**NSHS Moves On**

Transition is the operative word for many NSHS divisions this fall, as archeology staff and collections move to a new leased facility at 5050 N. 32nd Street in Lincoln, and as collections staff begin moving government records into the same building. The Nebraska Legislature provided funding for compacting storage units which will enable the NSHS to consolidate and improve environmental storage conditions. Artifacts and records formerly stored in the basement of the Lincoln Children’s Museum and at the K Street Records Center will enjoy significantly better quarters. Staff, too: archeologists had been crammed into space at the Nebraska History Museum and then in temporary rental space over the last three years.

If you need to access public records, please contact the Library/Archives in advance to ascertain availability of items that may be in transition. Contact us at 402-471-4751, nshs.reference@nebraska.gov

When the renovated Nebraska History Museum reopens early in 2016, you’ll not only see new exhibits inside but a new look outside. In compliance with Nebraska’s 1% for Art statute, administered by the Nebraska Arts Council, a committee of NSHS staff, architects, museum curators, and artists selected a new work to be commissioned for the NHM exterior. “Inside-Outside,” created by the Urban Rock group, will provide a bright, colorful, and intriguing glimpse of what’s inside the museum on its Centennial Mall façade. Design details featuring NSHS collections are being finalized at press time. More details to come about the museum’s new look! 🌟

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

Nebraska History Museum renovation (plus Centennial Mall construction) in February 2015.
**LOSS**

Loss! Losing someone or something is an inevitable part of life. Our experience with loss may come as early as when our mother takes away the pacifier, or perhaps in a T-ball game. We learn as children to deal with this reality. It helps later on when a scholarship goes to a competitor, when the “love of your life” selects another, when hail destroys a crop, or when one is forced to close the doors of a business. The ultimate loss, of course, is death. It is all around us as we age, and for the most part we learn to accept it as a normal part of personal, family, and community life.

Death is also a factor in the lives of organizations. The Nebraska State Historical Society has experienced the usual pattern of deaths over the years. Employees, trustees, volunteers, and friends, after giving of themselves to the mission of the NSHS, have retired or gone on to other endeavors. Later we hear of their deaths and reflect with gratitude on their contributions to the work of Nebraska history.

On occasion, however, death comes to active colleagues. In a span of less than six months this year we mourned the passing of three staff members: in February, Tom Buecker, historian and author; and in July, Martha Kimball, executive assistant, and John Carter, curator, folklorist, and writer. All were in their sixties. Given life expectancies today, we should have known them for many more years. We grieve for their families and loved ones. We regret the loss of their personalities and skills. We wish things could be otherwise.

But loss is not only a part of life; it is a part of history. These three were wonderful Nebraskans just like the NSHS people who have gone before them. We miss them; we wonder at the loss of their laughter, their experience, their questioning minds, and their knowledge-filled talks and writings. Like all of history, however, these losses remind us of the passage of human life, and we turn to the Creator, the Great Spirit, the power that is life itself to seek consolation. Meanwhile, these colleagues have in themselves become an important part of the history of this place, these people, Nebraska. We wish them peace.

And may we also have peace.

Michael J. Smith, Director/CEO

**NSHS Annual Report: Online September 15**

The 2014-2015 NSHS Annual Report will be an electronic-only document available at nebraskahistory.org starting September 15. Go to nebraskahistory.org/admin/report, or just click on the “Publications” tab on our website’s home page. If web access is an issue, call Lana Hatcher at 402-471-3272 to request that a printed copy be mailed to you.

**New at NebraskaStudies.org**

NebraskaStudies.org is now even better! This educational website teaches students about Nebraska history (and is a great resource for grown-ups as well). It is a cooperative project of Nebraska Educational Telecommunications, the NSHS, and the Nebraska Department of Education.

Media posted on the site have been upgraded to higher resolutions, and new media have been added to pages that had none before. Videos can now go full screen, and interactions are not only larger, but are mobile-ready.

The site features many NSHS images and primary sources, and Photo Curator Karen Keehr has helped ensure that each piece of media has more complete metadata with description, date, owner, and ID number. And, finally, all media are now ADA-compliant, with either a description or transcript. Look for more exciting changes in 2016!

**Free Emergency Preparedness Workshops**

Free emergency preparedness workshops for Nebraska museums, library, and archives staff and volunteers will be held the last week in October at locations across the state. Grant funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services will provide small travel stipends to those interested in attending one-day sessions in Kearney, Gering, and [TK]. Tom Clareson of Lyrasis will help collections personnel adapt the Incident Command System used by first responders to their organizations’ needs. Hands-on simulations will give hands-on experience with damaged materials. The Nebraska Museums Association is co-sponsor of the series. For more information check nebraskamuseums.org, nebraskahistory.org or contact Lynne Ireland at lynne.ireland@nebraska.gov, 402-471-4758.
Honoring History Makers at the NSHS Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Join us at the Downtown Holiday Inn in Lincoln on Friday, October 16, 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., to recognize individuals who’ve made history by helping to preserve it. This year’s honorees:

Elizabeth and Bryce Lund will be presented the Nebraska Preservation Award in honor of their preservation and restoration of 1887 J. D. McDonald House in Fremont.

Dr. Dan Holtz of Nebraska City, Nebraska, will receive the Addison E. Sheldon Memorial Award in recognition of his distinguished service to preserving the history of Nebraska as a professor at Peru State College, Humanities Nebraska speaker’s bureau presenter, and president of the NSHS.

The late Tom Buecker, historian and longtime NSHS curator, will be honored with the Robert W. Furnas Memorial Award for outstanding assistance to the NSHS in the form of long-term service.

Dan Jibréus of Stockholm, Sweden, will receive the James L. Sellers Memorial Award for the best article published in Nebraska History during the previous year. His article, “The Long Journey of White Fox,” appeared in the Summer 2014 issue.

JoAnn Wallman of Lincoln, who teaches at Messiah Lutheran School and epitomizes the best Nebraska educators have to offer in engaging, inspiring, and guiding their students, will receive the James C. Olson Memorial Award.

The Nebraska Land Trust will receive the Asa T. Hill Award in recognition of its ongoing efforts to develop conservation easements for lands in Nebraska containing important archeological resources. Such easements have been developed in Sarpy, Boone, Saunders, and Dawes counties.

Former Nebraska First Lady Sally Ganem will receive the Champion of Nebraska History Award for championing continued stewardship of the Governor’s Residence and a virtual tour of the Nebraska State Capitol. The award is given on the initiative and at the discretion of the NSHS Board of Trustees to an individual who has provided a conspicuous service, particularly in the public arena, that supports the mission of the NSHS.

Doors open at the Holiday Inn Downtown, 141 North Ninth Street, Lincoln, at 11:30 a.m., with the luncheon at noon, annual business meeting at 12:45 p.m., and the awards presentation at 1:00 p.m. The cost of the luncheon is $25 per person; register and pre-pay by September 30 by calling 402-471-3272, or email Lana Hatcher at lana.hatcher@nebraska.gov.

Rodeo Nebraska Now Available

The NSHS’s new book, Rodeo Nebraska by Mark Harris, is now available through the Landmark Stores and other retailers. A large-format book of contemporary photography, this 240-page hardcover volume features stories and compelling photographs of small-town Nebraska rodeos and a historical essay by noted Western historian Candy Moulton. The book retails for $34.95 ($31.45 for NSHS members, plus tax/shipping).

Eight years ago Harris set out on a mission: to portray Nebraska’s contemporary rodeo culture more artistically and comprehensively in photographs than anyone ever has—and then write a book worthy of the photos. At eighty-two events in sixty-two separate locations he photographed the competition, the rural crowds, and all things connected with them. He visited ranches that breed broncs, bulls, and speed horses, and spoke to hundreds of competitors. National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore calls the book “a captivating tribute to rodeo like no other.” See more of Harris’s photography at rodeonebraskabook.com.
Tinkie Tower practicing her roping skills in the 1930s.

This outfit is one of three in our collection that belonged to trick rider Tinkie Tower. Born Mildred Geraldine Tower on August 10, 1923, in Edison, Nebraska, Tower started riding horses before she could walk and taught herself trick riding at the age of seven or eight. In the mid-1930s she traveled to Texas to further hone her craft. (According to family lore, she got there by stowing away in the trunk of a car.) When she returned to Nebraska she began performing in local rodeos and parades.

In addition to performing, Tower spent one year at McCook Teacher’s College and, prior to World War II, taught at a one-room school in the Sandhills. After the war she toured with Monty Montana’s Wild West Show and Jimmie Woods’ 101 Ranch Wild West Show. Around 1948 she began traveling the rodeo circuit as a solo act.

In 1951 Tower married her childhood friend Bob Phillipson in Holbrook, Nebraska, and quit the rodeo circuit. For the next twenty-five years she and Bob owned and operated livestock markets in Franklin, Holdrege, Lexington, Curtis, and Newman Grove. They also amassed 4,000 acres in Franklin and Furnas counties which they ranched and farmed.

Tinkie and Bob were founding members of the American Simmental Association, opened a Western wear shop, raised two boys, partnered with Jack Van Berg in the thoroughbred horse business, and were active in the Republican Party. Tinkie’s son said his mother was a staunch Republican until August 1974, when she suddenly lost all interest in politics. Tinkie and Bob faced financial difficulties in the 1970s and 1980s and eventually had to file for bankruptcy. She died in 1993 after a battle with ovarian cancer.
Honoring NHM Docents

Nebraska History Museum docents have remained committed and busy during museum renovations with Museum on the Move programming. They were recognized at a meeting in July. The presentation check for $17,420 made out to the Nebraska History Museum in this photograph represents the 871 hours docents volunteered during the 2014-2015 fiscal year, valued at $20 per hour. (A total of 6,424 total hours were contributed by all NSHS volunteers.) Of course, it’s impossible to quantify the transmission of knowledge and the sparking of curiosity, but even this rough measure reminds us how much volunteers add to the work of the NSHS.

Shown here are twelve of our twenty docents. Front row, L to R: Lorelee Novak, Sue Hodge, Phyllis Fischer, Donna Hinkley. Back row: Mary Lienemann, Don Humphrey, Susan Stranghoener, Karen Windhusen, Elaine Peters, Georgean McReynolds, Bev Cram, Steve Flader. Docent Phyllis Fischer received special recognition for her thirty years of volunteer service at the NHM.

You, too, can be part of this—see below.

Docents Needed for a “New” Nebraska History Museum

When the Nebraska History Museum reopens in early 2016, new NHM volunteer docents will be a vital part of the museum team. You can be one of them! We need more docents to provide guided tours.

Docents support the museum’s commitment to provide all visitors—children, students, and adults—with an opportunity to learn more about our state’s rich history. Museum exhibits are curated from our extensive collections and from stories shared by Nebraskans.

If you are interested in being a docent, eight educational training sessions will be given from 9:00-12:00 a.m. on October 8 and 22, November 5, December 3, January 21, February 4 and 18, and March 3. If you have a willingness to learn and communicate stories of Nebraska history using historical objects and biographies, and ingenuity in working with groups of all ages and interests, you could be a great addition to our team. Our docents enjoy flexible scheduling, behind-the-scenes experiences, a chance to learn in-depth history and a creative group of fellow docents.

Contact Deb McWilliams at deb.mcwilliams@nebraska.gov or 402-471-4955 for more details.

NSHS, Lincoln Journal Star Cooperate on Photo Book

On December 4 the Lincoln Journal Star and Pediment Publishing will publish a new book of historic Lincoln photos from the NSHS collections. Lincoln Memories: The Early Years will feature more than 200 photos of the city from the 1860s to the 1930s. The 144-page hardcover book will sell for $44.95 from the Journal Star and the NSHS Landmark Stores.

How difficult was it to find 200 historic photos of Lincoln? It’s better to ask how they chose only 200. NSHS Photograph Curator Karen Keehr provided the Journal Star with a selection of more than 9,000 images. They narrowed it down from there.
A Nebraskan Responds to the Thirteenth Amendment

The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, abolishing slavery, was ratified 150 years ago this December. While the Emancipation Proclamation applied to “persons held as slaves” in states or parts of states “the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States” as of January 1, 1863 (the Confederacy), it did not end slavery in the nation as a whole. President Lincoln recognized this and advocated a constitutional amendment as a permanent solution. The process began during the Civil War and ended months after the war’s conclusion.

Here’s a brief timeline of events:

- Apr. 6, 1864: Senate passes the amendment 38-6
- June 15, 1864: House defeats the amendment 93-65 (lacking a two-thirds majority)
- Dec. 6, 1864: Lincoln’s message to Congress, urging reconsideration
- Jan. 31, 1865: House passes the amendment 119-56 (subject of the 2012 Lincoln movie)
- Feb. 1, 1865: Lincoln signs resolution submitting amendment to the states (Lee surrenders Apr. 9; Lincoln is assassinated Apr. 14; last Confederate general surrenders June 23)
- Dec. 6, 1865: Georgia ratifies, completing the process
- Dec. 18, 1865: Sec. of State Seward announces that the amendment has been ratified

A Nebraskan living in Washington, D.C., wrote to the (Plattsmouth) Nebraska Herald when the amendment was ratified. (The Nebraska legislature could not vote to ratify because Nebraska was still a territory.) Below are excerpts of D. H. Kelsey’s Dec. 20 letter, which appeared in the edition of Jan. 3, 1866:

“[T]he great work of national regeneration has been accomplished. The nation, baptized in fire and blood, has arisen to a new birth, and to a high and holy destiny. The hydra-headed and hundred fisted monster, ‘Human Slavery’ has fallen accursed of God and man, and the Republic now stands ‘redeemed,’ regenerated, and disenthralled by the genius of Universal Emancipation. While we mourn with those that mourn, let us also rejoice with those that do rejoice. The Emancipation Proclamation of Abraham Lincoln, like John the Baptist, heralded and prepared the way of deliverance; and yesterday, by the glorious announcement of the Secretary of State, the crowning act is announced by the Constitutional Amendment de jure and de facto. ‘Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth: Good will to men.’

“As all men, regardless of color or caste, are now secured in the enjoyment of their equal Natural Rights, it becomes a great and pressing question whether they shall be entitled to equal civil rights, in other words, whether artificial distinctions, merely on account of the texture of the skin or cuticle shall be removed; and it seems to be the growing opinion in all the departments of Government, that manhood and merit—not color or caste—should be the test of political rights or civil immunities.

. . . [I]t is deemed especially important now, in the process of reconstruction and regeneration, to confer upon the loyal black man the civil privileges that are accorded to the unrepentant, disloyal white man. It is devoutly to be hoped that this matter will be settled on the principles of equal justice—that no hateful seeds of discord will be allowed to germinate and send their baleful influences through the restored Republic, so as again to threaten and culminate in the horrors of a civil war.”

Kelsey’s effusive language captures the spirit of the time and the belief of some that equal civil rights would naturally follow the abolition of slavery (indeed, this was the point of the Fourteenth Amendment). Kelsey’s optimism, unfortunately, proved unfounded; the work of forming “a more perfect union” and extending civil rights equally to all continues to this day.

D. H. Kelsey, age 40, attorney, native of Vermont, appears in 1860 Census of Plattsmouth, Cass County. At some point he moved to Washington, D. C., and by 1867 the Plattsmouth paper noted that he was employed by the U.S. Treasury department.
NSHS Kids’ Classes

Kids love to learn about interesting things that have happened here in the past, and NSHS educational programming continues despite the Nebraska History Museum’s closure for renovations. This past summer we held eleven classes for kids at various locations. Sixty-eight K-8 students learned about various aspects of Nebraska history.

Three classes were held at the Great Plains Art Museum in conjunction with the NSHS-sponsored exhibit, Homefront and Battlefield: Quilts & Context in the Civil War. Kids learned about Civil War-era textiles and made Union and Confederate flags. They learned about the life of soldiers in the Civil War and made housewives/hussiwls (sewing kits carried by soldiers), and haversacks (bags carried by soldiers to hold their personal items).

Two classes were held in the Thomas P. Kennard house. Young ladies learned about “Etiquette for a Proper Victorian Lady,” made personal calling cards, and tried on actual Victorian era clothing.

Six classes were held at the NSHS headquarters building. Students learned about and made Native American arts, crafts, and games; painted watercolors of Nebraska “Grandscapes”; made puppets and presented a show about trail travelers; learned about Nebraskans in World War II; dug for artifacts and threw with an atlatl in the archeology class; and made cornhusk dolls and churned butter in the class “A Day in the Life of a Pioneer Child.”

Nebraska is an amazing place with a rich history! We look forward to offering fun and educational kids’ classes again next summer at the newly-renovated Nebraska History Museum.

Holiday Highlights at Landmark Stores

Mark your calendar: on Wednesday, December 2, NSHS members will receive a 25 percent discount at the NSHS Landmark Stores. Shop early and check out these holiday ideas:

- Rodeo Nebraska by Mark Harris—see accompanying article on page 3
- New Prairie Kitchen by Summer Miller, featuring seasonal recipes and stories from the Great Plains
- State Capitol ornament for 2015, features a corn motif from an exterior grille vent
- The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America, by William G. Thomas
- More than Football: George Flippin’s Stromsburg Years, by Kathy Nelson
- Little Nebraska board book for children

Please visit us for more book and gift options that are sure to be enjoyed by adults and children. Our locations: State Capitol (Room 1417, lower level); Chimney Rock, Bayard.

If you can’t join us in person for your holiday shopping, remember, we do mail orders! Call us at 402-471-3447 or 1-800-833-6747. Happy Holidays from the Landmark Store!
New Marker Commemorates WWII Japanese Balloon Bombs

A new historical marker in the Nebraska Sandhills commemorates one of the stranger episodes of World War II. On July 11 the NSHS unveiled a marker near the landing site of Japanese balloon bomb. The marker is located along State Highway 27 in Sheridan County, about fifteen miles north of Ellsworth (the Mari Sandoz historical marker is along this same stretch of highway).

NSHS Director/CEO Mike Smith and former State Senator LeRoy J. Louden, who organized the marker project, spoke at the ceremony. Louden thanked local donors, the NSHS, the Nebraska Tourism Commission, and the Nebraska Department of Roads for their involvement.

Kenneth Hamilton, who witnessed the balloon bomb and who now has the rare distinction of being quoted on a historical marker, also attended. Here’s the full text:

“During World War II the Japanese built some nine thousand hydrogen-filled, paper balloons to carry small bombs to North America, hoping to set fires and inflict casualties. The first was launched November 3, 1944. The balloons rose to about 30,000 feet, where winds aloft transported them across the Pacific Ocean.

On February 22, 1945, Kenneth Hamilton, living on a nearby ranch, observed a balloon floating eastward. It looked like ‘an orange ball with the sun shining on it… As we were watching, it turned into a cloud of smoke and went to the ground.’ The balloons carried timing devices to release the bombs and then destroy the envelope. Alliance Army Air Field officials recovered a valve and pieces of shroud lines where the balloon came down.

‘Parts of five balloon bombs were recovered in Nebraska from a total of 285 balloon bomb incidents reported across North America. Although the balloon bombs proved ineffective as military weapons, they caused six fatalities and a few minor fires in the United States. Only after the war was their story revealed.’

Enter Nebraska Historic Site Photo Contest

If you like to photograph Nebraska historic sites, enter your favorites in the statewide contest, BRIDGES: Sharing our Past to Enrich the Future. Historic places are “bridges” to the past and this juried online exhibition is seeking “bridges” from all ninety-three counties. Photos selected for the online exhibition will also be featured in a statewide traveling photography exhibit to celebrate the Nebraska Sesquicentennial in 2017. All submitted photos will be featured online. Entries will be accepted through January 4, 2016.

Photographers are encouraged to highlight historic places throughout Nebraska, including often overlooked historical treasures. These could be places important to a community or personally significant to the photographer, such as historic properties or recognized historic landmarks. Other options would be cultural activities or events with a basis in local history and in context with a historic place. (Need ideas? Enter search term “National Register” at nebraskahistory.org for a complete listing of Nebraska sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places.)

You must be fifteen or older to participate, but don’t need to be a Nebraska resident. Submit photos online (and find complete rules and information) at hildegardcenter.org/bridges; entries must be JPEGs of at least eight megapixels, 300 dpi. Photographers may enter up to five images per submission for a non-refundable fee of $15. Multiple submissions are allowed. Along with an artistic view of the subject, the submission must also include a context image (overall general image) of each subject, as well as a narrative (250 words or less) that describes how the focus of the photos “bridges the past to the present.”

The Nebraska Tourism Commission and the Nebraska State Historical Society hope to use the exhibit photos in a variety of ways to help promote the state of Nebraska. Hildegard Center for the Arts plans to feature the juried exhibition in a digital catalogue. More information at hildegardcenter.org.
Fiftieth Annual Neihardt Day Hosts Historic Reunion

The fiftieth annual Neihardt Day celebration was also a family reunion of historic proportions. The August 2 event was held at the John G. Neihardt State Historic Site in Bancroft, Nebraska.

Myron Pourier, the great-great grandson of Oglala Lakota holy man Nicholas Black Elk, traveled from his home in Porcupine, South Dakota, to meet the relatives of John G. Neihardt, who had traveled from all over the country to attend the celebration. It was the first time the families had met.

In a surprise presentation, the Neihardt family gave Black Elk’s bow and arrows to Pourier. His great-great-grandfather Nicholas Black Elk gave them to John G. Neihardt after their meetings, which culminated in the creation of the now-classic book Black Elk Speaks.

Two of Neihardt’s great-grandchildren, “representing the next generation,” presented the gift to Pourier in the Sacred Hoop Prayer Garden. Jerome Kills Small then presented a Lakota honor song which he composed for the occasion.

Coralie Hughes, Neihardt’s granddaughter, explained that the family was returning the item to “give strength” for Pourier’s “peaceful” efforts to bring awareness to change the name of Harney Peak to Black Elk Peak. A sacred site to the Lakota people, the peak is the highest point east of the Rockies, and is where Oglala holy man Nicholas Black Elk had the vision recorded in Black Elk Speaks. Black Elk and his son Ben revisited the peak with Neihardt and his daughters, Hilda and Enid, in 1931.

The event, which also included live music, a living history interpretation, and other presentations, was sponsored by the John G. Neihardt Foundation, Nebraska Educational Television, Humanities Nebraska and Cuming County Visitors Bureau. The John G. Neihardt State Historic Site is owned by the NSHS and managed by the Neihardt Foundation.

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New Reference Room Hours Starting November 3

The Reference Room at the NSHS Headquarters Building (1500 R Street in Lincoln) will be open Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. starting November 3.
If you can’t get the whole family together this holiday season, just paste any absent persons into the group picture, as the Bostock Studio of Palisade, Nebraska, did in this undated photo. You don’t even need Photoshop.

NSHS RG5339-Y
Coming in *Nebraska History*

Today we take for granted that a network of centrally planned, publicly-funded roads is necessary infrastructure for modern civilization. But it took decades of work to sell people on this idea. A nationwide “Good Roads” movement began in the 1880s with an alliance of bicycle enthusiasts and then gained momentum with the coming of the automobile. Nebraskans followed the national movement even as they struggled to build support for it in their own state. The story is told in “Lifting Our People Out of the Mud: The Good Roads Movement in Nebraska” by L. Robert Puschendorf. The article will appear in the forthcoming Winter 2015 issue of *Nebraska History*.

The issue also includes “Pen Pictures and Prose Poems: Walt Mason in Nebraska” by Patricia C. Gaster. At the time of his death in 1939, humorist Walt Mason was considered to be one of the most widely read—if not the most polished—of living poets. Before gaining national fame, Mason spent twenty years in Nebraska writing for the *Daily Nebraska State Journal* and other papers.

In “An Issei on the Plains: The Story of Richi Ugai,” Griffen Farrar looks at a little-known side of Nebraska’s ethnic heritage. The state’s Japanese remained a small percentage of the population and generally tried to avoid publicity. Richi Ugai of North Platte was an exception. The restaurateur and hotel owner became a locally-prominent businessman in the early twentieth century, prospering even through World War II.

Look for the issue in your mailbox the second week of November.

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**In Memoriam: John Carter**

John Carter, 64, died July 23, 2015. He was senior research folklorist and associate editor for the NSHS, where he worked for almost forty years. John received his B.A. from Nebraska Wesleyan University and his M.A. in American Folk Culture from the Cooperstown Graduate Program, State University of New York. He authored the book *Solomon Butcher: Photographing the American Dream*, was co-author of *Eyewitness at Wounded Knee*, and published numerous articles in both scholarly and popular journals.

John was a scholar/consultant for many documentary films, including several produced by filmmaker Ken Burns. He was principal researcher for the documentary *Beef State*, produced by the NSHS and Nebraska Educational Telecommunications. He was a well-known and much-requested speaker on almost any aspect of Nebraska (except Cornhusker football). But more important, John was generous with his knowledge, enthusiastic in his work and play, and had a deep and abiding love for the history and culture of Nebraska. He is survived by his wife, Ann Billesbach, his siblings Steve and Martha, and other relatives.

**In Memoriam: Martha Kimball**

Martha Kimball, 63, died July 1, 2015. She came to the NSHS in January 2008, working as executive assistant to Director/CEO Mike Smith in the Administration office. We knew Martha as a knowledgeable Husker football fan, animal lover, and a devoted grandma to her grandkids Jackson and Rowan. She is survived by her daughter Amy Sparks, son-in-law Ben, brother and sister-in-law Sam and Rosanne Walker, and other relatives.
Recent tests of the Google Car and other self-driving vehicles may seem futuristic, but the idea for autonomous cars is not new. In 1958 the Nebraska Department of Roads conducted experiments with technology developed by RCA. A control box for the M-2 Vehicle Detector is shown here. The idea was that wires embedded in highways would allow cars and roads to communicate with each other, triggering a system of roadside warning lights and, potentially, enabling onboard systems of automatic steering and brake control.

RCA experimented with such a system in 1953, using a miniature car on a wired laboratory floor. Five years later, Nebraska traffic engineer Leland Hancock convinced the NDOR to bury wire beneath a 400-foot stretch of road at the new intersection of U.S. 77 and Nebraska Highway 2 in Lincoln. With a guidance system, a car could—in theory—follow the wires.

While the test cars weren’t equipped with automatic brakes or steering, they demonstrated that a vehicle detection and warning system could work, at least under simple experimental conditions. Engineers would need computers far more powerful than anything then in existence to deal with complexities of real-world traffic. That would have to wait. But the idea would not go away.

“Driving will one day be foolproof, and accidents unknown,” boasted the April 1958 issue of *Science Digest*, “when science finally installs the electronic highway of the future.”

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From the Collection: Automobile Autopilot, 1958