

# NEBRASKA history news

Volume 66 / Number 2 / April/May/June 2013

## A Renovated Nebraska History Museum?

Nineteen sixty-seven was the year of Sgt. Pepper, the Summer of Love, and the Jimi Hendrix Experience. It was so long ago that the youth from that time get blank stares from their grandchildren when they mention any of the above.

Another product of that year, the Elks Club building at Fifteenth and P streets in downtown Lincoln, is also showing its age. Since 1983 the building has served as the Nebraska History Museum. It needs critical updates not just to better serve the public, but simply to keep functioning. The NSHS is asking the state legislature to fund a \$7.1 million dollar renovation. In the long run this will be far less expensive than replacing the building (at an estimated cost of more than \$25 million), which will eventually be necessary if it continues to deteriorate.

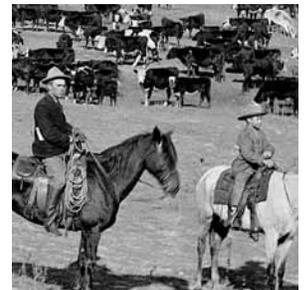
Back in 1997, a facilities master plan identified several "time bombs," including structural issues such as cracking and water infiltration, along with systems degradation. Fifteen years later, a consultant's report concluded that "the facility needs of the museum are reaching a crisis point that cannot be ignored any longer."

Other major issues include:

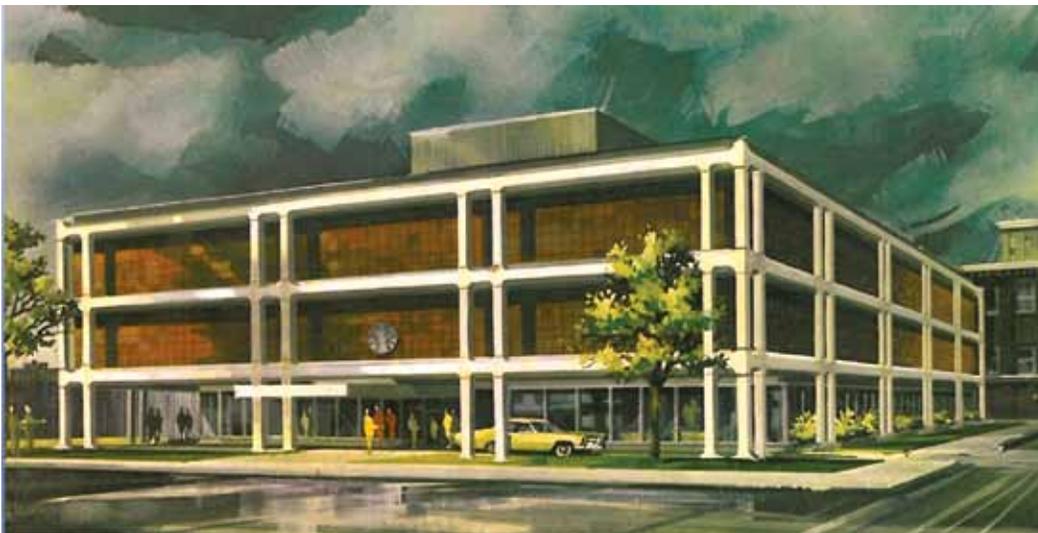
- failure to meet current codes for fire safety or handicap accessibility
- lack of a vapor barrier to help regulate humidity (critical for artifact storage)
- failing electrical systems
- leaky plumbing (which has already damaged valuable collections)
- elevators that are frequently out of service because replacement parts are no longer available

The NSHS maintenance staff has done an outstanding job of keeping the building functional so that most visitors remain unaware of the problems, but even the best crew can only patch up aging systems for so long. The Nebraska Task Force for Building Renewal continues to support these repairs.

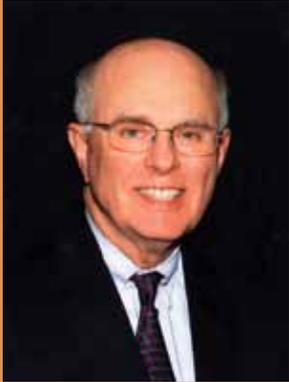
A renovation would also allow for better use of existing space, resulting in more room for activities such as our popular (and therefore crowded) family workshops and other public programming. It would also help the museum



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



Architect's drawing of the Lincoln Elks Club, future home of the Nebraska History Museum, in 1967.



*Heritage tourism offers a new way to encourage visits.*

**Nebraska is a Beautiful State**

Pioneers found the rolling landscape of the prairies both beautiful and frightening. Punctuated with forbs and flowers, the undulating hills of grass were absent trees and other vertical identifiers that gave comfort to people from “back east.” To those whose recent experience had included the ocean voyage from Europe, the endless prairie reminded them of the bounding ocean waves they had endured for weeks.

Today, a century and more since it filled up with homesteaders and others who came west to seek freedom and opportunity, the Nebraska landscape can still be a challenge to the traveler. We have added trees, fences, utility poles, and towering grain elevators to the skyline, but to an untrained eye, the visual effect remains one of endless expanses of grains and pastures.

Thus, it always gives me pleasure when visitors to Nebraska remark on the beauty of our state. In the last three months both my sister from the mountains of Montana and my brother from the limestone hills of northwestern Illinois, have visited Lincoln and then headed south across central Nebraska into Kansas. Both wrote exclaiming on the beauty they had experienced in our state.

Nebraska is a beautiful state, as our state song celebrates. Add to that natural beauty, preserved by our farmers and ranchers, and the history that harkens back to the Indian peoples, fur traders, explorers, settlers of towns and countryside, and we truly live in a place that is blessed.

Today, the NSHS is working hard to ensure that all Nebraskans understand the value of this place in the economic sphere of tourism . . . whether that tourist is a relative or an unknown Iowa or Missouri family seeking a new place to explore. Heritage tourism, like its cousins eco-tourism, agri-tourism and recreational tourism, offers a new way to encourage visits and the economic benefits in room nights, food and fuel sales, and all the other dollars spent by travelers.

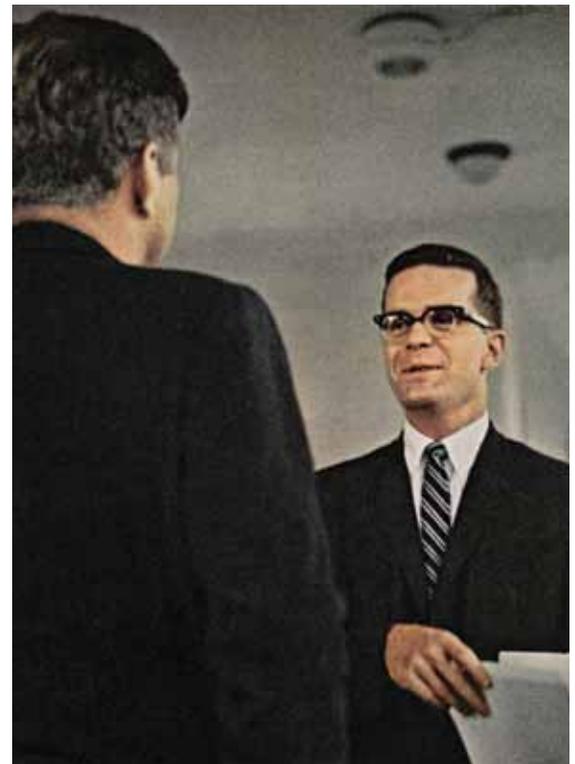
Nebraska has always been a way to the west and back. Today, we want to prove to our fellow Americans and overseas visitors as well, that Nebraska is a place to visit, to pause, to learn, and to enjoy. When we combine our natural and historic resources with the innate hospitality and good-heartedness of our citizens, we are a place hard to beat for a wonderful experience.

*Michael J. Smith*  
Director/CEO

*Continued from p. 1*

keep its prestigious American Alliance of Museums accreditation. Fewer than 5 percent of U.S. museums have achieved this elite ranking; the NHM is up for re-accreditation in eight years.

Nebraskans expect the NSHS to provide access to and protection of cultural heritage collections. They expect to have a state history museum that maintains its national accreditation standards. And they expect efficient delivery of exhibitions and programs that explain the past and point Nebraskans toward their futures. Time passes; people age and so do buildings. But we hope to renovate the museum so that it can serve another generation of Nebraskans. 🍷



**Ted Sorensen confers with his boss, President John F. Kennedy. The January 2, 1962, LOOK article called Sorensen “Kennedy’s closest advisor.”** Photo by Philippe Halsman

## “Sixties Survivors”: Nebraskan Revisits *LOOK* Magazine

For over three decades *LOOK* magazine was the window on America. Beginning in 1937 this large format magazine combined compelling photographs with short articles that brought us face to face with our culture and politics.

Nebraska historian Bill Ganzel is at work to turn that window on America into a time machine. When *LOOK* finally closed its doors in 1971, it donated about three million items to the Library of Congress. That is where Ganzel’s journey began.

He realized that the 1960s was pivotal in the history of America in the last half of the twentieth century. He conceived “Sixties Survivors” in 2005. The project aims to find people whose stories appeared in *LOOK* and, with images and oral histories, bring their stories to the present.

This kind of project is not new to Ganzel. In the 1970s he set out to find the people and places photographed by the Farm Securities Administration during the Great Depression. His interviews and photographs came together with the FSA icons in his important book, *Dustbowl Descent*.

Ganzel began his project by collecting and cataloging 306 issues of the magazine, scanning images

and building a database to help organize the content by people, places, and topics. Then, with funding from the Cooper Foundation, Ganzel began pre-production work and did his first interview in March of 2006.

That first interview was appropriately with Nebraskan Ted Sorensen. He was profiled in *LOOK* in 1962 in a piece exploring the “big wheels” in the administration of President John F. Kennedy.

To date Ganzel has completed twenty-five interviews, some with well-known figures like Jesse Jackson and Newton Minnow, others with people who went on to lives out of the limelight. There are many more interviews to be done, and Ganzel is scarcely halfway through his list. He has been supported with grants from the Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Arts Council, plus a number of private benefactors.

Ganzel’s plans for the project include a website (which is now available as a work-in-progress at [sixtiessurvivors.org](http://sixtiessurvivors.org) and [sixtiessurvivors.tumblr.com](http://sixtiessurvivors.tumblr.com)), a book, a television documentary, and perhaps a traveling exhibition. Most important, Ganzel plans to deposit all of the materials he has collected with the Library of Congress as a complement to the immense collection of materials it now holds. 📖



In the summer of 2006, Ted Sorensen kept Nebraska political activists hanging on every word at a fundraiser for U.S. Senator Ben Nelson. Photo by Bill Ganzel

## Nebraska Roundups in the 1870s

By the mid-1870s Nebraska's open-range cattle industry, centered in the western Platte Valley and the Panhandle, was experiencing growing pains. Concerns included introduction of Texas cattle to supply the Indian agencies, unregulated "round-ups" that caused ownership disputes (in winter, long hair made brands hard to see), and bulls running at large year round. These problems prompted cattlemen to meet at Ogallala on February 11, 1875, to organize "The Stock-Growers Association of Western Nebraska" encompassing Lincoln, Keith, and Cheyenne counties and all unorganized territory lying to the north. The association asked the state legislature to authorize stock inspectors and limit the roundup period to May 15 through November 15. The law was promptly passed.

The association drafted a constitution and by-laws, membership qualifications (ownership of at least 100 cattle), and organized the first official "round-up" to begin May 15, 1875. It would commence at Sidney. "The course to be pursued from Sidney shall be up Pole Creek to Pine Bluff, thence to Creighton's herd on Horse Creek." The round-up would then work east down both the South and North Platte rivers. At the same time another party would start from Nichols Station on the Union Pacific Railroad west of North Platte and proceed west along the two rivers. "They will work the cattle as far up as Ash Hollow." By June 24, the North Platte *Western Nebraskian* could report, "Thus far, the round up has been very satisfactory in every respect."

Lee Brothers Ranch, 1900.  
RG2608-1837



The association soon adopted more detailed rules. In 1876 the stockmen were to assemble at Nichols Station on May 20. Then, "the round-up will proceed west until they reach Ogallala at which point a sufficient force shall be stationed to keep all cattle west of that point that have not been rounded-up. From thence, the party will proceed west until they meet the party conducting the Cheyenne County round-up." For the first time the association specified the number of men each member was to furnish, based on the number of cattle owned. A member with 100 cattle had to provide one man; those owning from 2,500 to 3,000 cattle were to furnish nine men. One additional cowhand was requested for each 100 head exceeding 3,000.

An eyewitness account of the 1876 roundup appeared in the North Platte *Western Nebraskian*, June 17, 1876, under the headline, "The Round-Up; A Graphic Description by one that has often been with the Cow-Boys; An Annual Scene in Western Nebraska."

"... The cattle [were] sighted, scattered here and there in bunches, ranging from five to two hundred head, which at sight of a horseman would break and run. Then comes the excitement—up gulch, down canyons, over hills and table-lands, on a long steady run, in their vain efforts to escape from the boys who are pursuing them, horses and riders equally thrilled with the excitement of the chase; 'tis grand, exhilarating, and as the cattle are overtaken, checked and put with another bunch or bunches, they are then driven to the rodeo ground. Then comes the separation or 'cutting.' A band of a thousand head [is] surrounded by twenty horsemen or more. One party, employees of the owner, enter the herd, select the animals bearing the owner's brand and mark, cutting each animal from the main herd and making a bunch of that brand until all are separated. This 'cutting' is exciting work. Now going at full speed as the animal makes an effort to get again with the main bunch; now stopping and wheeling as quick as a flash of lightning, dodging, twisting, until the animal perceives the folly of its efforts and permits itself to be driven to the bunch or brand where it belongs. No horsemanship can excel that which is displayed by an experienced cow-boy. As they dash over the rough prairie at the top of their mustang's speed, [avoiding] great numbers of holes, the work of prairie dogs and our family of subsoilers, the utter disregard of their peril is something as courageous as it is rash. The training of the 'cutting' horses is something wonderful. No matter what distance the cutting horse has traveled, how fatigued it may be, the moment you ride it into the herd every muscle, every faculty, is on the alert and the intelligence they display is something almost human;

and occasionally you hear a cow-boy speaking of his favorite, 'He knows more than most of men,' is the usual expression.

"All the cattle separated, each man holds his brand separate, another bunch is gathered and separated until night. . . . Such is the routine, each day having its incidents. In case of dispute as to who owns an animal, the animal is lassoed, thrown down, and all marks examined and the ownership is readily proven. A great many true gentlemen can be found among these wild fellows, men that are honest, intelligent, and when one offers his friendship, it is a friendship that will stand all tests." ❁

— James E. Potter

*A new exhibit about Nebraska cowboys will open at the Nebraska History Museum in September.*

## Henry Allen Brainerd, Nebraska's Press Historian

Henry Allen Brainerd, as Nebraska's unofficial press historian, spent the last twenty years of his life (most of the 1920s and 1930s) in collecting memorabilia and related photographs of the newspaper history of this state. His detailed, antiquarian research was first displayed in the Nebraska State Historical Society's exhibit space in the third and present State Capitol building in Lincoln, completed in 1932. After his death in 1940, some of the material was acquired by the NSHS.

Brainerd was born November 4, 1857, in Boston. He and his family left after an 1872 fire destroyed much of the city, and settled in Providence, Rhode Island. There Brainerd attended business college and took classes at Brown University. He spent several years as a tramp printer before arriving in Lincoln in the early 1880s, where his employers included the *Nebraska State Journal*. He was in Omaha in 1884, where he worked on the *Omaha Bee* and the *Omaha World*, before returning to Lincoln, and then moving on to Milford about 1885.

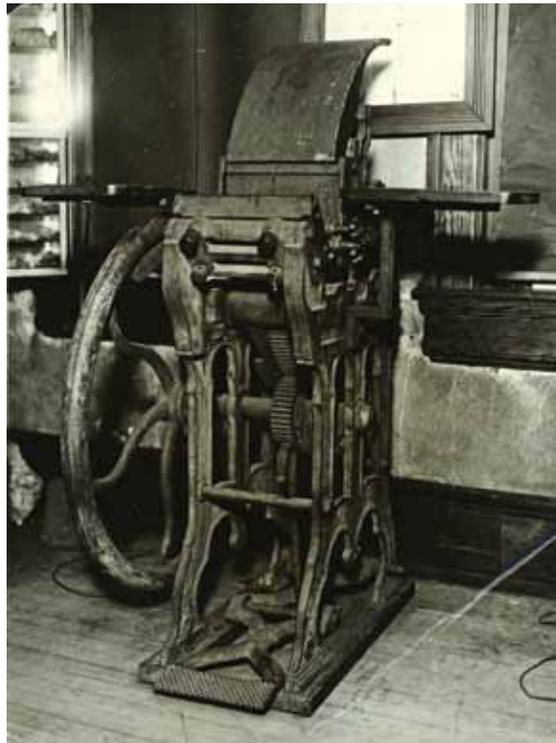
In Milford Brainerd worked for a country weekly, the *Milford Nebraskan* (previously the *Milford Ozone*), edited by Harry C. Hensel. During his subsequent newspaper career, Brainerd sometimes supplied papers for smaller communities by issuing them from his main office in another town, an idea he attributed to Hensel. The *Pleasant Dale Quiz*, for example, was published from the office of the *Milford Nebraskan*; the *Panama Union* from the office of the *Bennet Union*; and the *Byron Herald* from that of the *Chester Herald*. Brainerd also had interests in newspapers at Beaver Crossing and Sutton. His longest continuous associations were with the *Chester Herald*, 1896-1906, and the *Hebron Champion*, 1905-1915.

After the sale of the *Champion* in November 1915, Brainerd moved from Hebron to Lincoln. Always a booster of civic and patriotic organizations, he was an enthusiastic member of the Lincoln Home Guards during the World War I era. He was a regular contributor to the "People's Forum" column of the *Lincoln Star* on many topics, including high prices, especially of coal, sugar, and streetcar fares; the lack of parking in downtown Lincoln; and the importance of the Home Guard in maintaining military preparedness.

Beginning in May 1919 a bout with several illnesses left Brainerd temporarily blind. A partial recovery of his sight after an operation enabled him to resume some work, which then centered on collecting and compiling the state's press history. The Nebraska Press Association had elected Brainerd its president in 1914 while he was editor of the *Hebron Champion*, and later made him unofficial press historian. He was the author of a history of the NPA, published in 1923.

Much of the material Brainerd assembled was displayed in the space allotted the NSHS in the third State Capitol building, completed in December of 1932. The NPA's historical exhibit was one of the first major displays to be installed and featured over three thousand items on cardboard backing. Brainerd was given the use of a walnut desk formerly owned by Nebraska Governor Robert W. Furnas. There he filed and arranged his collection of press clippings, photographs, and other memorabilia relating to the state's press history. He died on November 20, 1940. ❁

—Patricia C. Gaster



Brainerd donated a Gordon press used by him to the NSHS. It is now on loan to the International Printing Museum in Carson, California. RG3161-14-2

THE NINTH FORT ROBINSON  
HISTORY CONFERENCE

**AFTER THE INDIAN WARS:  
PEOPLE, PLACES, AND EPISODES**

APRIL 25-27, 2013

*Sponsored by the Nebraska State Historical Society  
and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission*

*Camp near Pine Ridge Agency,  
November 1890. NSHS RG2845-6-9*

**Last Call! Register for Fort Robinson  
Conference by April 6**

“After the Indian Wars: People, Places, and Episodes,” the Ninth Fort Robinson History Conference, will be held April 25-27, 2013, at Fort Robinson State Park. Co-sponsored by the NSHS and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the conference will focus on the aftermath of what has been termed “the Great Sioux War of 1876-77.” A schedule of events and form for registration (required by April 6) is posted at [nebraskahistory.org](http://nebraskahistory.org) under “What’s New.” Don’t delay: the previous conference sold out. 402-471-3272 ☒

**Become a Trustee**

Would you like to help lead the NSHS as a member of the Board of Trustees? Board application materials are available at [nebraskahistory.org/admin/board](http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/board). Or just go to our home page, type “board” in the search box, and click on the first link that appears. Twelve trustees are elected by NSHS members; three seats are up for election in 2013. To be considered for the nominating committee’s slate of candidates, submit your application by June 12. Additional candidates may submit applications up to 5 p.m., August 12, 2013. ☒

**The 2013 NSHS Board of Trustees, left to right:**  
Bryan Zimmer, Taylor Keen, Steffan Baker, Sheryl Schmeckpeper, Brian Croft, Jose Garcia, Spencer Davis, Kay Kimberly, Dee Adams, Dan Holz, Cloyd Clark, Jeff Barnes, Roger Wehrbein, Sharif Liwaru.  
**Absent:** Jim McKee



**NSHS Seeks Award Nominees**

Who is making a difference in Nebraska history? We’re seeking nominations for our annual awards, which recognize outstanding achievement in preserving, interpreting, and educating people about the history of the state. Award plaques will be presented at the NSHS annual meeting on October 11 in Lincoln. Winners are selected by the NSHS awards committee.

See [nebraskahistory.org/admin/awards/nominations.htm](http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/awards/nominations.htm) for criteria and the nomination form. The nomination deadline is April 5 at 5 p.m. If you have questions, contact Martha Kimball ([martha.kimball@nebraska.gov](mailto:martha.kimball@nebraska.gov), 402-471-4746, or 800-833-6747). Here are the awards for which we are seeking nominations:

The **Addison E. Sheldon Memorial Award** recognizes “outstanding contributions to preservation and interpretation in the field of Nebraska history.” Individuals or organizations may qualify for the award for long-term contributions to history or for an important one-time accomplishment. Former Society employees as well as current and retired board members are eligible.

The **Robert W. Furnas Memorial Award** recognizes outstanding contributions or assistance to the Nebraska State Historical Society in the form of either long-term service or a significant one-time contribution by an individual or organization.

The **James C. Olson Memorial Award** goes to a Nebraska K-12 teacher for outstanding success in engaging, inspiring, and guiding students to discover, enjoy, and learn from the fascinating and important histories of Nebraska’s people. The award is limited to K-12 teachers who encourage and support their students in endeavors such as History Day, who use documents, oral history, or place in classroom projects, or who employ other imaginative or innovative methods to make Nebraska history come alive for their students. ☒



## Treasures from Nebraska Museums

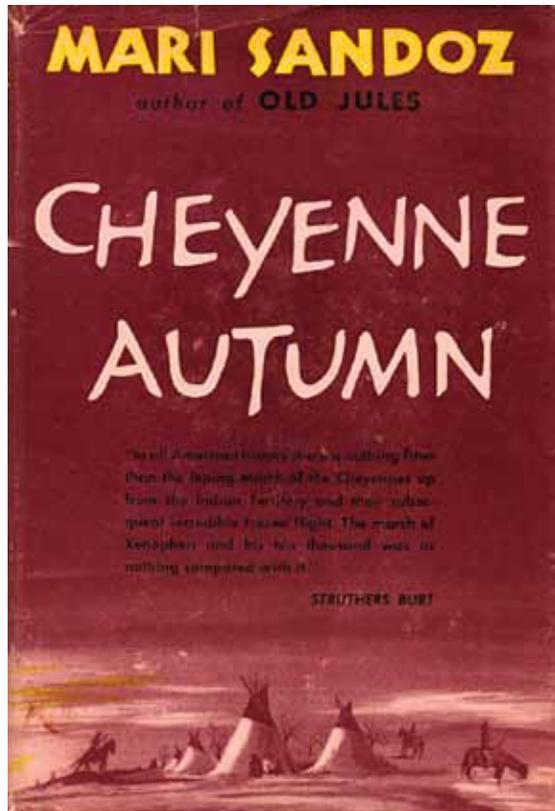
Selected items from the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center in Chadron will be displayed at the Nebraska History Museum from April through June. The Center celebrates the life and literature of Mari Sandoz and the culture of the High Plains through the acquisition, preservation, display, and interpretation of archival materials, records, documents, books, specimens, and artifacts of this region. The Center features exhibit galleries, a preservation/preparation workroom equipped with a digital imaging laboratory, and an archival library. It is a part of and supported by Chadron State College.

Items on display will include Mari Sandoz's book, *Cheyenne Autumn*, which was first published in 1953, and celebrates its sixtieth anniversary this year. The book tells the story of the Northern Cheyennes' 1,500-mile flight from Indian Territory, where they had been sent by the U.S. Government, to their homeland in Yellowstone country.

The book was made into a movie, directed by John Ford, in 1964. Photo stills from the film will be displayed. The film was nominated for an Academy Award for cinematography, but Mari Sandoz hated it. She asked to have her name removed from the credits and refused to allow any of her other works to be made into movies.

The Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center is located at 1000 Main Street, on the Chadron State College campus. Hours are Monday–Friday 8:00 to 12:00 and 1:00 to 4:00; and Saturday 9:00 to 12:00 and 1:00 to 4:00. The Center is closed on Chadron State College holidays. There is no admission fee, but donations are welcomed. For more information see [www.sandozcenter.com](http://www.sandozcenter.com) or call 308-432-6401. ☎

Photo still from the 1964 motion picture, *Cheyenne Autumn*, based on Sandoz's book. Though it was nominated for an Academy Award, the movie proved unpopular with audiences (and with Sandoz herself), and *Mad* magazine parodied it as "Cheyenne Awwful."



An early edition of Mari Sandoz's 1953 book *Cheyenne Autumn*.

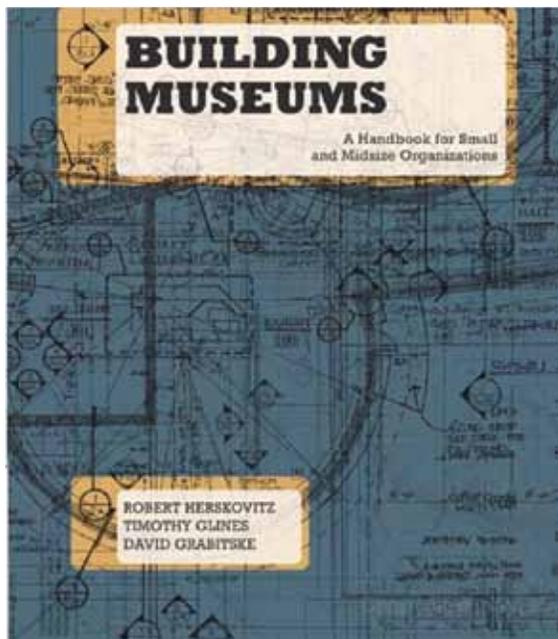


## Building Museums: New Book for History Organizations

Is your museum building or remodeling? History organizations in Nebraska would do well to invest in a book published in 2012 by the Minnesota Historical Society Press.

*Building Museums: A Handbook for Small and Midsize Organizations* by Robert Herskovitz, Timothy Glines, and David Grabitske offers a sound and logical approach to building, expanding and/or remodeling museums. The authors, all veteran staff members of the Minnesota Historical Society, lead readers through projects from pre-planning, to design, funding, and executing the work. They provide guidance on such technical issues as internal environmental standards, lighting, managing outside contractors, and even how to organize a move into the new space.

This is excellent and wise reading for an organization, whether it is considering its first foray into building a museum or whether it is doing a second or third addition to the museum. It is helpful whether a new structure is being contemplated or the museum is looking to reposition an historic building.



The book is available from the Minnesota Historical Society Press ([shop.mhspress.org](http://shop.mhspress.org)). The cost is \$29.95 and is well worth it. 📖

## NSHS Hosts Promotion Ceremony

On February 1, U.S. Marine Jared Fendrick stood with comrades, friends, and family at the Nebraska History Museum as he was promoted to the rank of Gunnery Sergeant. Fendrick chose to have the ceremony next to the World War II exhibit, and that is appropriate. Our military today stands on the shoulders of those who served before, and the ceremony reminds us that the present is intimately connected to the past. The NSHS was proud to host the event, and thanks Gunnery Sgt. Fendrick and his fellow Marines for their service. 🇺🇸



## First Annual Historic Preservation Conference, June 14

*Building Community: Preservation is Place*

Preservation is all about place. We define the uniqueness and character of our communities by our historic places. Nebraska's first annual historic preservation conference will explore the relationship between place and memory and the way we can build stronger communities with the stories of our past. Sponsored by the NSHS, *Building Community: Preservation is Place* will be held June 14 at the Fort Omaha Campus of Metropolitan Community College, Omaha.

Sessions will highlight neighborhood and downtown preservation projects, the economic benefits of preservation at the local level, and how preservation can help characterize our communities. The conference will offer valuable information to preservation advocates, planners, local government officials, realtors, developers, architects, and community development officials. Network with people who recognize its importance.



Built in 1888, the Johnson County Courthouse in Tecumseh is built of cherry red St. Joseph brick and Nemaha County limestone. It is an excellent example of the County Capitol style with Romanesque Revival influence.

Preservation is place-making. The conference promises to be an opportunity to learn more about how your community can discover, retain, and enhance its identity. See [nebraskahistory.org/histpres](http://nebraskahistory.org/histpres) for more information. 📍

## Nebraska Authors Featured in Two Spring Conferences

The John G. Neihardt State Historic Site in Bancroft will host its annual Spring Conference on April 27. This year's theme is "Neihardt and Education on the Great Plains." Speakers will include Dr. Joseph Weixelman, professor of American history at Wayne State College; Dr. James Work, American literature professor emeritus from Colorado State University; Joe Green, a Minden high school teacher; Jerome Kills Small, a Dakota/Lakota language and cultures teacher retired from the University of South Dakota; and Nancy Carlson,



Nebraska authors John G. Neihardt and Mari Sandoz.  
RG1042-21-2

archeologist and curator at the Genoa Indian School museum. Moderator for the conference will be Neihardt Board of Directors member Tim Anderson, professor of journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. [www.neihardtcenter.org](http://www.neihardtcenter.org)

The Cather Foundation will host its annual Willa Cather Spring Conference at the Cather Historic Site in Red Cloud May 31-June 1. This year's theme is Cather's novel *O Pioneers!* and the centennial of its publication in 1913. Dan O'Brien, author of *Buffalo for the Broken Heart*, will be the keynote speaker, and Food Network's Kent Rollins will serve a chuck-wagon dinner on the Cather Prairie, as conference attendees explore the roles that mentorship and the land played in Cather's writing of *O Pioneers!* [www.willacather.org](http://www.willacather.org)

A celebration of the taming of the American prairie, *O Pioneers!* was also chosen for the 2013 "One Book One Nebraska," a statewide reading program sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Humanities Council, Nebraska Library Association, Nebraska Library Commission, the Willa Cather Foundation, and the University of Nebraska Press. The program encourages Nebraskans to read and discuss one book, chosen from books written by Nebraska authors or that have a Nebraska theme or setting. [www.one-book.nebraska.gov](http://www.one-book.nebraska.gov)

The historic sites are administered by the Neihardt and Cather foundations, respectively, under contract with the Nebraska State Historical Society. 📍



Willa Cather on December 7, 1936. The Nebraska History Museum is offering *O Pioneers!* museum tours to groups. Contact [judy.keefle@nebraska.gov](mailto:judy.keefle@nebraska.gov) or call 402-471-4757.  
RG1951-17

# UPCOMING EVENTS

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



The Farmer's and Merchant's Bank in Red Cloud is part of the Willa Cather Thematic Group on the National Register of Historic Places. RG1951-905

**April 7 • 2-4 p.m.**

**"Celebrate World Health Day"**

**Free Family Workshop**

Nebraska History Museum (NHM), 15th & P streets, Lincoln  
402-471-4782 • judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

**April 18 • 12 noon**

Jeff Barnes

**"The Great Plains Guide to Custer"**

**Brown Bag Lecture Series**

NHM

**April 25-27**

**"After the Indian Wars"**

**Ninth Fort Robinson History Conference**

Fort Robinson State Park, Crawford

(registration required)

402-471-3272 • www.nebraskahistory.org

**April 27**

**"Neihardt and Education on the Great Plains"**

**Annual Neihardt Spring Conference**

John G. Neihardt State Historic Site, Bancroft

(registration required)

402-648-3388, www.neihardtcenter.org

**May 11 • 2-4 p.m.**

**"Make a Duck Tape Flower for Mother"**

**Free Family Workshop**

NHM • 402-471-4782 • judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

**May 16 • 12 noon**

Paul Hedren

**"Captain Jack Crawford"**

**Brown Bag Lecture Series**

NHM

**May 28 • 10-11 a.m.**

**Picture book readings with related activities  
for all ages**

**Hour at the Museum**

NHM • 402-471-4782 • judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

**May 31-June 1**

**Centennial celebration of *O Pioneers!***

**58th Annual Willa Cather Spring Conference**

Willa Cather State Historic Site, Red Cloud

(registration required)

866-731-7304 • www.willacather.org

**June 4, 11, 18, & 25 • 10-11 a.m.**

**Picture book readings with related activities  
for all ages**

**Hour at the Museum**

NHM • 402-471-4782 • judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

**June 5 • 9:30-12 noon**

**"Half-Pint Homesteaders"**

**Summer Classes for Kids**

NHM (registration required)

402-471-4782 • judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

**June 11, 12, & 13 • 9:30-12 noon**

**"Nebraska in the Civil War, 1863"**

**Summer Classes for Kids**

NHM (registration required)

402-471-4782 • judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

**June 14**

**"Building Community: Preservation is Place"**

**First Annual Historic Preservation Conference**

Metropolitan Community College, Fort Omaha Campus

(registration required)

nebraskahistory.org/histpres

**June 18 • 9:30-12 noon**

**"Making Baskets"**

**Summer Classes for Kids**

NHM (registration required)

402-471-4782, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

**June 20 • 12 noon**

John Carter, NSHS Publications Division

**"A New Look at the Old Sod House"**

**Brown Bag Lecture Series**

NHM

**June 26 • 9:30-12 noon; 1:30-4 p.m.**

**"Duck Tape Creations"**

**Summer Classes for Kids**

NHM (registration required)

402-471-4782 • judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

**June 27 & 28 • 9:30-12 noon**

**"Pioneer Puppet Play"**

**Summer Classes for Kids**

NHM (registration required)

402-471-4782 • judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

For updated events, see the Society's Facebook page,  
linked from [www.nebraskahistory.org](http://www.nebraskahistory.org)



## In Memoriam: Robert C. Pettit, 1936-2012

The Nebraska State Historical Society lost a retired staff member, longtime collections curator Robert C. Pettit, on December 2, 2012. A lifelong Lincoln resident, Pettit was a U.S. military veteran. He began working part time with the NSHS as a student in the late 1950s and became a regular employee in April 1965. At the time of his retirement in September of 2001, he had thirty-six years of service, more than any other staff member.

In 2002, he was awarded the Robert W. Furnas Award for outstanding contributions to the NSHS. It is estimated that he cataloged tens of thousands of items during his career. In addition to assembling knowledge about the objects in the collections, Pettit oversaw the first computerization of collections records. He donated more than two hundred objects to the NSHS.

After his retirement, Pettit volunteered in the Collections Division at the Nebraska History Museum, assisting with scanning projects. He continued to be a source of knowledge about NSHS institutional history and frequently provided staff with information about collections that were acquired during his



Bob Pettit at the NSHS in 1967.

career. He will be missed by the many staffers who enjoyed his quiet sense of humor and benefited from his incredible recall.

Survivors include a niece, Linda Seugling, New Jersey; a grand niece, Kathy Montgomery, Idaho; and cousins Eric and Frank Umland, both of Eagle; Bill Umland, Palmyra; Craig Umland, Lincoln; Arthur Umland, Hartford, South Dakota; Yvonne Jameson, Kansas City, Missouri; and Mary Damon, Princeton, Illinois. ☒

## Coming in *Nebraska History*

On March 1, the Nebraska History Museum opened a new exhibit, *Nebraska's Miss America: Teresa Scanlan*. Four decades earlier, Jeanine Giller of Omaha represented Nebraska in the Miss America pageant. Though Giller didn't win, her story is a window into the controversies surrounding the pageant in the early seventies. Historians David Turpie and Shannon Risk explore the issues in "Definitely Representative of Nebraska": Jeanine Giller, Miss Nebraska 1972, and the Politics of Beauty Pageants," coming in the Summer 2013 issue of *Nebraska History*.

In the same issue, Pat Gaster examines an infamous 1884 Nebraska newspaper hoax, involving the *Nebraska State Journal's* report of a "blazing aerolite . . . evidently a machine of human manufacture" which supposedly crashed in Dundy County. The incident reveals much about nineteenth century journalism as well as the Great Plains tall tale tradition. Paul Putz, meanwhile, provides a biographical sketch of the Rev. Charles Savidge, an influential Omaha pastor and social reformer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. ☒

## Summer Fun for Kids at the Nebraska History Museum

The NSHS will host classes for students in grades K-8 again this summer. June classes will include: "Half-Pint Homesteaders," June 5; "Nebraska in the Civil War, 1863," June 11, 12, and 13; "Making Baskets," June 18; "Duck Tape Creations," June 26; and "Pioneer Puppet Play," June 27 and 28.

June classes will meet from 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon at the Nebraska History Museum, Fifteenth & P streets, Lincoln. Registration is required, and all registrations are on a first-come, first-served basis. Watch for more details and later summer offerings at [nebraskahistory.org](http://nebraskahistory.org) and on our Facebook page. ☒

Civil War class in 2012.



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# hours

## Nebraska History Museum

15 & P Streets, Lincoln  
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  
[nebraskahistory.org](http://nebraskahistory.org)

facebook

State Historic Site hours:  
[www.nebraskahistory.org](http://www.nebraskahistory.org)

# NEBRASKA history news

Nebraska State Historical Society

## From the Collection. . .

### Eddie Rickenbacker in Omaha

As a former Nebraska resident, World War I flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker is listed with other Medal of Honor recipients in the Nebraska Hall of Fame. He was the most successful U.S. fighter pilot of the war, credited with twenty-six aerial victories. Years earlier, he was selling cars in Omaha when he took up auto racing. At his first race in Red Oak, Iowa, in 1910, he crashed through a fence and rolled his car, but escaped with cuts and bruises. A week later he won three races.

Soon Rickenbacker was a fixture at dirt tracks within a hundred-mile radius of Omaha, “some so primitive they were virtual death traps,” in the words of biographer W. David Lewis. Omaha opened a speedway that year at an old fairground on Leavenworth Street. By the time of this 1915 photo (recently acquired

by the NSHS) Rickenbacker was known as “King of the Dirt-Track Racers.” He set a new local record in Omaha that summer, reaching 102 mph in qualifying heats. “He’s a driving fiend, and he knows the Omaha track as none of the others do,” said one writer.

Rickenbacker’s racing career ended with U.S. entry into World War I. But the rest, as they say, is history. 🇺🇸

