Explore Nebraska History with Free App

Finding the places where history happened just got easier! "Explore Nebraska History" is our new free app that lets you plan your road trips with stops at some of the 500+ highway historical markers that dot our state. Each marker tells a story of places, people, and significant events. Our new app connects markers, and you, to larger stories of our shared past. All this at your fingertips on your Android or iOS device at mynehistory.com.

Fascinating stories and people come alive with extra historical information about the location, images, and media from NSHS archival collections, and links to additional publications. Our interactive GPS-enabled map will engage younger travelers in plotting the next stop.

Curated historical tours will guide your exploration, whether you’re traveling via your car or using your device to take you places. Choose from “Path to Statehood: 1803-1867”, “Lewis & Clark Expedition: 1804-1806”, “Western Trails”, “Native Americans in Nebraska”,”Conflicts and the Military on the Plains”; and “Settling Nebraska: From Homesteads to Cities.”

Download Explore Nebraska History and start your trip to the past today! We’ll be adding new content throughout the year, and will continue to update the app as new markers are placed.

Uncovering New History with NSHS Research Grants

New research is the lifeblood of our publications and exhibits. Every year the NSHS awards $1,000 grants to support the work of scholars researching some aspect of Nebraska history or archaeology. This year’s recipients are: Sally Bisson-Best, “Doris Stevens: Nebraska’s Forgotten Suffrage Leader,” and Jacob McGinley, “Sam McKelvie and Amending Nebraska.” Grant funding is provided by the Gladys Marie Lux Education Endowment and the Tom and Marilyn Allan Fund, both administered by the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation.

The Nebraska State Historical Society collects, preserves, and opens to all, the histories we share.
Don’t Touch That Dial! New Exhibits at the Nebraska History Museum

Don’t Touch That Dial: Kalamity Kate and the George Churley Puppets will be at the Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln August 18 through June 17, 2018. Kalamity Kate’s Cartoon Corral and the George Churley Puppet Company touched the lives of many Nebraska children during the 1970s. Hosted by Leta Powell Drake, the popular locally-produced children’s program aired on KOLN/KGIN television from 1967 to 1980. The George Churley Puppet Company joined the show in 1975. The show reached thousands of children, airing in seventy-two Nebraska counties and into northern Kansas. The George Churley Puppet Company also did educational workshops, demonstrations, and live performances throughout Nebraska and beyond.

In many ways Kalamity Kate’s Cartoon Corral was similar to other children’s television of the time. It featured a local host who played cartoons and interacted with a live studio audience. But it deviated from the typical TV formula with educational components such as a game-show-style quiz segment. For this the show earned national recognition. It was recognized as one of five nationwide examples of “excellence in local children’s programming” by the National Television Information Office.

By 1980, locally produced children’s programs were no longer a profitable venture, and the show went off the air. Kalamity Kate’s Cartoon Corral is remembered fondly by the many Nebraskans who watched it from home, participated in their classrooms, or who got to be part of the studio audience, eat a McDonald’s hamburger, and tell Kalamity Kate what they wanted to be when they grew up.

Another new exhibit, Nebraska’s Enduring Quilt Heritage: Recent Acquisitions, opened in June and runs through October 15.
Save the Date! NSHS Annual Meeting October 12

This year’s NSHS Annual Meeting will be held at the historic Livestock Exchange Building, the 1926 centerpiece of the former Omaha Stockyards. The event will include a historic building tour, trolley tour, awards, and refreshments. Stay tuned for more information in our next issue!

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 12 in Omaha. 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.

NSHS Trustee Petition Candidate Deadline August 15

While the June 16 deadline to seek nomination for the NSHS Board of Trustees has passed, prospective candidates may still submit a petition form before 5 p.m., August 15, 2017, to be placed on the ballot. Three seats are up for election in 2017, one in each congressional district. More information at nebraskahistory.org/admin/board.

“150: A Pictorial History of Nebraska” Available at Landmark Stores

The Spring 2017 issue of Nebraska History is available for $9.95 (plus tax and postage). This special eighty-page issue tells the history of Nebraska in 150 photos. Contact the NSHS Landmark Store at the Nebraska History Museum, 402-471-4754.
The Middle Loup River valley was the land of the Apaches around 1650.

Society Archaeologists to Study Apache Village in the Sandhills

Two hundred years before famed Apache leader Geronimo battled American troops in the Southwest, distant ancestors of the Apache were living in the Nebraska Sandhills. This year the NSHS Sandhills Archaeology Project is conducting excavations along the Middle Loup River to learn more about them.

At some point in the mid-1600s, groups of Apaches moved out of the Southwest and established camps and villages across wide areas of western Nebraska and western Kansas and the plains of Colorado. They moved back to the Southwest by the early 1700s.

These archaeological remains are called the Dismal River Culture because some of the first sites were discovered along that river in Hooker County.

Groundbreaking work was done in the 1950s and 1960s by University of Nebraska archaeologist James Gunnerson, based in part on 1940s excavations by the NSHS. More recently, University of Oklahoma archaeologist Sarah Trabert has re-examined old museum collections, but for many decades no one did major fieldwork on these sites.

The ongoing NSHS Sandhills Archaeology Project will include summer 2017 excavations at the Humphrey site, an Apache village along the Middle Loup River. This season’s work will focus on test excavations at several suspected buried house floors identified during a joint project with the National Park Service (Midwest Archaeological Center) in March. That research used geophysical techniques such as ground penetrating radar to search for subsurface magnetic or other anomalies marking buried archaeological ruins.

The 2017 fieldwork will undoubtedly shed new light on the Apaches who roamed the Sandhills and help answer important research questions about architecture, pottery and stone tool manufacture, trade with other groups, hunting patterns, and horticulture and plant gathering.

NSHS archaeologists will be examining other areas along central Sandhills streams looking for Apache and all other types of archaeological sites. Students and faculty from the University of Iowa will assist this summer.
Celebrate Nebraska Archaeology Month in September

This September, join archaeologists and Nebraskans across the state in exploring the archaeology of statehood during the Nebraska Sesquicentennial celebration of Archaeology Month! With over 12,000 years of human history represented in the archaeological record of our state, it can be easy to overlook the importance of archaeology at sites from our more recent past, such as those related to the overland trails, homesteads, and early townsites. However, archaeology has provided a much greater understanding of such sites, with insight into the people and events that helped shape our state, including details so often left out of the written record. Archaeology allows Nebraskans to experience the past through interaction with the material record, whether via artifacts in a museum or a site visit, providing a deep and tangible connection to the history of state.

Nebraska Archaeology Month 2017 will feature exhibits, lectures, demonstrations, tours, and other activities across the state at museums, historic sites, state parks, and libraries. To learn more and receive updates as events are planned, visit nebraskaarchaeology.org and be sure to “like” Nebraska Archaeology Month on Facebook!

Celebrate Archaeology Month at the Thomas P. Kennard State Historic Site (1627 H Street, Lincoln) with a Free Family Fun Day, 2:00-4:00 p.m., Saturday, September 9. Tour the Kennard House and learn about the 1992 excavations there and see artifacts. Watch archaeologists at work as they excavate additional portions of the yard. Participate in hands-on activities to discover more about archaeology. Have you found something interesting? Bring it for identification.

Nebraska Hall of Fame

The Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission is holding public hearings in the state’s three congressional districts in July. They will be reviewing finalists for induction to the Hall. The Commission, whose members are appointed by the governor, will then meet at the Capitol on August 2 and may select one finalist for induction. (See nebraskahistory.org/admin/hall_of_fame)

The Nebraska Hall of Fame was established in 1961 to officially recognize prominent Nebraskans. Under current law, no more than one person can be added to the Hall every five years. Nominations for this cycle were received in 2015-16.

- **District 1 Hearing**. Wednesday, July 12, 5-7 p.m. Norfolk Arts Center, Gallery Room, 305 N. 5th St., Norfolk. 402-371-7199
- **District 2 Hearing**. Thursday, July 13, 5-7 p.m. Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters, Auditorium, 3215 State St., Omaha. 402-453-9372
- **District 3 Hearing**. Wednesday, July 19, 5-7 p.m. Phelps County Historical Society, 2701 Burlington St., 1 mile north of Holdrege on Hwy 183. 308-995-5015

U.S. Senator George Norris was the first inductee to the Nebraska Hall of Fame in 1961. He is shown with sculptor Jo Davidson circa 1940. Davidson’s Norris bust is displayed at the State Capitol along with those of other Hall of Fame inductees. NSHS RG3298-8-2
Treasures from the NSHS Collections
The Kitchen Stove

We don’t usually associate the humble kitchen stove with high technology, but few technologies did more to transform the lives of the people (overwhelmingly women) who used them. Nebraska women cooked over open fires for thousands of years. The enclosed cast-iron kitchen stove became common by the mid-nineteenth century when Nebraska Territory opened to Euroamerican settlers. Even so, some pioneers made do with open fireplaces until a proper stove could be procured. On the sod-house frontier, firewood was scarce enough that pioneers often burned buffalo chips (“prairie coal”) and later cow chips. Corn cobs remained a popular cooking fuel for many years. Even hay could serve if need be.

Imagine both the skill and the sheer physical labor it took to build and maintain a proper fire—not too hot, not too cool—while making everything from scratch with no electrical appliances. If you can picture that, you can imagine how women reacted when new technologies promised “Drudgery Banished Forever.”

This 1878 Collins & Burgie Hay Burner Stove, used in Tecumseh, has been in our collections since 1934. Hay was fed by hand into the cylinders. Turning the crank pushed the hay into the fire box. It was best to prepare enough hay ahead of time, twisting it into a rope and cutting it with a corn knife into cylinder-length pieces. NSHS 4350-20

This circa-1920s mailer from Iowa-Nebraska Power & Light not only promises an end to drudgery, but boasts that “electrically cooked food is more delicious... Your food is cooked better because it is cooked scientifically, with time and temperature control. No Guesswork!” NSHS 13000-3097

Shown in 1996, Barbara Cizek of rural Prague loved her enamel Quick Meal Cook Stove, which she used from 1927 to 2007. With her husband James, Barbara helped husk corn, shock wheat bundles, and was involved in every aspect of the farm. She sold and dressed poultry, shipping them to Omaha’s Bohemian Cafe, Sloysich’s, and to restaurants as far away as Chicago. She also made down feather quilts (pexinas) and pillows, filling orders from customers across the Midwest and California. She died in 2008 at age 103.
Catalog page showing the Quick Meal Cook Stove. Though advertised as a coal stove, Barbara Cizek burned corn cobs and wood in hers. NSHS RG13135-2

Circa-1940 wiring catalog from Westinghouse Electric Corporation. Electricity came to towns and cities a generation before most farms had it. NSHS 10757-168

Frigidaire electric stove with three burners and an inset pot, used by Edward and Jessie (Griffiths) Brownson in the 1950s to mid-1960s in rural Falls City. Viewed in context of what came before it, this is space-age modernity in the kitchen. NSHS 11640-527
When Charles Baysdorfer prepared for takeoff near Waterloo, Nebraska, not only was he piloting a homebuilt biplane on its maiden flight, but he hadn’t taken any lessons or even flown in an airplane before. Manufactured planes and professional training were hard to come by in 1910.

On that day, November 21, Baysdorfer became the first Nebraskan pilot and the first to fly a Nebraska-built powered airplane. No one who knew Charles and his brothers would have been surprised. Sons of German immigrants, the Baysdorfer brothers—Otto, Charles, and Gus—moved with their parents to Omaha from Davenport, Iowa, in 1887. Otto opened a bicycle shop and learned to repair electrical motors. When local merchant Emil Brandeis bought the city’s first “horseless carriage” in 1895, Otto and his younger brothers began designing their own. Built entirely of locally-fabricated parts designed by the brothers, the “Ottomobile” was completed in 1898—the first Nebraskan-built car.

"Instead of a radiator they had a water tank under the seat," the Omaha World-Herald reported on November 27, 1910, "and after the car had gone a few miles, this became so hot, that,—well the driver arose and stood up for a time, and let the car stop for a little rest."

The brothers then designed an engine they could mount on a bicycle—one of the city’s first motorcycles. A World-Herald profile of Otto on March 5, 1933, also credited the brothers with building the city’s first X-ray machine, with operating the “first motion picture machine at the first movie shown here,” and with “inventing a sparkplug, a gasoline gauge and various devices which brought them money and acclaim.”

Charles left Omaha for four years in the early 1900s, touring the country as a balloonist and parachute jumper. The modern parachute harness had not yet been invented. Parachutists of the day straddled a sling and held onto a trapeze bar. Charles’s specialty was the double jump. He would let go of his parachute and free-fall for a few seconds—while onlookers shrieked below—before a second chute opened.

After Charles returned to Omaha, in 1907 the brothers built a dirigible airship—yet another Nebraska first. The Comet’s hydrogen-filled silk gasbag was fifty-two feet long and could only lift one man. Its eight-horsepower engine left it vulnerable to strong winds. Flying above the city on October 3, Charles was swept southward over the Missouri River. Dropping to treetop level, he called to a fisherman below to row out and catch the rope.

“Pull your own damned rope!” the man called back. Other fishermen were more helpful and brought the airship down safely. A few weeks later the Baysdorferers entered the Comet in an airship race in St. Louis, but its engine failed and the wind carried it to an inglorious landing half a mile off course.

Within a few years the Baysdorferers turned their attention to airplanes. The aviation craze was in full swing when the first “aeroplanes” flew in Nebraska in 1910. Glenn Curtiss—rival of the Wright Brothers—led a five-day air show in Omaha July 23-27. On September 6, Arch Hoxsey of the Wright flying team crashed his plane into a stable at the
Nebraska State Fair in Lincoln; he walked away with minor injuries.

The Baysdorfer's first plane was based on Curtiss's design. Otto and Gus worked with Curtiss mechanics during the Omaha air show, and Glenn Curtiss himself visited the Baysdorfer's shop while he was in town. The brothers built everything but the motor and propeller at their Omaha shop.

After the first flights at Waterloo, Charles and Gus made some other Nebraska flights in 1911, but soon left the state to tour with a nationally-known aviation team. Charles was still flying in 1912 when the New York World interviewed his wife, Artye, for a September 7 article titled, "Constant Agony for the Wives of the Aviators."

By this time so many prominent aviators had died in crashes that there was serious talk of banning public exhibition flights. Like most adventurers' wives of the era, Artye expressed confidence in her "sensible" and "cool-headed" husband, even while admitting that "I simply cannot go to the field and watch him go up... I just have to shut my eyes and clench my fists and keep telling myself that he is all right and that he will come back safely."

Artye said young women were attracted to pilots, but she warned that it was better to admire a pilot from the grandstand "than to keep wondering all the time how long it will be before your only remaining comfort will be to sit dressed in black with nothing but his picture and his press clippings to comfort you!"

A year later Charles crashed into a mountain in Vermont while doing stunt flying for a movie called The Battle in the Clouds. His engine failed during a mock bombing run. He suffered burns and a broken leg, but Artye's worst fears were not realized. Charles survived, eventually gave up flying, and became a commercial fisherman in Florida.

Otto and Gus remained in Omaha, where the World-Herald profiled them now and then as local heroes of invention. In a July 10, 1949, interview, Gus told a reporter of Charles's latest invention: an anti-whirl fishing float that prevented backlash. "Charley... just loves to fish," Gus said. The daredevil-turned-fisherman died in 1962 at age eighty-four, the last of the Baysdorfer brothers, and having outlived his wife Artye by thirty years.

Fort Robinson Then and Now

The photos below show Lakota dancers at Fort Robinson Post Headquarters in 1907, and the same building today. Now known as the Fort Robinson History Center, the old headquarters is filled with exhibits interpreting the events and people associated with the fort. Part of Fort Robinson State Park, the center is open daily through Labor Day, including state holidays. history.nebraska.gov

NSHS RG2063-18-2
UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Daily through October 15
Exhibition: Nebraska’s Enduring Quilt Heritage: Recent Acquisitions
Nebraska History Museum - 402-471-4782

July 3
No "Noon History Bites" due to holiday

July 11 - 10-11 a.m.
Hour at the Museum
Return of the Buffaloes by Paul Goble
NHM - 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

July 18 - 10-11
Hour at the Museum
Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote
by Tanya Lee Stone
NHM - 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

July 20 - 12 noon
Struggles and Survival in the Sandhills
Kelly Garcia and Mullen H.S. students
Brown Bag Lecture Series
NHM - 402-471-4782

July 25 - 10-11 a.m.
Hour at the Museum
Prairie Dogs by Emery & Durga Bernhard
NHM - 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

August 1 - 10-11 a.m.
Hour at the Museum
Children of the Frontier by Sylvia Whitman
NHM - 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

August 7 - 12 noon
Noon History Bites
Horse skull from Skidi Pawnee village
Nolan Johnson, NSHS archaeologist
NHM - 402-471-4782

August 8 - 10-11 a.m.
Hour at the Museum
The Creation Story: Tatanka and the Lakota People, Ill. By Donald Montilieux
NHM - 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

August 17 - 12 noon
Creative Nebraskans
Panel of Presenters
Brown Bag Lecture Series
NHM - 402-471-4782

August 18–June 17, 2018
Exhibition: Don’t Touch That Dial: Kalamity Kate and the George Churley Puppets
NHM - 402-471-4782

August 20
Presentation on Pawnee Cosmology in conjunction with Solar Eclipse. Details to come.
NHM - 402-471-4782, history.nebraska.gov

September 4
No "Noon History Bites" due to holiday

September 9 - 2-4 p.m.
Celebrate Nebraska Archaeology
Free Family Fun Day
Thomas P. Kennard State Historic Site
167 H St., Lincoln - 402-471-4782

September 21 - 12 noon
A Few Well-Known Nebraskans You May Never Have Heard Of
Jim McKee, historian
Brown Bag Lecture Series
NHM - 402-471-4782

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

Bellevue’s College Heights Park was an Army rifle range in 1886-94. A new historical marker, the last to be written by our late historian Jim Potter, was dedicated in his memory on May 21.
Summer 2017 Kids’ Classes
Sample 150 Years of Statehood in 150 Minutes

Summertime learning at the Nebraska History Museum for students in grades K-8 features fun and fascinating topics through August 10. Classes run from 9:30 to noon unless otherwise noted. Cost is $12 for NSHS members and $15 for the general public.

• **July 6.** *Amazing Masks.* Tour *The Strange and Wonderful Masks of Doane Powell* exhibit for inspiration. Create a mask out of quick dry plaster strips on a balloon. Paint and decorate it.

• **July 19.** *Building a Model 1867 Sod House.* See photos of sod houses in Nebraska and learn why homes were built of sod. See a grasshopper plow in the exhibit *Nebraska Unwrapped.* Create a model of an 1867 soddy.

• **July 27.** *1867 Quilt Blocks.* Examine historic quilts. Tour the quilt exhibit in the museum. Create a quilt block using an 1867 pattern. Tie quilts to be donated to Nebraska children in crisis.

• **August 2,** 9:30-noon and repeated 1:30-4:00 p.m. *Etiquette for a Proper 1867 Lady.* Held at the Kennard House, 1627 “H” Street. Grades K-8 ($15/$12). Try on Victorian era clothing. Practice 1867 manners.

• **August 9,** repeated August 10, 9:30-noon. *Playful Puppets and Their Puppeteers.* Grades K-8 ($15/$12). Tour the *George Charley Puppets* exhibit for inspiration. Use your imagination to create your own puppet using recycled materials. Have conversations with your classmates and their puppets.

Parents and grandparents are welcome to take the classes with their children 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 on the education page at history.nebraska.gov (direct link: http://bit.ly/2pRRVzc). Questions? Contact Museum Educator Judy Keetle, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov or 402-471-4757.

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**Liquor’s Last (Legal) Days**

This year is not just Nebraska’s sesquicentennial; 2017 also marks the centennial of statewide Prohibition. Nebraska law prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages effective May 1917, two years before the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution outlawed liquor nationwide. The April 27, 1917, issue of the *Grand Island Daily Independent* tells how the city coped:

“More or less during the past month, and particularly during the past week since the final passage of the prohibition bill . . . has the sales of wines, brandies and whiskies been extraordinarily large. [I]n several of the well to do families of Grand Island several cases of wines to the value of $25 per case have been put in . . . . Some dealers have suggested that they may not be able to dispose of their stock until the last hour, if then, and in order to remain open for the day without danger of damage from boisterous callers, such as has sometimes been the case, will ask for a special policeman during the entire day at their expense.”

The story continued in the May 1 issue: “The liquor traffic in Grand Island gave up its ghost peacefully, and as a matter of fate. There was little or no disturbance. Many a periodical overindulger took one last whirl in an effort to put John Barleycorn to the mat with both shoulders touching but, as usual, the decision went the other way. . . . For the most part, however, they were pacifist drunks—not the fighting kind. . . . At 7 o’clock last night only three or four places were yet open. . . . It is said that in the Bushhausen place there were at one time at least two hundred men. In the Kaumann’s place, according to a police officer stationed there, the crowd was packed like sardines. . . . About dark someone with an eye on history suggested a flashlight picture, and it was taken.”
People used to make toast by holding a slice of bread over a fire on a toasting fork or in some sort of metal frame. By the early twentieth century, manufacturers were finding more and more tasks that could be done by the magic of electricity. General Electric patented the first commercially successful toaster in 1909.

This Universal brand toaster belonged to Judge and Mrs. James P. Cosgrave of Lincoln. Its flip-down sides were typical of early models. You had to turn the slices manually to toast the other side. And with no timer you had to pay close attention—it was turn or burn. The first automatic pop-up toasters for home use weren't available until 1926 and remained a luxury item for years.

We take them for granted today, but electric appliances transformed daily life. See p. 6 for the story of the kitchen stove.