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Article Summary: Kivett's report mentions an all-time high in Society membership, considerable financial support from the State Legislature, increased public viewing of Society exhibits and the need for more space at Headquarters.

*Scroll down for complete article.*

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Photographs / Images: Charles C Osborne of Hastings, President, NSHS; A B Mortensen; Orville Zabel and Midland College class touring the Society Library; Fairview, William Jennings Bryan home in Lincoln; exhibit area at 1965 State Fair; Thomas P Kennard home; Fort Robinson museum and one of its exhibits; Richardson County archeological field excavations: an earthlodge floor, Indian rock carvings; Governor Frank Morrison accepting a bust of General John J Pershing for permanent display in the Nebraska Hall of Fame; historical marker erected at Crawford

# THE NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN 1965

MARVIN F. KIVETT, DIRECTOR

TEN years ago in 1955 Dr. James C. Olson, Director of the Society, started his annual report with the statement "there is evidence on every hand that Nebraskans are becoming more conscious of their heritage and more appreciative of its impact upon their daily lives." This statement would aptly describe the situation in Nebraska today.

Evidence of this renewed and increased interest may be found in every community throughout the state. Local historical societies are being founded each month. Plans are being developed for museums, historical site preservation and related projects. The Nebraska State Historical Society is carrying on an increasingly active role in this local and state development. We have continued to offer our services and encouragement to local historical organizations in every possible way. The Society has in turn benefited from the close cooperation between the state and local organizations.

Membership is at a new all-time high of 3,753 as compared to 3,242 reported last year. This gain of 511 new members during the year includes 24 Life Members, 79 Contributing Members and 7 Supporting Members. The additional support provided by the latter two categories of

membership established last year can be a major contribution to the work of the Society. We urge each of you to consider the advanced memberships.

This has been a most active year for the Society in relation to Legislative action. For the biennium beginning July 1, 1965 and ending June 30, 1967, the State Legislature has appropriated \$536,823.00 for the Society general operations including \$54,178 for the Fort Robinson branch. The additional amount of \$58,950 was appropriated for the restoration and operation of the Thomas P. Kennard home in Lincoln as the Nebraska Statehood Memorial. The Historical Land Mark Council received their total request of \$14,400 which will insure the continuation of the markers program. The Society also sponsored legislation in the form of L. B. 631 to clarify and define our relations to historical sites owned by the State of Nebraska and administered by the State Game and Park Commission. We were unsuccessful in receiving committee approval for this legislation. Resolution 32, however, passed by the Legislature does provide some guide line in this field. A second resolution, number 77, relates to the Society in urging the federal government to accept the George W. Norris home in McCook as a unit of the U. S. National Park Service. It also provides that in the event the property should be offered to the State, the Society would assume responsibility for its preservation. L. B. 609 passed by the Legislature provides for the establishment of the Nebraska Statehood Memorial in the Thomas P. Kennard home in Lincoln. We received outstanding support from many individuals and historical organizations in this legislative program. Your Executive Board has expressed their deep appreciation to the Budget Committee, headed by Senator Marvel, and the Legislature for their study and consideration of the Society needs. As Nebraska looks toward its Centennial in 1967 an increasing number of requests have come to the Society for assistance. Our budget request was made with the full realization that the next two years will be among the most active for the Society.

A total of 190,433 persons viewed exhibits prepared by the staff during the past year at the Lincoln headquarters, Fort Robinson and at the State Fair. On the afternoon of June 30 Mrs. Gary Shepherd of Pierce City, Missouri, became the one-millionth person to visit the Society building since its dedication on September 26, 1953. This increased utilization of the Society's resources was particularly noted in the Archives and Library where 5,522 persons used the facilities in person as compared to 3,000 last year. These departments also answered 1,200 letters requesting information as compared to 700 mail inquiries for last year.

The bulk of the Society collections whether in the Museum, Archives or Library, are received by donations from citizens in Nebraska and throughout the nation. A total of 228 individuals or organizations made materials available to the library and archives while 277 persons donated 1,174 items to the museum.

As reported a year ago one of the major problems has been to recruit a competent staff and meet competition from other institutions. I am pleased to report that this year all professional positions have been filled with the exception of the Curator of History position on the museum staff left vacant by the resignation of David Drury who left the Society to head the Fort Wayne Indiana Historical Society. New staff members include Miss Hazel Bullis who was assigned to the position of Librarian and Mr. Thomas Kehoe the position of Museum Director.

Each report during the past years has noted the increasing need for additional building space. This remains a major problem today. The work of the Society is to preserve and interpret materials relating to Nebraska people. The expansion of Society activities to other areas such as Fort Robinson and the Nebraska Statehood Memorial will provide for the preservation and display of certain museum collections but the need for additional archival and library space remains critical. Your Executive Board has devoted

a great deal of study to this problem during the past several years.

*Nebraska History*, now in its 47th year of publication, has continued to publish a variety of articles related to our history. These articles have ranged from the Indian warfare to the political history of the 1930's. Contributors have included staff members, members of the Society and persons from many institutions throughout the nation.

The *Historical News Letter* has continued in much the same form with a general development toward serving as an exchange for historical information relating to local organizations as well as your State Society. The "Out of Old Nebraska" columns have continued to be issued at the rate of one each week for publication in the press of the state. These columns are written by various members of the staff with Dr. Danker, Society Historian, serving as editor. Among other publications during the year was a Guide to the Archives prepared by William Schmidt, Archivist. It is expected that a supplement guide will be issued each year.

The photographic section under the immediate supervision of Miss Myrtle D. Berry has made outstanding progress during the year. Numerous collections have been catalogued and every effort directed toward preparing for heavy demands in connection with the Centennial.

There has been general improvement in the Archives. Some 300 collections have been redescribed after the pattern of the Library of Congress and the National Archives. The microfilm project for newspapers and archival materials has continued. A major change has been the purchase of both a negative and positive film copy of all current work to insure maximum preservation. A considerable amount of positive film for microfilm completed during the past fifteen years was also purchased.

Federal grants during the year include a continuation of the National Science Foundation archeological grant for a study of the Logan Creek Complex in the amount of \$3,500. A grant from the National Historical Publications

Commission of \$6,800 provides two full-time additional staff members for the preparation of papers relating to J. Sterling Morton, Robert W. Furnas and others for micro-filming. A second grant will be requested during the next year to complete the microfilming.

Despite staff vacancies, the museum carried on an active program headed by John Garrett, Curator of Anthropology and David Drury, Curator of History. At the end of the fiscal year Mr. Garrett had resigned to accept a position with the Aero Space Program. Wendell Frantz, Highway Salvage Archeologist has been assigned to this position. The museum staff prepared 53 new exhibits during the year for the State Fair, Fort Robinson and the headquarters building. They also prepared technical research reports on archeological research at Fort Kearny, Fort Atkinson and the highway salvage program.

The Education section under the immediate supervision of Mrs. Rosemary Seyler, Curator of Education on the museum staff, provided tours or special programs for 16,247 students. Without the dedicated volunteer service of the Junior League of Lincoln we would not be able to carry on this program.

The Historical Land Mark Council, a Society related activity, carried on a busy year with the dedication of ten markers at various locations in the State. The Society also coordinated the fund drive for the John J. Pershing bust in the Nebraska Hall of Fame. During the year the Society Director served on the National Pony Express Centennial Commission. Other Nebraska representatives on this Commission include Paul Henderson of Bridgeport and Merrill Mattes of Omaha. Specialized markers commemorating the route of the Pony Express were erected this year at Scottsbluff, Fairbury, Ogallala, North Platte and Gothenburg. During the year I also served on the Board of Trustees for the Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement, Secretary to the Historical Land Mark Council and the Secretary to the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

We continued our efforts to meet with historical organizations throughout the state. During the year I spoke on 26 occasions, Dr. Danker and Mr. Schmidt each spoke to 13 different groups.

There are many other details that might be provided as evidence that your Society progressed during the year. Many of these are presented in the sections dealing with each department.

Without a competent staff devoted to the work of your Society I would not be able to report progress today. I would particularly like to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Danker who has provided outstanding service. Mr. Schmidt in his position of Archivist has brought new enthusiasm and fresh ideas to an old institution. Your Executive Board under the leadership of President Warren C. Wood has devoted many hours to the welfare of your Society. I hope that each of you as members of the Society will take as your personal project to build our membership far beyond our goal of 5,000 by September of 1967.

## MUSEUM

Despite a limited staff the museum section carried on an active program ranging from displays to archeological research. There was an increase of about 20% in the number of individuals viewing Society exhibits at the State Fair. Smaller increases in visitors were recorded at the Fort Robinson Museum, at the Wm J. Bryan Home, and at the headquarters in Lincoln. Some 53 new exhibit units were installed in these four areas of display.

Museum staff members devoted considerable time to our program of working with local historical organizations who have museums or potential museum programs. Such assistance ranged from advice on cataloging systems to the loan of exhibit materials. Our program to assist local historical organizations with their museum and site preservation projects is one of the important contributions that the State Society can make in the Nebraska historical field.

Staff publications and research manuscripts remain an important activity for all divisions of the Society. During the past year, Wendell Frantz, Highway Salvage Archeologist, completed a report on "Results of the 1963-1964 Highway Salvage Program." The Nebraska Department of Roads, under the direction of John Hossack, has provided outstanding support for this cooperative program. John Garrett, Curator of Anthropology, completed manuscript reports on excavations in 1964 by the Society at the sites of Fort Kearny and Fort Atkinson. Other manuscripts were completed by the museum staff for publication in professional journals.

During the year the museum staff attended local and regional museum conferences and served as co-host for the Plains Archeological Conference. Special exhibits were made for this conference depicting the sixty-five years of research in Anthropology by the Society.

One of the major problems for the museum continues to be adequate space, not only for the storage of important specimens but for adequate display of important collections. We presently have a rather extensive collection of agricultural equipment. It is hoped that eventually adequate display space will be available for a Nebraska Hall of Agriculture where the story of agriculture may be presented in all its important details.

### ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY

Increasing demands for public service have characterized this past year. Requests for historical information through the mails have been especially numerous. More than 1,200 letters were answered, an increase of more than fifty per cent over last year. Some 400 telephone inquiries were received. At the same time, 5,522 scholars, authors, and genealogists used the facilities in person. The Archives and Library have had an active year to meet this increasing demand.

In order to improve our service to the public, the Archives have been reorganized. Three hundred collections have been redescribed after the pattern of the Library of Congress and the National Archives. In connection with this program, the Society for the first time has reported its holdings to the *National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections*. The NUCMC gives the Society's holdings national recognition. In addition, the Archives has added significantly to its collections. A few of the more outstanding papers received were those of Ralph F. Beerman; George Brandsberg, consisting in part of taped interviews with Oren Lee Staley; Theophil Herman Berg, relating to the city government in Lincoln; Frank E. Edgerton; Albert Litle Johnson; John P. Senning, and the records of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association.

The Archives is continuing its efforts to obtain new collections. While little success has been experienced in receiving city and town records, various counties throughout the state and numerous state agencies have placed records with the Society. Since many state agencies cannot, according to law, release their records, an agreement has been made with one department to have its material placed under Society control on a permanent loan basis. In many cases private organizations are reluctant to turn over their archives because of anticipated reference in the future. To cope with this problem, the Society has offered to microfilm these collections, thereby providing the private institution with a security copy in the event anything should happen to the original and at the same time, assuring scholars of new material. Under this program, the Society was able to obtain the records of the Nebraska Conference of the United Church of Christ, as well as the personal papers of Allen R. Benton and Randall Fuller. Throughout the year a concerted effort has been made to obtain the papers of Nebraska's representatives in Washington. Thus far, Senator Roman L. Hruska, Congressmen Glen Cunningham and Clair Callan have consented to place their papers with the Society.

To accommodate wider use of the archival holdings, the Society accepted a grant from the National Historical Publications Commission of \$6,800 to prepare the papers of J. Sterling Morton, Robert W. Furnas, the Farmers Alliance of Nebraska, Samuel Maxwell, and Samuel Chapman for microfilming. Another grant will be requested to film these collections.

To strengthen our service to scholars and researchers, a bulletin, *A Guide to the Archives and Manuscripts* and a pamphlet, *Genealogical Aids*, were prepared. Other publications by the Archivist have appeared in *Nebraska History*, *American Archivist*, *Nebraska Newspaper*, and various newspapers in the state. To publicize the functions of the Archives and Library, the archivists made 13 speeches to groups in the state and a number of talks on an Omaha radio station.

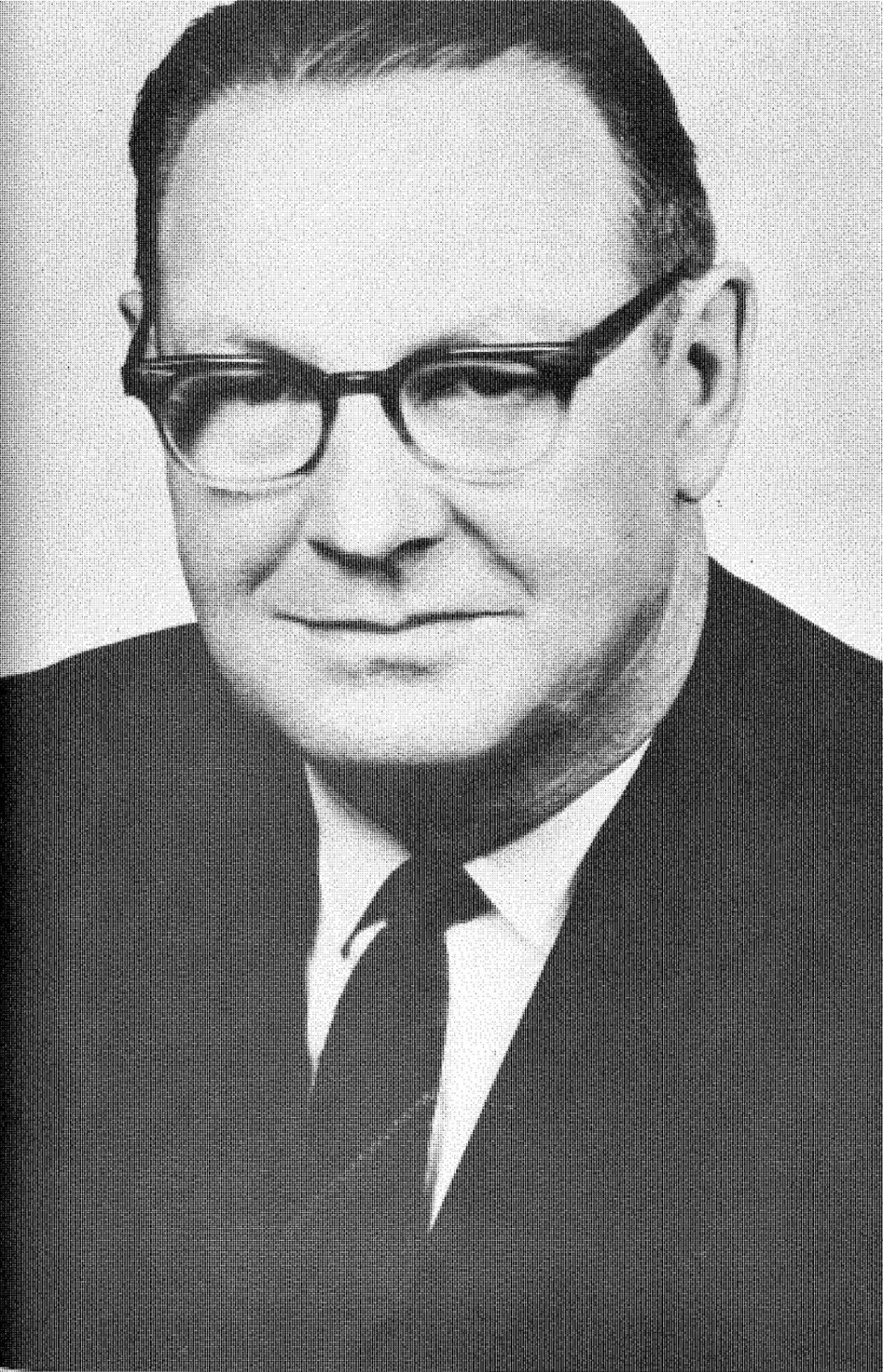
The Library has continued its steady growth as the following chart indicates:

Category	1964 total	Additions	1965 total
Volumes .....	48,791	2,012	50,803
Maps .....	5,505	7	5,512
Microfilm reels .....	8,436	601	9,037
Photographs .....	79,354	3,000	82,354

Statistics alone do not fully explain our achievements. The above figures represent a 60% increase in the number of books catalogued and a 3% increase in microfilm reels processed during the previous year. The Information Index, a Library project begun in 1957, has been increased by 2,101 entries. In addition 207 books were bound in the Society's bindery.

During the course of the year we furnished photographs to a number of periodical and book publishers. Among these were, *American Heritage*, *Time, Incorporated*, Houghton Mifflin, Prentice Hall, Crowell-Collier, Macmillan Company, the Clarendon Press in London, and the Librairie Hachette in Paris.

As in the past few years, considerable use was made of our picture collection for television purposes, for various exhibits sponsored by schools and other organizations, and for research and study by students and others.



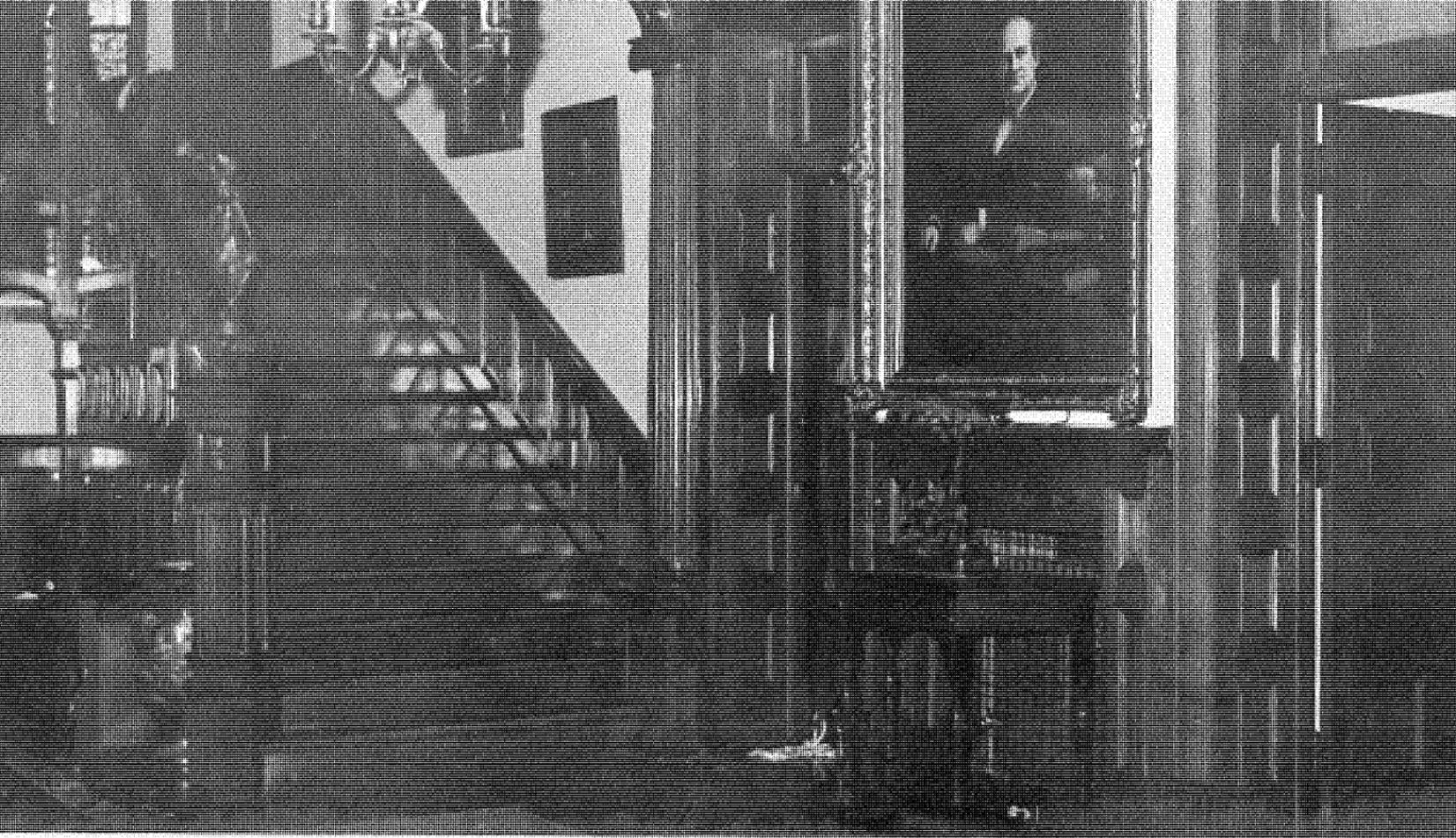
Charles C. Osborne of Hastings, President, Nebraska  
State Historical Society.



Professor A. R. Mortensen, University of Utah.



Professor Orville Zabel and class from Midland College  
touring the Society Library and Archives.



*Fairview, William Jennings Bryan home in Lincoln.*

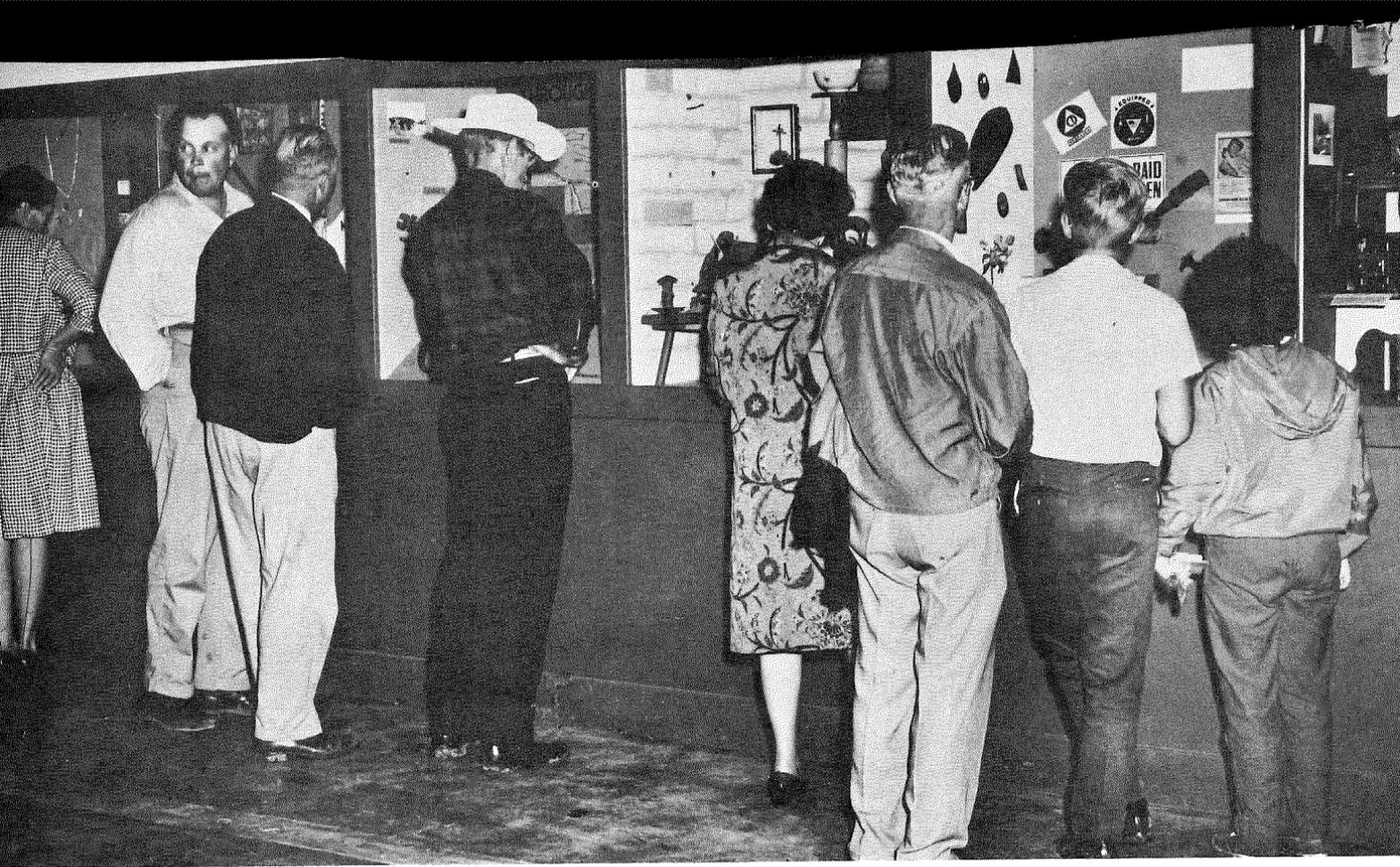
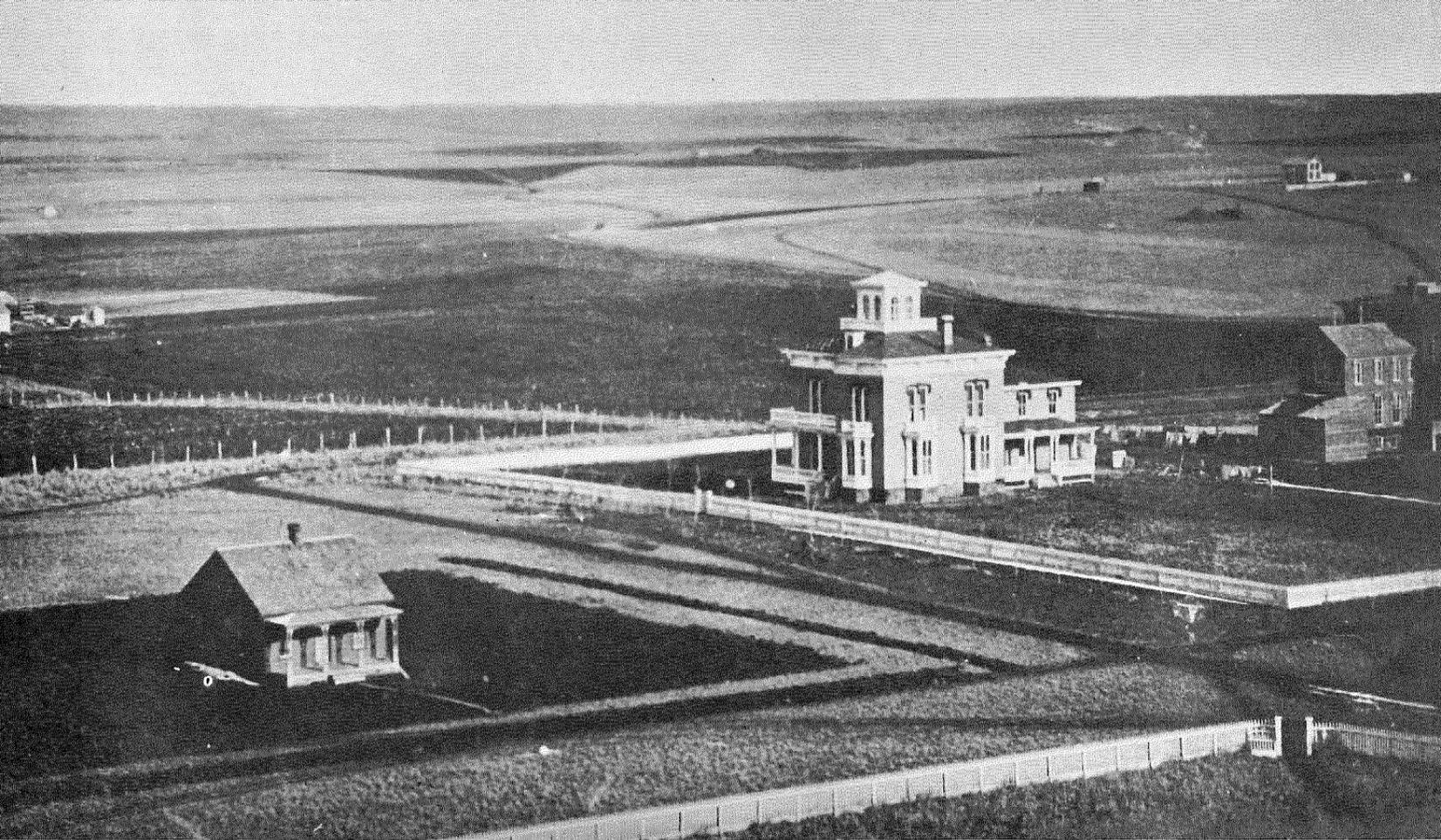


Exhibit area at 1965 State Fair.



Thomas P. Kennard home, center, designated by the Legislature as the Nebraska Statehood Memorial.



Fort Robinson Museum Exhibit.



Fort Robinson Museum near Crawford.



Archeological field excavations in Richardson County showing an earthlodge floor.



Indian rock carvings exposed by excavation work in Richardson County.



Governor Frank B. Morrison accepting the bust of General John J. Pershing on behalf of the State of Nebraska for permanent display in the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

NEBRASKA

HISTORICAL



MARKER

## THE 100th MERIDIAN

The 100th longitudinal line west of Greenwich was the major goal set by Congress in building the first transcontinental railroad. Construction of the Union Pacific track reached the Meridian on October 5, 1866. To celebrate this record-breaking achievement against terrific odds, appropriate ceremonies were enacted on this ground on October 26, 1866. A Great Excursion from Wall Street to the 100th Meridian brought 250 notables including railroad and territorial officials, congressmen, financiers and newspaper men on the first passenger train to run west of the Missouri River. A large signboard proclaiming the "100th Meridian 247 Miles From Omaha" stood for many years close to the track on the Meridian but finally disappeared, and in 1933 was replaced on the original site with a monument of native stone by the Cozad Chapter of the D. A. R.

In 1879 John Wesley Powell, U. S. Army, in his report for the Geological Survey recognized the 100th Meridian as the natural demarcation line extending northward from the western shore of the Gulf of Mexico. Evaporation from the gulf waters supplies most of the rainfall east of the Meridian. West of the Meridian precipitation comes largely from the Pacific which is generally insufficient for agricultural needs without irrigation. Here on the 100th Meridian, Humid East Meets Arid West.

Cozad Chamber of Commerce

Historical Land Mark Council

Historical Marker erected at Cozad.