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A TRIBUTE TO NEBRASKA

On March 1, 1967 the Senate of the United States paid tribute to Nebraska in recognition of our Centennial year. Following is a portion of that tribute as it appeared in the *Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 90th Congress, First Session, Washington D. C., March 1, 1967, Volume 113, no. 32.*

Senate

NEBRASKA IS 100 YEARS OLD TODAY

Mr. HRUSKA. Mr. President, today, March 1, begins Nebraska's centennial year.

In 1860, the people of Nebraska first voted on the statehood question. Statehood was defeated, but the vote was close: 2,094 in favor of statehood, and 2,372 against, a difference of 278 votes. The issue was again presented to the people in 1866. This time they voted for statehood, but again the voting was close, winning by only 100 votes—3,938 for and 3,838 against. Following the congressional endorsement of statehood, the Nebraska Legislature met on February 20, 1867, and composed an acceptance. March 1, 1867, President Andrew Johnson by proclamation officially recognized the existence of the free State of Nebraska. Today we celebrate the fact that the 100 vote difference led to the first 100 years of progress.

We Nebraskans are proud of the heritage built for us by rugged pioneers who asked only for a chance to direct their will and energies toward building a future for themselves and for those who would follow. We who follow pay tribute to those pioneers this centennial year.

These pioneers perceived gold in Nebraska—the fields of golden wheat and golden corn inlaid with the stately beauty of the goldenrod, later to be adopted as our State flower.

This was a kind of gold that had to be won by hard work. It required dedication of heart, mind, and soul.

Nebraska pioneers were just the right kind of people to reap such a land. They asked for no quick spoils. They worked, and worked hard for everything they got.

Apart from the dedication of heavy-toiling men and women, what forces and events shaped the Nebraska of today? This question opens fascinating opportunities for speculation. It formed the basis for an imaginative and informative article in the centennial issue of the Omaha World-Herald on February 26. Some 16 historians, from Nebraska universities and colleges and the Nebraska Historical Society, were asked to join in the selection of significant events.

Not surprisingly, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 which opened the territory to legal settlement was deemed the most important event by the historians. Also stressed were subsequently enacted land laws, such as the Homestead Act of 1862. These attracted fresh and willing settlers.

Other forces and events influencing the State were the unicameral legislature adopted in 1934, the development of the railroad and the Populist movement.

Of course, Nebraska's entry into the Union on March 1, 1867, marked the beginning of another stage of progress. The recognition of the importance of education, as symbolized in the chartering of the University of Nebraska on February 15, 1869, and the Morrill Act of 1862 which provided for the establishment of land-grant colleges, was noted.

The troubled years of depression of the 1890's and 1930's, the livestock industry and this century's technology are other factors mentioned by many of the historians.

This absorbing article contains the following observation:

A vital relationship between the land and the law runs like a thread of continuity through much of the comment offered by historians as they discuss major Nebraska events.

Their observations regarding the Kansas-Nebraska Act, for example, made these points: Territorial status paved the way to self-rule and eventual statehood. People could purchase or pre-empt land, charter towns, organize counties. They could make provision for public education, roads, bridges and other public structures.

The Lincoln Journal and Star's centennial issue of February 26 brings us back to where we began—back to the people themselves. In the introduction to the centennial picture story, "Nebraska and Its People," the editors of the Journal state this:

Neither Government nor Place can provide the pulse of life. Only People can tame a Frontier, create a Society, build a State, and meet the challenges of Civilization's Adjustments to Time.

The promise of free land brought many people into Nebraska. Only those who were willing to pay a different kind of price succeeded. It was a hard life, but they were sturdy people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. HRUSKA. I ask unanimous consent that I may proceed for another 5 minutes, or such part of that time as I may need.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

Mr. HRUSKA. Settlers who were determined to be a part of the land lived not only on the land, but in and under that land. This was the era of the sod house. Because of the scarcity of timber, many pioneers built their very homes out of sod. Huge slabs of Nebraska earth were plowed with a special blade made for this purpose and were laid together much as brick, excepting that the rooted grass growing in the sod served as a mortaring device. In the winter, the wall facing the cold wind was insulated with hay. Cellars were as necessary for preserving life as for preserving food, and were retreated to in times of severe blizzards and windstorms. In summertime, the sod houses literally came alive, blooming into a profusion of wild prairie flowers and grasses, providing a beautiful interlude amidst the stark plains.

The Lincoln Journal centennial issue captured the spirit of those times in an article called "Families and Homes." I shall ask to have this article inserted in the *Record* at the conclusion of my remarks.

Honoring our heritage is only one part of our celebration. We are going to have a birthday party, too. And, we are laying a proper foundation for the second 100 years.

The birthday party honors the Nebraska of today. The importance of the State's agricultural industry to the entire nation is apparent. The farmer produces enough to feed himself and nearly 40 others. He fed only 10 as recently as World War II, and in homestead days, 75 years ago, only four.

The cattle industry ranks third in the Nation. Nebraska ranks sixth in hogs. As for crops, Nebraska is fourth in corn, seventh in wheat, and third in sorghum grain. It is sixth in total cash receipts from farm production.

We are proud of our agriculture, but realize the importance of diversification. The state is attracting more industry, research, and education. Just as forces and events combined to bring in the pioneers during the last century, the unlimited future of a progressive State acts as a magnet to the ambitious and persevering pioneers of today.

The Nebraska Centennial Commission, working with local and county centennial committees, has arranged an interesting schedule of events.

More events are being planned on the State level and there are literally hundreds of other events being staged by counties, cities, and towns. There will be plenty to do and see. On behalf of the State of Nebraska, I extend a hearty invitation to all America to come visit us in this centennial year.

* * * *

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may proceed for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Chair hears none, and the Senator may proceed for 5 minutes.

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. President, I rise today to exercise a rare privilege. I rise to speak on the occasion of the 100th birthday of the State of Nebraska. I rise to pay tribute and homage to the great men and women through

the years who have made it possible for me to be here, including those valiant men of the Senate and House of Representatives who 100 years ago gave their consent for Nebraska to become a part of these great United States.

To the citizens of Nebraska, Mr. President, I have said this is a time to pause both to reflect and to project—to look back and also to look forward.

Today I want to look briefly first at the present, and particularly at my immediate surroundings.

I see around me, Mr. President, a far different picture than the Senate of a century ago. In the first place, there is not a beard among us. Then, over to my left and down in front I see the distinguished majority leader, the Senator from Montana, the beloved Senator *Mansfield*. I cannot shy from pointing out to him the wisdom he must ascribe to the Members of the Congress 100 years ago, even though the vast majority of them were of the opposite political party from him. Had the Senate and House of that day admitted the full Territory of Nebraska, instead of an abbreviated version of it as the 37th State of the Union, there would have been no Montana.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. CURTIS. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Had that taken place, I think Nebraska might well have become the biggest State of the Union, because there seems to have been the Texas influence even in those days.

Mr. CURTIS. May I say that the course followed was a good one; otherwise we would not have had Montana.

And, knowing the infallible and indispensable nature of the Senator from Montana, Mr. President, I can only presume that the majority party today would be without a leader. I am sure the distinguished minority leader, the Senator from Illinois, can fully appreciate the heavenly bliss that would accrue to him politically under such a circumstance.

Next, I see a number of others who very well might not be here today except for the wisdom of their predecessors in this body a century ago. There is the other dis-

tinguished Senator from Montana, plus the distinguished Senators from Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota. All of those States were, Mr. President, a part of the original Nebraska Territory.

Oh, I will make one exception to the banishment of all those capable gentlemen of the Great Plains. He is the distinguished senior Senator from Wyoming [*Mr. McGee*]. Like his immediate predecessor, the late Senator Frank Barrett, he is a native Nebraskan. He migrated westward to the University of Wyoming to teach history, and his charges, perhaps in despondency over the grades he passed out banished him to Washington via the elective process. But we in Nebraska are proud of him, as we were of his forerunner, and by recent history, at least, we have come to regard his as Nebraska's third seat in the Senate.

On the front of the National Archives Building is the inscription "What is past is prologue. Study the past." The proposal to admit Nebraska 100 years ago provoked a controversy that settled for all time the course this Nation would pursue in reconstructing the Union after the Civil War.

It was not easy for Senator Benjamin F. Wade, of Ohio, chairman of the Committee on Territories, to bring the Nebraska bill before the Senate for consideration. He was rebuffed by Senators Luke Poland, of Vermont, and Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, who argued it was more important to take up a bill to establish a uniform bankruptcy system for the Nation.

The good Senator from Ohio persisted, saying:

This is a territory which has always been loyal, always patriotic, which sent into the field to fight the battles against rebellion more troops in proportion to her inhabitants than perhaps any other State or Territory in the Union.

And right prevailed, Mr. President.

When it was allowed to proceed, the debate on the bill spread to a variety of issues not altogether foreign to the issues today.

There was a question of population—apportionment, if you please. Estimates of Nebraska's population ranged all the way from 30,000 to 100,000. Objectors to the bill said it was not fair to the eastern seaboard States to admit a new State and give it two Senators and a Representative

when the population did not even justify one Representative.

The two distinguished Senators sitting here today from New Mexico would have smiled and then scoffed at the reference made to their State in that debate. It was said that the Territory of New Mexico, by the 1860 census, had more people than the Territory of Nebraska, and that, therefore, New Mexico should be admitted to statehood first. But a report from General Sherman did not promise much future for New Mexico. An excerpt as follows was read to the Senate:

The whole Territory seems a pastoral land, but not fit for cultivation. The mines undeveloped are mostly in a state of nature. We have held this Territory since 1846, 20 years, at a cost to the National Treasury of full \$100 million, and I doubt if it will ever reimburse to the country a tithe of that sum.

Obviously, General Sherman had never heard of the income tax or the cattle industry.

One of the Senators from Maryland, Reverdy Johnson, suggested no more Western States should be admitted because they were growing too rapidly to a position of power likely to prove harmful to the Atlantic States. He was rebuked by a Senator from Wisconsin, Timothy O. Howe, for attempting to inaugurate a sectional fight.

But the overriding controversy—the big issue of the debate and of the times, Mr. President—was one that grew out of the principles that were tested and the blood that was shed a few years earlier in the great Civil War. It was a cause we are still fighting to achieve today. It was the cause of equal voting rights for all citizens.

I am proud to point out, Mr. President, that Nebraska was the first State, both in its own constitution and by Federal charter, to guarantee persons of all races the right to vote and to have their votes counted. I am proud to point out that the issue was decided right here on this floor in heated debate 100 years ago on the occasion of admitting Nebraska to the Union.

And I am proud to point out that in this cause the Republican Party became firmly established as one of the two great parties of this Nation, and is itself today a firm 100 years old.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. CURTIS. I ask unanimous consent that I may proceed for 3 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered. The Senator may continue for 3 minutes.

Mr. CURTIS. The setting for the debate in the Senate in the weeks and months leading up to March 1, 1867, was a dark and dreary one with many uncertainties. The country had been torn asunder by the Civil War. Only 26 of the 36 States were represented in the Congress. The brutal death-by-assassination of a great President who had fought so valiantly to hold the Union together was still fresh in the minds of the people and the Congress. The Territory of Nebraska, by a bare majority of 100 out of 7,776 votes cast, had adopted a constitution and submitted it to the Congress for admission, and the constitution, although broad and forward-looking in all other respects, granted the right to vote in elections only to white male adults.

There were those who argued that Congress could not insert a provision in a State constitution and make it binding, and those who charged that to do so not only would do violence to the sovereignty of the States but also would discriminate against a new State compared with those already in the Union.

Senator Wade of Ohio, the Committee on Territories chairman, pleaded with the Senate not to tamper with the constitution which had been adopted by the people of Nebraska. Adversaries presented figures charging that 108 votes against the constitution had been invalidated illegally by election officials while 40 votes cast illegally in favor of the constitution by Iowa soldiers stationed at old Fort Kearny in Nebraska Territory had been counted, and they contended the document did not in fact have the blessing of even a majority of the citizens who voted.

On and on the debate raged, and gradually the sentiment began to weigh in favor of inserting an equal-rights provision by Federal requirement.

Senator Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, who initially had opposed even considering the bill, declared:

It seems as if Providence presented this occasion in order to give you an easy opportunity of asserting a principle which is of infinite value to the whole country. Only a few persons are directly

interested; but the decision of Congress now will determine a governing rule for millions.

Senator Sumner continued:

Nebraska is a loyal community, small in numbers, formed out of ourselves, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. In an evil hour it adopted a constitution which is bad in itself and worse still as an example. But neither the tie of blood nor the fellowship of party should be permitted to save it from judgment. At this moment Congress cannot afford to sanction this wrong. Congress must elevate itself if it would elevate the country. It must be itself the example of justice, if it would make justice the universal rule. It must be itself the model which it recommends to others. It must begin "reconstruction" here at home.

So, Mr. President, the Senate did. After voting three times and each time failing to approve identical or similar amendments, the Senate adopted by the narrow margin of 20 to 18 an amendment which read:

And be it further enacted, that this act shall take effect with the fundamental and perpetual condition that within said State of Nebraska there shall be no abridgement or denial of the exercise of the elective franchise or of any other right to any person by reason of race or color, excepting Indians not taxed.

The House lengthened the amendment to provide for its acceptance by a vote of the territorial legislature, so that the Constitution would not have to be submitted to a popular vote in Nebraska again, and the Senate concurred.

Mr. President, that bill passed the Senate on January 9, 1867. That was more than a month before Congress considered the 15th amendment, which provided that the right to vote could not be denied because of race or color. It is significant that it was Nebraska, on February 17, 1870, which ratified the 15th amendment, whereupon Secretary of State Fish certified that the 15th amendment was part of our constitution.

The fight still was not won. President Johnson vetoed the bill—President Andrew Johnson, that is. He contended the action of Congress was unconstitutional because it imposed "conditions which, if accepted by the legislature, may, without the consent of the people, so change the organic law as to make electors of all persons within the State, without distinction of race or color."

But Congress had made up its mind. By the lopsided vote of 31 to 9, the Senate passed the bill over the President's veto. The House also overrode the veto. Nebraska was a State.

One hundred years later, Mr. President, a stewardship report seems in order. First in importance, the territory approximately 430 miles long and 210 miles wide entrusted to us has been converted from the uninhabitable desert described by the first explorers into a highly productive agricultural region.

In an average year we have in excess of 6 million cattle, 600,000 sheep, 2,600,000 hogs, and 7 million chickens on our farms and ranches. We produce annually a crop of 2 million calves, more than 4 million pigs, $1\frac{1}{4}$ billion eggs, $1\frac{3}{4}$ billion pounds of milk, 210 million pounds of potatoes, and 900,000 tons of sugarbeets. Our farms yield in an average year upward of 275 million bushels of corn, 56 million bushels of wheat, 29 million bushels of oats, 17 million bushels of soybeans, 1,750,000 bushels of rye, 127 million bushels of grain sorghums, 2 million tons of sorghums for silage and forage, 7 million tons of hay, and 55 million pounds of popcorn. We are striving always to do our part to feed the Nation.

Our people have pioneered in soil and water conservation. We are pushing a Federal-State-local effort to eliminate pollution in our 11,000 miles of streams and 2,300 lakes and reservoirs. We have built lakes ranging in size from farm ponds to a reservoir which occupies 35,000 surface acres on the Platte River near Ogallala. We have discovered a vast underground water supply, estimated at one and a half billion acre feet, or enough to cover the entire State with 30 feet of water if it were pumped to the surface at one time.

Our people have developed gravity or ditch irrigation, for more than 750,000 acres and pump irrigation from wells tapping the vast underground water supply to bolster crops on an additional 2 million acres. Our water supply and especially our underground reserve is today such a valuable resource that some Nebraskans regard it as the fabulous "Kingdom of Quivira" which Francisco Coronado's Spanish soldiers sought but did not find when they explored the central plains in 1541. We have the largest man-made national forest, covering 30,000 acres near Halsey. We prospered from the Homestead Act, and we have established a national park at the site where Daniel Freeman claimed the very first homestead in America on 160 acres near Beatrice, Nebr.

We have built an integrated transportation system including more than 100,000 miles of highways and streets, enough to reach four times around the earth. A four-lane superhighway has replaced the Oregon and Mormon Trails which the early wagon trains traveled. We also are served by ten major railroads which come into Omaha, the fourth largest rail center in the United States, and five railroads which operate throughout the State. Five commercial air carriers operate to and in the State. We have built the world's largest livestock market at Omaha.

The Federal grant of 3,500,000 acres of school lands has been reduced to about 1,600,000 acres. However, a permanent trust fund of \$31 million has been retained from the lands that were sold. The rental income from the lands and interest from investment of the trust fund provides additional revenue for the common schools, as originally intended by Congress. The State legislature recently decided to sell the remaining lands and put all of the receipts in the permanent trust for investment at a higher return for the support of the schools.

We have built 20 universities and senior colleges for higher education. In addition, we have a growing system of junior colleges and vocational technical schools. We have the only one-house legislature in the United States, and the State capitol in which it is located is one of the architectural wonders of the world. We supplied 47,801 men for military service in World War I and 128,000 men and women in World War II. We also did our part in Korea and are doing it in Vietnam.

Moving into our second century, we still have many problems in Nebraska. We would be remiss as a State if we did not acknowledge that this Nation of which we are a part also has great problems, such as the war in Vietnam, crime in our cities, huge Federal spending and debt, economic strife among certain segments of our population and in certain sections of the country, Federal interference in the affairs of the States, the need for improving our sprawling transportation system and the never-ending challenge to provide better education and better health for our citizens.

To the Senate and the Nation today I want to say that our sentiments in Nebraska are the same as those voiced by Senator William Sprague, of Rhode Island, 100 years

ago during the great debate on the admission of Nebraska. Senator Sprague told his colleagues in this Chamber:

I have no fear for the future, because that future has for its leading object the virtue, the independence, and the progress of the mass of the people. A branch of the government that holds on to that which is gained for these objects, and does not lose hold of them in a too eager reach after greater progress before the people are educated to enjoy it, will not be inconsiderately treated in the future.

As I told the people of Nebraska in an open letter published recently:

We have great problems facing us, but they are no greater than the trials and tribulations that our forefathers faced in battling their way westward—in fending off unfriendly tribes of Indians, in cultivating virgin soil, in battling wind, hail, drouth and snow to carve a livelihood out of the new-found soil.

The promises of the future are unlimited, but not without the drive and the zeal on the part of all of us to achieve new heights. We must cultivate and display the same drive, the same zeal that the pioneers demonstrated paving the way for us if we are to do for tomorrow what we owe our children and their children in building a better Nebraska (and, I would add, a better nation).

I am sure that all of us are equal to the task.

With God's help, and it is my prayer that we shall always seek it, I am certain we shall succeed.

Mr. President, on my right is a flag of the United States with 37 stars—the number of States in the Union on Nebraska's admission. It was crocheted by a disabled veteran of North Platte, Nebr., Mr. Howard Saunders and presented to me. I prize it most highly.

NEBRASKA CELEBRATES ITS 100TH BIRTHDAY

1867 — 1967

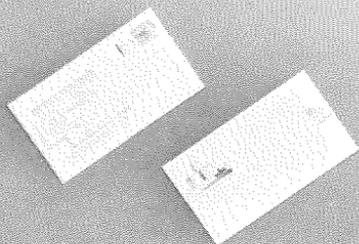


NEBRASKA STATEHOOD CENTENNIAL

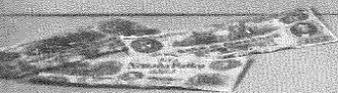
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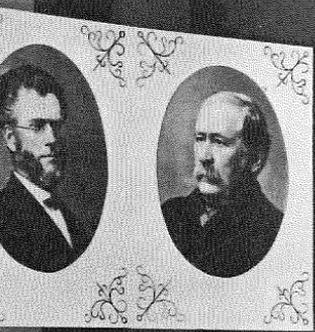
DECEMBER 31



1967



Special Nebraska Centennial issues.
Nebraska State Historical Society Museum display.



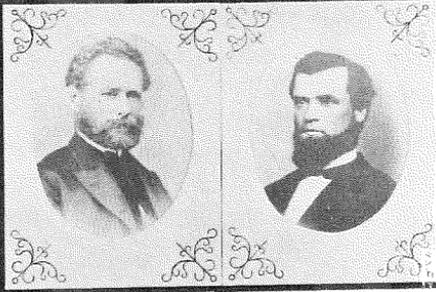
JOHN M. HAYES 1822-1900
 Hayes was well known as the legislator and commander of the First Nebraska Regiment during the Civil War. He was also one of the two first United States Senators from Nebraska. He later served as Governor of the Wyoming Territory.



DAVID BUTLER 1829-1901
 The first state Governor, Butler was also one of the three Capital Commissioners who chose Lincoln as the site of the state capital.



ANDREW JOHNSON 1808-1875
 President of the United States, Andrew Johnson was born in a cabin in the mountains of Tennessee. He was the only President to be impeached, but he was later acquitted.



THOMAS P. FURNARD 1827-1900
 The first Nebraska Secretary of State and one of the Capital Commissioners, Furnard became an important figure in Lincoln business.

JOHN CLEGG 1825-1895
 Clegg was elected the state Auditor in 1868. He was the third member of the Capital Commission, with Butler and Raymond. He did much to do with the early development of Lincoln.



OLIVER INGALLS 1822-1881
 As the President of the Territorial Council, the upper legislative house, he was selected to be the member of the state the Governor. He was later an American Civil War Soldier.



ALVIN SAUNDERS 1817-1896
 The second Governor from 1861 to 1867, he was elected on important men in Nebraska's early years. He was a United States Senator from 1867 to 1880.



Statehood
 Album

Statesmen prominent in Nebraska Statehood. Nebraska State Historical Society Museum display.