

# NEBRASKA TRAILBLAZER



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No. 5

Settlers' Homes

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## Arbor Lodge

This picture shows Nebraska's most famous house. It was the home of J. Sterling Morton, the founder of Arbor Day. He came to Nebraska City in 1854 and built a log cabin. Later he moved into a new home, which is now part of this huge house. Morton's son, Joy, enlarged and remodeled the house in 1905.

Beautiful gardens and hundreds of trees surround Arbor Lodge. J. Sterling Morton planted some of these trees. Famous visitors, such as President Grover Cleveland, planted others. Today you can visit the house and gardens, a part of Arbor Lodge State Historical Park.



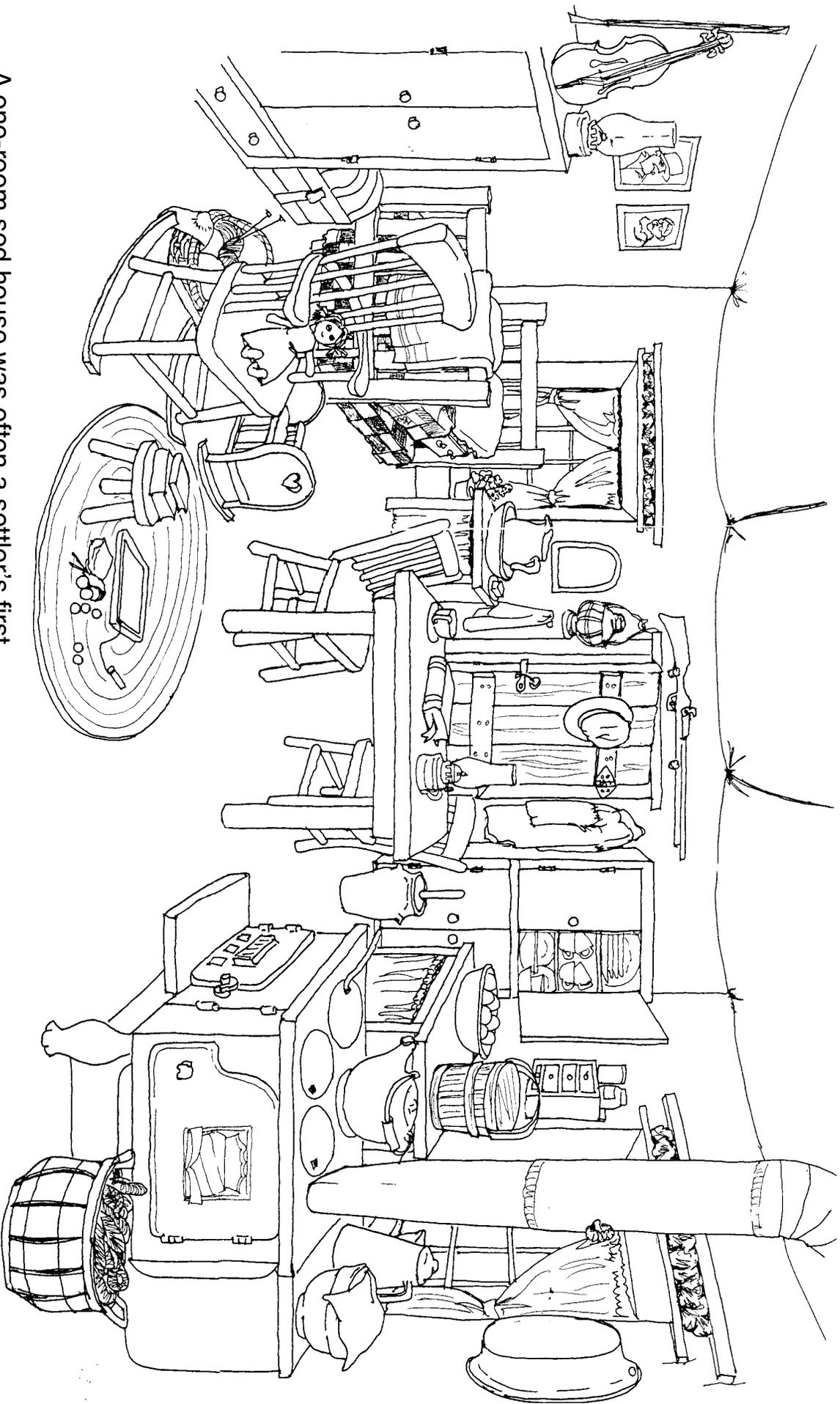
## **Governor's Mansion**

The Governor's Mansion is located in Lincoln, across the street from the state capitol. Completed in 1957, the Mansion replaced an older house which stood nearby. The house and grounds take up a city block. Tours through the mansion are available to the public.

The mansion has a large dining room and a drawing room on the first floor for state dinners and receptions. The Governor's family lives on the second floor.

Kay Orr was the ninth governor to live here. She was also Nebraska's first woman governor. She used the mansion for public occasions.



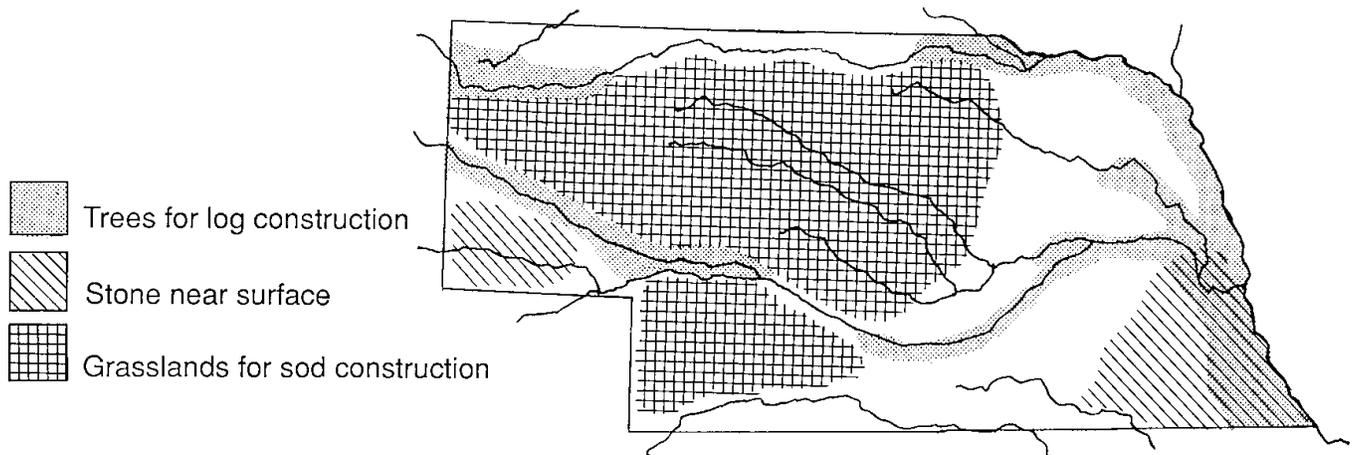


A one-room sod house was often a settler's first home on the prairie. How would your family life change if you lived in a one-room house like this? Some pioneer families had to move the table outside at night to make enough room for sleeping.

Only a few valued pieces of furniture were brought to Nebraska. Other furniture was made from packing boxes or from lumber purchased in town.

## Houses of Early Nebraskans

Nebraskans have lived in many kinds of houses, built from a variety of materials. The Native Americans and early settlers in Nebraska had to use the wood, grass, dirt, and stone that was here. Native Americans in central and western Nebraska lived mainly in the tipi. It required little wood and its hide covering made it portable. Tribes in eastern Nebraska had more trees available and used them in earthlodges and wigwams. Early settlers who lived along rivers and streams used logs for building. Sod houses were built in the grassland areas of the state. Stone was rarely used. The map below shows the locations of these early building materials in the state.



## Log Houses

In eastern Nebraska pioneers found trees large enough to build cabins. Large trees were also found along the major rivers and streams in other parts of the state. When building a log cabin, settlers chopped the sides of a log with a broadaxe so they were flat. Notches were cut near the end of the logs to hold them together. Then the logs were placed one on top of the other to make the wall. The cracks between the logs had to be filled with mud to keep out the cold wind. When later rooms — of cut lumber — were added, siding was often placed over the logs. Even today log houses, covered with siding and long forgotten, are discovered during remodeling.

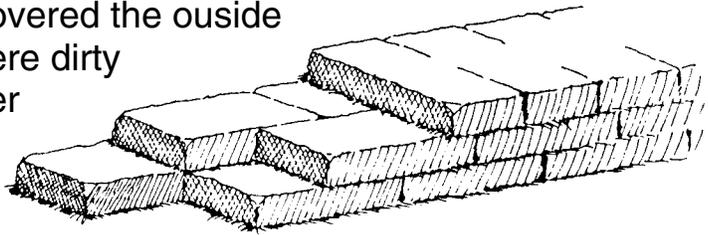


## Sod Houses

A grasshopper plow was used to turn the prairie sod over into strips. The strips were cut into three-foot lengths. These blocks were sometimes jokingly called "Nebraska marble." The blocks were laid in a wall, like bricks, with the grass side down. (See the drawing.) Sand and mud were used to plaster the inside



walls which were whitewashed to brighten the room. If the sod house were to last several years, its owner covered the outside walls with wood siding. Sod houses were dirty inside, but they were warm in the winter and cool in the summer because of the thick walls.



## Mud Houses

Some early houses in Nebraska were made of clay. A mixture of wet clay and straw was put into a mold and dried in the sun. These slabs of dry clay, called adobes, were stacked like bricks to make a house. Another kind of clay house

was made by packing wet clay into a large wooden form to build one section of a wall at a time. Clay houses, like the one in this picture, had to be plastered or covered with boards to keep the walls from washing away in the rain.



*The family living in this mud house are immigrants from the country of Czechoslovakia.*

## Wood Frame Houses

Wood frame house construction was common in river towns from the beginning of settlement. Lumber was shipped up the Missouri by steamboat or was cut at local saw mills. After the building of the railroad began in Nebraska in 1866, frame house construction became more practical in other parts of the state. The railroad transported lumber and other building materials across Nebraska. Then frame houses, like this one, began to replace sod and log houses built by the early pioneers.



Frame houses were much easier to keep clean than sod or log houses, which often had dirt floors. These houses were built much like houses are today. Long boards were nailed together to form a framework. Wood siding was nailed over this frame to make the outer walls. Then the inside walls were plastered.

## Brick Houses

The first Nebraska bricks were made in the 1820s at Fort Atkinson, an army post in present-day Washington County. A few brickyards were opened after settlers came to Nebraska. They made use of clay, a kind of dirt that existed in many parts of the state. By the 1880s, brick-making became a major industry. For a time, nearly every town had a brickyard. To make bricks, workers pressed wet clay into the desired shape. The clay was then fired in a special furnace called a kiln.



Bricks buildings were expensive, but they needed little maintenance and were almost fireproof. After some towns in Nebraska nearly burned to the ground, laws were passed requiring business owners to build “fireproof” brick buildings.



## Stone Houses

A skilled stone-cutter was needed to build a stone house. After it was quarried (dug from the ground), the stone was carved into blocks. The builder laid the stone blocks into a wall and held them together with mortar, a type of cement. Some early stone houses in Nebraska are still in daily use.

# WORD SEARCH



## SETTLERS' HOMES

Settlers	Whitewash	Buildings
Plaster	Mansion	Lumber
Siding	Boards	Mortar
House	Lodge	Frame
Cabin	Grass	Stone
Sand	Home	Wood
Dirt	Log	Sod
Bricks	Mud	