

NEBRASKA history news

Volume 63 / Number 1 / January/February/March 2010

Gabriel Field—The Face of a Soldier



Lt. Gabriel Field died at Fort Atkinson in 1823. NSHS archeologists identified his remains and commissioned a facial reconstruction based on cranial structure.

Lt. Gabriel Field was serving with the Sixth U.S. Infantry at Fort Atkinson when he died from an accidental knife wound on April 16, 1823, and was buried in the post cemetery. Fort Atkinson's preservation, age, and research significance make it perhaps the most important Euroamerican archeological site in Nebraska. The Historical Society, in cooperation with the Game and Parks Commission, has conducted archeological investigations at the fort since the 1950s. The identification of Field's remains is a remarkable result.

Field was a member of the Yellowstone Expedition, dispatched up the Missouri River in 1819 under Col. Henry Atkinson to build fortifications west of the Mississippi to protect the American fur trade and to prevent British encroachment from the north. Halted in present-day Nebraska by the approach of winter, the soldiers built their first outpost, Cantonment Missouri, on the river bottom north of the Council Bluff, where Lewis and Clark held a council with the Oto and Missouri Indians in 1804. Engineer Cantonment, the 1819-20 winter camp of Maj. Stephen H. Long's scientific party, also a part of the Yellowstone Expedition, was established at the same time about five miles south. Cantonment Missouri was abandoned the following spring due to flooding, and a second post was built on the bluff top. In 1821 the new post, garrisoned by the Rifle Regiment and the Sixth Infantry, was officially designated Fort Atkinson.

The post's peak population of more than one thousand included military personnel, some of their families, and other civilians. The rectangular fortification consisted of log barracks facing inward upon an enclosed parade ground with loopholes on the exterior walls. Cannons were mounted in the bastions at the northwest and southeast corners. A stone powder magazine occupied the center of the enclosed area. Outside the fortification were a large council house for negotiating with Indians and a gristmill, blacksmith shop, sutler's store, brick kiln, and other structures.

The fort was occupied by the U.S. Army until 1827. Although its structures (except the powder magazine) had disappeared by



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

FROM THE DIRECTOR

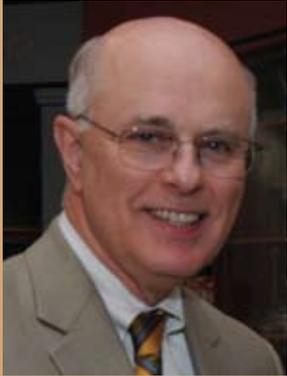
Lincoln, January 2010

The Nebraska State Historical Society is the state's historic preservation agency. I serve as State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO); Deputy SHPO Bob Puschendorf provides day-to-day program leadership. His staff assists communities, businesses, organizations, and individuals in the always-challenging task of preserving the places that connect us with our past. Those places may be buildings, farmsteads, landscapes, or archeological sites—or even whole neighborhoods and downtowns.

Preserving the past is not easy. A growing America is forever building, and doing so within a culture that often ignores the importance of history and the way in which an awareness of the past is a key to our present concerns and future possibilities.

The NSHS historic preservation team surveys counties for significant structures, conducts archeological surveys, nominates properties to the National Register of Historic Places, scours federally funded or licensed projects for any adverse effects on National Register-quality places, and works to provide mitigation and protection. It provides a host of educational opportunities for those who value history. Federal funds provide for 60 percent of our costs.

Today, the NSHS has a new ally in the effort to preserve and reuse our history and the places where it is found. It is Heritage Nebraska (HN), a private, not for profit, statewide organization led by Board Chair George Haecker and Executive Director J. L. Schmidt. It manages Nebraska Main Street, which is helping communities visualize reuse of their downtowns. HN works closely with the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Denver staff. It has two field representatives, Laurie Richards in the east and Gene Morris in the west. We are delighted with this key development in the never-ending struggle for preservation. HN is a membership organization. Call them at 402-323-7338 or visit nebraskamainstreet.org for further information. We are a great team.



"An awareness of the past is a key to our present concerns and future possibilities."

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Smith".

Michael J. Smith
Director/CEO

the mid-nineteenth century, historical accounts mentioned the site, and its general location was known. In 1954 a farmer plowing a field north of the fortified area discovered a fragment of headstone with the inscription "Gabriel Field, 1st Lieut. 6th Regt. Born Jefferson Cou . . ." In 1956 the first large-scale excavation at the fort was carried out by the Nebraska State Historical Society. Test excavations revealed four coffin burials near the recovery site of the headstone fragment, but none could be identified.

In 1958 another nearby grave was found containing the skeleton of an adult male in a wooden, hexagonal coffin. The right upper leg bone had been amputated. A rectangular wooden box at the foot of the grave contained the removed two-thirds of the leg. These remains, excavated by the Historical Society, were strongly suspected to be those of Field, who was known to have died at Fort Atkinson. However, no direct evidence linked the skeleton with the name on the headstone.

Research by Gayle Carlson, associate director for Archeology/State Archeologist at the Nebraska State Historical Society, uncovered additional information on Gabriel Field. He was born in Jefferson County, Kentucky, in 1794 or 1795, the eldest son of Abner Field and Jane Pope Field. After volunteer service in the War of 1812, he received a commission in the regular army in 1817 and in 1818 was promoted to first lieutenant. Field was a member of the 1819 Yellowstone Expedition, which led to the establishment of Fort Atkinson, and served at the post. Carlson said, "All of the research I have done seems to indicate that Lieutenant Field was well thought of by his fellow officers and was routinely assigned duties requiring intelligence and leadership abilities."

Field's military career, however, ended at an early age. After suffering an accidental knife wound to the thigh on March 31, 1823, at Robidoux's (Cabanne's) trading post, he was returned to Fort Atkinson by boat. On April 12 his leg was amputated in a vain attempt to save his life. He died on April 16. Field's death was announced to his fellow soldiers the next day.

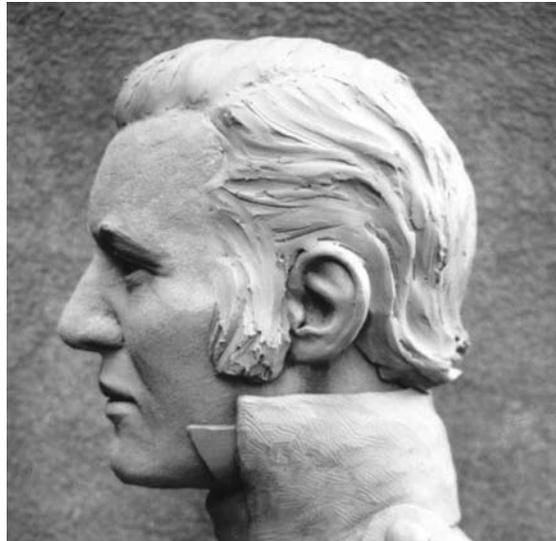
Two separate sources confirming Field's amputation are now known. Capt. Benjamin Contal, who had lived at the fort as a boy, recalled in 1890: "Lieutenant Field was playing with his knife, shutting it and throwing it open one day and it slipped and struck him in the thigh. This caused the amputation of his leg above the knee." (*Blair Courier*, September 6, 1890) More recently, a partial diary of Maj. William S. Foster of the Sixth Infantry has been transcribed and provides the date of the amputation.

The few days between surgery and death explain the separate container for the leg recovered from the grave in 1958. It was probably placed in the wooden box for burial after the amputation. After Field's death the box was apparently retrieved and then interred in the grave with his body. A facial reconstruction based on cranial structure, completed by Betty Pat. Gatliff, now provides the only likeness of Gabriel Field. A cast of the reconstruction is displayed in the Historical Society's exhibit, *Nebraska Joins the Union*, at the Nebraska History Museum.

Field's skeleton and the other human remains recovered by archeologists illustrate the hazards and brevity of life at Fort Atkinson. Poor dental health, diseases such as scurvy, and "pulmonic inflammations" were common at the post. Death resulted from fights among the soldiers, suicide, or accidental injury rather than from military engagements. In fact, the troops at the fort participated in almost no military operations with the exception of the brief Arikara War of 1823.

More detailed information on the search for Gabriel Field is included in Karin S. Bruwelheide, Douglas W. Owsley, and Gayle F. Carlson's "Military Burials at Cantonment Missouri, 1819-1820, and Fort Atkinson, 1820-1827, Nebraska" from *Skeletal Biology and Bioarchaeology of the Northwestern Plains*, published by the University of Utah Press in 2008.

—Patricia C. Gaster. 🏠



A Boyd County Murder Mystery?

The discovery of Gabriel Field's grave began with a farmer's plow; the recent discovery of an unmarked Boyd County grave began with a cable trench. Last summer, workers uncovered an old coffin in a rural field where no graves were known to exist. Archeologist Gayle Carlson was called to investigate.

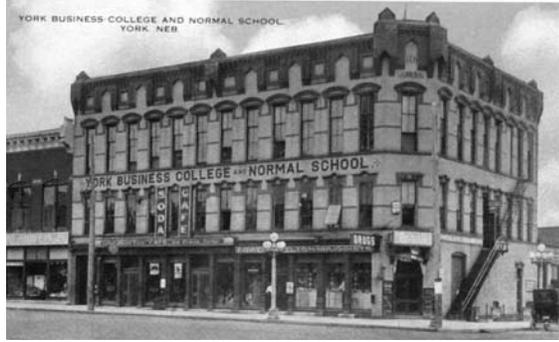
Based on bones and teeth, Carlson says the skeleton is of a man in his twenties or thirties. He thinks the burial took place sometime between the 1890s and about 1910.

The excavation revealed several strange clues: the grave's isolated location away from known cemeteries or family plots; the absence of any traces of clothing or burial sheet; and—most ominously—a round, bullet-sized hole in the middle of the forehead, along with what appears to be an exit wound on one side of the skull.

Individuals in Boyd County are searching local records in hopes of identifying the body; Carlson is trying to narrow the search using physical evidence. For example, he has found a match for a metal fastener from the coffin lid in an 1892 funeral supply catalog.

The remains will soon be reburied—according to relatives' wishes if they can be identified, or else anonymously in a local cemetery. For now, the story of this man's untimely death remains a mystery. 🏠





Off to Business College in 1908

One of the benefits of publishing historical essays is the way they elicit previously unknown materials from readers. Recently Dr. Oliver Pollak forwarded a letter from Frank Sorenson of Corvallis, Oregon, written in response to Pollak's essay, "Looking for 'Wide-Awake' Young People: Business Colleges in Nebraska, 1873-1950." Sorenson writes:

I enjoyed your article on business colleges in Nebraska in the Spring 2009 issue of *Nebraska History*. My father attended York College, and I thought you might be interested in some of his reminiscences about the experience.

As background, Dad was almost 20 at the time. He was helping his father on the family farm near Creighton, Nebraska, and farming some leased land, which had enabled him to earn and save some money. Previously he had gone to school part time through the fifth grade, so university wasn't an option. Dad's comments [from a 1967 manuscript] follow:

"[Possibly] I would have stayed on the farm had I not had a visitor from York Business College. The gentleman who called was Mr. Buckley . . . President of the college. I haven't the least idea how he got my name. . . . [H]e drove into the yard, introduced himself and told me why he was there. Either he was a good salesman, or I was an easy sell. I signed a contract to go to school in York. . . . Total tuition was \$180 with no time limit . . . whether you went to school one year or four . . .

"I arrived in York . . . in December [1908]. The next morning I went directly from the hotel to the office of the school, paid \$180 tuition, received the books, etc., and instructions for starting. I

was directed to a home where living accommodations were available. Six boys were living there, all students of the college and all from farm homes. Weekly cost for room and board was \$2.00. . . . Only one had finished high school.

"York Business College was a private school staffed with five teachers. We attended nine months a year, five days a week and had some homework. While our work was graded [no one flunked], . . . anyone who paid tuition . . . could continue in school.

"What did one study . . . and what did a young man think he was preparing himself for. First, for those of us with little or no schooling, it provided the fundamentals in reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling. I should include 'grammar.' . . . I believe we devoted more time to that subject than any other. We could start at any level and proceed as far as their facilities allowed. Second, it provided business courses in shorthand, typing and bookkeeping.

"Primarily, we hoped to prepare ourselves for stenographic, bookkeeping, or any kind of office work that would give us a start in business. Then we would gradually better ourselves by further education and actual experience.

"[With summers off and time out for fall farm work] I attended school for 15 months. . . . As we approached the spring of 1910 I told Mr. Buckley I would not be back in the fall. He told me bluntly I was making a mistake . . . because I was weak in the business course. . . . I soon discovered he was right."

To conclude, Dad went to Omaha and got a job from which he was quickly fired. He just as quickly got another job under another man who provided the further education and on-the-job experience.

What were the benefits of attending business college? One, he met a girl there, who was from a remote Sand Hill ranch and was sent to York to go to high school. She later became my mother. That was sufficient benefit for me. Two, I would say it provided a foundation, or at least a sense of foundation, and opened a door with the result that, when Dad retired, he was managing the Kellogg plant in Omaha *and* had a small farm. 🏡

*I told Mr.
Buckley I
would not be
back in the
fall. He told
me bluntly I
was making a
mistake. . .*

Saving Immanuel Lutheran School

It doesn't take much imagination to picture horses and buggies lined up in front of the wooden building that was once Immanuel Lutheran Church and School near Wayne.

It's just as easy to visualize little girls wearing long dresses running toward the sound of the school bell, their braids flying out behind them, while boys wearing plaid shirts and suspenders grudgingly stop their ball games and head inside for afternoon classes.

For years, those students and their teachers spoke in German. In time, Bonnie Nelson said, English became the language of choice. The long skirts got shorter, the suspenders gave way to belts, and the horses were replaced with automobiles.

But time also brought the closing of the school. The paint cracked, the foundation crumbled, the shingles wore out. Some members of the congregation wanted to tear it down. Others, including Debra Nelson, were determined to save it.

Situated between Wayne and Wakefield, Immanuel Lutheran Church came into being in the fall of 1882. Among the first members were immigrants with the last names of Hinnerichs, Meyers, Krakow, and Wolters.

Two years after its formation, church members pooled their resources, borrowed what money they could and constructed the church building, adding space on the back for a parsonage.

In 1896, the congregation built a new church across the road and turned the old one into a school. It survived until after World War II when, Debra Nelson said, the shortage of teachers caused it to close. After that, the building was used as a polling place and for Vacation Bible School in the summer.

But it fell into disrepair, which broke Nelson's heart.

Now a teacher in Omaha, Nelson grew up six miles from the church. Her mother, Bonnie, has been the organist for forty-six years. Her father, Marvin, has been active, too. As a child, Nelson attended Vacation Bible School in the old church, which is why she bristled when church fathers talked about tearing down the historic structure.

It took Nelson four years to persuade church leaders to let her restore the building. She became the official president, secretary, and treasurer of the church restoration committee in January of 2001.

"I don't know, but I'll get it," is the answer she gave when church officials asked how she was going to get the money to replace the roof's cedar shingles or shore up the decaying foundation under the bell tower.

Gradually, she gathered donations and supporters. Now and then, unexpected volunteers appeared. One of them power-washed the building's exterior to remove the peeling paint. Another repaired the church's front doors.

Frustrated over where to find the timbers she needed to replace the rotted ones under the bell tower, she called the Omaha Tie Company. After explaining her problem, an employee there said, "Come on in and we'll hook you up."

"I had a convertible . . . and wondered, 'How will I get the timbers home?'" she said. A truck driver from Carroll saved the day.

"He hauls cattle. I asked if he ever went to Omaha, and he said, 'I go to Omaha all of the time,'" Nelson said.

Repairing the roof was her big project for the summer. Wanting to maintain the building's historic integrity, she determined to use cedar shingles. With labor, the new roof cost around \$11,000. There's still plenty of work to do. She hopes to repair the bricks next summer. Inside, the wooden floor and ceiling need attention, as do the desks.

She's managed on donations of \$5, \$10, \$50 and more. They come from former members, relatives of members and others who have ties to the little country church. She's even put up a donation box in the cemetery.

So why go to the trouble?

"It's our heritage," she said. "I want to have students come out, dressed in clothing from the time, with their lunch in pails . . . to learn about our history."

—*Sheryl Schmeckpeper* 📷



Historic preservation isn't just about buildings; it's about communities. Debra Nelson and local volunteers are repairing the long-empty Immanuel Lutheran Church and School near Wayne.

David Bristow
John Carter
Patricia Gaster
Lynne Ireland
James Potter
editorial staff

Kylie Kinley
Sheryl Schmeckpeper
contributors

Ebbeka Design
design & production

Nebraska History News is published quarterly for members of the Nebraska State Historical Society, 1500 R Street, P.O. Box 82554, Lincoln, Nebraska, 68501-2554. Telephone: (402) 471-3270. e-mail: nshs.publish@nebraska.gov. Annual membership in the society is \$40. www.nebraskahistory.org Opinions expressed by writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSHS.

Scientist Charles Bessey had a humorous side, as shown in a page from *Ye Perills of Ye Younge Bugge-Hunter*, a mock Old English booklet he wrote and illustrated for his children in 1876. Courtesy of Karen Bessey.



*He faileth to catch y^e 4 Bugges,
and getteth into great
embarrasement,*

Bessey Descendants Discover Nebraska

Few people are so privileged to see an ancestor inducted into a hall of fame. Barbara and Karen Bessey enjoyed such a moment this past June at the induction of Charles E. Bessey into the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

Bessey was an important botanist and educator (see the April-May-June 2009 issue of *NH News*). Among other accomplishments, he established one of the top botany programs in the country, developed modern plant classification, and started the only man-made forests in the nation.

Barbara, of Woodside, California, and Karen, of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, are Bessey's great-granddaughters. They and their families not only attended the State Capitol ceremony, but also enjoyed the opportunity to explore Nebraska.

At a bed-and-breakfast guest ranch in Brewster, “the husband drove us over the sand dunes on his ranch for close to three hours, showing us his cows, etc.,” Karen emailed. “We spent one evening with them watching a University of Nebraska documentary on the Sandhills. The evening had a dramatic ending when a violent storm blew up suddenly and they said we might have to dive into the storm cellar. The storm passed, however, without incident.”

They visited the Bessey forest, touring the nursery and hiking the trails. They were interviewed by a North Platte TV station, and saw Oregon Trail wagon ruts at Ash Hollow.

“The scenery and history in Nebraska were really compelling,” Karen said. “I’m SO glad we had time to explore.”

Charles Bessey would be pleased to see his descendants rediscovering the land that meant so much to him. 🌻



Here You Have My Story

*Eyewitness Accounts of the
Nineteenth-Century Central Plains*

Edited and with an introduction by
RICHARD E. JENSEN

Here You Have My Story: A New Book of Old Stories

Some stories are so good they deserve to be told again and again.

This idea is the theme of *Here You Have My Story, Eyewitness Accounts of the Nineteenth Century Central Plains*. The book, edited and with a foreword by retired Nebraska State Historical Society senior research anthropologist Richard E. Jensen, is a collection of the best articles published by the NSHS between 1885 and 1919. It is being published this January by University of Nebraska Press, and is available through the NSHS stores and website.

Jensen said the book contains material that any Nebraskan would be interested in, but current *Nebraska History* subscribers will be particularly intrigued.

“They’re good stories,” Jensen said. “And they [the subscribers] are already interested in history.”

Included are tales of settler-Native American interactions, accounts of cattle drovers, and narratives by the founders of Lincoln and Omaha. Jensen said the stories convey a wide range of emotions, from lighthearted to somber.

“There are attempts to be humorous, but at some you kind of groan,” Jensen said. “There were funny sides and tragic ones, too.”

After his initial selection of about forty narratives, Jensen asked a “history buff friend” to go through the stories and grade them “good,” “okay,” and “boring.” This helped him whittle down the selection to the twenty-four stories now in the book.

Jensen said that he hopes the quality of these stories will interest readers who are only casually interested in Nebraska history. What makes *Here You Have My Story* different from so many other historical titles is that it isn’t history as told by a historian, but history as seen through the eyes of those who lived it.

“It’s interesting to read things by people who were there,” Jensen said. “This book is about people who are telling their own stories.”

Fire Sprinklers, Wheelchair Ramps and Art!

In writing about our ongoing headquarters renovation, we’ve told you about improved fire safety and handicapped accessibility. We haven’t mentioned the art.

Under Nebraska’s One Percent for Art program, a state-funded renovation project like ours must devote one percent of its cost to a specifically commissioned work of art for the building. The Nebraska Arts Council and an NSHS committee are administering the process. John Schleicher and Bob Peters of our trustee board, and Sharon Kennedy of the Sheldon Museum of Art, will review qualifications and make the artist selection.

The work will be installed in the rotunda entrance, the building’s premier space. Because the building is on the National Register of Historic Places, the artwork will support the space’s historical integrity. Look for word on a public unveiling and celebration of project completion this summer.

Reference Room Nears Completion

Researchers, be reassured—the renovation of the Nebraska State Historical Society’s headquarters building is well on its way to completion.

“I think it is going absolutely as best as we could hope for,” said Charley McWilliams, facilities and maintenance manager for the NSHS.

As of November 2009, the new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system is installed and running; the new east fire escape stair tower is substantially complete; 90 percent of work in the stacks is finished; and 70 percent of the cleaning and restoration of the outside limestone is complete, McWilliams said. Also, the new electrical system is fully functional, and workers are putting the finishing touches on second floor offices and the first floor reference room.

“We hope to open the reference room in February, just like originally planned,” McWilliams said.

Researchers will benefit from improved lighting and heating and ventilation, as well as the use of a handicapped-accessible bathroom. Once the east end is completed, renovation work will begin on the west end. The entire renovation project is expected to be completed in late 2010. See nebraskahistory.org for the latest news.

Research Grants for 2010

Every year, the NSHS Foundation awards one or more \$1,000 grants to researchers working in areas of Nebraska history. The idea is to encourage the use of our library and archives, and to generate material that may be suitable for publication in *Nebraska History* magazine. Send your proposal to David Bristow, Editor, at the return address on this publication (or by email to david.bristow@nebraska.gov) by April 1, 2010. We’ll announce the winner(s) in May. Grant recipients will then have until April 1, 2011, to complete their manuscripts. See nebraskahistory.org/publish/grants for details.

www.nebraskahistory.org

NSHS Board of Trustees Seeks Candidates

Do you want to help shape the future of the Nebraska State Historical Society? Assist in setting policies? Help guide strategic planning and offer overall support to the director, staff, members, and volunteers? These are the principal duties of the NSHS Board of Trustees.

The board consists of fifteen members, and meets quarterly at a variety of locations across the state. NSHS members elect four members from each of the state's three congressional districts to staggered three-year terms. The governor appoints another three members. Terms expiring in 2010 include seats in all three districts.

The board-appointed nominating committee will put forward a slate of nominations, but anyone may become a candidate by petition with the signatures of twenty-five current members, or seek a governor appointment.

Application materials and contact information will be posted at nebraskahistory.org/admin/board starting January 13. In order to be considered for the nominating committee's slate of candidates, please submit your application by June 1. Petition candidates may submit applications up to 5 p.m., July 19, 2010. ☞

NSHS Welcomes New Trustee

Kay Kimberly of Big Springs has been elected to the Nebraska State Historical Society Board of Trustees. Our governing board includes twelve members elected by NSHS members, and three appointed by the governor. Three-year terms began January 1.

Kay and her husband farm south of Big Springs. The daughter of cattle producers in Keith County, Kay's mother grew up at the base of Chimney Rock; Kay was involved in the development of the Chimney Rock Visitor Center. ☞

In Memoriam: Debra Brownson, 1959-2009

If you've been reading this publication and *Nebraska History* for more than a few years, you no doubt noticed the dramatic transformation of both publications into some of the nation's most attractive state history magazines. This was thanks to the work of Deb Brownson, our former graphic designer, who died October 21, 2009, after a long battle with cancer.

Brownson, of Falls City, was a graduate of Falls City High and of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She came to work for the NSHS in 1987. In addition to her excellent design work, she also donated many items to the NSHS collections, all meticulously researched to better tell the story of our state.

She is survived by her husband, Robert Koza, her brother, Michael Brownson, and two nieces. We will miss her. ☞

Heritage School at Nebraska History Museum

Heritage School is on the move—literally. The one-room schoolhouse at the former State Fairgrounds in Lincoln has long been used by fourth grade classes seeking to experience an important part of Nebraska history. With help from the NSHS and Lincoln Public Schools, the schoolhouse was moved across town to Pioneers Park.

That didn't solve the problem of what to do for students in the meantime. Last fall, a photography lab at the Nebraska History Museum was transformed into a temporary home for Heritage School classes. For their day of living history, fourth grade classes come dressed as if it's 1892. Though it wasn't the same as learning your lessons in a real one-room schoolhouse, the museum's period displays helped recreate the past. ☞



The Landmark Store at the State Capitol is now open! Located on the south side across from the Main Street Café on the ground level, the NSHS-run store features items on a variety of Nebraska themes, including the state's history and government, art and architecture, and educational materials for adults and children. Store hours are 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 402-471-2062.



Sheryl Schmeckpeper talks about Norfolk's past to a "Brown Bag" audience at the Nebraska History Museum.

NSHS Blog and Facebook

We've launched a new blog and Facebook page. You can find them both at nebraskahistory.org. Even if you're not the sort of person who tweets about a blog post you heard about in a text message retrieved while updating your Facebook page with a photo you shot with your phone while downloading a song from iTunes, you'll like these new web features. We take care of the technical stuff. All you have to do is read.

The idea behind the **blog** (blog.nebraskahistory.org) is to allow our staff of historians, curators, archivists, etc., to share the latest things we're learning about the history of our state. We'll show you newly acquired artifacts and photos, explain the latest research, try to unravel historical mysteries—in short, share all the good stuff that isn't covered by our current publications and exhibits. You can post your own comments as well. The idea is to create an ongoing conversation about Nebraska history among experts, teachers, students, and curious people of all ages.

Facebook, the popular social networking site, is a handy way to update you about our ongoing events and activities. Through Facebook, we can provide more details and more timely information than you'll find here in *Nebraska History News*.

We're also posting videos of our popular "Brown Bag" lecture series to **YouTube**. Go to youtube.com and enter Nebraska State Historical Society as your search term.

Coming in Nebraska History

In 1986, downtown Omaha saw the loss of one major employer (Enron) and was facing the potential loss of another (ConAgra). The riverfront, meanwhile, was an industrial zone dominated by a lead refinery. Seventeen years later, both downtown and riverfront had changed dramatically. Historian Janet R. Daly Bednarek examines how and why the transformation happened in "Creating an 'Image Center': Reimagining Omaha's Downtown and Riverfront, 1986-2003."

For more than half a century, *Nebraska Farmer* featured youth pages that, in hindsight, documented changes in the lives and attitudes of rural youth. University of Nebraska-Lincoln student Kylie Kinley writes about it in "Growing up on the Farm: *Nebraska Farmer* Youth Pages, 1904-1965."

The Bristol collection of Native American artifacts is one of the Nebraska History Museum's most significant collections. Conservation technician Tina Koeppel, who has been conserving the artifacts, examines the life of "Omaha Charley" Bristol, the showman who amassed the collection in the nineteenth century.

Look for these and other features in your mailbox the week of February 8.

A Future Archeologist?

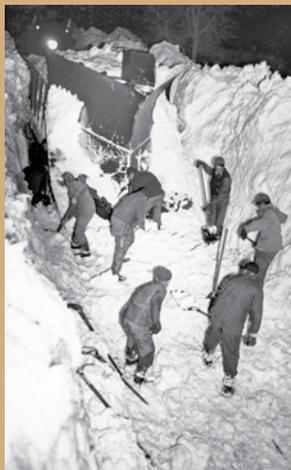
Alexis Arens of Hartington received a Nebraska State Historical Society Certificate of Achievement acknowledging her scrapbook, *Oil Pipeline & Artifacts*, at the 2009 Nebraska State Fair. The scrapbook illustrated and documented the artifacts found near Hartington during the digging of the Keystone Pipeline on her grandparents' property. Alexis prepared her scrapbook for the "Explore Your Heritage" 4-H project. Along with her certificate Alexis received a one-year complimentary Society membership.



"Omaha Charley" Bristol

UPCOMING EVENTS

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



A crew near Chadron on the Chicago and North Western line resorted to hand shovels to dig out a snowplow during the winter of 1948-49. NSHS RG3139-27

January 10 • 2 p.m.

**Exhibition opening by
Northeast Nebraska Art Association
Sunday at the Museum**
John G. Neihardt State Historic Site
306 W. Elm Street, Bancroft
neihardt@gpcom.net 888-777-4667

January 21 • 12 noon

Jeff Barnes, freelance writer
**“Forts of Nebraska”
Brown Bag Lecture Series**
Nebraska History Museum

February 18 • 12 noon

Capt. Joyce Citta, Lincoln Police Department
**“The History of the Lincoln Police Department”
Brown Bag Lecture Series**
Nebraska History Museum

February 21 • 2 p.m.

**Book signing for D. R. Haskin’s *The Hills of Mars*
Sunday at the Museum**
John G. Neihardt State Historic Site

March 14 • 2 p.m.

**Celebration of Irish American Month:
Make a leprechaun for St. Patrick’s Day
Family Workshop**
Nebraska History Museum
judy.keefle@nebraska.gov 402-471-4754

March 14 • 2 p.m.

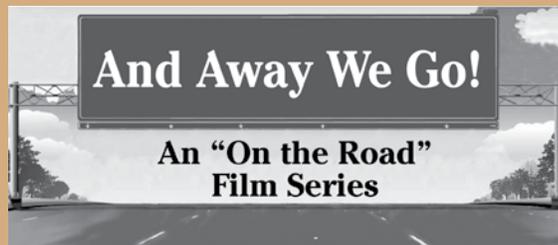
Presentation on journalist Elia Peattie
by Dr. Susanne Bloomfield and Carrie Crockett
Sunday at the Museum
John G. Neihardt State Historic Site

March 18 • 12 noon

Kenneth Bé, Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center
**“Conservation of Grant Wood’s Corn Room
Murals at the Gerald Ford Conservation Center”
Brown Bag Lecture Series**
Nebraska History Museum

March 27, 2010 - April 8, 2012

**Beauty and Hard Times:
Depression Era Quilts in Nebraska**
Exhibition
Nebraska History Museum



“And Away We Go!”

Free movies at the Nebraska History Museum, 15th & P streets, Lincoln. Showtimes are 1:30 p.m. 402-471-4754.

January 17 - *It Happened One Night* (1934)

A cross-country road trip leads to romance for stars Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert.

January 24 - *Wild Boys of the Road* (1933)

A realistic portrayal of hobo life during the Depression.

January 31 - *Sullivan’s Travels* (1941)

A movie director learns about life through a road trip.

February 7 - *Westward the Women* (1951)

Trail boss Robert Taylor guides 150 Chicago women to California in the 1850s.

February 14 - *The Wild One* (1953)

Marlon Brando leads a motorcycle gang into a small California town.

February 21 - *Easy Rider* (1969)

Dennis Hopper, Peter Fonda, and Jack Nicholson star in this counterculture classic.

February 28 - *About Schmidt* (2002)

Omahan Alexander Payne directed this “roadtrip as searching for the meaning of life” black comedy starring Jack Nicholson.



N S H S

foundation news



January/February/March 2010

“Simple Giving”

Perhaps one of the barriers to charitable giving isn't a lack of desire, but the logistics of giving the gift. As calendars get busier and more business is conducted via debit card or online, it is more time consuming to find the checkbook, write the check, address the envelope, and the price of stamps has gone up again!

For those of you who find yourself in a similar situation, the Foundation has established the *Simple Giving* program, which will allow you to make your gift via electronic funds transfer (EFT). *Simple Giving* gives you the ability to choose the amount and frequency of your automatic gift, and we take care of the details. Additionally, all of your tax-deductible donations will be acknowledged in one complete annual receipt, automatically sent to you each January. Here are some of the other benefits of giving via EFT:

- **Safer:** No check is in the mail; your transfer is secure.
- **More effective:** Your contribution and hundreds of other EFT contributions can be processed in the time it takes a few check contributions to be processed, so your EFT gift helps free up staff time for other projects.
- **Less expensive:** Your EFT contributions cost less in bank fees than contributions by check or credit card, so your giving goes further.



J. W. Thompson (whose cap is pictured on the back page) was a Rural Free Delivery mail carrier in Farnam, Nebraska, in the early twentieth century. He is pictured at one of the stops along his route. The NSHS has acquired Thompson's RFD items to help tell the story of this important postal service program that impacted rural life. You can support the telling of stories like these by supporting the NSHS Foundation.

Ready to get started? You can find the enrollment form online at nshsf.org, print it and mail it, along with a voided check, to:

Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation
128 N 13th St. Ste 1010
Lincoln, NE 68508

Prefer to talk to us? We would be glad to help with your EFT questions: 402-435-3535 or info@nshsf.org ☒

Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation

Meg Klostermann Kester,
Acting Executive Director

128 N 13th St. Ste 1010,
Lincoln, NE 68508

Ph: 402-435-3535

Email: megk@nshsf.org

www.nebraskahistory.org/foundation

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
STATE OF
NEBRASKA

hours

**Nebraska
History Museum**
15 & P Streets, Lincoln
402-471-4754

Tuesday–Friday, 9–4:30
Sat. & Sun., 1–4:30
Closed Monday

Museum Store
402-471-3447

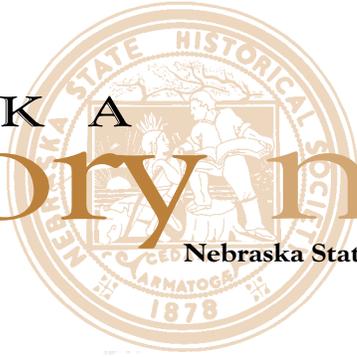
Tuesday–Friday, 10–4:30
Saturday & Sunday, 1–4
Closed Monday

Library/Archives
1500 R Street, Lincoln
402-471-4751

Reference room closed
for construction

State Historic Site hours:
www.nebraskahistory.org

NEBRASKA history news



Nebraska State Historical Society

From the collection. . .

This mail carrier's cap belonged to J. W. Thompson (pictured on p. 11), who was in charge of Route 1 in Farnam, Nebraska, in the earliest days of the Rural Free Delivery (RFD) mail system. These and other RFD items have been recently acquired by the NSHS.

RFD revolutionized the way farm families kept in touch with the rest of the world. It was tried experimentally in West Virginia in 1896, and implemented nationwide on July 1, 1902. Instead of picking up mail in the nearest town (which could be hours or days away), farm families could now order machinery and supplies, and easily send and receive letters and news. RFD forced the government to improve roads, and stimulated economic growth since families could buy and sell by mail and by using the improved roads. ☞

