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Article Summary: Olson comments that Society membership grew more in 1948 than in any other year of its existence. Archeological field work at Medicine Creek provided thousands of new specimens for the collection. The Museum recorded a large increase in visitors.

Scroll Down for complete article.

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The Nebraska State Historical Society In 1948¹

By James C. Olson

THOUGHTFUL Americans do not need to be told that in these days of grave uncertainties it is of the utmost importance that the American people understand the significance of the American way of life and the basic attributes of American democracy. Likewise, it is generally agreed that a knowledge of American history is essential to an understanding of the meaning of America. For those of us who live in Nebraska, an important and very real part of the American experience is the history of this state and the region of which it is a part. Unless we understand or appreciate the Nebraska experience, we cannot hope to understand or appreciate the American experience.

For that reason, it is particularly gratifying to report that during the past year the Nebraska State Historical Society has enjoyed a greater growth than in any other similar period during its 81 years of existence. From 1 October 1947 to 30 September 1948, 586 new members were added to the Society's rolls, bringing the total membership to 1,720, the largest in the Society's history. All but 13 of these new members represent the addition of paid-up, annual members, the backbone of the Society. In this category, it is interesting to observe, the Society's membership has more than doubled in the last three years.

Much of this increase comes as a result of the interest of old members in securing new ones. I cannot emphasize too strongly that the most effective way for the Society

¹Read at the Seventy-First Annual Meeting of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, 13 November 1948.

to keep growing and to keep extending its influence on behalf of a better understood Nebraska is for each of us to assume a personal obligation to increase the Society's membership. I would like to remind you, as I did last year and the year before, that if each one of you would get at least one new member during the coming year, we could report a doubled membership at our next annual meeting.

A goal toward which we all look in eager anticipation is the occupation of a building of our own in which Nebraska's treasures may be properly preserved, displayed, and used. I am happy to report that we are nearer the goal than we were a year ago. The State Treasurer has invested a total of \$533,000.00 in United States government bonds, pursuant to the direction of your executive board, to be held until such time as the Society is prepared to construct its building. The five year levy under which the funds were collected has expired, and it is estimated that not more than \$25,000.00 will be added through further collections. As was reported last year, your executive board, determined that the people of Nebraska shall get full value for each tax dollar entrusted to the Society, hesitates to begin construction in the face of current high prices and uncertain building conditions.

During the past year, also, we have steadily carried forward the Society's program of bringing the history of Nebraska to the people of Nebraska. The Superintendent's weekly column, "Out of Old Nebraska," now beginning its third year, continues to increase its circulation in the press of the state. During the past year it was carried regularly by an average of approximately 100 papers each week, and it appeared in approximately 210 different papers. I wish at this time to express my deep appreciation for the continuing support received from the editors of Nebraska, the Nebraska Press Association, and Mr. Scott Greenwood, Manager of the Nebraska Press Association. As a further means of bringing Nebraska's history to the people of the state, the Superintendent made 24 historical addresses during the past year, including seven at Lincoln,

five at Omaha, three at Scottsbluff, two at Gering, and one each at Beatrice, Falls City, Fort Kearny, Grand Island, Nebraska City, Peru and Weeping Water. In addition, he read a paper at the 41st Annual Convention of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association held at Rock Island, Illinois.

The library continues to be one of the Society's primary responsibilities, and though we continue to be hampered by a shortage of personnel and working space, we have moved steadily during the past year, under the able direction of Miss Myrtle D. Berry, toward a more useful organization of our collections. Among our special projects, the following may be reported: 1) the work of calendaring the executive correspondence has been carried forward until now it virtually is completed and the material ready to be placed in manuscript boxes and added to our permanent files; 2) the indexing of land office records has progressed steadily during the year and a total of 36 entry books now have been completed, with approximately one-fourth of the entries indexed typed in permanent form, comprising approximately 14,000 cards.

Approximately 1,950 persons came personally to the library during the past year to use its facilities for research. In addition, some 400 telephone inquiries and about 500 written requests were answered. Approximately 50 calls for photographs were received, one of which resulted in the loan of about 230 prints to the Newberry Library of Chicago. During the year the library has accessioned 520 volumes, of which 70 were purchased, 58 received in exchange for our publications, and 392 received as gifts. A total of 1,145 books were catalogued, and one part time worker in the bindery has bound or repaired 620 volumes.

The principal addition to the manuscript collections during the past year resulted from the transfer of approximately 350 cubic feet of records and correspondence from the files of the Secretary of State.

In the newspaper department, a total of 369 Nebraska newspapers and other publications were received regularly. These may be classified as follows:

Daily newspapers	24
Weekly newspapers	279
Bi-weekly newspapers	8
Agricultural publications	9
College and High School	14
Religious	8
Trade and Professional	2
Miscellaneous	5

A total of 300 volumes of newspapers were bound during the year.

In the photograph department, the Society received as gifts, 66 prints and 7 negatives, in addition to two large albums received through the courtesy of Mr. Harold Hulfish, Custodian of the Capitol, containing hundreds of photographs showing various stages of the construction of the capitol and its architectural features, the whole forming an invaluable pictorial record of Nebraska's capitol.

A significant addition was made to our collections of the work of Nebraska's cartoonists, when Steven S. Spencer of Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, presented 260 original cartoons, the work of his father, the late Guy R. Spencer. He also gave three large scrapbooks of published cartoons, representative of Mr. Spencer's work as a cartoonist for the *Omaha World-Herald* during the years 1923-1938.

Donors of books and pamphlets include the following:

Rev. Ray M. Baker, Luverne, Iowa
 C. E. Bobbitt, Lincoln
 Miss Alice B. Brainerd, Montreal, Canada
 H. Halderson, Newman Grove
 Erwin Keller, Topeka, Kansas
 M. I. McCreight, DuBois, Pennsylvania
 Mr. and Mrs. Lewis D. McPherson, Washington, D. C.
 N. R. Mahnken, Stillwater, Oklahoma
 Boyd Perkin, Maywood
 Mrs. Dorothy H. Nyberg, Wayne
 Nebraska Legislative Council, Lincoln
 Nebraska State Journal, Lincoln
 Mrs. Elizabeth Gaylord Rathburn, Lincoln
 C. E. Sanden, Lincoln

Mrs. C. S. Sherman, Lincoln
Mrs. Esther Sherman, Lincoln
Thurman R. Smith, Taylor
Rev. M. A. Stegman, Firth
M. J. Steiner, Chicago, Illinois
Mrs. Ruth B. Whitney, Lincoln
Mr. and Mrs. T. F. A. Williams, Lincoln
John Wiltse, Falls City
Henry F. Wyman, Napa, California
H. W. Yates, Omaha

Donors of photographs include:

Robert Armstrong, Lincoln
C. E. Bobbitt, Lincoln
Jay G. Carpenter, Sioux City, Iowa
C. A. Eshelman, Red Cloud
T. L. Green, Scottsbluff
Harold W. Hulfish, Lincoln
George E. Hyde, Omaha
Miss Elizabeth Mallalieu, Lincoln
Roy G. Pierce, Gildersleeve, Connecticut
Don Renner, Omaha
Goldie Robertson Funk, Olympia, Washington
George O. Simmons, Page
Thurman R. Smith, Taylor
Steven S. Spencer, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania
W. E. Williams, Hanford, California
H. Y. Yates, Omaha
Mrs. J. M. Young, Lincoln

Among the most important aspects of the Society's activities during the year was the continuation of archeological field work under the direction of Mr. A. T. Hill, in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution and the University of Nebraska, as a part of the Missouri River Basin Development Program. For the second successive season, the Society's excavations were conducted at Medicine Creek, preliminary to the inundation of a portion of the valley by water to be impounded behind the multiple purpose dam being constructed north of Cambridge.

Work was begun 3 May and ended 18 August. A maximum of six laborers were used, but most of the work was done with an average of three men. Excavations were carried on at six sites, resulting in the location and uncovering of 14 house floors, most of which contained inside caches. Seven middens or "village dumps" also were investigated.

A total of 6,957 specimens were secured and have already been cataloged. In addition to cataloging, specimens of identifiable animal, fish, bird, and turtle bones to the number of 536 have been sorted out, packed, and separately cataloged for submission to experts for identification. A total of 534 mussel shells and one lot of snail shells also have been prepared for identification.

Samples of charred corn were obtained from six of the house remains as well as from one midden, while seven of the structures yielded identifiable samples of charred or decayed wood. This material to the number of 16 lots also has been prepared for submission to botanists and dendrochronologists.

The remaining 5,871 specimens consist of the tools and implements of wood and bone, used by the prehistoric farmers of the Medicine Creek Valley, and of sherds of the pottery used in preparation of their food. One complete pot was recovered and restoration of others is now in progress. Analysis of the cultural material, preparatory to a complete technical report, is now getting under way.

As always, the Museum has been the Society's principal public attraction, with an estimated 167,934 visitors viewing the collections during the year. This represents an increase of more than 20,000 over last year. The total number of persons registering—shown by actual count over an extended period of time to average less than one-third of the total visiting the museum—was 55,978. Of these, 17,007 were from out-of-state, and 291 were from territories and foreign countries. Every state in the Union and 40 foreign countries are represented on the register for the year, including 70 school and scout groups. States and foreign countries having the largest number of registrants were:

States

Iowa	3,024
Kansas	2,035
Illinois	1,669
Missouri	1,454
California	1,353

Minnesota	560
South Dakota	532
Ohio	482
Wisconsin	481
Texas	455

Territories and Foreign Countries

Canada	74
England	25
Hawaii	21
Denmark	19
China	19
Alaska	18
Germany	12
Mexico	9
France	7

Nebraskans and others were particularly generous in augmenting the Museum's collections through their gifts. A total of 62 persons gave 4,263 separate articles to the Museum during the year. The largest gift was the notable collection of 1,088 historical dolls, and a library of 119 doll books presented by Mrs. Elizabeth Gaylord Rathburn. This collection, one of the finest of its kind in the Middle West, was put on display in September and has attracted widespread attention. Donors to the Museum during the year were:

Clarence Allen, Cambridge
 Herbert Allen, Cambridge
 Mrs. H. F. Baer, Lincoln
 Mrs. W. E. Barkley, Lincoln
 Mrs. H. J. Bayha, Niobrara
 Clyde Benham, Lincoln
 Dr. A. E. Bennett, Omaha
 Bertha Berniecker, Seward
 L. N. Blough, Lincoln
 T. F. Cooney, Hastings
 Col. A. T. Cooper, Santurce, Puerto Rico
 Floyd M. Copes, Palmyra
 J. F. Davis, Aurora
 W. A. Denlavy, Bloomington
 Mrs. J. A. Dickinson, Lincoln
 Frederick Horton Dubois, Oakland, California
 Myron T. Faye, Lincoln
 Laura Gable, Lincoln
 William Gleason, Lincoln
 Mrs. Helen Goldstein, Lincoln
 Mrs. Laura B. Hartzell, Lincoln
 Mrs. Caroline Hayden, Jacksonville, Florida

Mr. and Mrs. George Jelinek, Lincoln
Joe M. Johnson, Lincoln
Mr. and Mrs. Dave Kaley, Red Cloud
Ruth Kindred and Gladys Dolan, Tulsa, Oklahoma
Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Langworthy, Seward
W. A. Lerner, Wayne
J. O. Lobb, Sidney
Allen E. Lowell, Jr., Lincoln
James William Lundy, Lincoln
Mrs. Tom H. Mauck, Lincoln
Mrs. Glen McDonald, Humboldt
George Metcalf, Wauneta
Mrs. N. P. Mier, Crowley, Louisiana
Mr. and Mrs. Miesbach, Lincoln
Nebraska State Game Commission, Lincoln
Mrs. Fannie Easterday Nielsen, Weeping Water
Mrs. Bertram Offutt, Omaha
Dr. H. Winnett Orr, Lincoln
John G. Pickerill, Lincoln
Mrs. H. M. Rathburn, Lincoln
D. D. Reavis, Falls City
Rose Rosicky, Omaha
Mrs. George Schofield, Lincoln
Olive Seamark, West Arcadia, California
James L. Sellers, Lincoln
Mrs. C. S. Sherman, Lincoln
Esther B. Sherman and Ruth B. Whitney, Lincoln
S. T. Spangler, Lincoln
W. E. Stover, York
Arthur B. Summer, Omaha
F. E. Tanner, Lexington
S. L. Tillett, Alliance
H. P. Tracy, Barre, Vermont
Leonard Umseid, Omaha
Eric Gordon Underwood, England, and Charles Sumner
Bird, Walpole, Massachusetts
United States War Department, Washington, D. C.
J. L. and Elizabeth Walters (Deceased)
Paul A. Warp, Minden
Bessie Watkin, Ogallala
W. C. Williams, Hanford, California