It's Monday, April 4, 2022. In today's issue: Plate pandemonium; Annual awards; Did a Nebraska History article inspire a new TV series?; Omaha woman in Klondike gold rush; Artist Sara Green; Kearney Woman's Club; Dirt-floor latrine in Capitol basement; 1976 school busing controversy; Pawnee archeology.

History Nebraska “Plate Pandemonium” ends today
If you follow us on social media, you know we’ve answered college basketball’s “March Madness” with our own “Plate Pandemonium” bracket, now in its final round.

In 2023, History Nebraska will create new license plates that can be purchased for your vehicle. We’ve come up with a lot of cool designs, but need your help to figure out which ones you would love to see. (This bracket is for
entertainment purposes only, but it helps us learn what people like.)

We started with the designs shown above, and after three rounds of head-to-head voting we're down to this:

Cast your vote here by noon today. Then tell us which designs you like the most and why.

History Nebraska’s annual awards
On March 15, History Nebraska held its annual awards ceremony during our Legislative Luncheon at the Thomas P. Kennard House in Lincoln. State senators presented awards for excellence in teaching, archeology, advocacy, historic preservation, and historical writing, as well as our “Champion of History” award. Read more about the winners and the difference they’re making in our state.

Did a *Nebraska History Magazine* article inspire a new TV series?
In 2018 *Nebraska History Magazine* published the story of “Queen Louise” Vinciquerra, an Omaha woman who became a notorious bootlegger in the 1920s. Now Louise’s story may be coming to television.

“Atmosphere Entertainment has launched development on *The 18th*, a one-hour series inspired by the true story of Nebraska’s ‘Queen of the Bootleggers,’ which has Odessa A’zion (*Grand Army*) set to star,” according to a recent article in *Deadline*. The production company is currently shopping the series to networks.

Among the series’ creators is one of Vinciquerra’s nieces; her initial research
led her to Kylie Kinley’s *Nebraska History Magazine* article and video. Kinley—our former assistant editor who is now a high school teacher in Lawrence, Kansas—is working with Atmosphere Entertainment as a research consultant.

Will a network greenlight the series? Stay tuned. In the meantime, read more about Queen Louise and watch our video [here](#).

*Nebraska History Magazine* is a quarterly publication sent to [History Nebraska members](#).

---

March was Women’s History Month. In case you missed these three new stories at history.nebraska.gov...

How Omaha’s Ada Braxton mined gold in the Klondike
The *Omaha World-Herald* did not usually interview Black women in 1905, but a reporter seemed delighted to talk with Mrs. Ada Braxton, “only just returned to Omaha from the Klondike where she has been for the past year,” and who “claims the distinction of being the first woman who ever walked over the famous Challey [Chilkoot] trail.”

History Nebraska researcher Matt Piersol found numerous examples of Nebraska press coverage of the famous Klondike Gold Rush—and many stories of hardship and tragedy. But Ada Braxton seemed to thrive on the challenges.

“When I went there I was so frail I could not do my own work,” Braxton said, “but I had not been there long until I could whipsaw my own lumber… The mere sight of a gun scared me but it was not long before I could go out and kill game as well as anybody. I killed a mountain goat one day and they are very hard to get.” [Keep reading.](#)
Painting Nebraska Life: Artist Sara Green

Born in Beatrice in 1908, Green taught at the University of Nebraska and Nebraska Wesleyan University. During the Great Depression she was employed by the Civil Works Administration’s Public Work of Art Program, the first public art program of the New Deal. History Nebraska’s Gerald R. Ford
Conservation Center in Omaha has treated some of her paintings. See before-and-after photos and learn how these paintings are being preserved here.

Kearney Woman’s Club

Founded in 1887, the club raised money for local charities and advocated for causes such as prohibition and women’s suffrage. Since 1931 the club’s official home has been the Hanson-Downing House at 723 W. 22nd Street. Not surprisingly, this local landmark is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Keep reading.
The dirt-floor latrine in the Capitol basement, 1859

What was it like inside Nebraska’s second territorial capitol in the 1850s? Let’s put it this way: the photo makes it look a lot better than it really was. Keep reading.
Omaha’s court-ordered school busing, 1976

In 1975 a federal court ordered Omaha Public Schools (OPS) to do more to end racial segregation. While the district was not officially segregated, and while there were no schools that were either 100 percent white or non-white, a long history of housing discrimination had sorted most children into racially homogenous—and unequal—schools.

In 1976 OPS launched a busing program to meet the court’s requirements. The plan was controversial, and local leaders feared violence and “white flight” of parents moving to suburban districts. Keep reading.
The Pawnee lived over a wide expanse of what is now Nebraska, and for longer than any other named Indigenous nation. They left a robust archeological record of villages, camps, sacred sites, and cemeteries that became the focus of archeological research by History Nebraska and other agencies from the 1920s to the present. Keep reading.
2022 History Nebraska Award Winners

History Nebraska is proud to announce the winners of the 2022 History Nebraska Awards. History Nebraska annually recognizes people that provide significant contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Nebraska history. Winners were presented with their awards during the History Nebraska Foundation’s Legislative Luncheon on Tuesday, March 15, 2022, at the Historic Kennard House.

The award winners were:

**2022 Champion of History Award** – Susan La Flesche Picotte Center, Inc., Walthill, NE

**2022 Champion of History Award** – Vickie Shaepler, Kearney, NE

**2022 History Nebraska Excellence in Teaching Award** – Rod Mullen, Omaha, NE

**2022 History Nebraska Advocacy Award** – Moni Hourt, Crawford, NE

**2022 Nebraska State Historic Preservation Award** – Preston and Emily Leise,
Hartington, NE

2022 Asa T. Hill Memorial Award – Rob Bozell, Omaha, NE
2022 James L. Sellers Award – Brent Ruswick, Media, Pennsylvania, and Celine Butler, Cheyney, Pennsylvania

Read on for more information on each of the winners.

Champion of History

The Champion of History Award is given annually to recognize outstanding contributions by an individual or organization that helps preserve or interpret Nebraska's history.

The Susan La Flesche Picotte Center Inc, of Walthill, NE, was selected for their diligent work to preserve, promote, and educate visitors about Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte. Since 2019, the organization has raised over $2.9 million to restore the Susan La Flesche Picotte Memorial Hospital, including emergency stabilization and completing the exterior restoration utilizing the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit program. When the project is complete, the organization plans to use the space to
interpret Dr. La Flesche Picotte's legacy, educate visitors about native cultures and language, youth activities, and more.

The second Champion of History Award will be presented to Vickie Shaepler of Kearney, NE. Vickie has been selected for her efforts to share the history of Japanese immigrants to western Nebraska. Ms. Schaepler has been a key individual behind preserving Japanese Hall in Scottsbluff, NE. After learning that the building, built in 1928, was scheduled for demolition, she and a crew of people from across Nebraska raised money to move the building to the Legacy of the Plains Museum campus. The building will be restored and serve as a museum about the Japanese and Japanese American communities. The goal is to open the museum this year.

History Nebraska Excellence in Teaching Award

The History Nebraska Excellence in Teaching Award 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.
The History Nebraska Excellence in Teaching Award will be given to Rod Mullen, who teaches at Omaha Central High School in Omaha, NE. Growing up in North Omaha, Mr. Mullen's dedication to the teaching profession has inspired countless students to go into teaching and is an inspiration to future teachers of color. Last year, Mr. Mullen worked with others on the Omaha Public School Making Invisible Histories Visible program. He joined rising 9th graders on a two-hour walk along North 24th Street, sharing memories of growing up in Omaha's predominantly African American neighborhood. He helped students understand what was a thriving area of North Omaha and contextualized its decline in the 1970s and 1980s. Fellow teachers comment on Mr. Mullen's passion for history, his reliability, and the relationships he creates with fellow teachers and students.

History Nebraska Advocacy Award

The History Nebraska Advocacy Award is given annually to recognize outstanding contributions or assistance by an individual or organization to History Nebraska through volunteerism, advocacy, or donation.
The History Nebraska Advocacy Award will be presented to Moni Hourt of Crawford, NE. Ms. Hourt was a dedicated teacher for many years and serves as a substitute when needed. As a researcher of Dawes and Sioux Counties in northwest Nebraska, Ms. Hourt is a dependable resource for the Fort Robinson History Center staff at Fort Robinson State Park. Along with providing accurate historical details of the area, she brings home school children to Fort Robinson to instill a passion for Nebraska’s history.

**Nebraska State Historic Preservation Award**

The Nebraska Preservation Award recognizes significant achievements in historic preservation in Nebraska by an individual or organization. The award is given for two categories: "brick and mortar projects" or "individual or group achievements."
The Nebraska State Historic Preservation Award will be given to Preston and Emily Leise of Hartington, NE. After purchasing a building built in 1900 in downtown Hartington, they knew that rehabilitation work was in their future. When the Hartington downtown district was named to the National Register of Historic Places, they could begin using the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit to bring their building back to its original luster. The Leises utilized historic images of the original windows to create replacements, replaced the roof, added ADA access, and repointed mortar based on the color and texture of the historic mortar. Elements of the interior that could be saved were carefully refinished, and new electrical and HVAC were added as part of the rehabilitation. The project was completed last year.

Asa T. Hill Memorial Award

The Asa T. Hill Memorial Award was created in 1975 to recognize an individual or organization for outstanding research projects or interpretation of an archeological site(s) in Nebraska.
The Asa T. Hill Memorial Award will be presented to Rob Bozell of Omaha, NE. Over his 40 year career as an archeologist for History Nebraska, Rob has broadened the collective understanding of Nebraska’s past - from the Plains Apache who called the Sandhills home to the scientific expedition wintering over at Engineer Cantonment in 1819, and countless histories in between. Mr. Bozell has made archeology more accessible to all. He has trained and inspired numerous colleagues and students over the past four decades and has served as the face of Nebraska Archeology beyond the field, delivering countless public lectures and making numerous appearances in popular media. His work on developing collegial relationships with tribal communities has been particularly influential. Even in retirement, he continues to lead the effort to repatriate the human remains and sacred objects housed at History Nebraska under NAGPRA.

James L. Sellers Memorial Award

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. In addition, the author receives $1,000 from the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation through the support of Catherine Sellers Angle.
The James L. Sellers Memorial Award will be given to co-authors Brent Ruswick of Media, Pennsylvania and Celine Butler of Cheyney, Pennsylvania, who wrote "No Mutually Acceptable Solution: The Struggle to Integrate Campus Life at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, 1968-1972," published in the Fall 2021 issue of Nebraska History Magazine. Selected by the Nebraska Wesleyan University history department faculty, the judges chose this article because they were "impressed by the originality of the topic and the strength of the authors' argument. While many tend to think of the issue of school desegregation primarily in the context of K-12 education, Ruswick and Butler vividly portrayed the unique contours of the issue as it was experienced by college students in Omaha. In doing so, they succeeded in telling a new story about the complexity of historical change in Nebraska, demonstrating how nationally contentious issues played out on the local stage without simply mirroring the familiar themes of national history."
Louise Vinciquerra, Nebraska’s Bootlegger Queen

“Queen Louise” thumbed her nose at the law throughout the Prohibition era, usually avoiding punishment despite frequent arrests across the state. Her story provides new insight into crime boss Tom Dennison’s Omaha, and shows how a woman could exercise power in the underworld. Kylie Kinley tells the story in the Summer 2018 issue of *Nebraska History*.

History Nebraska members received the issue as part of their membership; single issues are available for $7 from the Nebraska History Museum (402-471-3447). Here’s an excerpt:

On the afternoon of October 17, 1925, a Ford Sedan careened through the neighborhood of 27th and D Streets in Lincoln, Nebraska. “Queen” Louise Vinciquerra sat in the passenger seat with two gallons of illegal moonshine whiskey on her lap. Her future second husband, ex-Prohibition agent Earl Haning, was at the wheel. A mutual acquaintance named Joseph Holder crouched in the back seat
with the burlap sacks that had hidden the jugs only moments earlier. Karl Schmidt, a federal prohibition agent for Nebraska, pursued them for over a mile through Lincoln neighborhoods and finally edged his car closer.

The trio knew they were caught.

Vinciquerra picked up the jugs and smashed them one after the other against the car’s interior. Broken glass sliced her hand, and the moonshine soaked into her dress. Haning stopped the car, and when Agent Schmidt wrenched open the car door, the whiskey ran down the running boards and seeped from Vinciquerra's skirt. Schmidt borrowed an empty milk bottle from a neighborhood housewife, mopped up what evidence he could, and arrested Haning and Vinciquerra on a charge of conspiracy to violate the prohibition laws.

Haning and Vinciquerra were convicted in March 1926, but served no time and won on appeal in 1927. Joseph Holder served as a government witness and was not charged. At first Vinciquerra said she was on her way to a Nebraska football game. Later she said she was in Lincoln to get a suit of clothes for her brother. Either way, she claimed that she met Haning unexpectedly while waiting for a streetcar. Her defense was that she couldn’t have conspired to violate prohibition laws because she had no idea the moonshine was in the car. Her lawyer argued that the car chase and consequent breaking of the jugs prevented Louise’s transportation and since transportation was the sole reason why she had entered Haning’s car, no conspiracy had been committed. Consequently, Federal Judge Walter Henry Sanborn of the Court of Appeals for the Eight Circuit, reversed their conviction.

So Vinciquerra and her lover Haning went free, and no one was surprised.
Louise Vinciquerra was the queen of Nebraska bootleggers, and she bribed, argued, or charmed her way out of court more times before she was thirty than many male bootleggers did in their entire careers. The authorities and her peers often underestimated her because she was a woman, and she swindled them appropriately. She was a mother of two, a shrewd businesswoman, a champion for her family members, a habitual criminal, and a ruthless human being.

***

Kinley goes on to tell of Vinciquerra’s numerous arrests across the state, her involvement in a fatal shooting of a man by her sister-in-law, the bloody feud between two of her ex-husbands, her courtroom testimony against Omaha crime boss Tom Dennison, and the mysterious circumstances of her death. It’s a fresh look at underworld life in Prohibition-era Nebraska.

Read the full article here (PDF). [Queen Louise.pdf](#)

For more about Prohibition-era bootlegging, read "The Art of Making Moonshine."

---

**Categories:**
Prohibition, crime, bootlegging, women

---

**Klondike Gold Rush**

By Matt Piersol, Researcher, History Nebraska - Collections

The Klondike Gold Rush of 1896-99 was truly a 'Children's Crusade'. Thousands of ill-prepared fortune-seekers from the lower 48 headed North expecting adventure and easy gold. What they got was dangerous terrain and hundred-dollar loaves of bread. With an influx of mouths-to-feed the local merchants weren't prepared at all
for the droves of novices - most of whom hadn't prepared for the trip or the weather or the work, and were low on supplies and cash.

The public read with concern the accumulating stories in newspapers that reported deaths from overloaded and sinking boats, avalanches, dangerous and deadly trails, robbers and swindlers and price gouging, deaths from exposure and starvation... and everybody knew someone who had left with a smile and returned gaunt and bewildered. "Don't go." were the words on the lips of most that went. And still there were ads by the railroads and ship lines, urging them to come North for the opportunity of a lifetime. And newspapers still printed stories of the tiny percentage of miners who had struck it rich.

Ada Braxton, through foresight, luck and planning was one of the few who returned with new wealth, to Omaha, Nebraska, where the Omaha World-Herald interviewed her after the rush was over. (Read the interview below.)

"Mrs. Ada Braxton, her husband, Frederick Braxton, and their daughter, Hazel"
ADA BRAXTON, AN OMAHA WOMAN, TELLS
HOW SHE FOUND GOLD IN THE KLONDIKE
First Woman Over the Challey Trail and Saw Terrible Hardships.

Ada Braxton, only just returned to Omaha from the Klondike, where she has been for the past year, claims the distinction of being the first woman who ever walked over the famous Challey Trail, and her story is of interest. Mrs. Braxton, who was the only colored woman of the city of Delta, now nine years ago, Mrs. Braxton's story was the first colored woman ever to be in the Alaska gold fields, having worked there from nineteen to twenty years ago. She has been in every country.

Just a year ago Ada Braxton and her husband went to the Klondike at the request of the government, who offered them free of charge all the goods at that place. Mrs. Braxton is a woman and very little woman, who looks for you young to be the mother of a 15-year-old girl. She has been married thirteen years. You look at her, and you're not sure she's a grandmother, but she is the wife of a most good-looking man, and her good looks will win you over. She was the first colored woman ever to be in the Alaska gold fields, having worked there from nineteen to twenty years ago. She has been in every country.

The Klondike is a wonderful place to see, and even more so now than when I went there. I could see the snow as high as a man's head, and the air was so cold that I was in the habit of wearing my muffler and hat. I was always hungry, and I'm sure I could have eaten five meals a day, and I would have been satisfied. We were so hungry that we had to make our own food. We had no money, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hungry, and we had to work hard to get enough to eat. We were always hunger
Death of Mrs. Addie Braxton.

Mrs. Addie Braxton, wife of James Braxton of Alaska, died suddenly at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Henry L. Nix, 2623 Erskine street, Saturday night, June 27th. Mrs. Braxton, who was the daughter of the late Jeremiah and Mrs. Mary E. Smith, was born at Leavenworth, Kan., Jan. 29th, 1874, and was reared in Blair, Neb. She was as kind-hearted a little woman as ever lived. The funeral was held from the residence Friday afternoon, June 2nd, at 2:30 o'clock, interment being in Forest Lawn cemetery. The Rev. John Albert Williams, her pastor, officiated. She is survived by her mother, her sister, Mrs. Green, of Baltimore; her daughter, Hazel (Mrs. Henry L. Nix), and many relatives.
MEET DEATH IN KLOOKEE.

Skagway, Alaska, April 5. via Seattle, Wash., April 6th about noon today, on the Chilkoot, fifty at least ten persons were killed and others were injured more or less severely in a snow slide. The slide came down on the left and right sides of the trail midway between the Stoney and Stone House. The dead are:

Gus Regino, Seattle.
Frank Sprague, Seattle.
M. E. Hemstrom, Seattle.
C. H. Strong, Seattle.
O. C. S. Pearson, Seattle.
W. P. H. Henshaw, Seattle.
O. E. D. Johnson, Seattle.
C. S. Ball, Seattle.
C. S. Ball, Seattle.
C. W. Young, Seattle.
Mrs. M. A. Ryan, Seattle.
J. O. Young, Seattle.

Two of the persons injured are Walter Chamberlain of New York and John E. McVey of Dearborn, Mo.

Physical slide was caused by the snow and ice falling into the snow mound along the borders of the trail and into a snow slide which had been made.

The slide on which the incident occurred is about five miles above Chilkoot Pass. The telephone station is about four miles distant. The telephone wires at the point were carried away by the slide. The fact makes it difficult to obtain further particulars at this time.

A blinding snow storm was raging all day upon the summit of Chilkoot Pass. As a consequence many of these in the vicinity were making an attempt to traverse the pass.

Rescue parties were traveling and were found by the slide.

Thousands of people were exposed to the brunt of the slide and were rendered very serviceable assistance. Upon reaching the scene people below the snowslide, up to know if assistance was required, and were advised that little people were working on the debris and were only to each other's way.

All day Saturday and Sunday a snow-covered storm, with snow and snow, prevailed in that vicinity and it is believed that the majority of the snow on the mountains was due to the snow slide. As far as the snow slide was caused by the snow slide which had been made at the time it was made.

The snow slide was caused by the snow slide which had been made at the time it was made.

Later reports from the Chilkoot Pass have been received and the following is now believed to be a few hundred people were killed in the slide. Two hundred people have been rescued and the details and whereabouts were brought out in the rescue.
Ada Braxton, an Omaha Woman, Tells How She Found Gold in the Klondike

*Omaha World-Herald*, Dec. 3, 1905

Mrs. Ada Braxton only just returned to Omaha from the Klondike where she has been for the past year, claims the distinction of being the first woman who ever walked over the famous Challey trail. She and her aunt Mrs. Shepard were the only
colored women in the city of Atlin near Skagway. Mrs. Braxton’s aunt was the first colored woman ever in the Alaska gold fields, having walked there from Seattle twenty years ago and has been there ever since.

Just a year ago Mrs. Braxton and her husband went to the Klondike at the request of their aunt who offered them two of her mines at that place. Mrs. Braxton a plump and pretty little woman who looks far too young to be the mother of a 10 year-old girl. She has been married thirteen years. The little girl was left with her grandmother while her parents were in the gold fields. And it was her great desire to see the little girl and her mother that brought Mrs. Braxton home for a visit.

“Yes, indeed,” said Mrs. Braxton to the World Herald, “I walked over the Chilcoot pass (sic) and carried my bundle on my back like the rest of them. There are not many colored people up there [illegible] body was surprised to see me going with my husband. I only weighed ninety pounds when I went up there and you see how well I am now....”

[The Braxtons began mining for gold.]

“You see, she said, “first you have to take your pickax and start your digging, then you blow the boulders [with dynamite, presumably]. Then you must build the derrick, the flume and your sluice boxes. I built my own sluice boxes myself. When I went there I was so frail I could not do my own work, but I had not been there long until I could whipsaw my own lumber... The mere sight of a gun scared me but it was not long before I could go out and kill game as well as anybody. I killed a mountain goat one day and they are very hard to get.”

This plucky little woman fainted several times going over the Chilcoot pass but she would not turn back, although she saw the way strewn with the bleached bones of over 200 horses. She slept on the ground at night wrapped in bearskins and side by side with her husband went through every privation he did.

[Mrs. Braxton discussed wearing trousers for convenience. “Everybody does as they please up there in regard to their clothes.” She told of walking ninety miles over
unbroken trail to prospect. At last they found a creek that looked promising for mining.]

“...We named it ‘Abe Lincoln’ creek. It was at the end of a long trail, and when one of the miners asked us why we had named it that we told him because we were so glad to find the end of our trail and the prospect of gold in sight that we felt that we were out of bondage, and so we named it for Abe Lincoln.

“We have four mines, and we have named them ‘Lucky Dog,’ ‘Last Chance,’ ‘Little Spruce’ and ‘Carmeneita’...”

[Mrs. Braxton told of other adventures. She brought home some large nuggets of gold, one worth $65, but said food prices were high in Alaska, with steak and butter both selling for $1 per pound, and machinery and hired labor were also expensive.]

Mrs. Braxton declares that she is delighted to get back to Nebraska where she can have plenty of milk and butter and eggs and all the other Nebraska good things to eat. But still she likes her new home so well that she is planning to return in the spring....

[But she warned of hardships and suffering.]

“I remember one man who came into camp dragging the dead body of his wife on his sled. She had given birth to a child on the trail and both had frozen to death. He had been chased by wolves, who had devoured the little dead baby and he had saved the body of his wife by dragging it into a tree. Then he put it on the sled and staggered into camp with that pathetic load of sorrow on the sled. And that is only one of the many terrible stories you hear and see up there.

“If people could only realize the absolute necessity of being thoroughly equipped for such a journey such scenes would not be so frequent. I would not have missed my trip for anything, for all the hardships.”

Categories:
March is Women's History Month so we're highlighting mid-20th century Nebraska artist, Sara Green. The Ford Center has treated two of her paintings over the years.

Sara Green was born in Beatrice, Nebraska, in 1908. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a teaching certificate from the University of Nebraska and later taught there. She also taught art at Nebraska Wesleyan in the 1930s. Green spent six weeks at the Art Institute of Chicago studying oil painting under landscape artist Charles Wilmovsky. She later received a diploma from the Federal Art School of Minneapolis, which was a correspondence school for training in illustration and cartooning, founded in 1914 as a branch of the Bureau of Engraving.

During the Great Depression, Green was employed by the Civil Works Administration’s Public Work of Art Program (PWAP), the first public art program of the New Deal. The program funded temporary minimum wage employment programs during 1933 - 34. Sara Green was the only Nebraska artist who had a painting accepted for the Civil Works Administrations art exhibit in Washington. Her watercolor "Winter Blizzard" was chosen for the exhibition.
Before treatment photo of “Oregon Trail” by Sara Green.
Oregon Trail painting below belongs to History Nebraska. The scene depicts a covered wagon train with people walking beside wagons and on horseback and Chimney Rock is in the background. The work from 1934, is an unvarnished oil painting on canvas. The canvas had a sharp indent in the upper right corner and a small bulge in the lower right center. These were flattened under weights and moistened blotting paper. The upper right dent was further flattened using a local suction platter and vacuum. The flaking paint around the small hole by the top margin was consolidated with an appropriate adhesive, and the area was filled with gesso. The painting was cleaned with a dilute cleaning solution on cotton swabs. The filled loss was retouched with pigments and a resin. During treatment, it
was noted that the landscape appears to have been painted over a vertical still life. Parts of this earlier composition are exposed along the bottom tacking margin of the canvas.

Detail of the hole at the top edge of the painting
The second painting is entitled “Children’s Blizzard of ‘88”, and belongs to Beatrice Public Library. The painting depicts a woman and five children struggling against the snow and wind of a blizzard. Following an unseasonably warm winter day, on January 12, 1888, a blizzard hit suddenly in the middle of the day. Men were working in fields and children had been playing outdoors when temperatures suddenly dropped and white-out conditions soon occurred. The most harrowing tales were of the many school children away from home in tiny one-room school houses, with no food and little fuel. The painting depicts the heroism displayed by a number of school teachers, and their older pupils, in caring for the young children through the storm to safety.
Before treatment photo of “Children’s Blizzard of ’88” by Sara Green. Note the small puncture hole in the upper right corner.
The painting is owned by the Beatrice Public Library. The canvas was brittle and torn in a few places along the edges. The painting had become slack on its stretcher and as a result, the canvas was undulating. The ground layer had flaked away in a few spots where the canvas turns over the stretcher edge. Accumulated grime had resulted in overall darkening of the painting. Additionally, there was a small puncture from the front side which had resulted in some paint loss in the upper right corner.

After the painting was unframed, the flaking paint around puncture hole in upper right corner was consolidated to prevent further flaking of the broken paint. The area around puncture was flattened with blotting paper and weights. The hole was mended from the back with a heat-set adhesive and Japanese tissue paper, as were the tears long the edges of the canvas. The stretcher was keyed out to adjust the
canvas tension and reduce planar distortions and the painting was cleaned. The losses by the puncture were filled and retouched with pigment in resin.

Categories:
Gerald Ford Conservation Center, Gerald Ford, conservation, oregon trail, Chimney Rock, Sara Green

Kearney Woman's Club

“Interdependence, not independence”

The all-female social group now called the Kearney Woman’s Club coined this motto in 1900 to capture the new sentiment of the era. The mid-19th century gave rise to a new social movement that encouraged middle-class American women to rise up against their societal restraints and assemble voluntary organizations in order to undertake serious study of intellectual topics and current events, and advocate for social reform at local, state, and national levels.
With the popularity of women's clubs on the rise across the nation, the nineteenth century marked the dawn of female empowerment. The Kearney Woman's Club chose to deny the typical attitudes of other progressive women's rights groups of the era, and instead emphasized the balance and interconnectedness that rises from people, regardless of gender, working together harmoniously.

The Kearney Woman’s Club’s humble beginnings date back as early as 1887 when Kearney, Nebraska resident, Nora Jones, exchanged talk on local and world news and discussed scripture with her closest friends. Originally called the Clio Club, the ladies renamed their group the “The Nineteenth Century Club” at the turn of the century, until they finally decided in 1921 to change it to its current appellation.

At first, participation in the club was scarce, consisting of three or four members in regular attendance. With an increase in local population growth and subsequent club membership, the Woman's Club saw a large number of attendees at the state
meeting of the Woman Suffrage Association which they successfully hosted in 1889. Ten years later in 1899, the club was officially federated.

The Kearney Woman’s Club contributed community support and raised monetary resources through the annual sale of Christmas seals, though the women also acquired funds through participation in a variety of neighborhood fundraising campaigns. The funds raised were then used for community services, including funding dental and medical work for underprivileged children.

The Club’s members frequently rose to the occasion in other community matters, advocating for women to be put on the school board, females as physicians, and even played a crucial role in establishing school nurses through activism and the allocation of club funds. They passionately advocated for female participation in topics such as prohibition and suffrage.

Though most women could own property by the beginning of the early 20th century, female property ownership was a rarity, as women’s property rights were slow to progress and develop. That being said, despite years worth of accomplishments, for more than 50 years the Kearney Woman’s Club had no meeting place to call their own. That is, until 1930 when Maren Downing Morrison, daughter of the once prominent Kearneyite, W. A. Downing, gifted her childhood home at 723 West 22nd Street to the club in honor of her parents. The Club jubilantly acknowledged the terms and conditions of the offer, and held their first meeting in their new club home in April of 1931. It has remained their meeting place for over 92 years.

The Kearney Woman’s Club has seen many changes over the decades, but their commitment to the community has not ceased. The club, today made up of 40 active members, meets on occasion for guest speakers, events, and monthly meetings. They participate in a variety of community service projects, including several projects for the Veterans’ Home, supporting numerous non-profit groups, and volunteering for various organizations across Kearney.
Kearney Woman’s Club beauty Pageant

The clubhouse of the Kearney Woman’s Club has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1980 as the Hanson-Downing House. The State Historic Preservation Office is working with the current members of the Kearney Woman’s Club to update the nomination to reflect the club’s extensive use of the home and immense contributions to the community.
Some of the current 2022 Kearney Woman’s Club members on the porch of the Hanson-Downing house.
This photo of the Kearney Woman’s Club was presented to them by the first Board of Directors of the Kearney Woman's Club, Mrs. B. O. Hosteller for their 50th anniversary in 1938.

The year the photo was taken is unknown.

Categories:
women, Women's history, Kearney
When the Territorial Capitol basement was a human litter box, 1859

By David L. Bristow, Editor

What was it like inside Nebraska’s second territorial capitol in the 1850s? Let’s put it this way: the photo makes it look a lot better than it really was.

Construction began in 1857 atop the hill where Central High School now stands. The second floor was still unfinished in 1859, and the first floor was only partly finished. The House of Representatives met in a 22’ x 34’ room intended for the Supreme Court, and the “Council” (equivalent to a Senate) met in similar room intended to be the library.
That year Territorial Secretary J. Sterling Morton wrote various letters complaining about conditions. He demanded a fence to prevent “a large drove of cattle” from grazing near the building, a situation he called “anything but pleasant or agreeable.” Another letter warned that the south exterior wall had “broken loose from the inner walls” and was in danger of collapse.

And there was no privy (outhouse) on the grounds, and no indoor plumbing. Members of the all-male legislature were in the habit of going down to the dirt-floored basement to relieve themselves, “which in warm weather renders the upper part of the building unfit for use, and it has already cost as much or more for cleaning the Basement than it would require to build a privy.”

(Posted Feb. 22, 2022)

(Photo: History Nebraska RG1234-2-4)

Source:

Categories:
Nebraska territory, Territorial Capitol

1976: Omaha's Court-Ordered Integration (part one)

By Breanna Fanta, Editorial Assistant
In 1975, the Omaha Public School District received a court order to integrate its schools.

While racial segregation was not an official school district policy, it was a result of the city’s long history of housing discrimination.

The racial imbalance was addressed in a 1974 US District Court case, but action wasn’t required until the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals issued its order a year later.

The school district was required to submit a “comprehensive plan” by January 1, 1976, providing a fair integration ratio of Black to White students and faculty while fulfilling the court’s guidelines. It would then be implemented that fall.

Orders for Integration
Jolt Omaha Officials

By Larry Parrott

Omaha school officials, jolted Thursday by an unexpected court order to integrate students and teachers, are looking at three possible court appeal options.

The three-judge panel from the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis, Mo., ruled that the Omaha Public School system is intentionally segregated and directed that the U.S. District Court in Omaha must supervise the integration of 60,500 children, 20 per cent of whom are black.

(Omaha World-Herald 6.13.1975)

Other cities across the nation received court orders as well, reassigning students to other schools and implementing complex busing arrangements. These plans often faced violence and white flight.
Omaha residents knew about the court order, but didn’t know what expect.

The court order came as a shock to Owen Knutzen, the Omaha Public Schools’ superintendent, who hoped to voluntarily integrate the schools. He feared that the court order would create conflict and white flight to suburban school districts.

In the following months, there was no definite evidence of white flight. Local real estate agencies noticed more people taking interest in homes outside the Omaha School District, but few made actual purchases. However, they also noticed that fewer outside buyers were moving into the district, opting for homes in suburban districts instead.

Many residents thought suburban school districts should've been included in the integration plan and felt that they were isolated from the issue. If they were included, “Maybe the suburban districts [would] change their attitude of ‘it’s your problem’ and help us fight this ridiculous infringement on our constitutional rights,” a local man wrote to the Omaha World-Herald.

Parents widely disapproved of their children being transferred to schools outside of their neighborhood for reasons other than convenience, use of better facilities, or special education needs. One parent wrote, “Without a vote being cast, someone has taken from the parent the right to choose a public school and the right to prevent his child from being taken out of his immediate neighborhood.”

Residents also feared possible protest demonstrations and worried about children’s safety.

The school district took the public’s concerns into consideration and tasked a board of members with formulating an effective integration motion.

A plan was presented in December 1975, reflecting specific implications on elementary schools, junior highs, and high schools.
Elementary schools were the most impacted as they were separated into “clusters” among which students would be dispersed. Junior high schools only required the reassignment of specific attendance zones and grades, and high schools were the least affected. Of the eight Omaha high schools, four were already considered integrated. The school district hoped that students would voluntarily transfer to assist the balance efforts, but were prepared if there weren’t enough transfers.

To reinforce this integration, students would also be assigned to new bus routes with their peers.
People debated the effectiveness and benefits of busing students. Some questioned whether it would be helpful for integrating students or expressed concern about its impact on quality of education. State Senator Ernie Chambers, in a letter to the mayor, argued that “the only way to effectively eradicate segregation is to place white children in black schools and black children in white schools. Busing is the only tool.”

A group of seven Black parents also responded to the plan with doubts. Calling it “salable,” they thought the plan was heavily influenced by the officials’ need for White acceptance and their fear of white flight.

“It was conceived to solve the ‘dilemma’ of how to get White students to inner city schools. It was conceived assuming that Black parents will accept desegregation on any terms,” they wrote.

The plan continued to evolve over the summer of 1976, detailing that 8,500 of the 9,300 students reassigned in grades 2 – 9 would be eligible for busing. High school students would be eligible for travel reimbursement if they transferred as part of the racial transfer program or the magnet school program at the Technical High School.
As the new school year approached, schools planned activities to help familiarize students and ease concerns. Elementary schools held open houses, ran pen-pal programs to introduce students, made calendars, and planned opening day events. Institutions also held ride-alongs to allow parents the opportunity to participate in the same bus routes as their children.

Despite all the preparation, no one knew what to expect. While the plan was in place, there was no telling what would come that first day of school or the subsequent months.

Any remaining concerns were left to chance.
Part 2 discusses the plan's implementation, the return of students, reactions, and results.

(Posted February 24, 2022)

Sources:
- Omaha School District vs US District Court memorandum 10.15.1974
- Omaha World-Herald 12.15.1975 “The Desegregation Plan”
- Omaha World-Herald 1.30.1976 “Emphasizing Racial Differences”
- Omaha Star 1.8.1976 “Chambers Terms Zorinsky Remarks ‘Appalling’”
- Omaha World-Herald 2.8.1976 “Whites to ‘Wait and See’”
- Omaha World-Herald 2.15.1976 “Let Other School Districts Help”
- Omaha World-Herald 8.11.1976 “Peaceful Integration Goal of Cluster Six”
- Omaha World-Herald 8.30.1976 “Parent Ride-Along Turnout Good”

Categories:
Integration, Omaha, Busing

1976: Omaha's Court-Ordered Integration (part two)

By Breanna Fanta, Editorial Assistant

In an earlier post we looked at how a 1975 court order addressed Omaha Public Schools' racial imbalance by requiring the reassignment of students to new schools and bus routes. Today we'll look at what happened when the busing plan took effect.
The nation watched as many cities who received similar court orders responded with demonstrations and violence. This left Omaha residents uneasy about local reactions to their own integration.

As the public waited with nervous anticipation, the district prepared for all possibilities. Teachers willingly participated in training workshops and took on new teaching assignments. Schools prepped for incoming students. Law enforcement officers were placed on standby, monitoring buses and schools to assist with any conflicts.
By the fall of 1976, 150 teachers were reassigned; 1,400 high school students voluntarily transferred; and 9,344 students were reassigned, 60 percent of which were White.
As school year neared, people seemed more accepting of the court order's terms. A former city-wide PTA president explained that people seemed more willing to comply and help rather than fight it.

“All I have heard would indicate that people have accepted it (busing) as a reality and that they care enough about the kids, whether they’re parents or others in the community, they are determined to make it go well for the kids.”

On September 7, the plan was put to action.

Bus drivers rose before sunrise and arrived at the service lot. There, buses had final inspections and nervous drivers prepared themselves for the day ahead.

While problems were expected to arise, the Director of Transportation assured the public that everything would be handled and that bus routes were tentative.

The biggest problem was a shortage of drivers. Omaha's busing company struggled to maintain employees and license new drivers. Of the 170 bus drivers needed, only 108 positions were filled. As a result, 2,400 students were not transported to school on the first day.

The only problem for buses in operation was late starts due to the unfamiliarity of routes, student mix-ups, long loading/unloading periods, and pick-up/drop-off location confusion.

“Overall, we didn’t experience any real problems. As far as the desegregation routes go, it (the first morning operations) seemed to have gone fairly smooth,” the Director of Transportation said.

Superintendent Owen Knutzen, who waited with students and helped guide them to the buses, shared confidence in the busing: “This whole thing is going to work fine after the system has been working a while.”

Once students arrived to their assigned school, they joined their peers and were directed toward their classrooms.
Several administrators and teachers expressed satisfaction with the turnout.

A teacher from the Martin Luther King School said that in their 30 years of teaching, they had never seen students start school with a better attitude. The principal of Gilder and Giles shared a similar experience: “It has been the smoothest opening day I have experienced in 24 years.”
Students shared feelings of excitement and fear, but ultimately demonstrated inclusivity.
Children were reported helping each other, laughing on the playground, and talking over lunch about their summer breaks.

One student expressed excitement about the integration plan because it provided a new experience; another was anxious to meet her pen-pal with whom she exchanged poetry.

A Mason School sixth grader who was concerned about being the only Black boy in his class was later spotted handing out class material, apparently fitting in, and a late bus of White children was cheerfully greeted by a group of Black children.

At the end of the day, one Giles teacher asked her Black students how their day would’ve been different had they attended their old school and “they couldn’t think of a thing.”
Omaha Has New Busing Angle:
School Attendance Near Normal

For the bulk of Omaha School District students, the start of court-ordered integration appeared to go fairly smoothly.

There were at least these two hitches:

Ironically, one didn’t involve students who were riding buses, but rather those who wanted to ride buses but couldn’t. The students involved are some in the Omaha, Millard, Ralston and Papillion School Districts and parochial schools who pay individually to ride buses of City School Bus Service.

Many of these buses didn’t run because not enough drivers were available.

—Many of the buses used in the court-ordered plan were running late, although many others appeared to be running close to schedule.

On the positive side:
—No demonstrations were reported Tuesday morning at any school.
—Attendance at schools checked by The World-Herald appeared to be running about normal for a first day of school. If that holds true, it would be unusual for a city undergoing court-ordered integration.

Firm Halts Paid Rides For 2,400
By Howard Silver

Because there were not enough drivers Tuesday, City School Bus Service was unable to transport about 2,400 pupils whose parents had paid primarily for school bus service.

The company announced Monday afternoon that it would not have enough drivers for parent-paid busing in the Omaha public and parochial schools, the Millard, Papillion and Ralston districts and some junior and senior high schoolers in District 68.

Gov. J. J. Eskin accused the principal contractor Tuesday of a “no-win” situation and a “no-win” approach to providing qualified drivers.

Fred Downs, City School Bus Service manager, had charged the State Motor Vehicle Department with refusing to issue new or renewed licenses to qualified drivers.

Tickets Sold
Even though parent-paid busses were running Tuesday, parents were lined up at the City School Bus Service office to pay. They were hoping tickets would be a substitute for a start of the school year.

Tickets were sold by personnel of the service, said Dean Parker, regional supervisor for the firm’s parent company.

Parker said those who had paid previously would receive refunds or credits for the period in which their children were not transported.

City Praised; Preparation Gets Credit
By Dana Parsons and Robert Dorn

The increased first day of court-ordered integration in the Omaha School District started peacefully, and most students went to school without their parents.

Late Start Are Problem The 1st Day
By Fred Thomas

At 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, Margaret Hitch, principal at Morton Junior High School, stood on the front of the school building and began barking for the buses to arrive.

They were scheduled to arrive at 7:30 for classes starting at 7:45.

Mrs. Hitch had a long wait. The four City School Bus Service busses were from 20 to 40 minutes late.

The situation at Morton, 4006 Terrace Drive, was repeated at some schools around the city...

While the integration appeared to have gone well, some students did admit frustration with attending an older school with lower quality facilities. “One boy in particular thought Giles was something of a ‘dump.’ But at the end of the day he smiled and told me ‘I’ll be coming back,” a fourth-grade Giles teacher said.
Knutzen, like many others, considered the first day a success and thought Omaha was more receptive to the integration compared to other cities.

“The court-ordered mandate has been carried out by this community in a way which makes Omaha and its people a model for the rest of the nation.”

However, after the first week back, statistics revealed a decline in student attendance and enrollment.

Comparing the first two days of the school year to years previous, it was found that 1 in every 24 students was linked to white flight. On average, there was a decline in enrollment by about 3,700 students the first two days of school. When eliminating factors such as the drop in birth rates, about 2,400 of those were attributed to white flight.

A member of the Northwest Parents Athletic Club felt that by updating facilities, the district would be able to hold on to more students and fight the flight. “We are competing in the market now to keep people in Omaha,” but suburban schools with better facilities were attracting attention.

Conversations continued about ways to combat white flight and the public fought the city bus service on providing proper transportation.

The busing measure remained in effect until 1999, when it ended as part of a voter-approved $254 million bond issue to renovate 24 schools and build three new ones. By the early 2000s community members noticed that Omaha schools were becoming re-segregated and that white flight to suburban school districts was continuing. A 2019 report, available via the University of Nebraska Omaha’s Center for Public Affairs Research, shows Omaha schools as being more segregated than most of the 242 cities included in the study.

Sources:

- Omaha World-Herald 9.5.1976 “Pains Taken in Picking Bus Routes”
- Omaha World-Herald 9.7.1976 “City Praised; Preparation Gets Credit”
- Omaha World-Herald 9.7.1976 “Paid Rides Are Called Off”
- Omaha World-Herald 9.9.1976 “1 of 24 Students Linked to ‘Flight’”
- Omaha World-Herald 12.7.1976 “Suburbs Beckon”

Categories:
Integration, Omaha, Busing
Pawnee Archeology

("Pawnee Loup Fork Village near Genoa, Nebraska, 1871." RG2065-1-1)

By Breanna Fanta, Editorial Assistant

Nebraska archeology is well known for its collection of Pawnee-related artifacts and research.

The Pawnee (or the ‘Chaticks-si-Chaticks’ as they call themselves) lived widely across present-day Nebraska, though their exact origin and the timing of their migration to Nebraska are unknown.
The Pawnee are a Caddoan-speaking people, sharing a similar language to the Wichita and Arikara tribes. Their ancestors migrated north to the Nebraska and Kansas regions.

These early migrants, referred to as the “Central Plains Tradition,” lived on isolated farmsteads and hamlets across Nebraska near rivers and creeks. They constructed homes using timber and wattle-and-daub (mud plaster over woven sticks).

The Central Plains Tradition remained in the region until a severe drought about 600 – 700 years ago. Most people left the central plains. “It was a time of interaction and even conflict with other northern tribes,” wrote archeologist Rob Bozell in the Winter 2021 issue of Nebraska History Magazine.

About 200 years later, when the climate improved and the tribes returned to the area, there was a noticeable change in their artifact styles, architecture, and social organization.

They transitioned from farmsteads to large towns following the lower Loup and Platte Rivers, and the Central Republican Valley.
Several dozens of these earth lodge villages have been discovered in eastern and central Nebraska. The structures, dating back to the 1600s – 1870s, reflect the evolution of Pawnee architecture from square buildings to circular lodges.

These villages housed hundreds to thousands of people for decades, usually until local game and timber became depleted.

("Cross section of a Pawnee earth lodge, showing interior arrangement of posts and beams: a, earth covering; b, grass, willows, and outer poles; c, edge of house pit; d, altar; e, secondary roof supports; f, cache pit; g, primary or central roof supports; h, firepit; i, smoke hole; j, entrance passage.")

History Nebraska excavated many of these lodge ruins from the 1930s – 1970s and found an abundance of artifacts, providing insight on Pawnee subsistence, trade, and technology.
Bison hunting was an important aspect of Pawnee subsistence. While the bison provided the people with a source of food, by the early to mid-1800s they were also hunted for the Euroamerican bison robe trade.

Tribes that traveled to hunt their game established hunting camps. Several of these camps have been excavated, uncovering many butchered bison skeletons. These findings helped researchers learn more about the Pawnees’ economic cycle.

But as archeologists excavated these villages and hunting camps in the early-to-mid-twentieth century, they also began excavating nearby cemeteries. Hundreds of Pawnee ancestors were unearthed to study mortuary customs, health/disease, and demography.

By the early 1970s, Indigenous groups nationwide were objecting to the excavation of graves and eventually demanded the return of human remains and funerary objects for reburial. This eventually led to federal and state legislation protecting graves and requiring the repatriation of remains. (Rob Bozell, Walter Echo-Hawk,
and Roger Echo-Hawk will tell that story in more detail in the forthcoming Summer 2022 issue of *Nebraska History Magazine*.)

“Due in part to the repatriation movement,” Bozell writes, “Pawnee archeology and that of other tribes is benefitting from a greater involvement by native scholars in telling the story of the tribal past through new interpretation of oral traditions, material culture, and places.”

The entire article can be found in the Winter 2021 edition of the *Nebraska History Magazine*. Members receive four issues per year.

**Learn More**

**Categories:**
*Pawnee, archeology*