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Fall 2014

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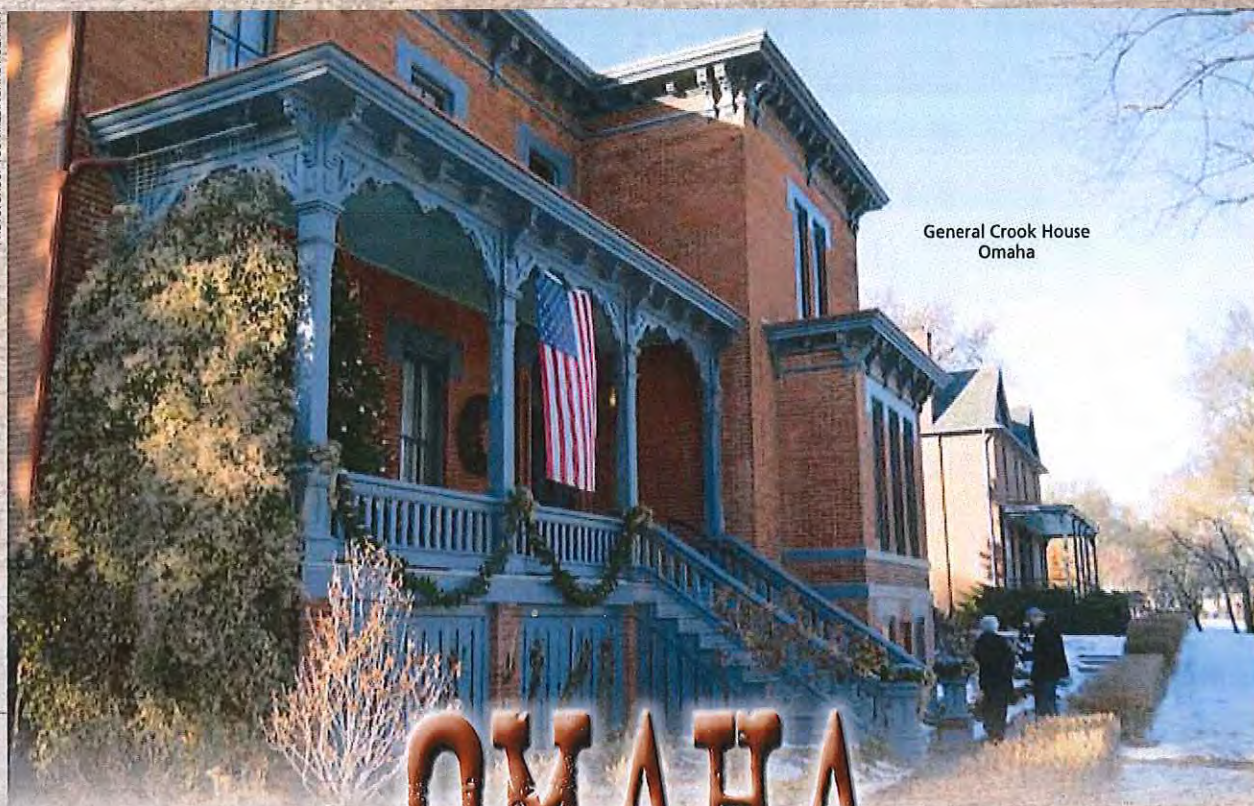
Historic gateway
to the West

Omaha

How to do spell megalopolis?

T-O-K-Y-O





General Crook House
Omaha

OMAHA

By David Hoekman

HISTORIC GATEWAY TO THE WEST

Omaha today reflects its frontier past.

Even before Omaha was founded in 1854 by land speculators and named after a Native American tribe, it served as a jumping-off point for the Mormon Trail.

Guides take groups through the Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters. The center provides glimpses into the rigors of frontier travel faced by those involved in the Mormon migration from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Salt Lake City, Utah.

The winter quarters were established in the winter of 1846–47. The settlement of 500 to 700 log cabins was home for about 2,500 people for nearly two years.

Guide Sister Sequin said the displays help her understand what the travelers were feeling.

"They were very optimistic about everything that happened to them," she said.

Just 2 ½ miles south of the Mormon Trail Center is Fort Omaha, an Indian War-era supply fort

that is now a community college campus. Docents provide tours of General Crook House Museum and Fort Omaha.

U.S. Army Gen. George Crook was posted to Fort Omaha in 1875.

Quarters One, now known as the General Crook House, was built for Crook in 1878–79, and the Italianate house has been restored.

"We're very fortunate to have so much of the original house intact," said guide Carolyn McCormick.

Douglas County Historical Society offers living history dinners for motorcoach tours at the house. Reenactors portray Gen. and Mary Crook.

Crook had the heart and soul of an American Indian, even though he was an Indian fighter.

"We're very proud that General Crook stood up for the Indians," McCormick said

Statue outside Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters, Omaha



Just west of Omaha is Boys Town, a nonprofit child care agency that calls itself Omaha's best-kept secret.

The Rev. Edward Joseph Flanagan, a Roman Catholic priest, founded Boys Town in 1917, introducing a new model of care for young boys that emphasized social preparation. The Village of Boys Town was established in 1921 and now there are 11 campus locations throughout the U.S. The facility admitted girls in 1979.

Tours of the village include the visitor center (which features a huge ball of stamps), Hall of History, Flanagan's home and Dowd Memorial Chapel, which contains Flanagan's tomb; he died in 1948. Step-on guides share an insider's perspective on life in the village and stories about Boys Town's past.

TRAINS AND PLANES

The Durham Museum is located in a meticulously preserved art deco train station.

Mick Hale, director of education, said the massive 1931 structure was intended to express the strength of the railroad.

Groups can see, touch and experience the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad at the museum.

Docent-led tours last up to an hour and can be customized to meet a group's needs or interests.



The Rev. Flanagan statue, Boys Town, Omaha

PHOTO: GROUP TOUR MEDIA/DAVID HOEKMAN

Six groups of statues spread throughout the Great Hall symbolize people who passed through Union Station.

Strategic Air & Space Museum is located between Lincoln and Omaha near Interstate 80.

The museum houses military aircraft and space artifacts, many of which have been restored in the museum's on-site restoration facility.

Originally, the museum was located at Offutt Air Force Base, closer to Omaha, where the U.S. Air Force Strategic Air Command was headquartered.

Docent Terry Currey, who grew up in Omaha, said during the Cold War Omahans knew Soviet missiles were aimed at Offutt Air Force Base.

"We didn't worry about it," he said. "We wore it as a badge of honor." ☐

Nebraska Tourism Commission

(877) 632-7275

www.grouptravel.visitnebraska.com

Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau

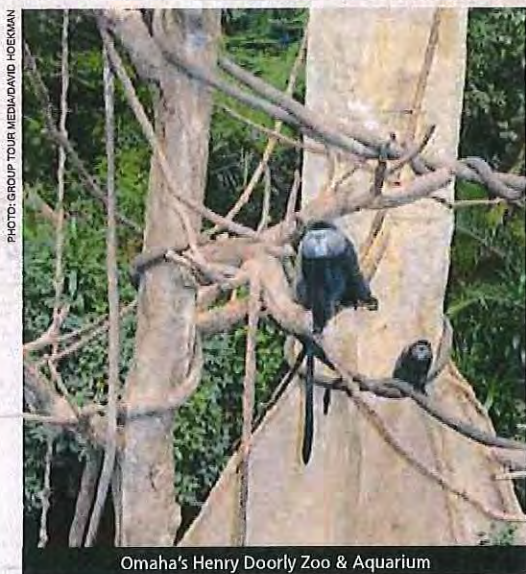
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www.visitomaha.com



Strategic Air & Space Museum, Ashland

PHOTO: GROUP TOUR MEDIA/DAVID HOEKMAN



Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium

PHOTO: GROUP TOUR MEDIA/DAVID HOEKMAN

CULTURAL CENTER

Omaha is home to five Fortune 500 company headquarters. Corporate generosity has helped establish top cultural institutions such as Joslyn Museum of Art, Lauritzen Gardens and Omaha Community Playhouse.

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium brings visitors face to face with over 900 different species. An indoor desert is located inside the world's largest geodesic dome, which is next to America's largest indoor rainforest. The newly renovated Scott Aquarium features a 70-foot tunnel with sharks circling above.

The modernistic Holland Performing Arts Center includes the 2,005-seat Peter Kiewit Concert Hall and the 486-seat Suzanne and Walter Scott Recital Hall.

Zinc, the center's restaurant, is a convenient place for a group dinner before an Omaha Symphony performance.

Blue Barn Theatre specializes in producing original scripts that challenge the theater artists and patrons, and it is building a new downtown theater.

LEISURE

DECEMBER 2014

GROUP TRAVEL

Annual Industry
Forecast Issue

*Marketing tips from the
pros pave the way to*
success

*The Maryland
shore invites*
groups
*to relax and
recharge*

*Welcome to
Ocean City, Maryland*

9

*Must-see
places for your
next itinerary in*
South Dakota

**American
Group Travel
Awards**

*Gala industry event
recognizes top achievers*

Westward Ho!

Touring Nebraska's Panhandle invokes visions of wagon trains and hardy pioneers

Look at a map of Nebraska and you'll see there aren't that many towns on the western side, at least compared to the eastern and central parts of the state. The largest city, Scottsbluff, has a population of only 15,000, and many communities number in the hundreds.

Traveling through the high plains of Western Nebraska, you will find rolling grasslands, barbed-wire fences and black angus cattle aplenty, along with corn fields here and majestic buttes there. Your main impressions of Nebraska's Panhandle center on wide-open space and the frontier feeling conjured up by landscapes reminiscent of the American West. But this is the Midwest. Or is it?

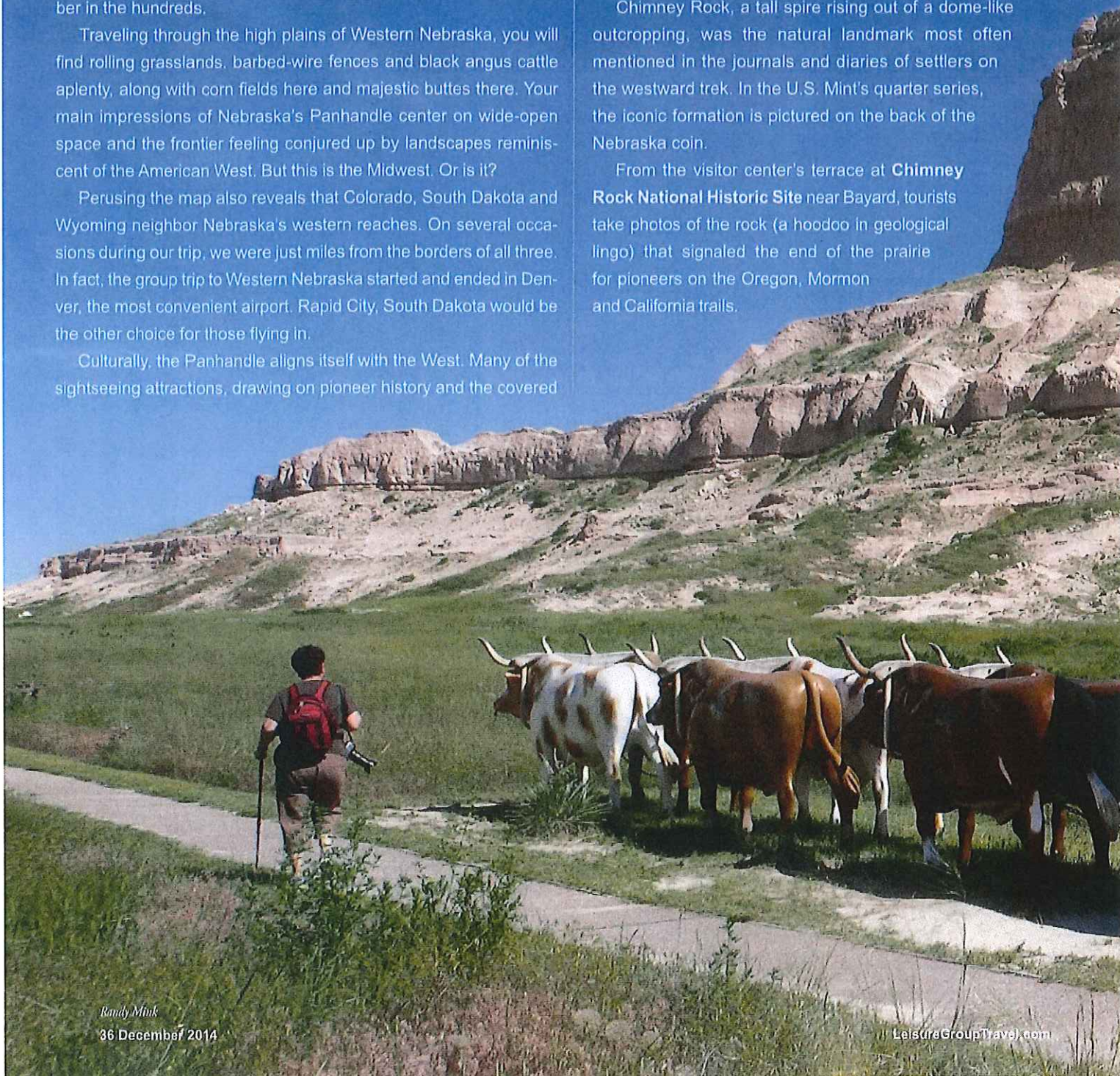
Perusing the map also reveals that Colorado, South Dakota and Wyoming neighbor Nebraska's western reaches. On several occasions during our trip, we were just miles from the borders of all three. In fact, the group trip to Western Nebraska started and ended in Denver, the most convenient airport. Rapid City, South Dakota would be the other choice for those flying in.

Culturally, the Panhandle aligns itself with the West. Many of the sightseeing attractions, drawing on pioneer history and the covered

wagons that rolled along the Oregon Trail, reflect that westward slant. It's possible to see the original wagon ruts in several places, though grass had covered them up at two sites we visited in June, leaving it up to our imagination.

Chimney Rock, a tall spire rising out of a dome-like outcropping, was the natural landmark most often mentioned in the journals and diaries of settlers on the westward trek. In the U.S. Mint's quarter series, the iconic formation is pictured on the back of the Nebraska coin.

From the visitor center's terrace at **Chimney Rock National Historic Site** near Bayard, tourists take photos of the rock (a hoodoo in geological lingo) that signaled the end of the prairie for pioneers on the Oregon, Mormon and California trails.



They could see it two days before, from 37 miles away. One of the half-million settlers who passed it called Chimney Rock "the most remarkable thing I ever saw." Many carved their initials on it. A dirt road near the visitor center provides access for those who care to walk through grass for three-fourths of a mile and climb Chimney Rock,

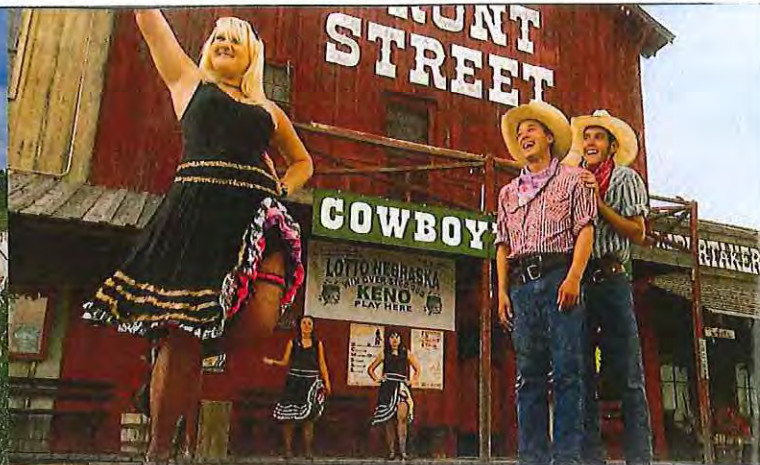
but beware of rattlesnakes. The visitor center has museum exhibits and a video that tells the story of the great migration West.

Closer to the Wyoming border, more stories of westward movement come alive at **Scotts Bluff National Monument**, another landmark that guided intrepid settlers. A series of wind-sculpted, clay-and-sandstone buttes, an escarpment rising 800 feet above the Platte River Valley, could easily be a Western movie set.

Visitor center exhibits describe the hardships of the long Oregon Trail journey that started in St. Joseph or Independence, Missouri. The very sight of the bluffs, you learn, was a psychological reward for those who had trudged for days (15 miles a day) through endless prairie on their creaking wooden prairie schooners. Wrote one woman about the tedious trek: "How I wish the Indians would attack. I am so bored."

During the summer at covered wagons outside the Scotts Bluff visitor center, living history interpreters describe life on the trail and cook up vittles over the fire. You might have a chance to sample hard tack—tasteless, rock-hard biscuits made from flour and water—but don't break your teeth. The wagons and costumed characters provide great photo opportunities.

Scotts Bluff National Monument provides all the right elements for that romanticized scene of westward migration.



Rip-roaring adventures in Western Nebraska include riding at Fort Robinson State Park and the Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out in Ogallala.

on location: midwest ♦

Cars and buses can ascend to the top of Scotts Bluff, where the views stretch 100 miles. You'll spot Chimney Rock, 23 miles away. From the summit, one can make the 35-minute hike back to the visitor center on a trail flanked by juniper, ponderosa pines and walls of rock.

Scotts Bluff National Monument is three miles west of the twin towns of Gering and Scottsbluff. Cheyenne, Wyoming is an hour and a half away. At the far eastern end of Nebraska lies Omaha, an eight-hour drive.

Sitting on 100 acres with Scotts Bluff as a backdrop, the **Legacy of the Plains Museum** was formed in 2013 from the Farm & Ranch Museum and North Platte Valley Museum, both of which were in Gering. The first phase of exhibits opened this past fall. The museum will cover everything from pioneer trails, sod houses and Native American crafts to livestock ranches, irrigation and the area's sugar beet industry. You can see sugar beets and other crops being grown on the museum grounds. (Tours can be arranged at the two local sugar beet factories that remain of the seven that flourished in the 1920s.)

Fort Robinson State Park, Nebraska's largest, is a gem in the state's northwest corner, three miles from the town of Crawford. Formerly a frontier military outpost, it commands a scenic setting in Pine Ridge Country, a land of canyons, grassy hills, and buttes and ridges crowned with ponderosa pines.

Established in 1878 to defend white settlers and cattle ranchers against possible Indian troubles, Fort Robinson became a cavalry post in 1887 and later developed into the U.S. Army's largest training, care and breeding center for horses and mules. Known for its lively social life in the 20th century, it was called the "Country Club of the Army," with a calendar featuring parties, polo matches, fox hunts and other equestrian events. Two museums on the grounds showcase the fort's history and area geology.



Fossils and badlands formations intrigue hikers at Toadstool Geologic Park.

Horses are still very much a part of life at Fort Robinson. Besides horseback trail rides, horse-drawn wagon and stagecoach rides are available. A free rodeo put on by the wranglers and their kids is staged on Thursday nights in summer.

The Post Playhouse, the former quartermaster's depot, offers nighttime entertainment from late May to mid-August. This summer's playbill at the professional repertory theater will feature *Grease*, *All Shook Up!*, *A Man of No Importance*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* and *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*.

Spotting mountain sheep is the highlight of open-air jeep rides into the wilderness. Visitors to Fort Robinson also see grazing herds of buffalo and Texas Longhorn cattle. Other activities include hiking, mountain biking, fishing, tubing and kayaking.

The Lodge, built in 1909 as an enlisted men's barrack, is the focal point of the park. It offers 22 rooms with private bath and houses the Fort Robinson Inn Restaurant, whose Western theme is carried out through the log tables and chairs, plus wall decorations like rifles, spears, saddles, chaps, portraits of Indians and photos of officers. The "Lunch in the Barracks" menu features a buffalo cheeseburger, buffalo tacos and hot buffalo sandwich with mashed potatoes and gravy. Meal options at Fort Robinson

also include chuck wagon buffalo stew cookouts and hayrack breakfast rides.

In addition to the Lodge, accommodations are in kitchen-equipped cottages and stately homes that once served as officers' quarters. Commanche Hall, perfect for family reunions, has 14 baths and sleeps 60.

Avid sightseers, especially those into fossils and geology, will want to make excursions to **Toadstool Geologic Park**, famous for its badlands formations; **Agate Fossil Beds National Monument**, which also has an impressive collection of Indian artifacts; and **Hudson-Meng Education & Research Center**, site of the largest extinct bison bone bed in the world.

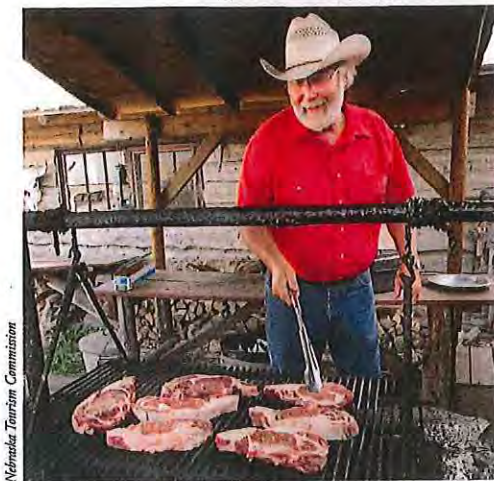
History buffs will enjoy the **Museum of the Fur Trade** in Chadron, while literature fans will be intrigued by the **Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center** at Chadron State College, where exhibits shed light on author Mari Sandoz (1896-1966), who wrote powerfully of life in the grass-covered sand hills that cover a quarter of Nebraska.

The town of Alliance, on the western edge of the sand hills, has two major attractions. The most photogenic is **Carhenge**, a whimsical replica of England's Stonehenge built from 38 vintage cars, all painted gray. The state-of-the-art **Knight Museum and Sandhills Center** is a treasure house of local ranching, farming, railroad and Native American history.

In the southern reaches of Western Nebraska, along Interstate 80, are several group-friendly places. Sidney is home to the flagship store of locally-owned **Cabela's**, the "World's Foremost Outfitter." After Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, it is Nebraska's most visited attraction. Besides offering every kind of gear and clothing imaginable for outdoor activities, it dazzles customers with its displays of mounted animals,

Front Street, famed for its **Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out**, complete with dance hall girls. Groups also visit the **Petrified Wood & Art Gallery**, where 86-year-old twins Harvey and Howard Kenfield display their creations made from small pieces of petrified wood along with Native American and other Western art.

While Nebraska's Panhandle may not have sights as famous as Mount Rushmore or Yellowstone National Park, groups will find plenty to marvel about on the high plains where the Midwest meets the West. For information, log on to visitnebraska.com. **LGT**



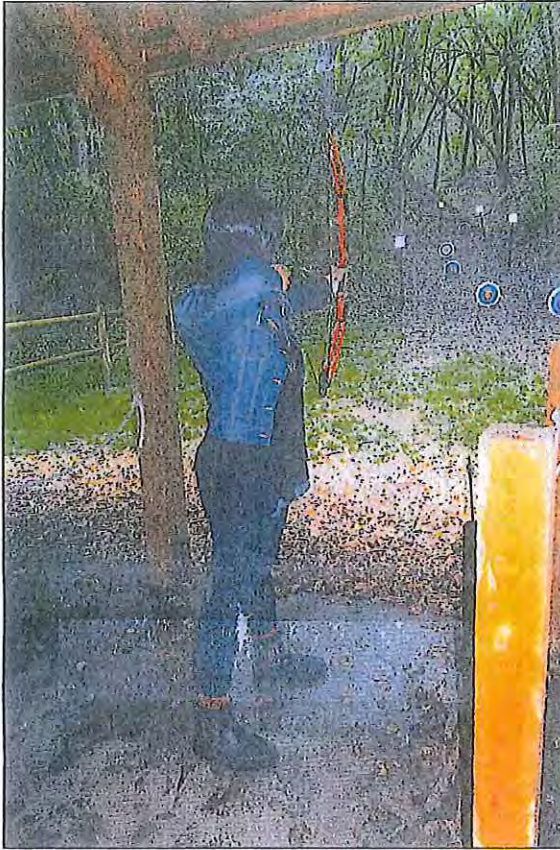
Nebraska Tourism Commission

The Drifter Cookshack at High Plains Homestead, a remote outpost near Crawford

even an elephant bagged by Dick Cabela in 1989. The cafe offers boar, bison and elk deli sandwiches, and there's a room on the mezzanine that groups can use. The **National Pony Express Monument** is on the Cabela's campus, and minutes away are hotel chains like Comfort Inn, Days Inn and Hampton Inn.

Ogallala, another I-80 town, abounds with Wild West history. Favorite stops include **Boot Hill** cemetery, dating from the 1870s, when Ogallala was a rip-roarin' cow town at the end of the Texas trail drives. Here in Nebraska's "Cowboy Capital" you can enjoy Western entertainment at

Red Deer Advocate



Photos by CAROL PATTERSON/freelance

Above: People can learn archery at Ponca State Park.

Bottom right: Niobrara State Park offers horseback riding for beginner and experienced riders.



Photo by KAY SCOTT/freelance

Top right: You can rent kayaks at Ponca State Park to paddle the Missouri.



Missouri connections

BY CAROL PATTERSON
SPECIAL TO THE ADVOCATE

Most people — even young children — spend as much time in front of a screen as they do sleeping each day. You might think cuddling indoors with a computer is harmless, but new research shows your health improves with time in nature.

But how does Mother Nature compete with megamalls and computer games? Perhaps we need things outside to be as exciting as on a video game.

The Missouri River is North America's longest river and was the backdrop for the great Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery Expedition. Homesteaders followed and settled along the fertile Missouri watershed. My ancestors were so inspired by the river they named my great, great aunt after it.

Now a new generation of park managers is using the Missouri River to plug people into nature. Mark Rettig, superintendent for Nebraska's Niobrara State Park, says people arrive with a backseat full of videos and kids clamoring to watch them.

When they discover the park's 19 cabins lack televisions or consistent cellphone service, they wonder how they will fill their time.

"We tell them to go turn over a rock and see what insects live underneath," Rettig says. "And you wouldn't believe how many kids have never made s'mores."

So there are s'more making lessons and afternoons at the pool.

I enjoyed the trails near the river, looking for birds fleeing Canada's cold weather. Supper was a buffalo cookout and a living history presentation that made me appreciate modern conveniences even while taking a break from them.

Further down the river, Ponca State Park has an education program that will engage even the most reluctant outdoorswoman.

I signed up for archery lessons and felt like Robin Hood after shooting tips from Tyler Wulf, assistant superintendent.

I passed up the chance to shoot a rifle or toss a tomahawk, opting instead to kayak the Missouri. The 95 km near the park border is free flowing, not channelized, and looks much like when Lewis and Clark paddled it.

I knew, however, I was only a couple of hours from a very comfortable lodge and training on how to start a fire with flint (although I could cheat with matches if needed).

Jeff Fields, park superintendent, encourages creativity from his staff and all ideas for new programs are considered.

The biggest success has been the annual Missouri River Outdoor Expo, a two-day bonanza of outdoor fun for 52,000 people from 27 states.

"The first year we had eight inches of rain (20 cm) and still 4,500 people showed up," Wulf commented on the event's success. "We knew we had something."

Ten years later, registration for the pre-expo school day sold out in 30 minutes!

The Missouri Outdoor Expo includes a Grunt, Gobble and Growl contest where people imitate the animal of their choice.

Dog lovers can watch the aquatic competition where dogs — some in life-jackets — throw themselves off the dock in an attempt to jump the longest.

Kids can compete in the gourmet s'more contest, while their parents sample wine. Yes, wine is grown in Nebraska and provides a soothing end to a busy day. I missed the expo but was kept hopping at Ponca, trying to decide between hiking and learning to fish. Time on the trails won out — I figured I could always get takeout — but checking my email seemed less attractive.

As Rettig summed up, "When people leave the park, they admit they enjoyed being away from their screens." Like me, they have forgotten what it is like to be unplugged.

Thanks to a new generation of parks personnel, it is easier to connect to nature. I understood better why my great, great aunt was called Missouri

and vowed to spend more time in mega-nature.

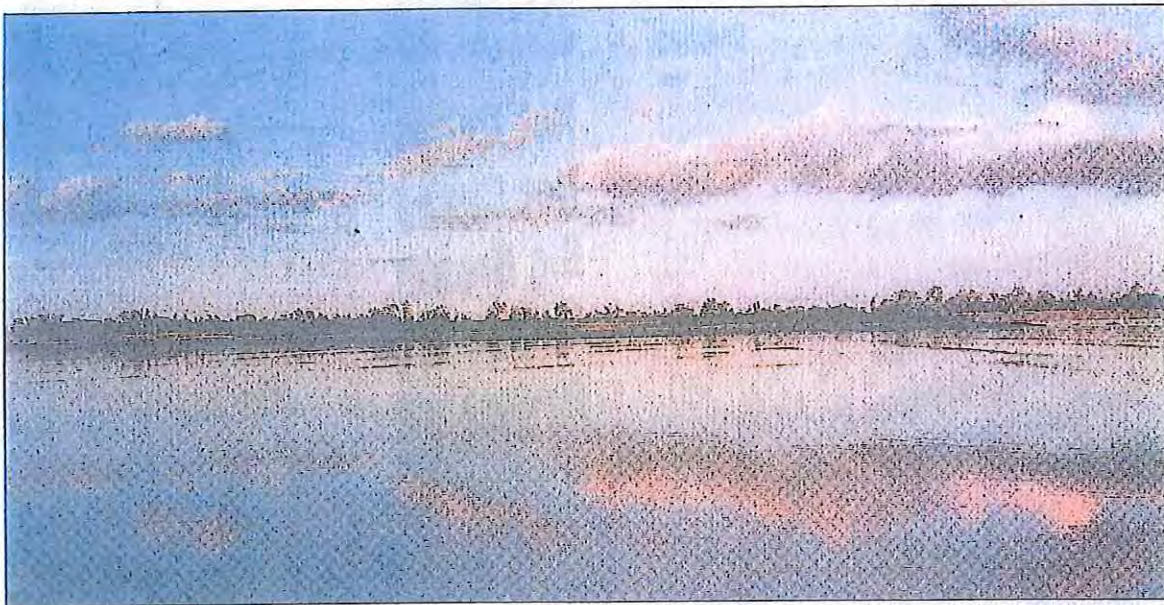
If you go

○ Niobrara State Park has rustic cabins overlooking the Missouri River and many outdoor activities. Ponca State Park offers deluxe accommodations along with the Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center (www.OutdoorNebraska.org). RV facilities are found at both parks.

○ To learn more about the Missouri River, stop at the Lewis and Clark Missouri River Visitor's Center (<http://www.mrb-lewisandclarkcenter.org>).

Carol Patterson inspires everyday explorers within organizations. When she isn't travelling for work, Carol is travelling for fun. More of her adventures can be found at www.carolpatterson.ca.

The Valdosta Daily Times



A river level view of the Missouri.

PHOTOS: KAY & DAVID SCOTT

Missouri National Recreational River

BY DAVID AND KAY SCOTT

The two of us recently had an opportunity to revisit northeastern Nebraska and explore portions of the Missouri National Recreation River.

We last passed this way in 2010 while following the route taken by Lewis & Clark as the Corps of Discovery in September 1806 returned to St. Louis from its winter stay in Fort Clatsop. At the time, we had spent nearly three months on the road and were anxious to return home to South Georgia.

Thus, we didn't take time to explore the cornhusker state's hilly corner that was partially bordered by two sections of the Missouri National Recreation River. The recent trip was designed to correct the earlier slight to an interesting and scenic area of the state.

What Is a National Recreational River?

The National Park Service, a bureau of the U.S. Department of Interior, administers more than 400 units that carry a number of designations including national park, national monument, national battlefield, national seashore, and national historical park.

Other designations include national recreation area, national river, and national recreational river, the latter of which includes the portions of the Missouri we visited.

The Missouri National Recreational River was established under the authority of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 1968 legislation designed to preserve selected rivers in free-flowing condition and to protect their immediate environments. The free-flowing restriction may apply to an entire river, or to portions of a river.

In the case of MNRR, it is two relatively short Missouri River segments bordering northeast Nebraska.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act categorizes river entries into one of three groupings: wild, scenic, or recreational. The latter category is the least restrictive and includes rivers that are generally easily ac-

cessible by vehicle and that may have encountered some diversion or impoundment plus shoreline development. Existing dams, developed shorelines, and relatively easy access result in MNRR being classified as recreational rather than wild or scenic.

The 'Big Muddy'

The Missouri River, often referred to as the Big Muddy due to the large amount of sediment it carries, once served as the country's major thoroughfare to the West, first by trappers and traders, and later by Lewis & Clark as the Corps of Discovery searched for a water route to a western ocean.

Although the Corps was unable to discover the water route that President Thomas Jefferson had hoped for, the men returned in 1806 to St. Louis with knowledge that helped open the American West to exploration and development. The Missouri, with a length of 2,341 miles, is America's longest river, exceeding the length of the Mississippi by approximately 150 miles.

The Missouri is generally considered to begin at the junction of three tributaries (the Jefferson, Gallatin, and Madison) in southwestern Montana. It then flows through or along the borders of North



Kayaking the river.

RIVER

FROM PAGE 6E

Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, and Kansas, until heading east through the middle of Missouri on its way to the Mississippi River. Surprisingly, the great river once flowed across present-day Montana toward the northeast until emptying into Hudson Bay and, eventually, the Arctic Ocean. This earlier course was dammed several million years ago by glacial ice, causing the river to divert toward the southeast along its present route.

Changes on the River

In modern times, the river has been impacted by a number of legislative acts including the 1944 Pick-Sloan Plan whose purpose it was to promote and coordinate flood control, irrigation, navigation, power, a sanitary water supply, wildlife, and recreation.

Other legislation important to the Missouri included the Wild and Scenic River Act of 1968 (mentioned previously), the Water Resources Development Act of 1976, and a series of environmental protection laws including the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

From the headwaters near Three Forks, Montana, to its confluence with the Mississippi River a short distance north of St. Louis, the Missouri that was once wild and meandering has been largely tamed by a series of dams including the huge Fort Peck dam in eastern Montana that served as the cover photo for the first issue of *Life* magazine. Construction on the Fort Peck Dam commenced during 1933 and required seven years before the project began generating electricity.

Five subsequent downstream dams resulted in large reservoirs that trap sediment rather than allowing it to flow downstream, thus altering the natural flow along with the river's ecosystem. The river has also been altered by stabilization of the banks



An NPS ranger guides a hiker to an old railroad bridge over the Niobrara River.

PHOTO: KAY & DAVID SCOTT

and forcing the water flow into narrower channels compared to when it ran wild and meandered over wide stretches of the adjacent landscape.

The dams and channeling have resulted in development moving closer to the river, further degrading the river's ecosystem.

Missouri National Recreation River

The MNRR is comprised of two free-flowing sections of the Missouri River along Nebraska's northeastern border with South Dakota, plus 20 miles of the Niobrara River and eight miles of Verdigris Creek, two Missouri tributaries. The two sections of the Missouri are separated by 25-mile-long Lewis and Clark Lake behind Gavins Point Dam, a short distance upstream from the town of Yankton, South Dakota.

The eastern district of the MNRR begins just below Gavins Point Dam and continues 59 miles downstream to Nebraska's Ponca State Park. Established by law in 1978, this was the

first of the two sections added to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The 39-mile western section of the recreational river begins just below Fort Randall Dam near the town of Pickstown, S.D., and terminates just beyond Nebraska's Niobrara State Park and the confluence with the Niobrara River.

Dams just above each of the two sections of the MNRR have had a major impact on the nature of the river within the sections. The reservoirs have produced many water-related recreational activities that were unavailable or more difficult to enjoy when the river was wild.

The dams have also reduced, but not eliminated flooding that was a more common occurrence when the river was free-flowing. The major flooding of 2011 was an example of how snowmelt and heavy precipitation along the upper stretches of the river can overwhelm man's ability to control the river.

Not surprisingly, the river's most popular activities are water-based.

Catfish, walleye, sauger,

and paddlefish are some of the species available to anglers in these sections of the river. Walleye, prize eating for two people from South Georgia, are best caught a short distance downstream from the two dams. A license from either South Dakota or Nebraska is acceptable for river fishing. Canoeing and kayaking are both quite popular, but care must be taken and the National Park Service recommends that only experienced paddlers should be on the river.

Two particularly inviting state parks are along the Nebraska side of the recreational river.

Niobrara State Park, a short distance from the town of Niobrara and near the downstream terminus of the western stretch of the recreational river, offers camping, 20 cabins, horseback trail rides, fishing, boat ramps, a swimming pool, and 14 miles of hiking trails. The cabins are on a high bluff offering outstanding river views.

Ponca State Park, located a short distance upstream from the terminus of the eastern recreational river segment, offers similar amenities, but with some of the nicest cabins we have found in a state park. The Ponca unit also houses the Missouri Na-

tional Recreational River Resource and Education Center that contains a large exhibit area.

On the South Dakota side of the river near the town of Yankton, Lewis & Clark State Recreation Area offers 400 campsites and 17 camping cabins in three separate campgrounds. A Corps of Discovery Welcome Center overlooking the river is across the Gavins Point Dam from Yankton.

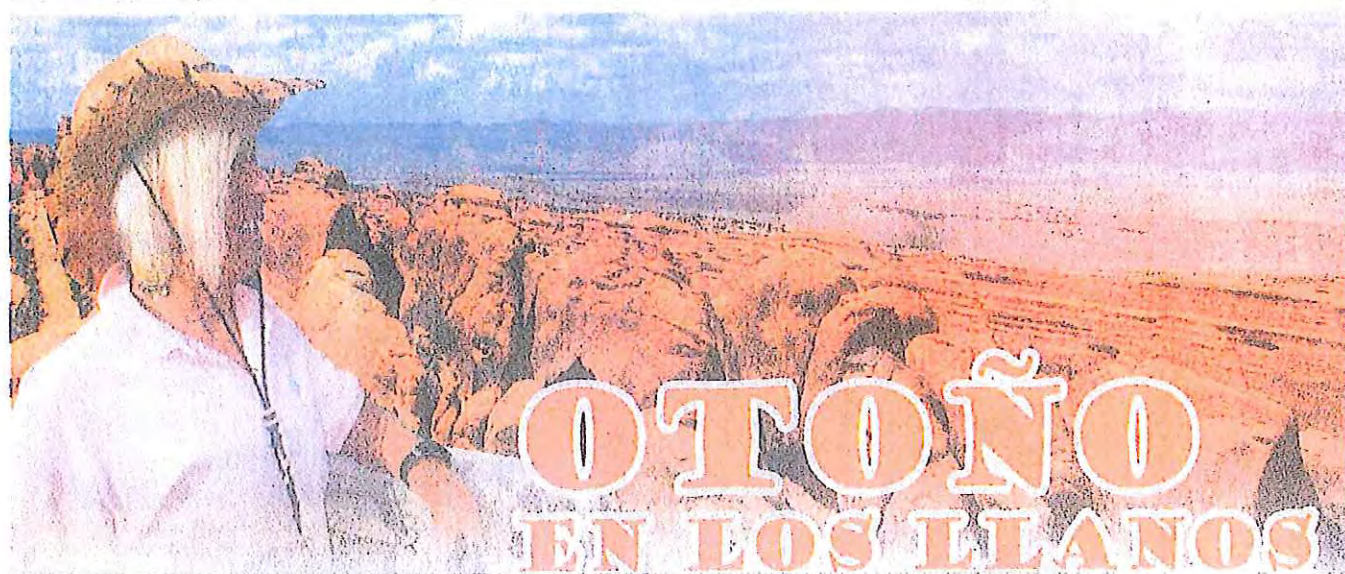
Nearby sites worth a visit include the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Sioux City which is an interesting stop for travelers wishing to learn more about the Corps of Discovery. Likewise, Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, approximately 30 miles south of Niobrara is simply outstanding. Complete skeletons of large mammals, turtles, and birds have been uncovered from ash that compacted after being deposited 12 million years ago following a volcanic explosion in present day Idaho.

So there you have it; a new place to visit you may not have previously considered.

We have found during our travels that many unique and interesting sites and activities are often overlooked by the majority of travelers. These are often available without the crowds and at reasonable prices. Northeastern Nebraska and its two segments of the Missouri National Recreational River is no exception.

David and Kay Scott are authors of 'Complete Guide to the National Park Lodges' (Globe Pequot). They live in Valdosta.

El Hispano News



Sigo los pasos de Lewis y Clark en el noreste de Nebraska. Esta área silvestre, rústica, salvaje y espectacular está repleta de impresionantes paisajes, la hospitalidad generosa y abundante historia.

Por: Jody Reed

Esta parte del Missouri ha sido designada como un río Recreativo Nacional y el follaje de otoño es un mosaico de marrón, oro y tonalidades escarlata. El silencio se rompe con la cometa de un alce solitario en algún lugar de este valle virgen. Los siguientes son algunos puntos destacados de mi diario de viaje:

DÍA UNO:

Pruebe acampar en las cabañas en Ponca State Park y el Parque Estatal Niobrara. Ambas áreas ofrecen una amplia mezcla heterogénea de actividades al aire libre como senderismo, ciclismo de montaña, kayak, piragüismo, pesca y paseos a caballo estacional.



DÍA DOS:

Para los observadores de aves, este es un paraíso. En Nebraska 16 lugares han sido designados como importantes zonas de aves de la Sociedad Nacional Audubon. El río Missouri es una ruta migratoria agradable y significativa para las aves acuáticas migratorias incluidas las aves playeras, gansos canadienses y patos de madera.



CALIFICACIONES DE REED:

- *** Panorámicas inolvidables, y un hermoso escenario
- *** Lugar para todas las generaciones
- *** Hermosos amaneceres y atardeceres.
- ** Hospitalidad única



DÓNDE COMER:

El restaurante Dusters y Gottberg Brew Pub en Columbus sirven grandes sandwiches. También cuentan con cervezas, cerveza de ratz hecha a mano. También recomiendo el Veranda Steakhouse en Norfolk que es de calidad de cinco estrellas. Para pastas caseras únicas, pase por el centro Coffee Company en Norfolk. Si estás en Sioux City (NE), echa un vistazo a Kahill de, justo en el río Missouri, grandes ensaladas, sopas y platos únicos.

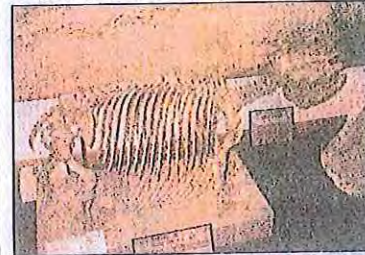


PARA MAS INFORMACION VISITE:

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www.divotslodge.com
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DÍA TRES:

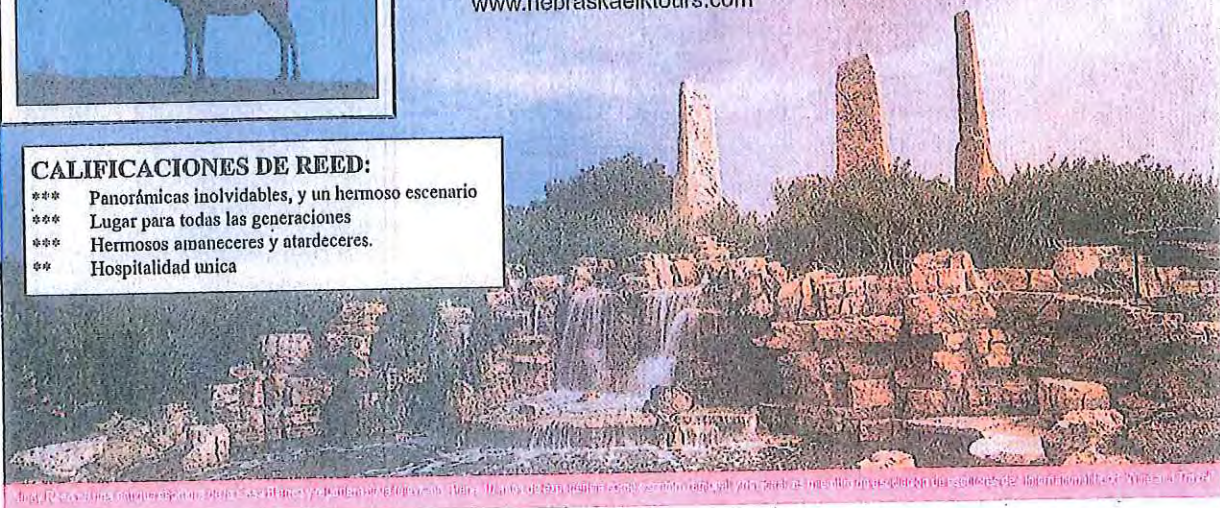
Para los amantes de la historia occidental, la cultura nativa y el patrimonio, este rincón de Nebraska es una verdadera biblioteca llena de mucha historia. Bienvenido al país de Lewis y Clark Meriwether Lewis y William Clark, y su Cuerpo de Expedición Discovery (1804-1806) encargado por el presidente Thomas Jefferson, para explorar la compra de Luisiana partieron de St. Charles, Missouri mayo 1804. Después de la observación de aves y observación de vida silvestre, aprecie excursiones de varios de historia occidental. Particularmente interesantes fueron los Calumet Bluff, Volcán Ionia y Fort Atkinson. Cuatro reservas, algunas de ellas con museos tribales iluminadoras desde el mismo período de tiempo, están cerca. Las comunidades de la Omaha, Winnebago, Ponca, Santee valen la pena su visitar.



DÍA CUATRO:

El Centro de Arte de Norfolk (Norfolk), Museo de Arte Agraria en David City incluye vigorizante arte regional, así como obras de artistas de renombre nacional como Winslow Homer, Thomas Hart Benton, Dave Nichols y Robert Bateman.

Después de esta mirada íntima a la madre naturaleza y su belleza expansiva, siento a Nebraska en mis fibras sensibles. Ya estoy planeando mi próxima visita.



A FAR

WHERE TRAVEL CAN TAKE YOU

AFAR



12-MILLION-YEAR-OLD SNAPSHOT: ASHFALL FOSSIL BEDS

About 12 million years ago, a superheated mass of magma spewed into the air in what is now Idaho. It spread ash all over the northern quadrant of North America. Animals that inhaled the ash suffocated. Near a pond in what is now Eastern Nebraska, the animals came to slake their unquenchable thirst. Beasts and birds died where they drank, their bodies falling into the wet ash, which hardened over time. The spot where they died has not been, as in so many other parts of the country, bulldozed by glaciers; instead, the shape of the animals remained unseen until they were discovered by Mike Voorhies, a University of Nebraska paleontologist. When we visited, Voorhies himself was there, picking away at dusty mounds of dried ash, uncovering prehistoric camels, three-toed horses, rhinos...and species of bird found nowhere else on Earth. The ashfall provides a kind of snapshot of the animal and plant life that used to inhabit this region. Now all excavation takes place in an enclosed area with walkways for visitors to stroll around the periphery of the dig, which is still yielding new information about what

http://www.afar.com/places/ashfall-fossil-beds-state-historical-park-royal?context=keyword&context_id=ashfall

AFAR

this part of the world was like a long time ago. There is an undeniable eeriness about being in a place where so many perished in a catastrophe of unimaginable dimensions. A visit here puts you in your place by reminding you that we humans still live on the same Earth, which regularly obliterates untold numbers of living things in the blink of an eye.

The Willoughby, Ohio News-Herald

Northeast Nebraska a historical haven



Jeff Frischkorn photo

A tandem kayak team on the Missouri River addresses sandbars and snags since this is one of two areas never reworked for commercial navigation, mimicking conditions faced in 1804 by the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Missouri River lures Lewis & Clark aficionados, others to special places

Jeff Frischkorn

Correspondent@News-Herald.com

The path described by my kayak paddle was neither straight nor true, owing to a years-long lapse in practice.

But the fellow in the kayak's stern was doing a pretty fair job of keeping our vessel away from the Missouri River's dead-heads, snags, hidden sandbars and the other type of obstacles encountered by captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark.

Their first names are almost footnotes to many Americans who simply refer to the intrepid explorers as Lewis and Clark, along with their 28-month-long journey forever known as the "Corps of Discovery."

leon, the expedition was ordered to traverse the great unknown of the 828,000-square-mile Louisiana Purchase.

The purchase doubled the size of the fledgling United States, and, depending upon who was speaking, was either a steal or a pig in a poke. Thus it was up to Lewis and Clark to determine which one Jefferson had prompted the Congress to buy.

The Corps of Discovery's exploration of the Louisiana Purchase and beyond would become a visible component of America's "Manifest Destiny."

Today, common folk can learn of the Missouri River's natural features, human history and paleontology and can experience firsthand some of

down the Missouri River over 28 months — nothing like my brief trip. But my adventure is available to anyone spending time in northeast Nebraska, skimming the edge of the mighty Missouri River and stopping every now and then to recollect what life was like — and is like — here.

The Missouri River defines this area now and in the past. From the rejuvenated downtown district of Norfolk, Nebraska — with its tribute to beloved hometown hero the late "Tonight Show" host Johnny Carson — to what is arguably the finest and most thoroughly amenities-assembled state park, Nebraska's Ponca State Park, there is much to see. It easily could take months for today's visitor to see and experience every-

An excellent visitors' center is a short walk to the park's dome-covered dig. Ashfall is unique and so intriguing that it has been named by Rand McNally and USA Today as one of the nation's "Best of the Road" destinations.

Yet I found the historic and vital Missouri River the most compelling centerpiece of my recent visit to northeast Nebraska.

That's no wonder, given the importance of the 529,350-square-mile Missouri River drainage system to Jefferson, Lewis, Clark and the indigenous American Indians. At 2,341 miles long, the "Big Muddy" and its tributaries were the interstate highway system of Lewis and Clark's day.

Fortunately the National

way that perfectly mirrors what the Corps encountered, this pair of units still hints at what the Missouri River was like two centuries ago.

A chief aspect of this federally designated recreational area is the absence of any channelization that embodies much of the rest of the Missouri River. That gouging out is done elsewhere on the river as an aid to navigation for commercial vessels.

You won't find that sort of disturbance within the recreation area's 39-Mile District or within its downstream neighbor, the 59-Mile District.

What you will discover as you paddle and float either stretch are what Lewis, Clark and Company found: huge cottonwood trees snatched from the river's turbulent erosion process and deposited helter-skelter by the forces of nature along with a never-ending ter-

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1953-54 DeSoto: Subdued Style

A Turn for the Bigger: 1974-76 Mercury Cougar
Cadillac Rides Out the Great Depression



- Briefly Noted: Australia's Valiant Pacer
- '72 AMC Gremlin X • '59 Goggomobil Dart



1953 DeSoto Powermaster Club Coupe

Smith Collection Museum of American Speed: Accelerated Learning

by Roy Stevenson

An upscale office park in the prairie town of Lincoln, Nebraska, is not the sort of place you'd expect to find a world-class race-car museum. Even the demure entrance belies the vehicular treasures that lie within. Still, the Smith Collection Museum of American Speed presents row after row of gleaming, racing machines, show cars, antique cars, street rods, hot rods, and hotted-up production vehicles. If a car can exceed the legal speed limit by 100 mph, there's an example of it here somewhere.

It's the Smithsonian of speed, the history of race cars under one roof. Looking at the muscular Mercury and Pontiac stock cars, "Fronty" Fords, lakesters, Indy cars, streamliners, and other speedsters, you can practically hear the roar of the powerful engines and smell the high-octane fuel.

This unabashed shrine to American speed was the baby of founder Donald William "Speedy Bill" Smith. He collected vehicles for 40 years before opening the 135,000-square-foot museum in 1992 as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization.

"I'm proud of my collection," Smith told me when we met some months before his death on May 30, 2014. "My friends had seen me at Hershey swap meets and auctions, and knew what I was doing. They would come to see my collection. So I started the museum as a private collection."

Speedy Bill was born in 1929 with need-for-speed DNA deeply embedded in his genes. He owned his first car at 14, without a driver's license. It was a Model T Ford.

With 60 years of racing and making and selling speed parts under his belt, Smith was a walking encyclopedia on the evolution of automobile racing. His personal involvement in the sport began on half-mile county fair tracks. "My first race was in a 'roaring roadster' 1930 Model A car with a 1940 Ford V-8 'flat-head' engine," he recalled. "I was 20 years old, and the car cost me \$106."

In the Fifties and Sixties, Smith raced dragsters, stock cars, modifieds, and



sprint cars. Then, in the Seventies, he raced Champ-series dirt cars, and sprint cars as one of the original "Outlaw" racers. In the Eighties and Nineties, he raced American Indycar Series open-wheelers and Bonneville streamliners.

Meanwhile, he had built his business, Speedway Motors, established in 1952,

into one of the largest in the country, producing custom parts for racing cars. It remains a thriving business today, run by sons Carson, Craig, Clay, and Jason.

On my tour of the three-story museum, the show cars, with their outrageous body designs, caught my eye first. Few cars anywhere are as outré as the Red

Baron, little more than a massively outsized German World War I helmet atop a two-seat cockpit resting on a T-bucket chassis, and with a brightly chromed exposed engine out front. Designed by Tom Daniel for a Monogram model kit that was a best seller when released in 1968, the full-size show car was built to capitalize on the Red Baron's popularity.

The low-slung green-and-white Outlaw is a 2008 clone of Ed "Big Daddy" Roth's famous Fifties custom T-bucket roadster. Builder Fritz Schenck even used fiberglass body molds taken from the original Outlaw, which still exists.

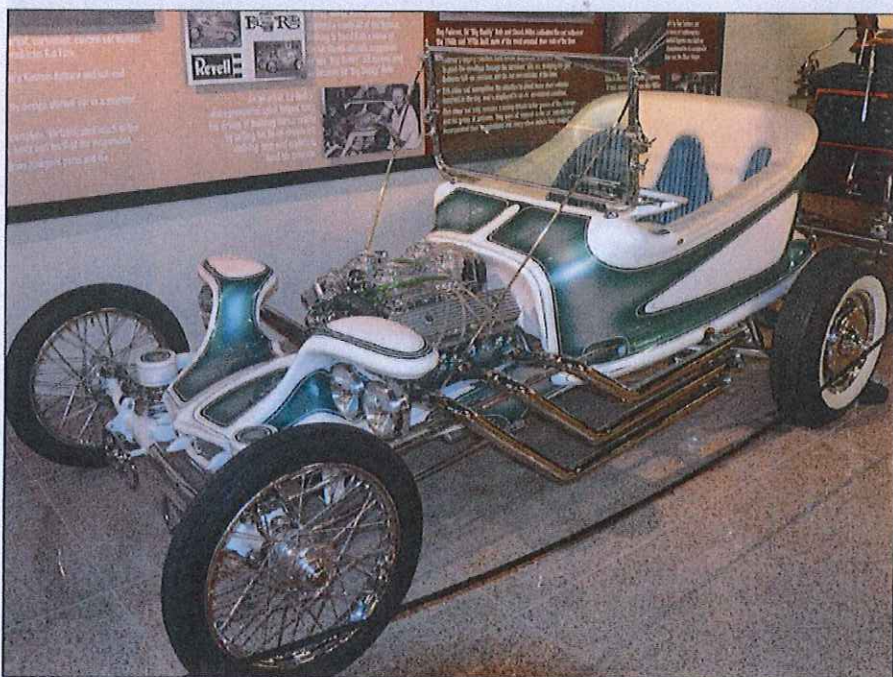
The museum's most unusual show car is undoubtedly the Boothill Express, built around an original funeral coach, circa 1850. The Express boasts considerably more horsepower than its inspiration would have used, considering it has a 426-cid Hemi V-8 with Chrysler push-button automatic transmission.

Moving on to the collection of production cars revealed a gorgeous blue Tucker Torpedo standing in a corner. When it was built in 1948, the Tucker was touted as being 20 years ahead of its time. The Torpedo's low floor and tapered roof reduced lift forces tremendously, yielding a top speed of 120 mph—staggering for the era.

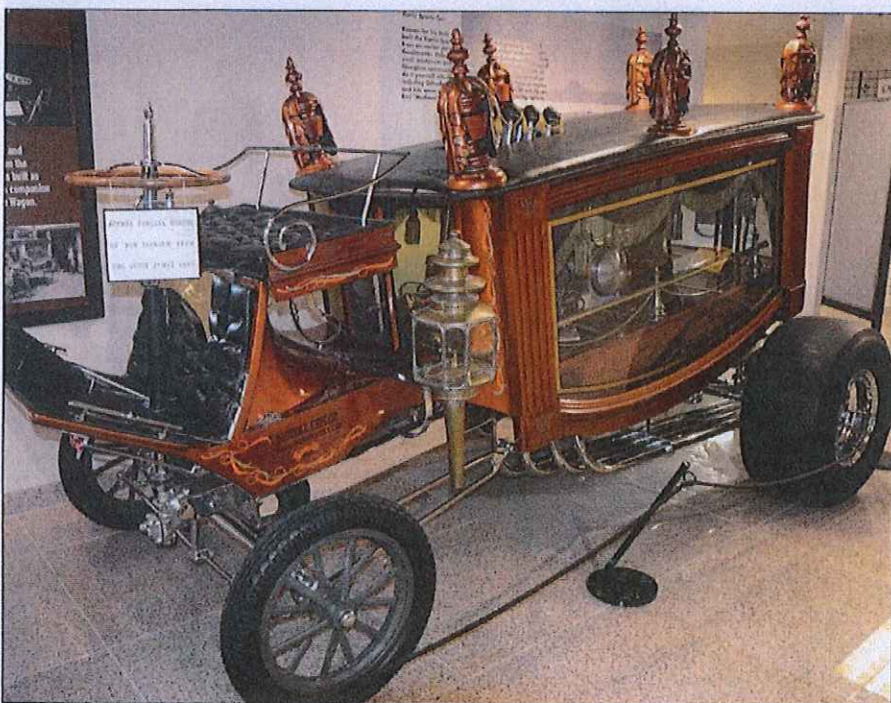
With four-wheel independent suspension, rear-mounted Franklin helicopter engine, and pop-out safety windshield, the Tucker created such a sensation that the company received 300,000 orders. Sadly, the underfunded company folded after a mere 51 Tuckers had rolled off the Chicago production line. Mint Tuckers sell for \$300,000 today because of their rarity and interesting history.

The museum's classiest car is, hands-down, the recreated 1931 Bucciali TAV-8 cabriolet. With its low-slung box-shaped coach, Rolls-Royce-like body, lengthy V-12 hood, front-end cow-catcher scoop, stylish rounded fenders, and massive searchlight front beams, this distinctive car is a breathtaking mix of art, class, and function.

1. The late William "Speedy Bill" Smith with a gas-turbine composite-body street rod at the Smith Collection Museum of Speed, which the Nebraska performance-parts entrepreneur opened in 1992. 2-4. The museum's celebration of automotive enthusiasm counts a collection of show cars like the Red Baron (2), a replica of Ed Roth's Outlaw (3), and the Boothill Express (4).



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Museum Pass

Only 151 Buccialis were built, each customized with its owner's choice of coachwork. This copy, built in the early Seventies by William Tichman, is the only one of its kind. Almost every part is hand made, except for the heating and air conditioning systems, and the radio and tape deck.

The museum has plenty of Fords, as they were the basis of many early race cars. The brown 1932 Ford Model 18 is a restored five-window coupe that would have cost \$490 in its day. The model 18 was a milestone in American automobile history: the first mass-production V-8-engined car.

Ah, but that Henry Ford knew how to turn out automobiles. I came across the 5-millionth Model T that rolled off the production line on May 28, 1921. Discovered sitting in a building in suburban Detroit, officials from the Model T Club of Detroit noticed its engine stamp ID number of 5,000,000.

Although grimy and dusty when discovered, the coupe had limited wear. Cleaned, repaired, and polished, today she starts up and runs like new.

Another unique Ford on display is known as "Edsel's Hot Rod." This black beauty was built in 1912 with a rare inline six-cylinder engine as an engineering study. Henry Ford despised sixes, but Edsel pushed for them despite his father's resistance. This lab model has much of the standard Model T's architecture.

Elsewhere, I notice dozens of mint-condition racing engines on display practically everywhere. My guide tells me that the museum's restored antique racing-engine collection numbers more than 600—the largest in the world. However, as noted, there are plenty of complete race cars to see as well.

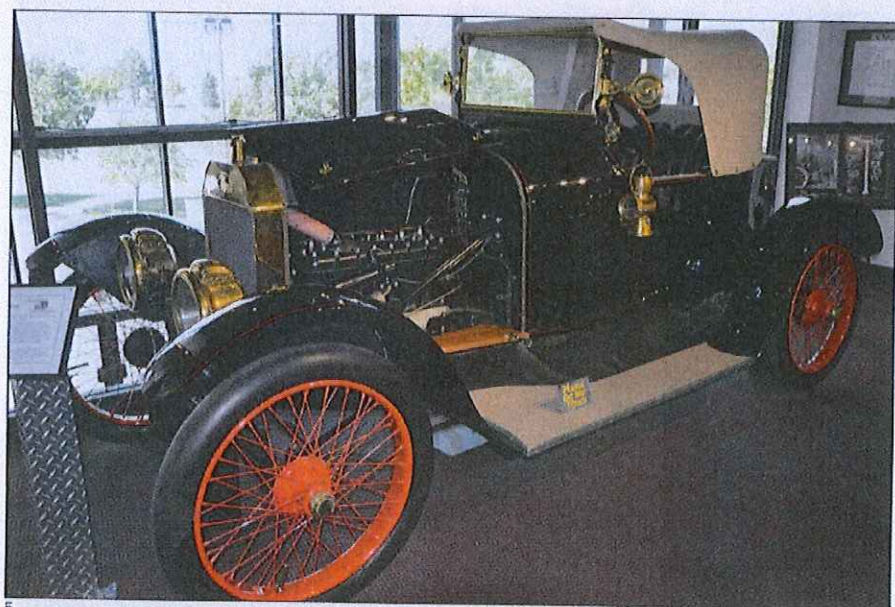
The red-and-white 1976 Mercury Montego on display has an interesting story. Built by the Wood Brothers Racing team, it ran in NASCAR superspeedway events from 1976 to 1979, with David Pearson as its most notable driver.

1. The museum's group of innovative production cars includes a 1948 Tucker Torpedo. 2. It's not a real 1931 Bucciali but an external copy with modern mechanicals. 3. A 1932 Ford, the legendary "duece coupe" and starting point for countless hot rods. 4. The collection houses a milestone Ford Model T. 5. An experimental six-cylinder car built for Edsel Ford in 1912. 6, 7. A Model T with a Mercury Speedster body.





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On the final lap of the 1976 Daytona 500, Pearson and Richard Petty were far ahead of the rest of the field, running neck-and-neck out of the final turn when the cars made contact, spun into the wall, and slid into the infield in front of the main grandstand. Pearson managed to keep his crumpled Mercury running and lumbered across the line at 20 mph to win the event. Pearson went on to win stock car racing's "Triple Crown" in '76 by also triumphing in the Charlotte World 600 and the Darlington Southern 500.

A 1956 Pontiac NASCAR Grand National car is a replica of the one driven that year by DeWayne "Tiny" Lund. The original was built in the Speedway Motors shops.

The low-slung 2002 Cadillac Northstar Le Mans Prototype (LMP) catches my eye. Now this is a race car! The gray carbon-fiber monocoque chassis was fabricated in England and assembled in Atlanta.

Cadillac had several of these cars built to contest the famous French 24-hour endurance race and to compete in the American Le Mans Series, powered by Northstar V-8 racing engines. The museum's model is the second of three LMPs built for 2002. GM cancelled the project that same year.

The Cowan and Riggs Chevy was the champion sprint car of the California Racing Association in 1973. Builder Roger Beck installed rare Crower fuel injectors in the 350-cid aluminum engine. This powerplant could generate 600 bhp in the Nineties.

The "Mechanical Rabbit" sprint car, with its offset chassis design, came about from the collaboration of drivers Don Brown, Greg Weld, and Joe Saldana. Duly impressed after driving one of Bill Smith's offset supermodifieds, the trio created their own models, which proceeded to clean up the sprint races. Brown said his goal was to build a car that would stick to the track like the mechanical rabbit at dog races, though all three cars eventually acquired the nickname. The museum's "Rabbit" belonged to Saldana.

Going further back in time is a recreation of a 1914 Cornelian. The first Cornelian was built in 1913 by the Blood Brothers Machine Company in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Advanced features included a monocoque chassis, four-wheel



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independent suspension, and an early style of rack-and-pinion steering. A Sterling 103-cid engine provided power. Louis Chevrolet drove one in the 1915 Indianapolis 500, finishing 20th when valve failure forced it out after 76 laps.

Another historic recreation is of Henry Meyer's Fronty Ford with the Frontenac overhead-camshaft conversion of the Model T engine. The original was raced by Meyer in 1928 and won the Canfield, Ohio, 100-lap race. After one crash, Meyer was pronounced dead at the course, only to revive during the ride to the morgue—no doubt a little nonplussed!

The museum's Ford lakester is typical of the cars built in the Forties and Fifties for speed runs on the dry lakes of Southern California. It has a Ford Model B four-cylinder engine that could achieve 150 mph, and hit 100 mph over a quarter mile. The lakester engine is equipped with a dohc head, a Bosch magneto ignition, and dual Winfield carburetors.

Any fan of form and function in fast cars should like the Mercury Speedster that caught my eye as soon as I entered the gallery. The maroon two-passenger body, white canvas roof, wire-spoke wheels, and boattail rear end on a Model T chassis make it very easy on the eye.

Designed by three graduates of the University of Kentucky mechanical-en-



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gineering program, the Mercury Speedster was originally designed for the Ford Model T chassis. In 1923, they introduced a modified version for use on the Chevrolet Superior chassis.

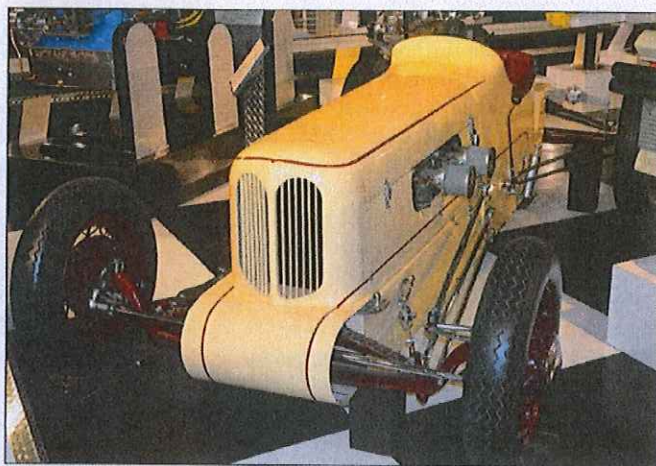
More exotic speed cars include a red cigar-shaped vehicle, the MacKichan-Schulz Bonneville Streamliner, built

specially for land-speed-record runs on Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats. When equipped with a twin-turbocharged Chevrolet 350-cid V-8, it was capable of speeds in excess of 335 mph.

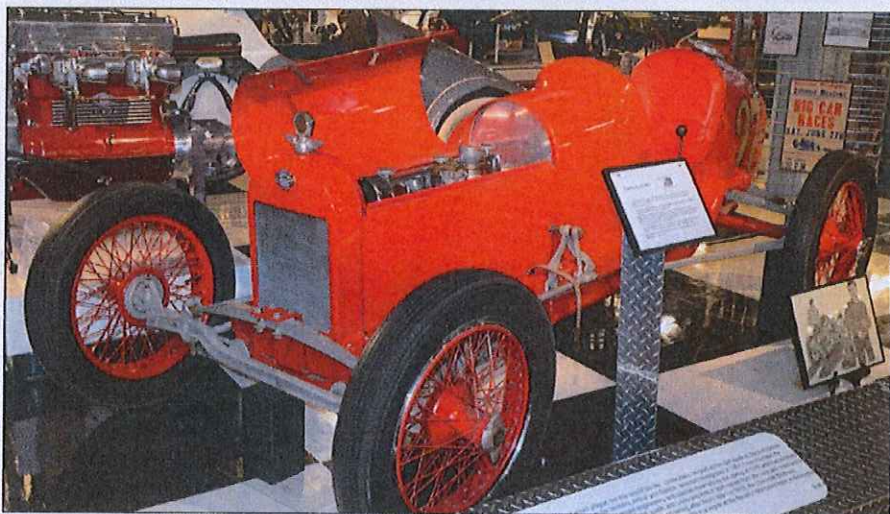
On the third floor is a thoroughly eclectic assortment of midget and sprint race cars, but that's not all. Visitors were



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1, 2. NASCAR stock car racing through the years: David Pearson's 1976 Mercury Montego (1) and a replica of Tiny Lund's 1956 Pontiac (2). 3. A recreation of a 1914 Cornelian, an early Indianapolis 500 entry. 4. Built for straight-line speed runs, this Ford lakester features a Model B four-cylinder engine. 5. This race car with a Frontenac-head Model T engine served driver Henry Meyer. 6. A Cadillac LMP02 from the 2002 American Le Mans Series season.



6

walking down memory lane past dozens of soap-box-derby cars and more than 1000 pedal cars. Behind glass cases hold hundreds of perfectly assembled model cars. The museum is festooned with a huge variety of car toys and memorabilia, including racing-themed LP record covers.

Every other year, the museum plays host to the International Speedsters Trials & Reunion. Geared towards fans of pre-1935 four-cylinder cars, events include a 150-mile road tour through rural Nebraska and a hill-climb competition. The next one of the biennial fests will take place this coming June 24-27.

The Smith Collection Museum of American Speed is located at 599 Oak Creek Drive, a few miles south of the junction of Interstates 80 and 180, and due west of the University of Nebraska campus. Visits are by guided tour at specific times. From May to September, tours are offered Monday through Friday starting at 2 P.M. From October through April, tours are conducted only on Fridays at 2 P.M. The museum is closed weekends and major holidays.

Admission is \$10 per person. Tours last approximately two hours. (Note that the museum website advises it is not appropriate for young children.) Cameras are permitted. The site is available for club, group, and company events. Further information can be by calling (402) 323-3166 or by visiting the website www.museumofamericanspeed.com.

The ultimate irony of visiting the Museum of American Speed is that you have to slow down to take in the superb galleries and race cars. Still, you will enjoy this shrine to speed immensely.

American Roads Online



In front of the Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center sits a vintage dining car that is currently being renovated. When completed, the car will let you step back in time to the golden age of rail and experience a real railroad dining car with all the amenities.

If admiring the rail yard from this lofty perch is not enough for you, visit during RailFest and you can actually take a tour of the yard and get up close and personal with the cars and people that make up Union Pacific. While you are communing with the trains don't become so enthralled that you forget there will be food vendors, entertainment of all kinds and lots of visiting trains. It's an annual event held in September.

Stop at the Visitor Center in the Tower on your way out for Union Pacific Railroad and Nebraska memorabilia.

For More Info:

<http://visitnorthplatte.com/attraction/golden-spike-tower/#sthash.pT0Ybw2Z.dpuf>



Golden Spike Tower

http://www.americanroads.net/railroads_fall2014.htm

High Plains Drifting: Kayaking and Tanking on Nebraska's Rivers Article and photos by Kathleen Walls

If you hadn't thought of Nebraska as a great water sports destination think again. The rivers of Nebraska's Sandhills offer unique opportunities and some spectacular scenery.

I recently went kayaking with Doug Graham of Graham Canoe Outfitters located near Valentine, Nebraska. He took us to the Niobrara River which begins in Wyoming and travels 535 miles until it flows in the Missouri River in northeast Nebraska. Seventy six miles of the river is named a National Scenic River. We put in at Cornell Bridge in Ft. Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge and paddled for three hours to Smith Falls State Park.



Putting in for our kayak trip

The trip took us through several different ecosystems and the cliffs along the banks told a geological story of the river's birth. On both sides, the sandstone banks showed the layers of time where the river had cut a valley 200 to 300 feet deep into the earth and between one-half to two miles wide. The bedrock beneath the river bottom is a hard pinkish gray ranging to brown sandstone called the Rosebud Formation. Multiple waterfalls, some tiny ones create a trickle into the stream: others like Smith Falls pour vast amounts of water into the river.



A pair of Canada geese on the river

The sandhills through which the river passes are an interesting geological feature. This area was once a vast inland sea. The sandhills are remnants of dunes that have become stabilized over the centuries by the prairie grasses.



Those cliffs are impressive

Once buffalo and elk grazed these plains. Today the Wildlife Refuge is home to about 160 plant and animal species including birds such as indigo and lazuli buntings, yellow-shafted and red-shafted flickers, and Baltimore and Bullock's orioles, Mammals such as white-tailed deer, raccoons, coyotes, squirrels, eastern cottontail rabbits, mink, beaver and river otter are seen often. Occasionally a moose might be spotted. We saw quite a few birds but I was not able to identify any other than the Canada goose.



Berry Bridge Landing is a welcome stop on the river

We took a brief rest stop at Berry Bridge. This is a great place to break. There are rest rooms, tables and water. There is a small shack that sells snacks, soft drinks and beer but it wasn't open when we stopped.



One of the falls along the river

Smith Falls Park is another great stopping spot. This was our take out spot where we found tables a shelter, a great fire circle and restrooms. Doug's wife, Twyla, and some other ladies from Graham Canoe Outfitters met us there and provided refreshments. What a treat.

What's the most unlikely scenario for river fun? How about hopping into a cattle feeding tank and floating down a river. Well, it's not just wild imagining. We did just that on Middle Loup River with Mitch Glidden of Sandhills Motel and Canoe rental.



Tanking is a whole different sport

Tanking is a relatively new sport that seems to be practiced almost solely in Nebraska so far. Instead of floating down a stream in a kayak, canoe, raft or even a tube, I found myself in a round feeding stock tank with about a seven foot diameter made of heavy gauge plastic and fitted with seats around the rim. Some are as large as nine feet. They seat up to eight people and are practically unsinkable. They are also unsteerable. We were equipped with oars that could be used to keep from getting caught up in patches of grass or tree limbs in the water. When we drifted into the banks. We could push off with the oar and the current would once again carry us towards our destination.



Some of my companions relaxing as they float down river

Luckily Mitch accompanied us and gave us a running commentary not only on the sport of tanking but the natural environment of the Middle Loup river. Middle Loup River flows just north of Mullen. It's part of a series of rivers along with North Loup and South Loup that eventually flow into the Platte. Middle Loup curves through sloping canyons in the Sandhills and is spring-fed with relatively calm waters. It has enough twists and turns to make it interesting. You always wonder what's around the next bend. We spotted a few cattle and some horses on the trip.



That horse didn't pay us any attention but we were sure watching him

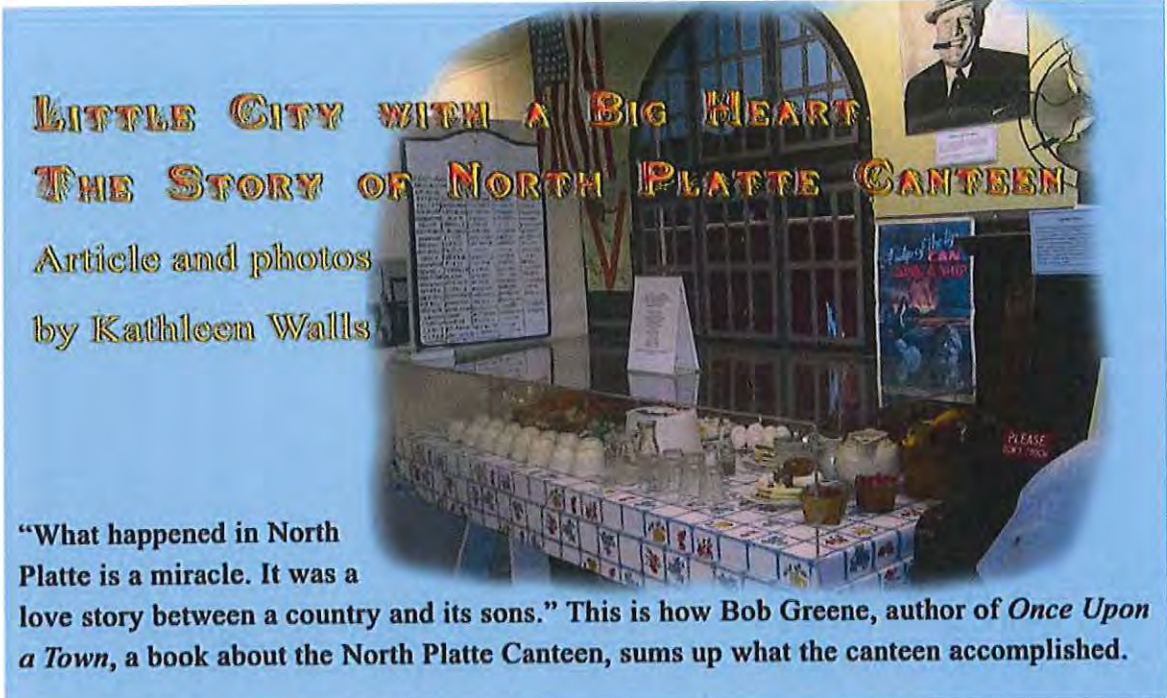
The thing that makes tanking different is the stability of the tank. It is almost impossible to turn over. We were able to all enjoy a leisurely lunch as the river carried us along with little or no help from us. It's a wonderful way to enjoy a relaxing day on the water.

For more info:

<http://www.grahamoutfitters.com/home>

<http://www.sandhillsmotel.com/river-adventures/middle-loup-river-trips/>

American Roads Online



LITTLE CITY WITH A BIG HEART THE STORY OF NORTH PLATTE CANTEEN

Article and photos
by Kathleen Walls

“What happened in North Platte is a miracle. It was a love story between a country and its sons.” This is how Bob Greene, author of *Once Upon a Town*, a book about the North Platte Canteen, sums up what the canteen accomplished.

The North Platte Canteen is one of America's little known World War II stories. I first heard of it on a recent visit to North Platte. You know you are going to have an authentic experience when you enter the museum through three doors that are preserved from the original North Platte Canteen. Inside, we were greeted by James Griffin, the museum curator.

James told us the story of the canteen and how it began. "The canteen began unofficially on Dec 17, 1941 because the people heard that their local Company D of Nebraska National Guard was coming and they wanted to give them their Christmas gifts. Instead it was the Kansas National Guard on that train. Someone stepped forward and said they wanted to give their gifts. Then they all stepped forward.



"From that was born the Canteen. The next day, Rae Wilson wrote a letter to the newspaper saying that we should have one here since there wasn't any war industry here they ought to make raising moral their war industry. So on Christmas Day 1941 the official canteen gave its first meal. From then on until April 1, 1946, no troop train was missed. Now, that's not a small feat because at the height of the war a troop train was coming through every hour on average. They were serving up to 5,000 a day at no cost to the soldiers. This was all done by volunteers. North Platte at that time was about 12,000 people. It became a western Nebraska project. 125 communities participated."

Bill Jeffers who was president of the railroad, offered free transport to volunteers coming to help at the canteen. The soldiers were thrilled to stop in North Platte. No matter their rank or color everyone was treated exactly the same at the canteen. It was the largest canteen in the United States.

The deep feelings of these volunteers is summed up in a statement made by one canteen volunteer who had recently lost her own son. "I can't help my son, but I can help someone else's son."



Canteen kitchen

The museum is in the front section of the building and the canteen in the back. From far back in what had been the kitchen area, a man was playing a piano. I couldn't recognize the tune but felt it was one I had heard my own grandmother play as a tiny child perhaps as far back as the war years. It gave me a hint of what a lonely serviceman must have felt when he first entered this building. My fellow journalists and myself wandered back and viewed the many artifacts from the days of the canteen, a huge coffee urn, a table set as it was from 1942 to 1945, a lot of letters, pictures and stories about the canteen. Among the weapons displayed there are a captured Nazi flag and a battle worn American flag.

They tell an interesting story about popcorn balls that really piqued my interest. It was the most unusual romance I had ever heard about. The story began with a simple popcorn ball. It was the habit of many of the young ladies at the canteen to place their names and addresses inside the popcorn balls they passed out to the soldiers. Sometimes the soldiers wrote and they became pen pals. In some cases it blossomed into something more.

In 1942, Virgil Butolph was a 25 year old serviceman passing through the canteen. Ethel Winters, a 19 year old girl from nearby Tryon, was helping at the canteen that day. Some of the Tryon women stuffed the names and addresses of some of the local high school girls into the popcorn balls that day. One name that went into the balls was Ethel's younger sister, Vera. Virgil got the ball with Vera's name in it but wasn't interested in writing anyone. He passed it on to a buddy who did write Vera.



Coffee urn used at the canteen

When Virgil saw the correspondence that resulted, he asked the buddy if Vera had a sister. Thus Virgil and Ethel began corresponding. Gradually the letters took on a more serious tone. Virgil asked for her photograph and sent her one of his. He began sending pressed wildflowers he picked from the Aleutian Islands where he was then stationed.

Virgil asked his sister to buy Ethel first a cedar hope chest. Ethel began saving her own earnings to fill it with household items a new home might need. Then in July 1943, Virgil asked his sister to buy Ethel a diamond ring for him. Ethel agreed to wear it on the condition they were not really engaged until they met in person and got to know each other.



Virgil and Ethel's wedding clothes

Finally in the summer of 1944, Virgil got his long awaited furlough. He sent Ethel a telegram as soon as he reached the States but it only arrived at her home about half an hour before Virgil himself. Needless to say, it was love at first sight.

Virgil spent some of his furlough in Ringgold with Ethel and then took her to nearby Kearney to meet his parents. Returning from Kearney on Sept. 14, 1944, Virgil said, "Let's get married."

They drove to a nearby Methodist Church in North Platte where they were married that same night. They used the church restroom to change clothes, Virgil into his uniform and Ethel into a dress she had in the car. Virgil and Ethel had met in person just two weeks before the ceremony.

The marriage lasted until March 21, 1976, when Virgil had a heart attack and died on a trip to Hershey to see the Sandhill cranes, one of their annual traditions. The couple had five children.

Ethel donated Virgil's Army uniform and her wedding dress to the Lincoln County Historical Museum where it hangs with the photos they exchanged, some letters and this story.



Restored farmhouse in the village

As fascinating as the Canteen part of the museum is, it's only a small part of the exhibits. After I browsed the canteen and front section of the museum, someone suggested we go see the Pioneer village out back. What a treasure we found!

Sixteen original buildings that transport you to Lincoln county's past. We visited former Union Pacific President Bill Jeffers' North Platte boyhood home. James Griffin told us, "Jeffers was kicked out of school in sixth grade for hitting a teacher. He went to work for Union Pacific as a janitor. Worked his way to call boy and eventually became president of the railroad."

The other home preserved in the village is the Ericsson Home. E. E. Ericsson was the first homesteader in Lincoln County. The two story log home is beautiful in its simplicity.

Then there was Trinity Lutheran Church. Which is still used for weddings, and Birdwood School, typical of a Plains area one-room schoolhouse. The tiny jail cell on display is enough to make even the most harden criminal decide to walk the straight and narrow here. It is just a barred iron cage with none of the modern comforts.



Part of the village

Being a railroad town, naturally there is a depot and caboose. Dick's Barber shop probably offered passengers on layovers a much cheaper haircut and shave then you will get in any airport shop today.

What a place to walk through the best of American history.

For more info:

<http://www.lincolncountymuseum.org/>



Some of the buggies displayed in the barn



Covered wagon on display in the barn

For more info:

<http://visitnorthplatte.com/attraction/buffalo-bill-state-historical-park/>

The Oklahoman Online

Exploring Nebraska

Blue skies, red barns, and rolling green hills in Northeast Nebraska are postcard perfect.

By Chris Jones, For The Oklahoman • Published: December 28, 2014



A display of unusual windmills draws interest on a Nebraska highway near Ponca State Park

Blue skies, red barns, and rolling green hills in Northeast Nebraska are postcard perfect. The pristine, peaceful scenes along the two-lane highway to Columbus are not what Captain Meriwether Lewis expected to see in 1804, as The Lewis and Clark Expedition explored what is now known as Nebraska, an Oto Indian word meaning “flat water.”



Skeleton of a prehistoric rhino is shown at Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, Royal, Neb.

Captain Lewis believed the Great Plains was a desert, “barren, sterile and sandy.”

He marveled at the natural resources of the Missouri River valley that created habitats for a vast array of plants, trees, mammals and birds, and expressed astonishment at the thousands of buffalo grazing on the prairie.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition traveled the stretch of river that is now Missouri National Recreational River from late August through early September of 1804, and again on their return trip in 1806. Visitors can follow in their footsteps and discover for themselves the sites recorded in the explorers’ journals.



Rain falls a sculpture of Lewis and Clark and Seaman, the Newfoundland dog who accompanied the explorers on their journey. The sculpture is on the grounds of the Sioux City Iowa Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center on the Iowa/Nebraska border. —Photo by Chris Jones

The mighty Missouri River, and the beauty of Nebraska, attracts families to Niobrara State Park, Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, Kreycik Riverview Elk & Buffalo Ranch and Ponca State Park, a site with top ratings.

Travelers will discover small-town museums and other treasures on drives along well-paved two-lane highways from Columbus, Norfolk, and South Sioux City, and a stone's throw across the Missouri to Sioux City, Iowa, where the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center is a site not to be missed.

Salad dressing and agrarian art

Highlights of a driving tour of sites in Northeastern Nebraska, sponsored by the Nebraska Tourism Commission, begin on a scenic drive along Highway 30, part of the Lincoln Highway, the first transcontinental highway for automobiles across the United States.

A stop was made in Columbus, for lunch at Duster's Restaurant, located in the restored Gottberg Auto Company. Fans of Dorothy Lynch Home Style salad dressing will find the product served with pride throughout the town.

There really was a Dorothy Lynch who stirred up the tasty dressing in the 1940s, and Columbus claims her as part of their history.

The small Bone Creek Museum of Agrarian Art in David City, 25 miles south of Columbus, is said to be the nation's only exclusively agrarian art museum and contains the Dale Nichols research center.

Nichols, 1904-1995, is one of Nebraska's most famous artists, known for his red barn Americana farm scenes.

Visitors to the town of 2,500 will notice the red brick Main Street and the practice of parking in the middle of the street, rather than along the curbs.

Accept a welcome from Norfolk residents to visit their clean, progressive, friendly city, where a huge mural of Johnny Carson attracts attention to the hometown boy who grew up to entertain the world.

The Elkhorn Valley Museum features a Johnny Carson Gallery, and the town is the site of an annual Great American Comedy Festival featuring nationally known comedians and events for amateurs.



Towers of Time Monument are seen at the entrance of Ponca State Park in Nebraska, a 2,400-acre forested state park.

Kuper Farms Country Market, an indoor farmers market located in the tree-lined downtown area, is a retail outlet for local baked goods, produce and jams. Fresh apricot, rhubarb, and raspberry kolaches attract a breakfast crowd devoted to the Czech pastry.

Fans of the movie "Nebraska" may want to visit the nearby town of Plainview, where the movie was filmed.

Since their town was featured as the fictional Hawthorne, Plainview residents are used to visitors driving past the movie sites.

Prehistoric disaster

Not far from Plainview, along Highway 20, a world from prehistoric days emerges from volcanic dust at Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, a National Natural Landmark.

This fascinating site situated on rolling hills and wide-open space takes the visitor back 12 million years to view well-preserved skeletons of prehistoric beasts.

These include three-toed horses, giraffe camels, bone-crushing dogs and hornless rhinos as they sought water and relief from the blinding blizzard of sudden volcanic ash that choked and killed them in their tracks.

Scientists believe the ash that killed and eventually buried the animals blew eastward from a huge volcanic eruption in what is now southwestern Idaho. Dust settled a foot deep over much of northern Nebraska. Then, the blinding dust began to blow around like fresh snow filling the waterholes.

The Niobrara River valley in Nebraska is famous in the world of paleontology, and it is considered a prairie Pompeii due to the amazingly preserved skeletons still locked in their death poses.

Visitors are invited to watch the ongoing excavation of the “time capsule,” an 18,000 square foot “Rhino Barn” which protects part of the deposit where skeletons are uncovered and displayed exactly where they are found.

The park is open May 1, through Memorial Day weekend, closed Sundays and Mondays.

Where buffalo roam



Visitors to the Kreyck Riverview Elk & Buffalo enjoy wagon tours of the ranch overlooking the Missouri River. Photo provided.

Leave the past and head for the Kreyck Riverview Elk & Buffalo Ranch, at Niobrara, where a new generation of farmers is looking to the future with elk and bison herds along the Niobrara River.



An elk looks over his territory at Kreycik Riverview Elk & Buffalo Ranch at Niobrara, Neb. Photos by Chris Jones, for The Oklahoman

An unusual offshoot of the family business is Elk Velvet Antler capsules they sell to people throughout the world.

During the summer months covered wagon tours of groups of at least 10 people are given tours of the ranch. Bison come close to the wagon, attracted by ears of corn thrown a safe distance away.

Nebraska is a surprising destination for a family vacation filled with outdoor activities, wide-open spaces and fresh air.



Horses on the grounds of Niobrara State Park in northeast Nebraska respond to the whistles of the game ranger. Photo provided.

Gather the kids, unplug the electronics, and spread out an old-fashioned map, pour a glass of milk, the state beverage, or Kool-Aid, developed in Hastings, Neb., by Edward E. Perkins in 1927, and plan a Nebraska vacation.

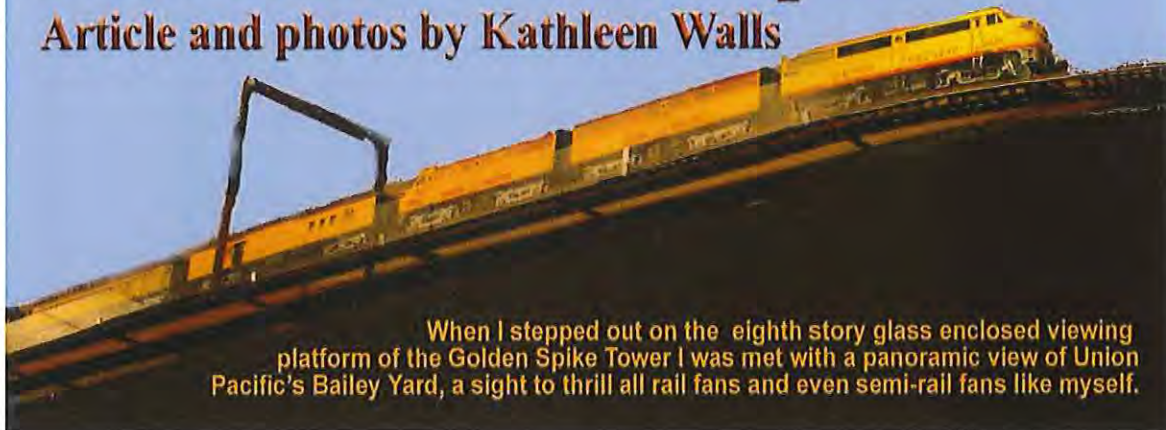
Travel and accommodations provided by the Nebraska Tourism Commission.

American Roads Travel Magazine Online



Nebraska's Golden Spike

Article and photos by Kathleen Walls



When I stepped out on the eighth story glass enclosed viewing platform of the Golden Spike Tower I was met with a panoramic view of Union Pacific's Bailey Yard, a sight to thrill all rail fans and even semi-rail fans like myself.

As I strolled around the tower, I had a 360 degree view of Bailey Yard and the Platte River Valley. I decided to take a quick elevator ride down one floor to see how the seventh floor open-air platform differed. The view was much the same from the two observation decks but the lower one was windy and cooler.

I returned upstairs and began browsing the pictures and information displayed on the inner walls. Bailey Yard is what is known as a classification yard in railroad terminology. A 'classification yard' is a switch yard, where trains are taken apart, cars and locomotives serviced and repaired, reassembled and sent out again.

The Guinness Book of World Records recognizes Bailey Yard as the world's largest railroad yard, containing more than 315 miles of tracks and processing more than 150 trains a day. Bailey Yard is eight miles long and up to three miles wide. That is room for a lot of trains.

Bailey Yard's story began long ago with the coming of the railroad. Railroads companies were granted land to build and towns sprang up as the workers settled temporarily in a base camp to build the tracks. Entrepreneurs followed and established trading posts to meet the needs. Two such men, William Peniston and Andrew Miller, established a trading post in what is now North Platte in 1866. A new town of about 3,000 grew around their trading post. When the section was completed and the workers moved on west in 1867. The town was depleted. It had only about 150 occupants left.

As the tracks were completed settlers were now able to the area more easily and quickly. Union Pacific built a round house there and once more the town began to boom. This roundhouse was the predecessor of the present day Bailey Yard.



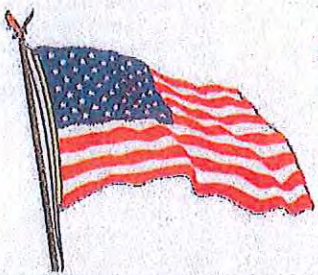
The original Union Pacific's viewing platform was degenerating rapidly by the mid-1990s. Some of the local community leaders came up with the idea of the Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center as a place where visitors could get a birds-eye view of Bailey Yard. The tower opened on June 26, 2008 and has been drawing visitors ever since.

They choose the name "Golden Spike" because North Platte, Nebraska is where east meets west on Union Pacific's rail line. They decided that since east met west in Promontory Summit, Utah, when the Transcontinental Railroad was built that name it also fit here. Union Pacific and Central Pacific building from Omaha, Nebraska, and Sacramento, California, respectively met and drove the golden spike to open up the west.

The courtyard facing Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center features the 23 flags representing each state Union Pacific Railroad serves. There is also a Memorial Brick Pavilion is paved with commemorative bricks each bearing the name of a person for which the brick was purchased.



View of Bailey Yard from the Tower



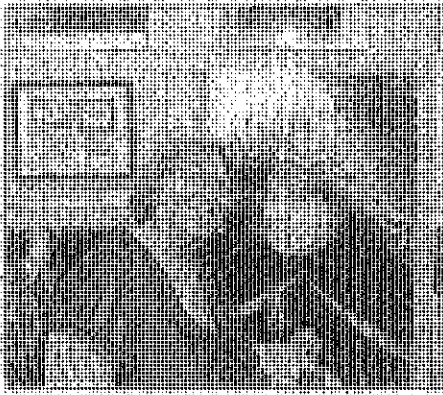
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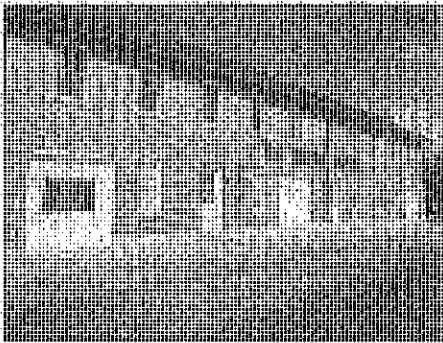
SUBURBAN EDITION

Volume 41 | Number 9 | November 4, 2014

Burbank, Evergreen Park, Hickory Hills, Justice, Oak Lawn



American Indians and Charney the Indian Boy



Genoa, Nebraska Indian School

Northeastern Nebraska has much to offer

by Annette Eason

Traveling in the northeastern part of Nebraska watching the sun shine on the rolling meadows, engulfed on both sides of the river, is like seeing heaven. There are many rivers flowing gently in and out of the big Missouri River.

The great big Missouri

River brings modern housing settlements of native American people, which cannot be differentiated between one city which was a reservation, owned by an American Indian Tribe, or a neighboring city.

My thoughts, like many people, wondered if most

American Indians lived in government reservations and everything was owned by the government. It was so good to see what appeared to be a successful looking city, belonging to a tribal nation.

Tourism has become an important industry especially along the Missouri River. The Omaha, Pawnee, Sioux, and Winnebago have reservations. The Ponca have a tribal headquarters, but no reservation just across the Missouri in South Dakota, and the Yankton Sioux have a reservation.

Columbus, Nebraska, which sits at the crossroads of the same Lincoln Highway (US 30) and US 81, has good food and home of Dorothy Lynch Salad Dressing. For those who already use Dorothy Lynch Salad Dressings know where to purchase it, but people who would like to try it, Mariano stores carry it.

On this trip, we visited and learned about many tribes. Genoa Indian School in Genoa, Nebraska was introduced to us by archaeologist, Nancy Carlson, also curator of the center. For more information visit www.megavision.net/genoamuseum

If you are making this a road trip, don't forget to stop off at the Ramada Columbus, which was formally New World Inn. Recently it has been bought and remodeling is now taking place. When completed, the property will offer more than 20,000 square feet of meeting space. It will be the only full service hotel in Columbus. If you want something smaller, similar to a Holiday Express, drive to Norfolk Lodge and Suites in Norfolk, 4200 W. Norfolk Ave. 402-379-3833.

Since you are staying in Norfolk, experience the Norfolk Art Center and experience work of local artists and artist outside the community. You can also visit the outside wall mural of the famous comedian, Johnny Carson, also the home he grew up in Norfolk, at age 8, the address is 306 S 13th St. (it is occupied). He also attended Norfolk Senior High where the Johnny Carson Theater is located. While Johnny attended Norfolk High School, he studied acting (801 Riverside Blvd. He also graduated from Nebraska University in

Lincoln.

We also visited the Elkhorn Valley Museum, 515 Queen City Blvd., Norfolk, Nebraska. There we discovered Johnny has a gallery which opened in 2002. As the director, Ryan Leichenauer mentioned, "the gallery consisted of memorabilia and clips of the old Tonight show, magic items, his clothes he wore as characters on his shows. Johnny chose the items for the exhibit that include his Emmy awards and Presidential Metal of Freedom." The museum is so extensive and entertaining, you can spend more than half a day to view it.

There is also an annual Great American Comedy Festival, held in Norfolk since 2008. It was created in Norfolk to pay tribute to Johnny Carson. Johnny Carson endowed the theater. Many comedy greats have appeared at the festival including Drew Carey, Jimmie Walker, Wendy Liebman. For more information about the Great American Comedy Festival visit: www.greatamericancomedyfestival.com

Observing the town, you realize that Johnny Carson not only lived there, but went to the high school, studied at the theater, worked in the town and continued to support the city of Norfolk until his death.

If you want to know more about Elkhorn Valley Museum www.elkhornvalleymuseum.org.



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desire to discover finds its way into the pit of their stomachs and their minds fill with wonder. Out here, that's simply called the good life, where curiosity is set free to roam and inspiration is invited to tag along. Spending a day in a place where the possibilities are wide open. Wouldn't that be nice?

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exhibit 1 of 1867 >

There are no more when time stands still. When a child's imagination is quickly replaced by a miraculous reality. What, just for a moment, their endless hunger for exploration is more than satisfied. The desire to discover a final way into the pit of their curiosity and their endless curiosity. But time only simply called the good life where curiosity is not time to learn and imagination is not to the place. Spending a day in a place where the possibilities are wide open. Wouldn't that be nice?

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For some? It takes a few days. For others? Only a few hours. But if you stay long enough, if you stay just long enough, everything turns down. Everything fits. The rolling acres of crops, the vast expanse of the people who remain and haven't yet moved. You eventually realize that the land here is more than just a place. It feeds the soul. Finding a place where the good life is always in season. Wouldn't that be nice?

Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice.



Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice.

Time doesn't slow down. But there are certain moments. Unforgettable moments that just stick. Like that day at the lake when they let you off everything except the hands of a big simple pleasure are found. Which is why you take your picture. Then, running on the sand, enjoying the good life. And you'll swear that somehow time stood still. Wouldn't that be nice?

Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice.



Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice.

A funny thing happens when you just slow down. You find the time to pay attention to the people with you. You get a little closer with each tiny moment. And then there are the things you can't forget. The worry and stress. You may not find a big event or give a situation. But you'll find each other. And those moments are the things you'll want to pack up and carry with you. Forever. Wouldn't that be nice?

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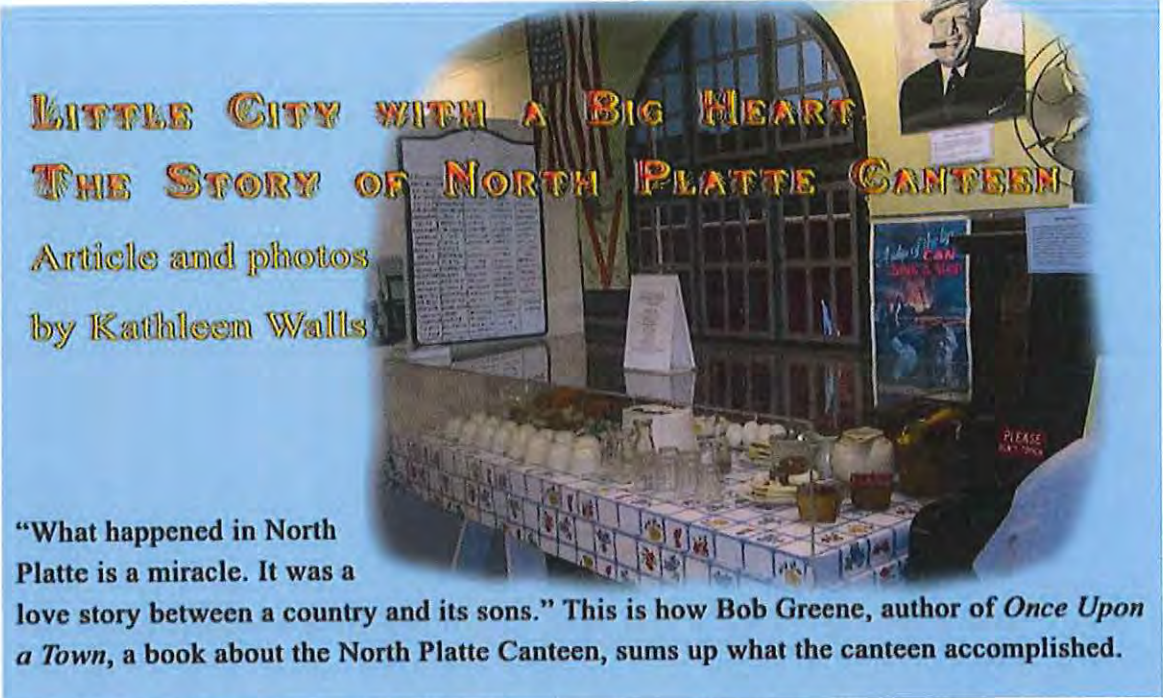
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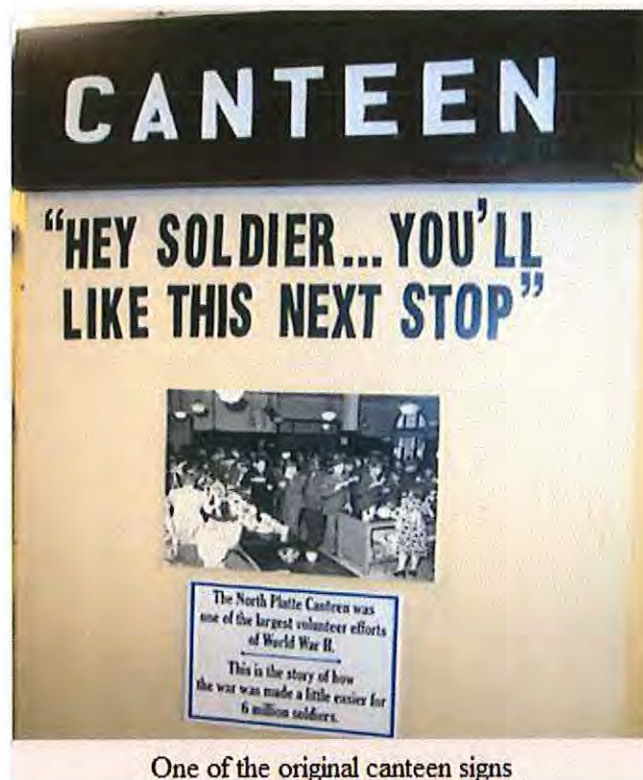
LITTLE CITY WITH A BIG HEART THE STORY OF NORTH PLATTE CANTEEN

Article and photos
by Kathleen Walls

"What happened in North Platte is a miracle. It was a love story between a country and its sons." This is how Bob Greene, author of *Once Upon a Town*, a book about the North Platte Canteen, sums up what the canteen accomplished.

The North Platte Canteen is one of America's little known World War II stories. I first heard of it on a recent visit to North Platte. You know you are going to have an authentic experience when you enter the museum through three doors that are preserved from the original North Platte Canteen. Inside, we were greeted by James Griffin, the museum curator.

James told us the story of the canteen and how it began. "The canteen began unofficially on Dec 17, 1941 because the people heard that their local Company D of Nebraska National Guard was coming and they wanted to give them their Christmas gifts. Instead it was the Kansas National Guard on that train. Someone stepped forward and said they wanted to give their gifts. Then they all stepped forward.



"From that was born the Canteen. The next day, Rae Wilson wrote a letter to the newspaper saying that we should have one here since there wasn't any war industry here they ought to make raising moral their war industry. So on Christmas Day 1941 the official canteen gave its first meal. From then on until April 1,, 1946, no troop train was missed. Now, that's not a small feat because at the height of the war a troop train was coming through ever hour on average. They were serving up to 5,000 a day at no cost to the soldiers. this was all done by volunteers. North Platte at that time was about 12,000 people. It became a western Nebraska project. 125 communities participated."

Bill Jeffers who was president of the railroad, offered free transport to volunteers coming to help at the canteen. The soldiers were thrilled to stop in North Platte. No matter their rank or color everyone was treated exactly the same at the canteen. It was the largest canteen in the United States.

The deep feelings of these volunteers is summed up in a statement made by one canteen volunteer who had recently lost her own son. "I can't help my son, but I can help someone else's son."



Canteen kitchen

The museum is in the front section of the building and the canteen in the back. From far back in what had been the kitchen area, a man was playing a piano. I couldn't recognize the tune but felt it was one I had heard my own grandmother play as a tiny child perhaps as far back as the war years. It gave me a hint of what a lonely serviceman must have felt when he first entered this building. My fellow journalists and myself wandered back and viewed the many artifacts from the days of the canteen, a huge coffee urn, a table set as it was from 1942 to 1945, a lot of letters, pictures and stories about the canteen. Among the weapons displayed there are a captured Nazi flag and a battle worn American flag.

They tell an interesting story about popcorn balls that really piqued my interest. It was the most unusual romance I had ever heard about. The story began with a simple popcorn ball. It was the habit of many of the young ladies at the canteen to place their names and addresses inside the popcorn balls they passed out to the soldiers. Sometimes the soldiers wrote and they became pen pals. In some cases it blossomed into something more.

In 1942, Virgil Butolph was a 25 year old serviceman passing through the canteen. Ethel Winters, a 19 year old girl from nearby Tryon, was helping at the canteen that day. Some of the Tryon women stuffed the names and addresses of some of the local high school girls into the popcorn balls that day. One name that went into the balls was Ethel's younger sister, Vera. Virgil got the ball with Vera's name in it but wasn't interested in writing anyone. He passed it on to a buddy who did write Vera.



Coffee urn used at the canteen

When Virgil saw the correspondence that resulted, he asked the buddy if Vera had a sister. Thus Virgil and Ethel began corresponding. Gradually the letters took on a more serious tone. Virgil asked for her photograph and sent her one of his. He began sending pressed wildflowers he picked from the Aleutian Islands where he was then stationed.

Virgil asked his sister to buy Ethel first a cedar hope chest. Ethel began saving her own earnings to fill it with household items a new home might need. Then in July 1943, Virgil asked his sister to buy Ethel a diamond ring for him. Ethel agreed to wear it on the condition they were not really engaged until they met in person and got to know each other.



Virgil and Ethel's wedding clothes

Finally in the summer of 1944, Virgil got his long awaited furlough. He sent Ethel a telegram as soon as he reached the States but it only arrived at her home about half an hour before Virgil himself. Needless to say, it was love at first sight.

Virgil spent some of his furlough in Ringgold with Ethel and then took her to nearby Kearney to meet his parents. Returning from Kearney on Sept. 14, 1944, Virgil said, "Let's get married."

They drove to a nearby Methodist Church in North Platte where they were married that same night. They used the church restroom to change clothes, Virgil into his uniform and Ethel into a dress she had in the car. Virgil and Ethel had met in person just two weeks before the ceremony.

The marriage lasted until March 21, 1976, when Virgil had a heart attack and died on a trip to Hershey to see the Sandhill cranes, one of their annual traditions. The couple had five children.

Ethel donated Virgil's Army uniform and her wedding dress to the Lincoln County Historical Museum where it hangs with the photos they exchanged, some letters and this story.



Restored farmhouse in the village

As fascinating as the Canteen part of the museum is, it's only a small part of the exhibits. After I browsed the canteen and front section of the museum, someone suggested we go see the Pioneer village out back. What a treasure we found!

Sixteen original buildings that transport you to Lincoln county's past. We visited former Union Pacific President Bill Jeffers' North Platte boyhood home. James Griffin told us, "Jeffers was kicked out of school in sixth grade for hitting a teacher. He went to work for Union Pacific as a janitor. Worked his way to call boy and eventually became president of the railroad."

The other home preserved in the village is the Ericsson Home. E. E. Ericsson was the first homesteader in Lincoln County. The two story log home is beautiful in its simplicity.

Then there was Trinity Lutheran Church. Which is still used for weddings, and Birdwood School, typical of a Plains area one-room schoolhouse. The tiny jail cell on display is enough to make even the most harden criminal decide to walk the straight and narrow here. It is just a barred iron cage with none of the modern comforts.



Part of the village

Being a railroad town, naturally there is a depot and caboose. Dick's Barber shop probably offered passengers on layovers a much cheaper haircut and shave then you will get in any airport shop today.

What a place to walk through the best of American history.

For more info:

<http://www.lincolncountymuseum.org/>

American Roads Online



His larger-than-life career linked two centuries. He was born in Iowa Territory in February 26, 1846 and died in Denver, Colorado on January 10, 1917. He was the stereotype of the wild west: Indian scout, buffalo hunter, gold prospector, Civil War soldier, pony express rider, rancher: William Fredrick Cody was that and more. He also was many of the things that we think of as "20th century": his career included Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, showman, entrepreneur, town founder, owner of a dude ranch and big game hunting preserve and even environmentalist.



Having a good time visiting Buffalo Bill's home

On a recent visit to his Scout's Rest Ranch near North Platte, Nebraska, I learned much about this unusual man. Cody had the two-story second empire style mansion built on about 4,000 acres during the heyday of his traveling show known as Wild West and named it Scout's Rest Ranch. The style and the cupola atop the home give it a decidedly Gothic look.

Today it is the site of Buffalo Bill State Historical Park which encompasses 25 acres of Cody's original ranch, including the house and barn. The park offers RV and primitive camping and picnic areas but for me the main attraction was Scouts Rest and the story it told about the man behind the legend.

Jason Tonsfeldt, park superintendent, showed us through the home and outbuildings. He calls it "One of the coolest places I have ever been."

In the dining room, the wallpaper is a copy of the original designed by BB. When the home was restored in the 1960s, a small section of the original paper was found. The paper is in effect a story of Buffalo Bill's life. It is filled with log cabins, Indians, stagecoaches and buffalo. There is a woman on a horse shooting a gun believed to represent Annie Oakley and the man on the bottom in front of a bunch of teepees would be Buffalo Bill himself.

The home is filled with pieces correct to the period but only a few are original pieces owned by Buffalo Bill himself, the sideboard and clock in the dining room and in his den or office, there is a rolltop desk and chair that is original to the home. >

Portraits reflect Buffalo Bill as a family man. There are several in the home of his wife, Louisa Frederici, and their four children.

He entertained a lot so he had large rooms to accommodate a lot of people. We asked Jason what famous people Buffalo Bill might have entertained. He named "Teddy Roosevelt, Annie Oakley, Sitting Bull, maybe Houdini, and Grand Duke Alexis (sixth child of Russian Emperor Alexander II)."

There was no guest book kept at Scouts Rest but according to Buffalo Bill's diary, he was a guide for the buffalo hunting trip in January 1872 celebrating the duke's twenty second birthday.



Buffalo Bill's bedroom

Buffalo Bill wrote of the event, "Alexis at first preferred to use his pistol instead of a gun. He fired six shots from this weapon at buffaloes only twenty feet away from him, but as he shot wildly, not one of his bullets took effect. Riding up to his side and seeing that his weapon was empty, I exchanged

pistols with him. He again fired six shots, without dropping a buffalo. Seeing that the animals were bound to make their escape without his killing one of them, unless he had a better weapon, I rode up to him, gave him my old reliable 'Lucretia,' and told him to urge his horse close to the buffaloes, and I would then give him the word when to shoot. At the same time I gave old Buckskin Joe (one of Buffalo Bill's own horses) a blow with my whip, and with a few jumps the horse carried the Grand Duke to within about ten feet of a big buffalo bull. 'Now is your time,' said I.

He fired, and down went the buffalo."

Another unusual feature is that every bedroom has a closet. In that day a closet was taxed as a room. The centerpiece of the kitchen is a shiny black woodstove that used corn cobs for cooking. That required careful tending as you had to put in just the correct amount of cobs. He had a good icebox, the refrigeration of the day. Obviously he liked his food fresh and prepared well.



Barn at Scout's Rest

The house is like a big time capsule. So we can see him a very social and family man who would spare no expense for his comfort and that of his family and guests. It also reflects the attitude of his time about hunting for sport.



Some of the buggies displayed in the barn

The outbuildings are designed for the occupation that allowed him to build such a luxurious home, showman. The barn is huge and filled with memorabilia of his show; a covered wagon, several buggies, lots of stalls for his prized horses. In front of a

larger-than-life painting there is a saddle where you can pose for your own claim to fame in front of the great man. "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" toured the United States, England and most of Europe. He met the heads of state including Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

Today, we tend to think of him as environmentally thoughtless to say the least but remember he lived in a different time. Actually, he was very environmentally friendly and liberal in his views in his later years.

He employed many Indians in his show, paid them a fair wage and referred to them as "the former foe, present friend, the American." In one interview he stated "Every Indian outbreak that I have ever known has resulted from broken promises and broken treaties by the government."



Covered wagon on display in the barn

He also supported Women's Rights. He is quoted as saying "What we want to do is give women even more liberty than they have. Let them do any kind of work they see fit, and if they do it as well as men, give them the same pay."

He even spoke out against hide hunting and campaigned for a set hunting season. He was a man of two centuries and left his mark on both. Scouts Rest is a must for every western fan, historian and sportsman. In fact, I can't think of anyone who would not enjoy a visit there.



Some of the buggies displayed in the barn



Covered wagon on display in the barn

For more info:

<http://visitnorthplatte.com/attraction/buffalo-bill-state-historical-park/>

The Oklahoman Online

Exploring Nebraska

Blue skies, red barns, and rolling green hills in Northeast Nebraska are postcard perfect.

By Chris Jones, For The Oklahoman • Published: December 28, 2014



A display of unusual windmills draws interest on a Nebraska highway near Ponca State Park

Blue skies, red barns, and rolling green hills in Northeast Nebraska are postcard perfect. The pristine, peaceful scenes along the two-lane highway to Columbus are not what Captain Meriwether Lewis expected to see in 1804, as The Lewis and Clark Expedition explored what is now known as Nebraska, an Oto Indian word meaning “flat water.”



Skeleton of a prehistoric rhino is shown at Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, Royal, Neb.

Captain Lewis believed the Great Plains was a desert, “barren, sterile and sandy.”

He marveled at the natural resources of the Missouri River valley that created habitats for a vast array of plants, trees, mammals and birds, and expressed astonishment at the thousands of buffalo grazing on the prairie.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition traveled the stretch of river that is now Missouri National Recreational River from late August through early September of 1804, and again on their return trip in 1806. Visitors can follow in their footsteps and discover for themselves the sites recorded in the explorers’ journals.



Rain falls a sculpture of Lewis and Clark and Seaman, the Newfoundland dog who accompanied the explorers on their journey. The sculpture is on the grounds of the Sioux City Iowa Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center on the Iowa/Nebraska border. –Photo by Chris Jones

The mighty Missouri River, and the beauty of Nebraska, attracts families to Niobrara State Park, Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, Kreycik Riverview Elk & Buffalo Ranch and Ponca State Park, a site with top ratings.

Travelers will discover small-town museums and other treasures on drives along well-paved two-lane highways from Columbus, Norfolk, and South Sioux City, and a stone's throw across the Missouri to Sioux City, Iowa, where the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center is a site not to be missed.

Salad dressing and agrarian art

Highlights of a driving tour of sites in Northeastern Nebraska, sponsored by the Nebraska Tourism Commission, begin on a scenic drive along Highway 30, part of the Lincoln Highway, the first transcontinental highway for automobiles across the United States.

A stop was made in Columbus, for lunch at Duster's Restaurant, located in the restored Gottberg Auto Company. Fans of Dorothy Lynch Home Style salad dressing will find the product served with pride throughout the town.

There really was a Dorothy Lynch who stirred up the tasty dressing in the 1940s, and Columbus claims her as part of their history.

The small Bone Creek Museum of Agrarian Art in David City, 25 miles south of Columbus, is said to be the nation's only exclusively agrarian art museum and contains the Dale Nichols research center.

Nichols, 1904-1995, is one of Nebraska's most famous artists, known for his red barn Americana farm scenes.

Visitors to the town of 2,500 will notice the red brick Main Street and the practice of parking in the middle of the street, rather than along the curbs.

Accept a welcome from Norfolk residents to visit their clean, progressive, friendly city, where a huge mural of Johnny Carson attracts attention to the hometown boy who grew up to entertain the world.

The Elkhorn Valley Museum features a Johnny Carson Gallery, and the town is the site of an annual Great American Comedy Festival featuring nationally known comedians and events for amateurs.



Towers of Time Monument are seen at the entrance of Ponca State Park in Nebraska, a 2,400-acre forested state park.

Kuper Farms Country Market, an indoor farmers market located in the tree-lined downtown area, is a retail outlet for local baked goods, produce and jams. Fresh apricot, rhubarb, and raspberry kolaches attract a breakfast crowd devoted to the Czech pastry.

Fans of the movie "Nebraska" may want to visit the nearby town of Plainview, where the movie was filmed.

Since their town was featured as the fictional Hawthorne, Plainview residents are used to visitors driving past the movie sites.

Prehistoric disaster

Not far from Plainview, along Highway 20, a world from prehistoric days emerges from volcanic dust at Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, a National Natural Landmark.

This fascinating site situated on rolling hills and wide-open space takes the visitor back 12 million years to view well-preserved skeletons of prehistoric beasts.

These include three-toed horses, giraffe camels, bone-crushing dogs and hornless rhinos as they sought water and relief from the blinding blizzard of sudden volcanic ash that choked and killed them in their tracks.

Scientists believe the ash that killed and eventually buried the animals blew eastward from a huge volcanic eruption in what is now southwestern Idaho. Dust settled a foot deep over much of northern Nebraska. Then, the blinding dust began to blow around like fresh snow filling the waterholes.

The Niobrara River valley in Nebraska is famous in the world of paleontology, and it is considered a prairie Pompeii due to the amazingly preserved skeletons still locked in their death poses.

Visitors are invited to watch the ongoing excavation of the “time capsule,” an 18,000 square foot “Rhino Barn” which protects part of the deposit where skeletons are uncovered and displayed exactly where they are found.

The park is open May 1, through Memorial Day weekend, closed Sundays and Mondays.

Where buffalo roam



Visitors to the Kreyck Riverview Elk & Buffalo enjoy wagon tours of the ranch overlooking the Missouri River. Photo provided.

Leave the past and head for the Kreyck Riverview Elk & Buffalo Ranch, at Niobrara, where a new generation of farmers is looking to the future with elk and bison herds along the Niobrara River.



An elk looks over his territory at Kreycik Riverview Elk & Buffalo Ranch at Niobrara, Neb. Photos by Chris Jones, for The Oklahoman

An unusual offshoot of the family business is Elk Velvet Antler capsules they sell to people throughout the world.

During the summer months covered wagon tours of groups of at least 10 people are given tours of the ranch. Bison come close to the wagon, attracted by ears of corn thrown a safe distance away.

Nebraska is a surprising destination for a family vacation filled with outdoor activities, wide-open spaces and fresh air.



Horses on the grounds of Niobrara State Park in northeast Nebraska respond to the whistles of the game ranger. Photo provided.

Gather the kids, unplug the electronics, and spread out an old-fashioned map, pour a glass of milk, the state beverage, or Kool-Aid, developed in Hastings, Neb., by Edward E. Perkins in 1927, and plan a Nebraska vacation.

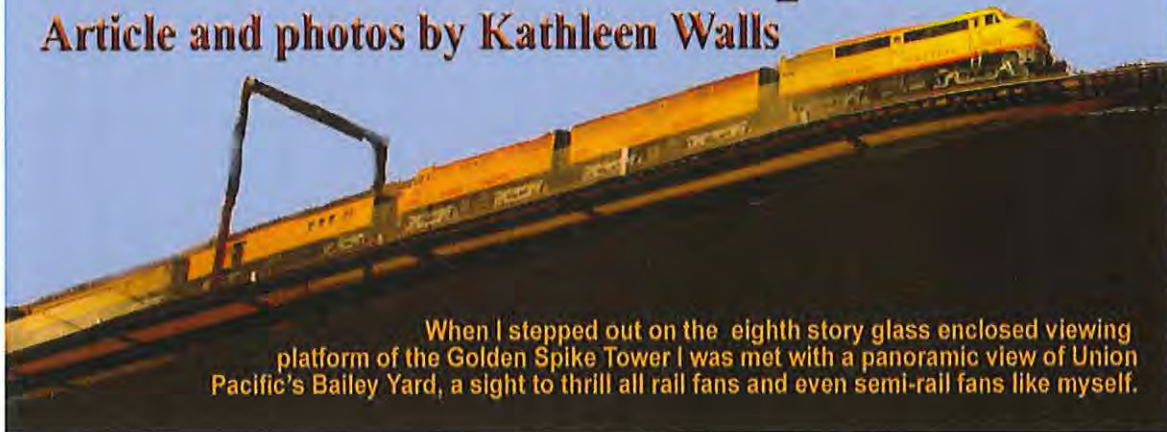
Travel and accommodations provided by the Nebraska Tourism Commission.

American Roads Travel Magazine Online



Nebraska's Golden Spike

Article and photos by Kathleen Walls



When I stepped out on the eighth story glass enclosed viewing platform of the Golden Spike Tower I was met with a panoramic view of Union Pacific's Bailey Yard, a sight to thrill all rail fans and even semi-rail fans like myself.

As I strolled around the tower, I had a 360 degree view of Bailey Yard and the Platte River Valley. I decided to take a quick elevator ride down one floor to see how the seventh floor open-air platform differed. The view was much the same from the two observation decks but the lower one was windy and cooler.

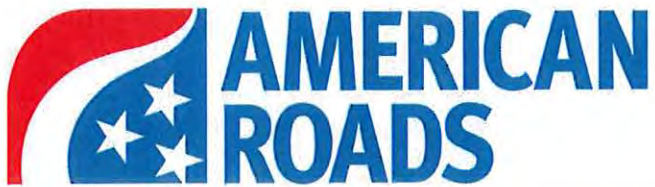
I returned upstairs and began browsing the pictures and information displayed on the inner walls. Bailey Yard is what is known as a classification yard in railroad terminology. A 'classification yard' is a switch yard, where trains are taken apart, cars and locomotives serviced and repaired, reassembled and sent out again.

The Guinness Book of World Records recognizes Bailey Yard as the world's largest railroad yard, containing more than 315 miles of tracks and processing more than 150 trains a day. Bailey Yard is eight miles long and up to three miles wide. That is room for a lot of trains.

Bailey Yard's story began long ago with the coming of the railroad. Railroad companies were granted land to build and towns sprang up as the workers settled temporarily in a base camp to build the tracks. Entrepreneurs followed and established trading posts to meet the needs. Two such men, William Peniston and Andrew Miller, established a trading post in what is now North Platte in 1866. A new town of about 3,000 grew around their trading post. When the section was completed and the workers moved on west in 1867. The town was depleted. It had only about 150 occupants left.

As the tracks were completed settlers were now able to reach the area more easily and quickly. Union Pacific built a round house there and once more the town began to boom. This roundhouse was the predecessor of the present day Bailey Yard.

http://www.americanroads.net/railroads_fall2014.htm



The original Union Pacific's viewing platform was degenerating rapidly by the mid-1990s. Some of the local community leaders came up with the idea of the Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center as a place where visitors could get a birds-eye view of Bailey Yard. The tower opened on June 26, 2008 and has been drawing visitors ever since.

They choose the name "Golden Spike" because North Platte, Nebraska is where east meets west on Union Pacific's rail line. They decided that since east met west in Promontory Summit, Utah, when the Transcontinental Railroad was built that name it also fit here. Union Pacific and Central Pacific building from Omaha, Nebraska, and Sacramento, California, respectively met and drove the golden spike to open up the west.

The courtyard facing Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center features the 23 flags representing each state Union Pacific Railroad serves. There is also a Memorial Brick Pavilion is paved with commemorative bricks each bearing the name of a person for which the brick was purchased.



In front of the Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center sits a vintage dining car that is currently being renovated. When completed, the car will let you step back in time to the golden age of rail and experience a real railroad dining car with all the amenities.

If admiring the rail yard from this lofty perch is not enough for you, visit during RailFest and you can actually take a tour of the yard and get up close and personal with the cars and people that make up Union Pacific. While you are communing with the trains don't become so enthralled that you forget there will be food vendors, entertainment of all kinds and lots of visiting trains. It's an annual event held in September.

Stop at the Visitor Center in the Tower on your way out for Union Pacific Railroad and Nebraska memorabilia.

For More Info:

<http://visitnorthplatte.com/attraction/golden-spike-tower/#sthash.pT0Ybw2Z.dpuf>



Golden Spike Tower

http://www.americanroads.net/railroads_fall2014.htm



View of Bailey Yard from the Tower

LEISURE

DECEMBER 2014

GROUP TRAVEL

Annual Industry Forecast Issue

Marketing tips from the
pros pave the way to
success

The Maryland
shore invites
groups
to relax and
recharge

Welcome to
Ocean City, Maryland

9

Must-see
places for your
next itinerary in
South Dakota

**American
Group Travel
Awards**

Gala industry event
recognizes top achievers

Westward Ho!

Touring Nebraska's Panhandle invokes visions of wagon trains and hardy pioneers

Look at a map of Nebraska and you'll see there aren't that many towns on the western side, at least compared to the eastern and central parts of the state. The largest city, Scottsbluff, has a population of only 15,000, and many communities number in the hundreds.

Traveling through the high plains of Western Nebraska, you will find rolling grasslands, barbed-wire fences and black angus cattle aplenty, along with corn fields here and majestic buttes there. Your main impressions of Nebraska's Panhandle center on wide-open space and the frontier feeling conjured up by landscapes reminiscent of the American West. But this is the Midwest. Or is it?

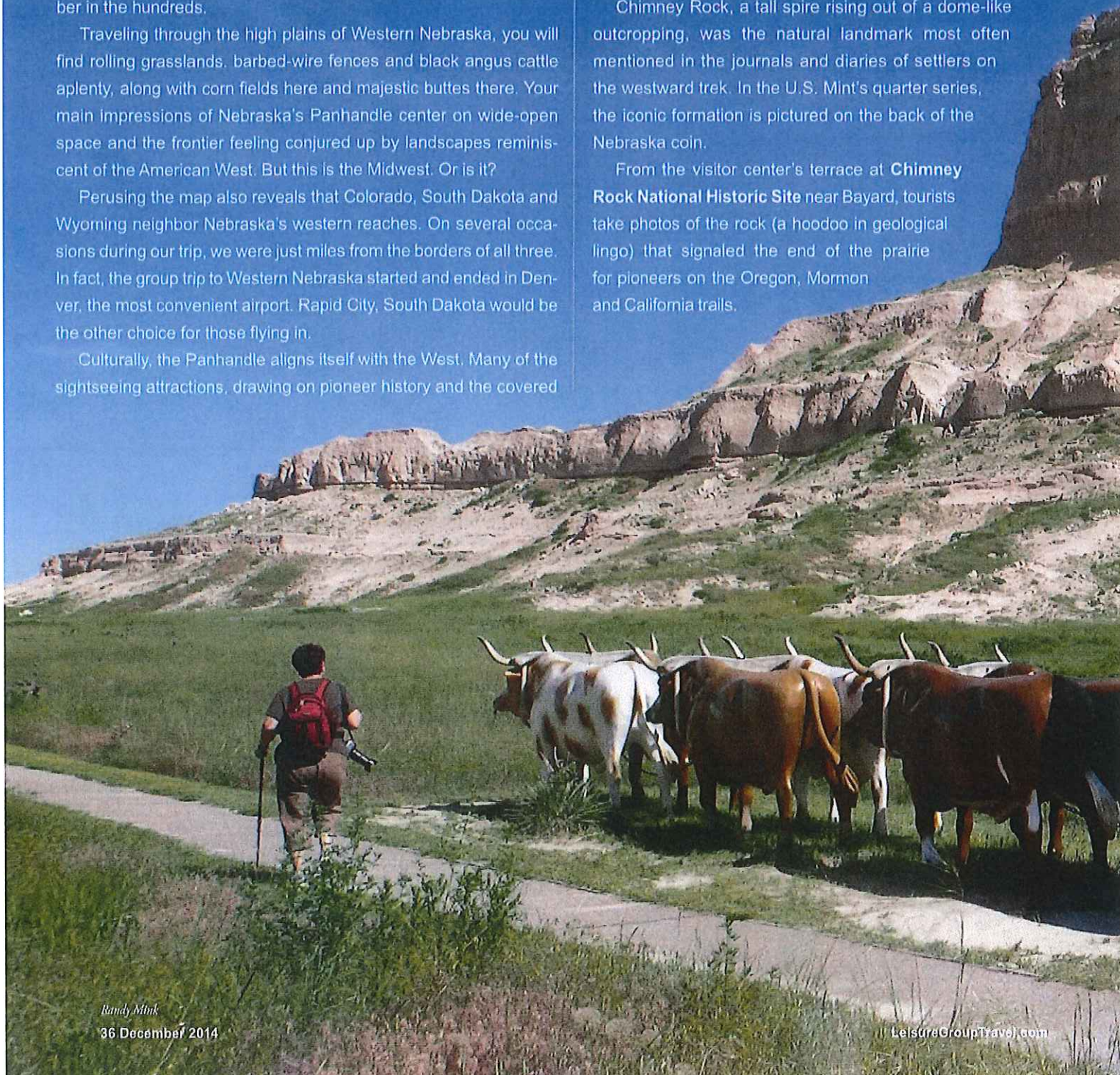
Perusing the map also reveals that Colorado, South Dakota and Wyoming neighbor Nebraska's western reaches. On several occasions during our trip, we were just miles from the borders of all three. In fact, the group trip to Western Nebraska started and ended in Denver, the most convenient airport. Rapid City, South Dakota would be the other choice for those flying in.

Culturally, the Panhandle aligns itself with the West. Many of the sightseeing attractions, drawing on pioneer history and the covered

wagons that rolled along the Oregon Trail, reflect that westward slant. It's possible to see the original wagon ruts in several places, though grass had covered them up at two sites we visited in June, leaving it up to our imagination.

Chimney Rock, a tall spire rising out of a dome-like outcropping, was the natural landmark most often mentioned in the journals and diaries of settlers on the westward trek. In the U.S. Mint's quarter series, the iconic formation is pictured on the back of the Nebraska coin.

From the visitor center's terrace at **Chimney Rock National Historic Site** near Bayard, tourists take photos of the rock (a hoodoo in geological lingo) that signaled the end of the prairie for pioneers on the Oregon, Mormon and California trails.



They could see it two days before, from 37 miles away. One of the half-million settlers who passed it called Chimney Rock "the most remarkable thing I ever saw." Many carved their initials on it. A dirt road near the visitor center provides access for those who care to walk through grass for three-fourths of a mile and climb Chimney Rock,

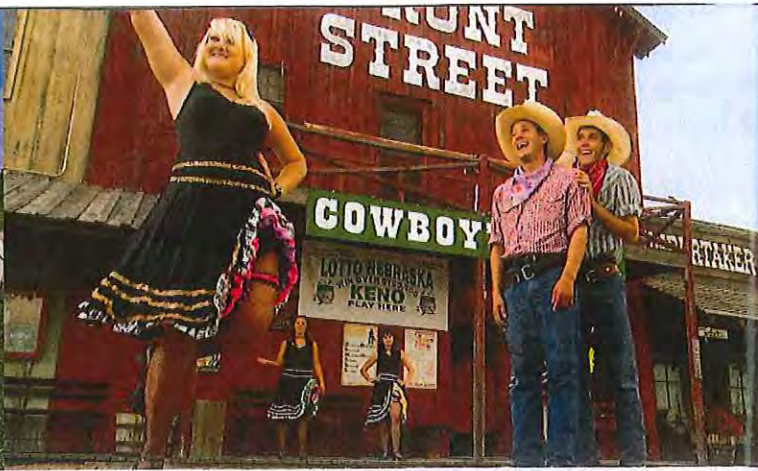
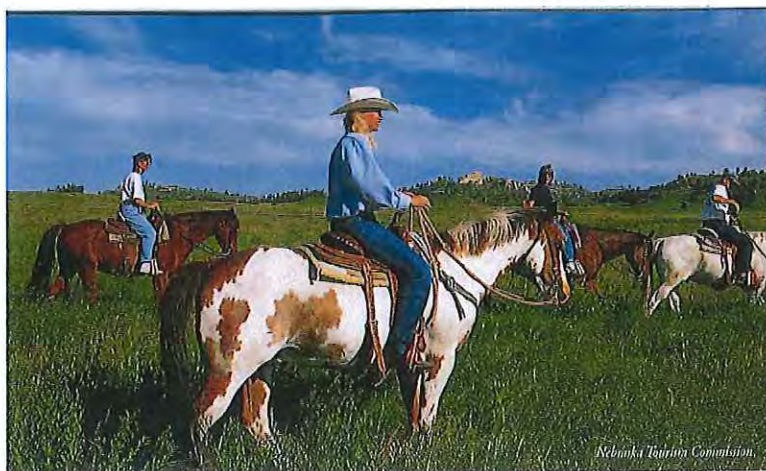
but beware of rattlesnakes. The visitor center has museum exhibits and a video that tells the story of the great migration West.

Closer to the Wyoming border, more stories of westward movement come alive at **Scotts Bluff National Monument**, another landmark that guided intrepid settlers. A series of wind-sculpted, clay-and-sandstone buttes, an escarpment rising 800 feet above the Platte River Valley, could easily be a Western movie set.

Visitor center exhibits describe the hardships of the long Oregon Trail journey that started in St. Joseph or Independence, Missouri. The very sight of the bluffs, you learn, was a psychological reward for those who had trudged for days (15 miles a day) through endless prairie on their creaking wooden prairie schooners. Wrote one woman about the tedious trek: "How I wish the Indians would attack. I am so bored."

During the summer at covered wagons outside the Scotts Bluff visitor center, living history interpreters describe life on the trail and cook up vittles over the fire. You might have a chance to sample hard tack—tasteless, rock-hard biscuits made from flour and water—but don't break your teeth. The wagons and costumed characters provide great photo opportunities.

Scotts Bluff National Monument provides all the right elements for that romanticized scene of westward migration.



Rip-roaring adventures in Western Nebraska include riding at Fort Robinson State Park and the Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out in Ogallala.

on location: midwest ♦

Cars and buses can ascend to the top of Scotts Bluff, where the views stretch 100 miles. You'll spot Chimney Rock, 23 miles away. From the summit, one can make the 35-minute hike back to the visitor center on a trail flanked by juniper, ponderosa pines and walls of rock.

Scotts Bluff National Monument is three miles west of the twin towns of Gering and Scottsbluff. Cheyenne, Wyoming is an hour and a half away. At the far eastern end of Nebraska lies Omaha, an eight-hour drive.

Sitting on 100 acres with Scotts Bluff as a backdrop, the **Legacy of the Plains Museum** was formed in 2013 from the Farm & Ranch Museum and North Platte Valley Museum, both of which were in Gering. The first phase of exhibits opened this past fall. The museum will cover everything from pioneer trails, sod houses and Native American crafts to livestock ranches, irrigation and the area's sugar beet industry. You can see sugar beets and other crops being grown on the museum grounds. (Tours can be arranged at the two local sugar beet factories that remain of the seven that flourished in the 1920s.)

Fort Robinson State Park, Nebraska's largest, is a gem in the state's northwest corner, three miles from the town of Crawford. Formerly a frontier military outpost, it commands a scenic setting in Pine Ridge Country, a land of canyons, grassy hills, and buttes and ridges crowned with ponderosa pines.

Established in 1878 to defend white settlers and cattle ranchers against possible Indian troubles, Fort Robinson became a cavalry post in 1887 and later developed into the U.S. Army's largest training, care and breeding center for horses and mules. Known for its lively social life in the 20th century, it was called the "Country Club of the Army," with a calendar featuring parties, polo matches, fox hunts and other equestrian events. Two museums on the grounds showcase the fort's history and area geology.

Horses are still very much a part of life at Fort Robinson. Besides horseback trail rides, horse-drawn wagon and stagecoach rides are available. A free rodeo put on by the wranglers and their kids is staged on Thursday nights in summer.

The Post Playhouse, the former quartermaster's depot, offers nighttime entertainment from late May to mid-August. This summer's playbill at the professional repertory theater will feature *Grease*, *All Shook Up*, *A Man of No Importance*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* and *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*.

Spotting mountain sheep is the highlight of open-air jeep rides into the wilderness. Visitors to Fort Robinson also see grazing herds of buffalo and Texas Longhorn cattle. Other activities include hiking, mountain biking, fishing, tubing and kayaking.

The Lodge, built in 1909 as an enlisted men's barrack, is the focal point of the park. It offers 22 rooms with private bath and houses the Fort Robinson Inn Restaurant, whose Western theme is carried out through the log tables and chairs, plus wall decorations like rifles, spears, saddles, chaps, portraits of Indians and photos of officers. The "Lunch in the Barracks" menu features a buffalo cheeseburger, buffalo tacos and hot buffalo sandwich with mashed potatoes and gravy. Meal options at Fort Robinson

also include chuck wagon buffalo stew cookouts and hayrack breakfast rides.

In addition to the Lodge, accommodations are in kitchen-equipped cottages and stately homes that once served as officers' quarters. Commanche Hall, perfect for family reunions, has 14 baths and sleeps 60.

Avid sightseers, especially those into fossils and geology, will want to make excursions to **Toadstool Geologic Park**, famous for its badlands formations; **Agate Fossil Beds National Monument**, which also has an impressive collection of Indian artifacts; and **Hudson-Meng Education & Research Center**, site of the largest extinct bison bone bed in the world.



Fossils and badlands formations intrigue hikers at Toadstool Geologic Park.

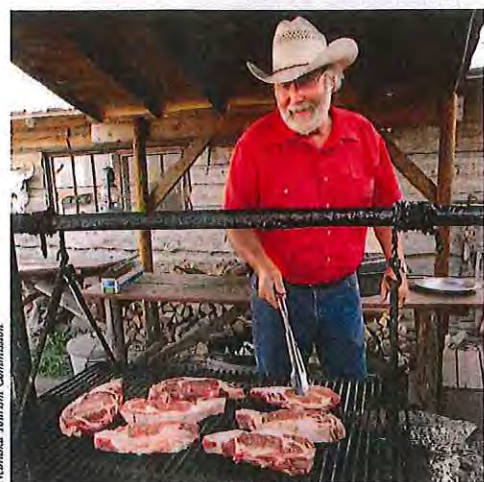
History buffs will enjoy the **Museum of the Fur Trade** in Chadron, while literature fans will be intrigued by the **Marl Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center** at Chadron State College, where exhibits shed light on author Marl Sandoz (1896-1966), who wrote powerfully of life in the grass-covered sand hills that cover a quarter of Nebraska.

The town of Alliance, on the western edge of the sand hills, has two major attractions. The most photogenic is **Carhenge**, a whimsical replica of England's Stonehenge built from 38 vintage cars, all painted gray. The state-of-the-art **Knight Museum and Sandhills Center** is a treasure house of local ranching, farming, railroad and Native American history.

In the southern reaches of Western Nebraska, along Interstate 80, are several group-friendly places. Sidney is home to the flagship store of locally-owned **Cabela's**, the "World's Foremost Outfitter." After Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, it is Nebraska's most visited attraction. Besides offering every kind of gear and clothing imaginable for outdoor activities, it dazzles customers with its displays of mounted animals,

Front Street, famed for its **Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out**, complete with dance hall girls. Groups also visit the **Petrified Wood & Art Gallery**, where 86-year-old twins Harvey and Howard Kenfield display their creations made from small pieces of petrified wood along with Native American and other Western art.

While Nebraska's Panhandle may not have sights as famous as Mount Rushmore or Yellowstone National Park, groups will find plenty to marvel about on the high plains where the Midwest meets the West. For information, log on to visitnebraska.com. **LGT**

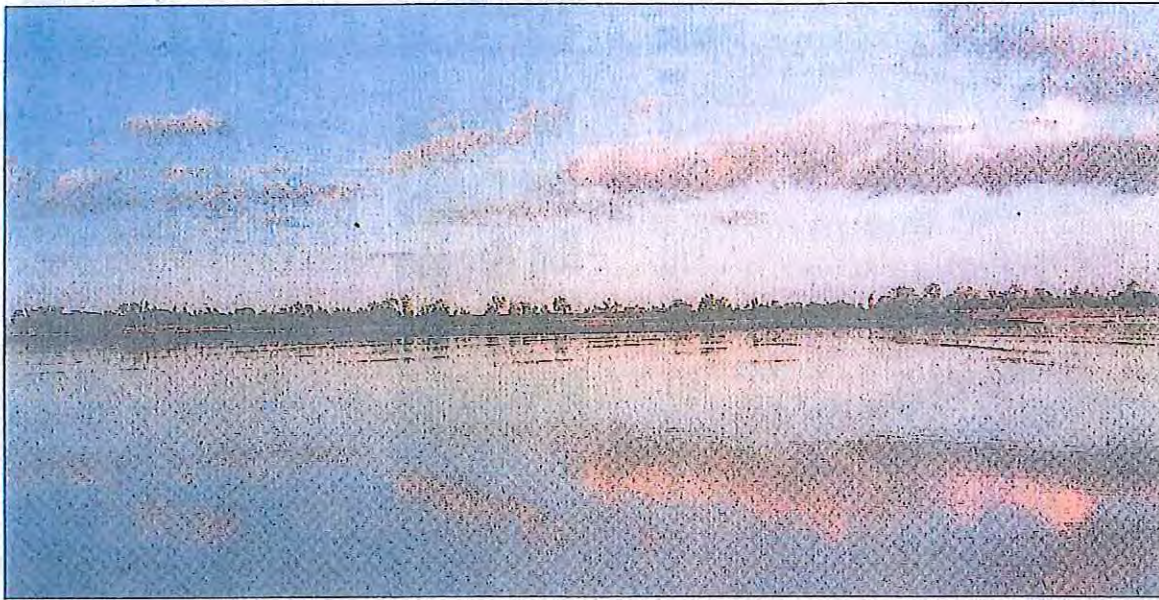


The Drifter Cookshack at High Plains Homestead, a remote outpost near Crawford

even an elephant bagged by Dick Cabela in 1989. The cafe offers boar, bison and elk deli sandwiches, and there's a room on the mezzanine that groups can use. The **National Pony Express Monument** is on the Cabela's campus, and minutes away are hotel chains like Comfort Inn, Days Inn and Hampton Inn.

Ogallala, another I-80 town, abounds with Wild West history. Favorite stops include **Boot Hill** cemetery, dating from the 1870s, when Ogallala was a rip-roarin' cow town at the end of the Texas trail drives. Here in Nebraska's "Cowboy Capital" you can enjoy Western entertainment at

The Valdosta Daily Times



A river level view of the Missouri.

PHOTOS: KAY & DAVID SCOTT

Missouri National Recreational River

BY DAVID AND KAY SCOTT

The two of us recently had an opportunity to revisit northeastern Nebraska and explore portions of the Missouri National Recreational River.

We last passed this way in 2010 while following the route taken by Lewis & Clark as the Corps of Discovery in September 1806 returned to St. Louis from its winter stay in Fort Clatsop. At the time, we had spent nearly three months on the road and were anxious to return home to South Georgia.

Thus, we didn't take time to explore the cornhusker state's hilly corner that was partially bordered by two sections of the Missouri National Recreational River. The recent trip was designed to correct the earlier slight to an interesting and scenic area of the state.

What is a National Recreational River?

The National Park Service, a bureau of the U.S. Department of Interior, administers more than 400 units that carry a number of designations including national park, national monument, national battlefield, national seashore, and national historical park.

Other designations include national recreation area, national river, and national recreational river; the latter of which includes the portions of the Missouri we visited.

The Missouri National Recreational River was established under the authority of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 1968 legislation designed to preserve selected rivers in free-flowing condition and to protect their immediate environments. The free-flowing restriction may apply to an entire river, or to portions of a river.

In the case of MNRR, it is two relatively short Missouri River segments bordering northeast Nebraska.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act categorizes river entries into one of three groupings: wild, scenic, or recreational. The latter category is the least restrictive and includes rivers that are generally easily ac-

The Missouri National Recreational River was established under the authority of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 1968 legislation designed to preserve selected rivers in free-flowing condition and to protect their immediate environments.

cessible by vehicle and that may have encountered some diversion or impoundment plus shoreline development.

Existing dams, developed shorelines, and relatively easy access result in MNRR being classified as recreational rather than wild or scenic.

The 'Big Muddy'

The Missouri River, often referred to as the Big Muddy due to the large amount of sediment it carries, once served as the country's major thoroughfare to the West, first by trappers and traders, and later by Lewis & Clark as the Corps of Discovery searched for a water route to a western ocean.

Although the Corps was unable to discover the water route that President Thomas Jefferson had hoped for, the men returned in 1806 to St. Louis with knowledge that helped open the American West to exploration and development. The Missouri, with a length of 2,341 miles, is America's longest river, exceeding the length of the Mississippi by approximately 150 miles.

The Missouri is generally considered to begin at the junction of three tributaries (the Jefferson, Gallatin, and Madison) in southwestern Montana. It then flows through or along the borders of North



Kayaking the river.

RIVER

FROM PAGE 6

Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, and Kansas, until heading east through the middle of Missouri on its way to the Mississippi River. Surprisingly, the great river once flowed across present-day Montana toward the northeast until emptying into Hudson Bay and, eventually, the Arctic Ocean. This earlier course was dammed several million years ago by glacial ice, causing the river to divert toward the southeast along its present route.

Changes on the River

In modern times, the river has been impacted by a number of legislative acts including the 1944 Pick-Sloan Plan whose purpose it was to promote and coordinate flood control, irrigation, navigation, power, a sanitary water supply, wildlife, and recreation.

Other legislation important to the Missouri included the Wild and Scenic River Act of 1968 (mentioned previously), the Water Resources Development Act of 1976, and a series of environmental protection laws including the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

From the headwaters near Three Forks, Montana, to its confluence with the Mississippi River a short distance north of St. Louis, the Missouri that was once wild and meandering has been largely tamed by a series of dams including the huge Fort Peck dam in eastern Montana that served as the cover photo for the first issue of Life magazine. Construction on the Fort Peck Dam commenced during 1933 and required seven years before the project began generating electricity.

Five subsequent downstream dams resulted in large reservoirs that trap sediment rather than allowing it to flow downstream, thus altering the natural flow along with the river's ecosystem. The river has also been altered by stabilization of the banks



An NPS ranger guides a hiker to an old railroad bridge over the Niobrara River.

PHOTO: KAY & DAVID SCOTT

and forcing the water flow into narrower channels compared to when it ran wild and meandered over wide stretches of the adjacent landscape.

The dams and channeling have resulted in development moving closer to the river, further degrading the river's ecosystem.

Missouri National Recreation River

The MNRR is comprised of two free-flowing sections of the Missouri River along Nebraska's northeastern border with South Dakota, plus 20 miles of the Niobrara River and eight miles of Verdigris Creek, two Missouri tributaries. The two sections of the Missouri are separated by 25-mile-long Lewis and Clark Lake behind Gavins Point Dam, a short distance upstream from the town of Yankton, South Dakota.

The eastern district of the MNRR begins just below Gavins Point Dam and continues 59 miles downstream to Nebraska's Ponca State Park. Established by law in 1978, this was the

first of the two sections added to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The 39-mile western section of the recreational river begins just below Fort Randall Dam near the town of Pickstown, S.D., and terminates just beyond Nebraska's Niobrara State Park and the confluence with the Niobrara River.

Dams just above each of the two sections of the MNRR have had a major impact on the nature of the river within the sections. The reservoirs have produced many water-related recreational activities that were unavailable or more difficult to enjoy when the river was wild.

The dams have also reduced, but not eliminated flooding that was a more common occurrence when the river was free-flowing. The major flooding of 2011 was an example of how snowmelt and heavy precipitation along the upper stretches of the river can overwhelm man's ability to control the river.

Not surprisingly, the river's most popular activities are water-based.

Catfish, walleye, sauger,

and paddlefish are some of the species available to anglers in these sections of the river. Walleye, prize eating for two people from South Georgia, are best caught a short distance downstream from the two dams. A license from either South Dakota or Nebraska is acceptable for river fishing. Canoeing and kayaking are both quite popular, but care must be taken and the National Park Service recommends that only experienced paddlers should be on the river.

Two particularly inviting state parks are along the Nebraska side of the recreational river:

Niobrara State Park, a short distance from the town of Niobrara and near the downstream terminus of the recreational river, offers camping, 20 cabins, horseback trail rides, fishing, boat ramps, a swimming pool, and 14 miles of hiking trails. The cabins are on a high bluff offering outstanding river views.

Ponca State Park, located a short distance upstream from the terminus of the eastern recreational river segment, offers similar amenities, but with some of the nicest cabins we have found in a state park. The Ponca unit also houses the Missouri Na-

tional Recreational River Resource and Education Center that contains a large exhibit area.

On the South Dakota side of the river near the town of Yankton, Lewis & Clark State Recreation Area offers 400 campsites and 17 camping cabins in three separate campgrounds. A Corps of Discovery Welcome Center overlooking the river is across the Gavins Point Dam from Yankton.

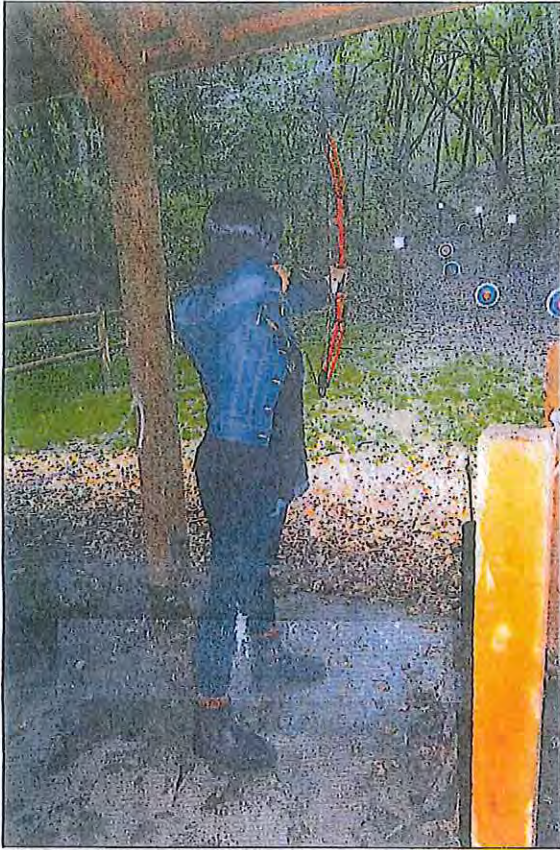
Nearby sites worth a visit include the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center in Sioux City which is an interesting stop for travelers wishing to learn more about the Corps of Discovery. Likewise, Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, approximately 30 miles south of Niobrara is simply outstanding. Complete skeletons of large mammals, turtles, and birds have been uncovered from ash that compacted after being deposited 12 million years ago following a volcanic explosion in present day Idaho.

So there you have it; a new place to visit you may not have previously considered.

We have found during our travels that many unique and interesting sites and activities are often overlooked by the majority of travelers. These are often available without the crowds and at reasonable prices. Northeastern Nebraska and its two segments of the Missouri National Recreational River is no exception.

David and Kay Scott are authors of 'Complete Guide to the National Park Lodges' (Globe Pequot). They live in Valdosta.

Red Deer Advocate



Photos by CAROL PATTERSON/freelance

Above: People can learn archery at Ponca State Park.
Bottom right: Niobrara State Park offers horseback riding for beginner and experienced riders.



Photo by KAY SCOTT/freelance

Top right: You can rent kayaks at Ponca State Park to paddle the Missouri.

Missouri connections

BY CAROL PATTERSON
SPECIAL TO THE ADVOCATE

Most people — even young children — spend as much time in front of a screen as they do sleeping each day. You might think cuddling indoors with a computer is harmless, but new research shows your health improves with time in nature.

But how does Mother Nature compete with megamalls and computer games? Perhaps we need things outside to be as exciting as on a video game.

The Missouri River is North America's longest river and was the backdrop for the great Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery Expedition. Homesteaders followed and settled along the fertile Missouri watershed. My ancestors were so inspired by the river they named my great, great aunt after it.

Now a new generation of park managers is using the Missouri River to plug people into nature. Mark Rettig, superintendent for Nebraska's Niobrara State Park, says people arrive with a backseat full of videos and kids clamoring to watch them.

When they discover the park's 19 cabins lack televisions or consistent cellphone service, they wonder how they will fill their time.

"We tell them to go turn over a rock and see what insects live underneath," Rettig says. "And you wouldn't believe how many kids have never made s'mores."

So there are s'more making lessons and afternoons at the pool.

I enjoyed the trails near the river, looking for birds fleeing Canada's cold weather. Supper was a buffalo cookout and a living history presentation that made me appreciate modern conveniences even while taking a break from them.

Further down the river, Ponca State Park has an education program that will engage even the most reluctant outdoorswoman.

I signed up for archery lessons and felt like Robin Hood after shooting tips from Tyler Wulf, assistant superintendent.

I passed up the chance to shoot a rifle or toss a tomahawk, opting instead to kayak the Missouri. The 95 km near the park border is free flowing, not channelized, and looks much like when Lewis and Clark paddled it.

I knew, however, I was only a couple of hours from a very comfortable lodge and training on how to start a fire with flint (although I could cheat with matches if needed).

Jeff Fields, park superintendent, encourages creativity from his staff and all ideas for new programs are considered.

The biggest success has been the annual Missouri River Outdoor Expo, a two-day bonanza of outdoor fun for 62,000 people from 27 states.

"The first year we had eight inches of rain (20 cm) and still 4,500 people showed up," Wulf commented on the event's success. "We knew we had something."

Ten years later, registration for the pre-expo school day sold out in 30 minutes!

The Missouri Outdoor Expo includes a Grunt, Gobble and Growl contest where people imitate the animal of their choice.

Dog lovers can watch the aquatic competition where dogs — some in life-jackets — throw themselves off the dock in an attempt to jump the longest.

Kids can compete in the gourmet s'more contest, while their parents sample wine. Yes, wine is grown in Nebraska and provides a soothing end to a busy day. I missed the expo but was kept hopping at Ponca, trying to decide between hiking and learning to fish. Time on the trails won out — I figured I could always get takeout — but checking my email seemed less attractive.

As Rettig summed up, "When people leave the park, they admit they enjoyed being away from their screens." Like me, they have forgotten what it is like to be unplugged.

Thanks to a new generation of parks personnel, it is easier to connect to nature. I understood better why my great, great aunt was called Missouri

and vowed to spend more time in mega-nature.

If you go

© Niobrara State Park has rustic cabins overlooking the Missouri River and many outdoor activities. Ponca State Park offers deluxe accommodations along with the Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center (www.OutdoorNebraska.org). RV facilities are found at both parks.

© To learn more about the Missouri River, stop at the Lewis and Clark Missouri River Visitor's Center (<http://www.mrb-lewisandclarkcenter.org>).

Carol Patterson inspires everyday explorers within organizations. When she isn't travelling for work, Carol is travelling for fun. More of her adventures can be found at www.carolpatterson.ca.

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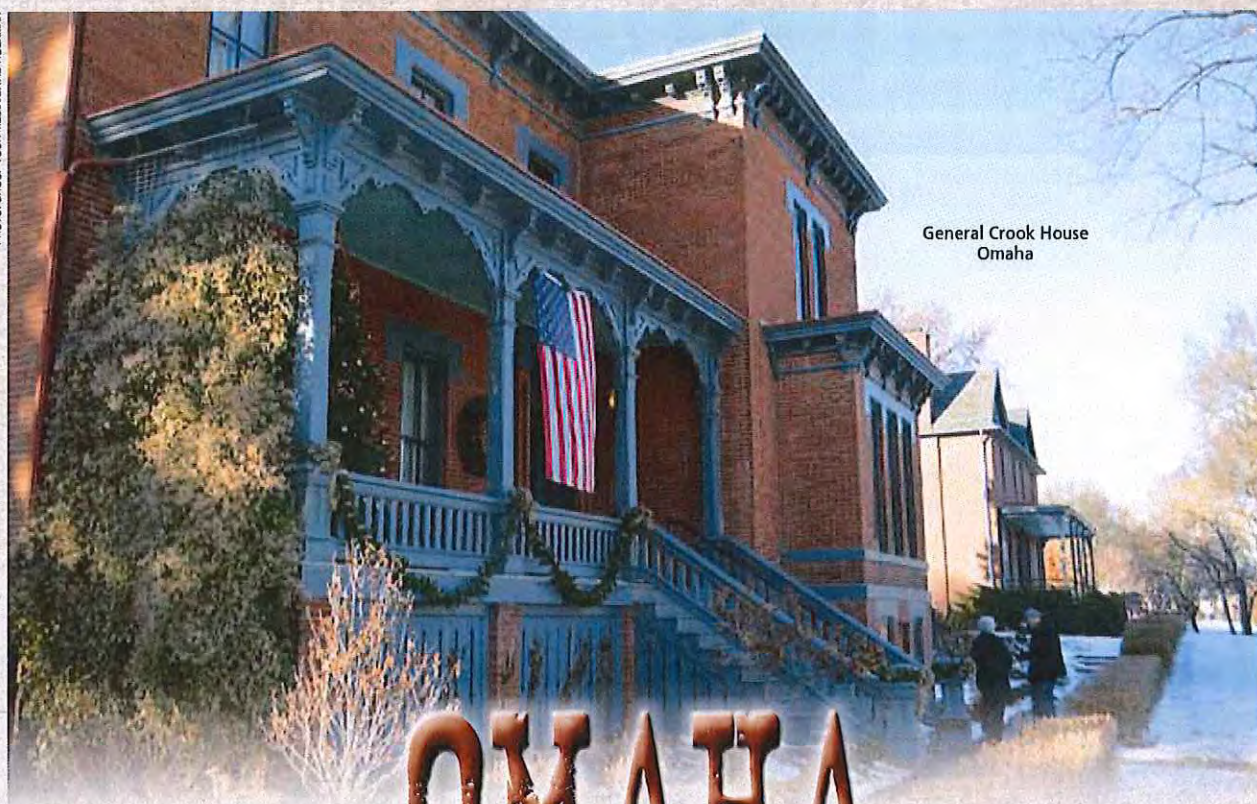
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OMAHA

By David Hoekman

HISTORIC GATEWAY TO THE WEST

Omaha today reflects its frontier past.

Even before Omaha was founded in 1854 by land speculators and named after a Native American tribe, it served as a jumping-off point for the Mormon Trail.

Guides take groups through the Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters. The center provides glimpses into the rigors of frontier travel faced by those involved in the Mormon migration from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Salt Lake City, Utah.

The winter quarters were established in the winter of 1846–47. The settlement of 500 to 700 log cabins was home for about 2,500 people for nearly two years.

Guide Sister Sequin said the displays help her understand what the travelers were feeling.

"They were very optimistic about everything that happened to them," she said.

Just 2 ½ miles south of the Mormon Trail Center is Fort Omaha, an Indian War-era supply fort

that is now a community college campus. Docents provide tours of General Crook House Museum and Fort Omaha.

U.S. Army Gen. George Crook was posted to Fort Omaha in 1875.

Quarters One, now known as the General Crook House, was built for Crook in 1878–79, and the Italianate house has been restored.

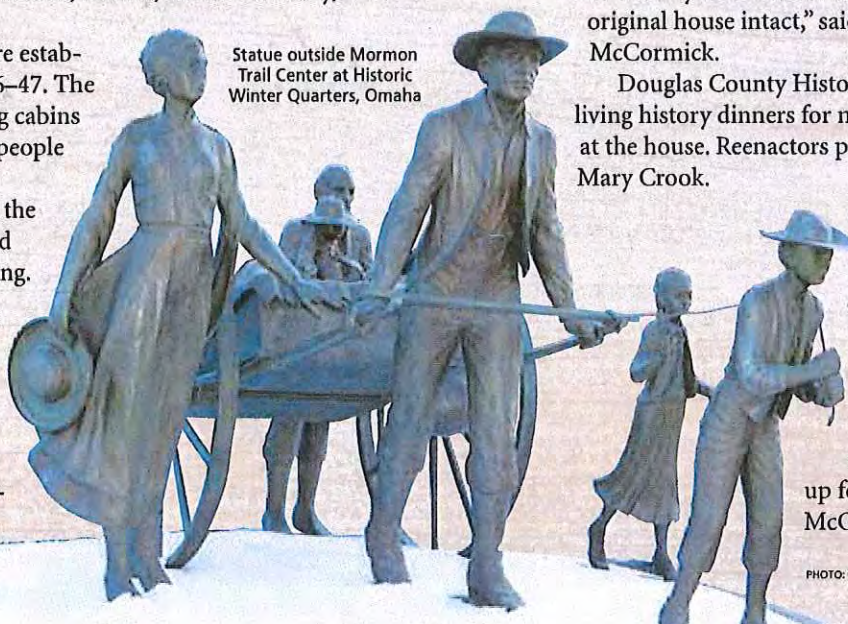
"We're very fortunate to have so much of the original house intact," said guide Carolyn McCormick.

Douglas County Historical Society offers living history dinners for motorcoach tours at the house. Reenactors portray Gen. and Mary Crook.

Crook had the heart and soul of an American Indian, even though he was an Indian fighter.

"We're very proud that General Crook stood up for the Indians," McCormick said

Statue outside Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters, Omaha



Just west of Omaha is Boys Town, a nonprofit child care agency that calls itself Omaha's best-kept secret.

The Rev. Edward Joseph Flanagan, a Roman Catholic priest, founded Boys Town in 1917, introducing a new model of care for young boys that emphasized social preparation. The Village of Boys Town was established in 1921 and now there are 11 campus locations throughout the U.S. The facility admitted girls in 1979.

Tours of the village include the visitor center (which features a huge ball of stamps), Hall of History, Flanagan's home and Dowd Memorial Chapel, which contains Flanagan's tomb; he died in 1948. Step-on guides share an insider's perspective on life in the village and stories about Boys Town's past.

TRAINS AND PLANES

The Durham Museum is located in a meticulously preserved art deco train station.

Mick Hale, director of education, said the massive 1931 structure was intended to express the strength of the railroad.

Groups can see, touch and experience the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad at the museum.

Docent-led tours last up to an hour and can be customized to meet a group's needs or interests.



The Rev. Flanagan statue, Boys Town, Omaha

PHOTO: GROUP TOUR MEDIA/DAVID HOEKMAN

Six groups of statues spread throughout the Great Hall symbolize people who passed through Union Station.

Strategic Air & Space Museum is located between Lincoln and Omaha near Interstate 80.

The museum houses military aircraft and space artifacts, many of which have been restored in the museum's on-site restoration facility.

Originally, the museum was located at Offutt Air Force Base, closer to Omaha, where the U.S. Air Force Strategic Air Command was headquartered.

Docent Terry Currey, who grew up in Omaha, said during the Cold War Omahans knew Soviet missiles were aimed at Offutt Air Force Base.

"We didn't worry about it," he said. "We wore it as a badge of honor." 🚗

Nebraska Tourism Commission

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Strategic Air & Space Museum, Ashland

PHOTO: GROUP TOUR MEDIA/DAVID HOEKMAN

CULTURAL CENTER

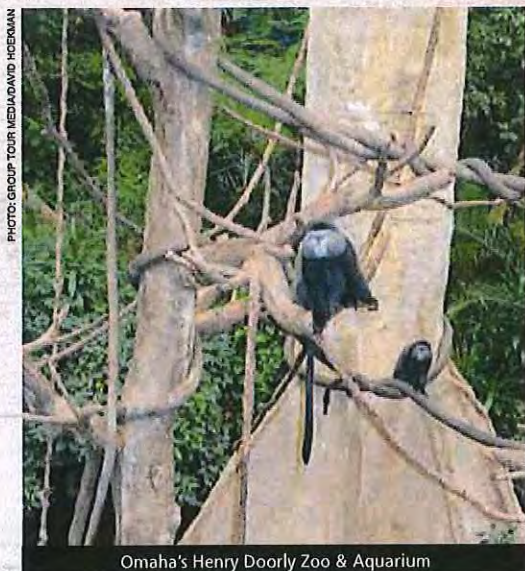
Omaha is home to five Fortune 500 company headquarters. Corporate generosity has helped establish top cultural institutions such as Joslyn Museum of Art, Lauritzen Gardens and Omaha Community Playhouse.

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium brings visitors face to face with over 900 different species. An indoor desert is located inside the world's largest geodesic dome, which is next to America's largest indoor rainforest. The newly renovated Scott Aquarium features a 70-foot tunnel with sharks circling above.

The modernistic Holland Performing Arts Center includes the 2,005-seat Peter Kiewit Concert Hall and the 486-seat Suzanne and Walter Scott Recital Hall.

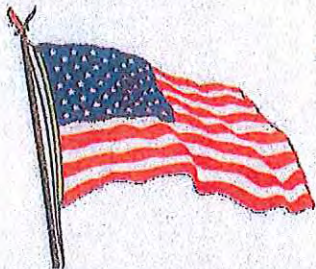
Zinc, the center's restaurant, is a convenient place for a group dinner before an Omaha Symphony performance.

Blue Barn Theatre specializes in producing original scripts that challenge the theater artists and patrons, and it is building a new downtown theater.



Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium

PHOTO: GROUP TOUR MEDIA/DAVID HOEKMAN



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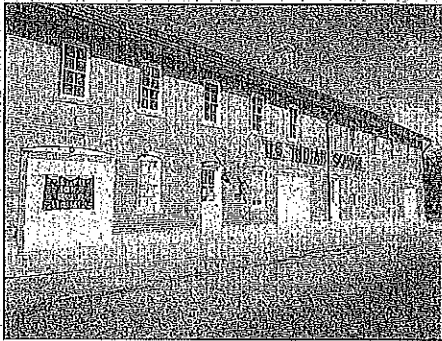
SUBURBAN EDITION

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Burbank, Evergreen Park, Hickory Hills, Justice, Oak Lawn



Annette Dixon and Carnac the Magnificent



Genoa, Nebraska Indian School

Northeastern Nebraska has much to offer

by Annette Dixon

Traveling in the northeastern part of Nebraska watching the sun shine on the rolling meadows, engulfed on both sides of the river, is like seeing heaven. There are many rivers flowing gently in and out of the big Missouri River.

The great big Missouri

River brings modern housing settlements of native American people, which cannot be differentiated between one city which was a reservation, owned by an American Indian Tribe, or a neighboring city.

My thoughts, like many people, wondered if most

American Indians lived on government reservations and everything was owned by the government. It was so good to see what appeared to be a successful-looking city, belonging to a tribal nation.

Tourism has become an important industry especially along the Missouri River. The Omaha, Santee Sioux, and Winnebago have reservations. The Ponca have a tribal headquarters, but no reservation just across the Missouri in South Dakota, and the Yankton Sioux have a reservation.

Columbus, Nebraska, which sits at the crossroads of the same Lincoln Highway (US 30), and US 81, has good food and home of Dorothy Lynch Salad Dressing. For those who already use Dorothy Lynch Salad Dressings know where to purchase it, but people who would like to try it, Mariano stores carry it.

On this trip, we visited and learned about many tribes. Genoa Indian School in Genoa, Nebraska was introduced to us by archaeologist, Nancy Carlson, also curator of the center. For more information, visit www.megavision.net/genoamuseum.

If you are making this a road trip, don't forget to stop off at the Ramada Columbus, which was formally New World Inn. Recently it has been bought and remodeling is now taking place. When completed, the property will offer more than 20,000 square feet of meeting space. It will be the only full service hotel in Columbus. If you want something smaller, similar to a Holiday Express, drive to Norfolk Lodge and Suites in Norfolk, 4200 W. Norfolk Ave. 402-379-3833.

Since you are staying in Norfolk, experience the Norfolk Art Center and experience work of local artists and artist outside the community. You can also visit the outside wall mural of the famous comedian, Johnny Carson, also the home he grew up in Norfolk, at age 8, the address is 306 S 13th St. (it is occupied). He also attended Norfolk Senior High where the Johnny Carson Theater is located. While Johnny attended Norfolk High School, he studied acting (801 Riverside Blvd. He also graduated from Nebraska University in

Lincoln.

We also visited the Elkhorn Valley Museum, 515 Queen City Blvd., Norfolk, Nebraska. There we discovered Johnny has a gallery which opened in 2002. As the director, Ryan Leichenauer mentioned, "the gallery consisted of memorabilia and clips of the old Tonight show, magic items, his clothes he wore as characters on his shows. Johnny chose the items for the exhibit that include his Emmy awards and Presidential Metal of Freedom." The museum is so extensive and entertaining, you can spend more than half a day to view it.

There is also an annual Great American Comedy Festival, held in Norfolk since 2008. It was created in Norfolk to pay tribute to Johnny Carson. Johnny Carson endowed the theater. Many comedy greats have appeared at the festival including Drew Carey, Jimmie Walker, Wendy Liebman. For more information about the Great American Comedy Festival visit: www.greatamericancomedyfestival.com.

Observing the town, you realize that Johnny Carson not only lived there, but went to the high school, studied at the theater, worked in the town and continued to support the city of Norfolk until his death.

If you want to know more about Elkhorn Valley Museum www.elkhornvalleymuseum.org.