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Article Title: The Nebraska State Historical Society in 1985

Full Citation: James A Hanson, "The Nebraska State Historical Society in 1985," *Nebraska History* 66 (1985): 411-434

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1985NSHS.pdf>

Date: 3/06/2014

Article Summary: Hanson describes the increasingly varied services provided to growing audiences by the Nebraska State Historical Society. His report covers the Lincoln museum, branch museums, exhibits, archeology, library, state archives, and historic preservation.

Cataloging Information:

NSHS Branch Museums: William H Ferguson House, Fort Robinson Museum, Neligh Mills Historic Site, John G Neihardt Historical Center, Senator George W Norris Home, Willa Cather Historical Center, Chimney Rock Historic Site, Museum of Missouri River History

Photographs / Images: James A Hanson; Marvin Kivett; students playing grace hoops at the Kennard and Ferguson Houses; volunteers at a recognition program; Pershing Rifles historical marker; bust of Gilbert M Hitchcock; paper quilt prepared by YWCA preschool students; Nebraska State Needlework Committee; school group visiting Fort Robinson veterinary hospital; speakers for John G Neihardt Day; Ann Billesbach speaking to tourists at the Willa Cather childhood home; Nebraska journalists touring the George W Norris house; *The Oregon Trail*, a painting by Sarah Green in a Depression-era art exhibit at the State Museum of History; Herb Thomas working on displays at Fort Kearny State Historical Park; crews excavating barracks of Fort Atkinson; Marlene Roesler demonstrating the Online Computer Library Center; Julie Dean working on a microfiche photo project; Pat Kean working in the paper conservation laboratory; Dennis Madden with manuscripts; participants in a Historic Preservation conference viewing the J L Tidball House, Crete

The Nebraska State Historical Society In 1985

By James A. Hanson

Delivered in part at the Annual Meeting of the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln, October 12, 1985

The statistics in this report are truly staggering, for they reflect the mass of work performed by and the continued dedication of the Society staff in providing quality service to an ever broadening audience. For example, during the last fiscal year Nebraska State Historical Society archeologists recovered 27,000 artifacts and identified 20 new archeological sites; the Research Library and State Archives served 22,700 patrons and supplied 2,100 copies of photographs; and over 178,000 people visited the Society's Museums. We added nearly 4,000 objects to the Museum collections, enrolled 24 properties in the National Register of Historic Places, provided over 100 lectures, and built 80 new exhibits.

None of these fantastic achievements would have been possible without the selfless dedication of the 100 Nebraska State Historical Society staff members and 342 volunteers, who furnished some 7,793 hours of donated work to the Society. The volunteer program has continued to grow, and we extend our deepest thanks to members of the Lincoln Chapter of the Junior League, who will be providing the salary for Society Coordinator of Volunteers Kathy Edwards for fiscal year 1985-1986. The Junior League also furnishes volunteers for the Kennard and Ferguson Houses. On June 1, 1985, near the close of the fiscal year Marvin Kivett retired, concluding over 20 years of service as Director of the Nebraska State Historical Society and 14 previous years as Director of the Society's Museum. Victories are not measured so much in miles as in inches, but the sum of Mr. Kivett's victories may best be reflected by the statewide growth of the Branch Museums system, the opening of the new State Museum of History, the development of the State Archives, and the acquisition of numerous

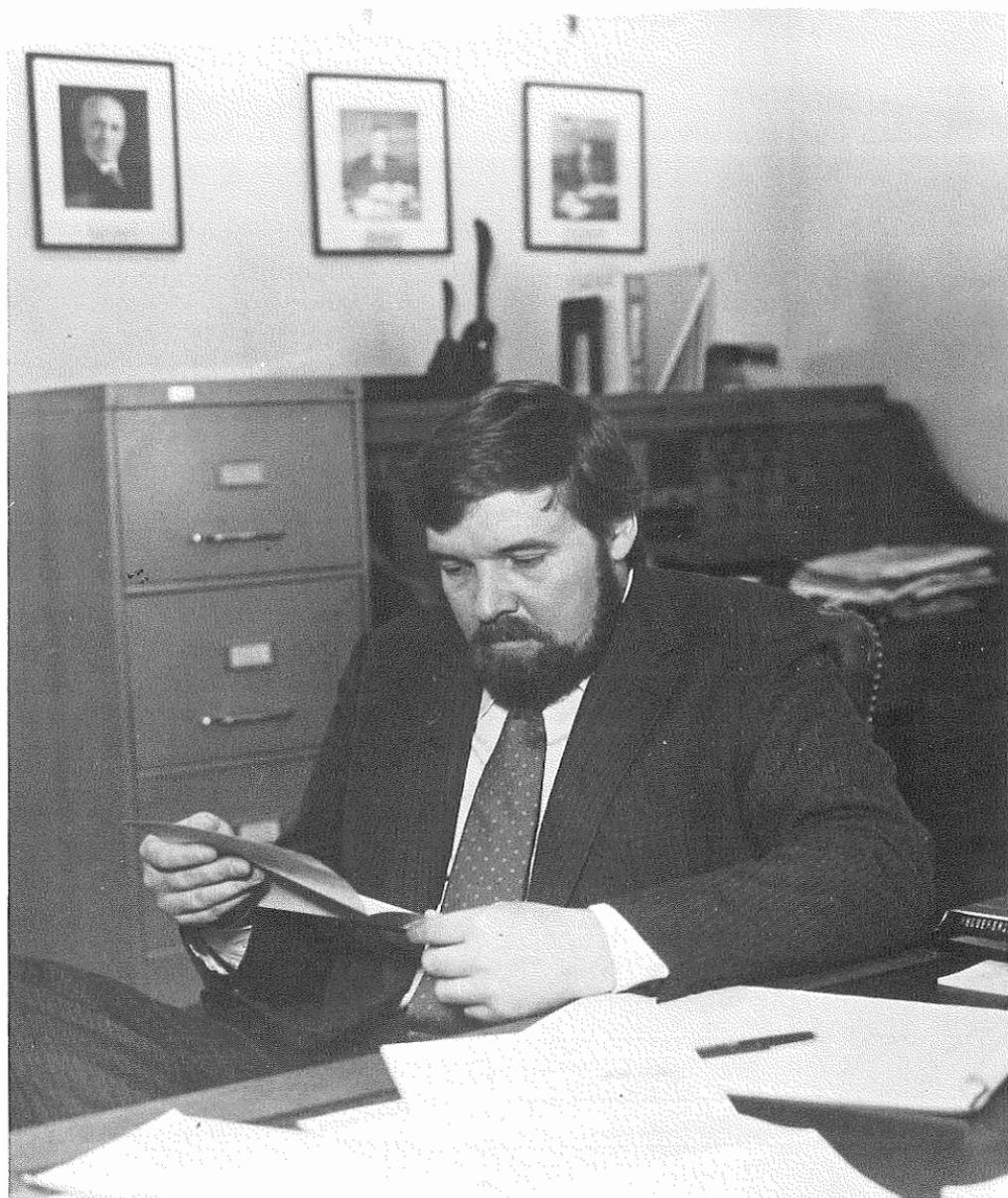
charitable gifts by the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation. Since his retirement Mr. Kivett has undertaken the important and laudable task of furthering the development of the Foundation, a most necessary and valuable contribution to the Society's wellbeing because of the budget restraints imposed upon us by flat economic conditions. We wish him well in his work.

The editorial office suffered a loss on June 5 when Society Historian Leigh DeLay died following a lengthy illness. In his absence Assistant Editor Pat Gaster coordinated the publication of *Nebraska History* quarterly and the monthly *Historical News Letter*. The publication of the *Index-Guide to Nebraska History Magazine, 1959-1979* continued the work begun in 1958 with the first *Index-Guide to Publications, 1885-1956 and Nebraska History, 1918-1958*.

As the Society's new Director I have been most gratified by the support of the Executive Board, the interest of the public we serve, and the generous gifts of money and historically important property we have received. Success for the Nebraska State Historical Society should not be measured in terms of great leaps and major changes but rather by qualitative refinements to improve our programs, our collections, and our services to the state's citizens. Knowing of the strong foundations built for us in the past, we welcome the challenges of future years.

LINCOLN MUSEUM

Lincoln Museums Curator Wendell Frantz reports that educational programming for the adult museum audience increased significantly in the past year. Beginning in September of 1984, the Museum instituted a public series of weekend film screenings and noon hour lectures. Films and slide/tape presentations covered such varied topics as historic house restoration and birch canoe building. Lectures were presented by Society curatorial staff as well as guest speakers from the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and the University of Nebraska. Among the most popular of these brown bag lunch presentations were Society staff talks, which were illustrated with selected objects from Museum collections. An average of 50 persons attended each film screening



Society Director James A. Hanson

and brown bag presentation. Some speakers attracted double that number, leaving standing room only in the E. E. Blackman Auditorium. Attendance at the State Museum of History was 57,848.

The major function of the Education Department continues to be the scheduling and conducting of Museum tours; answering mail requests for educational material and travel information; and selling Society publications. Curator of Education Dick Spencer coordinated three special events held in the Museum, two Smithsonian Lecture Programs, Meet Lincoln Day, and Neighborhood Oral History Project slide shows.

In preparation to become tour guides, 11 volunteers attended four docent training sessions and observed tours of the Museum. Docent in-service training was provided by a trip to Fort Atkinson to visit the Society's archeological excavation of the council house.

Nine scripts were researched and written for the historic film clip exhibit. Five narrations were recorded on audiotape to accompany slide shows in the Society's audiovisual library. Educational materials were sent to 790 students and teachers. Over 2,300 pieces of mail were handled by the Education Department.

The Historical Society has utilized volunteers since its inception; but in 1984 the hiring of a paid volunteer coordinator was made possible by a general operating support grant from the Institute of Museum Services. Since November of 1984, 342 volunteers have worked 7,793 hours in various Society departments. Volunteers played a new and significant role in archeological excavations at Fort Atkinson and near Grand Island and helped with the Society's annual festival of old toys and games for children. Society volunteers are compensated through monthly meetings and occasional field trips to historic sites. Opportunities for volunteer involvement continue to expand under the direction of Volunteer Coordinator Kathy Edwards.

The Museum Collections Department under Curators Robert Pettit and Gail Potter finished moving into new storage rooms at the State Museum of History on June 10. Throughout the last year the Collections Department employed three museum technicians hired with an Institute of Museum Services grant to assist with the packing and moving. Additional

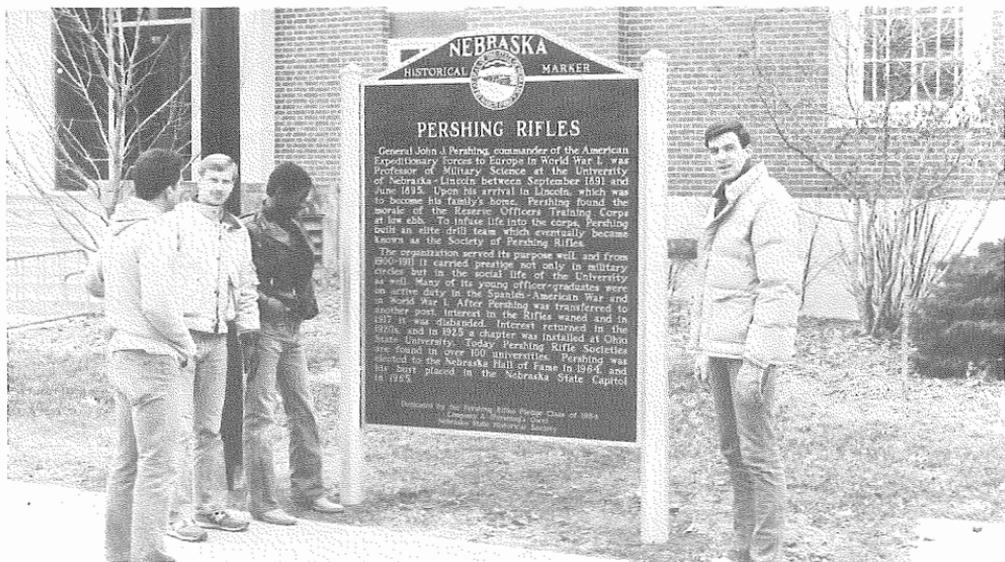


On June 1 Marvin Kivett retired after 20 years as Director of the Nebraska State Historical Society and 14 previous years as Director of the Society Museum. He is now Secretary-Director of the Society Foundation.



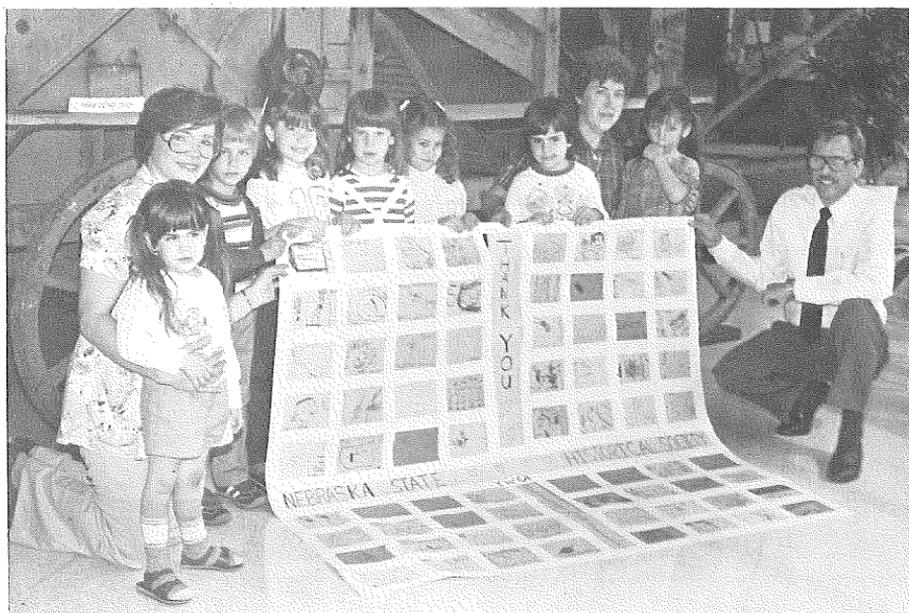
Jeff Langan with teacher and students played grace hoops during the "Pastimes and Playthings" festival held April 30-May 5 at the Kennard and Ferguson Houses, Lincoln. . . . (Below) Volunteers attending the April 25 recognition program at the State Museum of History: front row—Lucia Demma (left), Cynthia Monroe, Beulah Bedke, Jo Knight, Sarah Taylor, Margaret Allington; second row—Barbara Dunekacke (left), Kathryn Cooley, Olive Moore, Mary Preece, Eulalia Johnson, G. William LeWorthy, Lori Grossman; third row—Mark Dollase (left), Keith Sawyers, Eric Bachenberg, Vern Hanneman.





Near Pershing Rifles historical marker, dedicated April 27 on the UNL campus, are 2nd Lt. Danl A. Connelly, Army National Guard (left), and AROTC cadets Roger Kohn, Terry Jones, and Jerry Hyjek (right). . . . (Below) Around bust of Gilbert M. Hitchcock, inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame August 23, are Mrs. Harry Koch (left), Hitchcock's great granddaughter; Governor Robert Kerrey; Mrs. W. Dale Clark, Hitchcock's granddaughter; Chief Justice Norman Krivosha; George Lundeen; Secretary of State Allen Beermann; and Harold Andersen, Chairman of the Board, Omaha World-Herald. Photo by Phil Johnson, Omaha World-Herald.





YWCA preschool students and instructors Lou Rosen and Kim McGenn present a paper quilt to Curator of Education Dick Spencer. . . . (Below) Nebraska State Needlework Committee approving designs for new chair seats at the Governor's Mansion: Sue Shoemaker (left); Martha Greer (seated); Virginia Fleetwood, designer (standing); H. K. Stuart; Jean Olson; Diane Oldfather, committee chairman; Lynne Ireland, Society representative.



help was provided by students and regular Society staff. At the end of February several days were spent transferring large objects in the Museum collections from one warehouse to another.

During the past year the Museum Collections Department loaned several paintings to the Center for Great Plains Studies for its exhibit, "Great Plains Art, 1930-1939." A certificate presented by William Clark on behalf of the United States to an Omaha Indian leader is on loan to the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. for the exhibit, "Peace and Friendship: The Indian Peace Medal in the United States." The Collections Department received 187 separate new accessions during the year and cataloged 3,849 items.

The William H. Ferguson House, 700 S. 16th Street, was opened to the public on July 1 as a period museum depicting turn-of-the-century life in Lincoln. Special interpretive programs at both the Ferguson House and the nearby Thomas P. Kennard House at 1627 H Street continued to attract a large audience. Christmas ornaments created by Society volunteers added a special touch to the annual Christmas exhibits. Volunteers also assisted the staff in providing guided tours of the houses. During "Pastimes and Playthings," our yearly children's festival, nearly 20 volunteers helped over 2,000 children experience firsthand the toys and games of an earlier day. Attendance for the two sites topped the 30,000 mark, with 13,407 at Kennard and 16,621 at Ferguson.

BRANCH MUSEUMS

Curator of Branch Museums Bill Munn was appointed Acting Deputy Director in October. His assistant, Ron Kivett, was appointed Acting Curator in April.

A total of 88,306 people toured the Branch Museums, which represent some persons' only contacts with the Society. Quality curatorial expertise, maintenance, and interpretive exhibits are always prime concerns. Due to budgetary restrictions some services were cut back, and some positions were eliminated.

Fort Robinson Museum near Crawford—The post headquarters building has served as the museum for over 30 years, and its physical condition is now a concern. Access for the handicapped is particularly difficult to provide. Without such ac-



A school group visits the Fort Robinson veterinary hospital.

cess the Fort Robinson museum cannot qualify for matching state and federal funds. An alternate museum building is being considered. Attendance this year was 36,603.

Neligh Mills Historic Site at Neligh—Curator Thomas R. Buecker reports 5,158 visitors at the mill this year. With the addition of a custodial position he was able to paint the interior and exterior of the mill office. Buecker spent part of his time stabilizing the Elkhorn River bank in front of the mill that was severely damaged during last spring's flood. Several new interpretive exhibits were installed.

Plans are underway to replace the tar paper roof of the 1889 west wing of the mill buildings. This roof will be restored to its original appearance with cedar shingles.

John G. Neihardt Historical Center at Bancroft—The annual Neihardt Day celebration in August, cosponsored by the Neihardt Foundation, was again a success. Curator John Lindahl reports 3,506 visitors toured the center and the poet's restored study. Plans are underway to install new security and fire equipment. Additional funds are being sought to paint the interior of the nine-year-old center.

Senator George W. Norris Home at McCook—Curator Robert Ray reports 3,623 people toured the Norris home this season. Plans are still being considered to establish a modern interpretive center directly across the street in the city park. The center would provide needed space for additional interpretive exhibits and storage space for Norris-related artifacts and memorabilia.

Willa Cather Historical Center at Red Cloud—The newest addition to the Branch Museums program is slowly being restored with the assistance of LB 309 Deferred Building Renewal Task Force funds. Curator Ann Billesbach reports that the Spring Conference, cosponsored by Kearney State College, attracted a great deal of interest.

Plans are being made to provide security and fire detection equipment for center properties. This project is a joint effort sponsored by this Society and the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation. More than 5,000 visitors toured the facilities.

Chimney Rock Historic Site near Bayard—Chimney Rock, the Society's first outstate site, was donated to the Society in 1941. Supervisor Don Plock reports 16,337 people visited our



Speakers for John G. Neihardt Day, held August 4 at the Neihardt Center in Bancroft, included Omaha World-Herald columnist Tom Allan (at podium) and the Reverend James Gerken (left), Norbert Tiemann, Margaret Hasebroock, Hilda Neihardt Petri, and Society Director James A. Hanson. Photo by Bill Hanson, West Point News.

mobile museum during the three month season. This is about the same number that visited the Lincoln Museum during the same period. Chimney Rock continues to be one of the best attended attractions within the Branch Museum system. Plans are underway to properly develop this important historic site.

Museum of Missouri River History at Brownville—During July 1984 flood waters subsided around the *Captain Meriwether Lewis*, making it possible to again visit the boat. The flood did considerable damage to the recreation area and to the levee which surrounds the *Lewis*. During the year a major portion of the wood cabin on the upper boiler deck was stripped, sanded, and repainted. Labor for this restoration project was provided by the CETA summer youth employment program and Entry Employment Experience Program.

All of the exhibits have been installed as the result of a six year project. Assistant Curator Kurt Hasselbalch resigned at the end of June. Curator Carl Jones reported 18,074 people visited the boat in spite of floods and bridge and road construction.

EXHIBITS

Work continued July 1, 1984, on exhibits for Rock Creek Station State Historical Park in Jefferson County. These were completed in time for the September 1 dedication of this Nebraska Game and Parks Commission visitor center. Exhibit work began in the spring of 1985 on yet another cooperative venture between the two agencies—at Fort Kearny State Historical Park. A series of three detailed models of the post (1849, 1858, 1870) were constructed by Artist Curt Peacock and installed in May with a number of case displays.

Two special exhibits designed and prepared by Artist Steve Ryan for the State Museum of History in Lincoln featured the artwork of Nebraskan Thomas B. Johnson and Depression era art. The latter exhibit highlighted the Museum collection of Civil Works Administration artwork, which was commissioned by the federal government to help needy artists during the 1930's.

Seventy-eight display units were constructed, considerably fewer than during the previous fiscal year when we opened the State Museum of History. A number of these were prepared by the Exhibits Department for the Society's Branch Museums.

Many other units were labor intensive displays, notably the Weeping Water barber pole restoration and the Fort Kearny models, which kept our figures deceptively low. As in previous years the work of the department included a significant amount of photographic, carpentry, and graphic arts services for other Society departments.

During the year we advised and assisted an increasing number of museums, historical societies, and other organizations on exhibit questions. These included the Cozad Museum Board, the Union Pacific Historical Museum, the Nebraska Indian Commission, the Otoe County Historical Society, the Fillmore County Foundation, Bankers Life Nebraska, Boys Town, and the Broken Bow Library.

Curator of Exhibits Eli Paul, Collections Curator Gail Potter, and Curator of Education Dick Spencer received fellowships from the Kellogg Foundation to attend a seminar in Chicago on "Exhibition Development: The Team Approach." The lessons learned at this valuable workshop, which attracted museum professionals from all over the nation, will be applied to our future exhibit efforts at the State Museum of History and at the Fort Robinson Museum.

ARCHEOLOGY

Society Archeologist Gayle Carlson completed excavation of the Indian agent's council house at Fort Atkinson State Historical Park in July-August 1984. During the winter of 1984-1985 he prepared a report on archeological work at the council house. Early this summer Carlson returned to Fort Atkinson to excavate the north barracks line and the north half of the east barracks line.

Highway Archeologists Rob Bozell and John Ludwickson completed the excavation of a prehistoric house site (25SY31) along Nebraska highway 31 south of Gretna in July 1984. Activity next focused on excavation of a later prehistoric hunting camp between Crawford and Fort Robinson, Dawes County. Obsidian and charred wood found at the site will date it accurately.

Routine highway archeological survey and testing during the year included inspection of 51 road construction projects encompassing over 120 miles of right-of-way. About 20 new sites were identified.



Society Curator Ann Billesbach (third from right) lectures to tourists on the Willa Cather childhood home in Red Cloud. Courtesy of Hastings Tribune. . . (Below) Nebraska newspaper people tour the George W. Norris house in McCook. Courtesy of Holdrege Daily Citizen.



Laboratory work, under the supervision of Tom McGinnis with the assistance of Mike Goure and several volunteers, has focused on material recovered from the 1984 season. Nearly 15,000 artifacts from 25SY31 and about 12,000 artifacts from Ft. Atkinson (25WN9) were cataloged in 1985.

LIBRARY

Library Department head Ann Reinert reports that the Library staff assisted with approximately 12,000 requests, 42 percent involving family history. Other major research topics ranged from prominent Nebraskans and Nebraska community history to Indians of the Great Plains. Ninety percent of the visitors to the Library were Nebraskans.

The Library again received fine support from its patrons through donations. Included among the book donations were 108 Nebraska local history publications and 107 family histories and genealogical reference materials. One patron is responsible for the donation of 645 postcards depicting Nebraska. Twelve Library volunteers contributed approximately 2,500 hours of assistance with organization and preservation duties in the Library.

With a contribution from the Society Foundation the Library acquired a computer with special modifications to permit access to the Online Computer Library Center in Dublin, Ohio. With Society library catalog records entered into this OCLC database, other libraries can locate unique holdings relating to Nebraska and western history. The Library is also better able to assist patrons in need of special information located in other libraries. The OCLC library system also provides a more efficient method of cataloging. As a member of the Nebraska Library Commission's network of libraries, the Society library can use its computer potential to communicate with other libraries and access special state databases. The computer also helps maintain current organizational files, such as staff circulation records, which now can be more easily updated.

Although 2,100 copies of photographic images were sold to the public last year, new technology promises to provide better service from the photograph collection. In May 1985 the Society was awarded a joint grant of \$115,000 with the Kansas



Sarah Green's The Oregon Trail was included in a Depression-era art exhibit at the State Museum of History March 20-October 6. . . . (Below) Society Artist Herb Thomas works on displays for the Nebraska Game and Parks visitor center at Fort Kearny State Historical Park.





During the summer Nebraska State Historical Society crews excavated the north barracks and part of the east barracks of Fort Atkinson at Fort Atkinson State Historical Park just east of Fort Calhoun in Washington County.

State Historical Society to place a large portion of its photographs on tonal microfiche. This project, which is to be completed in one year, will permit expanded patron service by allowing loans of whole photograph collections on microfiche to individuals and research institutions.

One outstanding example of the value of the Society's photograph collection was the major exhibit of Solomon D. Butcher photographs in October 1984 at the Williams College Museum of Art in Williamstown, Massachusetts. This exhibition, held in conjunction with a special symposium, examined the Butcher photographs as works of art as well as documentary records of the process of homesteading in the Great Plains. Curator of Photographs John Carter acted as a consultant for this exhibit and also participated in the symposium.

The Library staff presented 39 programs, workshops, and orientations during the year. Library cataloger Gwendolyn Birky retired this spring after many years of dedicated service. Research Associate Betty Loudon completed the *Index-Guide to Nebraska History Magazine, 1959-1979*, published by the Society in June 1985. She has now assumed the editorship of the "Out of Old Nebraska" weekly columns. Assistant Librarian Cindy Steinhoff-Drake was an area representative for the Nebraska State Genealogical Society.

STATE ARCHIVES

State Archivist Jim Potter reported no major changes in Archives operations in 1984-1985. The number of persons using the archival collections showed a slight increase, but in general the pattern of public service activity has remained stable. In 1984-1985 6,202 persons used archival resources in person, and the staff responded to 2,741 letters and 1,307 telephone calls. They produced 33,742 photocopies and xerox copies at public request. The majority of this activity was generated by genealogical research.

There were several staff changes in 1984-1985 which slowed internal activities such as acquisition, processing, and collection management. Assistant State Archivist Donald Snoddy resigned in July 1984, and Dennis Madden did not join the Archives professional staff until April 1985. Other staff vacancies in the microfilming division reduced the output of preserva-



Society Cataloger Marlene Roesler demonstrates the OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) terminal to Cataloger Margaret Resz . . . (Right) Julie Dean works with a project that will make available microfiche of 45,000 photos from both the Nebraska and Kansas Historical Societies. A grant of \$115,475 from the National Endowment for the Humanities funded the undertaking.

tion microfilming. In response to these vacancies the microfilming workload was reduced by the decision to suspend microfilming of church records.

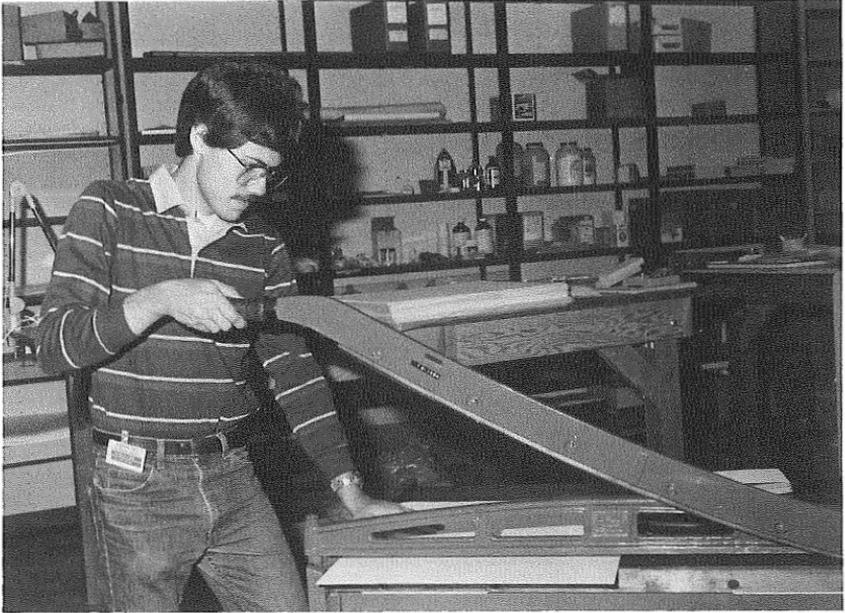
Space to house the archival holdings continues to be a major problem. For over ten years the Archives has leased off-site warehouse facilities to meet its storage needs. As leases expire the collections have been moved frequently, most recently in March 1985. At that time seven semi-trailer loads of records were moved from one warehouse to another in order to consolidate all off-site storage. At present more than one-half of all records held by the Archives are stored in warehouse facilities. Because the lease is renewable annually, there is every expectation that the archival holdings will be moved in the future. Not only does leased storage cost \$6,000 per year in rent, but it has been difficult to provide public access to records stored away from the headquarters building. Each move further damages fragile records. A long-term solution to the storage problem consists of renovation of the headquarters building, the acquisition of permanent off-site storage, and a stepped-up program to microfilm and destroy certain records.

In the summer of 1984 the Archives cooperated with other Society departments in a study of computer needs sponsored by the Historic Preservation office. The Archives currently uses an Apple PC to maintain location control of microfilm and records, and it is evident that data processing will become a greater factor in archival management in the future.

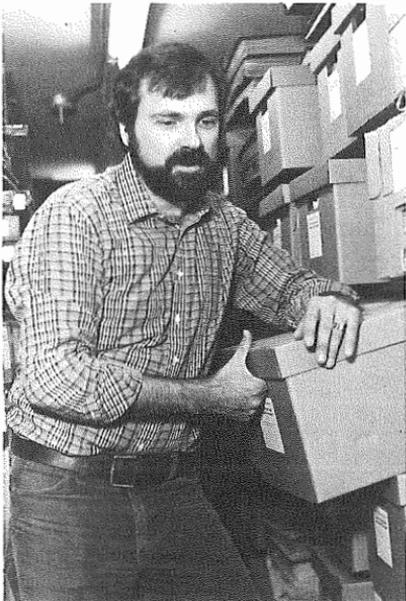
The Archives program completed an institutional evaluation in 1984-1985 under the auspices of the Society of American Archivists. The report of the evaluation team noted that microfilming, conservation, public service, and staff were important strengths of the program. Lack of space, the need to develop a collection policy, and the duplication of similar reference services by the Archives and Library were highlighted as areas needing improvement.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

During fiscal year 1984-1985 the Historic Preservation Office, under Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Richard Jensen, continued its efforts toward a state-wide survey of historic buildings. The staff worked in Furnas, Hamilton, Red



Archives volunteer Pat Kean works in the paper conservation laboratory.



Manuscripts Curator Dennis Madden

Willow, and Sarpy counties. Near the end of the year a contract was signed with Save America's Heritage to survey Harlan and Franklin counties. A survey of portions of Dawson County was initiated in cooperation with the Dawson County Historical Society. Both historic buildings and archeological sites are to be considered under the terms of this contract. An agreement was signed with Wichita State University to carry out an archeological survey in the northern part of Dixon County. Funding for these three projects is from the federal Historic Preservation Fund.

During the year 24 additional properties were enrolled in the National Register of Historic Places, bringing the total to 377 Nebraska sites. The new entries consist of a variety of sites including the Burwell Rodeo Grounds, the Kilpatrick House in Beatrice, and the Warner Ranch in Pawnee County. Approximately 75 percent of these properties were listed at the owner's request, and most owners made substantial contributions to the research needed to prepare the nomination forms.

The Preservation Office participates in the review of rehabilitation projects under the terms of the Economic Recovery Tax Act, which provides substantial tax savings to developers of certified historic buildings. Since the act provides a mechanism for preserving historic buildings, the Preservation office staff held seminars for business leaders in Chadron and Scottsbluff and worked with developers in Lincoln, Omaha, Grand Island, and Broken Bow.

The Preservation Act created a partnership between the federal government and the states, which is being expanded to include local governments. Communities who become qualified attain Certified Local Government status and are eligible for federal preservation funds from the states' apportionment fund administered by the Preservation Office. This allows the certified local governments to develop and to maintain programs which emphasize local priorities.



Participants in the July 17-19 conference of the Midwest State Historic Preservation Officers view the J.L. Tidball House during walking tour of the College Hill Historic District, Crete. The meeting was hosted by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office.