



*Nebraska History* posts materials online for your personal use. Please remember that the contents of *Nebraska History* are copyrighted by the Nebraska State Historical Society (except for materials credited to other institutions). The NSHS retains its copyrights even to materials it posts on the web.

For permission to re-use materials or for photo ordering information, please see:

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/magazine/permission.htm>

Nebraska State Historical Society members receive four issues of *Nebraska History* and four issues of *Nebraska History News* annually. For membership information, see:

<http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/members/index.htm>

Article Title: Ned C. Abbott

Full Citation: James C. Olson, "Ned C. Abbott," *Nebraska History* 41 (1960): 79-81

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1960NCAbbott.pdf>

Date: 11/10/2016

Article Summary: A tribute to Abbott, an educator of the blind with a special interest in Nebraska's history.

***Scroll down for complete article.***

Cataloging Information:

Names: Ned Culbertson Abbott, J Sterling Morton

Nebraska Place Names: Nebraska City

Keywords: Ned Culbertson Abbott, J Sterling Morton, Nebraska School for the Blind, Arbor Day, Arbor Lodge

Photographs / Images: Abbott



Ned C. Abbott

## NED C. ABBOTT

BY JAMES C. OLSON

NED Culbertson Abbott was born at Fremont, Nebraska March 9, 1874, the son of Luther J. and Clara Culbertson Abbott. He died in Pasadena, California, February 24, 1960. Mr. Abbott attended the public schools in Fremont and then entered the University of Nebraska, from which he received the B.A. degree in 1896, the LL. B. in 1900, and the M. A. in 1918. In 1948 the University awarded him an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. On June 19, 1901 he married Lillian Newbranch, and to this union were born one son and three daughters. Mr. Abbott was admitted to the Nebraska bar in 1900, but did not practice law. He devoted himself instead to education, and particularly the education of the blind. Most of his professional career was associated with the Nebraska School for the Blind at Nebraska City—as a teacher, 1896-1898; and as superintendent, 1909-1911, and 1913-1947. In the years between assignments at the School for the Blind, he taught in the Philippine Islands, Humboldt, and Lincoln, and held school superintendencies in Tekamah and Plattsmouth.

*Dr. James C. Olson is chairman of the Department of History, University of Nebraska. Dr. Olson enjoyed a long personal and professional association with Mr. Abbott.*

Although he was widely known as an educator, and particularly as an educator of the blind, Mr. Abbott had many other interests. He served as president of the University of Nebraska Alumni Association, the Nebraska Historical Society, the Native Sons and Daughters of Nebraska, and the Nebraska Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution. He was Exalted Ruler of the BPOE, and founder and first president of the Nebraska City Rotary Club. He was particularly active in the civic affairs of Nebraska City. Writing in the *Nebraska City News-Press*, March 3, 1960, of this aspect of Mr. Abbott's life, J. H. Sweet said:

In Nebraska City Ned Abbott, as the record so well shows, was "mixed up" in every worthy community project. He was intimately associated with the Chamber of Commerce, took keen delight in helping with public demonstrations of various kinds, was the first president of the Rotary Club and one of the first honorees. When Arbor Lodge was given to the State of Nebraska by Joy Morton, Ned did enormous spade-work in assuring the Nebraska legislature they were not "buying a pig in a poke." He was one of the men in charge of the famous breakfast at Hotel Grand when more than 100 members of the legislature came down to inspect Arbor Lodge before deciding it would be a valuable addition to the park system of the commonwealth.

The civic activity to which Mr. Abbott probably devoted more time over the years than to any other, was the promotion of Arbor Day. He designed the Nebraska City motto, "Plant Trees"; he was chairman of numerous Arbor Day celebrations, and of the Morton centennial celebration in 1902. He wrote and spoke extensively on the life of J. Sterling Morton, founder of Arbor Day, and was closely associated with the Morton family in developing their historical interests. He served as agent for Mark Morton when he purchased the Clarence Paine Collection for the Nebraska State Historical Society, and he made the survey of the papers of J. Sterling Morton which led to their deposit in the library of the University of Nebraska, and ultimately in the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Closely associated with Mr. Abbott's interest in J. Sterling Morton and Arbor Day was his interest in Nebraska's history. This interest found expression in exten-

sive writing and speaking, and in devoted service to the Nebraska State Historical Society. He was a member of the Executive Board from 1926 to 1947, and served as president of the Society from 1930 to 1932. He was regular in his attendance at meetings of the Board and of the Society, and served energetically on many special committees of the organization. He clearly understood the nature of the Society and the contribution it could make to the cultural life of the state. Even after his retirement, Mr. Abbott maintained a keen interest in the Society's affairs. At the time of the annual meeting in 1959, although crippled with arthritis, he penned a characteristic note to Dr. James L. Sellers, then president of the organization: "Best wishes to you and the Society which I joined in January, 1900, along with Fred Hawksby. Furnas and Morton were there in full splendor. It was the last address my Father ever made."

Mr. Abbott kept a detailed diary, and collected omnivorously—clippings, photographs, letters—on a wide variety of subjects. His papers have been deposited in the Nebraska State Historical Society. In addition to numerous articles in newspapers, his historical writing included:

"We Hope," Presidential Address, Nebraska State Historical Society, 1931, *Nebraska History*, XII, No. 2, pp. 172-174.

"Lincoln: Name and Place," *Publications*, Nebraska State Historical Society, XXI, (1930), 1-133.

"Silas A. Holcomb," *Nebraska History*, XXVI (October-December, 1945), 187-200; XXVII (January-March, 1946), 3-17.

"That Cass County Court House—An Informal History," *Nebraska History*, XXIX (December, 1948), 339-350.