

# NEBRASKA history news

Volume 62 / Number 2 / April/May/June 2009

## Our New Logo



Even a historical society likes a new look now and then. After more than twenty years, we're retiring the blue "NSHS" logo in favor of an eye-catching design that better represents what we're all about.

Created by graphic artist Amy Ebbeka of Lincoln, the new logo is simultaneously historic and modern. The script font evokes the handwritten word upon which so 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.

You'll see the new logo on our publications and on our signage at historic sites around the state. Soon it'll even be part of the Lincoln skyline atop the Museum of Nebraska History. It's part of a larger effort to spread the word about what the Society does and why it matters. ■

## The Revolutionary Charles Bessey



*The Nebraska Hall of Fame inducts him June 26*

Charles E. Bessey revolutionized botany. Biographer Ronald C. Tobey wrote of him, "He transformed the dry, girls' school subject of basic botany into a gospel course for the scientific, laboratory method."

While he never trained in Europe, Bessie was keenly aware of the cutting edge work going on there in the use of experimentation and microscopic examination. He was the first American to bring

**Charles E. Bessey (1884-1915) will be inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame on June 26, 2009.**

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

*Continued on page 7*

Lincoln, April 2009

*Politics has loomed large over the last fourteen months beginning with the Nebraska Democratic Party caucuses on January 3, 2008, through the Presidential and Senate races, up to November 4<sup>th</sup> election, on to the seating of Nebraska's Legislature, and then the inauguration of President Barack Obama on January 20<sup>th</sup>.*

*There are many aspects to the political process in the United States, but at various points buildings become very important. In Washington, D.C., the Capitol houses the Congress; across the street sits the Supreme Court, while down Pennsylvania Avenue, the White House is both Presidential residence/office and symbol of the Executive Branch of our government.*

*Nebraska's government is housed in our magnificent Capitol completed in 1932. The Governor and his staff are there as are the other Constitutional Officers; the Unicameral meets in its Norris Chamber and utilizes nearby offices and committee rooms; Nebraska's Supreme Court is housed here. Up in the tower are found many of the departments and commissions of the government.*

*All these buildings are symbols of our democratic, representative, popularly-elected government. They speak to us of civil and legal processes which ensure that we have governments of laws, not of personalities. They are designed to look and to be permanent, to be, like our way of government itself, here for the ages.*

*We are very pleased that Nebraska continues to care for its National Landmark Capitol and we encourage our State's leaders to maintain their well-demonstrated commitment to preservation of our "Prairie Skyscraper," the place and the symbol of our civic life. If you have not visited the Capitol recently, consider this an invitation to do so. It would be an inspiring use of your time.*

*Michael J. Smith*  
 Michael J. Smith  
 Director/CEO



*"All these buildings are symbols of our democratic, representative, popularly-elected government."*



Willa Cather's childhood scrapbook is part of the Museum of Nebraska History's current "Saving Memories" exhibit.

## Summer Family Workshops

This spring and summer, the Museum of Nebraska History is hosting workshops that complement the theme of the current "Saving Memories" exhibit. The events are free and open to all ages.

The May workshop will focus on autograph albums, which preserved signatures, advice, and funny sayings. They were most popular in the nineteenth century, but "we're still doing that today," said museum educator Judy Keetle. She cited high school yearbooks as just one example.

During the workshop, families will make their own autograph album out of wallpaper scraps, learn some calligraphy, and then compose their own funny saying to put with their signatures.

"Just a little poem, something unique," Keetle said. "And then they will have the book for their friends to sign."

In July, participants in the second workshop will create a family photo album. Details aren't solid yet, but the workshop will focus mainly on teaching participants how to properly care for their photographs.

"We will encourage families to bring their own photographs, and then teach them how to preserve them," Keetle said.

She stressed that the workshops aren't just for kids.

"We have had a variety of ages," she said. "Parents and young children, parents and

adult children, grandparents and children; we focus on families.”

Since November, each of the three workshops so far has had a strong turnout.

“I think word is spreading that this is a fun thing to do,” Keetle said.

The museum will also hold three sessions that are children-centered. The two-day workshops will run June 16 and 18, July 28 and 30, and August 4 and 6 from 9:30 a.m. to noon. These sessions will teach the children how people have saved their memories over time, and allow them to view historical objects from the museum’s collection. Most importantly, they will teach children how to preserve their own memories.

“We try to personalize these as much as possible,” Keetle said. “We try to make visitors realize that these people weren’t famous people; they were people like you who wanted to save their memories, too.”

## Cather and Neihardt Spring Conferences

Two of our historic sites preserve the legacies of Nebraska authors; both will host spring conferences in April. The Cather Foundation will host its annual Willa Cather Spring Conference at the Cather Historic Site in Red Cloud April 24–25. This year’s theme is “The Later Nebraska Fiction: Wisdom in *Obscure Destinies*, *Lucy Gayheart*, and “The Best Years,” focusing on religious, moral, and spiritual themes in some of Cather’s prairie fiction. Check [www.willacather.org](http://www.willacather.org) for the schedule; call (402) 746-2653 to register.

The John G. Neihardt State Historic Site in Bancroft will host its annual Spring Conference on April 25. This year’s theme is “Neihardt and Native Realities,” with presentations by noted historians, spiritual leaders, legal minds, artists and authors dealing with

the subject of what has transpired in positive and negative ways for Native American peoples in the areas of issues addressed in Neihardt’s writings. See [www.neihardtcenter.org](http://www.neihardtcenter.org) for more information.

## Board of Trustees Seeks Candidates

Dr. Dan Holtz wants to hear from you. He chairs our Nominating Committee, and he’s seeking candidates for election to the Nebraska State Historical Society Board of Trustees. To be eligible, you must be a Society member and obtain the signatures of twenty-five other members.

Society members elect twelve board members, and the governor of Nebraska appoints three. The board assists in setting policies, provides guidance in strategic planning, and offers overall support to the director, staff, Society members, and volunteers. Quarterly meetings are held at various locations across the state.

If you’d like to run for the board, contact Dr. Holtz by June 1, 2009, at 2315 Park Lane, Nebraska City, Nebraska 68410, by email at [dholtz@oakmail.peru.edu](mailto:dholtz@oakmail.peru.edu), or by phone at 402-713-9600. Learn more about membership at [nebraskahistory.org](http://nebraskahistory.org) or call us at 1-800-833-6747 or 402-471-4955.

## Library/Archives Still Closed... But Call Us Anyway

What you’re looking for may still be available. More than 50,000 of our photos have been digitized, plus other archival materials. And although construction at our Lincoln headquarters will continue into 2011, we plan to open the reference room whenever possible. Check [nebraskahistory.org](http://nebraskahistory.org) for the latest news, and call us with your research needs. Even with the stacks closed we may be able to help.

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## How Would A \$5,000 Tax Credit Make You Feel?



Assistant curator  
Matt Piersol

The NSHS Foundation would like to honor Matt Piersol for his outstanding service and dedication to the Nebraska State Historical Society Library/Archives Division. This special recognition was made possible by the generous financial support of Kathleen Rutledge and Ted Kooser, who donated to the Library/Archives Division fund in Matt's honor.



If taxes aren't already on your mind, I am sure they will be soon. The April 15<sup>th</sup> deadline is fast approaching, and while the deduction date for 2008 has already come and gone, we can learn from our "taxable mistakes" and make wise adjustments to plan for the future.

What if you could make history *and* get a tax break for 2009? The Nebraska Charitable Tax Credit gives Nebraskans an opportunity to do just that! Now, your individual planned gift or corporate cash gift to a NSHS Foundation Endowment Fund can qualify for an immediate state tax credit of up to \$5,000 per year!

A "planned gift" is simply a current commitment to donate to a charity at some future time. The Nebraska Charitable Tax Credit allows individuals to take a tax credit today for an irrevocable donation they won't make for many years.

There are a variety of ways to structure your planned gift. Individuals can qualify for a tax credit of fifteen percent of the present

value of the gift under the following options:

- Charitable Remainder Unitrusts
- Charitable Remainder Annuity Trusts
- Charitable Lead Trusts
- Charitable Gift Annuities
- Deferred Gift Annuities
- Pooled Income Funds
- Paid-up Life Insurance

How you decide to take advantage of this program depends on what your personal financial goals are. Your tax or financial advisor can help you choose the method that's best for you—but be aware that The Charitable Tax Credit is scheduled to "sunset" by 2010 so now is the time to take advantage of this unique statewide program!

The NSHS Foundation gets its support from people with a passion for the past, people whose generosity makes history come alive for students, Indian Wars buffs, history day competitors, family history researchers, and many others—all working together to preserve our remarkable heritage and build a better future for Nebraska. ☒

*For more information visit [www.NebraskaTaxCredit.org](http://www.NebraskaTaxCredit.org).  
Then call and let us help you get your \$5,000 tax credit!*

## Coming in *Nebraska History*

Here's what's coming in the Spring 2009 issue of *Nebraska History* (in mailboxes the last week of May):

*The Missouri National Recreational River.* In 1978, lawmakers hailed a fragile alliance of landowners and conservationists who sought to protect a rare "natural" stretch of the Missouri River. The result was not what they expected.

*The Farmers' Alliance and Populism in Saunders County.* Drought and depression led to radical politics in 1890s Nebraska. Saunders County didn't fit the typical profile, but became a Populist stronghold thanks to its robust Farmer's Alliance culture.

*Frank Appleton's 1874 Letter from Red Cloud Agency.* A month before the young clerk was murdered, he wrote home to describe life "out here among the infernal Red skins."



Shorthand class at Broken Bow Business College, 1903. RG2608:2816

*Nebraska Business Colleges, 1873-1950.* High schools taught no office skills. Colleges taught the classics. By the late nineteenth century, entrepreneurs founded business colleges as an alternative to both.

Plus other short features and book reviews.



## Museum Store Helps Save Your Memories

◆ *Caring for Your Family Treasures* is a concise guide to preserving cherished belongings. \$24.95 (tax and shipping/handling where applicable is added to cost of all items).

◆ Photo albums featuring vintage camera covers. Each album holds 4" x 6" photos with acid-free insert cards and has a metal button with elastic closure. (Standard size cover: 4-3/8" x 6-3/4", \$11.50. Large cover: 7-5/8" x 8-3/4", \$18.)

◆ *Nebraska Quilts & Quiltmakers*, featuring 103 quilts. \$35.

◆ Story Quilt Kits, a great project for kids and adults. \$20/kit.

If you won't be in Lincoln any time soon, visit the store online at [nebraskahistory.org](http://nebraskahistory.org) (click on "Museum Store"). Or call 402-471-3447. Hours are Tuesday–Friday 10:00–4:30, and Saturday–Sunday 1:00–4:00.

As for the exhibits themselves, "Saving Memories: Scrapbooks, Photo Albums, Home Movies, and Ledger Drawings" runs through September 2009, and "Nebraska Gone Crazy: Crazy Quilts from Nebraska Museums," runs through February 2010.

*We hope the Museum of Nebraska History's current exhibits and summer workshops (see p.2) inspire you to preserve your own family memories. The NSHS's Museum Store, at 15<sup>th</sup> and P in Lincoln, carries items that will help.*



### Receive *NH News* by Email

Would you like to receive this newsletter by email? You can, starting with the next issue. Just email [nshs@nebraska.gov](mailto:nshs@nebraska.gov) with "NH News" in the subject line. Be sure to tell us your name (or the name your membership is in), and whether you'd like to receive the newsletter by email only, or if you'd like both an email copy and print copy.

We'll send the next *News* as a PDF file attachment. If your computer can't read PDFs (or you don't know if it can), go to [get.adobe.com/reader](http://get.adobe.com/reader) and follow the instructions for a free software download.

You can change your mind at any time. Just email or call if you decide to go back to the print version. ☒

# UPCOMING EVENTS

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

**April 2 • 7 p.m.**

Preview screening of “Wounded Knee”  
**Native American history from PBS series  
American Experience**

Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center  
313 N. 13<sup>th</sup> St., Lincoln • 402-472-5353

**April 13**

**We Shall Remain,**  
premiere of “After the Mayflower”  
**Native American history from PBS series  
American Experience**

[www.netnebraska.org/television](http://www.netnebraska.org/television)  
for local broadcast listings

**April • 12 noon**

“The Stromsburg Flippins”  
Kathy Nelson, assistant librarian,  
Stromsburg Public Library  
**Brown Bag Lecture Series**  
Museum of Nebraska History  
15th & P streets, Lincoln • 402-471-4754

**April 20**

**We Shall Remain,**  
premiere of “Tecumseh’s Vision”  
**Native American history from PBS series  
American Experience**

[www.netnebraska.org/television](http://www.netnebraska.org/television)  
for local broadcast listings

**April 23-25**

“The Soldiers Called Them Home: U.S. Army  
Posts on the Central and Northern Plains,  
1820-1880”

**Seventh Fort Robinson History Conference**  
Fort Robinson State Park, Crawford  
(registration required)  
[www.nebraskahistory.org](http://www.nebraskahistory.org)  
402-471-3272 • 1-800-833-6747

**April 24-25 • 8 a.m.-5 p.m.**

“The Later Nebraska Fiction: Wisdom in  
Obscure Destinies, Lucy Gayheart, and ‘The  
Best Years’”

**Willa Cather Spring Conference**  
Red Cloud • (registration required)  
[www.willacather.org](http://www.willacather.org)  
402-746-2653 • (toll free) 866-731-7304

**April 25 • 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.**

“Neihardt and Native Realities”  
**Annual Neihardt Spring Conference**  
John G. Neihardt State Historic Site  
306 West Elm Street, Bancroft  
(registration required)  
[neihardt@gpcom.net](mailto:neihardt@gpcom.net) • 888-777-4667

**April 27**

**We Shall Remain,** premiere of “Trail of Tears”  
**Native American history from PBS series  
American Experience**  
[www.netnebraska.org/television](http://www.netnebraska.org/television)  
for local broadcast listings

**May Family Workshop**

[www.nebraskahistory.org](http://www.nebraskahistory.org) for day and time  
“Autograph Albums”  
**Calligraphy, album construction and sayings**  
**Museum of Nebraska History**  
[judy.keettle@nebraska.gov](mailto:judy.keettle@nebraska.gov) • 402-471-4754

**May 4**

**We Shall Remain,** premiere of “Geronimo”  
**Native American history from PBS series  
American Experience**  
[www.netnebraska.org/television](http://www.netnebraska.org/television)  
for local broadcast listings

**May 11**

**We Shall Remain,**  
premiere of “Wounded Knee”  
**Native American history from PBS series  
American Experience**  
[www.netnebraska.org/television](http://www.netnebraska.org/television)  
for local broadcast listings

**May 21 • 12 noon**

“Historic Preservation”  
Ed Zimmer, Lincoln city planner and historian  
**Brown Bag Lecture Series**  
Museum of Nebraska History

**June 16 and 18 • 9:30 a.m.-12 noon**

“Saving Memories”  
**Summer Workshops for Students**  
**Museum of Nebraska History**  
(registration required)  
[judy.keettle@nebraska.gov](mailto:judy.keettle@nebraska.gov) • 402-471-4754

**June 18 • 12 noon**

“The German Language Press in  
Grand Island”  
Edith Robbins, independent scholar  
**Brown Bag Lecture Series**  
Museum of Nebraska History

**June 26 • 1:30 p.m.**

Induction of Charles E. Bessey into Nebraska  
Hall of Fame  
**Warner Chamber, Nebraska State Capitol**  
1445 K Street, Lincoln  
[deb.mcwilliams@nebraska.gov](mailto:deb.mcwilliams@nebraska.gov) • 402-471-4955



A young ball player.  
Edward Arthur and Margaret  
May Patton Gehrke Collec-  
tion. NSHS RG0849-3-142



the study into the laboratory, using microscopes and experimentation to understand the structure of plants. And he wrote the first textbook that incorporated these techniques. Published in 1880, his *Botany for High Schools and Colleges* became the standard text for the study of the “New Botany.”

He took botany out of the research and theoretical world of the university, developing applications that served the practical needs of Nebraska and the nation.

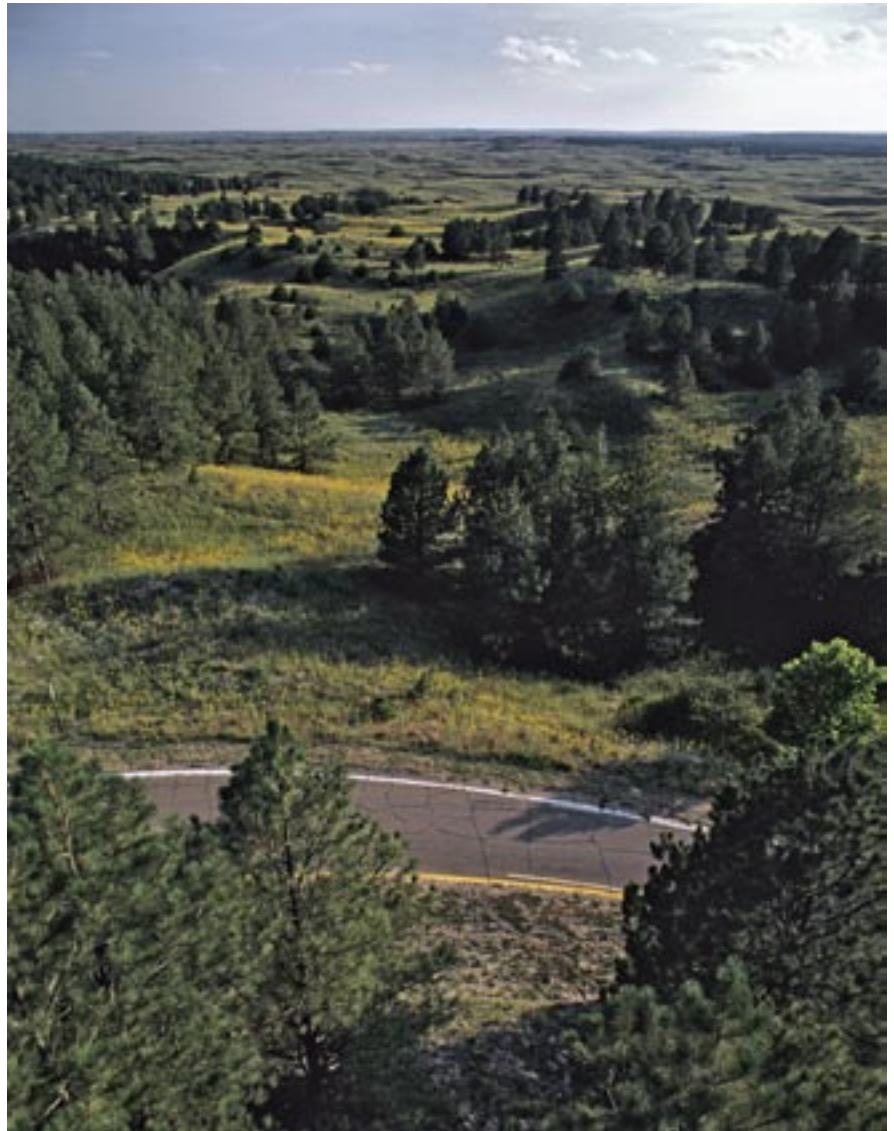
He helped draft the Hatch Act of 1887 requiring land-grant universities to distribute new knowledge and research to the public through agricultural experiment stations.

Bessey was an inspirational teacher, and his students further revolutionized biology. Students like Fred Clements, Roscoe Pound, and Arthur W. Sampson developed quantitative methods for examining plant populations, and looked at plants as populations interacting with soil, rain and drought, and other environmental factors. Collectively their work grew not only into new generations of scientific inquiry, but also into modern range management, forest management, and ecology.

He started the only man-made forests in the nation. In 1891 the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Division of Forestry established a small, experimental plantation of pines on the Bruner Brothers’ ranch in Holt County. This success led to the creation of two forest reserves on the Dismal and Niobrara Rivers by President Theodore Roosevelt in April 1902. In 1908 the reserves became the Nebraska National Forest. The Dismal River reserve near Halsey was later named for

Charles Bessey, and the Niobrara reserve became the McKelvie National Forest in 1971.

Appropriately, Charles E. Bessey joins the ranks of those honored in the Nebraska Hall of Fame with induction ceremonies 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 26, 2009, at the Warner Chamber in the State Capitol. ☒



**The Nebraska National Forest–Bessey Division is the world’s largest human-planted forest.** NEBRASKAland Magazine/Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

# hours

**Museum of  
Nebraska History**  
15 & P Streets, Lincoln  
402-471-4754

Tuesday–Friday, 9–4:30  
Sat. & Sun., 1–4:30  
Closed Monday

**Museum Store**  
402-471-3447

Tuesday–Friday, 10–4:30  
Saturday & Sunday, 1–4  
Closed Monday

**Library/Archives**  
1500 R Street, Lincoln  
402-471-4751

Reference room  
Closed for construction

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

# N E B R A S K A history news

Nebraska State Historical Society



## From the collection...

This crazy quilt was made for an 1893 fundraiser in Filley, Nebraska. The Ladies Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church made twenty quilt blocks, nineteen embroidered with the names of their maker, and one with the year and Society name. They sold the privilege of having one's name embroidered on the back. The quilt itself went to the top fundraiser, Kate Williams Filley, who backed the piece by typing the names of the "benefactors" onto seventeen-inch strips and laying them so that each maker's square was backed by her list of names. The quilt won many prizes in its day. ☞

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