The story of Nebraska is embodied in the people who have occupied these 77,358 square miles of land for ages. Only a small percentage of those people live here at any one time. When we are gone, a similar small percentage will replace us. Nebraska’s history is both the product of place—the land, water, air, wind, flora and fauna—and the totality of its people: ancient spear-throwers; early hunters and gatherers; planters of maize, beans and squash; buffalo killers; sod-breakers and farmers; merchants and providers of service; educators; preachers; medical providers; those who bury the dead...Taken together, their stories (insofar as we can know them) become our history.

We learn much about this history from documents, buildings, and artifacts, but more important than objects themselves are the ideas found in a place over time. These ideas become shared truths, ideals, and accepted ways of doing things. They become the spirit of a people. This intellectual and emotional process is in some ways akin to a geological process: layer after layer of sediment is laid down and, under the patient influence of time and pressure, becomes the mountains and plains of a later age.

Thus, during the occupancy of this place by several cultures with diverse technologies and ways of looking at the universe, there has developed something we might call “Nebraska-ness.” Never a single way of seeing the world and how to live in it, it is a filling of the human soul and body with the very essence of Nebraska. One can think of it as the spirit of the place.

The Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) gathers evidence of this Nebraska-ness and helps others explore and learn from it. While we often take direct action through historical markers, exhibits, published writings, National Register of Historic Places nominations, etc., we find our greatest accomplishments in opening this history to all, minorities as well as majority members of the served populations. Through the histories of all, we find the common threads of our Nebraska humanity.

The Nebraska State Historical Society works for the people of the state every day. We hear the voices of the past and the present, and with each passing year, we know more about the history of Nebraska and its people. Whether they trod the land 20,000 years ago or have just arrived from foreign soil, Nebraskans over time have created a place worth cherishing and preserving, a state of special value for agriculture and business, a mutually supportive society that seeks to live by its values. History shows us that we have been at times successful and at other times unsuccessful in meeting these ideals. Nevertheless, what motivates the Nebraska State Historical Society, its members, trustees and staff, is commitment to place and people.

To do this we need your assistance. Help us, please, to ensure that all are included in the Nebraska story and that we can continue to open to all the histories of this people. You can begin with a membership in the NSHS and back that up with annual operating support and/or volunteering to assist with NSHS programs.

As we noted, we work for the people, for you. Thank you for giving us that privilege.

With best regards,

Charles K. “Ken” Bunger
President

Michael J. Smith
Director/CEO
PARDON OUR MESS

WHEN THE ARCHIVES AND REFERENCE room at the NSHS Headquarters closed for construction in January 2009, we wondered if we’d hear from irate researchers. Instead, “they tend to feel sorry for us,” said Andrea Faling, associate director of the library/archives.

It’s an inconvenience, but well worth it. The renovation will improve safety conditions by removing asbestos, adding a sprinkler system, and building emergency exits and fire escape stairs. Contractors will replace the heating and air conditioning system (also a fire hazard) and make other improvements.

Because construction bids came in lower than expected, we’re able to do other much-needed work as well, such as cleaning and tuck-pointing the building’s exterior. The

planned $6.2 million renovation is now expected to cost $5 million.

Construction is expected to be complete by fall 2010. The renovation is the building’s largest since opening in 1953, says Charley McWilliams, facilities and maintenance manager for the NSHS.

“The heating system is original, the ceilings are original, some of the lighting is original,” he said.

The project is happening in three phases, allowing staff to remain in whichever section is not being worked on. Phase One involves the basement, the stacks, and the east side of the building, which includes the reference room. Renovators are replacing old ceiling tiles and lights, building a fire escape stairwell and a handicapped-accessible bathroom, and creating new environmental controls in the six floors of the stacks.

Construction will then move to the west side of the building. Phase Two includes building another fire escape stairwell and building a modern loading dock. In addition, renovators will create an open office area in the northwest corner of the second floor and create more offices in the Research and Publications area.

The project will conclude with Phase Three, which will include heating, ventilation and air conditioning work.

Though the makeover is a complicated process, it will make working in the building a better experience for researchers and staff alike.

“We are trying to make the building safer and more accessible for everybody,” McWilliams said. “That’s what it’s all about.”

Stripped to its bones, the Reference Room looks temporarily cave-like.

Below: NSHS Headquarters during recent construction.

While the work goes on, the stacks are kept safely under plastic.

Below: NSHS Headquarters during recent construction.
The Nebraska State Historical Society received national recognition for a teacher training initiative that is transforming the teaching and learning of Nebraska history. For more than a decade, NSHS has partnered with Nebraska Wesleyan University and Lincoln Public Schools in the Nebraska Institute. In September 2008, the American Association for State and Local History honored the NSHS with an Award of Merit.

The Nebraska Institute concept is simple: it provides educators with the tools to infuse Nebraska history and culture into humanities and social sciences curricula K-12. It does so by using historical documents, artifacts, places, and the wisdom of elders in discovering and uncovering the past. By improving what teachers know about our history and cultures, and by enlivening their classrooms with the “stuff” of that history, NSHS and its principal partners are engaged in systemic educational change.

Teachers from over two dozen school districts have received graduate-level training at the yearly summer institute. Participants learn innovative methods for sharing history discoveries with their larger communities. For example, a high school business class researched the history of their town’s only movie theater (then defunct) and created a non-profit corporation to re-open it. Other Nebraska Institute alums have received national recognition for their students’ use of cable media resources in “history fairs” featuring projects by over two hundred students at two partnering middle schools.

Recently, U.S. Department of Education Teaching American History grants have supported teachers in Lincoln and Omaha schools as part of more intensive graduate degree-program work. But over the years Institute participants have come from schools large and small, public and parochial, including a home schooling association.

The Nebraska Institute canon informed a successful application to the National Endowment for the Humanities for its Landmarks in American History teacher workshops, so educators from across the nation participated in 2004. The philosophy of improving teacher knowledge of history, historical evidence, and historians’ skills is spreading beyond Nebraska’s borders.

Still, change has to start locally. Having students consider the fundamental questions “How did I end up here?” and “How did this place get here?” helps build connections between local, state, and national history. Students move from perceiving Nebraska as the middle of nowhere to understanding it as being at the center of many significant parts of the American story.

But investigation requires evidence and skill in its interpretation. The Institute has prompted development of the website nebraskastudies.org, which offers primary source materials and lesson plans. National History Day participation has jumped. A new master’s degree in historical studies at NWU gives K-12 teachers the content knowledge they need in order to be able to teach history well.

The Institute’s most significant outcome is demonstrable improvements in student performance, particularly among minority populations. As teachers enliven their classrooms by using the Institute canon, they engage students in the discovery, rather than recitation, of historical evidence. Thinking like historians gives students and teachers useful tools and knowledge that they can apply far beyond the classroom. Knowing where they come from, and armed with skills in accessing and evaluating information and drawing conclusions, students of Nebraska Institute teachers are better prepared to take their places as citizens in our democracy.
Even a historical society likes a new look now and then. After more than twenty years, we retired the blue “NSHS” logo in favor of an eye-catching design that better represents what we’re all about. The Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation helped make the project a reality through its staff, board, volunteers, and dollars.

Created by Ebbeka Design of Lincoln, the new logo is simultaneously historic and modern. The script font evokes the handwritten word upon which much of our history is based. The abstract Nebraska shape represents the idea of diverse and overlapping regions that form the whole of the state. The colors are inspired by our previous NSHS colors, our state flag and state flower (goldenrod), and the beige of Nebraska’s endless grasslands.

It’s part of a larger effort to spread the word about what the NSHS does and why it matters.

Paintings Conservation Lab

It is quite the shopping list. It includes, among other things: A painting lining table with heated suction capability and canopy (an important piece of equipment for lining and flattening canvasses and securing flaking paint); a Wild/Leica M651 binocular stereoscopic microscope for the magnification of painting surfaces during examination and treatment; two solvent exhaust trunks to expel toxic treatment fumes; a hot air tool used for putting down paint flakes; miscellaneous fabrics, polymers, and other laboratory supplies for lining paintings, framing paintings, and for the completion of conservation treatments; paints, pigments, brushes, assorted hand tools, easels of various sizes used in the treatment of paintings; computers and laboratory furniture; and an array of special lights used in cleaning and retouching paintings.

Put all of these tools in the hands of a highly trained, highly skilled paintings conservator and you have a new paintings conservation laboratory at the Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, one whose service area stretches from the northern border of Texas to the southern border of Canada, and from the Mississippi River west to the east face of the Rocky Mountains. This dramatically expands the Ford Center’s ability to preserve our culture, both artistic and historic, for both museums and individuals.

As you might have guessed, this shopping list had a pretty impressive price tag. Important and substantial support from the Peter Kiewit Foundation, a National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant, and the NSHS Foundation represent an investment not so much in equipment as for the future good of Omaha, Nebraska, and the American West.

The long dreamed of paintings conservation laboratory is now a reality. And it already is making a difference.
THE NSHS, KEN BURNS, AND THE NATIONAL PARKS

The Nebraska State Historical Society doesn’t just tell Nebraska’s story; we use Nebraska to tell America’s story. If you want proof, be sure to watch Ken Burns’s next epic documentary, The National Parks: America’s Best Idea, which airs beginning September 27th on PBS.

While Nebraska has no national park within its borders, it did have two adventurous souls, Edward and Margaret Gehrke, who in 1914 began setting off on expeditions of discovery that led them to many of America’s grandest vistas over the course of their twenty-five years of travel. The Gehrkes recorded their experiences on film and on paper, and today their photographs and diaries are an important part of the holdings of the NSHS. And soon their experiences will become an American archetype, as they grace a substantial part of episode four of The National Parks. They will be the eyes and the voice of America.

Described as an epic story that’s a century long and a continent wide, this visually stunning and emotionally charged documentary will remind us all of the wisdom of those in the past who made us treasure, and thereby share, our great public lands. “Just as many of the lands that make up today’s national parks were the spiritual homes for the indigenous tribes who lived there, they had a profound and often spiritual impact on the settlers who first saw them and on the visionaries who fought tirelessly to preserve them as the common property of the American people,” said Ken Burns. “They saw in them a visual, tangible representation of God’s majesty. Our film celebrates the beauty of these parks and the vision and foresight of the men and women who made sure that this land would be preserved.”

Last October, Burns paid tribute to the NSHS and its work by coming to Lincoln and engaging a spellbound audience in the importance not only of this project, but also of the Society’s ability to tell this story. The Gehrke photographs and narratives are an American one-of-a-kind.

But the evening was also an important opportunity to raise money to support NSHS operations. At Mr. Burns’s suggestion, the funds from the event have been set aside to support the manuscript and photographic collections held by the NSHS. A very nice compliment indeed from America’s Storyteller.

Be sure to watch this powerful documentary when it airs. And be prepared to be proud of Nebraska and its rich and important history.
The NSHS annually recognizes individuals or organizations for contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Nebraska history. The 2008 awards were presented October 10, 2008, in conjunction with the NSHS annual meeting in Lincoln.

The **Robert W. Furnas Award** for significant contributions to the NSHS went to Cynthia E. Monroe, Lincoln, for decades of service. She served on the Board of Trustees, is an active volunteer, and stimulated efforts which evolved into Nebraska cemetery registry legislation. The registry is a valuable tool to those researching family history.

The **James L. Sellers Memorial Award** went to the author of the best article in the 2007 volume of *Nebraska History*. Patricia C. Gaster, Lincoln, received the award for “Bad Grammar and Sensation Style: The Daily Bumble Bee and the Fight for Prohibition in 1890,” printed in the Spring/Summer 2007 issue. Doane College History department faculty selected the work by Gaster, who is assistant editor for the NSHS Research and Publications division. The Sellers Award is supported by a fund at the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation established by John and Catherine Sellers Angle.

The **Nebraska Preservation Award** for outstanding accomplishments in the field of historic preservation went to Grace Carmody of Trenton, a supporter of Nebraska history for more than seventy years. A passionate advocate for the preservation of the Stolley House in Grand Island, Carmody has ensured its preservation and restoration. Built in 1858-59 by her grandfather, William Stolley, an early settler of Grand Island, the house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The award was accepted by Mrs. Carmody’s daughter and granddaughter.

The **Addison E. Sheldon Memorial Award** for significant contributions to the preservation of Nebraska history went to Frank and Betty Pothoff of Palisade and Bonnie Luckey of David City. The Pothoffs cared for William L. Bostock’s glass plate negatives for more than thirty years before donating them to the NSHS. The images enhance the historical record of southwestern Nebraska from 1900 to 1930. Bonnie Luckey spearheaded the digitization of the Boston Studio Project. The Butler County photograph collection spans years 1893–1979 and includes 100,000 negatives; 68,000 have been scanned.

The **James C. Olson Memorial Award** went to a Nebraska teacher for engaging, inspiring, and guiding students in discovering the important histories we share. Jim Barstow of Lincoln teaches at Lincoln’s Science Focus Program at the Zoo and was formerly Social Studies chair at Lincoln High School. An educator for more than 30 years, he has guided students to many successful National History Day competitions, especially in the area of documentaries.
**NSHS FISCAL YEAR 2009 OPERATIONS**

**REVENUES**

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<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>State Appropriations</td>
<td>58.06%</td>
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<td>Earned Income &amp; Membership</td>
<td>11.48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Grants &amp; Contracts</td>
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<td>2.10%</td>
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<td>Donations, Grants &amp; Special Events</td>
<td>2.03%</td>
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<td>Nebraska Capital Construction Fund</td>
<td>14.17%</td>
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**Total Revenues** $7,317,712.24

**EXPENDITURES**

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<td>Administrative Services</td>
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<td>Renovation Project</td>
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**Total Expenditures** $7,149,812.19

Michelle Furby, Accountant
26,350 artifacts were catalogued by our archeologists.

NSHS STAFF

ADMINISTRATION
Shawn Bachman, maintenance technician
Annie Bolender, custodian
Christina Bruce, security guard
Joan Clare, human resource services coordinator
Seth Doty, IT infrastructure support
Michelle Furby, budget officer
Roman Griser, security guard
Lana Hatcher, secretary
Edwin Heiden, facility maintenance manager
Sheila Hein, tourism aide/museum store clerk
John Hitt, administrative assistant
Lynne Ireland, deputy director
Meriah Johnson, custodian
Nolan Johnson, security guard
Martha Kimball, administrative assistant
Colleen Masar, custodial supervisor
Charles McWilliams, facility maintenance manager
Debra McWilliams, executive assistant/volunteer services
Troy Park, custodian
William Parminter, security guard
Kristin Rigg, museum store manager
James Salber, custodian
Michael Smith, director/CEO/State Historic Preservation Officer
Kelsey Soukup, security chief
Linda Wagaman, accounting clerk
Charles R Yost, staff assistant

ARCHEOLOGY
Kelli Bacon, archeological technician
Gayle Carlson, associate director/state archeologist
Melissa Dirr, architectural historian
Nolan Johnson, archeological technician
Amy Koch, curator of anthropology
John Ludwickson, curator of anthropology
Trisha Nelson, curator of anthropology
Karen Steinauer, archaelogical technician
Polly Wimberly, archaelogical technician

HISTORIC PRESERVATION
Jill Dolberg, Nebraska historic building survey coordinator
Teresa Fatomi, administrative assistant
Grant Landreth, program associate
Patrick Haynes, program associate

Jessie Nunn, National Register coordinator/architectural historian
L. Robert Puschendorf, associate director/deputy state historic preservation officer
Terry Steenacher, preservation archeologist
Stacy Stupka-Burda, National Register coordinator/architectural historian

CONSERVATION
(Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, Omaha)
Kenneth Bé, paintings conservator
Rebecca Cashman, conservation technician
Michelle Como, conservation technician
Lisa Grotrian, business manager
Megan Griffiths, conservation technician
Deborah Long, objects conservator
Lorrie Monteiro, registrar
Ray Plumb, business manager
Julie Reilly, associate director/chief conservator
Gina Saitta, business manager
Vonnda Shaw, conservation technician
Jessica Waite, conservation technician

LIBRARY/ARCHIVES
Kadyn Anderson, registrar
Dale Bacon, assistant curator/imaging services
Patricia Churray, assistant curator/reference services
Dell Darlington, imaging services technician
Cindy Drake, curator/library/archives
Paul Esloeoft, curator/audio/visual collections
Andrea Faling, associate director/state archivist
Linda Hein, assistant curator/reference services
Karen Kreiz, curator/audio/visual collections
Gayla Koering, curator/public records
Mary Jo Miller, assistant curator/reference services
Thomas Mooney, curator/manuscripts
Matt Pierson, assistant curator/reference services
Susan Sievers, library cataloger
Mary Woltemath, technical services, microfilming

MUSEUM/HISTORIC SITES
Deborah Arenz, curator, museum collections
Jessica Bartak, tourism aide, Neligh Mill State Historic Site
Ann Billesbach, associate director, Museum of Nebraska History
Barbara Broeckley, museum educator
Tom Buecker, curator and tourism facilities operator, Fort Robinson Museum
Vicki Cobb, custodian
Chimney Rock National Historic Site
Holly Counts, tourism aide, Fort Robinson Museum
Bryce Darlington, facilities maintenance specialist
Alice Filbert, artist
Donald Hall, tourism facility operator
Senator George W. Norris State Historic Site
Judy Keetle, museum educator
Signe Knis, tourism aide/guide
Chimney Rock National Historic Site
Tina Koepppe, conservation technician
John Lindahl, museum education associate, curator, Thomas F. Kennard House State Historic Site
Laura Mooney, museum registrar
Donald Ole, tourism facility operator, Neligh Mill State Historic Site
Curtis Peacock, artist
Loren Prosipil, tourism facility operator, Chimney Rock National Historic Site
Morgan Wettel, tourism guide, Chimney Rock National Historic Site

RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS
David Bristow, associate director/editor
Debra Brownison, publications designer
John Carter, senior research folklorist
Patricia Gaster, assistant editor
David Murphy, senior research architect
James Potter, associate editor/senior research historian
Volunteers at the Nebraska State Historical Society come to us from many backgrounds and bring with them a wide range of talents and skills. But all of them, whether students, retirees, or salaried workers using their spare time, bring a passion for Nebraska history. The hours they donate are vital to the continued work of the NSHS.

NSHS volunteers contributed 5,511 hours of service, an estimated value of more than $111,000.
The NSHS works with developers who rehabilitate historic buildings for an income-producing purpose to help them qualify for federal tax credits. This year, 17 such projects were initiated or completed, amounting to $53 million in rehabilitation.
The Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation continued to deal with change through the 2008-2009 fiscal year. The Foundation operated without an executive director because its Board of Directors and Executive Committee chose to take some time to better understand where we have been, are now, and want to be in the future in order to develop the best staff possible to tackle our worthy objectives. Meg Kester has just recently become the acting Executive Director until the position is permanently filled, which we hope will be soon. We owe a great thanks to Meg and Denise Boline for keeping the Foundation upright and moving forward during this time. Allison Petersen has continued to spend substantial volunteer time in the office. Please express your gratitude to these three wonderful ladies whenever you can, as they deserve all of our great thanks, and more. While the year has not been without challenges, we believe we are creating firm footings on which to build a better organization. George Carlin once said, “I put a dollar in one of those change machines. Nothing changed.” But that prolific writer, Author Unknown, perhaps more appropriately once said, “If nothing ever changed, there’d be no butterflies.”

Dr. John Wunder left the Board and Jack Campbell stepped down from the Executive Committee this year; they both provided many years of fine leadership. I extend to them the deep gratitude of the Foundation for their dedicated service. Chuck Burmeister and Judy Humiston were added to the Board last spring. They bring a wealth of knowledge and experience and are welcome additions.

Last October, the Foundation hosted the Nebraska State Historical Society’s special friend, Ken Burns, at the Rococo Theater, where Ken previewed his upcoming documentary on the National Parks. Like a similar event a few years ago, this was a wonderful time with one of history’s great spokespersons. Not only did all attending enjoy themselves, but the event raised $24,000 to support the Society’s photographic and manuscript collections.

The big development of the year, however, is certainly the culmination of the Foundation’s greatest fundraising effort ever, the Ford Center paintings conservatorship. We had previously announced the success of that massive, multimillion dollar fund raising campaign. This year, Kenneth Bé was hired as the Paintings Conservator to steward the program for Nebraska and the entire Midwest. We welcome Mr. Bé and look forward to his important role in this worthy program.

The Foundation’s Board is extremely grateful to all who have helped us with our objective of supporting the Nebraska State Historical Society in meeting its goals to gather, preserve, and present the great history of Nebraska. To all contributors, great and small alike, we say, “You are all important and we sincerely thank you!”

Steven E. Guenzel, President
Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation
NSHS FOUNDATION

Though the Reference Room was closed for nearly half the year, our staff assisted 2,749 visitors with their research, and responded to 2,867 written queries.
Gifts of $10,000 and Over
Peter Kiewit Foundation

Gifts of $10,000-$49,999
Dillon Foundation
Nebraska Beef Council
Jack A. Ringwalt Trust

Gifts of $5,000-$9,999
Mary and Douglas Lienemann
Allison and Gary Petersen

Gifts of $1,000-$2,499
Cornhusker Bank
Creigh Family Foundation
Donlan Foundation
Marilyn Forte
General Dynamics
Joan Gibson and Donald Wurster
Priscilla Grew
James Harris
Margaret Howie
JoAnne and Gordon Kissel
Ann and J Allan MacTier
Diane Oldfather
David and Roxanne Oldfather
Omaha Community Foundation
Ronald and Judy Parks
James and Gail Potter
Ann Rawley
John and Linda Rehberg
James and Rhonda Seacent
Marjorie Sorensen
Ruth Sorensen
Swanson Biggs Adams Family Foundation
Union Pacific Railroad

Gifts of $250-$499
Catherine Angle
Beulah Bedke
Catherine and William Beecham
Carrie Bence
Douglas and Louise Bereuter
Harley and Marcia Bergmeyer
Kathleen and Robert Best
Peter and Ann Bleed
Billie and Scott Bodie
Betty and Rodney Bohac
Craig and Denise Boline
Hobart Boswell
Louise and Russell Brehm
Rae and Gene Brown
Charles Buki
Gary Burchfield
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Foundation
Charles and Marita Burmeister
Lester Buss
Therese and Mike Campbell
Jack and Sally Campbell
Sandra Carter-Duff and Duane Duff
Steve Cleveland
Scott Coatsworth
Sara and John Crook
Rosemary and Leo Daly
Spencer Davis
Lawrence and Terri Day
Peggy Dickey
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Alice Dittman
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Gregory and Margaret Dynek
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Patricia Hermann
Margaret and Charles Hermes
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Ronald Jensen
Ronald Hallhoff and Sonya Ekart
F William and Beverley Karrer
Ken and Meg Kester
Kay and Mike Kimberly

Gifts of $100-$249
Tom and Jane Allman
Ralph Anderson
Nancy Anderson
Anonymous
Hazel Anthony
* Sue and Warren Arganbright
Jane Arts
Beverly Ashley
* Ellen Baldwin
Jim and Carol Barr
Merrith and Dean Baughman
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The Nebraska History Museum gave tours to 235 groups, from school classes to retirement communities. The Museum offered nine weekend and summer workshops and classes, as well as a new weekly “Hour at the Museum” program for kids in grade three and younger.

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These words, along with "Here Open to All is the History of This People," are literally carved in stone on the front of our Headquarters building. Since 1878, the Nebraska State Historical Society has preserved and shared our state’s history—because only by understanding our past can we build the future that Nebraskans want and deserve.