

Free! Your *Country Neighbor*

Take This Home

January 2026



Sweeten your Coffee Break with these Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha Rivers.



Sports Photos Page 5 & 6



The majestic bald eagle is a scavenger. In this case it wasn't bird flu... probably cholera.

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December 17, 2025

Snow Geese against a blue December sky

“Your Country Neighbor” is delivered to the following communities in Southeast Nebraska & NW Missouri.
Auburn • Brownville • Cook • Falls City • Johnson • Julian • Nebraska City
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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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ADVERTISING RATES ARE ON PAGE 10

This Month's Writers & Contributors

Devon Adams 18

John Chatelain 8

Stephen Hassler 7, 13, 19

Merri Johnson 19

DiAnna Loy will be back next month

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Thank You!

*“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead
where there is no path and leave a trail.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*“People will forget what you said, people will forget
what you did, but people will never forget how you
made them feel.”*

Maya Angelou

*“If you would not be forgotten
as soon as you are dead and rotten
either write things worth reading or
do things worth the writing.”*

Ben Franklin

January

by a country neighbor

If January has a temperament, it's a steady one. It doesn't arrive with fanfare so much as step quietly through the doorway, a cool breath of air slipping in after the warmth of December's gatherings. The fields are stripped to their essentials now, the land resting under a thin crust of snow or the stubble of last year's crops. Even the wind seems to carry a different note—less festive, more honest—whistling along fencelines, across open ground and past my bedroom window.

January has a way of clearing the slate. The lights come down, the ornaments are boxed away, and the house settles back into its familiar rhythm. With the tree gone and the rooms a little emptier, you begin to notice small things again—the sound of the furnace turning on, the creak of the basement step, the first light of a winter morning. It's not a time of celebration, but of recalibration. A quiet taking-stock of what we hope to build, repair, or simply hold onto. Are there still seed catalogs in this social media world?

Outdoors, the stillness is its own kind of invitation. Tracks in the snow tell their brief stories—rabbit, fox, deer—each creature moving through the same landscape in its own determined way. There's something steady in seeing how life persists through the cold, carrying on without complaint. It reminds us that January isn't empty at all; it's preparatory, a month that gives shape to the rest of the year.

And yes, there's a certain melancholy in the bare trees and short days, but it's softened by the knowledge that the light is returning. Slowly, almost imperceivable at first, the sun lingers a few minutes longer each afternoon. That small gift is enough to shift the heart a few degrees toward hope.

So here's to the quiet strength of this month—the clean start, the open calendar squares, the chance to look ahead without the noise of the holidays crowding our vision. May January bring you calm where you need it, clarity where it helps, and the steady assurance that new beginnings don't have to be dramatic to matter.

From my place between the river and prairie, to wherever you're reading this—may the new year unfold gently, and may it offer you more light than you expect. Happy New Year!



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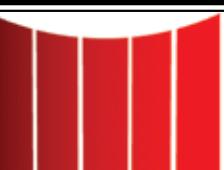
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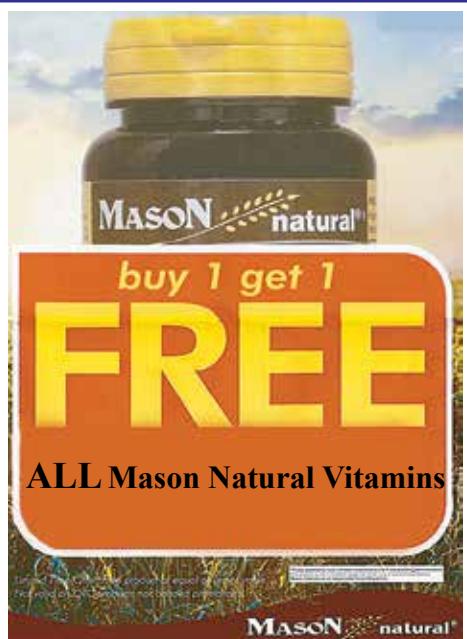
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To see some wildlife videos, visit my Channel on YouTube

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I know it's rough. I'm learning YouTube and Videography... slowly.

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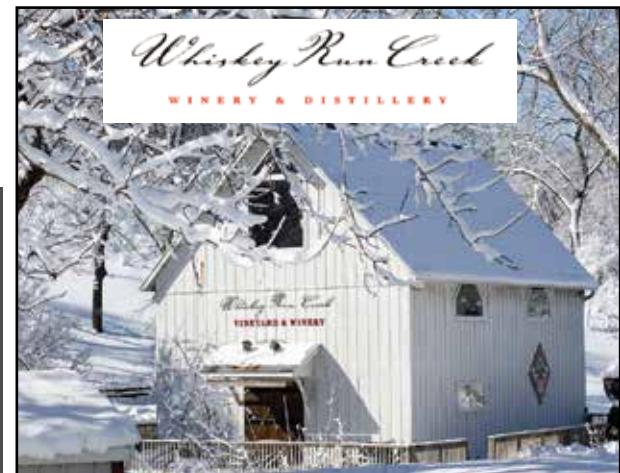
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December 17, 2025

Plenty of Trumpeter Swans for viewing at the Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge. Just 30 Minutes from Brownville.

Haunted? "The Light in Morgan Hall" by a quiet observer

Every campus has its stories—the ones whispered in dorm rooms after curfew, shared on midnight walks, or passed along by upperclassmen with the wink of half-truth. At Peru State College, it's Morgan Hall that carries the weight of memory, like something still living inside its walls.

Elisa Morgan Hall has stood for more than a century, brick-bound and serious, gazing out across the Missouri River valley like a mother who's watchful.

Long before Wi-Fi and wellness checks, Morgan Hall was home to young women who studied hard, whispered dreams into pillows, and sometimes never quite fit the mold they were handed. It was always the same room: second floor, the one with the narrow dormer window that faced the quad. At night, even after the building was officially closed for renovation, students passing below swore they saw a light—sometimes flickering, sometimes steady. The college denied it, of course. Power cut. No one inside. They said it was just a trick of the eye, headlights from the street.

Morgan's Quiet Hour

In the fall of 1962, a freshman named Mary E. was assigned to Morgan Hall, second floor, room 214. The room was unremarkable at first glance—neatly furnished, tidy view of the quad—but she quickly noticed something peculiar. Each evening around 10:30, her desk drawer would slowly creak open. Always the top right one. She thought it was warped wood or a slant in the floor, until she started finding notes inside. One simply read, "Write it down."

At first, she thought it was a prank. But the handwriting wasn't hers, and her roommate claimed ignorance. The next week, she stayed up, watching the desk. Nothing happened—until she stepped out briefly to brush her teeth. When she returned, the drawer was open again. Inside was a folded piece of stationery with a faint scent of lavender. This note said, "Don't wait too long to forgive her."

Mary E. never found out who "her" referred to. But she carried that note in her wallet until the day she died.

Years later, her granddaughter attended Peru State and found herself assigned to—you guessed it—Morgan Hall, room 214. When she told her grandmother, now in her 80s, Mary E. just smiled and said, "If the drawer opens, write back."

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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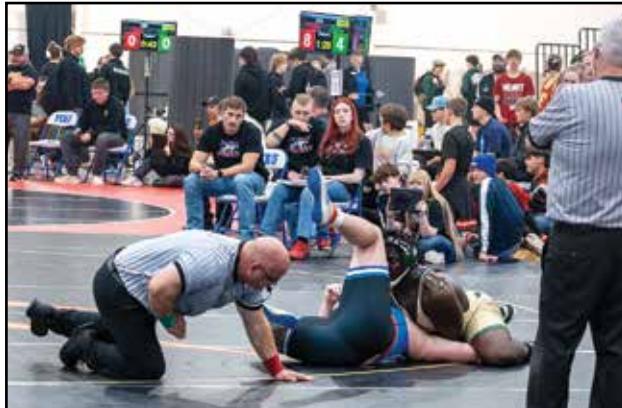


Grand View defeats PSC in a close one... 65-69.

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Thank you to everyone who participates!



December 12, 2025 PSC Athletics was excited to host 10 Nebraska high schools for the 2025 Peru State Wrestling Invitational!

Santa was escorted to the Gazebo by the Peru Fire Department.*



Kylie Diaz Earned Third-Straight Heart "Offensive Player of the Week" Honor.

Calvin Lottman was one of the first children in line to speak with Santa*



A Christmas Decoration in Peru.



Ramsie Sayer took a moment to think as she shared her list with Santa*

* Santa photos by Grace Hulsebus

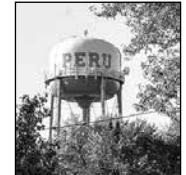
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Peru Recall Fails.

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Remember those who urged you to sign their petition. They are among those who regularly complain about administration and staff. They criticize every administration except their own, which, in my view, was corrupt with nepotism. They've been around before, and they'll be back. They crave control over everything, regardless if the current system is working well.

Though the vocal minority is small in number, they're well-organized and skilled at spreading doubt through false gossip and rumors.

They target and harass good people who volunteer their time to serve, hoping these individuals will give up and quit, so the troublemakers can take over.

This strategy has worked at times. Some people, disheartened, simply say, "I didn't sign up for this," and walk away, whether from the council, the office staff, or the maintenance crew.

This isn't citizen oversight, it's power-seeking dressed up as concern. Communities don't fail from silence; they fail when decent people step aside and let agitators run the room.

Their aim is not reform but disruption. The remedy is simple but not easy: pay attention, support those who serve in good faith, and don't confuse loud voices with legitimate ones.

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Peru Community Christmas Children's Event Well-Attended

Marty Peregoy, Peru

Sunday, December 7th was a great day to be a kid in Peru.

The Peru Community Christmas for kids started off with pictures with Santa in the decorated gazebo south of the Western National Bank. He was a dashing figure in red velvet and white fur as he stepped off the fire truck, and the kids couldn't wait to sit next to him or on his lap to share their behavior status and wish list.

Grace Hulsebus took pictures of Santa with the kids and their parents, and all her photos are available for free download from <https://gracehulsebusphotography.org/work/project-one-f5w4d-enym7>. The Peru Community Christmas event is 100% free of charge for kids and grandkids of Peru families. This year it was sponsored by donors M&T Buildings, LLC; Jerry Patterson; and Western National Bank, with oversite by PCIG. Event organizers were Kelly Adams and Marty Peregoy.

Kids were excited to receive paper bags of fruit and candy from Peru's Volunteer Fire Department, sponsors of Santa, before walking with their parents to City Hall for additional fun and games. It was a cold and blustery day, and they were anxious to get inside.

Shirley Robbins and Josie Coatney from the bank welcomed them with hot cocoa and cider, amazing cookies, and Josie's flavored spoons for stirring cocoa. Kids got a chance to warm up with a sugary snack, while guessing how many pieces of candy were in the candy jar for a chance to win and take it home. It was also a great opportunity to examine the contents of the paper bag and to get started on a few crafts while waiting for everyone to arrive.

At 4:15, City Hall was packed to the rafters with 41 children and countless parents, and the game of sticking the nose on Rudolph began. Kids were blindfolded, spun twice, and nudged in the direction of Rudolph, where they stuck a nose with their name on it wherever they thought Rudolph's head might be.

Following that, a rousing race of "sweep the carrot 'round the cones" ensued. The shape of the carrot provided a few challenges, although the miniature size of the brooms helped. Kids who chose not to participate in the games happily worked on coloring their gift bag, completing an ornament, working on a maze or trying every piece of candy they received from the firemen.

The winner of the 120 pieces of candy, with his guess of 105, was Owen Blondo. Winners of the drawings for the 20" inflatable ornaments hanging from the ceiling were Piper Hutchinson and Axel Reeves.

As kids left the building, they were each given a grab bag loaded with an assortment of goodies, from coloring books, colors, scarves, Christmas glasses/hats/headbands to wooden ornaments to color.

Due to a late delivery issue, annual ornament making did not take place, as only half the ornament kits had arrived. Most kids receiving green-handled bags as they entered the event received a started beaded snowman ornament with a 2025 silver charm. Event attendees who did not receive the kit in their bag can pick one up from Western National Bank during regular business hours.

The partially completed kit will contain beads and a picture of a variety of Christmas figures, from Santa to Rudolph. If you look at the picture, stick both strings through each bead in the right order and tie a knot in the bottom, you'll have a keepsake 2025 ornament to look back on this childhood Christmas event for years to come.

A few leftover gift bags and grab bags will also be available at the bank, for those kids who were unable to attend the Christmas event.

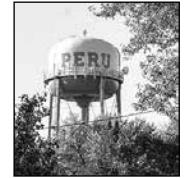
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Hearts United for Animals (HUA), a nationally recognized no-kill shelter dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of dogs and cats, has named Kelcie Keeling as its new Executive Director.



Kelsie's first day at *Hearts United For Animals*

Keeling brings more than 20 years of experience in nonprofit leadership, marketing strategy, community engagement, and donor relations. Most recently, she served as Director of Marketing and Communications at Peru State College, where she led a comprehensive digital marketing transformation that strengthened the college's brand visibility and community presence.

Her professional background also includes leadership roles with the Southeast District Health Department, where she managed multi-channel public communications during the COVID-19 pandemic, and as Executive Director of the Butler County Chamber of Commerce. During her tenure there, Keeling increased membership by 40% and led high-profile community initiatives, including "Christmas Comes Early to David City" with the Hallmark Channel, as featured on People.com. She

PSC BASKETBALL

John C. Chatelain

Under head coach, Roman Gentry, the 2024-2025 men's team posted an impressive 22-9, win/loss record, winning post-season trips to the Heart of American Athletic Conference Tournament, the Heart of America Athletic Conference Tournament and the NAIA Men's Basketball National Championship. A survey of Peru State College basketball history can serve as inspiration as Bobcats face a tough 2025-2026 season. PSC has a proud tradition of forging men's and women's basketball teams, which can be drawn from for years to come.

Peru had been a pioneer in the new sport, having played out-doors for several seasons before the gymnasium was built in 1905. The men beat Nebraska City 19-16 in the first official home basketball game inside. In its 12th season of official play, the men's team traveled to Omaha for Creighton University's inaugural men's basketball game in 1917. 1

While women's roles changed in post-World War I, Peru had been ahead of the movement. "The day is passing when mothers forbid their girls to play basketball," exclaimed Jessie Downing, head of the physical training department. The "Normalite" ran a poem dedicated to basketball star Doris Frye in 1919: This lady seems very demure, But she plays like a wind in a blizzard, To put balls in the 'bask', for her is no task, If you saw her, you'd say, "What a wizard!" 2

Under Coach Lon Graf, the men's basketball team rolled to 54 consecutive conference victories from 1921 to 1926, which was claimed as a national record. It was at this time that the Bobcat became the school mascot. 3

World War II brought campus life at Peru State shortages and other hardships. To provide stability for students, the campus offered social events, activities and sports, all of them bolstered by the participation of the naval trainees on campus. Kansas basketball legend Phog Allen took part in a basketball clinic in 1944 that drew more than 300 area high school athletes. 4

The Bobcat men had just four letter winners and two upperclassmen, yet Coach Newt Kyle put together a 20-3 season in 1947-48. Peru set a record with 20 victories including 13 straight wins from mid-January to mid-February and won the York Invitational and Nebraska College Conference tournaments. They also qualified for the NAIB Tournament in Kansas City for the fourth time in five years. Peru opened its renovated gym in December 1949 hosting a tournament with teams from Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska and Missouri. The 1949-50 basketball team celebrated a conference title. 5

Under Coach Jack McIntire, the 1961-62 Bobcats had a 23-5 record and won the Nebraska College Conference title. Holding off Wayne State they won the NAIA District 11 title to qualify for the national tournament in Kansas City. 6

Coach Wayne Davidson's 1987-88 women's team started a long tradition of excellence with a 23-7 season, qualifying for the NAIA playoffs. They had 17 consecutive home-court victories and outscored opponents by an average of almost 14 points per game. 7

Corday Sims was a first-team NAIA Division I All-American for the 2015-16 season, averaging 26 points a game in leading the Bobcat men to the national tournament. 8

Holding a composite 3.277 GPA during the 2016-2017 season, the women's basketball team demonstrated the importance of performing academically as well. 9

As of this year's end, Roman Gentry's 2025-2026 team has racked up 7 wins and 7 losses.

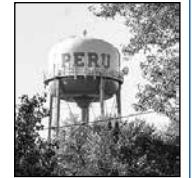
1 Nebraska's First College: Shaping The Future Since 1867, p 51; 2 Ibid. 75; 3 Ibid. 86; 4 Ibid. 106; 5 Ibid. 112, 114 and 115; 6 Ibid. 134; 7 Ibid. 178; 8 Ibid. 251; 9 Ibid. 255

Editor's note; On December 13th, Peru State Men's Basketball defeated Culver-Stockton 85 to 79. PSC never trailed in a tight game against a worthy opponent.

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This Holiday Season, Think of the Children

Lorna Byrne, Ireland

Say a prayer for the world to change, so that all children, everywhere, can grow up feeling safe and loved. No more war, no more tears, no more hurting each other. The children of the world are our future and they must grow up with love in their hearts.

These are the birthrights of every child born into the world:

1. Every child has the right to life.
2. Every child has the right to be a child.
3. Every child has the right to be treated equally.
4. Every child has the right to not be discriminated against because of religious beliefs or creed.
5. Every child has the right to be loved and cared for.
6. Every child has the right to be part of a family.
7. Every child has the right to have a home.
8. Every child has the right to have food and water.
9. Every child has the right to clothing and warmth.
10. Every child has the right to breathe clean air.
11. Every child has the right for nature to exist.
12. Every child has the right to be happy, to laugh and play in a safe environment.
13. Every child has the right to be born into a peaceful world.
14. Every child has the right to be free and not be a slave.
15. Every child has the right not to live in fear or terror.
16. Every child has the right to a full education.
17. Every child has the right to reach their full potential.
18. Every child has the right to full medical care.
19. Every child has the right to participate in all sports.
20. Every child has the right to see and touch trees, plants, animals, rivers, lakes, and to see them free of pollution.
21. Every child has the right to have their birthrights placed first, before money and material things, because every child is the biggest and most precious asset of mankind.

has also held positions in publishing, sales, and stakeholder engagement with organizations such as Nebraska Wedding Day Magazine, Columbus Neighbors Magazine (Best Version Media), the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, and Sandhills Global.

“Kelcie comes to HUA with a vast amount of successful experience in leadership, marketing, finance, and strategic partnerships,” said Don Phillips, Board President. “Her passion for animal welfare inspires staff, volunteers, and stakeholders, and the Board is confident she will sustain and grow the organization.”

“I am honored to join an organization built on the compassion and vision of Carol and Dennis Wheeler,” said Keeling. “I look forward to honoring their legacy while working alongside our dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters to build the future of Hearts United for Animals.”

As Executive Director, Keeling will oversee shelter operations, donor and volunteer engagement, and strategic initiatives that advance HUA’s life-saving mission across Nebraska and beyond.

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A Brief Pictorial Review of 2025



A Prairie Love

Chapter Ten: Rooted – May 1924

The cabin was beginning to take shape—real walls now, not just outlines in dirt and dreams. Cora helped hang the first window, her fingers trembling slightly as the glass settled into place.

“Like seeing the world from a new angle,” she said, stepping back.

Lyle nodded. “We’ll let the morning light in from the east.”

School would be out in two weeks, and already Cora felt the tug of summer freedom. She had been offered a place at a teacher’s institute in Lincoln—a week of lectures, learning, and lodging paid. It was flattering. Tempting. But something else tugged at her too.

That Sunday, she brought a picnic to the build site: a gingham cloth, chicken sandwiches, early strawberries. The air was warm, the cottonwoods leafing out above them. Nearby, the old windmill creaked and turned in the breeze, steady as breath.

Lyle arrived late, covered in sawdust and apologies.

“I reckon I’m not much for schedules,” he said.

Cora handed him a sandwich and smiled. “I reckon I knew that.”

They ate with their knees brushing now and then, the quiet between them easy. When the meal was done, she pulled a folded letter from her pocket.

“The institute,” she said. “They want me to go.”

He was silent for a moment. “Do you want to?”

“Yes. And no.”

He looked at her with that steady gaze of his. “You’re not made to stay still, Cora. That’s one of the things I admire.”

She reached out and touched his calloused hand. “But roots can grow, too. If you tend them.”



The wind stirred the grasses, spinning the windmill lazily above the well. Somewhere in that moment—amid the creak of wood, the warmth of touch, the hush between breaths—something unspoken was understood.

To be continued...

Letters from the Prairie

May 7, 1888

Tenth Letter from Anna Wilhelmine Bauer
to her sister Klara in Germany

My dear Klara,

The prairie has awakened with such force it nearly startles me. It is as though the earth, long held in silence, cannot contain its voice any longer. Everywhere there is green—young, bright, unafraid. The lilacs are budding by the house, and I clipped the first sprigs of mint for Sunday’s stew. We’ve begun planting in earnest.

Johann walks behind the plow with a kind of reverence, and the children tuck seeds into the softened earth as if placing wishes in a secret box. Even Lena, with her small hands, takes part. She buried a single sunflower seed near the porch and asks each morning if it has grown.

I find myself humming more often, even while doing chores. The rhythm of spring has returned to my bones. There was a gathering at the church last week—a May supper, with pies lined up end to end and children racing in bare feet across the grass. It reminded me of the village festivals we attended as girls. A fiddler played a reel, and someone coaxed Johann into dancing. He blushed like a boy when I joined him.

I met a new family, just arrived from Bavaria. The mother’s name is Margarete, and her voice trembles when she speaks English. I remember those early days and have promised to help her find her way here. It is no small thing to cross an ocean and begin again. We who survive must become guides.

The days are longer now, and I find time each evening to sit with pen in hand. Your letters are a comfort beyond words—keep them coming.

In hope and gratitude,

Your Anna

To be continued...

Westward With Lewis & Clark

Chapter Eight: The Stranger on the Ridge
August 1804 — Near the Platte River’s Mouth

There are mornings when the wind rises before the sun. This was one of them. The tall grasses bent and whispered long before light reached our side of the river. Some of the men stirred early, uneasy without knowing why. The dogs paced and whined, and York—who rarely shows nerves—stood watchful, eyes scanning the opposite shore.

It was Drouillard who saw him first.

“A man on the ridge,” he said quietly, pointing beyond the cottonwoods that lined the far bank. The figure stood alone. Not moving. Not hiding either.

We brought out the glass. He wore a blanket, draped across his shoulder, and held a long staff or spear. Too far to see his face. Too close to ignore.

Captain Lewis signaled the men to remain calm and visible, no weapons drawn. It was the right call. Whoever he was, he’d already seen us. We’d been camped for two nights along this bend of the river, making repairs to the keelboat and gathering firewood. Tracks of elk and turkey were common here. Tracks of men were not.

By midmorning, he was gone. Gone without sound, without sign, without answer.

Clark ordered a small scouting party—Drouillard, Labiche, and myself—to cross and check the ridge. We found no trail, though we did find a ring of stones, long cooled, from what must have been a recent fire. A carved stick leaned against a tree, the bark stripped in bands. No name. No mark of tribe. Just evidence of someone who watched.

We left a gift in return—small beads, a mirror, and a length of red cloth. Peace offerings, if they were needed.

Lewis made a long entry in his journal that evening. He noted the weather, the color of the clay soil, the habits of the local birds. But beneath his neat script, I saw the tension in his jaw.

“Not all unknowns are threats,” he said to me, as if to reassure himself.

And maybe they aren’t. But the men kept their rifles closer that night.

We moved again at dawn.

The Platte loomed ahead—wider and slower than the Missouri, pouring its silty waters into ours like a handshake of rivers. It took all our strength to row against it, to heave the keelboat forward inch by stubborn inch. But we made it. No further sign of the stranger.

Only the sky—endless and bright—and the wind behind us.

— Elias LeGrand

To be continued...

Freedom

Sheila Tinkham, Lincoln

Tony looked at his fake documents
In the car running for the border
Would they make it?

Make it across the border with the armed guards

Ready to arrest them
Why?
They were escaping Czechoslovakia
Tony wanted freedom
Freedom to work
Freedom to live
So the minutes ticked
The fake paper in hands
Tony's soul waiting
Will they make it?
And they did
Life under communism, life under socialism
The sweet notes of freedom on the palate
Tony's story
They made it.
To a freer life, to freedom..

New life, New Year

Sheila Tinkham, Lincoln

Chance knocked on Sacajawea's door
Kidnapped, lost on a bet to a French trader
She was young, maybe 16, 17
Life is unfair
Then the only pregnant woman in the entire
Lewis and Clark expedition
She was popular and vital to the mission
She had been the daughter of a Shoshone chief
Lewis and Clark were running out of food, supplies, horses
Sacajawea met her brother the new chief
He sold all the supplies required to Lewis and Clark
Sacajawea gave birth to her son
Vulnerable, feverish
Lewis and Clark saved the baby's life
Brought down the fever
And later Lewis and Clark adopted him and educated him as
Sacajawea went with her husband and died not long after
There would be no successful Lewis and Clark
without Sacajawea Chance
Luck favored America, George Washington and Lewis and Clark
Be not afraid in 2026
Take a chance
Make a difference
Happy New Year!

WILDLIFE NEWS

Stephen Hassler, Peru

One advantage Sandhill cranes have over snow geese is predictability. Each year, on either side of the first day of Spring, visitors can reliably witness the crane migration through central Nebraska. The timing is steady enough that travelers can plan with confidence.

Snow geese, by contrast, offer a spectacle that is arguably more dramatic—but far less certain. When several hundred thousand geese lift off at once, the effect is overwhelming: the sudden rise, the roar of wings, the circling motion, and the shifting color as their white bodies flash in sunlight and then turn dark underneath. Seen even once, it is an experience that belongs on anyone's bucket list.

For visitors, however, snow geese are hit or miss. Over time, I've learned to predict their presence most of the time, but it depends on several conditions coming together. Migration typically runs from November through February, influenced by a lack of food farther north and temperatures warm enough to keep marshes from freezing. February is often the best window, particularly when geese pause during their northbound journey—assuming open water is available.

They frequently gather in large numbers in anticipation of the Spring thaw. Last year, February remained cold and the marsh frozen over, until the final week, when the refuge suddenly filled with geese. The result was extraordinary—millions of birds, creating ideal viewing conditions almost overnight.

A welcome bonus is the presence of Bald Eagles, which reliably follow concentrations of waterfowl. Birds go where the food is, not necessarily where the climate is warmer. When geese arrive in force, eagles are rarely far behind.

Another notable change in recent years has been the increase in swans. When I once felt fortunate to see 15 or 30 in a season, recent counts have reached into the hundreds, and occasionally thousands. Interestingly, swans are sometimes present even when snow geese are absent—a pattern I can't fully explain, but one that adds to the refuge's appeal.

By Spring, two pairs of Bald Eagles typically remain to occupy established nests, with additional birds appearing when waterfowl numbers are high enough to support scavenging. For visitors, this means that even on days when one species is scarce, another often fills the gap.

Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge is a jewel of the 4-corners Area.

ARBOR CITY NEWS

Morton-James Public Library Calendar of Events January 2026

All activities held at Morton-James Public Library (unless otherwise noted), 923 1st Corso, Nebraska City, NE 68410
For questions call 402-873-5609 or visit morton-jamespubliclibrary.com

All Programming is Free and Open to the Public

Library Closed

Thursday, Jan. 1

Lego Club

Monday, Jan. 5 3:30 - 5:30PM

Free build with Lego's at the club or bring your own sets to work on.
Ages 8 and older. No registration, free to attend.

AM Story Time

Wednesday, Jan. 7 10:00 - 11:00AM

Make a Wish Story Time

We will sing songs, learn some signs in American Sign Language, read stories and offer star and New Year themed coloring pages. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Free! Families are welcome!

Yarn Crafters Club

Wednesday, Jan. 7 1:30PM - 3:00PM

This is for all levels of crafters. Bring your own hooks, yarn, needles, whatever you need to make your yarn craft. Club members will be here to help those beginning, and MJPL will have some patterns available. Free to attend. Everyone is welcome who is 15 and older!

PM Story Time

Thursday, Jan. 8 4:00 - 5:00PM

Make a Wish Story Time

We will sing songs, learn some signs in American Sign Language, read stories and offer star and New Year themed coloring pages. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Free! Families are welcome

Library Board Meeting

Wednesday, Jan. 14 4:00 - 6:00PM

Build-an-Animal Workshop*

Stardust Unicorn

Saturday, Jan. 17 10:00 - 11:00AM

Kids 18 or younger get to build their own stuffed animal for free! Limited spots available. *Must register ahead of time in person or by calling the library at 402-873-5609

Writers Workshop

Saturday, Jan. 17 10:00 - 11:00AM

Share writing and give feedback to others. Zoom option available. Please email mjplibraryww@gmail.com to have a Zoom link sent to you if you cannot attend in person. Bring a short piece of your writing to share! This program is for writers aged 18 and older

Afternoon Book Club

Tuesday, Jan. 20 2:00 PM

A Calamity of Souls by David Baldacci

Anyone can join and there is no registration. New members are always welcome! Book lists for the year are available at the Library.

Lego Club

Monday, Jan. 19 3:30 - 5:00PM

Free build with Lego's at the club or bring your own sets to work on.
Ages 8 and older. No registration, free to attend.

AM Story Time

Wednesday, Jan. 21 10:00 – 10:30AM

Winter Birds Stories

Featuring songs, signs in American Sign Language, and stories about winter birds. We will then make a handprint paper cardinal craft. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Free! Families are welcome! There is no registration.

Evening Book Club

Wednesday, Jan. 21 5:30 - 6:30PM

Something in the Water by Catherine Steadman

Anyone can join and there is no registration. New members are always welcome! Book lists for the year are available at the Library.

PM Story Time

Thursday, Jan. 22 4:00 – 4:30PM

Winter Bird Stories

Featuring songs, signs in American Sign Language, and stories about winter birds. We will then make a handprint paper cardinal craft. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Free! Families are welcome! There is no registration.

Adult Craft Class*

Wednesday, Jan. 28 6:00 - 7:00PM

Winter Wreath, free class! *Must register by calling the Library at 402-873-5609.

Library Closed for Inventory

Thursday, Jan. 29

Chess Club

Every Thursday in January EXCEPT 1/1 and 1/29
4:30 - 6:00PM

ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

Arbor City News

a monthly news section in
Your Country Neighbor
A Nebraska Regional Magazine (w/News)

Does This Make You Think?

Bruce Madsen, Nebraska City

A room full of people and not a word is said
The world of audible communication is practically dead
Thumbs and fingers relay the thoughts and visions we have in our head
While the art of speaking vocally is put silently to bed
Does this make you think?

Churches don't suffer from over use
Believers don't show up anymore to fill the pews
Religious neglect has created this ruse
Wonder if we can survive as a people under this kind of abuse
Does this make you think?

Has the work ethic and the pride we use to have begun to diminish
It's hard to find someone to start a job, let alone finish
Maybe, feelings of 'a job well done' and 'the best I can do' are getting 'thinnish'
Time to over haul our attitudes. Could be, we need to readjust and replenish
Does this make you think?

We shouldn't have to be shady or shiftless in our dealings with others
If we are not honest and fair, its not worth the bother
Maybe if we could just live up to 'love one another'
Wouldn't we all wish this if we had our druthers?
Does this make you think?

Seems harder and harder to pay all the bills
The end of the month sports an empty till
The cost of living is taking away the thrill
And the dream of 'easy street' keeps moving a little farther up the hill
Does this make you think?

I do believe its still wonderful to be living now
Still room for all that's good in life to take a bow
Hopefully, from all of us we can provide some know how
And make an even better world for all of us to endow
I hope this makes you think.

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Trumpeter Swans at the Refuge December 17, 2025

ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City



It is rare for a bald eagle to be photographed with both eyes “looking” at the camera. That’s when you’re seeing the eagle using a visual mode it doesn’t rely on often. With each eye on a different side of its head, the eagle can see around 340 degrees. The rare mode is a more narrow focused. You’ve got its “attention.”



Trumpeter Swans at Refuge, December 17, 2025

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Email: hsti@OSHABilingualTraining.org

Your Country Neighbor

**Your “2-cups-of-coffee” companion
including local photos and articles
with the flavor of rural America.**



With Winter Evenings Come Winter Sunsets



The Wildlife Refuge is one of my favorite locations for wildlife photography.

Poetry

by Devon Adams, Nebraska City

NEW YEAR, NEXT YEAR

It's time to try again to get everything right that went wrong last year. Maybe it was a slow slide down a slippery slope of little glitches, each one messing up the next one, so that the pile of rubble at the bottom was so much bigger than the sum of its parts. Or it was one bomb big enough to blow up half of the year. We are at the starting gate again, ready to go, or not. But you can't reset the river of time. It only flows one way.

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TIME IS TOMORROW

As we grow inside the tiny world of a child, time is a relative thing. Wait is a word without a meaning. Toddlers only understand now, so if I see something I want, I want it now. Days creep slowly, as years are racing, and we often say "Oh well, it can wait." And we are so busy that it does wait until it never happens. Then one day we look in a mirror at a person we don't recognize, because they are old. Of course we are looking at our own face. Time is real, but only for other people, until it catches up with us.

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THE COLD SKY

About three p.m. the clouds are deep and dark and full of ominous meaning. At two a.m. the sky is clear. The storm swerved away and left only stillness. Stars hover and twinkle in frigid, frightening temperatures that make air transparent and revealing. We are not alone. There are millions of heavenly bodies made of rocks and fire and gas that take up space in the vast infinity that is the mystery of our existence. Reality is more of a question than an answer. Who are we and why are we here?

By Artist, Devon Adams

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Send to:

Devon Adams
1220 Oak Street, Apt. A, Box 9
Nebraska City, NE 68410



adamsdevon07@gmail.com 402-209-9377

CHOCOLATE

It is a "trigger" word. If you hear it, you taste chocolate in your mind. Pie with whipped cream, fudge, dark chunks, cocoa, with nuts, with peanut butter, with cherries, syrup on ice cream, with coffee, frosting on cake, in candy bars, in M&M's, in Easter Bunny Bars, with caramel and sea salt, in S'mores. You see it dribbled on donuts and rolls, and baked in chewy bars, and melted over a bundt cake. You gain weight before you eat it. Enjoy your day!!

INTO THE LIGHT

The pretty little bowling ball of earth is rolling around an alley of space that is part of the sun and its gravity bound planets. Invisible cables keep them in a holding pattern around the massive inferno that is the sun. They circle the fire in a dance of time, counting days to the length of a year. Earth's axis is tilted sideways so that part of its year is cold and part is warm. January is leading us away from the chill into the light of warmth and new life.

Your Country Neighbor

Your "2-cups-of-coffee" companion including

local photos and articles with the flavor of rural America.

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

I don't believe I have "writer's block," but I'm not feeling any inspiration for my "Window" this month, just observation and recall. I found the following list for journal entry topics. They might also be helpful for breaking writer's block for you.

- Best parts of your day
- What you did well or was complimented on
- Something unusual or special you noticed about yourself
- Messages from your inner wisdom (voice, feeling)
- What you want to do more
- Struggles of the day
- Insights about yourself

These seem like good ideas.

We had some snow, maybe a couple inches. A little moisture for the fields, at least. We received some cold too, brrrr. Nothing below zero yet, still, "big coat" weather. Some sun and a few days without wind allowed for feelings of "Nice weather for a Winter day," but as of writing this, it's not quite Winter yet. That begins on December 21st.

There have been some good days for observing and photographing eagles, swans, and snow geese at the Refuge on days the marsh wasn't frozen, like the week of mild temperatures we had after the cold. There are not a lot of snow geese yet, but on sunny days their white wings against the blue sky were beautifully displayed. If January or February is mild (above freezing), there ought to be a lot of them, and by that I mean hundreds of thousands.

The world famous Sandhill Crane migration gets a lot of press. Everyone knows that on either side of the first day of Spring, there will be thousands of cranes. Predicting the presence of snow geese is more complicated. They won't be around if the marsh is frozen over. There won't be any significant presence before November or after February. But when they are present in huge numbers, even into the millions sometimes, the display in my opinion, is much more dramatic than at the Grand Island-to-Kearney crane locations. Trumpeter Swans seem to be present from October through Winter. I'll try to nail down their habit in 2026, but it's no big secret. You can probably find info at "Friends of Loess Bluffs NWR" on Facebook.

Happy New Year to my loyal readers!

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

Like many people of our age, Hubby and I have lately been spending more time than we care to tally up in medical offices. We had occasion a few weeks ago to drive to an appointment in Omaha on that horribly windy day, with the added attraction of needing to get up at 4:30 a.m. to do it.

Hubby was the consumer of medical care that day, so I had time to kill in the waiting room. At some medical facilities there are multiple halls one can stroll up and down to stretch one's legs and pass the time. But on this day we were at a small, stand-alone clinic. The waiting room was smaller than my living room, not at all conducive to pacing. As I mentioned above, it was terribly windy, and very gray, and cold, so taking a walk outside was not an option, either.

By 10:30, it felt like mid-afternoon. After all, I had been up since 4:30 and the gray sky had not brightened up any. But the waiting room had emptied out and I began to take notice of the Christmas decorations. They were all in a nice blue and green color scheme. Very coordinated. Not at all like my hodge-podge at home.

Anyway, I noticed that one ball had fallen off the tree. It was just out of reach behind a chair. I resisted the urge to move the chair to retrieve it and rehang it. I was sorely tempted to reposition a few balls on the tree, as well, but you know how that goes: you move a ball to fill a gap and then a new gap appears. You could be at it all day.

Taking my focus off the tree, my attention was drawn to the string of white lights suspended under the overhang of the check-in counter. More precisely, I was drawn to the fact that the lights were not plugged in. The outlet was right there; I could reach it easily. Surely, if someone bothered to hang the lights, they intended to plug them in?? Is there anything sadder than holiday lights that are not turned on? Alas, the two receptionists were positioned so that they were facing the waiting area. Luckily, one of them left her work station and the other one was distracted by a phone call. I had to make a snap decision. Yes, I would quickly, but casually, stroll to the window next to the outlet, pretend to look outdoors, and discreetly plug in the lights. Mission accomplished!

I returned to my seat, which put me at eye-level with a two-foot tall, clear, columnar vase on the coffee table. It was filled with balls that matched those on the tree. One problem: the ball at the top of the vase was larger than all the others, and it stuck up above the rim of the vase. It just didn't look right, you know? I could swap it for a smaller one on the tree. Would that be too much meddling with décor in a sort-of public place? Mind you, I would never presume to surreptitiously rearrange décor in someone else's home. It was hard, but I kept my hands in my lap and left the vase alone.

By the time you read this, many houses around town will be displaying unlit holiday lights and lawns will be littered with sad-looking outdoor displays that seem out of place. It can be depressing. I, for one, commit to putting my artificial décor away for another year by Epiphany and shift my attention to Mother Nature's décor. A regular walk might just be good for my health as well as delightful to the eye.

Happy New Year, everyone.

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