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Article Summary: This summary of the Society's 1963-1973 activities stresses membership growth, publications, gains in budget and staffing, and the need for additional space.

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Photographs / Images: Society President James A Rawley and Foundation President Maurice S Hevelone looking at the Sellers Award plaque; Society Treasurer Arthur Carmody making his annual report; Orville H Zabel addressing the spring meeting; Neligh Mills (2 views); Curator of Education Mrs Ralph G Brooks explaining an exhibit; Museum Registrar Gail DeBuse cataloging an art glass collection; displays at the Kennard Home and at the Museum; 1887 Adobe Officers' Duplex at Fort Robinson before and after restoration; 1884 Wheelwright Shop at Fort Robinson before and after restoration; archeologists salvaging artifacts from an Omaha Indian village; excavation at the Fontanelle Trading Post (3 views); Archivists James E Potter and David J Johnson examining old volumes in the collection; Manuscripts Curator Donald Snoddy checking old correspondence; Sellers Award plaque presented to Robert A Trennert, Jr; Award of Merit granted to William E Lass for his book on freighting published by the Society; retirement reception for Mrs Laretta Griffin, Society receptionist; Bess Streeter Aldrich at ceremonies celebrating her membership in the Nebraska Hall of Fame; street in front of Society Headquarters; Poet Laureate of Nebraska John G Neihardt; NSHS certificate of accreditation from the American Association of Museums



*Society President James A. Rawley, Lincoln (left) and Foundation President Maurice S. Hevelone, Beatrice, admire the Sellers Award Plaque, which was granted to Robert A. Trennert, Jr., for excellence in historical writing.*

## THE NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN 1973

By MARVIN F. KIVETT, *Director*

Presented at the Annual Meeting in Lincoln, September 15, 1973.

Twenty years ago in 1953 Society Director James C. Olson and ten years ago in 1963 Director William D. Aeschbacher each summarized as a portion of their annual report the preceding decade of Society activity. Dr. Olson left the Society in 1956 and Dr. Aeschbacher in 1963. September 1 of this year marked my tenth year in the position as Director of the Society, and I found myself noting that in the history of the Society only one man, Addison E. Sheldon, has served in that position for more than ten years. Dr. Sheldon served for some twenty-six years, from 1917 until his death in 1943. His predecessor, Clarence S. Paine, provided outstanding service from 1907 until his death in 1917.

Twenty years ago on September, 1953, the Society dedicated its first building designed for its specific functions and use. In 1953 it was barely adequate to house the Society and its collections. In 1963 former director William D. Aeschbacher looked to the future and cited certain goals to be achieved in the next ten years. Among the first needs listed was that of additional space to provide adequate housing for the Society. This continues to be one of our primary goals.

Some progress has been made in various areas during the past ten years. Our membership stood at 2,148 in 1953, 2,960 on June 30, 1963, as compared to 5,000 on June 30, 1973. This increase of approximately 69% compares with an increase of 38% for the preceding decade.

In 1963 the need was expressed for a resumption of our *Publications* series started in 1885. A way has now been found

to resume this series. Volume XXV, "The Great Platte River Road" by Merrill J. Mattes was published in 1969 and volume XXVI, "From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake" by Dr. William E. Lass appeared in 1972. In 1972 the Society also reprinted the definitive study of J. Sterling Morton by Dr. James C. Olson which was first published in 1942. As a result of the success of these publications, it can be expected that other detailed studies will continue to be published in this series.

In 1963 the need was also expressed to expand the *Publications In Anthropology* series. There have been three additions to this series since that time, with two representing Ph.D. dissertations based largely on the archeological program of the Society. The most recent, No. 5 in the series, was written by staff members Gayle Carlson and Richard Jensen.

Some highlights of the annual reports for the past decade may be reviewed. The year 1963 was the real start of our Historic Building Survey, which was to have added significance with the passage of the federal Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

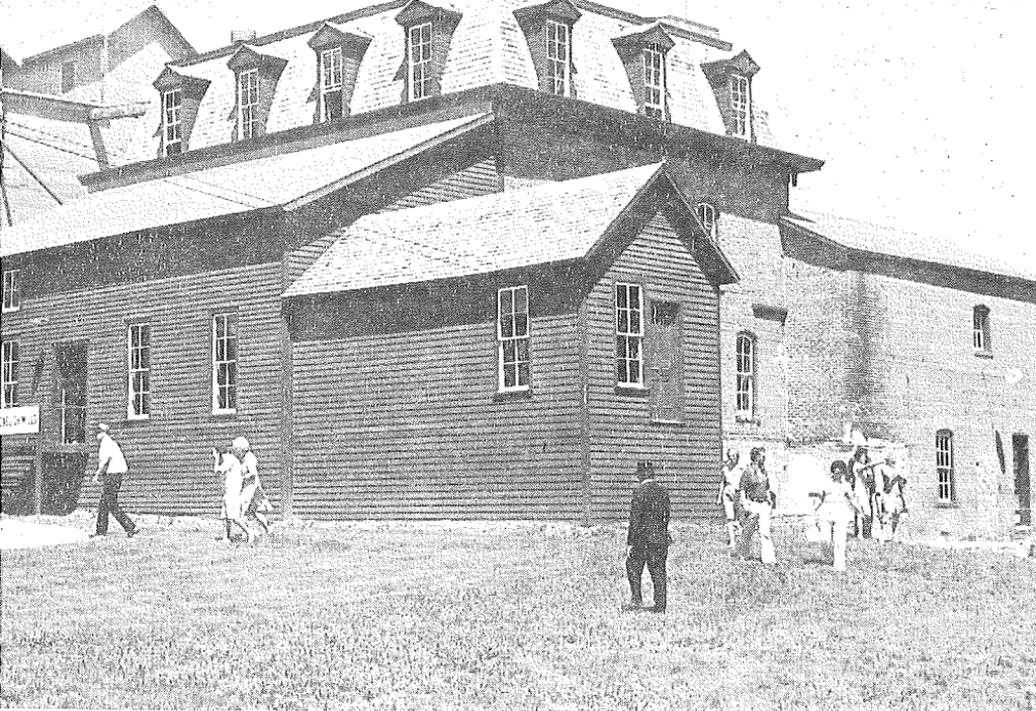
We have made some gains in staffing and budget during this ten-year period. In 1963 our staff numbered seventeen full-time employees as compared with fifty full-time employees in 1973. This major increase, of course, has resulted largely from increased responsibilities. In 1963 our only operation outside the headquarters building was at Fort Robinson. Since that time the Society has been assigned responsibility for the restoration and operation of the Thomas P. Kennard Home in Lincoln, the George W. Norris Home at McCook, the Neligh Mills, and the operation of three seasonal mobile museums. The passage of various laws to officially define the State Archives as a program of the Society and to outline its responsibilities has also resulted in an increased work load. The passage of L.B. 719 in 1967 designated the Society as the agency to act on behalf of the state in terms of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Since that time an inventory of sites and buildings throughout the state has resulted in the approval of eighty-nine nominations for entry on the National Register of Historic Places. Four full-time employees devote their effort to this program.

The 1964 report reflected the considerable loss of Society staff that had occurred in 1963 and our efforts to retain and replace a trained staff. The year 1965 was a busy year with the Legislature. Legislation was passed with an appropriation of



*Society Treasurer Arthur Carmody, Trenton, makes his annual report at the 1973 fall meeting in Lincoln. At left are President James A. Rawley (partially obscured) and Board Member Charles C. Osborne, Hastings. At right is Marvin F. Kivett, Director of the Society. . . . (Below) Orville H. Zabel, Creighton University professor, Omaha, addresses the spring meeting at Neligh. At right are Society Vice President Nellie Snyder Yost, North Platte, and Neligh Mayor John E. Glandt.*





*The Neligh Mills (active between 1874-1956) is now administered by this Society as a result of an act of the Nebraska Legislature. After restoration it was opened to the public on a summer-fall schedule. Dedicatory ceremonies (above and below) were held at the Society's Spring Meeting in Neligh.*



NEBRASKA  
 ANTIQUARIAN MARKER

**THE NELIGH MILLS**

The Neligh Mills, built from locally Gred timber by John W. Neligh, was the first grange and industry in the area, started in 1874. The design and operation of the mill included William C. Brown, Stephen C. Dinger and J. W. Spink. Milling operations began in 1874 with the use of a horse-powered mill. In 1876, and all the way until the mill closed in 1956, Elmer Brown, Nelson Brown, and others, who were here to operate the mill, were the first to produce here historic quality flour, 50 LBS. Bran and Clear Brand flour. The flour was sold in the area in the vicinity of Neligh, and was used for making bread and other flour products. The mill was a symbol of the early days of agriculture in Nebraska, and sometimes received special government contracts with the Army and Indian Affairs for emergency supplies.

In 1969 the Legislature authorized the Nebraska State Historical Society to acquire and restore the mill as a symbol of our agricultural history. The property was purchased in 1969 by the Society and the National Historic Place.

\$58,950 for the preservation and restoration of the Thomas P. Kennard home in Lincoln to be designated as the Statehood Memorial. Major gains were also made in our overall operation budget which increased 25%. On June 30 of that year, Mrs. Gary Shepherd of Pierce City, Missouri, became our one-millionth visitor in the building. We received a National Science grant totaling \$17,500 for archeological research at the Logan Creek Site in Burt County. We also received our first grant in the amount of \$6,800 from the National Historical Publications Commission to microfilm significant archival collections. This was followed in 1966 by an additional grant of \$15,785 to complete the project and publish guides to the microfilm. During that year the first guide to the Archives collection was published.

In 1966 much effort was devoted to preparations for the State Centennial in 1967. Board members M. S. Hevelone, Frank Latenser, and the Society Director were members of the Commission to develop plans for the Centennial. Archeological work started at Fort Robinson as the first step in the reconstruction of the 1874 Guard House. Restoration work started at the Kennard House, and the first mobile museum trailer was placed at Chimney Rock in cooperation with the city of Bayard. The Library acquired some 1,000 geneological publications from the State Law Library. The Archives gained an Assistant Archivist. The program started of securing one positive print for all current microfilm negatives. The second volume of guide to the archives was published.

The year 1967 was full of centennial activities. The National Pony Express Association reported the placement of twenty-seven plaques at fourteen locations from Scotts Bluff to Jefferson County. The Society and Joslyn Art Museum prepared exhibits for three mobile museum trailers which toured the state, stopping at 104 locations with 102,977 visitors. Brewster, population 44, had a visitation of 492. There was heavy use of the Library and Archives for research material in connection with the Centennial.

In 1968, twenty new historical organizations were formed, bringing the total to one hundred. A special issue of *Nebraska History* was published in observance of the fiftieth year. The restored Kennard House was dedicated at the annual meeting in a rainstorm. Three mobile museum trailers were placed at various locations in the western half of Nebraska. A cooperative

project with the State Educational Department provided for the printing and distribution of educational materials prepared by the Society. The 1884 Wheelwright's Shop at Fort Robinson was furnished and opened. The reconstructed 1874 Guardhouse at Fort Robinson was dedicated. Major archeological excavations were carried out in Deuel and Butler Counties by the Highway Salvage Archeologist.

In 1969 the Legislature provided \$35,288 for the purchase and start of restoration work at the Neligh Mills. A Curator of Manuscripts position was added to the Archives program. The Legislature resolved to study the present and future building needs of the Society. Volume XXV, "The Great Platte River Road," was published by the Society. The George W. Norris House was dedicated at the Spring Meeting in McCook on April 26, 1969. The Society staff completed displays for the Union Pacific Golden Spike Exposition Train Car Museum which toured from Nebraska to California. The reconstruction of the 1874 Adjutant's Office was completed at Fort Robinson. A grant from the State Department of Economic Development provided for a detailed historic survey of Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee, and Richardson counties. Archeological excavations started at the Nehawka Flint Quarries in Cass County. L.B.512 was passed to revise the 1965 Records Management Act and more fully define the role of the State Archives as a program of the Society. L.B. 1148 repealed the twenty-year limitation before Society could acquire public records. The first guide to the Society Newspaper Collection was published. Researchers in Library geneological collections increased 100%.

You are all more familiar with our recent activities. By 1970 there were 40 buildings and sites on the National Register of Historic Places. Number 4 of our *Publications in Anthropology* was issued. The Society publication "The Great Platte River Road" was voted the best non-fiction western publication by the National Cowboy Hall of Fame. The Nebraska Arts Council presented an award to the Society and to Arthur Duerschner, architect, for professional dedication to the restoration of the Kennard House. The Society Foundation acquired the John A. Anderson photographic collection and eight paintings by the Nebraska artist Terence Duren. The Society Foundation started restoration work on the Lewis-Syford house in Lincoln. Restoration work started on the Neligh Mills.

In 1971 the National Park Service approved the first edition

of the Nebraska historic preservation plan as prepared by the Society. The Spring Meeting was held at Red Cloud. The Lincoln Garden Club landscaped the grounds of the Kennard House with appropriate plantings of the 1870-1890 period. The American Association for State and Local History presented an Award of Merit to the publisher and author of "The Great Platte River Road." The Foundation received the Emil Kopac Memorial Library of some 23,000 volumes as a gift from his brother Ed Kopac. The Archives began a program of providing a "security collection" of microfilm for governmental agencies. A major accession in the Archives was the gubernatorial papers of Norbert T. Tiemann, 1967-1971.

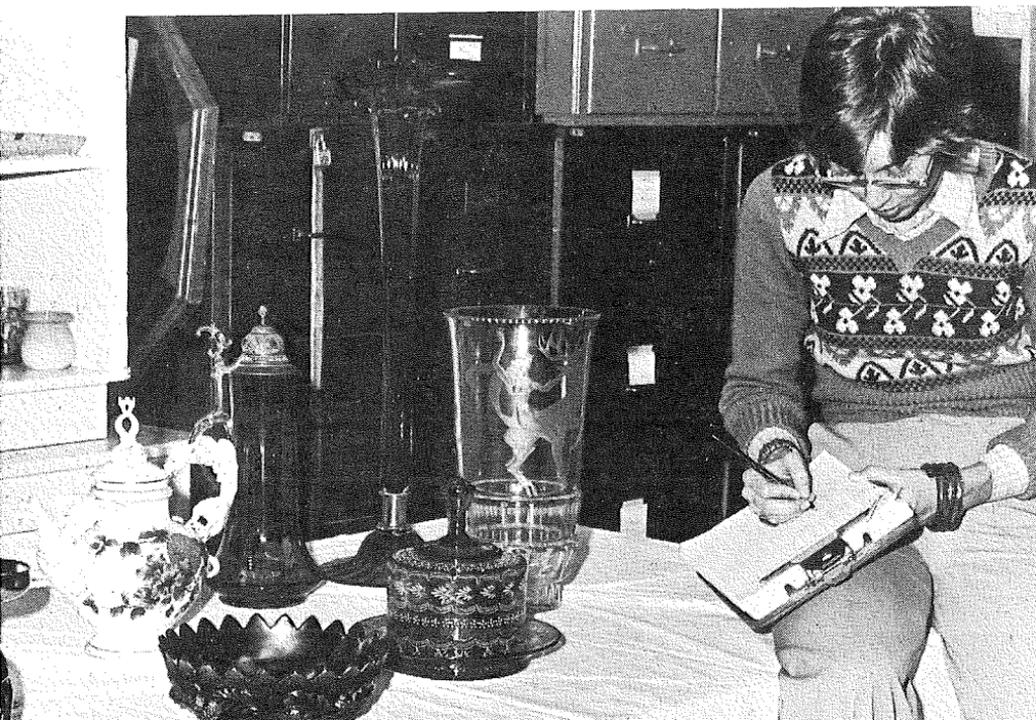
In 1972 we reported sixty-three Nebraska sites or structures on the National Register. We reported 130 non-profit historical organizations. We held the 3rd Annual Workshop for historical organizations. The Society reprinted the publication *J. Sterling Morton* by Dr. James C. Olson in the Centennial Year of Arbor Day. A total of 140 historical markers in the new style had been erected since 1961. The June 10 Spring Meeting was held at Sidney with a tour of historic sites. A division of Branch Museums was approved by the Board. Archeological investigations started at the site of a fur trading post in Fontenelle Forest. The Archives inventoried public records of 18 departments and county courthouses. A new microfilm camera replaced the original one purchased in 1952. The Legislature appropriated \$20,000 for preliminary planning for additional building space.

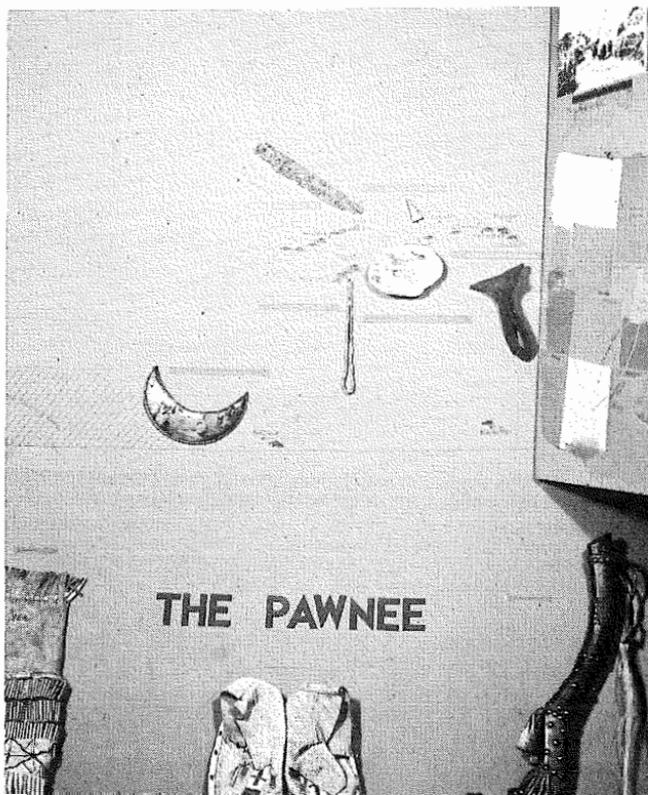
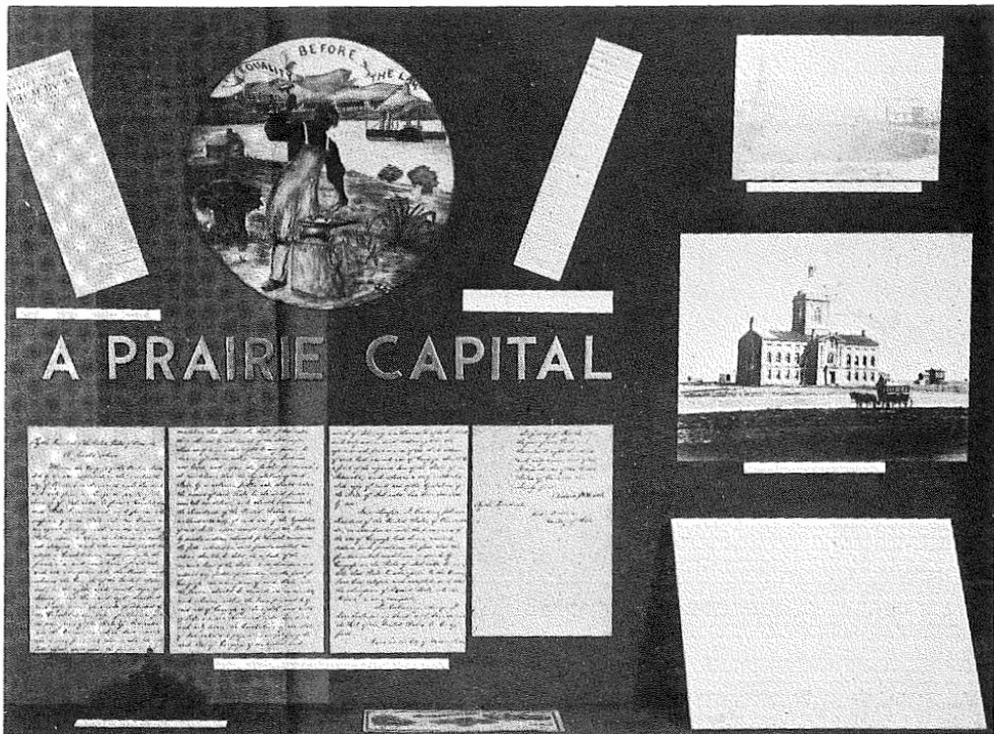
And now for 1973: We have passed a milestone in membership. As of June 30 of this year our membership stood at 5,000, a total increase of 253 for the year. Our Contributing members now stand at 605, an increase of 91 for the year. Supporting memberships now stand at 23, an increase of 4. We gained 9 Life Members for a total of 299.

We have continued to work with many local historical organizations. One of the most encouraging aspects of our work is the progress made by these organizations. In a sense they have reached a new plateau. An increasing number are receiving supporting funds from a mill levy, revenue sharing, or other public appropriations. This in turn encourages the donation of private funds for specific projects. An important result has been the construction of functional buildings designed for museum



*Mrs. Ralph G. Brooks, Curator of Education (above), explains an exhibit to grade school pupils. Educational tours are a service of the Society Museum. A 70-piece art-glass collection (below), recently acquired from the Through The Years Museum Foundation, is being catalogued by Museum Registrar Gail De Buse.*





Society Museum personnel maintain ever-changing displays at two Lincoln locations: "Prairie Capital" (top) is at the Kennard Home, "The Pawnee" at the main museum.

## THE PAWNEE

purposes. For the most part old houses do not make good museums. They can have an important role as restored structures with furnishings representing a particular period of time. Certain of the local historical organizations have reached the level of having at least one full-time individual responsible for the operation. Museums are in a sense comparable to a library as educational resources. To meet their responsibilities they must have adequate housing and staff. This has been recognized on the national level, where there are a number of legislative proposals now pending which if enacted would provide funds for construction as well as operation.

The importance of preserving certain of our most significant sites and structures has been recognized by the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. This act provides for nominations of selected sites and structures to the National Register of Historic Places. During the past year thirty-seven nominations were submitted with twenty-eight approved and nine not yet acted upon. A total of eighty-nine nominations have now been approved for Nebraska.

The Historical Markers program has continued to be an effective method of presenting a segment of our history to the traveling public. Sixteen markers were erected with twelve being sponsored in part or totally by local historical or service organizations. The present emphasis is to provide markers for the I-80 rest areas.

The weekly "Out of Old Nebraska" columns, now in their 27th year, continue to be widely used by the weekly press. *Nebraska History*, now in its 53rd year has continued to attract many contributors from throughout the nation. Last year we noted the expansion to 492 pages for Volume 52. Volume 53 for 1972 numbered 580 pages. The James L. Sellers Memorial Award committee consisting of Kearney State College professors Philip S. Holmgren, Ernest Grundy, and Gene E. Hamaker, selected the article "The Mormons and the Office of Indian Affairs" by Robert A. Trennert of Temple University, Philadelphia, as the outstanding *Nebraska History* article published in 1972.

Volume XXVI of the *Publication* series titled "From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake, An Account of Overland Freighting," was published during the year. The author, Professor William E. Lass of Mankato State College, Minnesota, carried out the study under a Woods Charitable Fund grant

administered by the Society. We are pleased by the favorable reviews received to date.

By action of your Executive Board, the Addison E. Sheldon Memorial Award in memory of Society Secretary Addison E. Sheldon has been established. Dr. Sheldon provided distinguished service from 1917 to 1943 and laid the foundation for much of the progress of the Society since that time. The award may be presented each year to an individual or organization who has made outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Nebraska history. The first recipient this year is the Brownville Historical Society.

The annual Spring Meeting held on June 10 at Neligh and sponsored by the Antelope County Historical Society was most successful largely due to the outstanding organizational work by the local society and city of Neligh. A highlight was the dedication of the Neligh Mills. Some restoration work continues, but the mill with interpretative exhibits is available to the visitor.

Staff members attended a total of 321 meetings largely in the state. It might interest you to know that we processed 14,133 pieces of mail providing information or requesting information. We also received a total of 5,670 telephone calls. The Director continued to serve on a number of commissions and advisory boards ranging from the Hall of Fame to the Fort Robinson Centennial Commission.

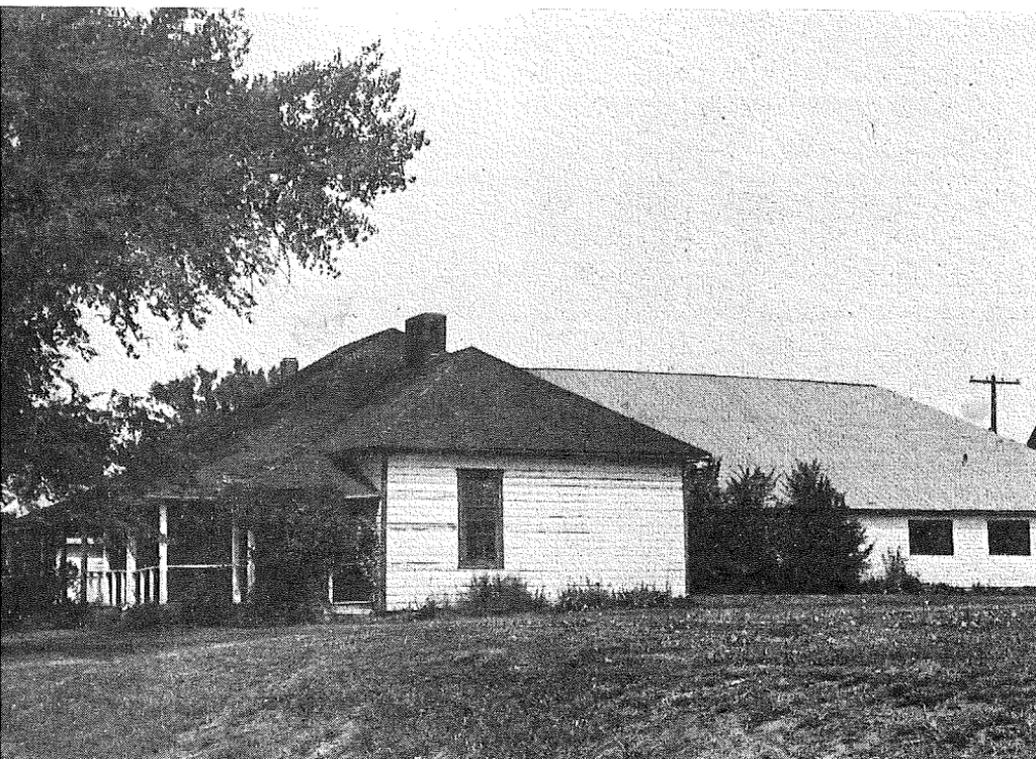
Your Society operates with four major programs including Administration, State Archives, Library, and Museum. The museum is further divided with separate administrative heads for the Lincoln operation, Branch Museums, and Anthropology. A few highlights from these operations will be presented.

### LINCOLN MUSEUM

The headquarters museum is under the immediate supervision of Curator Wendell Frantz, who reports 64,818 visitors during the year. This is a drop in visitation of more than 7,000 persons from last year. We believe this decrease is largely due to the lack of available parking in the vicinity of the building. A total of 8,284 visitors were recorded at the restored Thomas P. Kennard House. An important recognition during the year was the accreditation of the Lincoln Museum by the American Association of Museums.



*An 1887 Adobe Officers' Duplex has been restored by the Society at Fort Robinson. The view below is of the building as it appeared in 1967 before restoration work was carried out.*





*Restoration work at the Fort Robinson Branch Museum has continued on the 1884 Wheelwright Shop, oldest wooden building at the post. Curator Vance Nelson (above, in doorway) greets visitors. The view below is of the building in 1955.*



All display work for both Lincoln and branch operations is carried out by the Lincoln staff. As a result of a threat to the security of the collections at Fort Robinson, major display changes were made. Specimen display was also reevaluated in all areas with a total of 102 separate display units being constructed.

We have continued to be selective in the acquisition of specimens. A total, however, of 1,783 separate items were received from 126 donors. A major collection not yet fully accessioned came from a donation in memory of the late George Mechling of Lincoln, who incorporated the "Through the Years Museum Foundation." Through the interest of Mrs. Mechling and other incorporators, the assets of the Foundation have been transferred to the Society Foundation. Specimens range from rare china and glassware to a 1927 Packard sedan.

### BRANCH MUSEUMS

At the end of its second year, the division of Branch Museums has added one new museum to its operations with the opening of Mud Springs museum on June 22, 1973. It is located in the old stone schoolhouse near this important Pony Express, Telegraph, and Stage Station. On June 10, 1973, the Historical Marker and Mill were dedicated at Neligh, putting that museum into full operation. The division now has three branch museums, three trailer museums, and a leased schoolhouse at Mud Springs, which is operated on the same basis as the trailer museums. Development planning and work has continued at Fort Robinson, which will be celebrating its centennial year in 1974, and work planning was also continued for Chimney Rock, Mud Springs, and Neligh Mills. The Curator of Branch Museums, Carl Hugh Jones, reports that he has traveled some 18,000 miles to conduct society business at the branch museums.

Fort Robinson continues to be our largest branch museum operation with seven buildings open to the public. This year, the restoration of the 1887 Adobe Officer's Quarters has reached a stage in its completion where almost all of the furnishings have been installed and tours conducted through it on a regular basis. Finishing touches are still being completed on the exterior of the building and to its furnishings. During May and June 1, 384 people toured this restoration. According to

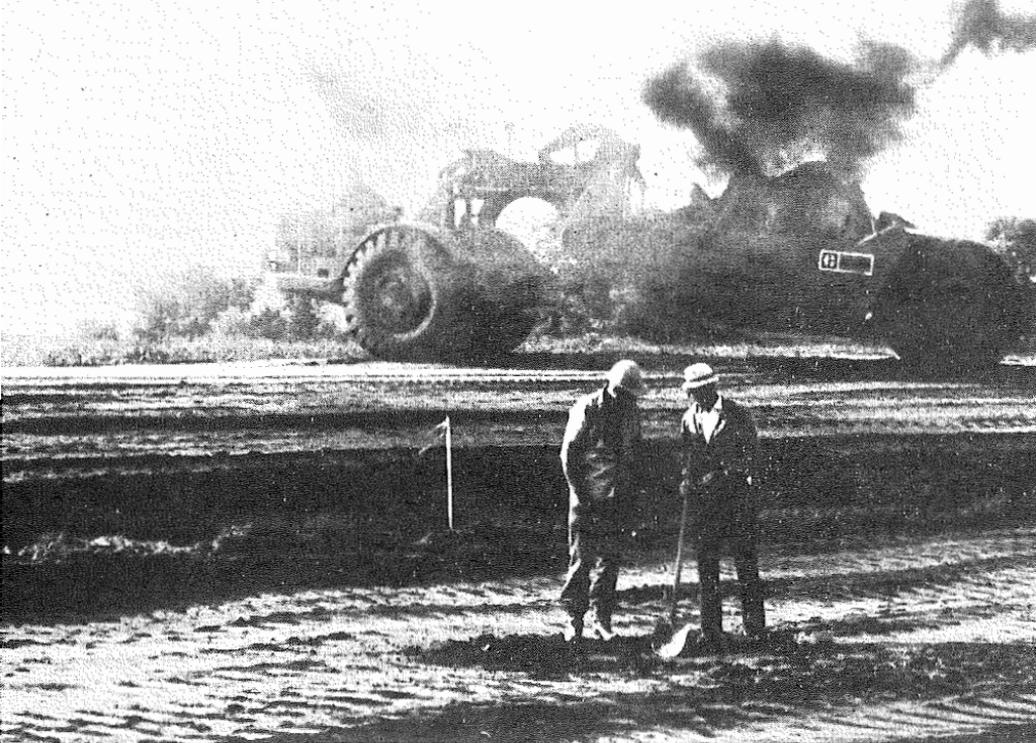
Vance Nelson, Curator of Fort Robinson Museum, the evening film program has continued to be popular with the visitors and about 1,500 people have attended 28 programs. The attendance at the museum in the former Post Headquarters building was 29,357, and some 8,453 visitors were touring the other six structures owned and operated by the State Historical Society.

Two mobile museums were again placed on the Interstate: One is at the Grand Island west-bound rest area and the second at the Maxwell-Brady east-bound rest area. The Chimney Rock trailer continues to be a popular place for travelers. It offers exhibits about Chimney Rock, the early pioneers who passed this way, and the history of the region. It is located in a small roadside park owned and maintained by the city of Bayard. There was a 2% visitor increase at this trailer this year for a total of 13,930 visitors.

The Norris House in McCook has operated this year under the able direction of curator, Daryl Bonow. He has gone to great lengths to inform the clubs and schools in the area about this very fine historic home. During the year 2,615 visitors toured the home and saw the small museum in the basement and Senator Norris' car in the garage.

Neligh Mills received the finishing touches to the mill office and also the wooden exterior of the mill itself. During this period of time, the various floors and machines in the mill have been cleaned and opened to the public. By June the visitors were able to visit all floors of the mill and to enjoy the interpretive exhibits. One series of exhibits is located in the 1886 west addition, where the history of the mill and the art of milling is represented. The second exhibit area is in the east addition, or the old 1915 powerhouse, and tells of milling in Nebraska and the related growing of wheat. Although the mill was open on a limited basis during most of the year, some 1,752 people found their way to the mill.

This spring the Historical Society entered into an agreement with the Mud Springs Women's Club for the use of their schoolhouse at Mud Springs. We received excellent cooperation from the Highway Department who provided directional signing on the state highways. It is anticipated that attendance at the site will increase as knowledge of its existence, its exhibits, and historical significance increases.



*Society Archeologists (above) work with construction crews at Homer in salvaging historically important artifacts from an Omaha Indian Village. Below archeology workers begin the excavation of a building foundation at the Fontenelle Trading Post (1823-1840's).*





*During the summer of 1973 Society Archeologists continued excavation of the Fontenelle Trading Post. A limestone chimney is identified in the above view. Below, a limestone fireplace is being uncovered. The post is located north of Bellevue.*



## ARCHEOLOGY

During June and July of 1973 the anthropology section under the immediate supervision of Richard E. Jensen, Curator of Anthropology, continued the archeological excavations started last summer in Fontenelle Forest.

Two major excavation areas were examined. In one the limestone foundation of a structure 83 feet in length and 21 feet wide was uncovered. Approximately 30 feet from the south end of the building was the remains of a massive fireplace and chimney of limestone. Between the fireplace and the south wall was a small basement or cellar that measured 7 feet square and 4 feet deep. The large quantity of refuse in this feature indicates that it has been later used as a trash dump. The artifacts recovered from the southern one-third of the structure suggest its use as a part of a dwelling while the northern portion was almost devoid of artifacts except for nails which were probably used in the construction of the building. This northern area may have been used as a storeroom.

The second major excavation area exposed the remains of a blacksmith shop about 30 feet square. Artifacts included blacksmithing tools, and large quantities of scrap iron and cinders. On the floor of the shop was a lens of iron scale, which results from hammering red hot iron on the anvil.

A number of smaller excavation areas were dug. These were necessary to determine the extent of the occupied area and to locate additional buildings. A total of five structures have been located. These buildings are situated around three sides of open court about 100 feet on a side. The open end faces the Missouri River.

This site was purported to have been the location of a Missouri Fur Company trading post established in 1823. A year later it was purchased by a small company headed by Lucien Fontenelle, a prominent leader in the fur trading business. About 1831 the post was sold to the U.S. government and served, until its abandonment about 10 years later, as the Indian Agency for the Upper Missouri under Major John Dougherty. Among the many travelers who stopped at the post were Prince Maximilian and his artist Karl Bodmer in 1833. Bodmer's painting of the post is now part of the Northern Natural Gas Company collection housed at Joslyn Art Museum.

The evidence obtained through archeological investigation

and research into historic records strongly suggests that the archeological site and Fontenelle's post are one and the same. In addition to providing the probable authorship of the site, this research has produced a much-needed body of data in a relatively unknown period of Nebraska history.

A cooperation program between the Society and the Department of Roads provides for one full-time archeologist, Gayle Carlson. During the 1973 Highway Salvage archeological field season, most of the time was spent, as usual, on the surveying of proposed highway projects throughout the state, prior to the beginning of construction. Surveys were conducted in 33 counties on 56 road projects. During the course of these investigations 8 new archeological sites were recorded and 10 previously known sites were visited and examined.

During late June and the first part of July several days were spent in the vicinity of Homer conducting salvage work at the historic Omaha village site of Tonwantoga (25DK5) visited by Lewis and Clark in 1804. Widening and resurfacing of U.S. Highway 77 from Winnebago to just north of Homer made this work necessary. Six storage pits were located and excavated during the grading operations that were being carried out at that time. Occasional small areas of burned earth and ashes, apparently the remains of outdoor hearths, were also observed within the right of way. Materials recovered during the work at the site consist of trade artifacts of iron, brass, and glass, catlinite pipes, worked and unworked animal bone, unworked shell, and charred beans.

On July 1, Terry L. Steinacher became the new Highway Salvage Archeologist, replacing Gayle F. Carlson, who is now a Curator of Historic Sites.

### STATE OF NEBRASKA ARCHIVES

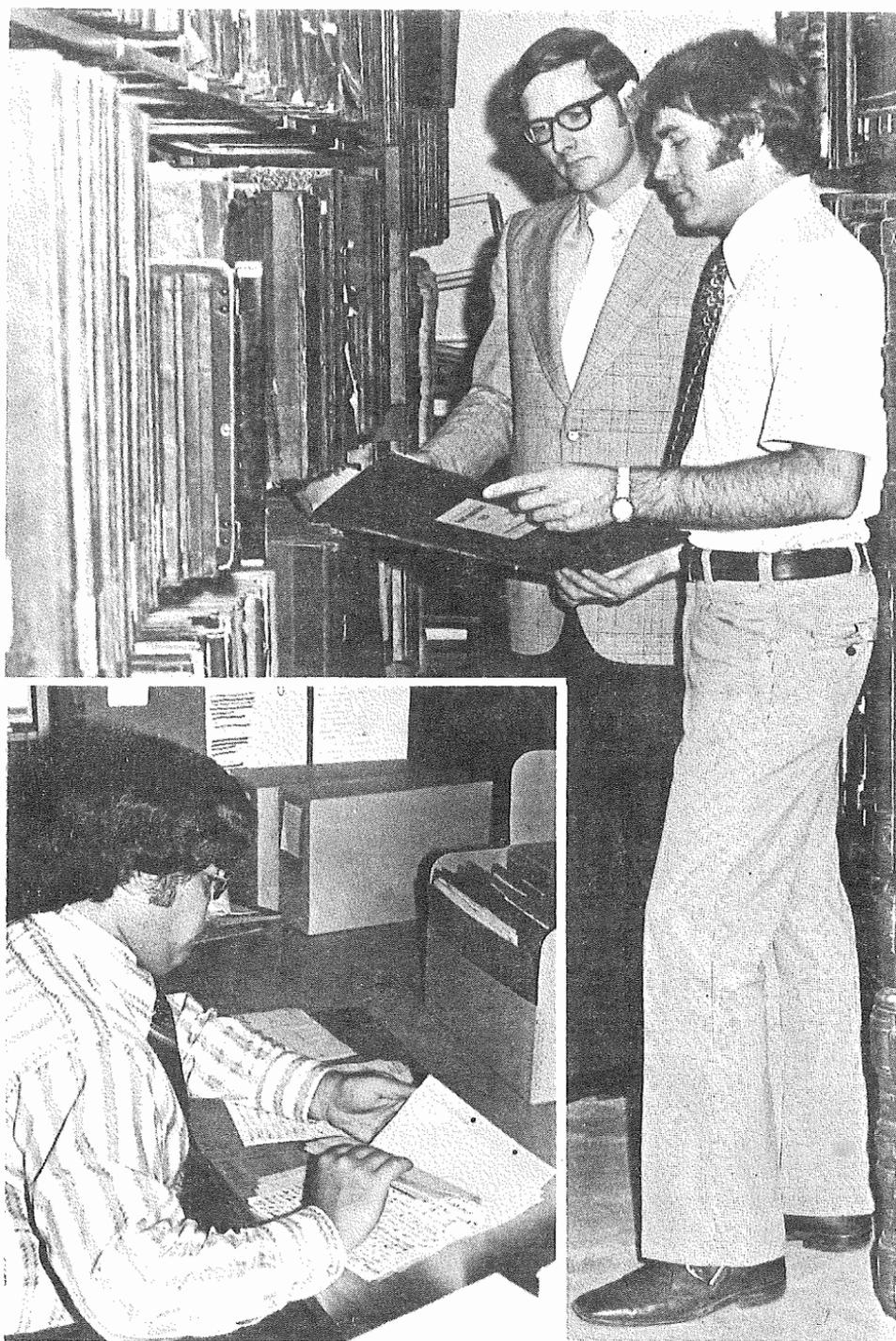
Public service has highlighted the activities of the State Archives under the able direction of James Potter, State Archivist, during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1973. Professional scholars, local historians, genealogists, and the general public have made use of the public records, manuscript collections, and newspapers on microfilm. Some 70 individuals conducted major research projects within the Archives while the staff responded to hundreds of additional mail and telephone inquiries which required us to consult primary material.

Manuscript Curator Donald Snoddy has continued his efforts to acquire significant collections of manuscript material reflecting many aspects of Nebraska History. The past year the Manuscript Division has accessioned scrapbooks and speeches of Congressman A. L. Miller, 1945-1960; papers of long-time editor and historian Horace M. Davis, 1890-1966; records of the William H. Ferguson family, 1890-1929, relating to their interests in the grain industry and the Beatrice Creamery Company; and additional Burlington Railroad files of the late Val Kuska. Sources for Nebraska literary history were enhanced by such acquisitions as scrapbooks relating to the career of Willa Cather, and professional and political organizations continue to provide important documentation such as the records of the Democratic Party State Committee, 1970-1971, and files of a former president of the Nebraska Medical Association, 1967-1969. Several manuscript collections were placed on microfilm including letters of outlaw Doc Middleton, 1872-1873; diaries of Cheyenne County pioneer A. B. Persinger, 1872-1882; and journals (1857-1902) of L. W. Gilchrist of Wahoo, who traveled extensively throughout the West in the 1850's and 1860's.

Among the manuscript collections receiving serious study were the Roy Towl papers in planning for the Omaha Riverfront Development project; various land-company records for an article on the economic effects of railroad development on the plains; the Bryan, Morton, and William V. Allen papers for data on the Treaty of Paris debates, 1898-1900; the Cather, Pound, and Gere Collections for a Ph.D. dissertation in American literature; the Farmers' Alliance papers for a study of Populism; and numerous overland trail diaries in an examination of the pre-1850 medical conditions of emigrant travel in the West. Several seminar papers and general research projects were carried on, using primary sources from the Manuscript Division.

The Division has continued to emphasize the importance of privately created documentary sources to the history of Nebraska. We have encouraged local historical organizations to cooperate whenever possible in our search to discover and preserve manuscript materials. The comprehensive guide to the Manuscript Division, long in the preparatory stages, is now at the printers and should prove of great benefit to individuals and institutions interested in these resources.

Preservation of public records, by law a responsibility of the



*State Archivist James E. Potter and Assistant Archivist David J. Johnson (above) examine old volumes in the collections of the State Historical Society. Manuscripts Curator Donald Snoddy (inset) checks old correspondence.*

JAMES L.  
SELLERS  
MEMORIAL  
AWARD



Presented To  
ROBERT A. TRENNERT, JR.

1973

For An Outstanding Original Contribution  
Published In "Nebraska History" Quarterly

*Mervin E. Kuehl*  
Foundation Secretary

*William K. Aldinger*  
Foundation President

# Award OF MERIT

to WILLIAM E. LASS

for

WRITING FROM THE MISSOURI TO THE GREAT SALT LAKE:  
AN ACCOUNT OF OVERLAND FREIGHTING, AN IMPORTANT  
CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN WEST.



Presented by

The American Association for State and Local History

*Laura S. Tucker*  
President

*William K. Aldinger*  
Chairman, Committee on Awards

SEPTEMBER 18, 1973  
Date

Robert A. Trennert, Jr., Temple University professor, won the 1972 Sellers Award (plaque, above) for the best article in Nebraska History magazine. William E. Lass, Mankato State College, was granted an Award of Merit (below) for his book on freighting which was published by this Society.

State Archives, has continued to be a major function. State Archivist James E. Potter and Assistant State Archivist David Johnson have personally consulted with more than twenty-five county, city, and state officials during the year and records have been accessioned into the Archives from twenty agencies. In addition, fifteen counties have deposited security microfilm for preservation within the Archives, bringing the total to 3,427 reels.

Among the major bodies of public records received were the Nebraska-Wyoming Water litigation case files, 1920-1960, from the attorney general; military records of Nebraska dating from the Civil War period, from the adjutant general; engineers' diaries of Nebraska highway projects, 1911-1951, from the Department of Roads; tax lists from Webster, Colfax, and Richardson counties; and civil court dockets from several counties across the state. The Archives has now begun a systematic program of microfilming county board proceedings and county election records, since these files are among the most important historical documents created in county government. This program also offers security for these very important records, and we hope to increase the scope of this activity in 1973-1974.

County records holdings of the State Archives received careful study by students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, who were examining the role of merchants on the Nebraska frontier as part of a requirement for an American history course. The federal land records, traditionally used by genealogists and persons seeking to verify one hundred years of continuous residence, have also been the primary resource in a study of land acquisition in the Nebraska Sandhills region. Records of the adjutant general were used by genealogists as well as by county officials to verify military service for the purpose of marking graves of Nebraska veterans. State agencies, such as the Office of the Attorney General and the Bureau of Vital Statistics, have frequently requested that data be retrieved from the permanent records deposited within the State Archives.

The close relationship of the State Archives and the Records Management Division of the Office of the Secretary of State has continued. Both departments are involved in the review and approval of all records disposition requests from public agencies, and we have cooperated in several projects involving inventory and consultation within departments of state and



*Mrs. Loretta Griffin (left), for thirty-one years Society Receptionist, retired in 1973. Here she talks with Director and Mrs. Marvyn F. Kivett at a social which honored her. Society personnel are at right.*

local government. We worked in conjunction to prepare and secure the introduction of legislation which amended certain obsolete statutes relating to public records. LB 224, passed by the 1973 Legislature, repealed the statute providing that county and municipal clerks must keep permanent custody of board proceedings and will allow the transfer of these records into the State Archives for continued preservation. In addition, this bill directed that the Archives could assume the responsibility for the preservation of all original legislative records which had previously been a function of the secretary of state. Finally, this legislation established a penalty for the willful or negligent abuse of public records, which we hope will serve to make Nebraska's Records Management Law more effective.

The Microfilm Division continued to reflect a high level of patron activity. Although many of these patrons are students, scholars, or professional genealogists, the majority are members of the general public who have discovered the great value of the newspapers and other collections on microfilm. Some are seeking family or personal information. Others wish to gather data for local or county histories, while still others are simply seeking to satisfy a personal curiosity about some aspect of

Nebraska history. In addition to the thousands of persons who visit the Microfilm Division each year, hundreds more are mailed photocopies or purchase duplicate reels of microfilm for their personal use.

It should be emphasized that the Division continues to generate microfilm of Nebraska newspapers while responding to the requirements for assisting the public with the use of the more than 16,000 reel collection. This year nearly 700 reels of microfilm were produced and titles placed on film have included the *Lexington Clipper*, 1892-1972; *Mitchell Index*, 1896-1972; *Omaha Daily Record*, 1908-1972; *Nelson Gazette*, 1895-1971; and *Ruskin Leader*, 1914-1973. While many of the larger daily newspapers of Nebraska have their files microfilmed commercially, the State Archives is the only agency preserving the smaller weekly newspapers which contain the only record of much of our state and local history.

During fiscal 1972-1973, increased attention has also been given to the preservation of archival and manuscript materials on microfilm. These projects have included the filming of all available county platbooks and atlases; Nebraska's Swedish language newspapers; county board proceedings from various counties; and World War I selective service files relating to Nebraska soldiers. We have continued to make inroads into the negative microfilm backlog. Over 2,000 negative reels still remain in the Division, however, and if damaged or destroyed, they could not be replaced. During the year microfilm of the *Lincoln Star*, 1948-1967, was acquired, thus completing our film files of this newspaper from 1902 to the present. Funds are still needed to purchase microfilm copies of the *Omaha World-Herald*, 1925-1967, as the original papers are increasingly fragile and occupy much-needed space. We cannot justify the time and expense to microfilm these files ourselves when film copies are currently available. Unfortunately, the Legislature has not yet made an appropriation for this purpose.

Several special projects have been undertaken by the State Archives during the last year. All out-of-state newspaper files were weeded from the collection and were offered to appropriate repositories in other states. A determination was also made to dispose of the so-called "permanent" newspaper collection of titles dating prior to 1900 which had previously been microfilmed. Lack of space did not permit us to justify the further retention of these files, most of which were unbound

and very fragile. Prior to destruction, they were offered to local editors or historical societies, and were in some cases accepted by them. The removal of these newspapers will provide increased space in which to house archival and manuscript materials.

In conjunction with the Nebraska Library Commission, which provided materials and clerical personnel, a state-wide microform survey was completed in May. Public Libraries, schools, newspaper offices, and local historical organizations were contacted to discover those which had microfilm and equipment and to learn the policies governing their use. The Library Commission intends to make a printed summary available in the very near future. We feel the survey will be beneficial to outstate researchers who may find that they can gain access to microfilm equipment in their own area.

### LIBRARY

The year ending June 30, 1973, has seen a steady continuation of the service to patrons which has characterized the Society Library under the direction of Mrs. Louise Small for many years. Occasional changes in emphasis can be accounted for by such widely varying conditions as special publicity in the news media or increasingly restricted parking facilities. Steady users of our genealogical collection become more skillful and require less help from the staff.

The growing national interest in genealogy contributes to the work of the Society Library. Our original federal land records, our record of Civil War veterans, and our copies of all available Nebraska census data constitute a unique source not available elsewhere. The Library clerical staff has concentrated on two projects designed to aid in genealogical and related research. Finally completed is the indexing of the 1886 *Gazeteer and Business Directory of Nebraska* showing the name and address and occupation of every businessman and farmer in Nebraska in 1886. This file includes over 100,000 cards and serves as an index to the 1885 census of Nebraska. The available staff time is now being used to type so-called "obituary" cards for inclusion in the Newspaper Index. This adds another resource to our search for family history. The purchase of a soundex index to the 1880 Census of Nebraska, and the purchase of the 1840 censuses of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, has added to our resources. County genealogical societies and other interested



*At ceremonies in May, Bess Streeter Aldrich (1881-1954) became a member of the Nebraska Hall of Fame. Her bust, now in the State Capitol, is flanked (above) by Sculptor and Mrs. Hermann Becker (left) and the daughter of Mrs. Aldrich, Mrs. Milton Beechner, and Mr. Beechner. . (Below) On a busy day the street in front of Society Headquarters in Lincoln is congested. Considering the lack of parking nearby, museum visitation has remained relatively high.*



groups visit the Library and use our collection with their more skilled members helping the beginners.

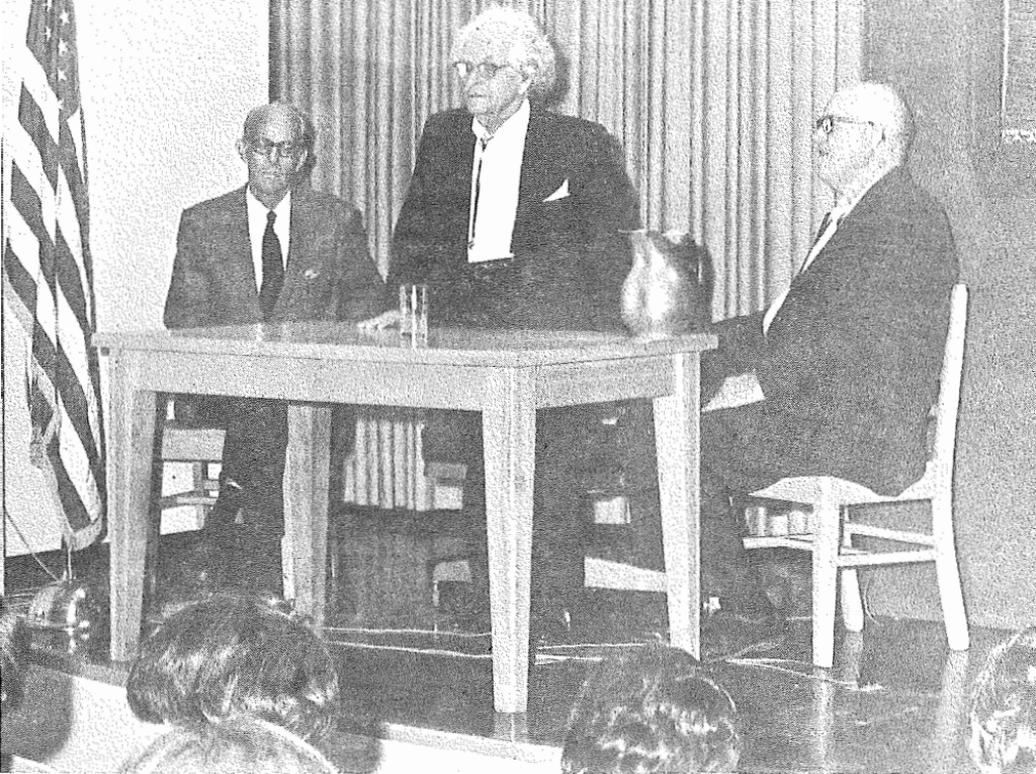
The Society's truly significant collection of pictures and photographs continues to attract national and international attention. An increase of nearly 100% in the patrons coming to the Photo Room in person, combined with a slight decrease in letters, seems to indicate increasing confidence in our ability to supply the desired pictures. Publishers and media specialists world-wide continue to use our unique illustrations, as demonstrated by our many foreign requests.

The Newspaper Index continues as one of the Library's most useful tools. Our fine collection of Nebraska newspapers are noted in the Library Public Catalog. We are cooperating with the Nebraska Publications Clearing House, a function of the Nebraska Library Commission. Publications of all state departments are collected and delivered to the Society monthly. This insures the completeness of our holdings. In other state and community contacts, the Librarian participated again in the genealogical workshop at Winter Quarters Stake of the L.D.S. Church in Omaha and spoke to the Platte County Historical Society in Columbus. Representatives of the National Park Service used our resources in planning historic restorations.

The steadily increasing use of the Society's resources in all departments is a very satisfying development, which serves to point up the necessity to preserve this material for future users. Both experience and research by national groups have demonstrated the impossibility of preserving this material in its original format. Each year brings the Society more records which need to be microfilmed to preserve them. Each patron who uses old and fragile books helps to increase that backlog of threatened material. Future plans for the Nebraska State Historical Society should include additional microfilming facilities as well as increased provision for using the microfilm.

### IN SUMMARY

For ten years it has been my pleasure to work closely with a most dedicated Executive Board. As a novice in its activities, it was my pleasure to first work with General Warren C. Wood as President of the Board. The General was an excellent instructor and I hope prepared me for the duties ahead. Throughout the 95 years of your Society's history, outstanding leaders of



*The late Poet Laureate of Nebraska, John G. Neihardt, who died in 1973, was a frequent caller at the Society headquarters. At left is Director Marvin F. Kivett and at right, Julius Young, Lincoln.*

Nebraska have provided dedicated service. Your present Board has continued in that tradition.

A major factor in many of our activities and particularly in our publication and preservation program has been the growth of the Society Foundation under the leadership of M. S. Hevelone since 1967. Throughout this report there are many evidences of projects completed that could not have been carried out without the financial assistance provided by the Foundation. The invested assets of the Foundation stood at \$37,023.43 in 1963. Our most recent audit now in process will show a balance in excess of \$212,000. If we are to meet our obligations to preserve and interpret Nebraska history, we must continue to attract gifts and bequests from private individuals to supplement the available public funds. Your Society Foundation has been recognized by the Internal Revenue Service and is fully qualified to receive donations within the limits of the laws.

An immediate major problem facing the Society is an expansion of our housing. As reported last year, your Executive Board has devoted a great deal of study to this problem. We are

pleased that this problem has also been considered by the Governor and the Legislature. There has been an appropriation made for preliminary planning in the amount of \$20,000. History does not always have the highest priority in the competition for state funds. We fully realize that we will need the dedicated support not only of the Society membership but of all Nebraska citizens if we are to realize our goal of constructing a suitable Nebraska Historical Heritage Center. The progress reported today would not have been possible without the dedicated support provided by your Executive Board headed by Professor James A. Rawley and the Foundation Trustees headed by M. S. Hevelone. We have a most dedicated staff and they are the people who provide outstanding service to achieve our goals.



The  
Accreditation  
Commission  
of the  
American  
Association  
of  
Museums

certifies that

*Nebraska State Historical Society Museum*

has demonstrated a professional level of museum operation in accordance with the standards of excellence prescribed by the American Association of Museums, and is hereby awarded this certificate of museum accreditation.

*M. S. Hevelone*  
Chairman 1973

*The Nebraska State Historical Society joined a select group when its Museum became accredited by the American Association of Museums.*