Nebraska History Museum Re-Opens April 1

It’s almost here! The NHM, at 15th and P Streets in downtown Lincoln, re-opens April 1, 2016, featuring these exhibits:

**Nebraska Unwrapped: Selections from the Collections.** Most of what the NSHS holds in trust for the people of the state has been “under wraps” during the renovation. Here is the story of Nebraska in 150 items. See page 3 to learn more.

**Photographers and the Plains Indians.** An exploration of how photographs influence Americans’ perceptions of Plains tribal people and how both photographers and their native subjects used early photographs to convey particular meanings.

**Nebraska’s Enduring Quilt Heritage: New Acquisitions.** Quilts that tell stories of migration, politics, and events both joyous and memorial, featuring quilts added to the museum holdings over the last ten years, many not previously displayed.

**American Dreams in the Cold War: Photos by Ralph and Barbara Fox** (working title). Images by husband and wife newspaper photographers who covered pivotal people and events and everyday life in the post-World War II “atomic age” of the 1950s and 1960s.

Looking further ahead, the museum will serve as a community hub and represent the many peoples and cultures that have called Nebraska home over the last 12,000 years, including new immigrants. It will be a venue for a variety of cultural programs; staff are working with community groups that may not have a place to exhibit or celebrate their heritage.

Inside the museum, the History Learning Center will engage people of all ages through interaction with objects and investigation of the clues historians and archeologists use to figure out the past.

New visitor orientation and sesquicentennial exhibits are in the planning stages, and fundraising is planned for new long-term exhibits. Work on the building itself will soon be complete, but programming and exhibits will continue to evolve, with opportunities for input from Nebraskans and other visitors.

The Nebraska State Historical Society collects, preserves, and opens to all, the histories we share.
NSHS Director Smith to Retire in 2016

Mike Smith has announced his retirement as NSHS Director/CEO effective June 30, 2016. He has worked as a museum administrator for more than forty years, and has served as NSHS director since 2006. The Board of Trustees has established a search committee, chaired by Bryan Zimmer, with the goal of having a new director in place by July 1, 2016. More information is available at nebraskahistory.org.

NE 150 License Plate Now Available

Here’s a hot new automotive accessory for all you history geeks. The Nebraska 150 Sesquicentennial license plate celebrates the upcoming 150th anniversary of Nebraska statehood. It costs $70 per year, which includes the cost of custom lettering (such as NSHSGEEK, HSTRYFAN, or 03111867). The plates will be sold through the end of 2022. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commission to provide grants to communities for related programs and events.

Research Grants for 2016

Every year, funds from the NSHS Foundation support one or more $1,000 grants to researchers working in areas of Nebraska history. Proposals should involve research resources in the NSHS library and archives, and generate results that may be suitable for publication in Nebraska History magazine. Send your proposal to David Bristow, Editor, at the return address on this newsletter (or by email to david.bristow@nebraska.gov) by April 1, 2016. We’ll announce the winner(s) in May. Grant recipients will then have until April 1, 2017 to complete their manuscripts. See nebraskahistory.org/publish/grants for details.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

MUSING

Musing! Maybe “thinking” would be a better word. The renovation of our Nebraska History Museum (actually it is your Nebraska History Museum) is nearly complete and the building will reopen to the public on April 1, 2016. We’re anxious and excited, and it’s a good time to reflect on the museum’s larger purpose.

Let me first share some very broad impressions. Consider the variety of Nebraska’s almost two million citizens. There are many “faces” of Nebraska—differentiated by skin color, length of hair (or no hair), age, the height of our cheekbones, and the set of our jaws. In this and in a broader sense we are each a face of Nebraska. Together we are a strong and vital accumulation of humanity.

Then there’s the place itself, representing the transition from the Middle West to the Great Plains, from the tallgrass prairie of the east to the shortgrass plains of the west, miles of open space under the clear blue of summer or the dark gray of a winter morning. The land includes the Sandhills, the loess landscape of the east, the picturesque Wildcat Hills and Pine Ridge of the Panhandle, water courses and lakes and plants and animals, both wild and introduced.

On this landscape we find the icons of Nebraska culture. At the time of his death John Carter was working to achieve a greater understanding of the once-ubiquitous sod house, both as a place of shelter and as a record of a certain time in the land’s history. Recently we published Mark Harris’s book, Rodeo Nebraska, which explores the state’s small-town rodeos and the role they play in Nebraska’s rural culture. In our cities and small towns Nebraskans form communities at schools, churches, restaurants/bars, coffeehouses, athletic fields, beauty shops, and more.

How can one building contain all these stories? That is the challenge. The many aspects of Nebraska should and will be reflected in the Nebraska History Museum. It will continue to be a “community commons” for Nebraska’s people, places, and cultures, as these stories have unfolded over time. We invite you to come and see us there beginning April 1.

Michael J. Smith, Director/CEO
Nebraska Unwrapped: 150 Items from our Collections

As we approach Nebraska’s 150th birthday in 2017, the Nebraska History Museum is preparing a new exhibit called Nebraska Unwrapped, to open April 1, 2016. The idea is to tell the story of 150 years of Nebraska statehood (and something of the centuries before) in just 150 objects. “It’s our birthday gift to the state,” said NSHS curator Paul Eisloeffel. “We are opening items in our collection to the public. The exhibit will show our disturbing chapters, our successes, recent and ancient items, and things in our collections that have never been displayed before.”

Objects include: a 1,500-year-old ceramic pot from Platte County (the earliest known evidence of native Nebraskans’ use of pottery); an 1850-51 Oregon Trail sketchbook with some of the earliest known views of Nebraska; a rare original 1860 glass plate ambrotype of Abraham Lincoln, plus what may be the last official document he ever signed; Ponca Chief Standing Bear’s 1883 headdress; Willa Cather’s childhood scrapbook; plus many other items illustrating famous and little-known aspects of our history.

“This exhibit gives a glimpse of how unique Nebraska really is,” Eisloeffel said. “All of the selections are truly incredible so that it’s hard to pick favorites.” Eisloeffel’s personal favorites include some of the exhibit’s more offbeat objects, such as a model ship, a 1975 Kawasaki motorcycle, and a montage of home movies. The wooden ship was carved by an unknown prisoner of war at Fort Robinson during World War II, when Nebraska was home to more than 12,000 POWs. The motorcycle was built in Lincoln, the first off the production line at Kawasaki’s first U.S. plant. The home movie montage assembles Nebraska footage from the 1920s to 1960. Eisloeffel explained that in 1923 Eastman Kodak Company put movie and photography equipment into the hands of ordinary people for an affordable price; Nebraskans captured on film everything from moments in their lives to community milestones.

Other items, such as Ku Klux Klan-member Larry Trapp’s white robe and hood, tell a story of change. The one-time Grand Dragon for the Realm of Nebraska organized neo-Nazi meetings and made threatening phone calls to African Americans and Jews, but renounced the Klan and his lifetime of hate after experiencing the kindness of Cantor Michael Weisser and his wife, Julie.

Nebraska Unwrapped opens April 1, 2016, at the Nebraska History Museum. Where else can you experience 150 years of Nebraska history in one place?

NSHS Welcomes New Trustee

Dr. Heather Fryer of Creighton University has been appointed to the NSHS Board of Trustees. She assumes the governor-appointed Second Congressional District spot formerly held by Sharif Liwaru. Fryer, who received a doctorate in history from Boston College in 2002, is an associate professor of history and director of Creighton’s American Studies program. She is a specialist in twentieth century American social and cultural history and is the author of Perimeters of Democracy: Inverse Utopias and the Wartime Social Landscape in the American West (University of Nebraska Press). Our governing board includes twelve members elected by NSHS members, and three appointed by the governor. Two members were elected to a second three-year term, which began January 1: Spencer Davis of Bellevue in District 1 and Jeff Barnes of Omaha in District 2.
This 1918 portrait shows Emily Fontenelle holding a beaded bag similar to the one below. Her father was Alexander LaForce Papin, a fur trader of French ancestry; her mother was Pawnee. As a child, Emily attended a school operated by Rev. Samuel Allis, a missionary to the Pawnee. When Allis and his associates moved to Bellevue, Emily was among the group of Pawnee children that went along. She attended school and lived with the Allis family and later moved with them to Mills County, Iowa. In 1855 she married Henry Fontenelle, son of fur trader Lucien Fontenelle and Bright Sun, and brother of Logan Fontenelle. Henry and Emily moved to the Omaha reservation and resided near Decatur.

This pair of moccasins is decorated with beads and brilliant red quillwork. Parts of a painted parfleche are used for the soles. NSHS 93(1-2)

Emily Fontenelle donated this bag to the NSHS in 1920. The bag is fully-beaded on both sides and has a metal frame and commercially tanned leather. The red beads are known as white hearts, because they are made of two different colors of glass. The outer layer is red and the inner layer is white. NSHS 3741

The NHM’s collections include many beautiful examples of Plains beadwork and quillwork, including clothing and accessories, jewelry, dolls and toys, bags and pouches, blankets, and more than 300 pairs of moccasins. Most of the collection can be viewed through our online database at nebraskahistory.pastperfectonline.com. Here are a few highlights:

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From a distance this vest might seem to be decorated with quillwork, but the design is primarily made out of tubular glass beads, called bugle beads. The vest was collected by Charles F. Zimmerman, a doctor and pharmacist who worked with the Indian Service and also had a practice in Naper, Nebraska. NSHS 4364-279

This beaded storage bag is from the family of Joseph Farley LaFlesche. Joseph was the son of Edward Farley and Rosalie LaFlesche, and the grandson of Omaha Chief Joseph LaFlesche (Iron Eye). NSHS 11196-1

The museum collection includes objects made by contemporary artists. This pair of Stadia Basketball high top sneakers was beaded around 1992 by Jody Comes of Pine Ridge, South Dakota. NSHS 10921-30-(1-2)
Civil War Veteran Finally Receives Burial Honors

Otto Arlt has finally been recognized for his Civil War service thanks to historical detective work by NSHS Reference Librarian Matt Piersol and former NSHS Reference Assistant Stephanie Polk. One hundred thirty-five years after Arlt's death, he now has a headstone.

During the renovation of the NSHS headquarters building in 2009, Piersol was moving county court records when he spotted an unusual envelope in a ledger book. Among the items inside were Union Army discharge papers, a package of quinine (used to treat malaria), and a coroner's inquest report from June 1880. The report said the fifty-year-old Arlt had been struck by a passing train while crossing a railroad bridge between Lincoln and Roca. Arlt, who was hard of hearing, tried to leap from the trestle at the last moment, but slipped and fell across the tracks.

Piersol was intrigued. “Sometimes you are drawn into an unfolding story,” he told the Lincoln Journal Star. “My eyes are like beagles, on the trail of it. You don’t want to stop ‘til the end is found.”

Piersol searched newspaper archives, military documents, census reports, and Roca Cemetery maps. He found that Otto Arlt had been born in Prussia, came to America and served three years in the Union army, surviving numerous battles. During the war he was discharged in Virginia after spending months in the hospital, but re-enlisted in March 1865.

The next fifteen years of Arlt’s life are uncertain. Piersol found records of a man by that name working as a colored-glass salesman in Philadelphia and as a carpenter in Louisville, Kentucky, but he isn’t sure if it’s the same man. Why Arlt came to Nebraska is also unclear, but Piersol learned that he talked to someone at the Roca train station and said he was walking to Lincoln.

Piersol searched cemetery records until he found Arlt’s unmarked grave at Roca Cemetery. It didn’t seem right that the veteran didn’t have a headstone. Speaking with Stephanie Polk, a former NSHS co-worker, Piersol learned about a program offering free government headstones for Civil War veterans. Polk then launched a service project for her 4-H club, but regulations required approval of the veteran’s next of kin—and Arlt had no known relatives or descendants. In the end, Polk secured the assistance of a county veterans’ service officer and U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry’s office. The Star City Cornhuskers 4-H Club obtained $400 to buy a nonmilitary marker. It was dedicated on October 18, 2015, just over 150 years after the end of the war in which Arlt served his adopted country.

Nebraska Hall of Fame Seeks Nominations

The Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission is seeking nominations. Located in the State Capitol, the Hall of Fame brings public attention and official recognition to outstanding Nebraskans—those who were born in Nebraska, or who gained prominence while living in Nebraska, or whose time living in Nebraska influenced them and contributed to their greatness. Nominees must have been deceased for at least thirty-five years, and inductions are limited to one person every five years.

An inductee’s contributions will usually have been made in public affairs, the arts, the sciences, or the professions. Secondary consideration is given to entertainment, athletics, or fields of endeavor where publicity and recognition may for a time be intense, but where a contribution to society is secondary. Activities that have added to the welfare of society and to the reputation of Nebraska are weighed more heavily than activities primarily benefiting the nominee.

Nominations will be accepted through December 31, 2016. The commission may select finalists to be considered at public hearings in each congressional district. After the hearings, the commission may select one finalist for induction in 2019. Michael Smith, Director/CEO of the NSHS, serves as secretary of the commission.

A nomination form, plus other information about the Hall and its inductees, is at nebraskahistory.org (search “Hall of Fame”). Or request a form by emailing deb.mcwilliams@nebraska.gov, or by writing to the Hall of Fame, P.O. Box 82554, Lincoln, NE 68501-2554.
Women Serve on a Frontier County, Nebraska, Jury for the First Time in 1966
—By John F. Hanson

Editor’s note: John F. Hanson, attorney and NSHS member, provided the following recollection of a unique event from fifty years ago in the history of Frontier County, Nebraska. He wrote the story in May 2015 as a memorial to his late colleague Harold W. Kay, but in the style of a newspaper article from the time.

Stockville, Nebraska, Tuesday, February 1, 1966. Today, forty-six years after the nineteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution gave women the right to vote, hold public office, and sit on juries, the Frontier County District Court conducted a trial before a jury of eight women and four men. Until 1962 the seating of women on Frontier County juries had been disallowed because of political and technological problems. Today, for the first time in the county’s history, women helped deliberate a legal issue.

The political problem was the possible relocation of the county seat away from Stockville, a tiny village in the center of the county surrounded by three larger towns. Several elections have been held to relocate the courthouse, but none were successful, and during this time it was deemed imprudent to make improvements to the frame building built in 1888-89. After the last such election in 1951, the county seat relocation issue was quietly laid to rest.

The technological problem was that the courthouse had no indoor plumbing. It was served by traditional small buildings out back. This issue led District Judge Charles E. Eldred, who took office in 1919, to make a local rule that women would not be permitted to serve on juries until such time as modern restroom facilities were provided. Because of the previously mentioned political problem, this lack was not addressed until 1962, when modern restrooms for both men and women were built into an addition at the back door of the courthouse. Coincidentally, 1962 was also the year that Stockville became the last county seat in America to be reached by a paved highway.

Once these two problems had been resolved, the court rule was rescinded and it remained only to wait until a jury trial was scheduled, which took four years. That trial, a civil action for damages, was held today and the jury rendered its verdict just before suppertime. The judge was Victor Westermark, who succeeded Judge Eldred in 1945. The lawyers were John F. Hanson for the plaintiff and Harold W. Kay for the defendant. A photograph of the jury seated in the jury box is historic because it documented the first time in county history that women served as jurors.

Adobe Houses in Scotts Bluff County

Are there any adobe houses left in Scotts Bluff County? Help join in the search. The NSHS and the Nebraska Latino American Commission are looking for examples of this Mexican-American tradition brought to Nebraska. A local effort to locate adobes still standing is being led by Chabella Guzman of Scottsbluff, a commissioner of the Nebraska Latino American Commission. The NSHS and the commission have joined forces to document this heritage.

“Even though we don’t know what we’ll find, we want to bring in people that can help us in our search and with their history,” Guzman said.

A project “kickoff” meeting was held in Scottsbluff on October 30, 2015. For more information contact: Bob Puschendorf of the Nebraska State Historical Society, bob.puschendorf@nebraska.gov, 402-471-4769; or Jasel Cantu of the Latino American Commission, jasel.cantu@nebraska.gov, 402-471-2791.

Adobe houses in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. From Sara A. Brown and Robie O. Sargent, *Children Working in the Sugar Beet Fields of the North Platte Valley of Nebraska* (1924), 64.
In Memoriam: Gayle Carlson

Retired NSHS archeologist Gayle F. Carlson, 80, died in Lincoln on November 15, 2015. A native of Wahoo, Nebraska, he served in the U.S. Navy, earned degrees from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and worked for the NSHS from 1967 until his retirement in 2011.

Carlson's research in Nebraska and surrounding states displayed an impressive depth and breadth. Especially notable is his work on the early settlement period at sites such as Fort Atkinson, Fort Robinson, Rock Creek Station, Engineer Cantonment, and Fort Sully. This work not only contributed significantly to material culture studies of Great Plains settlement and military frontier complexes, but also informed accurate reconstructions of buildings at historic sites. He also made significant contributions in the discipline of Native American archeology from 8,000 years ago until the 1800s.

Gayle was the voice of experience and widely known as the “go-to guy” on anything involving Nebraska archeology, warmly and patiently welcoming questions from fellow archeologists, students, and the public. He is preceded in death by his wife, “Marty” Carlson, and survived by his daughter and son-in-law, Rita and Mark Walz of Lincoln, and his son and daughter-in-law, Jim and Julie Carlson of Yardley, Pennsylvania, and five grandchildren.

Coming in Nebraska History

More than 1,200 men from Hall County, Nebraska, served in the military during World War I, and the Grand Island Independent published “Letters from Our Lads on the Front” as a regular column. Though the letters had to meet the approval of censors and editors, they still provide valuable insights into the doughboys’ wartime experiences. Daryl Webb examines them in the Spring 2016 issue of Nebraska History.

The same issue includes Stacey Stubbs’ investigation of the Republican River Flood of 1935—specifically, the important role of the federal government and its “New Deal” programs in the aftermath. Today we expect the federal government to respond quickly to major disasters. This expectation was shaped in part by Depression-era programs that rebuilt disaster areas while providing jobs for the unemployed.

James E. Potter writes about the 1875 Black Hills Council at Red Cloud Agency, Nebraska, in which the government tried unsuccessfully to buy the Black Hills from the Lakota.

Finally, a newly-discovered collection of glass plate negatives by photographer C.W. Bonham provides an unprecedented look at circa-1900 Gering, a time when major irrigation projects were transforming the North Platte Valley.

Look for the issue in your mailbox the second week of February.
Every Farm Needs a Sheldon; Every Kid Needs a Concrete Mixer

What does an eleven-year-old need with a concrete mixer? For eleven-year-old Iowan named Caleb Crystal, a nearly 100-year-old machine provided a 4-H project, a Nebraska history lesson, and a county fair prize.

Caleb is a part of 4-H, a youth organization that emphasizes hands-on learning. For his 4-H project, Caleb bought a 1919 Sheldon concrete mixer from Craigslist. He wanted to restore it so it would look and function as it did when it came off the production line almost 100 years ago. The name of his project comes from an old advertising slogan: “Every Farm Needs a Sheldon.”

Caleb learned that his concrete mixer was manufactured in the town of Nehawka, Nebraska. It was the invention of local resident George C. Sheldon, whose homemade mixer was shown at the town’s annual fair and quickly gained the interest of farmers and small contractors, who saw that it saved the labor of mixing concrete by hand but didn’t cost nearly as much as other mixers on the market. The product’s success turned little Nehawka into something of a factory town during the 1910s and 1920s. (Search “Sheldon Manufacturing” at nebraskahistory.org for a Nebraska History article about the company.)

Caleb contacted the Nebraska State Historical Society to learn more about his mixer and the company that made it, learning how it was advertising and reading documents about the machine itself. Then he began his restoration work. He power-washed the mixer, took it apart, ordered new bolts and cotter keys, replaced and sanded the wood, painted the wood gray with oil-based paint, sandblasted the metal parts, and finally put it all back together.

“The most important things I have learned are how to sand wood using the sander, including how to change the sandpaper, how to paint with a paint gun and how to mix the paint,” Caleb said. “It took a lot longer than I thought. I learned a lot about the Sheldon Mixer and the history behind what it took to make, produce, and sell.”

His hard work paid off when he won first place in Lik-Skillet Questers Preservation and Restoration at the Dallas County Fair in Adel, Iowa. Caleb generously donated his winnings to the Nebraska State Historical Society as reward for helping him with his project.

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? Speak up for the importance of teaching history in the schools? Witness to the value of the work of the NSHS? These are some of the principal duties of the NSHS Board of Trustees.

The board consists of fifteen members, and meets quarterly at various locations across the state. Three-year terms expiring in December 2019 include seats in all three congressional 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 gubernatorial appointment.

Application materials and contact information will be posted at nebraskahistory.org/admin/board starting January 22. In order to be considered for the nominating committee’s slate of candidates for 2016, please submit your application by June 15. Petition candidates may submit applications up to 5 p.m., August 18, 2016.
Moving out of, and back into, the Nebraska History Museum feels like this some days. Emanuel Wolfe (1858-1933) photographed these men in what is probably Neligh, Nebraska. More than 2,000 of Wolfe’s glass plate negatives reside in the NSHS collections.

Looking for Kids’ Classes and Family Fun Events?

This issue’s event listing looks bare without our usual kids’ classes and Family Fun Events. Right now we’re in the process of moving back into the newly-renovated Nebraska History Museum. Look for a new list of events and educational programs in our next issue, and plan on lots of free family fun April 1-3 when the museum reopens!

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

January 15 · 12 noon
Charles E. Wright
Law at Little Big Horn: Liberty Crushed, Justice Denied
Brown Bag Lecture Series
Room 303, City-County Building
555 S. 10th St., Lincoln
402-471-3272 · lana.hatcher@nebraska.gov

February 19 · 12 noon
Barbara Hewins-Maroney
Will Brown: A Lynching, a Lost Identity, and Urban Unrest in Omaha, 1919
Brown Bag Lecture Series
Room 303, City-County Building
555 S. 10th St., Lincoln
402-471-3272 · lana.hatcher@nebraska.gov

March 17 · 12 noon
Jamison Wyatt
Stalking the Ghost of Mari Sandoz
Brown Bag Lecture Series
Room 303, City-County Building
555 S. 10th St., Lincoln
402-471-3272 · lana.hatcher@nebraska.gov

April 1 · Save the Date!
Museum Reopening
Nebraska History Museum
15th & P Streets, Lincoln
402-471-4754

For updated events, see the NSHS Facebook page, linked from www.nebraskahistory.org

www.nebraskahistory.org
Brown Bag Lectures on Public Access TV, YouTube

NSHS Brown Bag history lectures are coming to more TV viewers around the state! The monthly talks are already broadcast in Lincoln on Channel 5, the government access cable channel. As of mid-November 2015, plans were underway to begin broadcasting the lectures on government/public access channels in Omaha, Bellevue, Grand Island, and North Platte.

The NSHS Trustees have wanted for some time to share these programs with more Nebraskans, and we are making further contacts in other cities. If you know of such cable channels in your area, please contact our Brown Bag coordinator, John Strope, at strope@louisville.edu or 402-484-8650.

You can also view the talks on the NSHS’s YouTube channel. We’ve produced the Brown Bag series for more than twenty years, thanks to the financial support of the NSHS Foundation, and now more than 130 past lectures are available. Here’s how to find them: in the address line of your browser (e.g., Chrome, Explorer), type www.youtube.com/user/NebraskaHistorical (or follow the YouTube link from nebraskahistory.org). Just below the logo and words “Nebraska State Historical Society” you will see the words “Home,” “Videos,” etc. At the right of that line, click the magnifying glass and type the name of the program or the topic’s keywords or the presenter’s name in the “Search Channel” box.

With cold weather upon us, here are some past programs that might keep you warm:

- Shirley Chaffin & Sheila Green, “Memory Quilts” (2010)
- Dr. Pat Crews, “Nebraska Quilts and Quiltmakers” (2006)

Or here are some others you might dig:

- Rob Bozell, “Nebraska’s Weirdest Archeological Discoveries and Artifacts” (2015)

Besides quilting and archeology, you’ll find talks on a variety of other topics. We’ll share more of those in upcoming issues.

And if you’re in Lincoln, join us at noon on the third Thursday of every month. See page ten for a schedule.

Volunteer Archeology Dig at Engineer Cantonment

On October 3-4 the NSHS Foundation sponsored an open house and volunteer dig at the Engineer Cantonment site near Omaha. The Stephen Long expedition, the first of the U.S. Army that included a contingent of professional scientists, inhabited the site during the winter of 1819-20. The expedition led to the establishment of Fort Atkinson. The site’s exact location was unknown until it was located and excavated by NSHS archeologists.

The two-day volunteer dig served both as an opportunity for people to experience archeology for themselves, and as a fundraiser for the Foundation. NSHS Associate Director and State Archeologist Rob Bozell and Dr. Peter Bleed gave talks on both days, explaining the site’s significance and the methods archeologists use to unravel the mysteries of the past.

What’s it like to be an archeologist? Volunteers found out under the supervision of professionals.

Fragment of an 1819 bottle.
From the Collection: Inaugural Ball Gown, 1961

One of 150 objects selected for the forthcoming Nebraska Unwrapped exhibit (see p. 3), this gown was worn by Maxine Morrison to the inaugural ball honoring her husband, Governor Frank Morrison, in 1961. The stylish Mrs. Morrison worked as a fashion director for Gold’s Department Store in Lincoln. The gown was created by Emma Domb, a California dressmaking company which focused on party, prom, and wedding dresses. It was first owned by Emma Domb and her daughter Lorraine Domb Steinberg.

Maxine Hepp Morrison was born in Greeley, Nebraska, in 1915. She married Frank B. Morrison in 1935, and the family resided in Stockville and McCook until moving to Lincoln in 1955. She worked as a teacher, musician, real estate broker, and television and radio host. As the Democratic nominee for Nebraska’s 2nd District congressional seat in 1968, she lost by less than 1 percent of the vote. She also served as chairwoman of the First Ladies of America and on the board of directors for the Arbor Day Foundation. She passed away in 2004 at the age of eighty-eight.