



Museum Acquires Judge Dundy's Winchester Rifle

Dick Harmon of Lincoln, firearms specialist and volunteer at the Museum of Nebraska History, recently made an exciting discovery that culminated with an acquisition by the museum of an artifact carrying significant associations with Nebraska history.

At a major antique arms show in Kansas City in January 2006, Harmon learned of a dealer offering a Winchester Model 1876 Deluxe Sporting Rifle with the words "Judge E. S. Dundy Falls City, Neb." engraved on the underside of its cartridge lifter. Examining the gun,



Harmon also noted that it was accompanied by a dated letter from the Winchester factory detailing its serial number, special features, and the shipping date, and identifying the judge as the buyer, leaving virtually no doubt that the engraving on the rifle was authentic.

Judge Elmer S. Dundy was the federal judge in Omaha who presided over the trial of Standing Bear (photo top right) in 1879. The trial was one of the earliest and most significant moments in the long struggle to define the rights of Native Americans. Based on interpretations of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth amend-

ments to the United States Constitution, Dundy ruled that Native Americans were persons within the meaning of the law and had certain legal rights.

Harmon described the gun to Deb Arenz, senior museum curator, and Laura Mooney, museum registrar. Because of its associations with



Judge Elmer S. Dundy.
RG2411-1422

no association with Nebraska history. Arenz explained, "The museum has gone from collecting 'type objects' to



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

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Lincoln, August 2006

*Hello,
In the seven months I have served as Director/CEO of the Nebraska State Historical Society I have met hundreds of Nebraskans. You are easy people to meet. A handshake, a word of welcome, and conversation flows easily.*

Who are these Nebraskans? You range in age from 8 to 98. Your ancestors came to America from all continents. Your occupations are as varied as the yellow pages. You are well educated in both the academic

and the practical worlds. You are, as a whole, a wonderfully diverse people drawn together by the value of our history.

You have a reverence for Nebraska, from the land to the Capitol in Lincoln. You value liberty and the meaning of being Americans. You admire courage, commitment, and the willingness to work every day to achieve noble and practical ends. You have a sense of humor that moderates your intensity. You are, above all, highly responsible. You are special people indeed!

The Nebraska State Historical Society is here to serve you. That is our purpose and pledge. So, don't be shy. Let me know how the Society can assist you.

In turn, I ask for your support and assistance. Take out or give a membership in the Society. Join us in building support for history among your friends and neighbors, in your community leaders, in the teachers serving your young people, among visitors, and, indeed, in everyone who would benefit from a better knowledge of Nebraska's people and heritage. We will be here for you. Thank you for being here for us.

With best regards,

Michael J. Smith
Director/CEO

Michael J. Smith became director/CEO of the Nebraska State Historical Society on January 30, 2006. Formerly president/CEO of the American Textile Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts, he is an Illinois native. When Mike and his wife, Mary Ann, are not traveling Nebraska byways getting to know the state and its people, they are settling into their new home in Lincoln.

collecting items with a Nebraska history connection.”

Acquiring the gun was a challenge. “The dealer was asking a reasonable price, but it was more than we could afford,” Arenz said. So Harmon helped the museum negotiate a trade for a similar gun from the museum collection. The museum rarely trades artifacts, but Arenz considered this situation a unique opportunity to acquire a significant object. The newly acquired Dundy rifle is now on display on the first floor of the museum.

Arenz said the rifle might become a part of *Building the State*, a permanent exhibit in the museum that includes a section devoted to Standing Bear's trial. Among the artifacts currently on display is the headdress Standing Bear presented to his lawyer as a gift after the trial. Arenz said the rifle could become part of an expanded display devoted to Dundy and the famous trial.

What makes the gun so valuable to the museum, and what convinced Arenz and Mooney to acquire it, is the factory letter, which leaves no doubt that the rifle belonged to Judge Dundy. The letter states that the rifle was shipped from the Winchester warehouse on April 10, 1879, twenty days before the Standing Bear trial began.

Harmon laughed, “I don't know if Dundy decided he wanted a gun in the courtroom or what. We don't know.” Whatever Judge Dundy's purpose for the gun, the collections held in trust by the Society for the people of the state are made significantly richer by the acquisition of this invaluable Nebraska artifact. ☒

Two State Historical Markers Missing

Jim Potter, Nebraska State Historical Society senior research historian and a veteran of nearly forty years with the state historical marker program, can remember nothing like it: Two state historical markers are missing.

The California Hill marker in Keith County, commemorating the upper crossing of the South Platte River and the first major grade faced by emigrants headed west during the covered wagon migration of 1841–60, has been missing since August 2005. The Fort Pierre-Fort Laramie Trail marker near Chadron, which describes the 300-mile-long freighting route that was the shortest overland connection between trading posts on the Platte and the steamboat traffic on the Missouri River, was reported missing in June 2006.

The missing markers are the double post type, plaques five feet wide by six feet tall supported by a concrete posts. They are made of cast aluminum and weigh about 185 pounds. Costing about \$4,500 each, double post markers are the most expensive of the three types of marker used. Potter visited the site of the Chadron marker and said, “One of the posts, broken off at ground level, was lying on the ground, and the other was still standing.”

The Nebraska State Historical Society has administered the state historical marker program since the 1960s with the cooperation and assistance of the Nebraska Department of Roads. The state legislature established the program to commemorate sites and events important in Nebraska’s history and to offer insights about Nebraska’s past to travelers throughout the state. Currently there are about 450 state historical markers across Nebraska. All the marker texts are available on the Historical Society

website at <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/markers/index.htm>.

In the past some markers have been vandalized, sometimes by rifle bullets and shotgun pellets, and some have been damaged or destroyed in vehicle accidents. But like Potter, John Lindahl, education program associate and the current historical marker program manager, cannot remember an incident when markers were stolen, as these two apparently were.

“They were not taken as a prank,” Lindahl said. The rising prices of metals, especially copper and aluminum, make Lindahl and Potter suspect they were stolen for scrap. Aluminum is currently worth more than a dollar per pound.

Erecting a historical marker is a lengthy and expensive process. A sponsoring organization must submit a request to the Historical Society, along with a draft of the proposed text. The marker must meet certain criteria, which are posted on the Society’s website, and the sponsoring organization must provide the funds for its manufacture.

Two years ago the Historical Society’s marker program received a federal Transportation Enhancement Grant to fund repairs and to repaint weathered markers. No state funds are available to replace the two missing markers. The Historical Society hopes the markers will be returned, since replacement would depend on the availability of donations. ☐

Each marker weighs
185 pounds and costs

\$4,500



Fort Pierre-Fort Laramie Trail marker near Chadron, missing since June 2006.





Jack Maddux (left) and John Maddux discuss the history of the Maddux Cattle Company in Chase County with NET Television senior producer Olive Bucklin.

Beef Documentary Production Underway

It has been a long time coming, but the documentary being co-produced by the Nebraska State Historical Society and NET (Nebraska Educational Telecommunications) is officially underway. In late June and early July NET Senior Producer Olive Bucklin made a scouting trip to the Panhandle. Later in July her travels took her north to the Bassett area.

Bucklin is exploring beautiful ranch country landscapes looking for places to film over the course of the next year. She is also looking for stories and resources, and conducted a number of preliminary interviews while scouting locations. Filming will begin this fall.

“Without exception, this project promises some of the most surprising, informative, and rip-snorting stories our public television viewers will have ever heard,” Bucklin said, “On my recent research trips I have seen some breathtakingly beautiful ranches and met some truly impressive storytellers. These trips remind me again of the dedication,

strength, and hospitality of Nebraska’s ranching community.”

Nebraska State Historical Society staff is hard at work searching out historical materials for use in the television documentary and the accompanying website. The research will expand across the state, with visits planned to the many historical and cultural organizations in cattle country.

We hope, too, that Nebraskans will look in their family histories to help tell this important story. Do you have pictures, documents, and motion pictures related to the cattle industry that you would be willing to share? We are particularly interested in the rare photographs taken prior to 1900 that show ranching, transportation, cow towns, and stockyards, particularly those in South Omaha. If you can help, write to John Carter at NSHS or email beefstate@nebraskahistory.org. If you wish to help financially, contact the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation (see address at lower left). ☒

Woods Grant Will Support Museum Education

In late June the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation was awarded a grant of \$9,900 by the Woods Charitable Fund to enhance education programs at the Museum of Nebraska History. The grant will fund development of mobile experiential history carts and will pay for busing Lincoln public schools students to the museum.

Each cart will house items related to a specific activity or theme. Carts can be used anywhere in the museum or even outside. Ann Billesbach, associate director for the Museum/Historic Sites Division, said, “We decided to make the components of the program as flexible as possible.”

Subsidized busing will increase the number of student visits to the museum. Said

The Nebraska State Historical Foundation newsletter, which usually accompanies Nebraska History News, does not appear in this issue. It will resume publication with the November-December issue. For more information about the Foundation contact Jaqueline K. McCullough, Executive Director, at 402-435-3535, Fax 402-435-3986, e-mail jackiem@nshsf.org Visit the Foundation online at www.nebraskahistory.org/foundation/index.htm.

2005-2006 HISTORIC SITE REPAIRS

Billesbach, "For ten years we've held the Nebraska Institute, a teacher-training program emphasizing the use of primary resources in teaching. Unfortunately, Lincoln schools have not always had the funds to send classes to the museum." ❏

Help for State Historic Sites: Maintenance and Repair

During the past year an NSHS maintenance crew has traveled the state, north, south, east, west, maintaining the quality and authenticity of the State Historic Sites. From the northwest corner of the state, where they patched up Fort Robinson buildings, to the John G. Neihardt State Historic Site in the northeast, to the Senator George W. Norris State Historic Site in the southwest, to the Kennard House, Nebraska's Statehood Memorial, in Lincoln, and to society facilities in between, the crew has strengthened foundations, roofed buildings, and performed many other tasks to keep the historic sites in good condition.

NSHS carpenters men Charley McWilliams and Bryce Darling, and artist Curt Peacock are crew regulars. They are often aided by Steve Scoggan, Fort Robinson maintenance supervisor and electrician. Because it has the most buildings, Fort Robinson requires the most time, but since July 2005 the maintenance crew has worked on projects at most of the seven historic sites, including the John G. Neihardt State Historic Site, the Neligh Mill State Historic Site, the Senator George W. Norris State Historic Site, the Chimney Rock National Historic Site's Ethel and Christopher J. Abbott Visitor Center, and the Museum of Nebraska History, NSHS Headquarters, and the Kennard House, Nebraska's Statehood Memorial, all in Lincoln.

A year ago they traveled to McCook to

July

Senator George W. Norris State Historic Site • Roofed garage

August

Neligh Mill State Historic Site • Repaired and stabilized window-sills; roofed mill office

September

Fort Robinson Museum • Tuck-pointed Veterinary Hospital; repaired foundation; poured new sidewalk

November/December

Museum of Nebraska History • Installed Weird Nebraska exhibit

January/February/March

Fort Robinson Museum • Removed old floor in adobe building; poured Officers' Quarters footing, installed new floor; repaired Blacksmith and Harness Shop windows

April

Senator George W. Norris State Historic Site • Repaired wiring in garage and house; roofed sunroom; acquired new water heater and a light for the flagpole

Fort Robinson Museum • Finished Officers' Quarters floor; finished Blacksmith and Harness shop windows

May

Fort Robinson Museum • Repaired Wheelwright Shop windows; replaced damaged framing and siding

Neligh Mill State Historic Site • Replaced elevator office tin roof



Charley McWilliams tuck-points a mortar bond between bricks. Photo by Curt Peacock

Charley McWilliams has been with the Historical Society since 1986. Recently he and his staff renovated the Headquarters Building's Capitol View Conference Room.

Bryce Darling joined the NSHS workforce in 1989, and his construction and design talents are on display in every exhibit at the Museum of Nebraska History.

In 35 years **Curt Peacock** has worked on more NSHS projects than he can count. Besides exhibits and facilities work he now manages the website (a word not yet coined when he was hired in 1971).





Maintenance crew re-shingles the Veterinary Hospital annex in April 2005: Left to right, Charley McWilliams, Steve Scoggan, Bryce Darling. Photo by Curt Peacock

work on the Norris Site, replacing a leaking garage roof. The need to preserve authenticity makes work on a historic site unique. McWilliams said, “We try to get things as close as we can to the original materials yet decrease maintenance costs. We have to get a lot of stuff made for us.”

Shingles on the Norris dining room were recent enough that McWilliams could find a close match at a local lumberyard. Some other materials in need of repair or replacement are no longer manufactured. New siding for Fort Robinson’s wheelwright shop, for example, had to be milled to size.

On other projects, reinforcing the old materials is better than purchasing new. To reinforce aging windowsills at Fort Robinson, the Norris Site, Neligh Mill, and other sites the crew used epoxy. Peacock explained, “Epoxy lasts longer than the wood itself. It’s acrylic, like Plexiglas.”

But epoxy can’t fix everything. When working on the Veterinary Hospital at Fort Robinson McWilliams and his crew discovered that the building needed a new roof. New slate shingles matching the originals

would have cost as much as \$200,000 including shipping costs from the manufacturer in Pennsylvania. McWilliams talked to Bob Puschendorf, deputy state historic preservation officer, and Terry Steinacher, preservation archeologist, who approved rubber and plastic composite shingles that look almost exactly like slate, will last as long, but are only one-quarter of the cost. Moreover, the composite shingles required about four weeks for installation compared to an estimated eight weeks for slate.

McWilliams estimates that it usually takes about twice as long to complete historically accurate reconstruction as it takes to complete construction on modern buildings.

The Fort Robinson Veterinary Hospital has undergone many renovations during the past year. In April 2005, the annex was repainted and shingled. In September 2006, the maintenance crew tuck-pointed the brick and discovered that the corners of the building were cracking. They dug under the footings and discovered that they, too, were cracking. To remedy the problem, the crew dug around the foundations of the building, set forms, and poured concrete around the foundation wall, then backfilled the trench. “We didn’t want to change the appearance,” McWilliams said. Their work is invisible but essential to the building’s stability.

The crew’s most recent job was replacing the tin roof of the elevator office at Neligh Mill.

Time does not stand still, and the effects of age and use mean that historic properties, like all human constructions, are continually deteriorating. But the skill and dedication of the Historical Society’s maintenance crew craftsmen ensure that a long future is guaranteed for the state’s historic sites. ❏

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September 7-10 • various times daily
Bread 'n Jam Festival

Neligh Mill State Historic Site
N Street at Wylie Drive, Neligh
402-887-4303

September 10 • 2 p.m.

"Fragile Cargo: Children of the Orphan Trains"

Charlotte Endorf, author/performer

Sunday at the Museum Series

John G. Neihardt State Historic Site
306 W. Elm Street, Bancroft
888-777-4667 neihardt@gpcom.net

September 21 • 12 p.m.

"From McCook to Whispering Smith"

Tom White, Lincoln

Brown Bag Lecture Series

Museum of Nebraska History
15th & P streets, Lincoln 402-471-4754

October 6-7

"Changing the Future of the Past"

NSHS Annual Meeting

(See story below)

October 15 • 2 p.m.

"American Democracy and the Part-Time Citizen"

Dr. Richard Collings, Wayne State College

Sunday at the Museum Series

John G. Neihardt State Historic Site

October 19 • 12 p.m.

"Where the Water Comes From"

Michael Farrell, Neb. Ed. Telecommunications

Brown Bag Lecture Series

Museum of Nebraska History

UPCOMING
EVENTS

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



**Changing the Future of the Past:
Historical Society's Annual Meeting
October 6 and 7**

Creating a better future for historical and cultural organizations and their work in preserving Nebraska's past is the theme for the annual meeting of the Nebraska State Historical Society to be held Friday and Saturday October 6 and 7 in Lincoln.

Dan Hunter, executive director of the Massachusetts Advocates for the Arts, Science, and the Humanities, will lead a Saturday morning workshop on encouraging cultural organizations to work together and strategies for increasing awareness of and financial support for history and other cultural activities. A former director of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, playwright, songwriter, and humorist, Hunter has nearly twenty years experience in cultural advocacy.

A special event on Friday evening will be a showing of the 1949 feature film, *Whispering Smith*, starring Alan Ladd, Robert

Preston, and Brenda Marshall. *Whispering Smith*, a fictional railroad detective, was the creation of Nebraska author Frank Spearman. The film will be introduced by Tom White, who received a NSHS research grant to explore the life and works of the long neglected author whose books were widely popular in the mid-twentieth century. The film will be shown at 7 p.m. at the Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center. It is co-sponsored by the Historical Society, the Nebraska Festival of the Book, and the Ross Theater.

The meeting also will include presentation of annual awards, the annual members' business meeting, and an announcement of board of trustees election results.

The boards of trustees of the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation will also hold meetings on October 6 and 7.

Registration materials will be mailed to members. For more information call 800-833-6747, 402-471-3270, or visit www.nebraskahistory.org.



Dan Hunter

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, 9–4:30
Saturday & Sunday, 1–4
Closed Monday

Library/Archives
1500 R Street, Lincoln
402-471-4751
November–February:
Tuesday 1–4
Wed.–Fri. 9–12, 1–4
Saturday 8–5

March–October:
Tues.–Fri. 9–12, 1–4
Saturday 8–5

State Historic Site hours:
www.nebraskahistory.org

NEBRASKA history news

Nebraska State Historical Society

From the Collection. . .



Sylvester Rawding homestead. RG 2608.PH:1784

The Nebraska State Historical Society's collections include nearly 3,500 glass plate negatives made by Solomon D. Butcher between 1886 and 1912. Butcher's photographs of settlers in Custer, Dawson, Buffalo, and Cherry counties are national icons, the major visual record of Euro-American settlement in the West. His 1886 photograph of the Sylvester Rawding homestead in Custer County is the most requested photograph in the Society's collections.

Butcher's photographs are accessible worldwide over the Internet. Many are on the Historical Society's website at www.nebraskahistory.org. From there visitors can link to the Library of Congress's American Memory site, where the entire collection is posted. ☒

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