History on the Plains

As we have done for more than thirteen decades, the Nebraska State Historical Society has spent every working day of the 2012-2013 year collecting and recording stories and documents, researching and interpreting our history, and engaging those who have an interest in the Cornhusker State’s past, present, and future. It is fascinating work in many ways, not the least in that our history is the product of choices made by people of every ethnicity and background.

Students are usually taught Nebraska history in terms of major events and sweeping changes, such as the 1840s rush to Oregon and California, the influx of settlers drawn by the 1862 Homestead Act, the conflict between Native Americans and Euro-Americans across the Plains, the Populist revolt among farmers, the Great Depression, the Civil Rights movement, or the energy crisis.

At the NSHS, however, we also seek out the individual stories that formed the basis of these sweeping trends. We discover the choices that people have made—for example, to move to the Plains, enlist in the military, join the Grange or vote the Populist ticket, open a business in the most unlikely of economic times, demonstrate for minority rights, or switch to a smaller car. There we find evidence of gritty determination, honor, duty, a desire to benefit one’s family or community rather than oneself. In some way each decision created the Nebraska we know today.

Today, people are involved with the NSHS in many different ways, as members, trustees, staff, volunteers, or donors of historical materials. Others participate by using NSHS museums, archives, publications, or other services. We are all fortunate. Together we are preserving the memory of real people who made a difference.

In every NSHS division and activity during the 2012-2013 year, we have moved forward in our mission to make the past real and accessible. We do this for the best of purposes: to foster an understanding of this place, Nebraska, and of ourselves as Nebraskans, to enable our statewide community to make decisions for the benefit of people today and of generations yet to come. We are thankful for the opportunity to serve in this unique manner. Thank you for your continuing support and encouragement.

Sheryl Schmeckpeper
President, NSHS

Michael J. Smith
Director/CEO
NSHS Board of Trustees
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Michael J. Smith, Lincoln, Secretary to the Board

NSHS Annual Awards
People who have made history by helping preserve the past are recognized annually by the NSHS. The 2012 awards were presented October 26, 2012, at the NSHS Annual Meeting and Luncheon in Lincoln:

- **Suzy Giannoble** and **Bonnie Quinn**, both of Lincoln, received the **Robert W. Furnas Memorial Award** for outstanding contributions or assistance to the Nebraska State Historical Society.
- **Gayle Carlson**, recently retired from the NSHS, received the **Asa T. Hill Memorial Award** in recognition of his lifelong work in the field of Great Plains archeology.
- **Dennis N. Mihelich**, Omaha, received the **Addison E. Sheldon Memorial Award** in recognition of his outstanding and long-term contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Nebraska history.
- **David D. Kruger**, Laramie, Wyoming, received the **James L. Sellers Memorial Award** for the best article published in *Nebraska History* during the previous year. His article, “Main Street Empire: J. C. Penney in Nebraska,” appeared in the Summer 2011 issue. The NSHS Foundation, through support of Catherine Sellers Angle, provided a cash prize of $1,000.
- **Restore Omaha**, a volunteer group of architects, architectural historians, conservators, preservation and restoration professionals and enthusiasts in the Omaha community, received the **Nebraska Preservation Award** in honor of educating property owners about how to restore, revive and preserve their historic place or business.
Collections Division

Our staff serves people all over the world who are interested in Nebraska history, helping nearly 10,000 people this past year through our Reference Room, by correspondence, or by phone. Serving genealogists, authors, publishers, and other researchers, the staff provides access to invaluable resources.

Public programming included:
- Talks and/or tours given to groups from the Hillestad Textiles Gallery, History Colorado, Merrill Lynch, the American Quilt Study Group, and Nebraska Wesleyan, to name just a few.
- Brown Bag lectures at the Nebraska History Museum about Nebraska-born illustrator John Falter and Terri Lee dolls.
- A John Falter class for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Three Digital Preservation training webinars broadcast to more than 100 library and archives professionals in Nebraska and across the United States.
- A Nebraska Educational Television online brown bag lunch in conjunction with the airing of the documentary . . .Until He is Dead: the History of the Nebraska Death Penalty.
- Pet Films, a winter film series at the Nebraska History Museum.
- Curation of the exhibits Nebraska’s Miss America: Teresa Scanlan, Treasures from Nebraska Museums, and Doing Hard Time: Historic Nebraska Mug Shots.
- A Dutch film crew taped part of their program about a Dutch sailor and his family’s connection to Lancaster County in the Reference Room.

Collections Access:
- Collections staff continue to make more records available online through nebraskahistory.org. More than 24,000 object and photograph records, 48,522 library records, and over 1,800 finding aids for the manuscript and government records collections are just a click away.
- Images from our collections continue to be in high demand and have been used in textbooks from as far away as Germany and Denmark.

Acquisition Highlights:
Staff added more than 135 cubic feet of records and more than 2,200 items to our government records, manuscript, archeological, audio visual, library, museum, and photographic collections, including:
- Forty-nine snapshots of Lincoln Telephone company employees on strike in the late 1940s.
- Over 250 boxes of Nebraska State Penitentiary mugshot negatives and identification cards from the 1930s to the 1970s.
The Terri Lee doll company of Lincoln, which manufactured popular dolls in the 1940s and 1950s, was featured in the Nebraska History Museum exhibit, *The Best-Dressed Doll in the World: Nebraska’s Own Terri Lee*, in 2012-2013. *Nebraska History* published an article about the company’s rise and fall written by NSHS Exhibits Coordinator Tina Koepple.

A sellout audience of more than 150 frontier military history buffs packed the Post Playhouse during the Ninth Fort Robinson History Conference, April 25-27, 2013, co-sponsored by the NSHS and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The event featured presentations by top historians, plus guided tours of historic sites.

- Records from the Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women, which has ceased to exist.
- Home movies depicting the groundbreaking, cornerstone laying, and moving of Torahs of the Tifereth Israel Synagogue (Lincoln) from 1954.
- More than sixty-five paper masks made by native Nebraska illustrator and artist Doane Powell. The masks are of celebrities, politicians, and other public figures from the 1930s through the 1950s, and were used in film, theater, and advertising.

**Nebraska History Museum and Historic Sites**

During the year more than 61,400 people visited NSHS historic sites and museums: Nebraska History Museum, Fort Robinson Museum, Chimney Rock National Historic Site, Willa Cather State Historic Site, Thomas P. Kennard House, John G. Neihardt State Historic Site, Neligh Mill State Historic Site, and Senator George W. Norris State Historic Site.

The 1967 building that is home to the Nebraska History Museum is showing its age and facing numerous structural issues and systems degradation. Fortunately, renovation plans are underway. The NSHS received $8 million in state funding: $2 million from the State’s Task Force for Building Renewal and $6 million appropriated by the legislature from general funds. The NSHS hired an architectural/engineering consultant for the project in August 2013.

The space outside the museum has already been transformed. The city completed its renovation of Centennial Mall between O and P streets, widening sidewalks and planting new trees and perennials in front of the museum. Though 15th Street was closed for months, pedestrian access to the museum’s main entrance was maintained throughout the project, which helped the museum to increase its annual attendance by 4 percent this year.

**Exhibitions:**

- *The Best Dressed Doll in the World: Nebraska’s Own Terri Lee* opened at the Nebraska History Museum (NHM) on December 7, 2012, and closed September 2, 2013.
- *Nebraska’s Miss America: Teresa Scanlan* ran from March 1 to September 2, 2013.
- *Quilting on the Frontier: Celebrating 150 years of the Homestead Act* ran from November 5, 2012, through April 15, 2013.
- “We the People”: *The Nebraska Viewpoint* traveled to the Knight Museum in Alliance, the Hastings Museum, and the Morton-James Public Library in Nebraska City, funded by a grant from Humanities Nebraska.
- NHM’s *Treasures from Nebraska Museums* exhibit space showcased objects and documents loaned by Wildwood Historic Center in Nebraska City, the Elkhorn Valley Museum and Research Center in Norfolk, the Civil War Veterans Museum in Nebraska City, and the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center in Chadron.
- Temporary exhibits at NHM continued from 2011-2012 included: *Superheroes and Thugs: The Comic Art of Bob Hall* (through August 4, 2012); *Pioneering Aviators from Flyover Country* (through October
Historic Sites:

- NSHS staff met with representatives of the Northern Cheyenne on April 24, 2013, to discuss interpretation at Fort Robinson. One result, a Cheyenne language video describing the Cheyenne Breakout, has been installed in the 1874 cavalry barracks. We will continue to work together to strengthen Native American interpretation at the site.
- Expanded interpretation at the Fort Robinson History Center: In addition to the two buildings opened for the 2011-12 season, the Veterinary Hospital was open daily during 2012-13, plus a Lakota-style tipi was erected next to the museum for the summer season.
- Five of the Historical Society’s historic sites again participated in the Blue Star Museum program during the summers of 2012 and 2013. This program offers free admission for active duty military personnel and their families to museums and historic sites from Memorial Day through Labor Day and is jointly sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Blue Star Families’ Operation Appreciation.
- Museum staff participated in meetings with Sinclair-Hille Architects to conceptualize an addition to the Chimney Rock Visitor Center. The addition would provide much-needed programming space for the site and would also serve as a shelter during severe weather. The plan has been completed and fundraising is the next step.

Education and Public Programming

- NHM hosted 242 guided tours for school groups, children’s organizations, and adult groups. Museum docents guided most of the tours.
- Staff and docents are also working to bring the museum to distant locations—for example, a new World War II traveling trunk loaned to K-12 classrooms around the state.
- A Celebration of Nebraska Books was held at NHM, November 3, 2012, in partnership with the Nebraska Center for the Book, Humanities Nebraska, and the Nebraska Library Commission.
- NHM continued to host summer classes for kids and Weekend Free Family Fun events.
- Nebraska History Forum “Brown Bag” lectures are held at noon on the third Thursday of the month in the NHM Auditorium. Lectures are taped for broadcast on Lincoln’s public access cable channel and on YouTube.
- Remembrance Day was held at NHM November 17, 2012, in partnership with the Nebraska Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and
State Historic Preservation Office
The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) identifies needs and opportunities to preserve and enhance historic buildings, structures, archeological sites, and cultural landscapes that help define who we are as Nebraskans. The office’s programs are guided by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Plan, and include:

- The Nebraska Historic Resources Survey and Inventory (NeHRSI) is the state’s official database of historic and architectural properties. It has now been electronically scanned, a project which included over 210,000 negatives and over 11,000 paper files. The digitization of the NeHRSI was started in 2010 to better safeguard our inventory of 76,000 surveyed sites in duplicate form and make this huge collection more accessible to the public.
- Certified Local Governments (CLGs) increase local preservation activities and link local governments with a nationwide preservation network. This year the City of Auburn received certification for its local government preservation program. Auburn is the seventh CLG preservation program in Nebraska.
- The NSHS held the first statewide historic preservation conference, Building Community: Preservation is Place-making, at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha on June 14, 2013. One hundred and one people attended the conference, which featured many well-known authorities on preserving a community’s sense of place. The conference budget included grants from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Nebraska Humanities Council. Continuing education credits were certified for architects and planners.
- The Nebraska Historical Marker Program commemorates significant events, people, places, sites, movements, and traditions in Nebraska history. On June 29, 2013, the NSHS dedicated its 500th historical marker which recognized the brick section of the Lincoln Highway near Elkhorn. Over 200 people attended the celebration. Staff worked with the Douglas County Engineer’s office on the erection of the marker and its dedication.

Nebraska State Historic Preservation Board
The board serves in an advisory capacity to the state’s historic preservation program administered by the NSHS. One of the board’s primary responsibilities is review of nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.

Dee Adams, Merna
Nancy Carlson, Genoa
Nancy Gillis, Bancroft
A 2010 flood damaged the 1910 bridge adjacent to the Neligh Mill State Historic Site. In 2013 the 140-foot-long bridge’s south end was lifted by crane so its pilings could be replaced. Workers also rebuilt the timber decking and repaired guardrails. The Neligh Mill bridge is noteworthy as a well-preserved example of a “Pratt Truss” bridge, a mainstay structural type for wagon bridges in Nebraska.

Financial Report: Fiscal Year 2013

Revenues
- State Appropriations 57.60% $3,693,300.82
- Earned Income & Membership 21.47% $1,376,740.14
- Federal Grants & Contracts 13.42% $860,358.14
- NSHS Foundation Support 5.37% $344,622.87
- Donations, Grants & Special Events 2.14% $137,432.30
- Total Revenues $6,412,454.27

Expenditures
- Administrative Services 16.11% $992,590.33
- Museum & Historic Sites 26.15% $1,611,022.94
- Collections 15.17% $934,657.44
- Archeology 9.47% $583,707.94
- Historic Preservation 18.31% $1,127,848.85
- Conservation 8.07% $497,368.44
- Publications 6.72% $414,059.96
- Total Expenditures $6,161,255.90

Michelle Furby, Chief Financial Officer

Archeology

The Nebraska Highway Archeology Program staff was expanded this year to meet the increased workload stemming from federal regulations. This year archeology staff:

- Completed cultural resources investigations on 250 proposed Nebraska Department of Roads projects, including test excavations at four sites.
- Provided more than twenty lectures to the public, school groups, and college classes.
- Completed analysis of artifacts and architectural features and prepared a report on excavations at an 1891 officers’ quarters at Fort Robinson.
- Helped develop and participated in a Boy Scout Explorer Post on archeological research and principles.
- Worked closely with several Native American tribes and the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs regarding repatriation of skeletal remains, as well as ongoing consultation on proposed highway projects.
- Assisted PaleoCultural Research Group with remote sensing and excavations at Fort Clark and the associated Mandan village in North Dakota.
- Taught a course in heritage management archeology at the University of Nebraska.
Consulted with seven law enforcement agencies on inadvertent discovery of bones and testified in a ‘cold case’ murder trial which resulted in a conviction.

Conducted cultural resource surveys for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in Sioux and Banner counties, and for HDR, Inc., in Lincoln County.

Participated on a tour of Nebraska Land Trust easements in the Schramm State Park area, providing talks on the archeological resources of each easement to the trust board.

Noted with pride: the Nebraska Association of Professional Archeologists presented longtime NSHS archeologist Gayle Carlson (retired in 2012) with the William Duncan Strong Award for outstanding contributions to Nebraska archeology.

Publications

Through books, periodicals, and online publications, the NSHS seeks to build the ongoing written record of Nebraska’s history and make it accessible to the public. Major accomplishments:

- *Nebraska’s Post Office Murals: Born of the Depression, Fostered by the New Deal*, by L. Robert Puschendorf, published by the NSHS in November 2012 with the support of James C. and Rhonda Seacrest of Lincoln. The book was named a 2013 Award of Merit winner by the American Association for State and Local History.

- *Standing Firmly by the Flag: Nebraska Territory and the Civil War, 1861-1867*, by James E. Potter, published by the University of Nebraska Press in January 2013. This book by the NSHS’s senior research historian makes a case that Nebraskans participated in the war, and were affected by it, to a much greater extent than previously acknowledged.

- *Nebraska and the Civil War*, by James E. Potter, is the NSHS’s first-ever iBook. Written for students, it was published in cooperation with the Nebraska Department of Education and is available for free download through their website.

- “‘Wearing the Hempen Neck-Tie’: Lynching in Nebraska, 1858-1919,” by James E. Potter (*Nebraska History, Fall 2012*) was named a Spur Award Finalist by the Western Writers of America.

- *First Telegraph Line across the Continent: Charles Brown’s 1861 Diary*, published in 2011 by the NSHS with the support of Ronald K. and Judith M. Parks of Papillion, won the 2012 Nebraska Book Award for Cover/Design/Illustration. The book was designed for the NSHS by Reigert Graphics of Lincoln.

- Thanks to volunteers, *Nebraska History* continues to expand its online presence, with more than 500 full-text articles freely available online, plus a comprehensive (1885-to-present) searchable table of contents with links to articles.
Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, Omaha

Preserving objects of importance to museums, cultural institutions and private citizens, the Ford Center staff evaluates and treats historic and artistic works.

This year staff served 107 clients and treated 334 objects, while also examining and outlining treatment for 447 objects.

Among the more challenging objects treated were large stoneware sculptures by noted Omaha artist Jun Kaneko for an installation in Millennium Park, Chicago.

Other Ford Center highlights:

- Treatment of nearly 100 artifacts for the upcoming cowboy exhibit; 38 small firearms damaged by leaking HVAC equipment at the Nebraska History Museum; several archaeological artifacts from Midwest Archaeological Center; three artifacts from the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site.
- Ford Center conservators continue to contribute to implementation of Nebraska’s Statewide Collections Preservation Plan. Funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the project supports workshop training, collections plan development, and other forms of assistance for small museums, archives, and libraries across Nebraska.
- Paintings conservator Kenneth Bé performed treatments on numerous works for the Geometric Abstraction exhibition at the Sheldon Museum of Art; many works by Council Bluffs native Louis Grell (1887-1960) for an upcoming exhibition; various paintings from NSHS sites; restoration of a seventeenth century Dutch landscape from the Joslyn Art Museum; and onsite work at the Hallmark Corporate Art Collection in Kansas City. Bé also co-taught a course at UNO and was a guest lecturer to the board of the Museum of Nebraska Art, Kearney.
- Outside work by Deb Long, head of objects conservation, included assessments at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, the Missouri State Museum in Jefferson City and The Kansas African American Museum in Wichita, Kansas; she authored components of long-range collections and emergency response plans.
- The Ford Center hosted an open house and a U.S. citizenship naturalization ceremony July 14-15 in honor of the 100th birthday of President Gerald R. Ford, Jr., who was born in a home originally on the site.

NSHS Volunteers

Sharing their passion for history, volunteers with a wide range of skills are vital to our continued work. Students, retirees, and working adults contributed 7,174 recorded hours of service this past year.

* NSHS Board of Trustees
° State Historic Preservation Board

* NHM – Nebraska History Museum, Lincoln

Dee Adams °
Christina Allen, Collections
Anna Allison, Landmark Store
On February 1, 2013, the Nebraska History Museum hosted a promotion ceremony for U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt. Jared Fenrick, who requested to have the ceremony next to the World War II exhibit.

Chimney Rock staff participated in the Bayard Pioneer Days Parade on June 22, 2013, and didn’t miss the opportunity to promote the visitor center. Here, Amanda Gibbs shows off the little wagon that won second place in the parade’s Historical Division.
The NSHS’s popular winter film series has featured a variety of themes over the years. In 2013 it was pets.

Inside the reconstructed 1874 cavalry barracks at Fort Robinson State Park.

Von Innes, Publications
Sally Johnson, Landmark Store
Randy Kane, Fort Robinson History Center
John Kay°
Taylor Keen*
Chloe Kessler, NHM Education
Roger Keetle, NHM Education
Jim Kendrick, NHM Docent
Kay Kimberly*

Penny Lange, NHM Docent
Billie Lefholtz, Kennard House
Mary Lienemann, NHM Docent/Kennard House
Suinne Lind, NHM Docent
Nina Little, Ford Conservation Center
Sharif Liwaru*
Donna Lundberg, Landmark Store

Anna Matthes, NHM Education
Jim McKee*
Georgean McReynolds, NHM Docent
Robert Meininger, Collections
Linda Meyers, Landmark Store
Phil Miller, Administration
Marty Miller, Collections
Cynthia Monroe, Collections
Jennifer Murrish°

Loralee Novak, NHM Docent

Rich Oehlerking, NHM Docent
Linda Oehlerking, NHM Docent

Curt Peacock, Collections
William Peglow, NHM Docent
Elaine Peters, NHM Docent
Robert Peters°
Bob Peterson, NHM Docent

Bonnie Quinn, Publications
Robert Quinn, Collections
Mary Rabenberg, Collections
Barbara Rader, Collections
Elizabeth Rhine, Administration
Jessica Richard, Collections & NHM Education
Jenna Ripke, Administration
Cynthia Rockwell, NHM Docent
Ernie Roberts, Collections
Connor Rodenbaugh, Archeology Research
Madeline Rodenbaugh, Archeology Research
Stephanie Rouse, Historic Preservation

Sheryl Schmeckpeper*
James Schurr, Publications
Gladys Shafer, Kennard House
Rogene Silletto, Landmark Store
Thomas Gage Smith, NHM Education