Conference to Focus on Missouri River

The mighty Missouri, America’s longest and one of its most historic rivers, flows near the conference site where a dozen presenters will speak on the history of this remarkable waterway.

Steamers, Sandbars and Snags: Reflections of the Steamboat Era on the Missouri will be held at Ponca State Park, Ponca, Nebraska, September 4–7, 2008. This second Missouri River History Conference is co-sponsored by the Nebraska State Historical Society, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the National Park Service, and the Missouri River Institute of the University of South Dakota.

Topics will range from the fur trade to steamboats, and the archeology of the nationally significant Engineer’s Cantonment and steamboat Bertrand sites. Presenters include Tim Cowman of the Missouri River Institute, Julie Reilly of the NSHS Ford Conservation Center, Dr. Annalies Corbin of the PAST Foundation of Columbus, Ohio, and Dr. William Lass, renowned Missouri River steamboat historian and professor emeritus of history at Minnesota State University. Participants can also enjoy tours to the wreck of the North Alabama in the Missouri and also of the shores of the Missouri River at Ponca State Park.

Registration is open to all for a fee of $80 for the entire conference (including all meals) or $25 for a half-day session. Lodging is available in the Ponca area. For further information call Ponca State Park at 402-755-2284 or email jeff.fields@ngpc.ne.gov or jennifer.wolff@ngpc.ne.gov or contact NSHS at 402-471-3270 or nshs@nebraskahistory.org.
Nebraska is a big place, its 77,358 square miles ranking number sixteen among the fifty states. If you spend time on our roads, you need little reminder of the size of the Cornhusker State. There is lots of room out on the grazing lands in the Sandhills, the cultivated farm fields, on our rivers and lakes, in our varied wildlife habitats, and along the streets and sidewalks of our cities, towns, villages, and hamlets.

Accompanying all that space are some big historical stories. The plentiful stories of Nebraska’s places and people can be as recent as yesterday or stretch back ten thousand years ago to the Paleoindians. Expansive space and length of time offer some exciting histories, stories that every Nebraskan should know and pass along to each new generation.

This summer space and time are much on our minds with the release of Beef State, the documentary co-produced by the Nebraska State Historical Society and Nebraska Educational Telecommunications. Beef State shows just how Nebraska became the top producer of beef cattle in the nation. It is a big story with longhorns and pure-bred herds, larger-than-life ranchers and tougher-than-nails cowboys, cattlewomen who rope and ride, weather disasters, and Omaha, once home to the world’s largest stockyards and beef slaughtering operation.

Open the pages of Nebraska History or explore any of the thousands of books on Nebraska’s past and you will find Nebraskans and their personal stories. It is the history of a special place and its special people.

Want to work with your own stories? The Nebraska State Historical Society can help you bring together this very big place and its people in ways that would be especially meaningful in your lives. Write, call or e-mail us. We are here to help!

Michael J. Smith
Director/CEO
recreational facilities, and public buildings in many Nebraska locales still bear the mark of the WPA, PWA or CCC.

Examples of these community buildings, structures, and sites will be compiled into a guide to the New Deal in Nebraska. Thus far, the Nebraska SHPO has identified approximately 150 New Deal projects throughout the state and is busy gathering information about their construction. If you know of New Deal sites in your community or region, please contact Jill Dolberg, Nebraska State Historical Society, PO Box 82554, Lincoln 68501-2554 or 402-471-4773 or email jdolberg@nebraskahistory.org.

**Now Hear This: African-American Oral Histories Get New Life in Digital Form**

The Nebraska State Historical Society’s extensive sound recording collections include several projects and individual interviews that relate to the African-American experience on the Great Plains. The Nebraska Black Oral History Project was conducted in the early 1980s and consists of over 30 interviews on audiocassette tapes amounting to nearly 50 hours of sound recording. The project was undertaken as a partnership between the Black Studies Department of the University of Nebraska-Omaha, the Great Plains Black Museum, and the Nebraska Association for the Study of African American Life and History. It was originally funded by a grant from the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities.

Fast forward to the twenty-first century. The unique results of this project, housed at the Nebraska State Historical Society, are now available in digital form and online. The “Sound Model” effort sponsored by the Colorado-based Collaborative Digitization Program with funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services has made it possible to digitize audio recordings, greatly expanding public access to them. You can see and hear some of the results of this effort in a virtual exhibit called *The West Out Loud* at [http://www.bcr.org/cdp/exhibits/soundmodel/index.html](http://www.bcr.org/cdp/exhibits/soundmodel/index.html).

Converting analog sound recordings to digital files is more often done with music than the spoken word, and standards for archival digital audio files are just emerging. The NSHS, by digitizing its Nebraska Black Oral History Project materials, helped create new standards now in use throughout the nation.

The sound recordings attempted to in part fill a gap in the documentation of African-American populations in the United States. Experiences in the rural south, large cities of the Midwest and Northeast, and even the West Coast had been explored, but little was available on the Black experience on the Great Plains. Population concentrations in this region were not as large as the others, but are no less significant.

Interviewees were chosen from three geographical categories: Omaha, Lincoln, and greater Nebraska. The interviews cover many aspects of rural and urban life, including social and cultural activities, religion, small town experience, neighborhoods, agricultural and business activities, education, and, of course, race relations and the Civil Rights movement.

The project is another example of how the NSHS is using new technology to make the voices of the past heard.
Save the Date—October 10-11

Plan now to join Nebraskans from across the state for Preservation at Work: Building Communities through Historic Preservation. Case studies from Nebraska towns and cities will highlight how to make historic preservation a vital economic and development tool in your community. Reinvesting in the past through our historic buildings, sites, structures, and even entire districts brings vitality to the state and its communities, improves our quality of life, and preserves our sense of place.

Join us at the Museum of Nebraska History, 15th & P streets to learn more about major preservation concepts and processes and see concrete examples of preservation in practice through heritage tourism, main street projects, and more. Participants will have ample opportunity to pose questions at all sessions and will work collaboratively to create an agenda for future preservation efforts.
Preservation Grants Awarded to Local Governments

The Nebraska State Historical Society has announced that $113,740 has been awarded to four cities for historic preservation projects. The funds are available through the National Park Service for local governments that have established certified historic preservation programs.

The City of Omaha will receive $50,000 to conduct a survey of post-World War II housing subdivisions; Lincoln will conduct a survey of the Eastridge neighborhood and develop public access programs on 5CityTV with its $21,000 award. Plattsmouth will obtain $32,740 to prepare a study of street-scape improvements for its downtown commercial district, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Some $10,000 will fund public outreach, educational programs, a historic preservation seminar, and research on downtown buildings in North Platte.

Currently six Nebraska city governments are designated certified local historic preservation programs, including Red Cloud and Sidney in addition to those above. For more information visit www.nebraskahistory.org/histpres/index.htm

What’s New Online?

Find answers to collections care questions on the Saving Nebraska’s Treasures Web site www.savingtreasures.org. Also learn about the Gratitude or Merci Train in a new exhibition on the NSHS Web site www.nebraskahistory.org featuring objects donated by French citizens in 1949 to express their appreciation for postwar aid. The train had a boxcar of gifts designated for each state; Nebraska received car number thirty-five.

Looking for a Unique Gift?

Beef State, history on DVD of Nebraska’s beef industry, co-produced by the Nebraska State Historical Society and NET Television. Each DVD is $14.95 each, plus shipping and handling, at our Museum Store. Call 402-471-3447 to order.

Volunteer at the Investigation Station

Want to help people uncover and discover evidence about the past? At our new history laboratory, “The Investigation Station,” volunteers help visitors of all ages become history detectives and use historic artifacts, documents, photographs, maps, and more to solve history mysteries. The learning environment relies almost exclusively on two- and three-dimensional materials—reproductions of “the real deal” so that there’s an opportunity for intergenerational sharing without the distraction of electronic media.

Four learning stations include a scaled-down Native American tipi, an overland trail “load the wagon” activity, a miniature town-building module and a 1920s-style auto touring camp.

Volunteers will explain how visitors can investigate these four stations and will check out Discovery Boxes for families and small groups to use. Help is needed at the Museum of Nebraska History, 15th & P streets, Lincoln, Tuesday through Sunday afternoons from 1:00–4:00 p.m. To apply to become a volunteer contact Deb McWilliams at dmcwilliams@nebraskahistory.org or 471-4955. The Investigation Station is supported in part by the Woods Charitable Fund, Inc.
EVENTS

July 2 • 9:30 –11:30 a.m.
“First Nebraskans”
Summer Workshops for Students
Activities for ages 5 to 12 (Registration required, first come, first served)
Museum of Nebraska History
15th & P streets, Lincoln 402-471-4754
jkeetle@nebraskahistory.org

July 9 • 9:30 –11:30 a.m.
“Nebraska Joins the Union”
Summer Workshops for Students
Museum of Nebraska History

July 16 • 9:30 –11:30 a.m.
“Building the State”
Summer Workshops for Students
Museum of Nebraska History

July 17 • 12 noon
“Running for President in 1908: Bryan vs. Taft”
Jim Potter, senior research historian, NSHS
Brown Bag Lecture Series
Museum of Nebraska History
15th & P streets, Lincoln 402-471-4754

July 23 • 9:30 –11:30 a.m.
“Nebraskans on the Homefront in WWII”
Summer Workshops for Students
Museum of Nebraska History

July 26
Library/Archives Reference Room closed

July 30 • 9:30 –11:30 a.m.
“Quilts A–Z”
Summer Workshops for Students
Museum of Nebraska History

August 3
Forty-third Annual Neihardt Day
Speakers, exhibits, music with lunch available
John G. Neihardt State Historic Site
306 W. Elm Street, Bancroft
neihardt@gpcom.net 888-777-4667

August 21 • 12 noon
“Nebraska Home Movies”
Paul Eisloeffel, curator, visual and audio collections, NSHS
Brown Bag Lecture Series
Museum of Nebraska History

August 26 • 8 p.m.
“Running for President in 1908: Bryan vs. Taft”
Jim Potter, senior research historian, NSHS
Tuesday Evening Program
Scotts Bluff National Monument
Gering 308-436-9700

September 4–7
“Steamers, Sandbars, and Snags: Reflections of the Steamboat Era on the Middle Missouri”
Missouri River History Conference
Ponca State Park (registration required)
jeff.fields@ngpc.ne.gov 402-755-2284
nshs@nebraskahistory.org 402-471-3270

September 18 • 12 noon
“Deployment to Iraq”
Father Brian Kane, Morse Bluff
Brown Bag Lecture Series
Museum of Nebraska History

September 26–28 • 9–5 daily
Lauritzen Gardens Antique and Garden Show
Antiques, appraisal clinics, music, lectures
Lauritzen Gardens, Omaha
(tickets available online)
omahaantiqueshow.org 402-436-4002

September 28
“Nebraska’s Citizen-Soldiers in the Twenty-first Century”
Exhibition closes
Museum of Nebraska History 402-471-4754

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.
Celebrating Success and Steering to the Future

*We at the Foundation are honored and humbled by our role in helping fund Beef State, an outstanding film that does so much to honor our Nebraska history.*

Through a century of American history, showcasing beef like we’ve never before seen it and defining its seminal role in who we are today. If you missed it or are itching to know more, go to [www.netnebraska.org/beefstate](http://www.netnebraska.org/beefstate) for repeat air times, photo galleries, video extras, and streaming video of the complete program.

*Beef State* is what John Carter, the senior content consultant, calls “a really good start.” The film introduced Nebraska’s biggest industry, but there is more to learn. Over fifty new web pages will be added to [NebraskaStudies.org](http://NebraskaStudies.org), the state’s premier educational Web site this fall. Plans are to actively harvest Nebraskans’ memories through an oral history project. NSHS is also exploring a travel exhibit that would allow communities to localize their story in the larger saga of Nebraska and America. We’ve made a great start, but there is a lot more to be done! 😊

*Omaha Stockyards, 1928. RG1085-20-13*

If you would like more information about how you can support the future of the Beef State project, contact the NSHS Foundation, at 402-435-3535 or e-mail info@nshsf.org.
From the collection. . .

The hot new communications technology of the 1908 presidential campaign was the penny postcard. Authorized by the U.S. Post Office in 1902, postcards became a cheap, quick, and easy way to send a message. Manufacturers cranked out hundreds of postcards, and since no envelope was required, the message was visible to anyone who saw it. Highly simplified slogans and a touch of humor helped create an image of the candidate, in this case, Nebraska’s own William Jennings Bryan. “The other Bill,” William Howard Taft, defeated Bryan, blocking the journey “from Lincoln to Washington” this card promotes.