“Beef State” Documentary airs June 1

Just how did Nebraska, once thought to be the “Great American Desert,” become the greatest beef-producing state in the world?

Produced by NET filmmaker Olive Bucklin, the documentary “Beef State” will air at 6 p.m. CDT, Sunday, June 1, on NET 1 and NET-HD television channels statewide. Viewers will experience the scope of this dramatic tale of luck, pluck, and risky business in a story that covers more than two centuries, thousands of miles, and millions of critters.

Some might see Nebraska as being in the middle of nowhere, but in fact it has been right in the center of creating the American diet. Senior Research Folklorist John Carter, the principal researcher and NSHS point person for the co-production, spent nearly eight years uncovering Nebraska’s role in the story of beef’s rise to prominence.

It is a bigger story than a one-hour program can tell, and a program website, www.netnebraska.org/beefstate, will provide more video clips, historic photographs, and eyewitness commentary on the trails, rails, ranches, cowboys, feeders, stockyards, packing houses, and fascinating folks who made Nebraska the Beef State. New educational modules on www.nebraskastudies.org will add the Beef State story to this online Nebraska history site.

That story, central to this state and to the larger pageant of American history, is largely unknown. But thanks to an NSHS partnership with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications, Nebraska’s journey from supposed desert to “The Beef State” is coming soon to a screen near you.

Continued on page 2
Carter’s research shows that before the Civil War pork was the centerpiece of the American diet. Lacking artificial refrigeration and preservation methods that could keep beef tasty, it was largely a seasonal food, eaten during the cold months. Adventurous newcomers to the Great Plains reckoned the environment that allowed the American bison to flourish would support cattle. In the three decades following the Civil War their success, along with breed improvement and Nebraskan Edward Cudahy’s invention of the artificially refrigerated chilling room, made beef a year round staple.

At elegant restaurants, steak houses, and drive-ins, or cooked in the home oven or on the backyard grill, beef was on the American menu, and by 1952 Omaha had become the largest meat-producing city in the world.

The “Beef State” program and web sites will not only introduce viewers to this history, but also to the people who made it—memorable characters, including those who carry on the beef-producing tradition today. Compelling stories, beautiful scenery, and historic images combine in this NSHS/NET co-production to create a feast for both the mind and the eye.

After its initial broadcast, Beef State will be repeated on the NET television channels; Broadcast schedules will be available in local listings or at www.netnebraska.org. DVD copies of the program will also be available for purchase.

Principal funders include Nebraska Beef Council; Farmers Mutual of Nebraska; Nebraska Corn Board; Nebraska Cattlemen Association; Farm Bureau Federation; Nebraska Cattlewomen; James Stuart JR and Susan Stuart Foundation; Union Pacific Foundation; Nebraska Ethanol Board; Agri Affiliates; Sandhills Oil; Nebraska Cattlemen Foundation; Elaine Wolf; and Virginia Coffee.
NSHS Board of Trustees Seeks Candidates

Do you want help shape the future of the Nebraska State Historical Society? Assist in setting policies? Help guide strategic planning and offer overall support to the director, staff, members, and volunteers?

Those responsibilities—and privileges—are the principal duties of the NSHS Board of Trustees, which, according to Ann Marsh of Grand Island, chair of the board’s nominating committee, is seeking candidates to run for seats.

The board, which meets quarterly at a variety of locations across the state, consists of fifteen members. Twelve board members—four from each of the state’s three congressional districts—are elected to staggered three-year terms by the members of the NSHS. Three are appointed by the governor. Terms expiring in 2008 include three seats in both the second and third districts, and two in the first district.

A slate of nominations will be put forward by the board-appointed nominating committee, but any member of the NSHS may become a candidate for a seat on the board by petition. The signatures of twenty-five current members are required.

Anyone interested in running for the board must contact Ann Marsh by June 1 at 2810 Brentwood Road, Grand Island, Nebraska 68801-7200, or by telephone at 308-381-0106. For information about membership contact the NSHS at 1-800-833-6747 or 402-471-4955 or visit the website at www.nebraskahistory.org.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Lincoln, April 2008

This month we say goodbye and good luck to Dr. Donald Cunningham, editor of Nebraska History and Nebraska History News. Don served the state for 27 years, contributing to our own Nebraska History and to the Game and Parks Commission’s Nebraskaland Magazine. Both publications have benefited greatly from his knowledge. Indeed, Don’s contributions go far beyond the magazines to provide broad support for preserving and using the state’s history and natural history. We thank Don for his work and look forward to his continuing contributions as researcher and writer.

Dr. Cunningham’s retirement gives me pause to reflect on future retirements in academia and in local, state, and federal organizations that will impact Nebraska’s history. For example, at the NSHS Jim Potter and Gayle Carlson both have forty years of service. Jim is assistant editor of Nebraska History, following years of work as state archivist and magazine editor. Gayle, whose work in archeology has contributed greatly to our knowledge of peoples of the past, became State Archeologist in 2007. Both continue to be strong contributors to Nebraska’s history.

Considering the information about Nebraska’s past stored in the memory banks of teachers, researchers, and curators like Don, Jim, and Gayle raises this question: How can that knowledge be gathered and preserved?

It is difficult to replace people who can answer so many esoteric questions from memory rather than from hours of research. Yet this is our challenge. We must find ways to gather and pass this knowledge to a new generation of scholars. Passing the torch will be challenging, but I have confidence in the new generation—provided we give them time and encouragement to follow on the heels of the great servants of Nebraska history. We need to make this work, and we appreciate everyone’s assistance.

“...It will be difficult to replace women and men who can answer so many esoteric questions from memory rather than from hours of research.”

Michael J. Smith
Director/CEO
After the Disaster

If disaster strikes—flood, fire, tornado, earthquake—will your important legal documents and irreplaceable pieces of family history survive?

A new manual, *Rescuing Family Records: A Disaster Planning Guide*, now available from the Council of State Archivists, provides practical guidance to help individuals and families protect family records and important documents. It includes a brief introduction to caring for historical family records and a checklist for noting whether a record is duplicated and where copies are kept, options for duplicating and protecting records, and a discussion on certifying certain records.

The twenty-four-page manual written by David Carmichael, director of the Georgia Archives, is available for $10, plus $3 postage and handling, from the Council of State Archivists at [www.StateArchivists.org/](http://www.StateArchivists.org/) or from Victoria Walch, executive director of the council, at 319-338-0248 or vwalch@statearchivists.org.

Investigation Station Opens

Visitors lined up outside the Museum of Nebraska History, Fifteenth and P streets, Lincoln, an hour early on March 1 for the grand opening of the NSHS Investigation Station, a new hands-on learning facility. More than two hundred visitors filled the room to learn about tipis, Overland Trail wagons, and 1920s automobile camps.

The Investigation Station was made possible by special funding from the Nebraska Legislature and a grant from Woods Charitable Funds, Inc.

More Resources to Help You Save Family and Community Treasures

- [www.netnebraska.org/treasures](http://www.netnebraska.org/treasures) Video clips, workshop segments, information on many types of objects, and links to other resources.

- **Saving Nebraska’s Treasures** A television program featuring conservators from the NSHS’s Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center and how-to’s for caring for family photos, quilts, silver, and more. Check out the DVD from public libraries or purchase online from NET. (Web site and DVD production/distribution supported in part by the Institute for Museum and Library Services and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Project partners: NET, NSHS, Nebr. Library Comm.)

- **IMLS Connecting to Collections Bookshelf** Free “preservation bookshelf” for small to mid-size museums, libraries with special collections, botanical gardens, nature centers, aquariums, and zoos. Set includes basic publications, resources and reference material for collecting institutions. Applications accepted until April 30. Information at [http://www.aaslh.org/Bookshelf](http://www.aaslh.org/Bookshelf)
Early Omaha TV Footage Preserves Local History

At the Nebraska State Historical Society, we’re doing our part—and then some.

With the recent addition of news footage from KMTV in Omaha, the NSHS audiovisual collection now has material from four early Nebraska television stations. The other stations are KHAS of Hastings, KOLN/KGIN of Lincoln, and KETV of Omaha.

KMTV, also known as KM3, grew out of radio station KMA in Shenandoah, Iowa, and began broadcasting from its Farnam Street studios on September 1, 1949, only three days after rival station WOWT went on the air. On that date there were about 1,500 television sets in the viewing area, but by Christmas the number had soared to 25,000.

When KMTV and WOWT began broadcasting there were no television stations in Des Moines or Denver, and only one each in Kansas City and St. Louis. There were only fifty stations in the entire nation. Pioneering Omaha stations launched the careers of luminaries including Tom Brokaw, Floyd Kalber, and Johnny Carson.

The KMTV collection consists of about ten thousand hours of news-related field footage on 16mm film and videotape dating from 1949 through 1989. Daily logs and scripts will help to identify the footage and make it accessible. The donation also included KMTV-produced documentaries, still photographs, and promotional material.
UPCOMING EVENTS

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

April 1–May 15
“Kooser Impact!”
Original art based on poems by Ted Kooser
John G. Neihardt State Historic Site
306 W. Elm Street, Bancroft
neihardt@gpcom.net 888-777-4667

April 17 • 12 noon
“Wallace Cadet Taylor and the Last U.S. Volunteers”
Tom Thiessen, retired archeologist, National Park Service
Brown Bag Lecture Series
Museum of Nebraska History
15th & P streets, Lincoln 402-471-4754

April 23 • 6:30 p.m.
Reading
Desmond Egan, poet
John G. Neihardt State Historic Site

April 26 • 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
“The Writer and the Plains”
Annual Neihardt Spring Conference
(registration required)
John G. Neihardt State Historic Site
For conference information: 888-777-4667

May 1 to October 27
“Quilting A to Z”
Final rotating exhibition from the NSHS and International Quilt Study Center
Museum of Nebraska History

May 15 • 12 noon
“Robert Ramsay Livingston, Nebraska Pioneer Physician”

John Schleicher, head of Special Collections/asst. prof., McGoogan Library of Medicine, UNMC

Brown Bag Lecture Series
Museum of Nebraska History

June 1 • 7 p.m. (CT)
“Beef State”
Television documentary co-produced by NET and NSHS, NET1 and NET-HD
www.netnebraska.org/television

June 5–7
“Cather and Her Contemporaries”
Cather Spring Conference and Symposium
(registration required)
Red Cloud
www.willacather.org 402-746-2653
(toll free) 866-731-7304

June 7 • 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Genoa U.S. Indian School Reunion/Celebration
Activities, speakers, tours, muzzle-loading camp, Native American foods
Genoa 402-993-6636

June 16–20, 22–28
“Conflict, Compromise, and an Uneasy Coexistence on the Contested Plains”
Trails and Tales
Classroom sessions and tour for academic credit (registration required; stipends available)
Peru State College
dholtz@oakmail.peru.edu 402-872-2267
scrook@oakmail.peru.edu 402-872-2279

June 19 • 12 noon
“The Politics of Disloyalty: The 1918 State University Professors’ Trial”
Frank Edler, philosophy instructor, Metropolitan Community College, Omaha
Brown Bag Lecture Series
Museum of Nebraska History

Civil War soldier James Hutton, First Nebraska Volunteer Infantry. NSHS-RG2057-40
EE Bonds—Bounty or Bane?

U.S. Government Bonds, Series EE (formerly Series E)… remember those? Many people who remembered the impact of the terrifying bank holidays of the 1930s bought them for the security of government guarantees.

They were so attractive. We saw the value immediately because we received a shiny official certificate stating that we would receive, for example, $100 for our $50 investment if we waited until the bond matured. Moreover, it was backed by Uncle Sam! It was about as safe and sure an investment as a person could get. So, we bought them routinely: directly in increments, monthly perhaps; through small amounts deducted from our paychecks; or whenever we had extra cash. One way or another, many of us accumulated a significant number of bonds.

Fast-forward to today—we know that accumulated interest is taxable. Most of us don’t care to see that happen, so we “sit on” our bonds, watching them accumulate interest long after they have matured. We monitor their growth and we wait—with dread—for the thirty-year anniversary, (or forty for Series E bonds issued before November 1965) when the interest stops accumulating. But then what?

We convert them to HH bonds, of course, so that our taxes are deferred to their sale and they yield semi-annual income for twenty years. Whew! We’re off the hook—for twenty years at least. But wait…isn’t the semi-annual income taxable? Yes.

Then (as if we need any more bad news) we discover that the untaxed interest is “income in respect of a decedent” (IRD), vulnerable to both income and estate taxes. If not dealt with in our wills, the government could walk away with over 76 percent of the interest income! Alas, the benefits of our bond purchase begin to fade. Our shiny Uncle Sam guarantee has lost its luster.

Fortunately, there are several strategies with positive estate and income tax outcomes if we donate our bonds to charity.

Give an outright gift at death of all IRD assets. Create a Charitable Remainder Trust that allows income for a beneficiary for a specific period of time, after which the remainder goes to your charity of choice. Establish a Lead Trust that allows the charity to receive income benefits for a period, after which the remaining value of the fund is distributed to named beneficiaries. These and many other options are available.

As with all estate planning tools, these strategies require conversations with qualified tax and legal professionals.

Diane E. Rolfsmeyer
In cattle country you can get into trouble by voicing a preference for red cows (Herefords) over black cows (Angus) or any of another dozen or so breeds. At the heart of the issue is the passion that Nebraskans have for cattle—a passion reflected in traditional art. Drive the back roads of the state and you will find many farm and ranch roads marked by beautifully painted signs sporting a handsome animal profile. This finely crafted three-dimensional Hereford was carved by Jesse E. Utter of Bridgeport. We don’t know why Utter created this head or where it hung. It is currently on display at the Museum of Nebraska History at Fifteenth and P streets in Lincoln.