



The Nebraska State Historical Society in 1952

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THE NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN 1952*

BY JAMES C. OLSON

THE year 1952 has seen the Nebraska State Historical Society moving steadily toward the realization of long-standing aspirations and preparation for fulfilling the greatest obligations to the people of Nebraska that have faced the institution in all of its long history. In reporting to you, it is a pleasure to express once again my deep appreciation for the continuing support given me as Superintendent by President James E. Lawrence, members of the Executive Board, and members of my capable and loyal staff.

Despite a strike against the Associated General Contractors of Lincoln which stopped construction from 14 July to 18 August, work on the Society's new building has gone forward in gratifying fashion. The cornerstone was laid on 16 July. At this time, the building is almost entirely closed in, and it is anticipated that work on the interior will continue during the winter months so that next spring we may begin the long and arduous task of establishing the Society in its new quarters. Financial details will be found in the report of the Treasurer.

While much of our attention has been centered on the new building, the regular work of the Society has been carried forward as in the past and has been expanded in

* Read in part at the annual meeting of the Nebraska State Historical Society, held in Lincoln, 18 October 1952.

anticipation of moving from the capitol and to meet the growing responsibilities of the institution.

It has long been felt that the Society should hold regional meetings in addition to the annual meeting in Lincoln. This program was inaugurated with a dinner meeting in Omaha, 9 May, under the chairmanship of Frank Latenser and Wayland Magee. It is anticipated that similar meetings will be held in other cities in the state in the future. The Society's publications program also was expanded during the past year with the issuance of *Woodland Sites in Nebraska* by Marvin F. Kivett, Director of the Museum, as Number One in a new series, *Publications in Anthropology*. Future numbers will follow at the rate of about one per year. Likewise, in cooperation with the Bureau of Audio-Visual Instruction of the University of Nebraska, the Society has been engaged this year on a major venture in education, the preparation of six film strips on the history of Nebraska. These will be ready for distribution during the current academic year and will be available to schools and other interested groups.

In *Nebraska History*, now in its thirty-third year, we continue to publish a wide variety of articles on Nebraska's past. Volume XXXIII contains contributions from our members and from scholars representing the following institutions: University of California at Los Angeles, Murray State College in Kentucky, National Park Service, Nebraska State Game, Forestation and Parks Commission, University of Nebraska, Oklahoma A. & M. College, St. Louis University, University of South Dakota, United States Naval Academy, Washington University, and the University of West Virginia. The *Historical News Letter*, now in its fifth year, continued to be published monthly. "Out of Old Nebraska," the Superintendent's weekly column, continued to appear regularly in the press of the state. As of 30 September, these columns had been issued for 314 consecutive weeks.

Both the Director of the Museum and the Superintendent filled numerous speaking engagements. The Director of the Museum addressed groups on twelve different occasions—nine in Lincoln, one each in Wilber, York, and Plattsmouth. The Superintendent delivered thirty-seven historical ad-

dresses during the year, including ten in Lincoln, three in Omaha, two each in Blair, Gering, Norfolk, and Rockville, and one each in Ashland, Beatrice, Bellevue, Grand Island, Hastings, Lexington, Murdock, North Platte, Pawnee City, Plattsmouth, Scottsbluff, Wilber, York, Lisle, Illinois, and St. Paul, Minnesota. In addition, the Superintendent gave sixty-six fifteen-minute radio talks on various phases of our history. Thirty-eight of these were given as part of the "Nebraska School of the Air" program sponsored by Station KRVN, Lexington—a program in which the Society continues to participate—fifteen were over Station KCOW, Alliance; and thirteen over Station KMMJ, Grand Island. The Curator of History, Miss Sally Johnson, spoke to approximately fifty organized groups in the museum.

The Society was represented at the annual meetings of the American Historical Association in New York, the Mississippi Valley Historical Association in Chicago, the Association of American Museums in Minneapolis-St. Paul, the Ninth Plains Conference for Archeology in Lincoln, and the Nebraska Academy of Sciences in Lincoln. The Librarian, Mr. John B. White, served as a member of the constitution committee of the Nebraska Library Association; the Museum Artist, Mr. Stanley Sohl, as vice president of the Lincoln Camera Club, co-sponsor of Kappa Alpha Mu, and as judge of the annual photographic salons of the Omaha Lens and Shutter Club and the Nebraska State Fair; the Superintendent as a member of the council and chairman of the nominating committee of the American Association for State and Local History, Chairman of the History Section of the American Association of Museums, a member of the membership committee of the Society of American Archivists, a member of the Board of Managers of the Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement, president of the Nebraska Writers' Guild, and consultant to the Defense Department of the History of the United States Army in World War II.

At present the staff is composed of fourteen full-time, permanent employees and seven temporary, part-time employees. Permanent, full-time employees joining the staff during the past year are: Donald Danker of Campbell, for-

merly an instructor in history at York College, appointed archivist to replace Robert W. Richmond who resigned to accept the post of archivist with the Kansas State Historical Society; Gene B. Reed of Lincoln, appointed microfilm technician to succeed Dale Yung; Mrs. Ardes Bures of Lincoln, secretary to the Director of the Museum; and Marilyn Kucera, Milligan, clerk-typist.

The Society continues to attract new members. Mr. Nathan J. Gold, the Society's Treasurer, converted his membership from annual to life. New life members joining the Society during the year were: Senator D. J. Cole, Merriman; Byron Dunn, Lincoln; Howard Freeman, Lincoln; J. M. McDonald, Jr., Hastings; Ralph M. Peterson, Coleridge; and Harold P. Piser, Flushing, New York. In addition, 144 new annual members joined the Society. As of 30 September, the total membership was 1,767.

THE MUSEUM

The Museum, under the able direction of Mr. Marvin F. Kivett, continued to attract thousands of visitors. An estimated total of 131,718 visitors came from all sections of the United States and throughout the world. Of this estimated total, 43,906 individuals registered with 26,312 registered visitors being from Nebraska. Iowa led the other states with a total of 2,815 registered visitors while Vermont and New Hampshire were each represented by only 6 individuals. More than fifty territories and foreign countries were represented with Canada as usual leading in number. Eighty-five organized groups (mainly from schools) visited the museum this year as compared with seventy-eight last year. This figure is expected to increase sharply as an adequate program is provided for these groups in the new building. A small lecture room, such as will be provided in the new building, will be of great service in this program.

States, territories, and foreign countries having the largest number of registrants were:

	<i>States</i>	
Iowa		2,815
Kansas		2,149

Illinois	1,934
Missouri	1,343
California	1,159
Colorado	840
Minnesota	742
New York	498
Ohio	497
Texas	459
Wisconsin	447
Indiana	433
South Dakota	427
Michigan	416
Oklahoma	399

Territories and Foreign Countries

Canada	62
Alaska	32
Germany	24
Hawaii	22
France	17
England	17
Japan	16
Belgium	14
Egypt	13
Africa	12

A total of ninety-eight different donors contributed items to the museum collections. Many of these gifts consisted of single items while others included a large number of specimens. There are still many items needed for a representative collection of the pioneer white period.

A total of forty-four different display sections have been changed throughout the museum. Many of these are temporary or seasonal displays used for short periods of time. Among the more interesting of these is a small kitchen utilizing materials of 1869 to 1894.

The work of identifying materials now in the collection in preparation for their use in the new building has required considerable time. The bulk of our attention during the past year has been directed toward display plans for the new building. Certain displays in the present museum have been experimental in nature.

The Society continued its cooperative project the past year with various state and federal agencies for the recovery of archeological materials which will be inundated or destroyed as a result of the Missouri River Basin Development Program. This work initiated in 1946 by River Basin Surveys,

Smithsonian Institution, has been expanded by cooperating state institutions with funds supplied in part by the U.S. National Park Service.

The scene of the investigations this year was one of the villages tested in 1951 in the Fort Randall Reservoir near Chamberlain, South Dakota. The remains of nine earthlodge floors, associated storage pits, and trash areas were uncovered during the summer. The cultural remains suggest an agricultural group related to both the early Pawnee of Nebraska and the Arikara of South Dakota.

In addition to the emergency salvage work in South Dakota, sixteen archeological sites were recorded throughout Nebraska. Test excavations were also carried on at five sites in Nebraska.

THE LIBRARY

Under the effective leadership of Mr. John B. White, the library staff has continued to process the vast backlog of unorganized materials and all current acquisitions. A total of 4,366 volumes were cataloged during the year, of which 2,792 were from the backlog and the remainder were acquisitions—96 by purchase, 986 by gift, and 432 by exchange. Thirty-five maps and 760 photographs were added to the collections during the year. As of 30 September, 332 Nebraska newspapers were being regularly received, of which 24 were dailies, 277 weeklies, and 31 of other frequency. Also, as of 30 September, 272 periodicals were being currently received, of which 112 were published in Nebraska. In the bindery, 408 books, including periodicals, were bound, and 362 were repaired; 360 newspaper volumes were bound. In summary, the following inventory is presented.

Volumes	22,499
Bound Volumes, Newspapers.....	26,287
Maps	125
Microfilm reels.....	147
Photographs	53,376
Genealogical Charts.....	5
Backlog (estimated volumes).....	30,000

A microfilm reader was obtained in January, and the long-awaited microfilm camera, Recordak Model C-1, arrived

2 April. The enormous task of microfilming the Society's collection of Nebraska newspapers is now underway. A Newspaper Film Record has been started, listing our holdings of Nebraska newspapers on microfilm, alphabetically by town. A systematic attempt to inform Nebraska editors of papers needed to complete our files for filming has brought gratifying results thus far, and will be continued as fast as the papers can be filmed. As of 30 September, 10,000 feet of microfilm had been processed.

In the Manuscript Division, the following collections were processed:

Robert W. Furnas papers, 8,202 items plus 9 volumes, and 8 boxes of miscellaneous material.

Bishop George Allen Beecher papers, 4,076 items plus 11 boxes of undated materials and 10 scrapbooks.

Edwin A. Fry papers, 891 items, plus 2 scrapbooks.

George W. Holdrege papers, 1,910 items, plus 11 boxes of miscellaneous material.

William B. Lambert papers, 362 items, plus 682 items from the U.S. land office at Neligh.

John R. Maltby papers, 2,908 items, plus 4 boxes of miscellaneous material.

Samuel Maxwell papers, 4,700 items, plus 4 boxes of miscellaneous material.

Composer's manuscript and musical scores of "The Pageant of Lincoln," by Howard I. Kirkpatrick.

Volume of personal property assessment returns, Lincoln, 1875.

Theater programs and scrapbooks of Annie Louise Miller.

Robert V. Muir papers, 894 items, plus 1 box of miscellaneous material.

Annual reports of Nebraska railroads to the Nebraska Board of Transportation, 1890-95, 25 manuscript volumes.

Reports of County Central Committees to the State Relief Commission, 1895.

Correspondence, Office of State Veterinarian, 1885-88.

Francis E. Newton papers, 433 items.

Frank J. North diaries.

Omaha World-Herald's "Oldest Farmer" contest letters, 445 items.

Charles W. Pool papers, 1,532 items.

William B. Price papers, 346 items.

Financial records of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Nebraska, 1890-1924.

Charter and town minutes of Rulo, 1865-1877.

Business records and scrapbook of George D. and Herbert Thayer.

Notes, clippings, and stories collected by Martha M. Turner.

Albert Watkins papers, 501 items, plus 2 boxes of miscellaneous material.

Daniel H. Wheeler papers, 107 items.

William H. Woods papers, 347 items, plus 34 scrapbooks and diaries.

Mrs. Margaret Jane Carns papers, 86 items.

Classroom exercises of the Nebraska School for the Deaf, 1901, 28 items.

Charles W. Giddings papers, 60 items.

Mss. autobiography of John B. Jurnegan, 1868.

Letters of John M. Sylvester, 1880's.

Organization papers of St. John's Episcopal Church, Nemaha, 5 items.

Mss. history of Rock Bluff.

During the year, 1,200 persons were assisted in the library. The library staff answered 316 telephone inquiries, and 497 inquiries received by mail. Loans, including interlibrary loans, totaled 127; 366 photographs were loaned.

A LOOK AT THE FUTURE

The year 1953 will be the sesquicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase, that great act of statesmanship through which this western country was secured for the United States. The year 1953 also will be the seventy-fifth anniversary of the reorganization of the Nebraska State Historical Society. In combining these two events with the opening of our new building we can avail ourselves of the greatest opportunity in our history to bring before the people of this state

the significance of their past, and we can properly prepare the way for the celebration of the centennial of the organization of Nebraska Territory in 1954. I can report to you that your executive board and your historical society staff have given—and are giving—much thought to the fulfillment of the obligations these opportunities impose upon us. Some of the details of their planning may be of interest to you.

On 1 February 1952 the Executive Board created a committee to study the centennial question and recommend a course of action for the Society. That committee consisted of T. L. Green of Scottsbluff, chairman, Chancellor R. G. Gustavson, Professor James L. Sellers, and James C. Olson. In its report, adopted by the Board, the committee recommended that the Society request the Governor to recommend to the legislature the creation of a representative commission to assist in the appropriate observance during 1954 of the territorial centennial, that commission to be provided with the sum of \$3,000. The committee further recommended that the Historical Society give every possible assistance to the commission and to all local communities and groups, that the Society explore with the Kansas State Historical Society the possibility of suitable joint commemoration, and that the Society include in its budget each year during the "centennial period" (1954-1967) the sum of \$1,000 to be used for the research, writing and publication of a series of Nebraska history monographs.

To provide for its operation during the centennial period, the Society is requesting an appropriation of \$200,878.22 for the biennium which begins 1 July 1953 and ends 30 June 1955. When compared with the amount appropriated for the current biennium (\$168,164.75), this represents a sizeable increase. Yet, because we will not operate in our new building during as much of the current biennium as we originally had anticipated and because of strict economy in the management of the Society's affairs, we will have an unexpended balance, at the close of this biennium, estimated at \$26,092.96. We are asking that this be reappropriated; hence in new tax funds our request involves an increase of only three and nine-tenths percent—extremely modest in view of the So-

ciety's increased obligations and the steadily increasing cost of goods and services.

The year 1954 can be a great year in the patriotic and cultural development of our people. To realize fully the benefits that can come from our centennial year, however, it will be necessary to make preparation during 1953. Therefore, I propose that during 1953 we endeavor:

1. To establish the Society in its new building and to open that building to the public, in suitable ceremonies, as a significant addition to the cultural resources of this state.
2. To double the membership of the Society, thereby increasing the basis of its support and influence.
3. To strengthen the Society's research program, in both history and anthropology.
4. To enlarge the Society's educational program so that the story of Nebraska may be more effectively carried to all of our people.

These are large ambitions, but I am confident that given the resources and the public support we shall realize them.