Preserving the past. Building the future.

ANNUAL REPORT
2017-2018
## CONTENTS

Adobe Officers’ Quarters, Fort Robinson Historic Site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who We Are</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What We Do</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Audacious Goal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Goals:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow Our Audiences</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Access to Collections</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow Financial Sustainability</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand Outreach &amp; Engagement</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Teamwork/Accountability</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Report</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHO WE ARE

We are dedicated to preserving and sharing the history of Nebraska. Founded in 1878 as the Nebraska State Historical Society, today’s History Nebraska is a statewide team of professional employees, student workers, and volunteers.

We exist because Nebraskans believe that our history matters. History shapes our present and future. It strengthens our connection to place. It teaches us the skills of informed citizenship. It shows how Nebraskans play a vital role in the larger story of the United States.

JOIN US

When you join History Nebraska

...tens-of-thousands of Nebraska’s school children visit Nebraska History Museum admission-free every year.

...over 12,000 of Nebraska’s archeological sites have been discovered and over 1.2 million artifacts are preserved.

...major historical sites and museums are open to the public where people all ages learn and experience history hands-on.

...Nebraskans can discover their own family history using extensive collections and archives.

Go to: history.nebraska.gov/membership
WHAT WE DO

Educate about history
We have programs for all ages, and our publications range from scholarly articles to classroom materials to popular blog posts at history.nebraska.gov.

Make history accessible
We preserve the state’s official archive and collections of rare manuscripts, photographs, and objects. We assist researchers from professional historians to genealogists and students.

Provide historical experiences
The Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln and historic sites from Chimney Rock and Fort Robinson in the west, to the George W. Norris House in McCook, Neligh Mill in Neligh, the Willa Cather and John G. Neihardt state historic sites in Red Cloud and Bancroft, and the Thomas P. Kennard House and Nebraska Statehood Memorial in Lincoln—plus more than 500 historical markers statewide.
Preserve history

We support economic development by assisting property owners, communities, and local governments in adapting historic buildings for new uses. We do this through tax credits, education, and recognition via the National Register of Historic Places. Since 2015, the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit alone has contributed over $130 million in economic activity statewide.

Conserve history

We conserve fragile and damaged objects, paper, and paintings for museums and individuals at our Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center in Omaha.

Discover history

We discover and interpret our state's rich archeological heritage, chronicling more than 12,000 years of human life and culture in Nebraska.
We want to be the most engaging and relevant state historical society in the nation.

How do we get there?
We’d love to do it all, but we have to focus our resources where they make the most impact. This strategic plan is our guiding document. Five interlocking objectives work together to move us forward. In the following pages, we’ll highlight some of the ways we’ve met our strategic goals in the 2017-2018 fiscal year.
**Grow Our Audiences**

**Our New Name**

We changed our name from the Nebraska State Historical Society to History Nebraska on April 30, 2018. This new name and logo confirm what we are—the central place to learn about Nebraska’s rich history. From our sites to our amazing archival collections, we are fortunate to be the home of the greatest collection of Nebraska history in the world.

"History Nebraska" allows us to put all of the services you value under one easily remembered name. It will also be an effective way for us to promote interest in Nebraska history, to be welcoming to all Nebraskans, and to live our mission to “open to all the histories we share.”

This idea has been a long time coming and was reinforced by thorough study. We conducted research across the state, organized focus groups, talked to stakeholders, and discussed intensely with staff and our Board of Trustees. Everything we heard led in this direction, to create a friendly name that showed what we do—which is just about everything related to Nebraska’s history!
Rising Attendance and Online Engagement

When our museum and historic sites saw an 8.8 percent increase in attendance during fiscal year 2016-17, it would have been easy to credit the Nebraska sesquicentennial and to expect a decline after the festivities.

Instead, we set a goal to grow attendance by another 8 percent in 2017-18. We came close: attendance grew by 7.7 percent during that period.

Growth doesn’t just happen. Our rebrand has been part of a larger emphasis on marketing. We’re increasing our visibility through print media, TV and radio, our website at history.nebraska.gov, and an active social media presence.

In only two months following our rebrand, website use rose 17.5 percent. Facebook engagement grew 16.2 percent, and “reach” (the number of unique people who saw our content) grew an amazing 122 percent. History Nebraska also has a growing presence on Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. We’re using each platform to share historical content, engage audiences, and promote events.

(Above) Our active social media presence connects us to people worldwide. Our post about a Nebraska draft horse even made the news in the U.K. and Ireland.

(Left) Our social media is timely and relevant; this post garnered 24,000 views in relation to the release of a 2017 Star Wars movie.
Special Publications

Two special publications this year brought Nebraska history to a wider audience. A Brief History of Nebraska by Ronald C. Naugle tells the story of Nebraska in a small, 144-page paperback written for a popular audience.

A special issue of Nebraska History, our quarterly magazine, tells the story of Engineer Cantonment, the rediscovered winter quarters of an early US Army expedition that conducted America’s first biodiversity inventory. The issue unfolds the site’s history and archeology in non-technical language.
Preserve and Digitize

We have several ongoing projects to preserve fragile collections and make them available as digital scans.

A new 42-inch large format scanner allows us to digitize maps, blueprints, posters, and other oversized items. Volunteers are inventorying and digitizing the uncatalogued portion of our map collection. Already more than 100 “new” historic maps are available in our online database.

We’ve completed a multi-year project to inventory, digitize, and rehouse more than 9,000 photographic negatives from the Nathaniel Dewell Collection. The acetate and nitrate negatives were in danger of being lost to chemical decay. The images are now searchable on our website; the negatives are preserved in cold storage.

We’ve also scanned and posted photos by sociologist Hattie Plum Williams (focusing on Volga German immigrants), and more than 1,500 glass plate negatives (ca. 1891-1908) from State Geologist George E. Condra.
Moving pictures are also part of our preservation and digitization work. The Nebraska Broadcasters Association provided funding to allow us to digitize vintage TV news footage.

**Curiosity Project**

Increasing access to our collections isn’t only about making things available. It’s good to put historical artifacts on display; it’s even better to do so in ways that spark curiosity and actively facilitate learning.

This year HN staff have been working with consultants on a grant-funded project to better incorporate curiosity into everything we do. One of the first tangible results opened at the Nebraska History Museum on June 28, 2018. Color Quest: Explore Nebraska’s Colorful Quilts! not only displays historic quilts, but is also filled with interactive, hands-on exhibits.
Strategic Goal

Grow Financial Sustainability

Chimney Rock Visitor Center Renovation Project

Led by our partners at the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation, we are in the midst of a $1.7 million fundraising campaign to renovate and expand one of our most popular facilities, the Ethel and Christopher J. Abbott Visitor Center at Chimney Rock National Historic Site. The campaign will continue until September 2019 and we plan to complete construction by May 2020. Donations are appreciated and can be given at www.nshsf.org
**Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, Omaha**

With a staff of highly-trained conservators specializing in the treatment of paintings, paper, and historic artifacts, History Nebraska’s Ford Center offers services to private individuals, museums and libraries, corporations, and state and federal agencies. This year’s billable projects brought in nearly $220,000 to help cover its operating budget.

**Dr. Don R. Gerlach**

When Dr. Don Gerlach retired from the history faculty of the University of Akron, he came home to Nebraska and moved into the 1919 home his grandparents owned in Harvard. An early American historian and education advocate, Dr. Gerlach is giving back to his home state, pledging $1.3 million to the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation. In recognition of the gift, we honored him on September 29, 2017, with the dedication of the Dr. Don R. Gerlach Capitol View Room at our headquarters in Lincoln.

**Cather Property Transfer**

With the approval of the Unicameral, History Nebraska is in the process of transferring six properties in Red Cloud to the Willa Cather Foundation (WCF). The transfer supports the efforts of the WCF, which gave the properties to the State in 1978. History Nebraska will also transfer approximately 8,000 Cather related artifacts—helping ensure that the newly completed National Willa Cather Center will remain the essential location to research this great Nebraska writer for generations to come.
We’re building partnerships across the state. Here are some recent examples:

**Looking Past Skin Exhibit**

The Mountain-Plains Museum Association honored History Nebraska with a Leadership and Innovation Award for our recent exhibit, *Looking Past Skin: Our Common Threads*. Judges praised its originality and creativity, and its impact on the community.

The University of Nebraska’s Minority Health Disparities Initiative (MHDI), Nebraska Extension, and the Nebraska History Museum partnered on the four-part exhibit to present sociological, agricultural, and historical perspectives on migration and the state’s more recent demographic shifts. Funding was generously provided by Rural Futures Institute and Humanities Nebraska.

**Archeology across Nebraska**

The State Archeology Office uses multiple partnerships to explore and preserve Nebraska’s archeological heritage. This year we:
• Provided cultural assessments on roads projects for the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). We preserve the past while keeping road projects on schedule.

• Completed three seasons of fieldwork in the Sandhills in collaboration with the State Historic Preservation Office, the National Park Service (Midwest Archeological Center), local landowners, and the universities of Nebraska, Iowa, and Oklahoma. The projects identified over 200 new archeological sites ranging in age from 10,000 years ago to the 1890s. Crews also completed detailed excavations at an Apache village from the 1600s.

• Worked with tribal representatives and NDOT to ensure tribes have a greater role in protecting cultural sites in the path of highway construction. We also completed a final inventory of Native American human remains and associated funerary objects and reached an agreement with over 30 descendant tribes to repatriate the remains of over 500 individuals and 4,200 artifacts.

Preserving Historic Properties

The State Historic Preservation Office at History Nebraska administers the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit program. This year we led well-attended tours at six historic buildings that have been rehabilitated using tax credits. Together we saw the results of the tax credits and the benefit of substantial historic rehabilitations to local communities.

We’ve been working with community leaders on several new commercial historic district nominations for the National Register of Historic Places. We listed commercial historic districts in Kearney, Grand Island, and Neligh, and will soon present nominations for districts in Cozad and Hastings. This greatly increases the number of Nebraska properties listed on the National Register, and makes contributing properties eligible for our state and federal tax incentives. Tax credit projects are economic drivers and can help provide essential workforce housing.
Key Strategic Hires

We completed key strategic hires this year, not only filling positions opened by retirements, but also adding team members who bring new areas of expertise to our organization. They include educators, historic site staff, and our first-ever marketing team.
Conserving the George Churley Puppets

The Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center does a lot of work for outside clients, but also spent more than 3,000 hours this year conserving objects for History Nebraska. The Objects Lab treated twenty-eight mid-20th century puppets created by Nebraska puppeteer George Churley. Some of the puppets were so chemically unstable that they had to be sealed in oxygen-free environments to help prolong their lifespan. Many of the puppets were featured in the recent Nebraska History Museum exhibit, Don’t Touch That Dial! Kalamity Kate and the George Churley Puppets.

(Below) Conservators Vonnda Shaw and Rebecca Cashman at the Gerald R. Ford Center.
# Financial Report

**History Nebraska**

**Fiscal Year 2018***

## Revenues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Appropriations</td>
<td>59.12%</td>
<td>$4,076,064.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income &amp; Membership</td>
<td>25.19%</td>
<td>$1,736,711.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Grants &amp; Contracts</td>
<td>9.82%</td>
<td>$677,353.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSHS Foundation Support</td>
<td>4.54%</td>
<td>$312,871.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations, Grants &amp; Special Events</td>
<td>1.34%</td>
<td>$92,101.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$6,895,102.66</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum &amp; Historic Sites</td>
<td>28.50%</td>
<td>$1,842,848.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Services</td>
<td>15.67%</td>
<td>$1,013,395.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archeology</td>
<td>15.59%</td>
<td>$1,007,799.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Preservation</td>
<td>14.24%</td>
<td>$920,931.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections</td>
<td>11.52%</td>
<td>$744,623.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>7.33%</td>
<td>$473,761.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Publications</td>
<td>4.72%</td>
<td>$305,082.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesquicentennial Commission</td>
<td>2.43%</td>
<td>$157,347.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$6,465,790.71</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Michelle Furby, Chief Financial Officer*

---

*Figures do not include building maintenance funds (309), specialized grants or direct foundation expenditures.*
**Revenues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Appropriations</td>
<td>59.12%</td>
<td>4,076,064.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income &amp; Membership</td>
<td>25.19%</td>
<td>1,736,711.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Grants &amp; Contracts</td>
<td>9.82%</td>
<td>677,353.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSHS Foundation Support</td>
<td>4.54%</td>
<td>312,871.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations, Grants, &amp; Special Events</td>
<td>1.34%</td>
<td>92,101.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenditures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum/Historic Sites</td>
<td>28.50%</td>
<td>1,842,848.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Services</td>
<td>15.67%</td>
<td>1,013,395.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archeology</td>
<td>15.59%</td>
<td>1,007,799.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Preservation</td>
<td>14.24%</td>
<td>920,931.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections</td>
<td>11.52%</td>
<td>744,623.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>7.33%</td>
<td>473,761.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Publications</td>
<td>4.72%</td>
<td>305,082.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesquicentennial Commission</td>
<td>2.43%</td>
<td>157,347.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
History NEBRASKA
Nebraska State Historical Society

Volunteers make it possible.
Sharing their passion for history, volunteers with a wide range of skills are vital to our continued work. Students, retirees, and working adults contributed 5,326 hours of service this past year.

Anna Allison
Ahmed Al-Saray
Jordan Anderson
David Anderson
Ben Arenz
David Atkinson
Gabriela “Gabby” Ayala
Eric Bachenberg
Eva Bachman
Jeff Barnes
Clark Bates
Rod Bates
Barbara Batie
Benjamin Bay
Cheerio Beam Callaway
Cheryl Beery
Bill Behmer
Ann Bird
Gail Blankenau
Mike Bockoven
Erin Boyle
George Bray
Lance Bristol
Larry Brooks
Ron Buchholz
Erica Busta
Kathleen Cannon
Walter Case
Stephen Cass, Jr.
John “Jack” Chaffin
Leslie Childs
Denise Christensen
Gregg Christensen
Pat Churray
Dennis Clare
Joan Clare
Cassandra Clark
Lindsey Clausen
Beverly Cram
Brian Croft
Sara Crook
Tom Curran
Alexander Currie
Spencer Davis
Steven Eggland
Josh Egley
Kim Eldor
Katherine Endacott
Nancy Faber
Anne Fargen
Lauren Feden
Phyllis Fischer
Steven Flader
Deanna Frankforter
Heather Fryer
José Garcia
Mary Geisler
Vince Goeres
Graham Goodwin
Jamesena Grimes Moore
Molly Haas
Peter Hajda
Bob Hanover
Linda Hein
Karen Heiser
Nyla Helge
Timothy Heller
Becky Herian
Roland Hill
Donna Hinkley
Sue Hodge
Bruce Hoffman
Dave Hohbein
Holly Holle
Joyce Howe
Carter Hulinsky
Ron Hull
Steve Hunt
Von Innes
Christi Janssen
Nick Jensvold
Tracy Johnson
Cordelia Jones
Chuck Jones
John Kay
Tom Kraus
Lee Kreimer
Jerry Kromberg
Donna Kush
Frank LaMere
Pamilla “Penny” Lange
Katherine Latham
Billie Lefholtz
Andrea Lemmer
Mary Lieb
Lynn “Nora” Lorraine
Marlen Luff
Donna Lundberg
Christine Makowski
Nicole Malone
Betty Mapes
Mary Marchio
Denise Matulka
Emily Marvin
Shelley McAfferty
Jim McKee
Georgean McReynolds
Robert Meiners
Jamesena Moore
Marilyn Moore
Rose Mulbery
David Murphy
Ronald Naugle
Christie Nelson
John Nelson
Danny Nichols
Shannon Nolte
Lorelee Novak
Tatum O’Brian
Dora Olivares
Alissa Olsen
Jackie Park
Inna Pavlova
Curt Peacock
Cierra Pedersen
Jeanette Peters
Elaine Peters
Robert “Bob” Peterson
Robert “Bob” Price
Meredith Price
Richard Quinn
Bonnie Quinn
Mary Rabenberg
Marty Ramierz
Sandy Reisdorff
Jennifer Richardson
Prianna Ross
Heidi Saner
Fusun Sayood
Vickie Schaepler
Jacob Schlange
Nora Schmidt
Livia Shaefer
Rogene Siletto
Linda Simonsen
Samuel Skokan
Michael Smith
Jo Ann Smith
Mary Kay Sorensen
Connie Spellman
Jan Staley
Rod Steinacher
Marcia Stewart
Paula Stone
Jessica Stoner
John Strope
Cindy Swanson
Linda Taylor
Lacey Tlamka
Betty Todd
Kayla Toney
Marvin Trowbridge
Justin Walker
LuAnn Wandsnider
Jane Waterson
Leann Widhalm
Diane Wiehn
Diana Wild
Karen Windhusen
Eileen Wirth
Donna Wolf
Betty Wolff
Marcus Woodman
John Zimmer
Brian Zimmer
Matthew Zmijewski