

NEBRASKA history news

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Nebraska's Miss America: Teresa Scanlan Opens March 1

The first Miss Nebraska to be crowned Miss America, Teresa Scanlan, will be featured in a new temporary exhibit to open March 1, 2013, Nebraska Statehood Day, at the Nebraska History Museum. The Gering, Nebraska resident was the ninetieth Miss America when she was chosen in 2011. Then age seventeen, she was the youngest Miss America since 1921.

Museum visitors will see many of Scanlan's pageant outfits, including the gown she wore when competing in the Miss Nebraska pageant and her various costume changes from the Miss America pageant.

Although her dresses may have changed, one thing remained constant in all the pageants Teresa competed in since the age of thirteen: her shoes. The shoes Teresa wore when she was crowned Miss America were the same shoes she wore in 2004 when she was crowned Scotts Bluff County Teen Queen.

Pageant contestants have various talents, but Scanlan's involves an unexpected product: duct tape. One of her many hobbies includes making clothing and other items out of this versatile product. When the Duck Tape® brand learned she was a fan, they invited her to be the grand marshal for their festival in Avon, Ohio. A sash and bouquet made entirely out of duct tape will be on display, along with a ring given to her and made by students.



Teresa Scanlan of Gering, Nebraska, Miss America 2011, looks at items for the upcoming exhibit with Nebraska History Museum curator Laura Mooney.

During her reign as Miss America, Teresa traveled more than 240,000 miles, visiting thirty-five states and several foreign countries. She served as a goodwill ambassador for the Children's Miracle Network, visited many hospitals, and worked with the USO. She was a spokesperson and advocate for many organizations and causes, including the American Cancer Society, National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, Special Olympics, and many more.

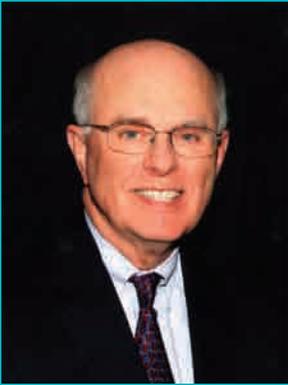
What's next for Teresa? Since ending her reign as Miss America, she has continued to work for various causes, including raising money for an orphanage in Haiti and an organization



Scanlan's sashes from the 2011 Miss America pageant.

The Nebraska State Historical Society collects, preserves, and opens to all, the histories we share.

FROM THE DIRECTOR



The building's key operating systems are at the end of their useable and repairable lives.

Renovating the Nebraska History Museum

Maintaining our histories and making them available costs money. That often comes as a surprise to people who perceive history as an endless string of names and dates in school textbooks. They aren't in touch with the things that make our history real and personal, such as artifacts, official records, and other documents. The NSHS collects and cares for these things because they reveal the many ways in which human societies work, not only in the past but today and in the tomorrows to come.

We're facing a major cost for the renovation of the Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln, a 1965 building that was converted to serve as the museum in 1981. The building's key operating systems—electrical, plumbing, heating and cooling, and even the elevators—are at the end of their use able and repairable lives. Breakdowns have accelerated to the point where we experience another one before the last one is repaired. In addition, the building's supporting structure of pre-cast concrete posts and beams is suffering from age and water damage. Plus there are fire and safety issues, and the need to meet the current requirements of the Americans with Disabilities codes.

Over the summer, consulting architects and engineers concluded a study that details the issues and sets out plans not only to make the systems upgrades, but also to relocate the entrance to focus on the new Centennial Mall, add a new stairwell to reach all the way to the third floor, and provide for a better use of the main floor, including a larger and more flexible auditorium.

Projected costs are in excess of \$9 million, a portion of which would be paid by funds provided through the Nebraska Taskforce for Building Renovation. The NSHS has submitted a request for the 2013-15 capital budget and will address the needs and solutions with state leaders. The project will provide an excellent home for the Nebraska History Museum for the next half century. We'll keep you up to date.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael J. Smith".

Michael J. Smith
Director/CEO

Continued from p. 1

supporting education for Kenyan girls. She is currently attending Patrick Henry College in Purcellville, Virginia. Her career goals include becoming a Supreme Court justice and running for president. 🇺🇸



As a hobby, Scanlan makes items out of colored duct tape. She received this duct tape bouquet as a present.



Laura Mooney and Laura Mohr box up a dress Teresa Scanlan wore during the 2011 Miss America pageant.



Shoes from the Miss America pageant.

New NSHS-Authored Book Shows Nebraska's Role in Civil War

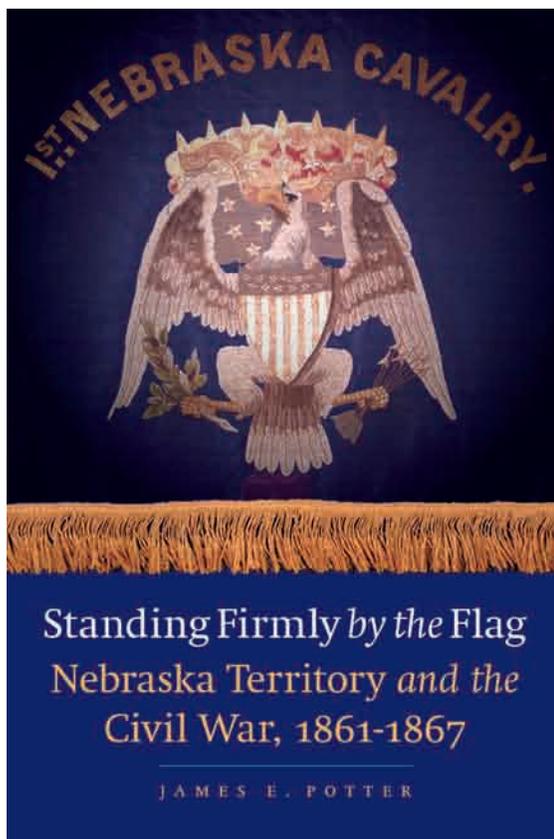
From a pool of barely nine thousand men of military age, Nebraska—still a territory at the time—sent more than three thousand soldiers to the Civil War. They fought and died for the Union cause, were wounded, taken prisoner, and in some cases deserted. But Nebraska's military contribution is only one part of the more complex and interesting story that James E. Potter, NSHS senior research historian, tells in *Standing Firmly by the Flag*. The first book to fully explore Nebraska's involvement in the Civil War and the war's involvement in Nebraska's evolution from territory to thirty-seventh state on March 1, 1867 may now be ordered through the NSHS Landmark Stores.

Although distant from the major battlefronts and seats of the warring governments, Nebraskans were aware of the war's issues and subject to its consequences. National debates about the origins of the rebellion, the policies pursued to quell it, and what kind of nation should emerge once it was over echoed throughout Nebraska. Potter explores the war's impact on Nebraskans and shows how, when Nebraska Territory sought admission to the Union at war's end, it was caught up in political struggles over Reconstruction, the fate of the freed slaves, and the relationship between the states and the federal government.

"A masterful narrative of wartime passions, played out on the battlefields, in the newspapers, and in the territorial legislature. *Standing Firmly by the Flag* tells the tumultuous story that culminated not on the road to Appomattox, but on the fitful path to Nebraska statehood." —Eli Paul, editor of *The Nebraska Indian Wars Reader: 1865–1877*

"This is easily the most complete and satisfying study of a critical but relatively neglected period in Nebraska's territorial history. . . . *Standing Firmly by the Flag* offers a multifaceted portrait—military, political, economic, and social—of a frontier territory more affected by the tumult of civil war than its location (hundreds of miles from the conflict's major battlefields) would suggest." —Edward G. Longacre, author of *The Cavalry at Gettysburg and Lee's Cavalrymen*

Standing Firmly by the Flag: Nebraska Territory and the Civil War, 1861-1867, by James E. Potter. 400 pp., \$29.95 / \$26.95 for NSHS members (plus tax and shipping on all orders). Contact the NSHS Landmark Store at 402-471-3447. 



"Cavalry Charge of Sully's Brigade at the Battle of White Stone Hill, September 3, 1863." *Harper's Weekly*, October 31, 1863.

“After the Indian Wars”: The Ninth Fort Robinson History Conference, April 25-27, 2013

The biennial Fort Robinson History Conference has explored themes relating to the U.S. Army and the so-called Indian wars of the last half of the nineteenth century since 1995. Fort Robinson’s establishment and much of its history stemmed from the conflicts that ensued as Americans occupied the homelands of the Native peoples of the central and northern Plains. The final conference in the series will focus on the aftermath of what has been termed “the Great Sioux War of 1876-77.” The conference is co-sponsored by the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

While the year 1876 brought the allied northern Plains tribes their greatest victory, the defeat of George Armstrong Custer’s Seventh U.S. Cavalry at the Little Big Horn, it was followed by intensive military campaigns that soon broke Native resistance. By the end of 1877, Crazy Horse had been murdered at Fort Robinson, the Black Hills had been seized and occupied by whites, and the Sioux, Northern Cheyenne, and their allies had been forced onto reservations. Henceforth, the role of the army and life for the Indians changed dramatically. Yet more conflict lay ahead. In December 1890 came the massacre at

Wounded Knee Creek as the Seventh U.S. Cavalry sought to disarm Big Foot, an adherent of the Ghost Dance religion, and his followers. More than 250 lives were lost, most of them Indians.

Scholarly papers will primarily address people, places, and events connected to the ongoing story of the army and the Indians from 1877 through 1890. Topics include the role of the African American “Buffalo Soldiers,” the Wounded Knee Massacre, and the changing image of George Armstrong Custer. A panel will consider topics still to be studied for a fuller understanding of the conflict, transformation, and loss that marked this era for both white Americans and the Native peoples. New books by several of the presenters will be available for purchase and a bus tour for conferees to the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre is planned. The conference will conclude with a banquet and address by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Thomas Powers, “Crazy Horse: Looking for the Deep Story.”

For more information, or to be placed on the mailing list, contact Lana Hatcher at lane.hatcher@nebraska.gov or 402-471-3272. 

Pine Ridge Agency, South Dakota, November 28, 1890.
NSHS RG2845-6-9



First Telegraph Line Wins Nebraska Book Award

First Telegraph Line across the Continent: Charles Brown's 1861 Diary, edited by Dennis Mihelich and James E. Potter, and published by the NSHS, won the 2012 Nebraska Book Award for Cover/Design/Illustration. The book was designed by Reigert Graphics of Lincoln.

The book was honored at the Celebration of Nebraska Books on November 3, 2012, at the Nebraska History Museum. The award winners are selected by the Nebraska Center for the Book, which sponsored the Celebration of Nebraska Books along with the Nebraska Humanities Council and Nebraska Library Commission, in partnership with the NSHS and the Friends of the University of Nebraska Press. ❄️

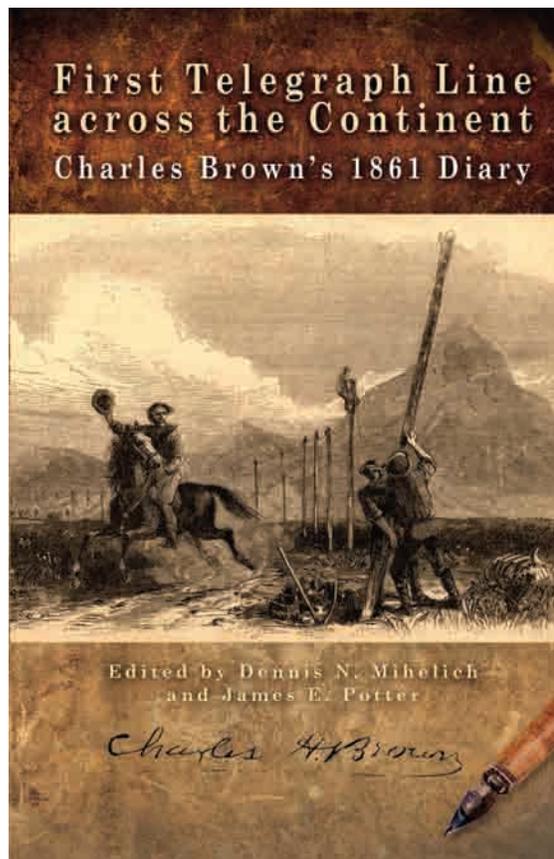
NSHS Welcomes New Trustees

Two new members have joined the Nebraska State Historical Society Board of Trustees. Our governing board includes twelve members elected by NSHS members, and three appointed by the governor. Those elected, whose three-year terms began January 1, include:

Jeff Barnes, Omaha. Barnes is a fifth-generation Nebraskan with a background in public relations and marketing. He is the author of two books, *Forts of the Northern Plains* and *The Great Plains Guide to Custer*. He is a past chair of the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission and is a member of the Nebraska Humanities Council Speakers Bureau.

Spencer Davis, Bellevue. Davis, who grew up in Plattsmouth, received a PhD in history from the University of Toronto, and since 1983 has served on the history faculty at Peru State College. He is a member of the Nebraska Humanities Council Speakers Bureau, the Sarpy County Historical Society, the Mayhew Cabin Historical Society, and he volunteers at the Durham Museum. He is also an academic resource person at Bellevue Public Schools and a regional and state judge for History Day.

Kay Kimberley of Big Springs was re-elected to the board for a second term. ❄️



NSHS Board of Trustees Seeks Candidates

Do you want to help shape the future of the Nebraska State Historical Society? Assist in setting policies? Help guide strategic planning and offer overall support to the director, staff, members, and volunteers? Speak up for the importance of teaching history in the schools? Witness to the value of the work of the NSHS? These are some of the principal duties of the NSHS Board of Trustees.

The board consists of fifteen members, and meets quarterly at various locations across the state. Three-year terms expiring in December 2013 include seats in all three districts. The board-appointed nominating committee will put forward a slate of nominations, but anyone may become a candidate by petition with the signatures of twenty-five current members, or seek a gubernatorial appointment.

Application materials and contact information will be posted at nebraskahistory.org/admin/board starting January 22. In order to be considered for the nominating committee's slate of candidates for 2013, please submit your application by June 12. Petition candidates may submit applications up to 5 p.m., August 12, 2013. ❄️



New NSHS eBooks Aren't Just for Students

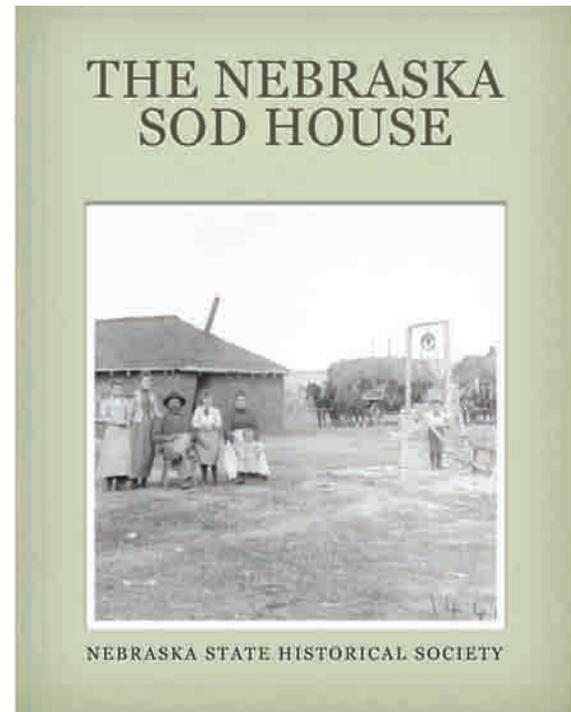
Two new eBooks, *The Nebraska Sod House* by Jenna Peterson, and *Nebraska and the Civil War* by James E. Potter, are being distributed freely to Nebraska schools, but you don't have to be a student to enjoy them. Both are available for free download at www.education.ne.gov/nebooks as part of a Nebraska Department of Education program. Though formatted for the iPad, the books are also available as standard PDFs that can be read on any computer.

The books are part of the NeBooks Project, a partnership between schools, state agencies, and non-profit organizations across Nebraska for the common purpose of providing quality instructional materials. The initial focus of this project will be creating Nebraska focused eBooks for use in teaching the fourth grade Nebraska history requirements.

With more and more schools providing iPads for their students (about two dozen districts so far), the electronic format makes sense—it not only saves printing costs, but also allows for a greater use of photos, video, and interactive features that aren't possible in print.

At the same time, the eBooks can lead students to traditional books. Potter's *Nebraska and the Civil War* is an article-length digest of his 375-page book, *Standing Firmly by the Flag: Nebraska Territory and the Civil War, 1861-1867*. Illustrated and short enough to be read in one sitting, the eBook provides an alternative for younger students who might not be ready for the full-length book, but also refers readers to the printed book if they want to know more about the subject.

The Nebraska Sod House will expose students to cutting edge scholarship in an age-appropriate way. Historians have long known that sod houses originated in Nebraska, but they didn't know how or exactly when. The book uses new research to show how a



Sod houses originated in Nebraska in the nineteenth century. A new eBook from the NSHS tells how.

mountain man named Andrew Sublette brought the idea to Fort Kearny from the Southwest in the 1840s. More importantly, the book answers two important questions: How did we use evidence to figure this out; and, how do we know this story is true?

These new electronic publications continue NSHS's commitment to not only teach kids Nebraska history, but to help them learn how to think like historians by looking at evidence and drawing conclusions. The new technology is exciting, but it's a means to an end: introducing young people to the intellectual skills that make possible the joy of discovery and informed decision making. These are skills they'll use their entire lives as citizens in a democracy. 🌐



Dome Rock, Scottsbluff National Monument.
NSHS RG2528-7-43

Learn Nebraska History in Scottsbluff

If you want to learn more about our state's history and live in the Panhandle, NSHS board member Brian Croft is teaching "History of Nebraska" at Western Nebraska Community College's Scottsbluff campus starting January 15. The class will be held Tuesday evenings 5-7:50 p.m., and can be taken for credit or audited. Olson's *History of Nebraska* and Hickey's *Nebraska Moments* will be the required texts, and *Nebraska History* magazine will be in constant reference, along with historical maps and other documents. Contact Brian at croftb@wncc.net, 308-635-6790. 🌐

Research Grants for 2013

Every year, funds from the NSHS Foundation support one or more \$1,000 grants to researchers working in areas of Nebraska history. Proposals should involve research resources in the NSHS library and archives, and generate results that may be suitable for publication in *Nebraska History* magazine. Send your proposal to David Bristow, Editor, at the return address on this newsletter (or by email to david.bristow@nebraska.gov) by April 1, 2013. We'll announce the winner(s) in May. Grant recipients will then have until April 1, 2014, to complete their manuscripts. See nebraskahistory.org/publish/grants for details. 🌐



Treasures from Nebraska Museums

Selected items from the Civil War Veterans Museum in Nebraska City will be displayed at the Nebraska History Museum from January through March. The CWVM is filled with artifacts and displays relating to Civil War history and to the G.A.R. (The Grand Army of the Republic, a veterans' organization for Union soldiers). It also includes the Ralph Kruger Research Library, containing books, magazines, and videos for visitors who want to learn more about the war or explore genealogical ties to veterans.

The CWVM is at 910 First Corso and is open seasonally from the end of April through the end of October, Friday-Sunday, noon-4 p.m. Admission: \$3 for adults, \$1 for kids 12 and under. www.civilwarmuseumnc.org



The Civil War Veterans Museum is housed in the Nebraska City G.A.R. Hall. One of the few surviving G.A.R. halls in the nation, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



This Southern Cross of Honor, given to John Cooke, is a recent museum acquisition. These awards were given to veterans of the Confederate army by the United Daughters of the Confederacy.



Union medical kit used by a Mr. Kenner during the war.





Opening day of Nebraska's first unicameral legislative session, January 5, 1937.
NSHS RG2183-1937-105-2

Coming in *Nebraska History*

The Nebraska Unicameral has two sets of rules, one written and one unwritten. State Senator Bill Avery describes the latter in “Folkways of a One-House Legislature,” which will appear in the Spring 2013 issue of *Nebraska History*. Avery explains that the informal rules are just as important, if not more so, than the formal rules; they describe what a senator must do in order to work effectively in the Unicameral.

The same issue features pioneering Nebraska naturalist and photographer Frank Shoemaker (1875-1948), whose photos and papers provide a rich record of the state's environmental history; plus an article on Valentine, Nebraska's, Valentine's Day postal cachet, which began in 1941 as a way to promote the town by encouraging people from around the country to send mail to be stamped with a special holiday postmark.

Look for the issue in your mailbox the week of February 4. 📧

Finding Nebraska's Hidden History

Nebraska's human history began with the arrival of the region's first people more than 12,000 years ago. The first 120 centuries of our history is hidden in the soil, existing only as the material remains of people who left no written records.

Archeology is how we uncover that history. Although NSHS has been involved in archeological research for more than a century, for the past twenty-five years identifying archeological sites around the state has been one of the goals of the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office. Prior to 1988, identification of sites resulted from investigations by a variety of federal and state agencies, universities, and archeologists or reports from the public.

These investigations included the Smithsonian River Basin Surveys of the 1950s and '60s, and the Nebraska Department of Roads' Archeological Highway Salvage Program. The Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office surveys are especially valuable for identifying areas where sites are being lost, such as those undergoing urban development and changes in agricultural practices. Surveys are directed to areas that are likely to be rich in archeology, such as near streams and river ways.

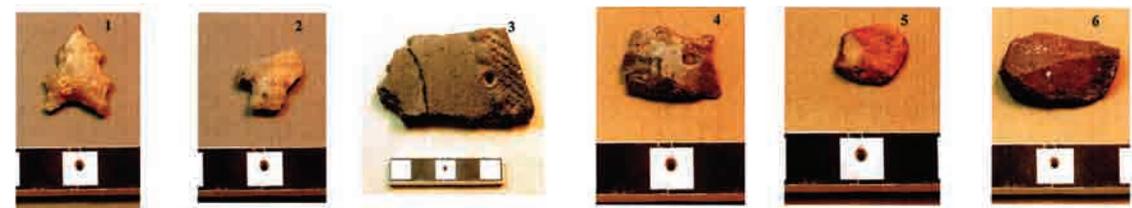
Locating hidden sites is a time-consuming job. Archeologists look for clues to previous occupations

by literally walking back and forth across the surface of the land in specific patterns. They look for the small remains that show on the surface, such as broken pottery, food remains such as mussel shells and animal bones, and (most commonly) small flakes from stone used to make tools. Many sites are buried and can only be found by inspection of stream banks.

Pre-European contact sites aren't the only ones identified. Surveys also record for future study many abandoned European-American period sites.

In twenty-five years since the program began, archeologists have inspected a total of 142,910 acres and identified 2,054 archeological sites, entering the sites on the Master Archeological Site Database maintained by the NSHS. Although the number of acres inspected in this systematic fashion sounds large, it represents less than 0.5 percent of the state. Although over ten thousand sites have been identified through decades of study, thousands remain unidentified.

In 2012-13 the survey is being conducted in Lancaster and Gage Counties. Findings help both the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office and the Nebraska Highway Archeology Program review federal and state projects for impact on archeological sites. And they create ever-growing understanding of the many peoples who have made this place their home over millennia. 📧



Artifacts found on the surface often provide evidence of the age of an archeological site and of the activities once performed there. Here an arrowhead (2) and a piece of pottery (3) suggest a Plains Woodland period of occupation (about 2,000 to 1,000 years ago). The other items indicate drilling (1) and hide or wood scraping (4-6).

Which Baby is the Best?

Baby shows were once a staple of state and local fairs and church festivals in Nebraska. Even private businesses hosted them to draw paying customers into their stores. Reports of such events, which often included the awarding of cash or other prizes to competing youngsters and their mothers, can be found in newspapers from both large and small towns.

The photograph below, from the Solomon D. Butcher Collection at the Nebraska State Historical Society, depicts a group of babies and young children in Broken Bow in 1903. Although the event at which they appeared is not identified, it was probably the



Baby show at Broken Bow. NSHS RG2608-2943

Custer County Fair, held in Broken Bow, September 1-4, 1903, which included a baby show among its advertised attractions. Butcher was at the fair, where he photographed the Hygeia Creamery Company display. The structure in the upper left of the photo appears to be a fair tent. Lawyer Alph Morgan, at left, was posing one of the children when Butcher caught him in the picture.

The *Columbus Journal* on September 23, 1891, reported that a baby carriage was awarded to the winner of a baby show at the recent Platte County Fair. The *McCook Tribune* reported on October 28, 1892, that a contest held at a St. Patrick's Church fair awarded a silver goblet to McCook's most beautiful baby. The *Omaha Daily Bee* reported other such events from around the state, including an 1889 contest sponsored by Omaha's Temple Israel, which used spectator voting to determine "which of two baby candidates is the most popular among the people of Temple Israel." A baby show was planned for the 1889 Adams County Fair, and Nebraska Governor John M. Thayer was invited to judge. The 1893 Douglas County Fair included a baby show with forty entrants. Names of the judges were kept "a deep secret until the time of the contest, in order to keep them free from the preliminary lobbying of the ambitious mothers."

To see a recent NSHS acquisition related to baby contests, turn to the back page. 📖

—Patricia C. Gaster, Assistant Editor

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NSHS Film Series: Pet Films

Free movies at the Nebraska History Museum, Fifteenth & P Streets, Lincoln. Show times are 1:30 p.m. Limited seating available. 402-471-4782

January 20 - *Old Yeller* (1957)

A Walt Disney classic with Omaha native Dorothy McGuire as the mother in a Texas ranch family that adopts a stray dog.

January 27 - *Lassie Come Home* (1943)

The story of the profound bond between a Yorkshire schoolboy played by Roddy McDowall and his collie.

February 3 - *National Velvet* (1944)

Elizabeth Taylor and Mickey Rooney star as young trainers of a horse that they hope to enter into the Grand National race.

February 10 - *The Yearling* (1946)

Based on the best-selling novel by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, a boy's love for his pet fawn leads to complex family conflicts.

February 17 - *Rhubarb!* (1951)

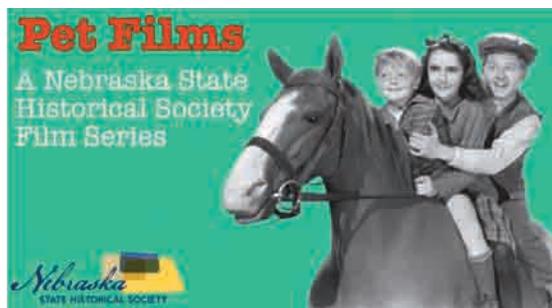
A zany comedy about a cat, Rhubarb, who inherits a baseball team and, as its mascot, leads it toward a pennant.

February 24 - *Babe* (1995)

The story of a pig who wants to be a sheepdog, this Academy Award nominee for Best Picture was a critical and commercial smash.

March 3 - *My Dog Skip* (2000)

Based on Willie Morris's autobiography, this story reflects the positive changes in a boy's life brought about by his dog.



Mickey Rooney (right), Elizabeth Taylor, and Jackie "Butch" Jenkins from *National Velvet*.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted, all events are free and open to the public.



A youngster shows off his valentine made for someone special at the "Be My Valentine" Free Family Workshop, February 12, 2011.

January 17 • 12 noon

Richard Schmeling
"The Shortest Interstate Railroad in America"
Brown Bag Lecture Series
 Nebraska History Museum (NHM), Fifteenth & P streets, Lincoln

January 19 • 2-4 p.m.

"Celebrate National Popcorn Day"
 Learn about raising popcorn in Nebraska and make popcorn crafts.
Free Family Workshop
 NHM • 402-471-4754 • judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

January 20 • 2 p.m.

Ron Hull of NETV will speak on *Backstage*, his autobiography
Sunday Afternoon at the Museum
 John G. Neihardt State Historic Site, Bancroft
 888-777-4667 • www.neihardtcenter.org

February 10 • 2-4 p.m.

"Be My Valentine"
 Make valentines in the style of the mid-1800s and learn about Valentine's Day traditions.
Free Family Workshop
 NHM

February 17 • 2 p.m.

Explore "Abandoned Cemeteries" with Brad Kellogg
Sunday Afternoon at the Museum
 John G. Neihardt State Historic Site

February 21 • 12 noon

Jerry Penry
"Military Air Crashes in Nebraska During World War II"
Brown Bag Lecture Series
 NHM

March 1 - September 3, 2013

Nebraska's Miss America: Teresa Scanlan Exhibition
 NHM • 402-471-4754

March 10 • 2 p.m.

"An Afternoon with Woody Guthrie," Mike Adams and Kathryn Benzel
Sunday Afternoon at the Museum
 John G. Neihardt State Historic Site

March 12 • 10-11 a.m.

Reading *Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote* Hour at the Museum
 NHM • 402-471-4754 • judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

March 16 • 2-4 p.m.

"Celebrate National Quilt Day"
 Learn about quilting and make a paper quilt.
Free Family Workshop • NHM

March 21 • 12 noon

Rob Bozell, NSHS archeologist
"Pawnee Origins"
Brown Bag Lecture Series
 NHM

SAVE THE DATE

April 25-27

"After the Indian Wars"
Ninth Fort Robinson History Conference
 Fort Robinson State Park, Crawford
 (registration required)
 402-471-3272, lana.hatcher@nebraska.gov

See p. 9 for dates of the NSHS Film Series.

For updated events, see the Society's Facebook page, linked from www.nebraskahistory.org



Seventy men clearing railroad tracks after a blizzard on February 2, 1915, in Knox County. NSHS RG21 18-9-23-a



The Schoolchildren's Blizzard, 125 Years Later

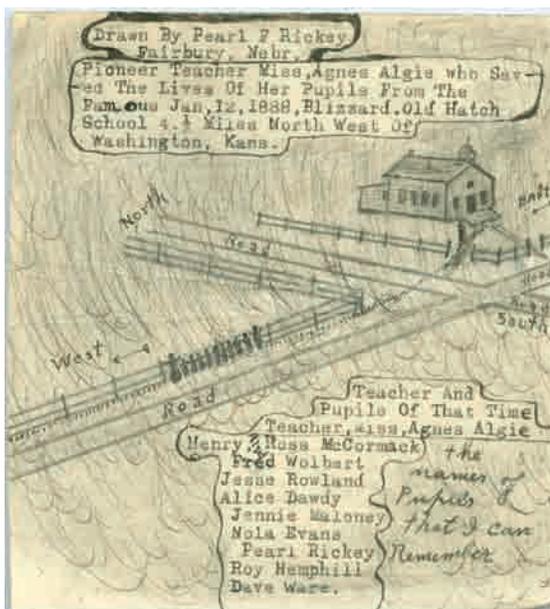
The early settlers of Nebraska faced many hardships, a great number of which were related to weather and climate. Among the most dangerous natural disasters were sudden blizzards on the prairie. This year marks the 125th anniversary of the infamous storm of January 12, 1888.

This blizzard was among Nebraska's worst for a number of reasons: it arrived unexpectedly on what had been a relatively warm winter's day; it struck Nebraska and the Dakota territories during the day while children were at school and farmers were working outdoors; and the fierce winds caused near-zero visibility for hours. Because so many children were trapped in isolated rural schools when the storm struck, it is often referred to as "the schoolchildren's blizzard."

On January 12, 1940, an impromptu get-together of storm survivors was held at the Lindell Hotel in Lincoln, at the urging of W. H. O'Gara, former Speaker of the Nebraska House of Representatives. Attendees voted to make their meeting an annual event, and the January 12, 1888, Blizzard Club was born.

One of the club's major objectives was to collect first-person accounts from storm survivors and publish them in a book. World War II impeded efforts at first, but letters and monetary pledges poured in after the war, and *In All Its Fury* was published in 1947. The book documents many different experiences, among them that of Ellen Rennerfeldt:

"I was out in the blizzard of 1888, and I remember very well how we walked home from school about three o'clock. Our house was about twenty-five rods from the schoolhouse and there was a row of cottonwoods almost all the way and we followed them. The teacher took the lead and I was on the tail end.



Mr. Pearl F. Rickey of Fairbury enclosed this sketch with his January 12, 1945, letter to William O'Gara. NSHS RG3658.AM

"The teacher boarded at our house and we had several of the school children at our house for several days before their parents could come for them.

"My father had been to the mill at Lyons to get wheat ground for flour, and he was caught in the storm. He was driving an old blind mare and a horse hitched to the wagon. The blind mare had been over the road many times without seeing it, so he loosened the reins and let her find the way home; which she did, bringing him to safety."

The club continued to collect stories of this and other Nebraska blizzards. Today, the original letters and official records of the Blizzard Club can be found at the NSHS Library/Archives. 402-471-4751

town. and litted a mule & p...
 the 12 came on Fri. the same as now. I went to school
 that morning. Never got back home until Sun. my
 teacher Miss Agnes Algie saved all us scollars
 by taking us a 1/2 mile West, from the school building
 during the hight of the storm. as we run out of
 fuel. we either had to leave the building or
 freeze to death. my story of that storm was
 1941- by my

An excerpt from Rickey's letter. NSHS RG3658.AM



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402-471-4754

Monday-Friday, 9-4:30
Sat. & Sun., 1-4:30

Museum Store
402-471-3447

Monday-Friday, 10-4:30
Saturday & Sunday, 1-4

Library/Archives
1500 R Street, Lincoln
402-471-4751

Tuesday-Friday, 10-4
Saturday 8-5

See Facebook link at
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From the Collection. . . The Search for Better Babies

Virginia E. Runge received this cup in a Better Babies contest held at the Nebraska State Fair in September 1929. Her first-place win in the Rural Girl category, for girls aged 18 to 27 months, came after the 238 registrants were given physical, mental, dental, and hearing tests by physicians and then scored for points. Virginia, who lived near Malcolm, scored 94.9 percent and received the cup and a prize ribbon, shown in the photograph. Virginia E. Runge Myers recently donated these items to the Nebraska State Historical Society.

The scientific search for “better babies” after 1900 reflected growing interest in child development and concern over high infant mortality in the U.S. Baby shows, long a staple of state and local fairs and church festivals, became contests in which young children were examined for physical and mental development and scored for points. Such contests, popular for a time with parents and the public, tended to foster eugenic ideas, which have since fallen into disfavor.

