The Present, Past, and Future of Nebraska

The floods of 2011 have given way to a year of severe drought across Nebraska. We ask how these events will be recorded for the edification of future generations. Certainly the data assembled by the U.S. Weather Service and the Army Corps of Engineers will endure. It is, however, through the work of the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS), in alliance with local and regional historical agencies, that the stories of Nebraskans affected by these natural events will be preserved and made available in the years ahead.

The NSHS offers many services to accomplish our mission of collecting and preserving. One of these is the microfilming of Nebraska newspapers. More than two hundred newspaper titles arrive on a daily and weekly basis at the NSHS Headquarters at 1500 R Street in Lincoln.

While many people consider the printed news to be passé and on a sure road to extinction, the local paper is still the best record of daily life in a community, large or small, urban or rural. Today, some of our newspapers with larger circulations provide for their own microfilming, but most Nebraska papers have neither the means nor the staffing to do that. The NSHS, therefore, is continuing to microfilm these papers. The resulting master reels, which have a life expectancy of four hundred years or more, are safely stored in our vaults. From these, copies are readily available to the historian, sociologist, or genealogist. Whether for use next week or far into the future, the newspaper’s stories provide much more than basic vital records. Were the NSHS to forsake this work, the major record of contemporary life in rural and small town Nebraska would likely be lost forever.

Newspaper preservation is just one of many ways in which the NSHS is working in the present to create the historical record of the future. The future genealogist will seek family information, and historians of the later twenty-first century and beyond will study these days of 2011 and 2012 to discern the personal and public stories that reveal the connections, relationships, successes, and heartaches that characterize life in Nebraska. Without the resources that the NSHS collects and preserves, it is unlikely that your story and ours will be discernable for the people of the future.

This Annual Report provides insights into our work. We can only fulfill our mission in partnership with you who share with us your objects, buildings, archival papers, histories, research, and enthusiasm. You also ensure we have the means to do our work through appropriations at the state and federal level, and through your personal financial and moral support. We thank you and pledge to continue our daily activities so that the memory of all generations will never pass away. Thank you.

Daniel J. Holtz, Ph.D.  Michael J. Smith
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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 2011 awards were presented October 14, 2011, at the NSHS Annual Meeting and Luncheon in Lincoln:

- **Mary and Doug Lienemann**, Lincoln, received the Robert W. Furnas Memorial Award for outstanding assistance to the Nebraska State Historical Society.
- **Dr. Peter Bleed**, Lincoln, after a career in the field of Great Plains archeology, was recognized with the Asa T. Hill Memorial Award.
- **Mary Lou Green**, Columbus, who epitomizes the best Nebraska educators have to offer in engaging, inspiring and guiding their history students, received the James C. Olson Memorial Award.
- **Dr. John Wunder**, Lincoln, received the Addison E. Sheldon Memorial Award in recognition of his outstanding and long-term contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Nebraska history.
- **Dr. Amy Helene Forss**, Omaha, was given the James L. Sellers Memorial Award for the best article published in Nebraska History during the previous year. Her article, “Mildred Brown and the De Porres Club: Collective Activism in Omaha, Nebraska’s Near North Side, 1947-1960,” appeared in the Fall/Winter 2010 issue. The NSHS Foundation, through support of Catherine Sellers Angle, provided a cash prize of $1,000.
- **The Nebraska State Capitol Commission** was presented with the Nebraska Preservation Award in honor of the $58 million, fifteen-year project that included planning, restoration, and conservation of the capitol.
Follow Us Online

Nearly 1,400 people follow the NSHS via our Facebook page, which is also a great way to see new posts on our blog, which already features nearly 400 posts. Staff from various divisions contribute their expertise with short articles, photos, and objects from the collections. Meanwhile, our YouTube channel features videos of Brown Bag History Forum lectures presented at the Nebraska History Museum. The channel has had more than 16,000 views.

Collections Division

Staff from three NSHS divisions (Museum and Historic Sites, Archeology, and Library/Archives) have formed a new Collections Division, which preserves and provides access to all the permanent collections held in trust for the people of Nebraska.

Nearly 11,000 people were served this year, including nearly 3,500 visitors to the Reference Room, more than 3,600 correspondence requests, and 3,000 phone queries, plus the loan of items from our collections to other museums in the state. Staff also gave presentations and tours to nearly 600 participants from classes and community groups. Additional researchers worked directly with Museum and Archeology collections staff.

Public programming included:

- The African American Experience in Film, a winter film series at the Nebraska History Museum.

Collections additions:

- 2,500 records to the Photograph and Museum Artifact database, including all the images from our Native American photo collection.
- 350 titles to the Nebraska History Library catalog.
- More than 60 new collection descriptions placed online, describing nearly 700 cubic feet of manuscript and government records—including the newly released records of the Grand Island Veterans’ Home.
- More than 80 detailed descriptions of moving image films, mostly home movies. These “shot lists,” plus digital copies of the films, provide easier detailed access to the collection.

A few acquisition highlights:

- A rare 1928 film featuring the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Glen Burton south of Paxton, Nebraska, that includes scenes of Mr. Burton harvesting barley with his 16-foot Rumely combine drawn by a team of 12 horses.
- Records of the Nebraska Ethanol Board (59 boxes).
- Eleven pristine 1878 copies of Iape Oaye (The Word Carrier), a newspaper from the Santee Normal Training School.
- A collection of radio transcription discs relating to U.S. Senator Kenneth Wherry.
- Artifacts from parties on both sides of the Keystone XL pipeline issue.
In May 2012 the NSHS contracted with Lincoln firms Bahr Vermeer and Haecker and Clark Enersen Partners to develop a Renovation Program Statement for the Nebraska History Museum. These firms studied the building’s systems and physical structure, and sought input from stakeholders and NSHS staff on what the museum could be in the future. The completed program statement for work on the museum will be submitted to the Legislature.

Inside the reconstructed 1874 cavalry barracks at Fort Robinson. New barriers provide visitors with access to the historic buildings despite staffing shortages.

**Storage space improvements:**
- Compact shelving units were installed for furniture and large artifact storage in the basement of the Nebraska History Museum.

**Nebraska History Museum and Historic Sites**
Exhibitions and educational programming are planned and delivered by the new Interpretation and Education Division. More than 65,200 people visited NSHS historic sites and museums during the year:

What did all those people come to see?

**Exhibitions:**
- *The Illustrator’s Pencil: John Falter from Nebraska to The Saturday Evening Post*, opened at the Nebraska History Museum (NHM) on April 6, 2012.
- *Celebrating 100 Years of Girl Scouting*, created in partnership with the Spirit of Nebraska Girl Scouts, was at NHM March – May 2012.
- *Quilting for a Cause: Nebraska’s Fundraising Quilts* opened at NHM on April 19, 2012, and runs through October 29, 2012.
- *Superheroes and Thugs: The Comic Art of Bob Hall* was on exhibit at NHM May 4 – August 4, 2012. Lincoln resident Bob Hall also gave a Brown Bag lecture on his work and taught two art classes for kids as part of our summer workshop series.
- NHM also began showcasing objects from other Nebraska museums in its new *Treasures from Nebraska Museums* exhibit space, and the NSHS’s exhibit on the history of Nebraska agriculture returned to the State Fair in Grand Island.
- After the “*We the People*: The Nebraska Viewpoint” exhibit closed at NHM on November 15, 2011, the Nebraska Humanities Council funded the NSHS’s grant request to travel the exhibit to three Nebraska venues in 2012: Omaha, Hastings and Alliance.

**Historic Sites:**
- Nebraska history comes alive at Fort Robinson, Chimney Rock, Neligh Mill, Kennard House, and the Willa Cather, John G. Neihardt, and George Norris state historic sites. These facilities offered tours, lectures, exhibitions, school programs, and seminars, allowing Nebraskans and visitors from around the world to experience some of the most important places and people of Nebraska’s past.
- Five of the NSHS historic sites again participated in the Blue Star Museum program during the summers of 2011 and 2012. 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.
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 127 clients and treated 262 objects, while producing treatment proposals for another 352 objects. Among the more challenging objects treated were two large sculptures by noted Omaha artist Jun Kaneko. The sculptures have since been installed in front of the San Francisco Opera House for the premiere of a new production of the opera *The Magic Flute*, with production design by Kaneko. Other Ford Center highlights are:

- Ford Center conservators contributed to a grant proposal to fund implementation of Nebraska’s [Statewide Collections Preservation Plan](#). If funded, the project will support 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 twenty-one paintings by John Falter in preparation for the April opening of the Falter exhibit at the Nebraska History Museum.
- Deb Long, head of objects conservation, conducted assessments at the Kansas African-American Museum in Wichita and the library of Ottawa University in Kansas, and authored components of the long-range collections plan for Museum of Nebraska Art.
- Valeria Orlandini prepared disaster preparedness presentations for delivery to professionals in Mexico and Colombia.

State Historic Preservation Office

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) identifies needs and opportunities to preserve and use historic buildings, structures, and cultural landscapes that help define who we are as Nebraskans. People from around the state contributed their ideas to the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Plan, which will guide the SHPO in its programs:

- The [Nebraska Historic Resource Survey and Inventory](#) identifies and photographs buildings, sites, and historic districts worthy of preservation—tens of thousands of properties so far. We’re digitizing this irreplaceable archive with a goal of future online public access. To date, we’ve scanned more than 175,000 photo negatives.
- [Nebraska Archeological Surveys](#) identify properties of cultural and archeological importance. As urban areas expand, these surveys help to locate sites worthy of preservation. This year we largely completed the digitization of archeological site files, and finished a new 8,500-acre archeological survey of the South Bend vicinity in Cass and Sarpy counties, identifying 85 archeological sites.
- [National Register of Historic Places](#) listings are based in part on survey findings. This year, sixteen properties were entered in the National Register; total listings have topped 1,000.
- Rehabilitation of historic properties for special [tax benefits](#) have a substantial track record of creating housing units and commercial spaces in downtowns and older neighborhoods. We reviewed more than $74 million worth of new federal income tax credit projects.

Heritage Tourism in Nebraska, a new report commissioned by the State Historic Preservation Office, found that visitation to historic sites in Nebraska generates over $196 million a year.

Valeria Orlandini joined the staff of the NSHS’s Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center as head of the paper conservation lab in February.
Local governments are important partners in the planning process. **Certified Local Governments** (CLGs) benefit from ten percent of the state’s federal historic preservation funds. This year nearly $90,000 in grants were given to four CLGs, and funded a local survey of historic sites, completion of a National Register nomination, digitization and Geographic Information System (GIS) implementation of local surveys, and local landmark designations.

The **Review and Compliance** program, through which local, state and federal agencies must identify and where possible avoid or lessen a federal project’s potential for damage to historic properties, processed more than 3,000 reviews.

**Heritage Tourism in Nebraska**, a report by the UNL Bureau of Business Research and the National Trust for Historic Preservation found that visitation to these places in Nebraska generates over $196 million a year. The Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Division of Travel and Tourism collaborated with the NSHS SHPO on the project.

**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 Gillis, Bancroft
Nancy Haney, Lyman
Nancy Carlson, Genoa
John Kay, Lincoln
Jennifer Murrish, Kearney
Daniel Holtz, Nebraska City (President, NSHS Board of Trustees)
Michael J. Smith, Lincoln (State Historic Preservation Officer)
Elizabeth Spilinek, Hastings
Tom Theissen, Pleasant Dale
Dan Worth, Lincoln

**Education and Public Programming**
- The NSHS continues to teach teachers, conducting teacher training workshops in Lincoln, Omaha, and at Fort Robinson, empowering educators to teach history more effectively by using objects and primary sources. This training has proven to raise student test scores. For example, Lincoln Public Schools found that on a fifth grade common summative classroom assessment, students of teachers who participated in the training scored 12 percent higher than those whose teachers did not!

- Community Conversation about Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender issues in Nebraska. Held at NHM November 8, 2011. The final program of NSHS’s yearlong “We the People” initiative.

- “This Amazing Place We Now Call Nebraska” class for Osher Life-
- Nebraska Book Festival at NHM, March 31, 2012. Held in partnership with the Nebraska Center for the Book, the Nebraska Library Commission, and the Nebraska Humanities Council.
- Remembrance Day, at NHM November 19, 2011. Held in partnership with the Nebraska Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, with Civil War-related events for adults and kids.
- NHM also continued to host summer classes for kids and Weekend Free Family Fun events.
- The Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest held the first of three Prairie Freedom Project workshops at NHM on September 11, 2011, in conjunction with the Society’s “We the People”: The Nebraska Viewpoint exhibit.


Revenues

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Expenditures

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Michelle Furby, Chief Financial Officer

Archeology

The Nebraska Highway Archeology Program expanded significantly due to an increased number of Nebraska Department of Roads projects and new federal oversight regulations. This year the program:
- Completed 320 cultural resources investigations on proposed NDOR projects, including test excavations at several sites.
- Worked closely with several Native American tribes and the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs on repatriation of skeletal remains as well as ongoing consultation on proposed highway projects.
- Participated in the recovery or examination of about ten sets of inadvertently discovered human remains pursuant to the provisions of law.
- Excavated site of the B-14 Officers’ Quarters at Fort Robinson for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to inform plans for its eventual
reconstruction.
- Surveyed Bordeaux Creek Wildlife Management Area in the Pine Ridge area for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.
- Presented public and college class lectures on Nebraska archeology and repatriation issues.
- Collaborated with GIS Workshop on a comprehensive upgrade of the Nebraska Cultural Resources GIS (Geologic Information Systems).
- Congratulated State Archeologist Gayle Carlson on his retirement after forty-five years of service.

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:
- **Scenery, Curiosities, and Stupendous Rocks: William Quesenbury’s Overland Sketches, 1850-1851**, by David Royce Murphy (of the NSHS staff), with contributions by Michael L. Tate and Michael Farrell, published by University of Oklahoma Press with the financial support of Ron and Judy Parks. Since its publication last fall, the book has received awards from the New York Book Industry Guild, the Independent Book Publishers Association’s Benjamin Franklin Awards, and the New Mexico Book Association’s Southwest Book Design & Production Awards.
- **First Telegraph Line across the Continent: Charles Brown’s 1861 Diary**, edited by Dennis N. Mihelich and James E. Potter, published by the NSHS with the financial support of Ron and Judy Parks.
- **Eyewitness at Wounded Knee**, by Richard E. Jensen, R. Eli Paul, and John E. Carter, issued in a new paperback edition by the University of Nebraska Press. We provided digitally restored images for this acclaimed NSHS-authored 1991 book.
- A special issue of *Nebraska History* (Spring 2012) featuring the Nebraska History Museum exhibition, *The Illustrator’s Pencil: John Falter from Nebraska to The Saturday Evening Post*.
- Thanks to volunteers, *Nebraska History* continues to expand its online presence, with more than 350 full-text articles freely available online, plus a comprehensive (1918-to-present), searchable table of contents with links to articles, and a page for teachers and students with resources for the study of civil liberties in Nebraska. These articles received more than 1.5 million views during the 2011-12 fiscal year.

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 7,599 hours of service this past year.

* NSHS Board of Trustees
° State Historic Preservation Board
NHM – Nebraska History Museum, Lincoln

In conjunction with a Nebraska History Museum exhibition, the Spring 2012 issue of *Nebraska History* featured the work of Illustrator John Falter.

Recent books: *Scenery, Curiosities, and Stupendous Rocks: William Quesenbury’s Overland Sketches, 1850-1851*; *First Telegraph Line across the Continent: Charles Brown’s 1861 Diary*; and *Eyewitness at Wounded Knee*. 
Nearly a thousand people visited the traveling World War I exhibit, *Honoring Our History*, sponsored by Waddell & Reed and hosted by the NSHS on August 19, 2011. Housed in a big rig trailer just outside the Nebraska History Museum, the exhibit was created by the World War I Museum in Kansas City. To complement the exhibit, NSHS trustee board member Steffan Baker and his son Colin interpreted WWI military clothing and equipment, including Baker’s reproduction motorcycle that he built from scratch.
World War I artifacts from *Pioneering Aviators from Flyover Country* at the Nebraska History Museum.

NET featured Neligh Mill State Historic Site in its “*Nebraska Stories*” series.

Sue Hodge, NHM Docent
Staci Hogsett, Library/Archives
Dan Holtz*
Joyce Howe, NHM Docent & NHM Office
Mary Jane Humphrey, NHM Docent
Don Humphrey, NHM Docent
Karen Humphrey, Archeology Dig
Steven Hunt, Library/Archives
Sally Johnson, Landmark Store
Ian Jordan, NHM Education Dept.
Randy Kane, Ft. Robinson Museum
John Kay°
Taylor Keen*
Jim Kendrick, NHM Docent
Kay Kimberly*
Sarah Knight, Library/Archives
Penny Lange, NHM Docent
Billie Lefholtz, Kennard House
Mary Lienemann, NHM Docent & Kennard House
Suanne Lind, NHM Docent
Nina Little, Ford Center
Jian (Richard) Lock, NHM Education Dept.
Delan Lonowski, Ford Center
Donna Lundberg, Landmark Store
Anna Fair Matthes, NHM Education Dept.
Rosemary McGuire, Library/Archives
Jim McKee°
Robert Meininger, Library/Archives & NHM Collections
Linda Meyers, Landmark Store
Kristina Miller, Archeology Collections
Phil Miller, Visitor Services
Martha (Marty) Miller, Library/Archives
Kent Morgan, Library/Archives
Talitha Muehlbrad, Visitor Services
John Murphy, Archeology Dig
Jennifer Murrish°
Kari Nelson, NHM Education Dept.
Lorelee Novak, NHM Docent
Linda Oehlerking, NHM Docent
Rich Oehlerking, NHM Docent
Nancy Ofe, Neligh Mill Historic Site
Carla Pantikow, Archeology Dig
William Peglow, NHM Docent
Elaine Peters, NHM Docent
Robert Peters*
Bob Peterson, NHM Docent
Bob Pettit, NHM Collections
Bill Pratt*
Bonnie Quinn, Publications
Richard Quinn, Library/Archives
The Nebraska State Historical Society collects, preserves, and opens to all, the histories we share.