New Exhibits Look at Nebraska Immigration

Two new exhibits at the Nebraska History Museum explore Nebraska immigration, past and present. People have been moving throughout Nebraska for thousands of years. Opening January 5, Looking Past Skin: Our Common Threads explores the movement of people from the earliest Native cultures to the most recent refugee families. Their rich traditions, unique languages, food and religions are all part of Nebraska's story.

The University of Nebraska’s Minority Health Disparities Initiative (MHDI), UNL Extension, and the Nebraska History Museum have partnered on a four-part exhibit to present sociological, agricultural, and historical perspectives on migration and the more recent demographic shifts in urban and rural parts of the state. A walk through the migration timeline provides a backdrop for additional features on the Karen, Latino, Sudanese, and Yazidi communities. The University’s Wall of Windows combines historic and contemporary photographs accompanied by stories from continued on p. 2

The Nebraska State Historical Society collects, preserves, and opens to all, the histories we share.
A Tana is a traditional harp that the Karen play for enjoyment. It is handmade from wood. On loan from the Karen Society of Nebraska.

Embroidered mittens brought from Sweden in about 1904. The owner’s sister, a seamstress to the royal family of Sweden, made them in Stockholm around 1890. NSHS 9149-8(1-2)

new Nebraskans living in Dawson County. Ask A Doctor reveals the complexities of speaking a non-native language through a simulated visit to the doctor where a language barrier exists. History of the Food Plate explores finding nutritional food in a new country.

Funding for Looking Past Skin: Our Common Threads was generously provided by Rural Futures Institute and Humanities Nebraska.

Opening February 2, What We Carried: Lincoln is a collaborative photographic storytelling project of the Yazidi community and photographer Jim Lommasson. Yazidis are a Kurdish religious minority who have been targeted for genocide by ISIS. Lincoln is currently home to the largest population of Yazidis in the United States.

The project began in early 2017 when Lommasson participated in an exhibit on war at the Sheldon Museum of Art in Lincoln. While here he worked with Nebraska Mosaic (a class in the UNL College of Journalism) and the Yazidi community. He asked the participating Yazidis to share items they brought with them on their journey from Northern Iraq to the US. He then created a photograph and requested that each owner write a personal reflection directly on the photograph. The project aims to present the experiences of refugees and create a platform for further discussion.
“First Female Fuzz?” How Nancy Bradshaw Changed the Omaha Police Department

In 1920, Emily Byram became the first woman to work as a fingerprint expert for the Omaha Police Department. The Winter 2017 issue of *Nebraska History* features her story. But who was Omaha’s first female cop? By 1970 the department had a few “policewomen,” but they were not allowed in cruisers and were not full police officers, or “patrolmen” as the city called them. On January 15 of that year Nancy Bradshaw, age twenty-nine, applied for the job of patrolman.

“Nowhere on the qualification sheet does it say the applicant has to be a male,” she told the *Omaha World-Herald*. “By federal law they cannot specify male or female.”

Bradshaw was no stranger to OPD. She had already worked nine years in the Municipal Court clerk’s office at the Central Police Station. And at 5’8” and 142 pounds, the athletic Bradshaw met the physical requirements for the job.

But at first, OPD refused to allow Bradshaw to even fill out an application. “Personnel Director Ernest Howard said the reasons are ‘obvious’ why Omaha doesn’t hire men to be policewomen and women to be policemen,” the *World-Herald* reported with amusement under the headline “First Female Fuzz?” on January 17. The next day’s edition noted that Bradshaw was “curvy and a mother of two.”

Undaunted, Bradshaw filed a complaint with the Human Relations Department charging sex discrimination. The *World-Herald* noted that “Mrs. Bradshaw may have something going for her in federal law. There have been cases similar to hers, though not involving law enforcement, in which it has been ruled that the traditional men-only or women-only rules could not be legally applied. She might make it if she’s persistent enough.”

She was, and she did. The city reluctantly allowed her to enter patrolman’s training at the police academy. Bradshaw graduated in 1971, but OPD still made her a policewoman. Bradshaw continued to argue for equality. Finally, in 1974 the city dropped the gender references—“patrolmen” became “police officers” and Bradshaw at last became a regular cop like she wanted. (And that fall, incidentally, the TV series *Police Woman*, starring Angie Dickinson as an undercover detective, premiered on NBC.)

According to a January 25, 2013, *World-Herald* article, Bradshaw was remembered as a consummate professional. Once, when she tested for sergeant, she was offered the promotion despite testing behind several other male applicants. Bradshaw refused, remaining a police officer until retirement.

“Nancy was a person of principle,” retired Deputy Chief Marty Crowley said.

After her retirement from the police force, Bradshaw spent ten years as varsity tennis coach at Duchesne Academy. She died in 2013 at age seventy-two.
Three Nebraska downtowns are destined for the National Register of Historic Places. Grand Island, Kearney, and Neligh were all nominated for listing in the National Register, at the September meeting of the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Board. Their listing is now pending approval by the National Park Service.

Local citizens initiated the three nominations by contacting the NSHS, which then contracted with private firms to research and assess the nominated districts. The assessments identified the significance and integrity each district retained. All three show the economic development of their communities from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries.

The Grand Island Downtown Historic District, centered on a six-block stretch of West 3rd Street, includes smaller segments along East South Front Street and West 2nd Street. Since its initial development in the 1870s, this section of Grand Island has served as the commercial center of town. Throughout the district, one- to three-story brick commercial buildings with flat roofs are common, with large storefront windows and cornice ornamentation.

The district was also nominated to the Register for its architectural significance. Its eclectic mix of architectural styles embody the characteristics of nearly a century of commercial building types.

The Kearney Downtown Historic District encompasses roughly five square blocks of the historic downtown core along Central Avenue, from 19th Street to 24th and 25th Street. The district contains ninety-nine contributing resources and four individually listed properties.

From 1875 to 1965, this area was the commercial center of Kearney. As transportation routes changed, so did commercial development. Now much of downtown resembles the look and feel of the previous eras. The district represents multiple decades, where late nineteenth century brick facades and 1950s slip-covers together illustrate the greater story of Kearney’s economic evolution.

The Downtown Neligh Historic District is the smallest of the three district nominations. Of its fifty-five properties, forty-one contribute historically to the district. Most of the represented building forms are one- and two-part commercial blocks of utilitarian architectural style with subtle stylistic influences. The dense streetwalls in the district’s center illustrate the growth of Neligh’s commercial core, and represent a typical downtown streetscape of the early commercial centers. The variety of businesses once housed here reflects the needs of what was a thriving commercial center.

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places not only recognizes significant historical development, but makes each city eligible for the State Tax Credit program and Federal Tax Incentives. These incentives simultaneously promote redevelopment and preservation, ensuring a vibrant commercial core for each of these communities for years to come.
Originally known as the Robertson Block, Kearney’s Henline Building housed First National Bank on the ground floor and the Masonic Lodge on the second.

Special Issue of *Nebraska History* Investigates Engineer Cantonment

The winter quarters of a famous American expedition was lost for more than a century before NSHS archeologists re-discovered the site along the Missouri River in 2003. The story of Engineer Cantonment and the Stephen Long Expedition of 1819-20 headlines the Spring 2018 issue of *Nebraska History*. The culmination of multiple excavations and years of historical research, the issue features the collaboration of Nebraska State Archeologist Rob Bozell and a team of archeologists.

The Long Expedition was the first U.S. government team of professional scientists and artists sent to investigate the West. The party traveled from St. Louis on the *Western Engineer*, the first steamboat to ascend the Missouri River. They wintered at a site north of Omaha, not far from where Fort Atkinson would soon be built. The following spring, Long led a party west on foot to the Rocky Mountains. His description of Nebraska as a “Great Desert” set the region’s reputation for a generation.

Bozell and his co-authors investigate the expedition’s history and archeology, describing the site’s re-discovery (using an old painting!) and excavation in seven chapters. The authors have also produced a booklength technical report for their professional peers, but the *Nebraska History* issue is written for a historically-minded lay audience, and is illustrated with the expedition’s artwork and artifacts.

The Engineer Cantonment issue mails to NSHS members in mid-February. Single copies will be available for sale through the NSHS Landmark Stores.
Among the thousands of railroad photos in our collections is a series shot outside the Union Pacific Depot in Ogallala around 1900. The photos were apparently meant to document how luggage and freight was commonly stacked outside the building, loaded on tall wagons, or simply piled beside the tracks. Details of a few of the photos are shown here.

It was probably a good thing it didn’t rain a lot in western Nebraska.

The Depot. The sign lists Ogallala’s elevation as 3,211 feet and gives distances “To Omaha 341 5/10 M” and “To Ogden 658 7/10 M.” NSHS RG2105-3-56

Luggage wagon. NSHS RG2105-3-36

Looking like they’ve been literally kicked out of a boxcar, these boxes include products from the National Biscuit Company (aka, Nabisco), and apricots from the Golden State Canning Company of Ontario, California. NSHS RG2105-3-43

The depot is immediately to the left of this detail. NSHS RG2105-3-38
As you prepare to take down your tree after the holidays, here’s Nebraska Hall-of-Famer J. Sterling Morton with a cup of holiday cheer for you. Morton (1832-1902) is usually remembered as the founder of Arbor Day and the builder of Arbor Lodge in Nebraska City. Most Nebraskans have forgotten that he was also both one of the most distinguished and despised of Nebraska’s early politicians.

Morton served twice in the territorial legislature, as territorial secretary from 1858 to 1861, and on two occasions as acting territorial governor. He also served as secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the Democratic administration of President Grover Cleveland from 1893 to 1897.

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Morton’s chief legacy, however, is his promotion of tree planting on the prairies. Upon his initiative, the State Board of Agriculture established Arbor Day. On November 23, 1899, Morton used his Nebraska City newspaper, The Conservative, to attack the custom of cutting down healthy trees for use as holiday decorations. He wrote:

“Millions upon millions of the straightest, most symmetrical and vigorous hemlocks, spruces, pines and balsams, will soon be aboard freight cars and going towards cities to be put into homes for Christmas trees, which shall bear tin bells, dolls, bon bons, glass bulbs and all sorts of jimcracks for the amusement of children. The generations following will want for lumber which these Christmas trees would have made.”

One can imagine the reaction to such holiday heresy. Even today, the headlines practically write themselves. (Alternate headline for this article: “Bah! Humbug! J. Sterling Morton Denounced Christmas Trees but was OK with Slavery.”)

Surprisingly, press response was mild, even approving. The Courier (Lincoln) on December 9, 1899, agreed with Morton, saying, “The fragrant fir hung with presents, glittering with lights, and surrounded by the beautiful, happy faces of children is a pleasant sight. But it costs the life of a tree and we cannot afford it.” The Kearney Daily Hub said on December 13: “There are a great many of us . . . who have not stopped to think about it at all . . . and it seems now that attention has been called to the wanton destruction aforesaid, that it ought to be stopped. But he [Morton] shouldn’t deprive us of our Christmas trees without offering us something else.”

Why all the Christmas tree guilt? It’s hard to imagine today just how few trees Nebraska had in the early decades of its settlement. Indigenous peoples had long used fire to manage the prairies as bison habitat. Settlers from the wooded East found Nebraska’s openness inconvenient and frankly disturbing. And people who spent decades encouraging tree planting couldn’t help but recoil at what they saw as the wasteful and inappropriate cutting of trees. They even thought Nebraska would someday produce its own lumber, though they apparently didn’t anticipate Christmas tree farms or artificial trees.

Nor did anyone else. But the Germanic tradition of Christmas trees was too well established in America by the late nineteenth century for Morton or any other newspaper editor to talk people out of it, whether they lived on the Nebraska prairie or not.
Now that winter is upon us, here are a few of the cold-weather-related items in the Nebraska History Museum collections, legacies of winters past.

Families often save wedding dresses or military uniforms, but usually don’t preserve everyday work clothes. This winter-weight work jacket was worn by Henry Hottendorf of Falls City in the early 1970s. The back collar reads, “Big Mac/Union Made/Penneys.” NSHS 11640-478

Cold-weather military cap used at Fort Robinson by 1st Lt. Robert H. McCaffree during World War II. The fort housed a prisoner-of-war camp and a war dog training facility. NSHS RG11475-1

This 1937 Persian lamb’s wool coat was the height of 1930s fashion and was a treasured possession of Hedwig Rosenberg of Frankfurt, Germany. Although some of the Rosenberg’s relatives escaped Nazi Germany and settled in Nebraska, Hedwig and her husband, Benno, did not make it out. On September 2, 1942, Hedwig took this coat and several other items to a non-Jewish neighbor for safekeeping. The Rosenbergs were soon arrested, and were murdered at the Treblinka extermination camp in Poland on September 29. The neighbor, who had buried the coat in her backyard, mailed it to Nebraska after the war. It is currently displayed as part of the Nebraska Unwrapped exhibit at NHM. NSHS 11588-263

Now that winter is upon us, here are a few of the cold-weather-related items in the Nebraska History Museum collections, legacies of winters past.
Wartime demands led to fuel rationing during World War II, and this U.S. Government Printing Office poster encourages citizens to economize, and to order their winter’s supply of fuel oil or coal early. NSHS 4541-738

"A little schoolhouse stood alone / Upon the prairie bare / And thirteen little children came / One winter morning fair. . . ." The blizzard of January 12, 1888, was the deadliest winter storm in Great Plains history. It was called Schoolhouse Blizzard because it came suddenly during a spell of warm weather, catching people away from home, and trapping rural students in their isolated schoolhouses. Numerous teachers—mostly young women—led their students to safety. Of these, the most celebrated was Minnie Freeman, subject of this song published by a Chicago sheet music company. NSHS 8731-50

This pair of steel ice skates was manufactured in Beatrice by F. D. Kees Manufacturing Company. The company also made roller skates, building hardware, cornhuskers (the hand tool), and garden tools. Frederick Daniel Kees owned a hardware store and gun shop in Beatrice; in 1874 he began making husking hooks and pegs, soon expanding to other products. The company’s line of ice skates and roller skates was sold to a Chicago company in 1933. NSHS 10873
UPCOMING EVENTS

NEW HOURS AT NEBRASKA HISTORY MUSEUM
Nebraska History Museum is open Monday-Friday, 10-5:30, and Saturday 1-5:30. The museum will no longer be open Sundays.

NOTE: No January “Noon Bites” due to holiday NSHS Sites closed January 1

January 5 · 5-7 p.m.
Exhibit Opening: Looking Past Skin: Our Common Threads
First Friday
NHM · 402-471-4782

January 13 · 2-4 p.m.
Celebrate Japanese Culture
Free Family Fun Day
NHM · 402-471-4782

January 18 · 12 noon
Century-Old Time Capsule Exposes Forgotten NU Histories
Mark Griep, UNL chemistry professor
Brown Bag Lecture Series
NHM · 402-471-4782

February 2 · 5-7 p.m.
Exhibit Opening: What We Carried: Lincoln
First Friday
NHM · 402-471-4782

February 5 · 12 noon
Model ship made by Fort Robinson POW
Noon Bites
NHM · 402-471-4782

February 15 · 12 noon
Freedom North: Uncovering the Civil Rights Movement in Omaha
Patrick D. Jones, Assoc. Prof. of History & Ethnic Studies, UNL
Brown Bag Lecture Series
NHM · 402-471-4782

February 17 · 2-4 p.m.
Celebrate Polish Culture & Tradition
Free Family Fun Day
NHM · 402-471-4782

February 22 · 5:30-7:00 p.m.
Community Conversation with Nebraska’s African Community
Midwest African Museum of Art (MAMA)
1935 Q St., Lincoln · 402-438-0529

March 5 · 12 noon
Woodland Pot
Noon Bites
NHM · 402-471-4782

March 8 · 5:30-7:00 p.m.
Community Conversation with Yazidi Community
NHM · 402-471-4782

March 13 · 10-11 a.m.
If Your Name was Changed at Ellis Island, by Ellen Levine
Hour at the Museum
NHM · 402-471-4782

March 15 · 12 noon
Japanese Nebraskans in the North Platte Valley, 1900-Present
Sandra Reddish, NSHS Historic Sites Coordinator
Brown Bag Lecture Series
NHM · 402-471-4782

March 17 · 2-4 p.m.
Celebrate Irish Culture, featuring Lincoln Irish Dancers
Free Family Fun Day
NHM · 402-471-4782

March 20 · 6:30-8:00 p.m.
NHM partners with University of Nebraska State Museum for: Science Café and History After Hours
(Special event related to Looking Past Skin exhibit)
NHM · 402-471-4782

March 22 · 5:30-7:00 p.m.
Community Conversation with Paw Naw Dee, President of the Karen Society of Nebraska
NHM · 402-471-4782

For updated events, see the NSHS Facebook page, linked from www.nebraskahistory.org
It was a busy autumn! The NSHS recognized the generosity of a major donor, honored history makers at our annual banquet, and received a Nebraska Book Award.

When Dr. Don Gerlach retired from the history faculty of the University of Akron, he came home to Nebraska and moved into the 1919 home his grandparents owned in Harvard. An early American historian and education advocate, Dr. Gerlach is giving back to his home state, pledging $1.3 million to the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation. In recognition of the gift, the NSHS honored Gerlach on September 29 with the dedication of the Dr. Don R. Gerlach Capitol View Room at the Nebraska State Historical Society headquarters in Lincoln.

The NSHS held its annual awards banquet on October 12 at KANEKO in Omaha’s Old Market. The gathering honored history makers from across the state. Former Omaha Planning Director Martin “Marty” Shukert received the Placemaker-History Maker Award and delivered the keynote address.

The NSHS itself was honored at the 2017 Celebration of Nebraska Books on October 21. "Last Days of Red Cloud Agency" by late NSHS curator Tom Buecker won the Nonfiction: Photography category. The award was accepted by Tom’s widow, Kay Buecker, and David Bristow of the NSHS. The book was published by the NSHS with the support of the Ronald K. and Judith M. Parks Publishing Fund established at the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation.

Guests at the NSHS Awards Banquet enjoyed the artistic setting at KANEKO in Omaha’s Old Market. The giant flower petals on the lights opened and closed as the lights changed colors.
From the Collection... Serving Platter from Engineer Cantonment

This 18 ½ inch-by-13 ½ inch serving platter was broken and discarded at Engineer Cantonment during the winter of 1819-20. It and many other items were recovered nearly two centuries later during archeological excavations at the site, which is located along the Missouri River north of Omaha. The platter is a type of earthenware called Creamware, which was developed in England in the 1760s, and which was passing out of popularity by the time it was brought north from St. Louis aboard the steamboat Western Engineer. The history and archeology of Engineer Cantonment are featured in the forthcoming Spring 2018 issue of Nebraska History. See p. 5 for details. ☝

See Facebook link at nebraskahistory.org

State Historic Site hours:
www.nebraskahistory.org