It’s February 27, 2020. In today’s issue: restoring a historic painting; women’s professional bicycle racing; HN award winners; moldy heirlooms; Little Bohemia; March events.

Watch this damaged historic painting being restored

NET Television recently spent time with Kenneth Bé at History Nebraska’s Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center in Omaha. As Bé talks about his work in this five-minute video, you can watch the old painting resume its original appearance.
Would you race this bike?

Take a look at this bicycle from the Nebraska History Museum. Would you ride such a bike? Would you ride it at night? Because it’s got this kerosene headlight located conveniently between the spokes...
OK, so would you *race* a high-wheel bike like this on a crowded indoor track? An Omaha woman named Lillie Williams did. (But not this particular one, which belonged to a man in Osceola, Nebraska.) Williams became a professional bicycle racer starting in 1889. Here she is with her bicycle in 1889, and on her motorcycle in 1912.

Racers switched to modern “Safety” bicycles within a few years, but women’s professional sports remained controversial. This 1897 illustration from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* shows one of opponents’ biggest fears. (Williams is second from right.)
“BICYCLE RACING TRANSFORMS LOVELY WOMAN FROM A PALE BEAUTY INTO A PERFECT FRIGHT.”
Williams excelled as a multi-sport athlete during her long professional career, competing in bicycle and motorcycle racing, swimming, fencing, horsemanship, rowing, and shooting. She even raised fine show animals. After moving to Los Angeles, she made headlines when in 1912 she applied to join the police department’s motorcycle squad. Did she get the job? Keep reading.

I already read about Lillie Williams in Nebraska History Magazine!

History Nebraska members can say that. The article by Lisa Lindell includes a lot more photos and stories than what we’ve included here.

Now is a great time to join, because we’re running special offers for new members. Click here to see this week’s offer. Already a member? Forward this email to a friend and help us build support across the state.

2020 History Nebraska Award Winners

History Nebraska is proud to announce the winners of the 2019 History Nebraska Awards. Each year we recognize people who make significant contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Nebraska history. Read the stories of this year’s winners.
Why did a Nat Geo camera crew attend our award ceremony?

Ben and Erin Schroeder received the Nebraska State Preservation Award for their preservation work in Hartington. Veterinarians by trade, the Schroeders are starring in a new reality series called *Heartland Docs, DVM* on Nat Geo Wild.

Don’t let this happen to your heirlooms! (Part 2)
Not-so-fun-fact: “Molds love high humidity, still air, darkness, and a food source (i.e., adhesives, cellulose, leather).” This leather saddle shows what can happen.

Last month the staff of History Nebraska’s Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center explained how light can damage artifacts. This month they show how you can improve artifact storage by paying attention to temperature and humidity. Keep reading.

Where is “Little Bohemia”?

Little Bohemia is one of Omaha’s historic ethnic neighborhoods. History Nebraska’s David Calease and others recently spoke with Omaha’s 3 News Now about the proposed National Historic District and how it could help revitalize the neighborhood. Watch the video here.
Popular on the HN blog and social media

- Fort Robinson is famous for many things, but did you know it had a [German POW camp](#) during WWII?
- This was Lincoln’s most [sensational criminal trial](#) of the nineteenth century. But it was more than just a sordid tale of murder, adultery, and greed.
- In case you missed it last time – our latest [archeology video](#) takes you behind the scenes to look at thousand-year-old Nebraska tools.
- The [Pawnees'] deep roots in Nebraska.
- From Omaha: [1930 ski jump video](#) (ouch!); amazing aerial photo of the [stockyards](#); and [Farnam Street in 1889](#).
Upcoming events

Historian Kristin Mapel Bloomberg talks about one of Nebraska's most important suffragists, Beatrice editor, publisher (and library founder) Clara Bewick Colby of Beatrice. Bloomberg's talk, part of the Brown Bag Learning Series, will be at noon on March 19.

Also coming in March: Homeschool Wednesday on March 4 and a School's Out! event on March 13. Read more.

History Nebraska Newsletter, written by David Bristow, Editor, and Josh Lottman. history.nebraska.gov
Want to change how you receive these emails? You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.
Complete Articles:

https://history.nebraska.gov/blog/omaha%E2%80%99s-lillie-williams-became-professional-bicycle-racer-1889

Omaha’s Lillie Williams became a professional bicycle racer in 1889

In 1889 an Omaha resident and novice female bicycle racer hurtled into the sporting spotlight. Starting in the high-wheel bicycle era, Lillie Williams became a multi-sport professional athlete at a time when women’s sports were widely regarded as improper and physically harmful.

Lisa Lindell tells Williams’ story in “The Nebraska Cyclone: Lillie Williams and the Embrace of Sport and Spectacle” in the Winter 2019 issue of Nebraska History Magazine.

Lindell describes Williams first race in Omaha:

“Over a period of six nights, before an overflow crowd averaging five thousand enthusiastic fans a night, Williams outrode the nation’s top “cycliennes” in a hotly contested race in the city’s newly constructed Coliseum. By the end, she had pedaled 259.4 miles and broken the women’s 18-hour cycling record. Although Williams would eventually take up and excel at a number of other sports—including motorcycling, swimming, and fencing, in which she set records and won championships—unrivaled in her memory was the race in Omaha that launched her professional career.”
Williams continued racing on an international women’s circuit. The races were held on indoor, banked velodromes similar to what modern track cyclists use. Cyclists switched to modern “Safety” bicycles within a few years, but wore no helmets. Like today’s competitors, they were sometimes seriously injured.

For this and other reasons, women’s professional sports remained controversial. This 1897 illustration from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* shows one of opponents’ biggest fears. (Williams is second from right.)

It wasn’t only the physicality of sports that opponents feared. It was also the fierceness of the women’s competitive drive. “They are riding for blood,” one newspaper reported.

The races drew cheering crowds and made money, but critics denounced them as unwomanly. Williams remained defiant. In press interviews, she boasted with cheerful swagger of her victories and her training regimen.

“I train just like a man preparing for a prize-fight,” Williams said in an 1897 interview. “I get up in the morning, punch the bag for ten minutes and then box for another ten minutes. Sometimes I wrestle and jump rope... and take excellent care of my general health.”

Williams later excelled in other sports, including motorcycle racing. After moving to Los Angeles, she made headlines when in 1912 she applied to join the police department’s motorcycle squad.

“Just set a speeder out in front of me and give me a chance at him on my motorcycle,” Williams said. “All I want is a chance to prove this.” But LAPD was not interested.

Incidentally, in 1912 Williams was still being judged for her looks, although not quite in the way the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* would have predicted. That year an *Omaha Bee* reporter described the 50-year-old as “an attractive young woman.”
History Nebraska is proud to announce the winners of the 2019 History Nebraska Awards. History Nebraska annually recognizes people that provide significant contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Nebraska history. Winners will be presented with their awards during the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation’s Legislative Reception on Wednesday, February 19th, 2020, at the Nebraska History Museum.

The award winners are:

- 2019 Champion of History Award – Doug Rung, Geneva / Mark Griep, Lincoln
- 2019 History Nebraska Excellence in Teaching Award – Stacey Haney, Humann Elementary School, Lincoln
- 2019 James L. Sellers Award – Nathan Tye, Kearney
- 2019 Nebraska State Historic Preservation Award – Ben and Erin Schroeder, Hartington / Jo Lynn Petty-Blackwell, Highlands Ranch, CO

Read on for more information on each of the winners.

**Champion of History Award**

![Dr. Mark Griep](image)

Dr. Mark Griep
Doug Rung

The Champion of History Award will be given jointly to Doug Rung of Geneva and Dr. Mark Griep of Lincoln. Mr. Rung has served as the president of the Fillmore County Historical Society since 2011. Each year, the organization sponsors a Museum Day where Doug portrays a pioneer settler, sharing stories of pioneer life and hardships, showcasing his buffalo hide robe and buffalo gun. Doug has organized fly-in air shows at the World War II-era Fairmont Army Airbase, and his love for history has taken him across the state to share topics ranging from Nebraska photographer Solomon Butcher slang words of the 1890s.

Dr. Mark Griep’s historical research has had an ongoing national impact. In 1996, his curiosity about Dr. Rachel Lloyd, the first woman to receive a Ph.D. in Chemistry and the second chemistry professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, uncovered her story and her impact on UNL’s chemistry department and her critical role in launching the state’s sugar beet industry. In 2014, Dr. Griep received permission to break open the date stone of Avery Hall on the UNL campus to remove its time capsule, where he found a high-resolution photo of Dr. Lloyd that was used in the only known copy of her biography. Dr. Griep's work has given Dr. Rachel Lloyd the recognition she deserves across Nebraska and throughout the discipline of Chemistry worldwide.

The Champion of History Award, formally the Robert W. Furnas Memorial Award, recognizes outstanding contributions by an individual or organization who helps preserve or interpret Nebraska history.

History Nebraska Excellence in Teaching Award
Stacey Haney

The History Nebraska Excellence in Teaching Award will be given to Stacey Haney of Lincoln. Stacey is a 4th-grade teacher at Humann Elementary and has served in a leadership capacity for social studies education. Last year, Stacey was the only classroom teacher in Lincoln Public Schools to take advantage of an opportunity to work with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to implement a “History Harvest” program with her class. Through the project, her students learned how to use primary resources, artifacts, and oral history to understand how to interpret history and to ‘read and think like historians.’

The History Nebraska Excellence in Teaching Award is formally known as the James C. Olson Award. It is presented annually to a teacher who excels in teaching Nebraska history through creativity and imagination in the classroom by using documents, artifacts, historic sites, oral histories, and other primary sources.

James L. Sellers Memorial Award

Nathan Tye

The James L. Sellers Memorial Award will be given to Nathan Tye of Kearney, Nebraska. Nathan is being recognized for his article, “Billy Clubs and Vagrancy Laws: Confronting the ‘Plague of Hobos’ in Nebraska, 1870s-1930s,” published in Nebraska History Magazine in 2018. Judges from Chadron State College selected the article to be the recipient of the award and stated: “the author masterfully uses a wide range of primary sources to overcome the fragmentary nature of the archive and place the important and overlooked voice of hobos into Nebraska history.”
The James L. Sellers Memorial Award was created in 1967. The award is given each year for the “best article” published in a volume of Nebraska History Magazine. The author receives an award and $1,000 from the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation, through the support of Catherine Sellers Angle.

**Nebraska State Historic Preservation Award**

Ben and Erin Schroeder

Jo-Lynn Petty-Blackwell

The Nebraska State Historic Preservation Award will be given jointly to Ben and Erin Schroeder for their preservation work in Hartington, and to Jo-Lynn Petty-Blackwell for her efforts to save the Oshkosh Water Tower.

Ben and Erin Schroeder have supported historic preservation efforts in Hartington, Nebraska, for the past several years. They renovated the former Globe Clothing store building into a residence, but also provided a rental space on the first floor for community events. Their next big project led them to renovate and reopen the Hartington Hotel, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. They were catalysts for listing Hartington’s downtown in the National Register of Historic Places in 2019, spurred others to invest in their downtown and explore historic tax credits, and have supported Hartington as the city researches the Certified Local Government program. Veterinarians by trade, the Schroeders are currently starring in a new reality series called, “Heartland Docs, DVM,” which can be seen on Nat Geo Wild.

Since March 2018, Jo Lynn Petty Blackwell has spearheaded local efforts to save the Oshkosh Water Tower. Taken out of operation by the City of Oshkosh and proposed for removal, Jo Lynn’s effort to preserve and protect the Oshkosh Water Tower resulted in its listing in the National Register of Historic Places in June 2019. It is the first water tower individually listed in the National Register in the state of Nebraska. She is the president of the 501(c)(3) Oshkosh Water Tower group, which has purchased the tower and is committed to not
only recognizing the tower for its historic significance but also ensuring that the Oshkosh Water Tower is a focal point of the Oshkosh skyline and community activity for years to come.

The Nebraska Preservation Award was created in 1988 to recognize significant achievements in historic preservation in Nebraska by an individual or organization. The award is given for one of two categories: "brick and mortar projects," or "individual or group achievements."

https://history.nebraska.gov/blog/cool-it-using-relative-humidity-protect-collection-materials

Cool It! Using Relative Humidity to Protect Collection Materials

The storage and exhibition environment best suited for the long-term survival of art materials is one in which the relative humidity is as stable as possible and the temperature is as low as practically possible. Temperatures that fall in a range below 72° F and above freezing are acceptable provided that relative humidity is controlled. Each degree the temperature is lowered, under stable relative humidity conditions, will slow the rate of deterioration of collection materials. Above 72° F some materials begin to soften and flow and below 32° F any materials containing water will begin to freeze and expand. Lower room temperatures with stable relative humidity will prolong the life of the collections, but may interfere with human comfort.

This protractor has succumbed to inherent vice. The degradation cannot be stopped or treated, but it can be slowed if stored at cold temperatures. Read more about the protractor here.
For Nebraska collections, relative humidity levels in the range of 50% to 30% are thought to be best for general collections; however, it is actually the stability of the relative humidity that is paramount rather than the actual value. This is certainly true in an arid environment like that in western Nebraska where 50% Relative Humidity (RH) may be difficult to maintain particularly in the cold winter months. Fifty percent relative humidity is not essential; it is the stability that is most important. Therefore, if the relative humidity is more stable at 45%, then all efforts should be focused on maintaining that relative humidity. Above 50% RH mold and mildew can form and below 30% RH serious dehydration of organic materials can occur.

---

The handle on this knife is made of ivory. Due to low relative humidity, it has cracked.

Mold is a growth of various types of fungi that produce a furry mass on the surface of materials. Mold spores are everywhere and invisible to the naked eye. Mold reproduces by sending out a large number of spores into the air which then travel to new locations and germinate under specific conditions. When the spores germinate, they produce fuzzy hair-like stalks called hyphae, which in turn produce more spores. Mildew is an early stage of mold that appears as a thin film. Mold can be found in a multitude of colors and will attach to a variety of surfaces and organic materials. Molds will attack the starches found in adhesives, sizings and textiles, proteins found in leather, parchment and animal glues, and cellulose, which is the main component in paper.

Mold damages the objects it settles on by excreting digestive enzymes. These enzymes alter, weaken, and stain the objects. Once an object is weakened by mold, it becomes more susceptible to future damage as it becomes more fragile and porous.

The easiest way to preserve objects is to prevent the mold from forming in the first place. In order to germinate, specific environmental conditions need to be in place. Molds love high humidity, still air, darkness, and a food source (i.e. adhesives, cellulose, leather).
Due to high relative humidity, mold has grown over the surface of this leather saddle.

The best way to prevent mold growth is by maintaining stable and moderate temperature and relative humidity. Do not store collections in spaces that are known to be damp or prone to leaks and flooding. Avoid attics, basements, and spaces along exterior walls. Air-conditioners and/or dehumidifiers should be used to lower the RH. Be sure air-conditioners or dehumidifiers are properly draining and drip pans are emptied regularly.

Still air allows mold spores to settle and can increase the moisture content of collections. Maintain good air circulation in storage areas. Do not aim fans directly at collection items.

Keep storage areas and objects as clean as possible. Dust and dirt house spores and can also act as food for active mold. Protective enclosures keep any dust and dirt off the object and provide an extra layer of protection. Keep windows closed to prevent dust and spores from entering the storage space. Vacuum storage areas and objects regularly.

Change HVAC filters according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Have the HVAC system regularly maintained to prevent the system itself from growing mold and affecting the entire building.

Make sure pipes and exterior walls are well insulated to prevent condensation from forming and creating pockets of moisture where mold can form. Regularly check pipes for leaks and make sure gutters are cleared.

Create a separate receiving space for incoming collection items. Check all incoming items for mold or other pests. This prevents contamination of the rest of the collections. If a new acquisition is found to contain mold, follow the steps found in our Mold Remediation Guide.