

NEBRASKA history news

Volume 70 / Number 1 / January/February/March 2017

Happy Birthday, Nebraska! Signature Sesquicentennial Event March 1 at Nebraska History Museum

The Legacy of Nebraska Opens March 1

Nebraska will celebrate 150 years of statehood throughout 2017. But the actual anniversary will be marked with a number of signature events, including the opening of *The Legacy of Nebraska* exhibition at the Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln. Governor Pete Ricketts and many other dignitaries will join artist Todd A. Williams to inaugurate the exhibit of paintings depicting historic, geographic, and figurative elements from each of the state's 93 counties. A Nebraska native, Williams worked with historians, sponsors, and leaders in each county to identify significant subjects for this project.

The public opening is scheduled from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Needlepoint tapestries created by stitchers in each Nebraska county for the state's 1967 centennial will also be on display.

Other March 1 events include raising a 37-star flag and free tours of the NSHS's Thomas P. Kennard House, Nebraska's Statehood Memorial, and historical presentations and a formal ceremony at the Nebraska State Capitol. *The Legacy of Nebraska* will be at NHM through June 4, at Grand Island's Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (June 17-August 20), and Omaha's Gallery 1516 (September 1 - October 15). Regional selections will be simultaneously

Continued on p. 2



The Nebraska State Historical Society collects, preserves, and opens to all, the histories we share.



Sioux Encampment Near Chimney Rock - Morrill County 2016, Oil, 24 x 36, by Todd A. Williams

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exhibited at Bone Creek Museum of Agrarian Art, David City; Homestead National Monument of America, Beatrice; Gallery 92, Fremont; Knight Museum, Alliance; Dawson County Historical Society Museum, Lexington; and the West Nebraska Art Center, Scottsbluff throughout the rest of 2017. The exhibition is part of a larger educational project that will include an art book, a collector's set of calendars, and a documentary film produced by NET, Nebraska's public television affiliate.

Nebraska's long history and its possibilities for the future are the focus for NSHS programming in 2017. We'll look not just at Nebraska as a state, but at the many peoples and cultures who called this place home over thousands of years. We'll also convene conversations about issues facing us now and shaping our future. And we'll have some fun for all ages. See more details throughout these pages, online at nebraskahistory.org, and follow us on Facebook. 📺

“Brown Bag” Lecture Series Explores “Peoples of Nebraska”

“Peoples of Nebraska” will be the 2017 theme for the Nebraska History Museum’s popular “Brown Bag” lecture series. The free lectures are held from noon to 1 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month, are broadcast on local access cable in several cities across the state, and are posted to the NSHS’s YouTube channel.

“In light of the 150th anniversary of statehood,

a yearlong theme seems appropriate,” says NSHS volunteer John Strope, even though it’s not been typical for the 30-year-old series. Strope schedules the series and has helped expand outlets broadcasting the recorded lectures.

Recording for later use is funded by the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation. See p. 10 for speakers and topics for January through March. 📺

NSHS Educator Sharon Kennedy Honored

Nebraska History Museum educator Sharon Kennedy was honored as Museum Educator of the Year by the Nebraska Art Teachers Association at its annual conference at McCook on September 30, 2016. Formerly the director of education at the Sheldon Museum of Art in Lincoln, Kennedy joined the NSHS staff in 2016. With educators Judy Keetle and Shannon Liedel, she is part of a team working to expand the Nebraska History Museum’s programming and outreach. Congratulations, Sharon! 📺



“Movies on Trial” Winter Film Series

The Nebraska History Museum welcomes back our annual film series in January 2017. This year’s theme is “Movies on Trial,” spotlighting six films from the 1940s, ’50s, and ’60s that feature courtroom drama. All films will be shown, free of charge at 1:30 p.m. Seating is limited!

January 22 *Adam’s Rib* (1949). The Spencer Tracy-Katharine Hepburn comedy classic of two lawyers, husband and wife, on opposing sides in an attempted murder trial.

January 29 *The Wrong Man* (1957). Henry Fonda stars in an Alfred Hitchcock film about a man wrongly accused of a series of hold-ups.

February 5 *Twelve Angry Men* (1957). Henry Fonda, playing the sole hold-out on a hanging jury, turns the case around for the defendant.

February 12. *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957). Charles Laughton and Tyrone Power head an all-star cast in an Agatha Christie drama directed by Billy Wilder.

February 19 *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959). James Stewart plays a lawyer defending an army lieutenant on a murder charge after an attack on the man’s wife.

February 26 *Inherit the Wind* (1960). Loosely based on the Scopes Trial of 1925, Fredric March and Spencer Tracy play characters based on William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow as they debate the teaching of evolution. 📺

\$79.8M Impact, 1,033 Jobs from Historic Tax Credit

Tax credits for historic preservation projects are producing big pay-offs. A new economic impact study finds the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit (NHTC) generated some \$79M in economic activity and 1,033 jobs in 2015, its inaugural year. The NSHS administers the program and asked the Bureau of Business Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to assess the first projects to use the tax credits created by the Nebraska Job Creation and Mainstreet Revitalization Act. Commercial and residential rehabilitation projects completed in Omaha, Boys Town, and Norfolk offer compelling evidence that preservation pays.

Thirteen of the 46 projects allocated credits are now completed and are the basis for the analysis. Additional key findings include \$35.07M in wages for Nebraska workers and \$45.26M added to the state's gross state product. And even though the projects involved income tax credits, they leveraged \$3.22 million in state and local taxes.

The NHTC offers incentives for the redevelopment of historic properties and districts in Nebraska, and encourages private investment in historic buildings and neighborhoods. The program is intended to spur the rehabilitation of historic buildings throughout the state, which the study concludes, "is likely to promote both direct and indirect economic benefits to the state economy."

Rehabilitation of the historic Burlington Station in Omaha by the Hearst Corporation as the new home of KETV is one of the biggest and most visible projects. But important smaller scale efforts are helping convert long-vacant properties into low income and other housing, banking, and commercial and retail spaces.

The Travers Row Houses near 26th & St. Marys Avenue in Omaha, once vacant and slated for demolition, have come back to life a century after some entrepreneurial brothers first constructed the buildings in what was then "west" Omaha. Norfolk's stately former US post office and courthouse, known as the "McMill Building" after the Roman numerals for its year of construction, MCMIII, now houses a variety of businesses and offices. Tax credits helped make major HVAC improvements possible.

Besides major improvements, other projects revive historic elements. A recently-discovered ornate plaster ceiling in the Hall County Courthouse in Grand Island was restored by a local plasterer through a 2016 tax credit project. And Chadron's



Weber Building will lose its "remuddled" storefront with one that's historically appropriate.

**Howard Street Apartment
Historic District, Omaha**

The good news will keep on coming. Another 2016 project, The Hastings Brewery, is slated for rehabilitation as 35 low-income housing units. Dr. Eric Thompson, author of the study noted, "The numbers provide strong evidence that the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit has already had a number of positive impacts on the Nebraska economy. The program is likely to continue to have significant impacts as developers continue to take advantage of tax credits in coming years."

The NSHS's State Historic Preservation Office administers the program in cooperation with the Nebraska Department of Revenue. Another \$15M in tax credits for calendar year 2017 will be allocated based on applications received by the NSHS no earlier than January 3, 2017. Learn more about the NHTC at www.nebraskahistory.org/histpres/nhtc.htm or 402-471-4788. ☒



Nancy Griffen, Miss Centennial Nebraska, 1967. Photos courtesy of Nancy Pardeiro

A Year as “Miss Centennial Nebraska” BY KYLIE KINLEY

It won her a crown so heavy it dented her forehead, a gold 1967 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme, and a quarter horse named Billy Ray Lane.

But when Miss Nebraska Centennial Nancy Pardeiro talks about her reign as Nebraska’s Centennial Queen in 1967, she doesn’t talk about the things. She talks about the people and the experiences.

“It was a thrilling, exciting, and intense year of people and events,” Pardeiro says. “I did it because it was just such an unusual event. And the timing was perfect.”

Then Miss Nancy Griffen, Pardeiro had just graduated from Atkinson High School and was starting at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a Spanish major.

Pardeiro had never competed in pageants before, but she won her local competition in Atkinson and then the Holt County pageant in the summer of 1966 before advancing to the state contest in December.

The Nebraska Centennial Queen pageant was just one of many festivities planned by the Nebraska Centennial Commission. Formed in 1961 by an act of the legislature, the commission was appropriated \$600,000 for the celebration (around \$4.5 million in today’s dollars). The commission’s goals were to

honor the state’s heritage, stage a state-wide birthday party from March 1 to November 25, 1967, and to design programs and projects of lasting value.

The goal of the Miss Centennial Nebraska pageant was to find “Nebraska’s Golden Girl.” It was to be the “biggest queen pageant in the Midwest,” said Ed Sykes, assistant director of the Nebraska Centennial Commission. The University of Nebraska’s *Daily Nebraskan* reported: “The ‘Girl of the Century’ candidates will be judged on natural beauty, poise and personality, public speaking ability, and talent.” Of these, beauty was most important.

Held at the Pershing Auditorium in Lincoln, the “First Official Nebraska Centennial Event” awarded more than \$10,000 in prizes, trips, and scholarships. Pardeiro competed on December 6. Her talent was playing the organ. She remembers how nervous she was to perform.

“The whole event was quite intense,” she says. “We were standing in line and I thought, ‘I’ve forgotten everything. I don’t have a single note to play.’ And I’d grab the book and refresh my memory. I learned if you’re well prepared, usually you can pull it off.”

She was voted “Glow Girl” by the other contest entrants and won the Miss Congeniality trophy.

Griffen in a parade in O’Neill, Nebraska, 1967.



"Then I was in the top ten. Then top five. Then I won, and it was so overwhelming. I couldn't believe it," Pardeiro says.

Pardeiro was required to take a year off of school to fulfill her queenly duties. Along with the car and the quarter horse, which she kept at her uncle's in Holt County, she received luggage, a watch, and an entire new wardrobe.

"It was what you would call 'church clothes' now with some very formal dresses," Pardeiro says. "They also had made some old western style dresses with cowboy boots and hats."

Her first event as Miss Centennial Nebraska was to travel to Pasadena to be in the Rose Bowl Parade. Once back in Nebraska, Pardeiro attended hundreds of events across the state. She usually made the journey in her 1967 Oldsmobile, which had one of the first vanity plates ever issued in Nebraska.

"Mine said 'Nancy,'" Pardeiro said. "One time a policeman pulled me over because he had never seen anything like it."

Even though the pageant organizers valued beauty, Pardeiro's role fulfilled the commission's wish to promote the heritage of the state and celebrate Nebraska's birthday.

"Sometimes I traveled to a town and I didn't know what they wanted—a speech or for me to play the organ or what. I was in so many parades," Pardeiro says. "It gradually happened that I became more outgoing because, well, you couldn't say no. I had to be prepared to do whatever they needed."

In 1968 Pardeiro returned to the University of Nebraska and her sorority house, Gamma Phi Beta. She sold the Oldsmobile to pay for her education.

"Sometimes I really wish I had kept it," Pardeiro says.

During her sophomore year, her house hosted Nebraska Governor Norbert Tiemann, whom Pardeiro knew from her time as Centennial Queen.

Pardeiro mentioned to him how she and a friend wanted to travel "somewhere different" for the summer. He connected them with employment at a hotel in Hawaii, and they went.

"I fell in love with Hawaii, and I transferred there and graduated in 1971," Pardeiro says.

She met her husband, Carlos Pardeiro, shortly after she graduated. They married, worked as self-supporting missionaries, and then moved to the mainland U.S. They've lived in Arkansas for thirty years and have four children. They own and operate a television network called SafeTV.

"We come back to Nebraska ever year for family reunions or high school alumni reunions," Pardeiro says.

Her hometown of Atkinson is still very special to her. And she was definitely special to Atkinson. After she won the title of "Nebraska's Golden Girl," a billboard erected on the highway coming into town read:

"Home of Nancy Griffin, Miss Centennial Nebraska." ❄️

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Nebraska History News is published quarterly for members of the Nebraska State Historical Society, 1500 R Street, P.O. Box 82554, Lincoln, Nebraska, 68501-2554. Telephone: (402) 471-3270, email: nshs.publish@nebraska.gov. Annual membership in the society is \$40; subscription-only membership is \$32. www.nebraskahistory.org Opinions expressed by writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSHS.

Winter Events at NHM

The Nebraska History Museum has a busy winter season planned. Join us for these recurring events—and follow the NSHS on Facebook for details and reminders.

Fourth Friday History Book Club. Meet monthly over the noon hour to discuss books about Nebraska history, highlighting the Nebraska150Books list. Feel free to bring a sack lunch. See p. 10 for schedule. 402-472-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

Noon History Bites. A 15-minute talk on a chosen object. If time allows, stay longer and enjoy your lunch with the new friends you will make. Upcoming topics include a scooter made by Lincoln's Cushman Motor Company (January 9), a recording of Martin Luther King's 1964 Speech in Lincoln (February 6), and a Boy Scout canoe from

a man who used to teach scouts how to build them (March 6).

Half-Pint Historians. Stories and crafts for little ones, at 10 a.m. on selected dates. January 18, "Can You Hear Me Now?" Historical objects both loud and quiet. February 16, "Fancy Schmancy!" Dress up and "find the fancy" in exhibits. March 14, "Animals are All Around."

Free Family Fun Days. 2-4 p.m. on selected Saturdays. Make your own poster on the peace and unity theme celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday and Inauguration Day as part of "Campaign Creations" (January 14; make and take Valentine's Day cards using historical copies as inspiration (February 11); celebrate Welsh heritage through crafts during "Tales from Wales" (March 18). ❄️





Resident Carter Hulinsky at Sky Park Manor

Sky Park Manor's 1960s Groove BY KYLIE KINLEY

Once hailed as a building with “a thrilling tingle of excitement for those who share in its luxurious appointments,” Lincoln’s Sky Park Manor is now listed on the National Register for Historic Places. With its basement fallout shelter, 1960s glamour, and significant architecture, the building at 13th and J Street preserves an important time period. Janet Jeffries of Berggren Architects wrote the nomination.

“If you were living in Lincoln at the time, this was *the* place,” Jeffries said. “I love reading about their marketing.”

A promotional brochure from Sky Park Manor boasts facilities with *Mad Men*-like hyperbole and suave: “Amid beautifully landscaped surroundings—including a sun-dappled patio and velvet putting green—the regal building proudly displays its distinctive exterior with marble and marble chip mosaic panels and handsome precast concrete grills. Spacious balconies with colorful ‘privacy panels’ hint of the unhurried living for which these apartments were so carefully designed.”

Advertisements in the Omaha and Lincoln newspapers from the 1960s also boast about the building’s amenities.

“Skypark was so far ahead of its time with these conveniences,” Jeffries said. “They even said ‘We have a fallout shelter in case you need it.’”

Located in the southwest corner, the fallout shelter is currently the building’s event space and multi-purpose room. Jeffries wrote in the nomination that “the 1968 Lincoln Telephone Directory listed Sky Park’s shelter capacity as 1,295 occupants, so clearly the building was to also serve as a neighborhood shelter. The city of Lincoln took the threat of nuclear attack seriously, being located just 50 miles from the Strategic Air Command in Bellevue, a potential target.”

Jeffries wasn’t sure how the city planned to gather the neighborhood into the shelter.


“If the bomb goes off, do you go ringing the door for the door guy to let you in?” Jeffries asked.

A doorman was just one Sky Park’s luxuries. Ceramic mosaic tiles and Italian marble lavatory counters were standard in all bathrooms, while vinyl wall coverings and Formica countertops were installed in the kitchens. The lobby and spacious corridors were decorated with textured vinyl wall coverings, plush carpet, and elegant light fixtures. Until the 1990s, soft music played in all public areas.

There’s nothing like the comfort of a well-appointed fallout shelter in which to while away the aftermath of a thermonuclear war.

FALLOUT SHELTER

Sky Park Manor is the first modern apartment building in Nebraska to include a Fallout Shelter for its tenants. This roomy area is stocked with an abundant supply of food and water and other necessities, and is furnished in the most pleasant, inviting manner. Big, comfortable lounge chairs. Excellent lighting. Television. Radio, library, music, communications system.



Sky Park Manor has first floor and basement parking areas, storage lockers, and one- to three-bedroom units, all with at least two balcony access points. The second floor features a “Fun and Sun Deck” with a pool. Floors ten and eleven contain penthouse apartments designed specifically for owners Solheim and Olson. The twelfth floor houses other penthouse units, boiler room, laundry room with access to the Solar Terrace, a Finnish sauna with dressing room and shower, and a restroom. The first floor originally housed a cigar stand, beauty salon, and a manager’s apartment with private patio. While much of the first floor has been re-purposed, most of the building’s features are nearly the same as when the building opened in 1963.

“The original textured, vinyl wall coverings, light fixtures, and wall-mounted cigarette receptacles are in place in the public spaces on all floors—creating a veritable time-capsule,” Jeffries wrote in her nomination.

Each floor had a theme for its light fixtures and wallpaper, from white-painted wrought iron and crystal light fixtures, to bronze wall sconces and flowered wallpaper.

Sky Park resident Carter Hulinsky, who helped with the nomination process, fully embraces the mid-century modern vibes of Sky Park. He’s even outfitted his apartment with period furniture.

“I live here because it’s a novelty,” Hulinsky said.

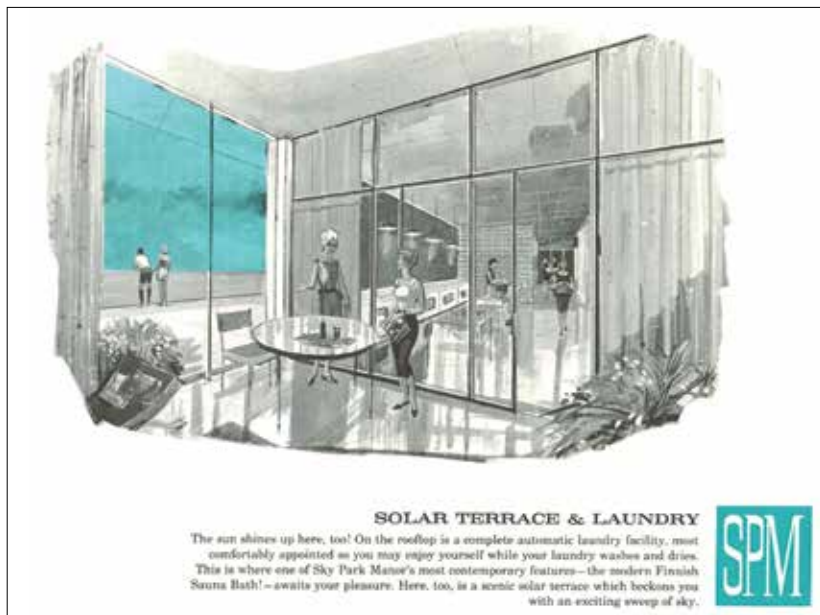
Hulinsky collects books, records, furniture, and Civil Defense items from the 1950s and 60s, and he often thinks about what living at Sky Park when it was new would have been like.

“They advertised it as a little island of paradise,” Hulinsky said. “You could get your hair done, you could get your candy and smokes. You had a doorman, a salon; your neighbors were the uppercrust of Lincoln.”

As Jeffries wrote in the nomination, “The \$1.5 million apartment building was planned with the affluent Lincolnite in mind. The targeted tenant was one who desired a lifestyle devoid of home maintenance, and also wanted the convenience and enjoyment of living in a vibrant downtown. Lincoln professionals and businessmen and their families, retirees, and Nebraska lawmakers were among those who resided there.”

“The units rented for \$175 a month in 1963, which would be \$1,300 a month in 2016 dollars,” Hulinsky said.

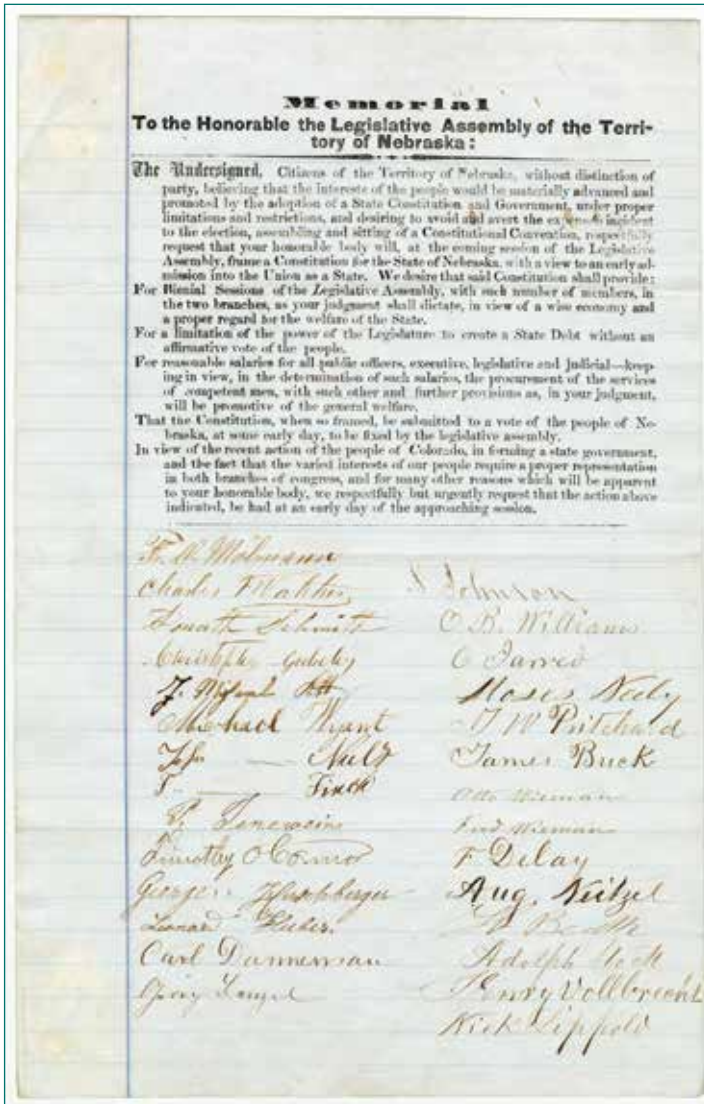
Now that the building is on the National Register, Jeffries said the owners plan on taking advantage of tax credits that come with the program, repairing and restoring components “to retain the architectural integrity of the building.”



Page from Sky Park’s promotional brochure, promoting the “Solar Terrace.”

Sky Park Manor Mid-Century Architecture Tour

Sat., Feb. 18, 1-3 p.m., followed by refreshments in former bomb shelter. Held in conjunction with the exhibit *Dreams in the Cold War* and hosted by the Nebraska History Museum, the State Historic Preservation Office, and Berggren Architects, courtesy of Sky Park’s owners and management staff. \$20 per person, \$15 for NSHS members, pre-registration required. Limited to 25 people. 402-471-4445, sharon.kennedy@nebraska.gov



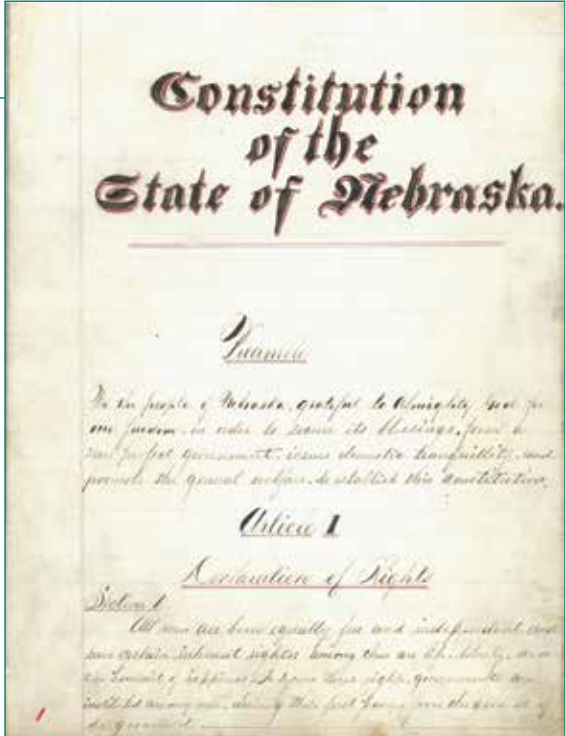
Treasures from the NSHS Collections

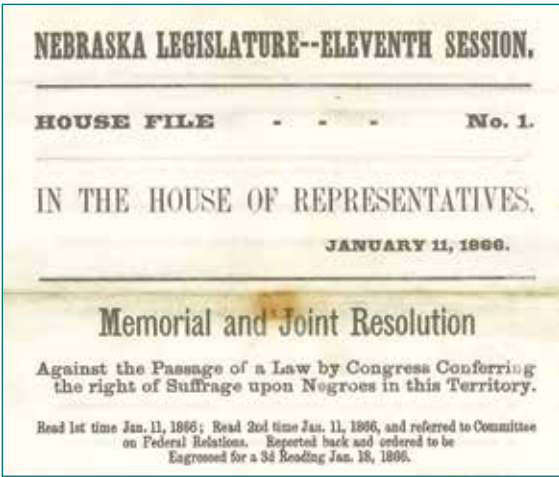
RACE, VOTING RIGHTS, AND OUR FIRST (ALMOST) STATE CONSTITUTION

Nebraska's founding documents tell the story of the territory's controversial transition to statehood 150 years ago. Six page images from the NSHS archives provide a glimpse of Reconstruction-era politics, bitter partisan rivalries, and the struggle for civil rights.

Statehood petitions circulated in early 1866. Not everyone favored statehood, and Nebraska had rejected it before. The federal government paid for the territorial government, but Nebraskans would have to tax themselves to pay for a state government. And Democratic leaders preferred to be governed by territorial officers appointed by President Andrew Johnson (a Democrat) rather than by state officers elected by Nebraska's Republican majority.

This proposed constitution appeared suddenly during the 1866 statehood debate and was introduced as a legislative bill. Allegedly it was drafted in secret by Governor Alvin Saunders and a few other pro-state allies. Anti-state Democrats were outraged. "Who made it? Who authorized it to be made?" said J. Sterling Morton's *Nebraska City News*, while the *Omaha Weekly Herald* called it "among the most offensive political abortions of which our Territorial history furnishes any record."

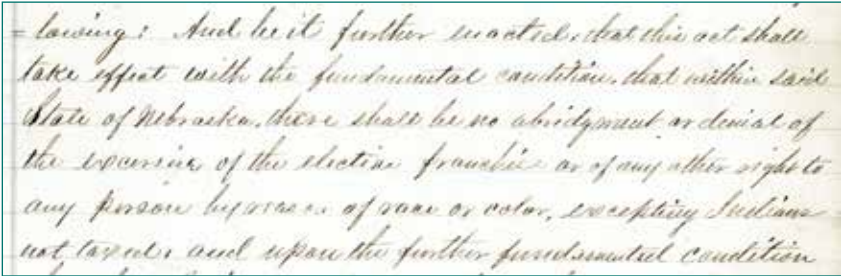
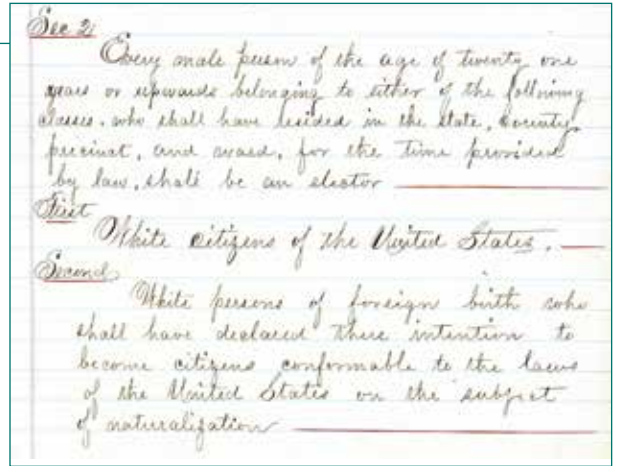




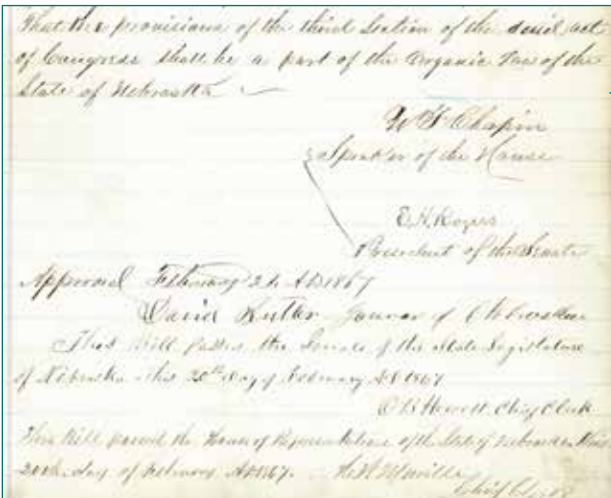
Meanwhile, many Nebraskans of both parties worried about a bill in Congress that would require U.S. territories to give black men the vote—something few states allowed. This Nebraska legislative resolution urged defeat of the suffrage bill as “an act of oppression” that might convert Nebraska “into a negro colony, where the war of races is liable at any day to break out in slaughters, murders and desolation.” NSHS RG56-7-18

The 1866 constitution included a provision, shown here, limiting the vote to white men. This was a point on which Nebraska’s Republicans and Democrats mostly agreed. Despite other objections, the territorial legislature approved statehood and the constitution, as did voters in a June 2 special election that also elected state officers.

But Nebraska did not become a state in 1866. Congress approved statehood, but President Johnson—who was fighting with Republicans over Reconstruction policies—did not sign the bill into law. Because of this “pocket veto,” Congress had to pass a new statehood bill in 1867. When it did, it added a new condition: Nebraska must first remove its whites-only voting provision. Republicans wanted to use Nebraska as a precedent for what they would require of former Confederate states applying for re-admission to the Union.



Events now moved quickly. President Johnson vetoed the Nebraska statehood bill on January 29, 1867, arguing that Congress had no authority to regulate suffrage in a state. Congress overrode the veto on February 9 and, five days later, Governor Saunders called Nebraska’s new state legislature into session to vote on an act by which “there shall be no abridgment or denial of the elective franchise... by a reason of race or color...”



The legislature passed the bill on February 20; it was signed the next day. This page bears the signatures of house speaker, senate president, two clerks, and Nebraska’s new state governor, David Butler. Outmaneuvered and outvoted, President Johnson proclaimed Nebraska statehood on March 1. ☑

UPCOMING EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted, all events are free and open to the public.

January 3 • 10-11 a.m.

Hour at the Museum, story hour

A Boy Called Slow: The True Story of Sitting Bull
by Joseph Bruchac
Nebraska History Museum (NHM)
402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

January 9 • 12 noon

Cushman Scooter: Kermit Wolff

Noon History Bites

NHM • 402-471-4782

January 14 • 2-4 p.m.

Free Family Fun Days: Campaign Creations
NHM • 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

January 18 • 10-11 a.m.

Half-Pint Historians (ages 3-)

Can You Hear Me Now?
NHM • 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

January 19 • 12 noon

Nebraska Fossils and People Before Written History
Rob Bozell and Shane Tucker
Brown Bag Lecture Series
NHM • 402-471-4782

January 22 • 1:30 p.m.

Winter Film Series: *Adam's Rib*
NHM • 402-471-4782

January 27 • 12-1 p.m.

Fourth Friday Noon History Book Club
The Children's Blizzard by David Laskin
NHM • 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

January 29 • 1:30 p.m.

Winter Film Series: *The Wrong Man*
NHM • 402-471-4782

February 5 • 1:30 p.m.

Winter Film Series: *Twelve Angry Men*
NHM • 402-471-4782

February 6 • 12 noon

Recording of MLK 1964 Speech in Lincoln
Albert Maxey
Noon History Bites
NHM • 402-471-4782

February 11 • 2-4 p.m.

Free Family Fun Days
Valentines at the Nebraska History Museum
NHM • 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

February 12 • 1:30 p.m.

Winter Film Series: *Witness for the Prosecution*
NHM • 402-471-4782

February 16 • 10-11 a.m.

Half-Pint Historians: Fancy Schmancy!
NHM • 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

February 16 • 12 noon

Artifacts from the Great Plains Black History Museum
Patrick Jones

Brown Bag Lecture Series

NHM • 402-471-4782

February 18 • 1-3 p.m.

Sky Park Manor Mid-Century Architecture Tour
\$20 (\$15 for NSHS members), pre-registration required
402-471-4445, sharon.kennedy@nebraska.gov

February 19 • 1:30 p.m.

Winter Film Series: *Anatomy of a Murder*
NHM • 402-471-4782

February 24 • 12-1 p.m.

Fourth Friday Noon History Book Club
Sharpie: The Life Story of Evelyn Sharp,
Nebraska's Aviatrice, by Diane Ruth Armour Bartels
NHM • 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

February 26 • 1:30 p.m.

Winter Film Series: *Inherit the Wind*
NHM • 402-471-4782

March 1

9:00 a.m.

37 Star U.S. Flag Raising

Thomas P. Kennard House • 402-471-4764

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Free Nebraska Statehood Memorial Tours

Kennard House

6:00-8:00 p.m.

Nebraska 150th Anniversary Exhibition Opening
The Legacy of Nebraska paintings by Todd Williams
NHM • 402-471-4782

March 6 • 12 noon

Boy Scout Canoe
Richard Spencer
Noon History Bites
NHM • 402-471-4782

March 14 • 10-11 a.m.

Half-Pint Historians: Animals Are All Around
NHM • 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

March 16 • 12 noon

Todd Williams, artist
Beautiful Nebraska: Images of Our Land and Peoples
Brown Bag Lecture Series
NHM • 402-471-4782

March 18 • 2-4 p.m.

Free Family Fun Days: *Tales from Wales*
NHM • 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

March 24 • 12-1 p.m.

Fourth Friday Noon History Book Club
NHM • 402-471-4757, judy.keetle@nebraska.gov

For updated events, see the NSHS Facebook page, linked from www.nebraskahistory.org

“Cattle War” Rifle Donated to Nebraska History Museum

A recently-donated historic rifle serves as a reminder of the “open range” era and of the birth of the modern cattle industry.

Among the most iconic Western images in our collections is a circa-1892 photo of Mike Shonsey of Clarks, Nebraska, posing with his horse and rifle. When Shonsey died on August 5, 1954, he was said to have been the last surviving participant in Wyoming’s 1892 Johnson County “cattle war.” He worked for Nebraska cattleman Thomas B. Hord and followed him to Wyoming in the early 1880s. There, he was ranch foreman for Hord and other open range cattlemen, several of whom played significant roles in the Johnson County war.

The “war” resulted from an effort by cattle barons affiliated in the Wyoming Stock Growers Association to kill or drive out small ranch operators who were increasingly moving into the ranges where the big companies ran their herds. The cattlemen’s justification for this brutal approach was that these competitors for the range were nothing more than rustlers who were not being reigned-in by local law enforcement.

Shonsey, who had formerly worked for Hord and would do so again, was with the men who gunned down two alleged rustlers north of Casper (some accounts say Shonsey fired the fatal shots). Soon the cattlemen were themselves besieged at another ranch, rescued by U.S. troops, and taken to Cheyenne for trial—where they were released after the court failed to find enough willing jurors. The following year Shonsey fatally shot a man (with a revolver) who had come seeking revenge. A jury acquitted Shonsey on grounds of self-defense.

Knowing he was a marked man, Shonsey soon moved to Central City, Nebraska, where he became foreman at the feeding station. In 1898 he moved to Clarks to manage the Hord feeding station there. In 1906 Shonsey became a partner in several of the Hord enterprises.



Shonsey’s rifle.



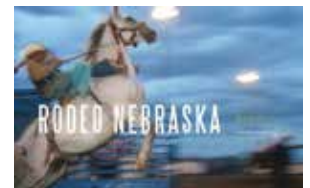
Mike Shonsey, circa 1892, with the rifle that was recently donated to the NSHS. RG4232-5-11

By then the wild days of the open range were long gone. In the early twentieth century Hord’s Nebraska enterprises were known for their enormous scale—thirteen feed lots around Central City, annually finishing 10,000 cattle, 10,000 sheep, and 7,000 hogs—and for modern innovations that made Hord’s operation a model of scientific management. In this environment the events of the 1890s were relegated to an increasingly mythologized past.

Jim Potter, late NSHS senior research historian, wrote about Hord and Shonsey in the Fall 2015 issue of *Nebraska History*. The article received much interest from people with ties to the cattle industry, to Central City, and among Hord and Shonsey descendants, including Michael Shonsey, who recently donated his great-grandfather’s rifle—the one shown in the famous photo—so that it may be preserved as part of the story of that tumultuous era. 📖

Rodeo Nebraska Wins Nebraska Book Award

Rodeo Nebraska by Mark Harris, published by the NSHS, received a Nebraska Book Award for cover/design/illustration from the Nebraska Center for the Book. The book features Harris’s words and photography, and was designed by graphic artist Nathan Putens of Lincoln. The award was presented at the Celebration of Nebraska Books at the Nebraska History Museum on October 29. Since 2012 the NSHS has won five Nebraska Book Awards in various categories for four different books. 📖



NEBRASKA

history news



Nebraska State Historical Society

hours

Nebraska History Museum & Landmark Store

131 Centennial Mall North,
Lincoln
402-471-4754

Monday-Friday, 9-4:30
Saturday & Sunday, 1-4:30

Landmark Store, Capitol

402-471-2062

Monday-Friday, 9:30-4:30

Library/Archives

1500 R Street, Lincoln
402-471-4751

Tuesday-Saturday, 10-4

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www.nebraskahistory.org

From the Collection... Not Quite “The Sower”

They don't make things like they used to—and sometimes that's a good thing. This crudely-made ball, covered with painted metal strips, is displayed at the Nebraska History Museum not for its workmanship but for the story it tells of Nebraska statehood. It's a finial (a rooftop ornament) from the first Nebraska state capitol.

Soon to be renamed Lincoln, the village of Lancaster was barely even a town when it was designated the state capital in 1867. It was a compromise choice among leaders eager to move the seat of government somewhere—anywhere—out of Omaha. But with no suitable building in Lincoln, the state legislature continued to meet in the old territorial capitol in Omaha (at the future site of Central High). Governor David Butler feared that unless a new capitol was ready to receive the legislature for its next session in January 1869, Lincoln would lose its status and the plan for capitol removal would fail.

The first state capitol in Lincoln, therefore, was a rush job, so poorly built that construction of its



replacement was begun in 1882. Today's capitol is the third built on that same site, and the first to be truly worthy of its important role. 📍