Garden Clubs Visit the Museum

On Friday, April 19, 2013, the Federated Garden Clubs of Nebraska visited the Lincoln County Historical Museum. Members from the Rocky Mountain Region were holding a convention in North Platte. This area includes Nebraska, Kansas, South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana. Members from Oshkosh, Ogallala, Kearney, Omaha, Sutherland, Chappell, Elkhorn, Plattsmouth, Dalton, and North Platte were among those visiting the Museum.

One of the highlights of the Museum visit was the presentation about the North Platte Canteen given by Waneita Schomer. Waneita’s first-hand knowledge about the Canteen effort has been shared with many Museum visitors.

A special cake presentation was made to Waneita to commemorate her birthday in April.

The Museum also wishes to thank the Garden Glove Greenhouse for the bulbs and perennial plants donated at the end of the summer. Dale Charles and Toni Barron bought the plants. We would also like to acknowledge the Spade and Hope Garden Club who also donated and planted flowers at the Fredrickson House. In addition they cared for the garden throughout the summer.

Note to the reader: There has been so much happening at the Museum in the past year, that many events have not been recorded in the newsletter until now. This issue of “Plains Talk” attempts to catch up on those events and set the stage for 2014.
Dear Museum Members:

I hope you enjoy this catch-up edition of Plains Talk. Last year was a whirlwind of activity at the museum. 2014 is shaping up to be just as busy with the old favorites, Heritage Festival and Anvil Blowing. But, we will have a new addition this year. The museum is reviving the Grand Duke Alexis Rendezvous. For more on this event see the article below.

We were also saddened with the loss of two board members this last year. Maxine Kelley and Faith Fisher both passed away unexpectedly leaving a large hole at the museum. These two ladies have been with this museum for decades. When I arrived seven years ago, they both became wonderful resources to me in the museum’s efforts to grow and become an integral part of the Lincoln County community. They will be greatly missed.

This year, we have started out with a great response to our annual membership and donation drive. If you haven’t sent your current membership in you still have time.

Likewise, this year, the museum has enacted a new membership category for businesses. The museum’s goal is to raise $30,000 this year through these memberships. There are lots of benefits with the membership including free admission tickets, listing on the museum, website, and spots on our cell phone audio tour to name a few. If you own a business and would like to become a member or if you do business with a company in Lincoln County and would like to introduce us to the owners contact myself at the museum and I would be glad to present the details of the membership opportunities. I hope to see you at the museum this summer.

Sincerely,
James Griffin

Letter From The Curator

Grand Duke Alexis Rendezvous

The museum is going to bring back a beloved event that used to be held by the Hayes Center, Nebraska Lions Club each summer. You may have even attended this decade long event. It is the Grand Duke Alexis Rendezvous. More details will be found in a future Plains Talk edition but the following article from the North Platte Telegraph will whet your appetite.

Buffalo Hunt Re-enactment Returns

By Heather Johnson
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A royal buffalo hunt is making a comeback in Nebraska.

The Lincoln County Historical Museum plans to reinvent the “Grand Duke Alexis Rendezvous” during Rail Fest Sept. 19-21.

The idea is to commemorate the 1872 visit to the U.S. by Alexei Alexandrovich, otherwise known as the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia.

“The U.S. was at the height of popularity with the Russian government at that time,” said Jim Griffin, museum curator. “Having Alexis visit was a way to cement diplomatic relations.”

A buffalo hunt, not far from Camp Hayes Lake, was organized to entertain the duke. Some of the more famous people involved in the adventure will be portrayed by actors during the rendezvous.

Among them will be Steve Alexander, of Monroe, Mich., who has been featured as General George Armstrong Custer in numerous TV shows and films. Kirk Shapland, of Dighton, Kan., will play William “Buffalo Bill” Cody, and Jahnis Abelite, of Arlington, Wash., will portray the duke.

Griffin said the actors will dress in period attire as they talk about the buffalo hunt and characters they represent. A series of lectures about topics such as Lakota story telling are also planned.

Griffin is hoping to offer a guided bus tour to the hunt site and to put on a play titled, “Fate Worse Than Death.” It is a comedy.

“The play is loosely based on the kind [of show] Buffalo Bill was in back east,” Griffin said. “It starts out with tall tales, and the audience is asked to hiss and boo at the characters.”

The original rendezvous was put on by Lions Club members and staged about 12 miles northeast of Hayes Center. It ran from 2000-2010 but was canceled in 2011 due to a lack of volunteers.

“We lost several members that were good workers,” said co-coordinator Doris Vlasin. “We just couldn’t seem to generate enough interest in the community to keep it going.”

The cost of the re-enactment also became a burden.

“We couldn’t charge admission fees because it was at Camp Hayes Lake on Nebraska Game and Parks Commission property,” Vlasin said. “It was expensive to do on our own, but I loved every minute of it and hated to give it up.”

Griffin has pursued grant funding to offset the cost of hosting the re-enactment in North Platte and is also seeking sponsorships. There will be an admission charge of $5 for anyone 12 or older. Those younger than 12 will be let in for free.

“It’s important to remember the hunt because of all the larger aspects that surrounded it,” Griffin said. “Not only does it show that Nebraska has been involved in world events, but it also demonstrates the interest in the west by Europeans, the end of the large buffalo hunts and the downfall of the Native American way of life.”
Museum Attendance at an All-time High!!

Attendance for 2013 hit an all-time high! The above map shows a state-by-state record of numbers of individuals visiting the Museum from each state. Included in the Nebraska figure are people attending special events such as Heritage Days, the Halloween Haunted Village, the Ft. McPherson jail break re-enactment, the anvil blowing on the 4th of July, and the Canteen celebration dinner.

Each year we also have visitors from several foreign countries. This past year we had visitors from the continents of North America, Africa, Europe, and Australia. Those figures include:

- Australia: 6
- Africa—South Africa: 1
- Europe—Belgium: 5
- France: 3
- Germany: 11
- Ireland: 2
- Italy: 2
- Netherlands: 4
- Sweden: 5
- Russia: 1
- Moldova: 1
- United Kingdom: 15
- North America:
  - Canada: 48
- Puerto Rico: 1
- United States: 14,920

Total: 15,025

The only state from which we had no visitors this last year was Maine.

In the spring there are many schools that bring students to the Museum. This includes most of the 4th graders in the city of North Platte. Kids’ Club spent one afternoon here during the summer. The Teen Café, young adult group from the Public Library, visited in conjunction with Veteran’s Day. During the year several bus tours have made the Lincoln County Historical Museum a stop on their itinerary.

We are looking forward to another record-breaking year in 2014.
Seven bus tours in ten days! !!!

Beginning on August 15, 2013, the Lincoln County Historical Museum hosted tour groups from the Kansas and Oklahoma areas. Village Tours & Travel is the company which brought the guests to the Museum. Dave Smith, senior account manager, was the tour guide with the first group. It is his job to report back to the home office any problems that need to be fine tuned before the next group leaves. For example, there might be the need to adjust time allotments at various stops along the way. The first group is the test for the following groups and it is Mr. Smith’s job to iron out any problems before all the other groups are on their way.

Curator, Jim Griffin greeted each group giving a brief overview of the Museum. A meal was provided by the Holiday Inn Express catering. The groups enjoyed pulled pork sandwiches, baked beans, potato salad, and iced tea, water, or lemonade. Desert was a cake prepared by Gracie Mae’s Bakery.

Prior to eating the group was given information on the North Platte Canteen by volunteer Phyllis Franken. After the meal they ventured out into the village.

As you can see by this picture some visitors had as much fun as the youngsters who visit on history days with the hands on exhibit in the Ft. McPherson building.

These tours were “mystery tours”. The people who sign up did not know where they were heading. Many of the participants had taken trips together in the past and enjoy meeting up again and again to travel together. After the LCHM the group would travel on to South Dakota to Mt. Rushmore and Crazy Horse, to Sioux Falls, Omaha and then on back toward home with stops along the way.

The second tour group was at the Museum the evening of the Ft. McPherson Lantern Tour event. All but 6 of the tour group stayed to participate in the Lantern Tour.

We hope to see many groups such as these in 2014.
Wonderful World of Volunteers!!!!

The Lincoln County Historical Museum is lucky to have many dedicated volunteers who serve in many capacities. We have people who man the reception desk, people who repair and refurbish museum property, people who serve on the board of directors, people who give tours, people who demonstrate for History Days to name just a few. Without all of these wonderful individuals the Museum couldn’t operate because the financial cost would be astronomical. So, once a year the curator and officers of the Museum Board host a Thank-you luncheon for those many volunteers.

One measure of the importance of volunteers is shown in the surveys given to Museum visitors. One question asked on the survey is “Were you treated with courtesy during your visit? Almost every response checked was “Perfect! Superbly Helpful!” In addition some included these special comments: “Very friendly”, “Delightful”, “We loved everyone here”, “Welcoming & Informative”, “Staff bent over backwards for me”, “Great suggestions on area attractions”, “Couldn’t have been any better”, “Personal tour, warm hospitality”, “Wonderful ladies at the front desk when I came in. Jim present at front when I departed.”, “We have found the people of Nebraska to be very welcoming and friendly.”, “Very social and warm reception”. 

Here’s to our nation’s volunteers:

All work and no pay.

—— Cat Lane

Lincoln County History Fun Fact

• The first library in North Platte began in 1870 with a circulating collection of books owned by R. J. Wyman.
Fright Night at the Museum

Celebrating the scary creatures of the night has become a tradition in October at the Lincoln County Historical Museum. The Museum partners with the North Platte Community College women’s softball team in a mutually beneficial fund raising activity. The haunted village has become a popular destination for locals who appreciate a good scare.

This year in addition to pumpkin painting there was a special maze for children too young and easily frightened by riding on the trailer which tours the museum haunted grounds.

Another added attraction this year was laser tag. Splatterbox owner Shayne Younghans of Hershey provided the equipment. This fast paced sport was enjoyed by “kids” of all ages.

Lincoln County History

Fun Fact

- There were 19,040 acres of Rye harvested in Lincoln County in the year 1919.
More Halloween

Lincoln County Historical Museum

The total attendance for the event was 4,000. This netted the softball team and the Museum each over $5500. A great fundraiser and fun for all.

Coach Erica leads a group to the trailer. They all come hoping for a good scare.

Another frightful sight is the electric chair with its victim.

Two zombie cannibals huddle by the fire looking for fresh unsuspecting victims to frighten.

Even the corn patch was infested with ghouls.

This is one outhouse that you might not want to enter!

Beware the man eating vehicle!!!

Wal-Mart Distribution Center families came out on 2 nights to partake of the frightful fun. They grilled, played laser tag, and enjoyed the wagon ride through the village.

Lincoln County History Fun Fact

- There were 88 tractors, 1,003 automobiles, and 1,057 cream separators in Lincoln County in 1919.
The Lower Birdwood School, a one-room schoolhouse located in the Museum’s village, was once located north and west of Hershey, NE. Inside, the building looks exactly as it would have 100 years ago. The exterior of the building had, over the years, deteriorated. Peeling paint and rotting siding needed to be addressed to restore the building to its original condition and to preserve it for future generations.

This project was undertaken by Eagle Scout candidate Nathan McGahan of Troop 292. Nathan was responsible for determining the cost of the project and raising the money to cover the costs. He had to arrange for people to complete the repairs and invest his own sweat equity into the project.

The second year building trades construction class of North Platte Community College, under the instruction of Gregg Cudzilo, took on the challenge of refurbishing the exterior of the building. The challenges included dry rot, termite damage, water damage, and a beehive that had once thrived in the walls.

After all the siding was replaced, the building was repainted. Curator Jim Griffin spray painted the building after the repairs were complete.

Damage to the siding was extensive.

A vapor barrier and new cedar siding were installed over the repaired walls.

The old siding had to be removed and sections patched with sheets of plywood.

New stairs were built to replace the old concrete ones on both the east and south sides of the building. The trim around the base of the building was painted a dark green.

The school as it looks today. The bell tower is still in need of restoration. It will be completed in the coming summer.
Canteen Celebration

A special fundraiser for the Lincoln County Historical Museum was held on Friday, November 8, 2013, and Saturday, November 9, 2013. Spearheaded by Judy Oliver, the event was held the weekend before the many Veterans’ Day celebrations that take place locally.

Participants were treated to a meal and entertainment as they ate. Tickets for the meal cost $20. The meal featured appetizers, a chicken dinner, a choice of dessert, and coffee. During the meal Vicki Windham and Sue Elmshauser entertained with music from the WWII era and patriotic songs. Lloyd and Nola Synovec also added their musical talents to the entertainment. Boy Scouts from Troop 293 acted as servers for both meals.

In attendance were special guests who had served during WWII or who had worked at the N.P. Canteen. Charles Bachmann of Bertrand, NE, Waneita Schomer, Lorene Huebner, Lloyd Synovec, and John Zygud (seated), Cozad, and John’s daughter-in-law were special participants on Saturday. WWII vet Milo Shavlik was there on Friday night.

In addition to the meal, a silent auction was held. Many local businesses and organizations donated items for the auction.

A total of $2,775 was raised through the sale of tickets and auction items.

Thank you to all who volunteered their time to make the event a success.

Thank You

NebraskaLand National Bank
Ideal Linen
Winfields Coffee
RSVP
Gary’s Super Foods
Marcene Franzen
Plains Equipment
Fairbanks Machinery
Sports Shoppe
Nebraska Machinery Co.
All The Individuals Who Volunteered To Make This Event Possible

Judy Oliver
Starbucks
Garden Glove, Inc.
Prairie Hand Knits, LLC
Pop Corner
Whiskey Creek
Orschlen Farm & Ranch
Do-It Center
North Platte Concert Assoc.
Ruby Tuesday
Ace Hardware
Perkins

Lincoln County History Fun Fact

- In 1914-1915 Lincoln County had 55 inches of snow.
Lincoln County Historical Museum

Lincoln County History Fun Fact

- In March 1910, a prairie started in southern Lincoln County and burned more than 1,500 square miles of land.

In Memoriam

The Lincoln County Historical Society wishes to recognize two people, whose passing in 2013, have left a great sadness in our hearts. Maxine Kelley had served as Vice-President and more recently as Acting President of the Society. Faith Fisher had served for many terms at Secretary of the organization. Both were often found at the Museum serving as volunteers.

Maxine was an outgoing person who loved to laugh. She was ready to help out wherever needed. She made a constant joke about not needing a microphone to be heard when conducting a meeting. We miss her zest for life and her dedication in supporting the mission of the Lincoln County Historical Society and Museum.

Faith Fisher was an avid gardener who had gained the status of Master Gardener. She cultivated the Native American Garden as well as the flower gardens on the Museum grounds. Faith played an important role in 4th Grade History Days by recounting the dynamics of a one room school sometimes with the assistance of her friend “Cowboy Joe”, a puppet she had made. As a teacher of 30 plus years, Faith recognized the need to preserve the past for future generations.

What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.

Pericles

NEBRASKAland Magazine Celebrity!!!

The LCHM’s blacksmith, Bill Fanter, was featured in the November, 2013, issue of NEBRASKAland magazine. Julie Geiser, a regional editor from the North Platte area, spent several hours on August 6, 2013, with Bill in his blacksmith shop learning how he creates knives. In the magazine article the process that Bill follows in creating Damascus-bladed knives was described in detail.

Bill’s skill with his blacksmithing tools are always of great interest to the students who watch him demonstrate his craft during Fourth Grade History Days in May.

Bill is also known for the knives which he makes out of railroad spikes.

Steak turners, heart hooks, plant hangers, gate latches, and decorative iron stakes are some of the other items that Bill makes. These items can be found in the Museum’s gift shop.
“One Book One Nebraska”

*One Book One Nebraska* is a movement developed in 1998 by a Seattle librarian, Nancy Pearl, to promote city-wide reading. The idea is that having people reading and talking about the same literature will enhance their understanding and appreciation for that book. The Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraska Library Commission, Nebraska Library Association, and Humanities Nebraska initiated the One Book One Nebraska program in 2005. When groups—friends, families, or neighbors—can get together and share what they gained about a great piece of literature their understanding and appreciation of that work is deepened. The Nebraska program is designed to get Nebraskans to read and discuss a book about Nebraska each year.


The 2014 selection, *Once Upon a Town: The Miracle of the North Platte Canteen*, was chosen from 71 nominations. According to Mary Jo Ryan, communications coordinator for the Nebraska Library Commission, the selection committee felt “...that this story epitomizes a lot of the things that are incredibly special about our state and about North Platte…”

If you have not read this book or know of someone who hasn’t it is available in the Gift Shop at the Museum. The book would make a great gift to family or friends.

**UPCOMING MUSEUM EVENTS**

- **May 5 & May 6 (Monday & Tuesday)** 4th Grade History Days—Museum & Ranch

- **May 8 (Thursday)** School Tour—Southwest Elementary

- **May 15 (Thursday)** School Tour—Hildreth 5th & 6th grades

- **June 28 & 29 (Saturday & Sunday)**—Heritage Days

- **June 29 (Sunday)**—Municipal Band Concert—2:30 p.m.—Museum

**Lincoln County History Fun Fact**

- Two train cars of emigrants came to Hershey, Nebraska in 1919.
Have you renewed your Membership yet?

There are many ways to become a member of the Lincoln County Historical Society/Museum. Simply pick the level that best fits you and send your information to the museum. Make checks payable to the Lincoln County Historical Society.

We are a registered 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization and your membership is tax deductible.

**Membership Levels**

**Yearly**

- Annual $20.00
- Family or Couple $40.00
- Contributing $50.00
- Supporting $100.00
- Sustaining $200.00

**One Time**

- Lifetime (Individual) $200.00
- Lifetime (Couple) $300.00
- Patron $500.00