



## **The D.A.R. Rescue of Early Lancaster County Records**

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Article Summary: The D.A.R. compilation, which was supported by the Works Projects Administration, gathered records of early pioneers from sources including marriage, newspaper, and census records.

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## The D. A. R. Rescue of Early Lancaster County Records

MRS. JILES W. HANEY, Lincoln

It is indeed a pleasure to report to a sympathetic group of people interested in historical research on the work being done by Deborah Avery Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution in Nebraska, in preserving the early historical records of Lancaster County.

Honor to pioneers who broke the sods  
that men to come might live.

These are the words inscribed upon the main entrance to our monumental State Capitol. There are other memorials not carved in stone, modeled in sculpture or created in architecture, but engraved upon the pages of history, which will live thru the ages—the names of those pioneers.

At a ceremony honoring General Pershing held in this room several weeks ago, one of the speakers said:

"There are few actors on life's stage whose presence will be remembered after the curtain has been rung down. In the leveling dust of history the names of men who have not merited fame are lost. Time can never efface Pershing's name from the list of America's great. For today we have an opportunity to build to him...a memorial which will endure...for those who come after us."

Indeed, this is the object of the D. A. R.—to compile in memorial volumes the records of the people of the first fifty years of our county's history. It was not until 1905 that a law was passed by our state legislature creating the Department of Vital Statistics, whereby all births and deaths shall be recorded. Our work is purely supplementary. If it is important to keep the record of all births and deaths since 1905, surely it is most important that the early records be preserved.

The impetus which led to this colossal undertaking had its origin in the foresight of Mrs. Julian G. Goodhue of Washington, D. C., National Historial-General (1934-1937) of the D. A. R., when she outlined a plan for projecting one of the major objects of the society, namely, the preservation of historic spots, relics, records, and documents. At that time Mrs. Reuben E. Knight of Alliance, State Regent; Mrs. A. J. Lazure of Fort Calhoun, State Historian; and Mrs. Horace J. Cary of Kearney, ex-State Regent, were instrumental in starting the work in Nebraska.

Deborah Avery Chapter chose the preservation of early historical records of Lancaster County, and adopted this as their project on December 3, 1937. The work is being carried forward by the Genealogical Records Committee under the national D. A. R. program as outlined by Dr. Jean Stephenson, National Chairman, of Washington, D. C., and Mrs. A. A.

Bald, National Vice Chairman, of Platte Center, Nebraska. The local committee members, who are serving now as an advisory council, are Mesdames Samuel Avery, Adrian Driggs, F. L. Duley, Jiles W. Haney, C. H. Jenkins, George W. Kline, Frank Park, C. A. Reynolds, William Whalen, and Miss Julia Orr.

The compilation of these valuable records of our early pioneers and their placement in our state and national libraries is most important. The work has been carried on in our eastern states for some time, and many valuable documents have been unearthed, manuscripts copied, properly indexed and made available for research. The Federal Historical Records Survey which is set up in Nebraska, directed from the Library of Congress and sponsored by the Nebraska State Historical Society, has paved the way by preparing inventories and thus locating materials available.

Many sad experiences have been reported from neighboring communities, of which these are a fair example: Records have been lost (a) by fire; (b) by being carried away; (c) by destruction in the belief that they are of no value. Paper becomes brittle and yellow with age and handwriting becomes illegible; churches have been disbanded and cemeteries abandoned; and tombstones have become weather-worn and undecipherable.

The preservation of these early records is of inestimable value in preserving a true picture of the life of our pioneer citizens to be used for research by graduate students, by genealogists, by historians, by biographers, by lawyers, and as reference material upon the lives of Nebraska people.

Our compilation of the "Historical Records of Lancaster County, Nebraska, 1855-1905," is divided into ten series. Each series will contain as many volumes as is necessary to record all vital data of that series, as follows:

Series I	Marriage Records	1867-1905
Series II	Newspaper Records	1867-1905
Series III	Census Records	1856-1880
Series IV	Cemetery Records	1861-1940
Series V	Wills and Administrations	1867-1905
Series VI	Church Records	1868-1940
Series VII	Bible Records (From earliest records to 1940.)	
Series VIII	Registration of Voters	1867-1874
Series IX	Assessment Lists and Taxes	1865-1879
Series X	United States Land Grant Records	1858-1907

Our source material was found in the County Court House; newspaper files; from over fifty cemeteries in the county, from private sources; and from federal documents and manuscripts in possession of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

The following volumes have been prepared:

Series I,	Volume I	Marriage Records	1867-1877
Series II,	Volume I	Newspaper Records	1867-1886
Series III,	Volume I	Census Records	1856-1874

These memorial volumes are and will be dedicated to outstanding men and women in our pioneer history. Among those contributing and our benefactors are many prominent men and women of Lincoln.

The work is most difficult, painstaking and at times discouraging. Accuracy of recording and careful handling of old manuscripts are most essential. Hours and hours of time are required for transcribing, proof-reading and checking of the data, and in preparation of the indices. The data is then typed on bond paper 8½ by 11 inches according to forms and standards supplied by the National Society, and bound in a good buckram binding. Each volume has an index and the plans include a master index.

A copy of each volume, as soon as issued, is transmitted to the custodian of each of three selected libraries, namely:

1. The Genealogical Library of the D. A. R., Washington, D. C.
2. The Nebraska State Historical Society Library.
3. The Nebraska State Library in the Capitol Building.

It seems very opportune that the work should be done at this time while the material is available and while we have the assistance of the U. S. Government under the Work Projects Administration, which has been a contributing factor on similar projects in other states. In Nebraska our project is sponsored by the State Historical Society.

The beauty of the service which we are attempting to render is the spirit in which our members have gladly given of their time and energies in order that the heritage of future generations may be preserved. This was ably expressed by one member when she said, "I am glad to do for others what was done many, many years ago for me." And Edmund Burke, the great English statesman, wrote, "People will never look forward to posterity who have never looked backward to their ancestors."

(In absence of an official supervisor of the workers on this WPA Project, Mrs. Jiles W. Haney, representing the D. A. R. thru her service on the Genealogical Committee, was requested to report on this activity at the annual meeting of the State Historical Society.—*Editor.*)

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