American Dreams in the Cold War: Photos by Barbara and Ralph Fox

The Nebraska History Museum re-opens with new exhibits on April 1—please join us from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. to tour your “new” museum! (Regular hours begin the next day.) In the previous issue we told you about Nebraska Unwrapped. In this issue we give you a taste of American Dreams in the Cold War and Nebraska’s Enduring Quilt Heritage: New Acquisitions (p. 4).

Barbara and Ralph Fox not only captured the post-war American story in their iconic photos, they lived it. The college sweethearts married before Ralph left for World War II service and

Senator John F. Kennedy in Lincoln during the 1960 presidential campaign. With him are Nebraska Governor Ralph G. Brooks, left, and Lincoln Mayor E. Bartlett “Pat” Boyles, right. NSHS RG4107-2-109, Ralph C. and Barbara Rehberg Fox Collection

Continued on p. 2
Barbara finished her journalism degree. After the war she worked as a freelance photojournalist, while he became part of a Nebraska State Journal team that won a Pulitzer Prize for coverage of the 1948 presidential primary. Running their own business, the Foxes covered notable and notorious events from baby-boom family life to nuclear bomb tests. The Foxes’ careers in photojournalism encompassed some of the most interesting, confusing, anxious, prosperous, and exciting years in all of American history.

THE SESQUICENTENNIAL… ONLY A YEAR AWAY!

Can the Sesquicentennial of Nebraska statehood be only a year away? It’s true: March 1, 2017, will mark 150 years since the territory became a full-fledged state. It will be a celebration of all things Nebraska, and we can all be involved.

In our fast-paced, communications-and-media-saturated world, it is easy to be centered on ourselves and on the present. We take statehood for granted, and often the various roles of state and local government (schools and roads, for example) and of the federal government (entitlement programs, defense, foreign policy) all flow together like background noise as we race through life.

It can be difficult for us to understand all the ways in which statehood was a big deal to those living here 150 years ago. Some Nebraskans in 1867 argued that we should remain a territory so that the expenses of government would be paid by federal funds instead of state taxes. Most, however, knew it was time for the territory to grow up and take its place alongside the existing thirty-six states (several of which were still under military occupation after the Civil War). Statehood meant voting in national elections, electing U.S. senators and representatives, and taking responsibility not just for local affairs, but for the entire nation.

Two organizations have been established to provide leadership for this important anniversary: Celebrating Nebraska Statehood and the Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commission. There will be activities for all Nebraskans throughout the year.

We can participate individually and collectively. Take stock of Nebraska’s accomplishments and tell our story to our own citizens and to the rest of the world. Engage our students of all ages. Look at the stories of our own families over the generations, whether our ancestors were here in 1867 or whether we only recently arrived. Look at the histories of our towns and cities, our multiple heritages. Share what it means to be a Nebraskan and invite others to join us.

It’s time to look ahead as active participants in civic life, grasping both the opportunity and responsibility to contribute through positive engagement in one’s family, at work, on the city block, or in the rural community. This special opportunity waits in 2017. It’s up to all of us to make use of it.

Michael J. Smith, Director/CEO
New Edition of Solomon Butcher Book by John Carter Arrives in April

For millions of Americans, Solomon D. Butcher's photographs epitomize the sod-house frontier. In 1985 NSHS staff member John Carter earned critical praise for his first book, *Solomon D. Butcher: Photographing the American Dream*. The *New Yorker* called it a "wonderfully revealing history," and *Publisher's Weekly* called it "a superb portrait of a bygone time."

One of Carter's final projects before his untimely death last year was completing a new edition of this important book. With digitally-restored photos and a new afterword by the author, the book will be published by the University of Nebraska Press this April (and will be available at NSHS Landmark Stores). The 152-page large-format paperback features 132 photographs and lists for $29.95.

Become a Trustee

Would you like to help lead the NSHS as a member of the Board of Trustees? Board application materials are available at nebraskahistory.org/admin/board. Or just go to our home page, type "board" in the search box, and click on the first link that appears. Twelve trustees are elected by the NSHS members; this year seats are up for election in all three congressional districts. To be considered for the board nominating committee's slate of candidates, submit your application by June 15. Additional candidates may submit applications up to 5 p.m., August 18, 2016.

New NSHS Books Here and On the Way

The NSHS recently published "From Our Special Correspondent": Dispatches from the 1875 Black Hills Council at Red Cloud Agency, Nebraska, edited by James E. Potter. The 336-page paperback sells for $29.95 through the NSHS Landmark Stores.

For a month in late summer 1875 the nation's gaze was drawn to proceedings at the remote Red Cloud Agency in northwestern Nebraska, where the federal government sought unsuccessfully to convince Lakota leaders to cede ownership of the Black Hills. The council was noteworthy for the issues involved, its effect on the future of Indian-white relations, and because it was among the largest such gatherings in American history. Gathered in this volume, the correspondents' reports provide a fascinating glimpse of the personalities, interactions, and cultures of the Indian, mixed-blood, and white participants in the negotiations.

On July 1 the NSHS will publish *Last Days of Red Cloud Agency* by Thomas R. Buecker. This hardcover volume will present a collection of 1870s photos—many never before published—of the Oglala Lakota agency near Fort Robinson during the crucial years at the close of the Great Sioux War. More about this important book in the next issue.

Register Now for Summer 2016 Kids' Classes

The Nebraska History Museum is hosting classes for students in grades K-8 on a variety of topics. Classes will be held between May 25 and August 8. May and June dates and topics are:

- May 25: *Bison: The Native Americans’ Superstore*
- June 2: *Nebraska Unwrapped*
- June 14: *Lewis & Clark, puppets*
- June 16: *Pioneer Music, 1830-1930*
- June 28: *The Nifty 1950s*
- June 30: *Nebraska in the Civil War*

All classes will be held in the Gilmore Room, 9:00-4:00, and are available for kids who have completed grades K-8. Cost is $40 per class for the general public, or $36 for NSHS members. Grandparents are encouraged to take the classes with their grandchildren at no extra charge!

All registrations (required) are on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration forms can be picked up at the NHM or found at nebraskahistory.org under the “For Kids” button. If you have questions, contact Museum Educator Judy Keetle, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov or 402-471-4757.
Thanks to generous donations, the Nebraska History Museum quilt collection has expanded greatly in the past decade. We now have nearly 400 quilts. *Nebraska’s Enduring Quilt Heritage: New Acquisitions*, opening April 1, will feature thirteen quilts made from the 1840s to 2012. Additional quilts featuring new acquisitions and showcasing collection diversity will be rotated into the exhibit over the next several years.

One of the quilts is a sampler top, featuring twenty-nine different patterns. It was made around 1963 by Louise Howey, Dove Howey, and Ernest Haight. Louise and her mother-in-law, Dove, were prolific Nebraska quilters who were also avid collectors of quilt patterns. They made sample blocks of patterns that appealed to them, reportedly creating more than eight hundred. The quilt top featured in our exhibit was a joint project with
another Nebraska quilter, Ernest B. Haight, who helped arrange and set the blocks. Ernest had an engineering degree from the University of Nebraska, and valued efficiency and mathematical precision in his quilts. He began quilting in 1936 after his father, a quilter in his own right, suggested that he piece a quilt for each of his children.

Earlier this year the Nebraska History Museum received a wonderful gift from the Ernest B. Haight family: his 1960s era Hilton brand electric sewing machine. It will be displayed alongside the quilt in the exhibition. Haight first learned to piece quilts on a treadle sewing machine that his grandparents brought to Butler County, Nebraska, in 1880. At first, his father and mother completed the quilting but could not keep up with the number of quilts Haight pieced. By 1960, with many tops waiting to be quilted, he replaced the treadle sewing machine and devised a faster method of quilting by machine, which he described in his 1974 self-published booklet, *Practical Machine-Quilting for the Homemaker.*

(top-right) Ernest Haight’s 1960s Hilton sewing machine, on which he developed a faster method of machine quilting.
(top-left) Feathered Star quilt block
(bottom-left) Crossword Puzzle quilt block
(middle-right) Morning Star quilt block
(bottom right) Oklahoma Dogwood quilt block
Many members of the public experience history from behind a screen or within pages of a book, but paper conservator Hilary LeFevere experiences history through the original paper—even if that paper is ink-stained, dirt-streaked, grease-blotted, or moldy.

“We like being able to touch history,” LeFevere says.

She and her fellow conservators at the NSHS’s Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center in Omaha are there to help if a painting, object, or paper artifact gets touched a little too much. Whether water got into an attic, normal wear and tear and age damaged an old book, or a dog ran through a painting, the conservators can try to repair or at least preserve an artifact.

LeFevere started work as the Ford Center’s paper conservator in October. Originally from Michigan, LeFevere is most recently from New York, where she worked for a private conservation studio specializing in treating contemporary works of art. The Ford Center has not had a steady paper conservator for several years, so LeFevere is working through a long waiting list of private clients as well as working on artifacts for the NSHS.

LeFevere’s role includes much more than the “bench work” of working with the artifact. She researches information to better understand the piece’s history and rarity, she takes numerous photographs before, during, and after she works with an artifact, and she writes reports about her methods at each stage of the process.

“I do a condition assessment, determine what it’s made of, and write up the history of the item,” LeFevere says. Her job is a mixture of art history, chemistry, marketing, research, and counseling.

“People want to preserve their legacies,” LeFevere says. “And it’s nice to think that we can make magic happen, but sometimes we just can’t.”

Some artifacts have losses, or pieces missing; others are cracked, ripped, worn, or just really dirty. LeFevere examines the piece several different ways.

“I use UV light to determine if repairs have happened, and I can sometimes determine whether it’s an oil or water stain in paper,” LeFevere says.

People often try to repair items themselves and just end up hurting the item more.

“We do not want people thinking they can do this at home,” LeFevere says. She showed one do-it-yourself-repair that was almost as old as the book itself. In The Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports from 1830, someone had crudely stitched the ripped page back in the book.

“This was before tape was invented,” LeFevere says.

She also does testing with solvent and adhesive reaction using a microscope to see how the item reacts to certain chemicals on the microscopic level. She uses cellulose powder to fix holes, and Fuller’s Earth, a powder made of ground up shells, as a poulticing agent.

LeFevere’s lab aesthetic falls somewhere between “mad scientist” and “grandma’s attic.” A counter with cupboards and her computer run along one side, artifacts line the other, and tables take up the center. Gray tubes called “trunks” because they look like elephant trunks hang from the ceiling, and they ventilate her work station when she uses solvents.

LeFevere’s lab also has a “humidity dome” that uses ultrasonic mist to help flatten papers, a sink the size of a pool table for working with posters, rolls of polyester woven material she uses to wrap photos in because it prevents damage, and a suction platen, which is a vacuum table that sucks solvent away so it doesn’t pool up on the document. Another wall holds “practice” documents, which are donated, damaged items that LeFevere can test before trying techniques on
Welcome New NSHS Trustee

Vickie Schaepler was appointed to the NSHS Board of Trustees at its January 2016 meeting, representing the third congressional district. She holds both bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Kearney State College (now UNK) and is retired after many years of service in the Nebraska Department of Education’s Division of Rehabilitation Services. Vickie is especially interested in the history of Japanese Nebraskans. She grew up working in a family owned restaurant that served American and Asian food from 1968 to 1983.

National Historic Preservation Act Turns 50

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act, which was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in October 1966. The act was a response to the loss of historic buildings across the country during the postwar boom of the 1950s and 1960s. Historic monuments across the country were demolished in a wave of highway construction and urban renewal. Here in Nebraska, landmark buildings such as the old Omaha Post Office were demolished as part of the redevelopment of city centers, while highway construction isolated neighborhoods and threatened historic landscapes.

The National Historic Preservation Act established a system to identify and protect historic resources across the nation from damage or demolition by federally funded projects. The act built upon previous federal laws, dating back to the 1906 Antiquities Act, which protected historic monuments and archeological sites.

Cities joined the federal government in passing local ordinances that embraced preservation and established commissions to identify, document, and protect historic buildings. These laws were modeled on ordinances passed by cities such as New Orleans, Charleston, and Santa Fe, which began in the 1930s to protect their historic colonial downtowns.

Visit preservation50.org to learn more about the fiftieth anniversary of the Preservation Act and nationwide commemorations. Participate in the National Park Service’s #50for50 Social Media Campaign by visiting www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/50for50.htm. The Nebraska Historic Preservation Office will also continue to provide information on the commemoration and future events via its (free) email newsletter. For more information, contact Ruben Acosta, National Register Coordinator, at ruben.acosta@nebraska.gov.

A damaged paper mask by artist Doane Powell, from the NSHS collections.
Crowdfunded African American Sandhills Settlement Marker Dedicated April 11

Nebraska's longest-lasting African American rural settlement will receive a state historical marker thanks to a coalition of descendants, the Cherry County Historical Society, and author Stew Magnuson (The Last American Highway). The group recently crowdfunded a roadside marker for DeWitty (later known as Audacious), raising $5,100 online. A dedication ceremony is scheduled for Monday, April 11 at 10 a.m. The marker is near the Brownlee turnoff road along U.S. Highway 83 in Cherry County.

“The homesteaders of DeWitty were just that—audacious,” said Catherine Meehan Blount, granddaughter of two of the settlement’s founders. “They were audacious for believing that the American dream belonged to them, too, and they were audacious for committing all they had to attain that dream.”

The NSHS approved a historical marker for DeWitty, which was established in 1907 along the North Loup River ten miles northwest of Brownlee. A group of homesteaders took advantage of the Kinkaid Act of 1904, which allowed settlers to claim 640 acres each (one square mile) in the thirty-seven counties comprising the Sandhills. In 1916 the town changed its name to Audacious. It had amenities such as a post office, general store, church, barber, and baseball team, plus rural schools for local children.

Audacious and its vicinity grew to about a hundred families by 1917, but like most Kinkaider settlements it eventually faded from drought and crop failures. The Sandhills proved unsuitable for farming. The last of the settlers sold their land and moved away by 1936. Today there is no physical trace that the town ever existed. The marker will change that.

In thanking supporters, the Cherry County Historical Society posted that the “most satisfying part was the diverse communities who got involved, such as the descendants of DeWitty, residents of Cherry County and Valentine, members of the Fans of U.S. Route 83 page on Facebook, and history buffs from near and far.”

Joyceann Gray, great-granddaughter of DeWitty homesteaders William Walker and Charlotte Hatter, summed up why this project matters: “When we can clearly mark where our ancestors have been—and by name—we can ensure the full story will be told and we can then better understand the purpose of our journey.”

Teachers Training for Nebraska Sesquicentennial

This June, Peru State College will offer the ninth rendition of Trails and Tales, an award-winning teacher institute and statewide tour.

Titled “Anticipating Nebraska’s Sesquicentennial,” the program features a week of on-campus courses (June 13–20) and a statewide tour (June 20–25), both of which give participants the opportunity to concurrently study Nebraska history and literature, particularly as they illustrate our state’s first 150 years.

The all-inclusive cost is $690 for double occupancy on the six-day tour, but $300 grants are available to the first thirty in-service or pre-service teachers who register through funds provided by Humanities Nebraska. The same thirty teachers are also eligible for $100 in tuition remission, provided by the Peru State College Foundation, to offset the cost of one or both courses.

For more information, visit peru.edu and search for Trails and Tales, or contact co-directors Dr. Sara Crook, professor of social science/history (scrook@peru.edu), or Dr. Dan Holtz, professor of English (dholtz@peru.edu).
Save the Date for Fort Robinson Museum Sixtieth Anniversary, June 3

The NSHS is planning activities to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Fort Robinson Museum on June 3. Event plans are still underway as this issue goes to press, but watch our Facebook page to learn more.

As you can see from the photos, the museum’s 1956 opening was a very big deal for northwestern Nebraska. Despite its rich history, the fort’s future was uncertain after the U.S. Army closed the base in 1948. The U.S. Department of Agriculture took over the site as a beef research station, but by the mid-1950s a movement was underway to preserve the fort as a historic site and recreational park. The decision of the NSHS to open a branch museum in the old Post Headquarters was a visible sign that this important site would be preserved. Today Fort Robinson State Park is one of Nebraska’s top tourist attractions. The Nebraska Game & Parks Commission manages the park, while the NSHS operates the museum and maintains several other historic buildings.

NSHS Seeks Award Nominees

Who is making a difference in Nebraska history? We’re seeking nominations for our annual awards, which recognize outstanding achievement in preserving, interpreting, and educating people about the history of the state. Award plaques will be presented at the NSHS annual meeting on October 14 in Lincoln. Winners are selected by the NSHS awards committee.

See nebraskahistory.org/admin/awards/nominations.htm for criteria and the nomination form. The nomination deadline is June 30 at 5 p.m. If you have questions, contact Lana Hatcher (lana.hatcher@nebraska.gov, 402-471-3272, or 800-833-6747). Here are the awards for which we are seeking nominations:

The Addison E. Sheldon Memorial Award recognizes “outstanding contributions to preservation and interpretation in the field of Nebraska history.” Individuals or organizations may qualify for the award for long-term contributions to history or for an important onetime accomplishment. Former Society employees as well as current and retired board members are eligible.

The Robert W. Furnas Memorial Award recognizes outstanding contributions or assistance to the Nebraska State Historical Society in the form of either long-term service or a significant onetime contribution by an individual or organization.

The James C. Olson Memorial Award goes to a Nebraska K-12 teacher who encourages and supports their students in endeavors such as History Day, who use documents, oral history, or historic places in classroom projects, or who employ other imaginative or innovative methods to make Nebraska history come alive for their students.
The Chimney Rock Public Power District is making a series of promotional videos of sites and activities in their district using their mascot, “Power,” shown here with the NSHS’s Loren Pospisil, site supervisor at Chimney Rock National Historic Site. Loren writes, “Today we take electricity for granted but the emigrants passing Chimney Rock in the nineteenth century used candles for light and buffalo chips to cook over. They would be astonished to see a robot at Chimney Rock.” We’ve published many photos of Nebraska’s most famous landmark over the years, but none quite like this.

For updated events, see the NSHS Facebook page, linked from www.nebraskahistory.org
Nebraska Unwrapped: What Would You Include?

Calling all would-be curators! What should the NSHS be collecting? When the Nebraska History Museum re-opens April 1, it will feature *Nebraska Unwrapped*, a showcase of about 150 objects that represent the people, history, cultures, and stories of Nebraska.

With all the cool old stuff the museum holds in trust for the people of Nebraska, the curatorial staff had a hard time choosing which objects to display. And we discovered that there were many things that we’d like to have but don’t.

So we’re asking you to play the part of curator and tell us what you would include in your museum collections! A form is online at blog-nebraskahistory.org (enter “unwrapped” in the search window). We’re sharing some suggestions on our Facebook page and Twitter, so keep an eye out … Maybe you’ll see your idea featured in the coming weeks!

Nebraska Museums Association Conference, April 11-12

The Nebraska Museums Association Annual Meeting and Conference will be held at the Knight Museum & Sandhills Center in Alliance, Nebraska, April 11-12. Highlights include: a three-hour workshop on collections cataloging and online access with Brian Gomez, vice president of PastPerfect Software, Inc.; sessions and roundtable discussions on grants funding, museum social media, effective board members, interpreting diversity, museum education and more for museum staff, volunteers and board members; tours of local attractions; and an evening reception hosted by the Knight Museum board. The NMA conference builds friendships, partnerships, and networks among Nebraska museum professionals as we work to preserve our great state’s history, culture, and art. To register online go to nebraskamuseums.org/2016-nma-conference or contact Kelli Bacon, NMA Conference Chair, kelli.bacon@nebraska.gov, 402-471-4766.

Cather and Neihardt Spring Conferences

“Changing Plains: The Evolving Landscapes of Early Nebraska” will be the focus of this year’s Spring Conference at the John G. Neihardt State Historic Site in Bancroft April 30. It will include presentations by noted educators, historians, and authors, focusing particularly on the effects on the landscape of the crossing of cultures during the development of transportation on the American prairie. Presenters include: Nancy Gillis, “The Homestead Act and its Impact on the Plains Tribes”; Jerome Kills Small, “Transportation Culture of the Oglala Lakota”; T. J. Obermeyer, “Rail Trails: The Route West”; Jeff Barnes, “From the River to the Rockies: Military Posts along the Union Pacific.”

The Willa Cather Spring Conference will be held June 2-4 at the Red Cloud Opera House in Red Cloud, Nebraska. This year’s theme is “Both Bitter and Sweet: Cather, Literature, and the Great War.” The years 2014–2018 mark the centennial of the First World War and represent a time to re-examine Cather’s writing of that period, particularly her 1922 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *One of Ours*. Topics will include Cather and World War I in particular, plus related topics that broaden and extend our understanding of her work both about and during the war years. www.willacather.org

The two historic sites are administered by the Cather and Neihardt foundations under contract with the NSHS. www.nebraskahistory.org/sites

Nebraska Brown Bag Lectures on Local Access TV

More and more Nebraskans can view NSHS “Brown Bag History Forum” lectures on their local government access cable channel. New videos are put into broadcast rotation within a few days after each monthly lecture. Participating cities include Beatrice, Bellevue, Hastings, Lincoln, North Platte, and Omaha—and the list is growing. For Lincoln viewers, Channel 5 is now using a “regular menu” listing, which means that “History Brown Bag Lectures” are listed like other programs. Or check them out on YouTube! Thanks to the NSHS Foundation for funding costs of recordings and to volunteer John Strope for expanding distribution.

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Opinions expressed by writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSHS.
From our new Nebraska Unwrapped exhibit at the Nebraska History Museum: Windom A. Rosene, a leader of Troop 4, Lincoln, developed plans for building a practical wood and canvas canoe. The canoe was called the Voyageur in honor of the fur trade canoe men of Canada and the Great Lakes. An article about how to build a Rosene canoe was featured in the April 1952 issue of Boy’s Life, official magazine of the Boy Scouts of America. Rosene supervised the construction of numerous canoes, including this one. The photographs show “Rosie” and boys building canoes in his basement. He also helped scouts make canoe paddles.