has left Lincoln, and her position with the Society, to accompany her husband to Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Dr. Danker has accepted a position in the History Department at Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas, a move to a teaching position that he had considered for some time. The loss of these experienced and able staff members will be keenly felt.

Nineteen hundred sixty-three has been a fruitful year. We gained 350 new members and four life members, giving us a total of 2960 as of June 30. *Nebraska History*, the *News Letter* and the "Out of Old Nebraska" columns were continued. In *Nebraska History* articles dealt with Indian campaigns in "The Second Nebraska's Campaign Against the Sioux" and "General Henry Atkinson's Report of the Yellowstone Expedition of 1825," and with such relatively contemporary subjects, such as "The Nebraska State Council of Defense and the Non-Partisan League" and "Municipally Owned Power Plants in Nebraska". These were interspersed with a variety of articles on the period between, such as Norma Kidd Green's "Ghost Counties in Nebraska."

During the year staff members presented programs outside the building to some 54 groups, in addition to an occasional radio and regularly scheduled television programs and special programs within the building. Staff members represented the Society at the Mountain-Plains Museum Conference, the Plains Archeological Conference, the Society of American Archivists, the American Historical Association, the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, the Western History Association, and the Nebraska Academy of Science. The Society was host to the Plains Archeological Conference in November 1962. It also served

as host to the first meeting of the Nebraska Folklore Society in October.

Dr. Danker served as president of the Nebraska Writers Guild during the year. Dr. White was program chairman for the American Inter-Professional Institute which met in Lincoln in 1962, and he was one of the speakers at the Fall Meeting of the Nebraska Writers Guild. Mr. Kivett has served as chairman for 1963 of the Nebraska Museums Conference and presented papers at the Plains Archeological Conference. Dr. Grange presented papers at the Plains Archeological Conference and the Nebraska Academy of Science, and he is chairman of the anthropology section of this organization for 1964. His report on Fort Kearny appeared in the March issue of *Nebraska History*. Before his death Mr. Rowen gave a paper at the Mountain-Plains Museum Conference and had an article appear posthumously in *Historic Preservation* as well as the article he had prepared for *Nebraska History*. I gave papers at the Great Plains Conference and the Mississippi Valley Historical Association meetings. My activities outside the state included serving as secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association and on the Truman Library Institute Board.

The Society Executive Board has continued to give fully of their time and effort. Frank Latenser, as president of the Society, has been particularly effective as a member of the Capitol Murals Commission toward instilling historical realism into the new murals.

A number of staff changes were mentioned earlier. Mr. David Drury of East Lansing, Michigan joined us as Curator of History on July 1 and in August Mr. William Schmidt became Archivist. Mrs. Verna Doran was advanced to the position of Library Secretary. Mr. Alfred Rigbert returned to our custodial staff.

The Society this year, as every year, is much indebted to those who have given generously to it. Each month's *News Letter* lists people who have donated to our library

and museum collections. Others give generously of their time. The Lincoln Junior League has helped us again this year with the puppet programs. Besides this activity it has carried the responsibility for staffing Fairview and has provided the Society with volunteer help in a number of other ways. The Horizon Club of the Campfire Girls has given us valuable assistance in our museum activities. Among the many individuals who have contributed time and service to the Society is Mr. A. O. Andrews. He has continued and extended the very valuable assistance first mentioned last year.

Administratively, the Society operated with departments of the Museum, the Library, and the Division of Education. Reports on their activity in greater detail follow:

## MUSEUM

Interest in the Society and Museum reached a new height during the year with a total of 93,778 persons visiting the building. This is an increase of 9,000 over the attendance of last year. Visitors at Fort Robinson numbered 29,653, an increase of about 5,000 people or 39 per cent over the previous year. The State Fair exhibits in 1962 attracted a total of 29,709 visitors.

"Fairview", the home of William Jennings Bryan, opened on July 1, 1962 as a co-operative project with the Bryan Hospital Board, the Lincoln Junior League and the Society, gives every promise of being a successful project. The house was visited by approximately 6,500 people during the year. Much progress has been made in the collection of original Bryan items for this restoration. The Society received a considerable amount of original material from the estate of Mrs. Mary Bryan Allen of Lincoln which will aid in the family research. The attendance at Fort Robinson and in all areas is a graphic illustration of

the contribution to the statewide efforts to develop tourism and the increasing tourist interest in authentic historical development.

A total of 240 donors provided 3,050 specimens for the museum collection. On August 17 of last year, title to the Walter J. Charnley Firearms Collection was transferred to the Society. This collection, numbering 796 items, represents one of the outstanding firearms collections in the country. Special exhibits featuring a portion of the collection have attracted national as well as local interest.

Other special exhibits included a continuation of the Civil War Centennial materials with photographic murals and specimens. The second floor corridor was also utilized for a special display of paintings, lithographs, and drawings featuring Nebraska Architecture in Art. Temporary exhibits were also prepared for the State Fair. A total of fifty-nine new exhibit units were completed during the year, including fourteen which were devoted to the Walter J. Charnley Collection. A Western Art exhibit, opened in June, featured original paintings from the collection.

The museum operation suffered a great loss with the tragic death of Richard D. Rowen, Curator of History, on January 29, 1963. Among the many activities carried on by Dick was the Historic Buildings Survey. This survey has as its purpose the recording of the many important buildings throughout the state. At the minimum, it includes photographs of the structure with notes relating to construction. The results of this survey will provide for recommendations as to the preservation of such structures. Several regional and county organizations such as the Joslyn Art Museum have co-operated in this survey.

This has been a fruitful year in archeological research. A National Science Grant of \$14,100 was provided for continued research at the Logan Creek Site in Burt County. Here a crew of twelve students, under the immediate supervision of Dr. Roger T. Grange, Jr., worked for a period of ten weeks during this summer. The grant

also provided for a detailed geologic study of the site. This work reveals more deeply buried cultural zones which should date more than 7,200 years ago.

The Highway Salvage program, carried on with the close co-operation of the Nebraska Department of Roads, provides for the preservation or excavation of historic and archeological sites. John W. Garrett, Highway Salvage Archeologist, carried on surveys throughout the state where new roads were planned for construction. He also recorded various buildings, particularly in the Omaha area, which were being removed by the construction work. An excavation crew provided by the Highway Department worked under Mr. Garrett's direction at an important archeological site in Dawson County. These excavations provided new information on the prehistoric inhabitants of west central Nebraska.

Progress was made during the year in a number of areas. Through the co-operation of the University of Nebraska, storage space at the Mead Field Laboratory was made available for storage of farm equipment. This additional storage permits us to seriously collect horse-drawn agricultural equipment. Such material is also being collected at Fort Robinson until such time that it may be utilized for special agricultural exhibits.

### LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

Although the preservation of important records and service to the public cannot be measured by statistics alone, the following table is an indication of continued growth in the library collections:

Category	1962 Total	Additions	1963
Volumes .....	47,159	732	47,891
Newspaper volumes .....	17,402	...	17,000*
Maps .....	5,411	78	5,489
Microfilm reels .....	7,467	380	7,847
Pictures .....	71,970	2,384	74,354

\* (Forty volumes of papers were bound but the total number was reduced by microfilming during the year.)

One of the most important Society collections, and that utilized frequently by researchers in Nebraska as well as outside the state, is the photographic collection. This is an invaluable visual evidence of our state's history. Such collections are widely utilized in school text books, Nebraska tourism projects, television programs, as well as by scholars studying the state's history. Additions to the collection during the year included 2,384 items, making a total of 74,854 photographs. Particularly significant additions to this collection included photographs relating to the Sutherland Project, the Nebraska Press Association, and the William Jennings Bryan family.

Another unique and valuable historical source in the Library is the newspaper collection. These are contemporary accounts which provide a detailed story of Nebraska people. As time and funds permit this collection is micro-filmed to provide a permanent record. A total of 1,694 persons utilized this collection during the year on various research projects. A total of 3,067 persons utilized the reading room collections.

The archives collections received important additions during the year. As custodian of all public records of a historical nature, the Society works closely with such public agencies to safeguard such records. Other important collections come from business firms and private individuals. Business records, including those of the farmer and rancher, are needed to provide a valid picture of our history.

## EDUCATION DIVISION

The promotion of the Society's educational leaflets and other materials for teachers and students has been a major activity of the Education Division during the year. A new educational resource for teachers and students is a set of twelve 9" x 7" black and white photographs. Selected from the Society's Picture Library, these are authentic photo-

graphs of Indian and pioneer life. Entitled the "Nebraska Heritage Picture Collection No. 1," the set includes pictures of a Pawnee earthlodge, a Sioux tipi, a covered wagon, a log house, a dugout, a sod house, a pioneer farm, a sod schoolhouse, horse-power threshing, a grist mill, an early locomotive, and a small town street scene. Included also is a sheet of information regarding the pictures. The set of twelve pictures sells for \$.25. This is the first of a series of picture collections which we plan to develop in the future.

The educational program for school groups and other youth groups followed the same general pattern as in former years. Fifty-seven puppet performances were presented to seventy-four groups totaling 2,487 children. One hundred two programs for school classes were presented to a total of 4,629 children. Thirty-five after-school programs were given to a total of 1,494 persons. Tours were also given in connection with puppet shows and auditorium programs. The total number of tours of all types was 396, with a total attendance of 9,511 persons. Junior League volunteers again produced the puppet shows for the Society.

A new project during 1962-1963 was a series of Sunday afternoon programs in the Society's auditorium. Designed to attract family groups, the series was entitled "Sunday Afternoon at the Historical Society" and emphasized hobbies and special interests which families can enjoy as a group. Eleven programs were presented, covering the following topics: guns, stamps, dolls, coins, model railroad-ing, historic buildings in Nebraska, Nebraska folksongs, Indian dancing, china painting, and western books. Outside speakers who were specialists on the particular topic to be discussed were invited to present the programs, which usually included slides or a film in addition to the talk.

The Society presented twenty-five fifteen-minute television programs on KUON-TV during 1962-1963. The programs, which emphasized Indian life and crafts, and fa-

mous Nebraskans, were given by members of the staff, with an occasional outside expert as guest talent.

The television series which the Society produced in cooperation with KUON-TV under a grant from the National Educational Television Center, was revised and completed in August 1962. The revised series, under the title "Land of Their Own," consisted of three programs: "The Face of Courage," "The Homestead Dream," and "The Fruited Plain." John G. Neihardt, Poet Laureate of Nebraska, served as narrator for the introduction and the closing of each of the programs, and an original musical score composed by Robert Beadell of the University of Nebraska School of Music was used as background music for the series. Final acceptance of the series by the National Education Television Center has been received and the Center will release the programs for national viewing over NETV network stations.

### AND TOMORROW

An overview of the last decade showed a substantial amount of progress by the Society. A look at the same period, and at developments in the state through the last decade, indicates a number of areas where the Society must make especial effort in the next ten years.

The space needs of the Society will become more critical. Sound planning and execution within this decade are necessary for the Society to continue to be adequately housed. The Centennial of the state approaches in 1967. The Society was largely instrumental in calling this to the attention of the state, and plans for a Centennial have been initiated by Nebraska during the past three years. In state planning and development, the Society has not as yet developed adequate projects identified directly with the Society as its contribution to the Centennial. The Woods Fellowships project in Nebraska History, established in

1960, is a Centennial project, clearly identified as a Society venture. Planning and development of other projects is most necessary.

In the past ten years, especially in the last five years, Nebraska has become acutely conscious of its need to develop tourist attractions, and in this development, private parties and state agencies alike have turned with increasing frequency and emphasis to our historical resources. Historical interest in the state has increased greatly. At the same time this emphasis on history for the purpose of attracting and holding tourists has established, and may well establish more, forces within the state and within the state government utilizing and interpreting the state's history for their purposes. These become in effect competitors of the Society. The Society must find ways to utilize the increased interest in the history of our state without allowing inadequate interpretations or inaccurate reporting to become characteristic of the state's utilization of its history.

Finally in the development of historical museums by state agencies, recently developed interest in our state's history can cause conflict and problems. The Society has an outstanding museum program, one that has made the use of exhibits for historical representation widely accepted in this state and region. Several years ago arrangements were worked out with the Game Commission to set up a satisfactory method to use the facilities of each agency to greatly increase the number of displays available over the state. These understandings need to be further defined and detailed so that the reputation of the Society, and the reputation of the state as a leader in developing historical display, is preserved.

In ending seven years of service as Director of the Society, I feel pride in the development and the accomplishments of the Society. It has been a satisfying and productive period. To the membership, the Executive Board, and the members of the staff I express my appreciation.

In the years ahead I am confident I will proudly view the further development of the Society as an interested and active member.