

Your
July 2025

Country Neighbor

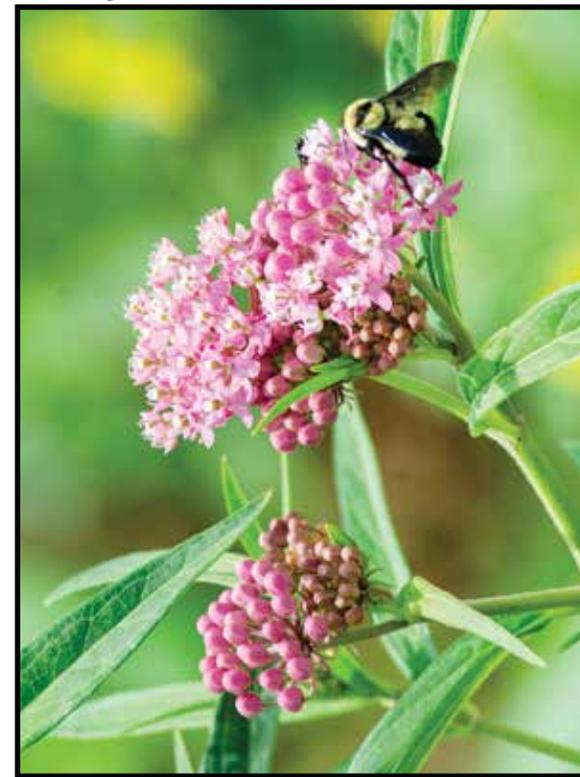
Free!
Take One



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



Coming in August; Is Nebraska City's Wildwood House Haunted?
This Month's Haunted House Photo is on page 4, Story page 5.



"Swamp Milkweed" is a favorable option for your pollinator garden.



PSC Alumni President John Chatelain (below), hosted the annual Omaha dinner on June 5th, with guests Dan and Elaine Hansen (left).



Interim PSC President Dr. Wendy Waugh (left), served as the main speaker.



CONTENTS

Your "Window With a View"
of Small Town and Rural America

"July".....	2
Merri's Diary.....	3
Summer in Brownville.....	4 - 5
"Old Man River Days" Youth Fishing Contest Photos....	6
Peru City News.....	7 - 9
"Tragedy Strikes Peru III" by John Chatelain.....	7
Tuesday Club Book Review.....	8
♥ Valentino's Coupon for up to Six!.....	10
"Westward with the Corps".....	12
"Letters From The Prairie".....	12
"Disney's Snow White" by Sylvie Shires.....	13
Arbor City News.....	14 - 16
Nebraska City's Morton-James Public Library.....	14
Nancy Feeney's "Heritage Guild News".....	15
Bruce Madsen's "Transportation".....	16
Devon Adams' Poetry & Portraits.....	18
"Window On Fifth Street".....	19
"A Prairie Love".....	20

“Your Country Neighbor” is delivered to the following communities in Southeast Nebraska & NW Missouri.

Auburn • Brownville • Cook • Falls City • Johnson • Julian • Nebraska City

Nemaha • Papillion • Peru • Rock Port • Syracuse • Tecumseh • Verdon

Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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www.yourcountryneighbor.com

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This Month's Writers & Contributors

Devon Adams 18

John Chatelain 7

Nancy Feeny 15

Stephen Hassler 19

Merri Johnson 3

DiAnna Loy 8

Bruce Madsen 16

Morton-James Public Library Calendar 14

Marty Peregoy 7

Sylvie Shires 13

Thank You!

July brings Joy!

July settles in with a sun hat and a pitcher of iced tea. It doesn't tiptoe like June, it arrives with heat on its heels, golden light streaming through the windows before breakfast, and crickets tuning up by mid-afternoon. The days are long and full, and the pace of life seems to swing between high energy and slow surrender.

Gravel roads shimmer in the midday sun. Sweet corn stands pop up like old friends returning for a visit. Fireflies blink across the yard in patterns only they understand. Everything is growing; tomatoes climb their cages, zinnias stretch taller each day, and the grass seems to need mowing the moment you finish. July is the garden's proving ground, a month of fullness and effort and reward.

Now's the time for fireworks and fresh lemonade, for canning jars and wash pinned to dry. Porch evenings stretch into stories and second helpings. The scent of sun-warmed dill and cut hay lingers in the air. Old-timers know; if June was a song, July is a symphony. It brings crescendo; heat, harvest, holiday, and hope.

Local produce is bursting with color—cucumbers, summer squash, cherries, and maybe even the first blushing peach. Farmers' markets are at their most generous. If you've ever thought about pickling, now's your time. And if the weeds are winning in your garden, you're in good company. July isn't about perfection, it's about participation.

So whether you're waving a flag at the Fourth of July parade, sipping something cold under a ceiling fan, or shelling peas on the back step, take a moment to pause. July moves fast. One minute you're watching fireworks, and the next, you're hearing the first cicadas call summer's second act.

And enjoy this issue of “Your Country Neighbor,” rich with summer scenes, reflections from our contributors, and the continuing episodes of three original historic-fiction series, stories rooted in the prairie, just like you.

To our Omaha-area readers; while the beloved tea room has closed, you can still find thoughtfully selected teas and gifts online at Bureikou Tea & More. Diana's hospitality lives on just one click away.

Here's to a vivid, flavorful July. And don't forget to bring that Valentino's coupon on page 10, because summer calls for good company and good food.

“We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time, important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other.”

Pope Francis

“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

“Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it because no one else will.”

Ghandi

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Is it just me, or is life less fragrant than it used to be? If you live on a livestock farm, this probably sounds like a ridiculous question. But, for the rest of you, how many scents can you specifically recall from today? If you spent most of the day inside an air-conditioned building, I'm guessing not very many. Maybe that's why scented candles, laundry scent beads and plug-in air fresheners are so popular. Our sensory organs are telling us that we're missing something.

I started my day as usual today, taking my first cup of coffee outside for my daily dose of early morning sunshine. I stood right next to my flower bed where bachelors' buttons, coneflowers, larkspur, Russian sage and spirea were blooming, but I don't recall detecting any floral scents. I know that hybridization can result in loss of fragrance in some species, notably roses. But I don't have any roses. Now that I think about it, the coffee wasn't all that fragrant either. So maybe it is me.

Although, the other evening I did enjoy the fresh scent of our white pine when I was sitting in my porch. Every time I mention how wonderful that pine smells, Hubby insists he can't smell it. That's so sad! But I guess scent receptors are like taste buds: everybody's are different.

Around here, cooking smells are at the top of the list for the scent du jour. Why is it that cooking smells are tantalizing while you're cooking, but once the meal is over, you can't wait to air out the house? Food scraps go immediately to the garbage can in the garage. Weather permitting, we run the whole house ventilating fan (which requires opening at least one window or door). Otherwise, we break out the birch scented candle and count on the simulated scent to overcome the lingering smell of cooking oil.

My awareness of the lack of aromas in my life was first prompted by reading Diana Gabaldon's "Outlander" series. I love books with lots of description, and I've never found an author who can match Gabaldon for her inclusion of scents in describing a scene.

Here's an example.

William smelled smoke. Not hearth fire or wildfire; just an ashy tang on the wind, tinged with charcoal, grease – and fish.

Gabaldon could have stopped with William smelled smoke. Most readers would not have felt deprived of the specifics of the particular smoke. Would modern readers even be able to tell the difference between hearth fire and wildfire? The ability to distinguish the nuances of various smoke aromas might have made a life-and-death difference in the 18th Century.

Here's another.

Diary Continued on page 19 >>>>

Share this publication with friends.

It's online at;

<http://www.yourcountryneighbor.com>



Canada Geese and their gosling - Loess Bluffs Wildlife Refuge.



Memorial Garden in Brownville, Nebraska



Annual Fleabane -- Steamboat Trace, June 19, 2025



Hackberry Emperor butterfly -- Steamboat Trace, June 19, 2025

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HISTORIC BROWNVILLE, NEBRASKA'S FREEDOM DAY CELEBRATION

Friday, July 4th, 2025 www.brownville-ne.com

7:00 AM Freedom Run departs from corner of H-136 and Main St.
10:00 AM Parade on Main Street between 6th Street and Hwy 136
8:30 PM Dinner Cruise on Spirit of Brownville (Boarding at 8)

FREEDOM FUN RUN - STRUT YOUR MUTT DOG SHOW - LORETTA'S DONUTS - PARADE
BREAKFAST BY LOCAL EASTERN STAR CHAPTER - PATRIOTIC PROGRAM AT BOETTNER PARK
REFRESHMENTS & CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES - QUILTS OF VALOR PRESENTATION
FIREWORKS 9:45PM - MUSEUMS OPEN - DINNER CRUISE ON SPIRIT OF BROWNVILLE
LIVE MUSIC BY JOSH DANIELS - BROWNVILLE VILLAGE THEATRE MATINEE

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The Captain Bailey House A Murder Unresolved *by a wandering neighbor*

The Bailey House presents itself with dignified restraint; handsome red brick walls and graceful proportions that speak of riverboat fortunes and cultivated taste. Yet this stately facade conceals Brownville's most enduring mystery, a tale written in blood and whispered across generations.

The Night That Changed Everything

Captain Bailey commanded both respect and steamboats in Brownville's golden age, when the Missouri River served as the town's lifeline to the wider world. His success in commerce had earned him enemies as well as admirers, though none suspected how deadly those resentments might prove.

On a bitter evening in the late 1800s, someone came calling at the Bailey residence. The knock came after dark, urgent, insistent. Captain Bailey answered his door for the final time. Whatever words passed between him and his visitor died with him, for within moments, a gunshot shattered the night's quiet. The captain crumpled on his own threshold, life bleeding away into the wooden planks he had crossed thousands of times before.

The murder sent shock waves through Brownville's close-knit community. Theories flourished like weeds after rain: bitter rivalries between steamboat companies, political vendettas from the volatile post-war years, disputes over valuable riverfront property, or perhaps a business partnership that had curdled into deadly betrayal. But for all the speculation and investigation, justice never came. The killer vanished into history, leaving only questions and the captain's restless spirit behind.

Captain Bailey *Continued on page 11 >>>>*



BROWNVILLE FINE ARTS ASSOCIATION

2025 Speaker Series & Art Exhibition

Speaker Series Schedule

Saturday, June 21 • 10:00 a.m.
"IN CONTACT WITH NATURE"
by Sue Kohles

As a former employee of NSA, Sue is very familiar with the Furnas Arboretum. Her program will include a presentation and a walk highlighting the innate human connection to nature and the benefits of spending time in contact with nature.

Saturday, July 19 • 10:00 a.m.
"THE CHILDREN'S BLIZZARD"
Discussion by Dr. Bill Clemente

Book written by David Laskin. "This account of the 1888 blizzard reads like a thriller." - Entertainment Weekly - "...gripping true story of an epic prairie snowstorm that killed hundreds of newly arrived settlers and cast a shadow on the promise of the American frontier. January 12, 1888, began as an unseasonably warm morning across Nebraska, the Dakotas, and Minnesota, the weather so mild that children walked to school without coats and gloves."

Saturday, August 16 • 10:00 a.m.
"I AM A MAN: CHIEF STANDING BEAR'S JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE"
by Joe Starita

Joe Starita tells the enthralling story of how Chief Standing Bear peacefully fought for Native American rights. (Humanities Nebraska)

Saturday, September 13 • 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
BROWNVILLE STREET ART & STUDIO TOURS

Artists will have their studios open for guests as well as other artists visiting Brownville with their works for sale.



Saturday, September 13 • 10:00 a.m.
CHALK ART DEMONSTRATION
by Amy Sell

Amy Lynn Sell is a Kansas City creative artist. She uses the temporary form of chalk to create images that pull you in and make you smile and become part of your experience when you're there.

Saturday, December 6, 2025
Brownville Tour of Homes
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Rohman Garden Tree Lighting
& Christmas Carols
5:30 p.m.



Art Exhibition Schedule

Schoolhouse Art Gallery

427 Main Street • Brownville, Nebraska

Art exhibits open Thursday, Friday, & Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

If you would like to see the show at other times, please contact 402-414-2082.

May 29 to June 29
"PAINTS & THREADS"

by Carol Skinner Hammond

Artist Reception: Friday, May 30, 6:00 p.m.

Show includes watercolors and acrylics paintings of florals and landscapes. The stitchery pieces are created from wool, silk, and cotton fibers embellished with hand stitching, beads, buttons, lace, ribbons, yarns, and trims of all kinds.



July 3 to July 27
"CLEARVIEW STAINED GLASS"
by Deb Costello

Artist Reception: Friday, July 11, 6:00 p.m.

Stained glass transforms light. The constant changing conditions of daylight, coupled with the refractive properties of color, texture, and transparency within stained glass, permeate the space with a constantly changing palette of color. Deb generally uses the traditional medium of leaded stained glass, to create conventional and unconventional glass art. She has also ventured into fused glass (kiln work) as an additional enhancement to her designs. She creates unexpected imagery, hoping to offer the observer a fresh view of this vibrant classical art form.



July 31 to August 31
"OUT OF THE CHAOS COMES BEAUTY"
by Jodie Leibe

Artist Reception: Friday, August 1, 6:00 p.m.

Jodie has been creating for as long as she can remember. Ten-plus years ago she started pottery. It has taught her patience and has been a lifeline through many ups and downs. Jodie is grateful to have found a way to bring joy and beauty to herself and share with others.



September 4 to September 21
"SOME OF NEBRASKA'S FAVORITES"
Artist Reception:

Friday, September 5, 6:00 p.m.

Mary Lauber - Jewelry
Susan Sisco - Pottery
Natalie Sisco - Glass and Pottery
Cate Wycoff - Watercolor



October 7 to November 2
"A SEAT AT GRANDMA'S TABLE"
by GK Callahan

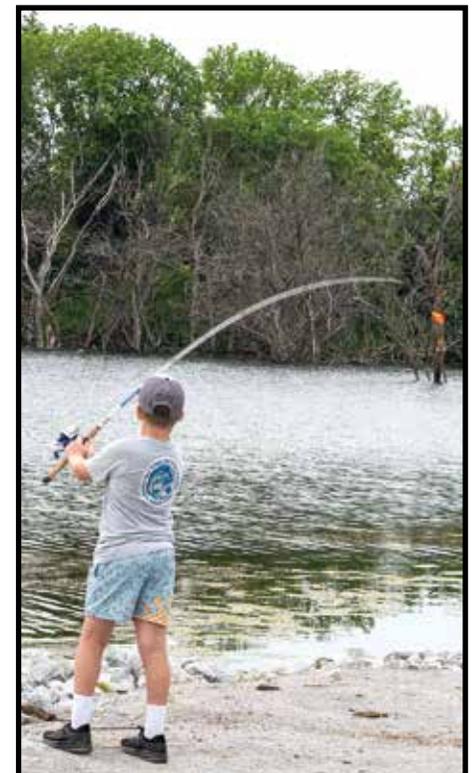
Installation includes integrating artwork with elements of corn, pheasants, and a harvest table. There will be story collections, photos and recipes evoking memories of home and the past.



Follow us on Facebook: Brownville Fine Arts Association

Old Man River Days Youth Fishing Contest At Duck Creek Lake

Sponsors; KJ Whitehorse, Peru • TJs Tavern, Brownville • Scotts Place, Sterling • Farm Bureau, Auburn • Crappie Shed, Sterling



Renley Dean won a custom crappie rod for catching largest crappie at 15.2 oz. Mason Cave won a lifetime kids fishing license for catching largest channel catfish at 12.2 lbs. Ewan Guenther won a kayak for catching the largest Panfish/Bluegill at 9.5 oz. 87 kids were registered in the tournament, 62 showed up to compete.



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Harvesting Nature's Bounty Provides Many Benefits

Marty Peregoy

It is the time of summer when all of nature's freebies in the forms of wild fruit begin to be available. In John Neihardt's book *Black Elk Speaks*, the Oglala Calendar Moon for the month of July was "Moon of Red Cherries." Around my house, June is definitely looking like the moon of blooming elderberries.

Taking advantage of this bounty of nature is not only delicious, it's also healthy, and harvesting from nature can give you and those you involve in the task a real sense of accomplishment.

I'm planning on harvesting my elderflowers as they come into full bloom, as they are reported to be good for anti-inflammatory support, potential relief from respiratory issues, and immune support. They also happen to make some delicious recipes.

Of course, I'll leave several flower-heads on each bush to ripen into dark and delicious fruit for the making of jams, muffins and cobblers closer to August. Sources suggest taking only a third of the flowers/fruit on each plant so that some are left for pollinators and birds.

If you've never harvested the dark fruit before, make sure that you know the difference between elderberry and poison hemlock. The fruits and their form look similar, but poison hemlock has purple dots and streaks on its stem, while elderberry does not. When in doubt, take a picture with your cell phone and use a plant-identification app to be sure.

Harvesting *Continued on page 8 >>>>*

TRAGEDY STRIKES PERU, Part 3

John C. Chatelain, Omaha

The April 24th publication of the 1950 college catalog made the termination of the psychology professor a reality. At 11:00 the following morning, Dr. Barney K. Baker calmly walked into the office of the president of Peru State College. Baker shot four times with his .32 Colt semi-automatic, killing Dr. William L. Nicholas instantly. 1

As he departed the office Baker kept his gun trained on the president's secretary, Dorothy Stephan as he backed out into the hallway. As soon as Baker was gone, Stephan rushed to Nicholas' office, shouted for help, before phoning for a doctor and the police. Immediately thereafter, she phoned the superintendent of the campus elementary school warning him to keep the children inside. 2

Baker then walked deliberately a few steps to the office of Dr. Paul A. Maxwell, head of the Education Department, passing professors Wesley Sweetser and John Christ along the way. Baker entered Maxwell's office by the side door and fired three shots, instantly killing Maxwell. As Maxwell's secretary, Mary Louise Smith, ran screaming from her office, Baker calmly walked across the hall to his own office, picked up his hat and coat, and left, once again passing Sweetser and Christ as he exited the building. From a window, Sweetser watched Baker walk towards his white two-story house at the edge of the campus. 3 The professor had once explained his theory to psychology students that during a sudden catastrophe, most people respond ineffectually.

4 City Marshall Art Hays and local policeman, Horace McAdams stood guard outside the Baker house until two highway patrol cars and the County Attorney, Fred Kiechel, arrived shortly after noon. The men walked to the front door, to which a note was pinned with a message: "Mr. Huck, Walk in and take over." Baker's body was found on a Persian rug, along with a suicide note, a pen and the gun, several feet away. 5

Rex Floyd was a captain in the army reserve. As director of special services, he handled public relations and student recruitment for the college. He also directed off-campus studies and activities. While Dorothy Stephan took witness statements, Floyd had local operators transfer all calls to the switchboard in the college administration building. For forty-eight hours, Floyd answered media calls from surrounding states. During the night he took calls at home from correspondents representing newspapers in London, Paris and Tokyo. He handled affairs with finesse, drawing praise from members of the media. The attention upset the residents of Peru, according to Corinne Adams, who wrote in her "West Side Items" column of the *Peru Pointer*: "One of the hardest parts [of the week] was the way the reporters and newscasters handled the affair, having a field day. Their methods seem[ed] harsh and their product sensational." Many were concerned that the killings might negatively affect the college. Enrollment did drop during the period, but the graduation of many war veterans was the cause. 6

In the wake of the tragedy, rumors spread that Peru State College might close. By the 1960s, however, enrollment had bounced back to over 1,000. 7

1. Nancy Handy Moran, "Tragedy at Peru State College: The Murders of William Nicholas and Paul Maxwell," *Nebraska History* 69 (1988): 131-141

2. Ibid

3. My personal recollection is the Baker's Victorian style house stood across the street north of Delzell Hall.

4. Nancy Handy Moran, "Tragedy at Peru State College: The Murders of William Nicholas and Paul Maxwell," *Nebraska History* 69 (1988): 131-141

5. Ibid

6. Ibid

7. *Nebraska's First College: Shaping the Future Since 1867*: 136

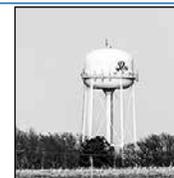
PERU CITY NEWS

Communication • Information • Pride In Community

A volunteer project

supported by the Peru Community.

Thank you to everyone who participates!



Tuesday Literary Club Reads

DiAnna Loy, Tuesday Literary Club

As we continue our theme of senior authors, Dorothy Chase chose to present *Run, Rose, Run* by Dolly Parton and James Patterson. As one who has read many James Patterson novels, it was easy to see the influence of both authors as I read this book. Patterson was clearly responsible for weaving the ever changing plot, keeping me on my toes trying to figure out where the next twist was going to take me. While Parton's knowledge of the music industry poured out to make all aspects of our main character's rise to stardom believable.

We meet our main character, AnnieLee Keyes as she is hitch hiking to Nashville where she hopes to follow her dream of using her talents as a singer and songwriter to make it big in the music industry. It was pouring rain and several cars had passed her by when a big rig passes her by. She stomps her feet and gives the trucker a "double salute." As the brake lights come on she runs to catch the truck, finally catching a ride. Mile after mile it's just fine until the trucker decides to get fresh. She pulls a gun from her backpack, shot the driver's window out of the truck, and forced the driver out of the cab. She drives on in the truck leaving the driver in the rain. That was enough to tell me the book was going to be interesting.

When AnnieLee gets to Nashville, she cleans up as best she can in a gas station restroom and hits the bars trying to find one that will let her literally sing for her supper. She gets lucky in more ways than one at the Cat's Paw. While she's singing she happens to be seen by Ethan Blake, backup singer for RuthAnna Ryder, retired country music singer/Queen who's been in the business over 40 years and just happens to have a recording studio in her home. Ethan liked the look and sound of AnnieLee and tells RuthAnna about her, and keeps telling her until she finally agrees to stop in to listen to her. RuthAnna takes a liking to AnnieLee and wants to help her get a foot in the door in Nashville's music scene.

Even with RuthAnna's help, it was not all smooth sailing for AnnieLee. AnnieLee had been jumped a couple of times by some men and beat up pretty badly. As the beatings were taking place, they called her Rose and told her she had broken the rules. After one beating in her motel she went to RuthAnna for help saying only that she had been mugged. At that point she began to work with RuthAnna regularly, staying closer to her. RuthAnna had Ethan act as AnnieLee's bodyguard; checking her motel room before she entered to make sure it was safe. AnnieLee continued to write songs and work on singing them, becoming more professional with RuthAnna's tutoring.

RuthAnna reached out to some people she knew and AnnieLee was signed with a huge New York City record label with a desirable contract. She had everything she needed to be on the road to stardom. But even with all of that, her journey was not to be easy. Small issues continued to plague her tour. She continued to be followed and accosted by thugs who insisted on calling her Rose. It appeared if she was going to work her way out from under her troubles, she was going to have to take matters into her own hands.

Relying only on herself, AnnieLee set off to set things right without telling anyone where she was headed. But more people cared about her than she realized. She was not as alone as she thought. The twists and turns that Patterson is so well known for aren't finished. This book kept my attention from beginning to end. I recommend this book for anyone who likes a little mystery.

<<<< Harvesting *Continued from page 7*

The internet is full of recipes for both flowers and fruit, and products from the flowers make nice gifts. Pale yellow St. Germain elderberry liquor in its art deco bottle makes wonderful cocktails, but the price is high enough that many have never experienced it. Why not try making it?

If you don't happen to have elderberries in your yard, look for them on the edges of ponds, streams or fences – and ask permission to be on the property if it is not open to public access. Elderberries flower and fruit June through August, so you have plenty of time.

These free sources of fruit for use in condiments, desserts, drinks, and alternative medicine can be used immediately or preserved for use later on. An internet search for elderberry fruit and flower recipes brings up numerous sites, some with over 100 recipes.

Always remember that elderberries, not the flowers, must be cooked before consuming, as they contain a toxic compound that can cause stomach upsets. Never consume raw berries, bark, leaves or stems. Happy Harvesting!

Easy Elderflower Jelly Recipe follows on page 9.

"Happy reading!"

PERU CITY NEWS

Communication • Information • Pride In Community

A volunteer project
supported by the Peru Community.
Thank you to everyone who participates!



Easy Elderflower Jelly Recipe

vitalfairliving.com

- 3 Cups of Elderflowers removed from the stalks
- 3 cups of Pectin sugar
- 3 cups of Apple Juice
- Juice of a lemon

Choose a sunny day to harvest your elderflowers, preferably in the morning when their scent is the strongest. Gently shake the flower heads to remove any insects and avoid washing them, as this can dilute their flavor. Instead, inspect them carefully and clean if necessary.

Snip the flower heads just below the blossoms, removing as much of the green stems as possible. Place the elderflower heads in a large bowl and pour the apple juice over them. Add the lemon juice to the bowl, or you can add the juice while making the jam too. Cover the bowl with a clean cloth and let it sit for 24-48 hours to allow the flavors to infuse. After infusing the flower, strain the liquid through a fine-mesh sieve or cheesecloth into a large pot. Discard the spent flowers. Add the pectin sugar to the pot and stir well to dissolve. In case you are using normal sugar and adding pectin separately, follow the instructions on the pectin package.

Bring the mixture to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring frequently. Reduce the heat and let the mixture simmer for about 15-20 minutes, or until it reaches a thick, jam-like consistency. You can test this by placing a small spoonful on a chilled plate; if it gels and holds its shape, then it's ready to be bottled.

While the jam is simmering, sterilize your jars and lids by boiling them in water for 10 minutes or use them hot from the dish washer. Carefully ladle the hot jam into the sterilized jars, leaving about 1/4 inch of headspace at the top. Wipe the rims of the jars with a clean, damp cloth to remove any residue, then seal with the lids. Process the jars in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes to ensure a proper seal. Remove the jars from the water bath and let them cool completely. You should hear a "pop" as the lids seal.



Elderberry Flower *by Marty Peregoy*



St. Clara's Catholic Church
604 6th Street

Pastor Fr. Timothy Danek
Mass - Sunday 8:30 am

Confessions - Sunday 8:00-8:20 am



Northridge Church
808 5th Street

Pastor Daniel Hutchison
Services - Sunday 10:00 am



Peru Community Church
520 Nebraska Street

Pastors Raymond & Rebecca Girard
Services - Sunday 10:45 am

July 2025

Your Country Neighbor

9

It's Deere Season

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JOHN DEERE



AKRS

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<<<< Captain Bailey *Continued from page 5*

The Haunting Presence: In the decades since that fatal night, the Bailey House has never known true peace. Those who have lived within its walls, worked as caretakers, or simply visited, have encountered phenomena that defy rational explanation:

The Threshold's Chill: Near the front entrance where Captain Bailey drew his last breath, an unnatural cold persists. Even on summer's hottest days, visitors report stepping into pockets of frigid air that seem to emanate from the very floorboards where blood once pooled.

Midnight Wanderings: The second floor echoes with the measured tread of unseen feet, pacing the hallways with the rhythm of a man unable to rest. The footsteps follow no pattern that the living can discern—sometimes urgent, sometimes slow and deliberate, as if their owner wrestles with thoughts too heavy for eternal slumber.

The Voice in the Study: Captain Bailey's old office still harbors whispers, a man's voice speaking words that remain maddeningly indistinct. The tone carries weight and urgency, sometimes rising to what sounds like anger or frustration, as if the speaker struggles to communicate something of vital importance to ears that cannot hear.

Electrical Disturbances: Despite modern wiring and multiple upgrades, lights throughout the house operate according to their own mysterious logic. They flicker without cause, illuminate empty rooms without human touch, and cast shadows that seem to move independently of any earthly source.

The Figure in the Hall: Most unsettling of all are the sightings of a man in period dress—tall, imposing, wearing the clothing of Brownville's steamboat era. He appears most often in the upstairs corridor, sometimes standing motionless, other times moving with purpose toward the front windows, as if watching for someone who never arrives.

One longtime caretaker, after years of encounters with the inexplicable, offered her own interpretation: "He remains because he must. Justice was never served, peace never found. Every evening at dusk, I feel him here; waiting, watching, hoping that someday the truth will finally surface."

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Chapter Two: The River Wakes

Camp River Dubois — May 14, 1804

The river was swollen, restless, and alive. Morning fog drifted low and silvered over the surface like breath from a sleeping giant. Men moved with purpose—some with tension, others with quiet joy—as the final cords were tied and provisions double-checked. Barrels of flour, dried meat, powder, tools, and medicine lined the keelboats like bones in a strong spine.

Elias Le Grand stood by the forge one last time, running a rag over his anvil like he might a friend's shoulder. He had spent the winter there hammering iron to will—mending axes, bending hooks, sharpening edges until they could split pine like butter. This forge had been his shelter, his company, his confession box. He did not rush to leave it.



Captain Lewis stood near the bow of the longboat, tall and trim in a wool coat that showed little wear for all the worry it had endured. He had barely slept—Elias knew that. A man doesn't pace all night unless the weight of a nation's hopes hangs just beneath his ribs.

Clark, more grounded, barked final instructions from the bank. He had a voice made to carry over wind and water. The enlisted men—young and mud-worn—moved quickly to obey.

Just past the bluffs, trees stood in their spring green, thick and pulsing with bird songs. But Elias smelled more than flowers—he smelled possibility and uncertainty, that strange cocktail that comes before any great undertaking. He'd felt it before battles, before storms. Today, he felt it at the back of his throat.

The boats were ready: the keelboat, fifty-five feet long with a square sail and two smaller pirogues to flank it. The Corps loaded their weapons, tucked their journals into oiled canvas, and carried their hopes in silence. The wind stirred, a quiet nudge. It was time.

Clark climbed aboard and turned to the men. "This river will test every inch of you," he said. "Let it. That's why we're here."

And with that, oars dipped into the Missouri, cutting ribbons in the current. The boat gave a soft lurch and then, as if it had been waiting all winter too, slipped free from the dock and into the westward flow.

Elias sat near the mid-deck, rope coiled beside him, a brace of tools tucked under his seat. He did not look back. Behind them lay farms, fences, the reach of familiar language. Before them, nothing but wind, water, and maps not yet drawn.

He reached into his coat and pulled out a leather string from which hung a small charm: a heron, smooth and worn from years in a pocket. He closed his hand around it and whispered something low.

The Missouri gurgled, wide and brown, and somewhere out there—beyond the confluence, beyond the Great Falls and mountains unknown—was the Pacific. But Elias was not thinking of oceans. He was thinking of today, and tomorrow, and the inch-by-inch building of courage. He was thinking that he might finally leave behind the ache in his leg, the shadow in his chest, and become someone new beneath the open sky.

And so the Corps of Discovery moved west, with the wind at their backs and history waiting like a storybook yet to be written.

Letters from the Prairie

October 15th, 1887, Nemaha County

Third Letter from Anna to her sister Klara in Germany
Meine liebe Klara,

The harvest moon has come and gone, and with it, the last of our corn stands gathered into Johann's newly built crib. How different this autumn feels from those we knew in the old country—here, the prairie stretches endlessly under skies so vast they make one feel both infinitely small and strangely blessed.

My hands bear the evidence of these harvest weeks—palms cracked and stained from stripping husks, fingertips split from the corn's sharp edges. Yet when I walk past our overflowing bins each morning, my heart swells with a satisfaction I never knew in Württemberg's cramped valleys. We have earned this abundance through our own labor, on our own land.

Last Tuesday brought our first killing frost, earlier than Johann had hoped, but the Good Lord preserved our pumpkins and late squash. I've arranged them along the front porch like golden sentinels, their orange faces catching the slanted autumn light. Little Lena counts them each morning—thirty-seven in all, enough for pies, preserves, and soup to carry us well into winter's embrace.

Yesterday's journey to Brownville brought unexpected joy. Johann returned from the grain market carrying more than receipts for our wheat, tucked within his coat pocket was a letter bearing Emil's familiar script! My hands trembled as I broke the seal, and tears blurred my vision reading of home. How my heart warmed to learn that our brothers still gather each Sunday after service, sharing news and memories over Mama's old oak table.

Please tell dear Emil that his harmonica has found new life in Lena's hands. Though she has yet to coax a proper melody from its chambers, her enthusiastic attempts fill our evenings with music of a different sort. I hear echoes of Emil's patient teaching in her determined efforts. Perhaps the prairie will nurture a musician as well as farmers.

As autumn deepens and the days grow short, I find myself drawn to quiet contemplation. After supper, when the dishes are cleared and the children settled, I take up my mending by the oil lamp's steady glow. The night sounds of this place have become companions—the distant yip of coyotes carrying across the grassland, the whisper of wind through dried corn stalks, the settling sighs of our little house as it adjusts to the cooling air.

These sounds once frightened me, symbols of the wilderness we had chosen over civilization's comforts. Now they speak a different language, one of belonging, of roots slowly but surely taking hold in foreign soil. The coyotes' wild chorus no longer sounds like loneliness but like freedom itself, reminding me that we are part of something larger and older than our small human concerns.

The other German families scattered across these townships have become like family. Mrs. Hoffmann brought apple butter last week, and we shared stories of harvest customs from the old country while our children played with corn-husk dolls. We are creating new traditions here, weaving together threads of memory and hope.

Winter approaches with its own promises and challenges. Johann has laid in enough wood to see us through, and my root cellar groans under the weight of preserved vegetables, pickled beets, and stone crocks filled with sauerkraut. We are as ready as mortal hands can make us for whatever the Nebraska winter might bring.

Kiss the children for me, and embrace our mother with special tenderness. Tell her that her daughter has learned to read the sky for weather and the soil for next year's promise. I am becoming, slowly but surely, a woman of this prairie—still German in my heart, but American in my daily bread.

Your loving sister across the ocean,
Anna Wilhelmine

Disney's New Snow White

Sylvie Shires, Peru

There seems to be a lot of hostility towards the new Disney's Snow White movie from Christian and Conservative quarters (to which I belong). However, I think we have to be more analytical rather than impulsive in this matter. We also need to separate the actors' personal political convictions from the characters they portray in the story, which is why I will only focus on the latter here.

First, let us consider the notion of a "remake," making a new version of something already known. Some have objected that the movie differs from the 1937 Disney's animated version of the tale. But, they overlook the very fact that said version is itself a different adaptation of the most famous written version of the story, recorded by the Brothers Grimm in 1812. As it turns out, there are many versions of Snow White (see, "The Tale of Snow White" harvard.edu). Cinderella might top the list, with over 700 versions, including at least one in which she is evil!

Being an English major has made me aware that remakes are generally the mark of a work of excellence. Think of Shakespeare's plays, for instance. Numerous adaptations exist of his plays, each appealing more than others to various audiences, some presented in 19th-century or modern settings. Think of Dickens's Christmas Carol, which comes to us in a vast spectrum of adaptations, including less traditional interpretations such as, Disney's short cartoon with Scrooge McDuck as Ebenezer Scrooge, A Christmas Carol, the Musical with Kelsey Grammer, or Scrooged with a very modern, hard-hearted CEO played by Bill Murray. Why is that significant? Because it underscores the fact that these stories continue to touch people's hearts and souls, from generation to generation; that these 16th and a 19th-century authors address perennial issues that concern our 21st society.

Second, the "original" story by the Brothers Grimm is quite disturbing. It certainly bothered me as a child. Think about it: this prince happens to come upon this glass coffin in the forest and falls in love with a corpse! Ick!!! Even when the princess comes back to life, what is this happily-ever-after marriage built on? Physical beauty? Maybe the testimony of the dwarfs that Snow White is a very good person? A pretty slim foundation for a strong and happy marriage! By the way, this obviously bothered Disney as well when he created his 1937 film, because he made sure that Snow White and the Prince knew each other at the beginning of the story and were already in love, thus neatly, and mercifully, removing any trace of necrophilia.

Third, we often forget that folk and fairy tales were not originally created specifically for children. Although they had a moral intent, they were often disturbingly dark. For instance, the Grimm Snow White ends with the evil Queen forced into red-hot iron shoes, dying in horrific agony. Such cruel practices existed in real life at the time these tales were created. Their presence in these tales was meant to stress the necessity to behave with honesty, hard work, and generosity. If we dig a little deeper, we can find historical origins to these stories. There are two main contenders for Snow White, but the most interesting is Maria von Erthal, born in Bavaria in 1725, reputed to be lovely and kind, who had a domineering stepmother, and who was reported to have fled her home for the thick forest near the castle. Nearby, nestled among seven hills, still lies a mining town. We must keep in mind that workers in mines were often children, whose harsh labor conditions caused them to be afflicted with stunted growth and deformities, and they were often referred as "dwarfs." Furthermore, Maria's castle was said to have a talking mirror, either because it was so well made that it always reflected the truth, or because it was a wonder of craftsmanship and echoed spoken words.

Moreover, fairy tales are rife with symbolism: white usually represents what is pure or innocent; witches are evil, agents of satanic forces; fairies are good, agents of Providence, a little like angels. In Snow White, the poisoned apple represents temptation and/or the danger of succumbing to it, while the mirror is a symbol of absolute truth.

With this informed background, let us now consider the Disney's 2025 Snow White.

From the start, we noticed some different details. Snow White gets her name because she was born in the midst of a snow storm, which actually makes more sense than the odd Grimm version. Her mother lives until Snow White is about 12 or 13, instead of dying shortly after giving birth. Snow White's parents are devoted to each other, to her, and to their people. They live long enough to create a healthy, nurturing, loving environment for their daughter, to impart in her a sense of generous, I would even say godly, leadership in which the rulers seek first the welfare and happiness of their subjects, and are even the servants of their people (for instance, they bake for them). In fact, this baking helps Snow White understand the labor of others and gives her more substance than being just pretty and idle. Finally, they show her that being fair, brave, and true are essential qualities for her to rule after them.

After her father disappears, Snow White is understandably overwhelmed and let herself be subjected to the evil Queen. Fear and cowardice have shackled her until Jonathan, the Robin-Hood hero comes into her life and makes her face the fact that, basically, she has failed in her leadership role; she has let her people down; and has even betrayed her parents' legacy.

It is only when she finds herself in the forest and meets the rebels that she regains her courage and determines to do her utmost to face the Queen and free her kingdom from her abusive authority, knowing she could perish in the task. In this, she reminds me of the biblical Esther who is first afraid to talk to the king on behalf of her people, but once reminded by Mordecai of her responsibility and her opportunity, decides she must and will fulfill her mission, even if she must perish in the attempt. We often forget that true courage is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to sacrifice self to serve the cause of Truth, Good, and the welfare of others.

The end is far more satisfactory than the one in the Grimm version. Snow White triumphs over the evil Queen by standing firm and winning her people over by reminding them of the life they had and could have again, simply by not obeying the Queen. Sometimes the best solutions are overlooked because they are the simplest!

One word about the dwarfs. I personally think they are very interesting, even if they are AI instead of real persons. After all, no one ever objected to cartoon characters interacting with real people in Mary Poppins, so I failed to see a justification for all the fuss about these dwarfs. More importantly, the fact that they are living like old bachelors, messy and even quarreling among themselves, and that Snow white acts as a peace maker is rather creative and inspiring. The character of Dopey is particularly endearing and even profound, reminding us that love and trust are the best encouragers and liberators.

Although there is a clear love story and a definite happy ending, the focus of this Snow White is more on leadership than on a simple, more common love story. Some see it as an empowerment of women. If so, this is nothing new: History is filled with outstanding, courageous women who have faced dangers and nearly unsurmountable odds. However, even if the focus is on Snow White, we do not have anything even remotely resembling feminist, man-bashing propaganda here: men are presented in a good, even powerful, light, whether it is the King and the inspiring role model he provided for his daughter, or Jonathan helping Snow White find the courage to do all she had been equipped to accomplish.

Personally, what I got out of this movie was a very pleasant surprise, as it distanced itself from politics and gave us a good story with a practical and inspiring message: living up to our responsibilities with courage, fairness, truth, and kindness to make, as much as it depends on us, our world a better place. I would think it is rather essential to teach such values to our children and grandchildren.

ARBOR CITY NEWS

Morton-James Public Library Calendar of Events July 2025

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 listed is free of charge

4th of July Story Time with Face Painting Clown Rudi Patudi!

Singing songs, and learning some American Sign Language, clown Rudi Patudi will be joining us to do face painting until 12:30! We will also have coloring pages. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6.

Wednesday, July 2

10:00AM

Yarn Crafters Club

Join us to work on your crocheting or knitting skills and projects. Club 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. Free to attend.

Everyone welcome 15 and older!

Wednesday, July 2

1:30PM-3:00PM

Lego Club

Must be 8 years and older to join.

Monday, July 7

3:30PM-5:00PM

Story Time Chalk Art

Sing songs, learn some signs in American Sign Language, read some stories, then color with sidewalk chalk outside! Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6.

Families welcome! Free!

Wednesday, July 9

10:00AM

Farmers Market Library Table

The Morton-James Public Library will have a table at the Nebraska City Farmers Market (810 1st Corso). Stop by to pick up a free animal sticker craft kit and other fun giveaways. Kids can play at the bubble station!

Thursday, July 10

4:30-5:30 PM

Day Book Club

The Reading List by Sara Nisha Adams

Afternoon Book Club meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 2:00 PM.

Anyone can join and there is no registration. New members are always welcome!

Tuesday, July 15

2:00PM

Story Time Flowers in Bloom

Sing songs, learn some signs in American Sign Language, and read stories about flowers. Then we will make a handprint flower bouquet craft!

Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Families welcome!

Wednesday, July 16

10:00AM

Evening Book Club

The Women by Kristin Hannah

Evening Book Club meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 5:30 PM.

Anyone can join and there is no registration. New members are always welcome!

Wednesday, July 16

5:30PM

MJPL-Kimmel Gallery

Photography Exhibit

Gone, but Not Forgotten

Amanda VanderBroek

July 3 through July 31

Disability History Program

To This End Shall I Live: My Search for Disability History in Nebraska 1890-1920
Disability writer Amanda VanderBroek highlights the stories of several disabled Nebraskans who lived at the turn of the 20th century, from everyday people to an author, film actor, and sideshow performer. She also shares the both fascinating and frustrating aspects of studying this subject in history. Winkler has written and spoken about various issues in disability for over ten years and holds a Master of Arts in Critical and Creative Thinking from the University of Nebraska Omaha.

Sunday, July 20

2:00PM-3:30PM

Lego Club

Must be 8 years and older to join.

Monday, July 21

3:30PM-5:00PM

Story Time Pete the Cat

Sing songs, learn some signs in American Sign Language, and read Pete the Cat stories. Then we will make Pete the Cat using popsicle sticks! Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Families welcome!

Wednesday, July 23

10:00AM

Farmers Market Library Table

The Morton-James Public Library will have a table at the Nebraska City Farmers Market (810 1st Corso). Stop by to pick up a free “ants in the pants” craft kit and other fun giveaways. Kids can play at the bubble station!

Thursday, July 24

4:30-5:30 PM

Music Story Time with Guest Omaha Symphony Educator

Read a story then participate in an interactive music making activity!

Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Families welcome! Free!

Wednesday, July 30

10:00AM

Adult Craft Class -- Book Ends

Wednesday, July 30

7:00PM

Chess Club

Every Thursday

4:00PM-6:00PM



ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

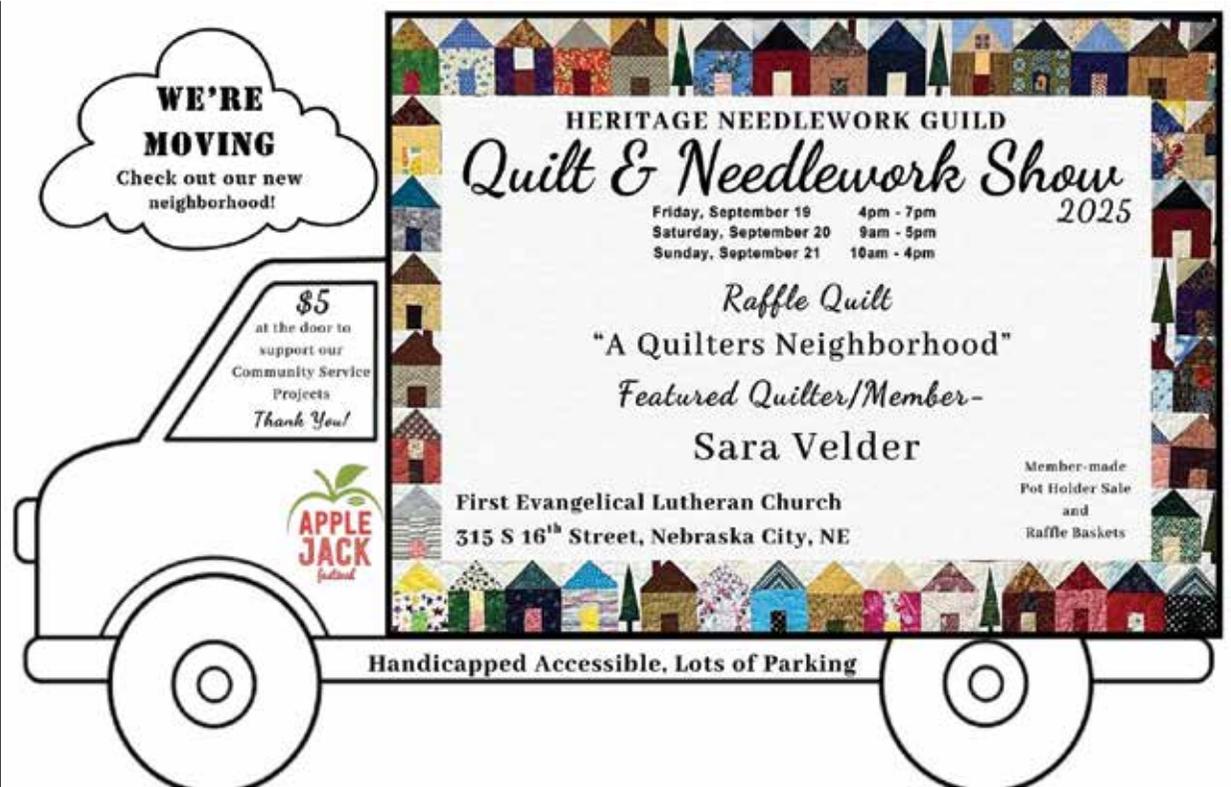
Heritage Guild News

Nancy Feeney

Quilt fans, beware! You will be in for a spooky surprise at the Heritage Needlework Guild Quilt Show at this year's Applejack Festival in Nebraska City. Inspired by the Fall Applejack Festival in Nebraska City, the Guild's 2025 Featured Quilter, Sara Velder, Elmwood, NE, is bringing an impressive display of her favorite Halloween quilts. Since this is one of Sara's favorite holidays, expect to be inspired by these many colorful quilts.



In this photo, Sara stands beside an antique pie case that she converted to hold these "spooktacular" quilts. These quilts, along with much more of Sara's work, will be on display at this year's Quilt show, which opens Friday evening, Sept. 19, and continues through Sunday afternoon, Sept. 21 at the First Evangelical Lutheran Church, 315 S. 16th St., Nebraska City. Please note the change of location for this year's show.



Heritage Needlework Guild's "Quilt and Needlework Show"

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Nancy Feeney, Nebraska City



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ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

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Transportation

Bruce Madsen

My main mode of transportation, when I was just a tyke
Was a self driven muscle powered red and white, trike
A three wheeled machine that was prone to crash
You had to look quick, 'cause I was here and gone in a flash

Back and forth on the sidewalk with agility and speed
Paying no mind to the imaginary tricycle creed
Little black skid marks I left wherever I'd been
The sidewalk was covered from end to end

One day I decided I needed an ego quencher
And I had my mind set on a new adventure
So I backed up on the sidewalk against the front door
Then sat there and questioned my bravery once more

Then like a flash I was off with a squealing start
I must have been doing ninety when I got to the end of the sidewalk
But I didn't hesitate, I didn't balk,
Before me was a whole new world, when I found out I could pedal on rock

The car was parked but around it I went
Pedaling like a fool with mindless intent
Out the drive to the mailbox and back again
Then down to the barn and around the cattle pen

That little trike took me everywhere
My leg muscles must have been that of a grizzly bear
My Mom said I wore the rubber off its little tires
And it earned the right to be totally retired

It was then I graduated out of "trike-dom"
And became a full fledged member of "Schwin-dom"
A 26 inch model and it too was red and white
Had a mud-flap, saddlebags, and the white wall tires made it look just right

So I'm thankful for this part of my life
Memories of a little boy that felt happy, no strife
And now I can sit here and reminisce
About the good times when simple things made a little sense

May we all have such good things to think about.

Arbor City News

is a monthly news section in

Your Country Neighbor

A Nebraska Regional Magazine (w/News)



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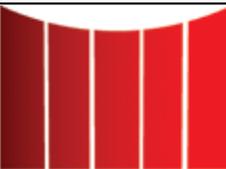
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by Devon Adams, Nebraska City

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FIRE IN THE NIGHT

There is total
blue sky delight
before the dark
comes with shadows
and shapes of gray,
as colors fade away.
Evening is silent
until the end of the
day explodes into
rumbles and blasts
that take our breath
away. It is the 4th of
July in a sky full of
shimmer and color
and noise, as our
country celebrates
freedom, and fights
against forces that
hate truth.

PUSH AND PULL

They aren't happy,
but they stay together.
There are two 'whys.'
His and Her's.
They are caught in a
web that took a long
time to weave.
It takes time to let
love go, but now it
is gone. If they
don't get out soon,
it will turn to hate.
Their friends are
waiting to pick up
The pieces.

WILLOW BEND

It is a morning full of
songs and fuzzy sunshine
on the banks of a simple
river running wide
around it's lazy bend.
Like little ink notes on
a page of music, birds
throw music into the air.
A heron stands still in
shallow water, the lines
of his body graceful as
a drawing by a master
artist, and a perfect image
to hold in your memory.

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Devon Adams

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adamsdevon07@gmail.com 402-209-9377

THIS AND THAT

Stay away from
high and mighty
words that wear
a cloak of truth.
The rumble of a
speech that rattles
sabers and speaks
of saving freedom
isn't always what
it seems to be.
Sound and fury
don't signify anything
but lies if they aren't
made of truth and
facts.

LIKE A LIGHT

So, you are stuck
in the weeds of
your worries and
fears. Don't despair.
You're not the only
one there. Let it ride.
Take a break, or a hike.
Don't take a drink.
Do what you love.
Don't think. Just be
there. The light will
find you.

<<<< *Diary Continued from page 3*

A half-naked man squatted in the shade of a huge beech tree, tending a small fire pit covered with damp burlap; William could smell fresh-cut hickory logs, mingled with the smell of blood, fresh meat, smoke and the pungent reek of drying fish.

Do you have the olfactory chops to distinguish fresh-cut hickory from some other tree species?

And again.

...the sap-thick smell of uncured tobacco lay like incense on the night. The scent soothed him.

If I were offered a whiff of uncured and cured tobacco, I think I could detect a difference. And I understand the psychological effect of smells. The smell of oranges always brings back my childhood church Christmas program, after which each child received a paper sack containing unshelled peanuts, some hard candies, an apple and an orange.

Bear with me one more time.

Manoke and Cinnamon were smoking tobacco on the porch when he came back. The smoke mingled with the rising ground mist, a sweet cool vapor, smelling of plants.

How does Gabaldon think to include all those details of life in the woods in the 1700s, let alone the scents that go with them? And she doesn't just give a laundry list of the scents. She describes how they interact with each other.

Remember Smell-O-Vision? The first real-world attempt at Smell-O-Vision was in 1960 with the film "Scent of Mystery," where scents were released into the theater during specific scenes. The technology wasn't flawless, and apparently viewers became desensitized to the smells. But the concept isn't dead, so we might still have the opportunity to experience it someday.

It may be that the scents of yesteryear will be re-created and held in museums in massive atomizers, where future generations can read descriptions of a scene, accompanied by a spritz of the relevant scent. Would the smells be just a curiosity, or would they evoke a sense of wonder and desire for a more fragrant world?

Maybe more smells are not what is needed. Maybe a mindset tweak would do the job. That old admonition to "stop and smell the roses" comes to mind. I think I'll try it.

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It's online at;

yourcountryneighbor.com

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

There's a charming store in Auburn, Nebraska, called "Lynch's Hardware and Gifts"—but I like to call it "Mary's Hardware." In Spring, it feels like a garden center; by Christmas season, Mary transforms it into a Winter Wonderland. Beyond hardware and small appliances, it's become a destination for thoughtful holiday gifts.

Mary starts ordering Christmas inventory in February! And for compelling reasons. Holiday shoppers begin browsing in October, so early ordering ensures products arrive in plenty of time, and that Mary's suppliers know what they need in their inventory. More importantly, staying months ahead in planning allows her to offer customers the "latest thing" before competitors even know it exists.

When I was young, our small town had "Coast-to-Coast" stores and "Gambles." What small businesses must do these days is indeed like a gamble—hoping and planning months ahead when countless events could disrupt future sales. New this year is the unknown factor of tariffs, adding another layer of uncertainty to an already complex planning process.

For a business to thrive in a small town, many things must align perfectly. I once ran a used bookstore and gift shop in my small community. After a successful first few months, customer traffic dwindled to just a few.

I knew a local couple who were well liked by everyone in town, yet their business attempt failed. "If we can't make it here, nobody can," they told me. Perhaps they were right about the fundamental challenge; not enough customers for most specialized products.

Small communities often develop invisible dividing lines—sometimes economic, generational, or social. Understanding and navigating these dynamics becomes as crucial as having a good product.

In my community, and to my knowledge, only Casey's and "Your Country Neighbor" are full time businesses that have survived more than twenty years. The common thread? Many, if not most of our customers, live elsewhere. It's ironic that "Your Country Neighbor" wasn't started as a business—just an 8-page newsletter for friends. Then business acquaintances began asking to advertise.

Do you perform a service, like photography for friends or watercolor portraits for relatives? Do you have a knack for baking or cooking? Can you do something no one else around is doing? Then maybe you can create a successful business. But first, do you know how to run one like Mary?

A Prairie Love

Corn Husks and Confessions October 1923

The October sun hung low as Lyle wrestled the final bushel into the corn crib, his red bandana so caked with chaff and dust it had forgotten its original color. From the kitchen window, Cora Ann watched the familiar rhythm of his movements while her hands worked through pie dough, her heart keeping time with each measured motion. The evening breeze stirred the windmill's weathered blades into their twilight song—that gentle, rhythmic clanking that had marked the passage of her days since childhood. The sound wrapped around her like an old quilt, as comforting as her father's footsteps crossing the porch or the familiar protest of the screen door's hinges. When the work was done and shadows stretched long across the barnyard, they found themselves beneath the shelter of the tool shed's tin roof. The question came without warning, spoken into the gathering dusk with a weight that made her breath catch.

"Would you ever leave this place, Cora?" She set down the corn husk she'd been twisting between her fingers. "The farm, you mean?"

"All of it. Nebraska itself." His voice carried dreams and doubts in equal measure. "Chicago, maybe. Or California—they say you can see the ocean from the mountains there."

Cora Ann let her gaze drift across the familiar landscape—the endless canopy of stars that would soon emerge unmarred by city lights, the profound quiet of prairie mornings when the world felt newly made, the eager faces of her students arranged in neat rows within the one-room schoolhouse where she would soon teach.

"Perhaps someday," she said carefully, testing each word like uncertain ground. "But only with good reason. Not just to chase something I've never seen."

Something shifted in the space between them. She could feel the question building

in him like distant thunder, could sense the words he wanted to speak trembling just beyond his courage. But evening held them both in its patient embrace, and the moment passed unspoken.



They remained in comfortable silence until her father's voice drifted across the yard, calling for lanterns to be lit. Above them, the windmill completed one final, lazy revolution, its blades catching the last light as they turned, a gentle benediction over words unsaid and possibilities held close. Rising together, they tucked the moment away like a precious seed saved for spring planting, knowing that some things must wait for their proper season to grow.

Letters and Lanterns November 1923

Cora stood at the mailbox, a letter in hand, the wind tugging at her coat. The return address was from Chicago—a cousin who'd gone to work in a department store and wrote of elevators and electric signs. She turned the envelope over again before slipping it into her pocket.

That night, the family gathered for supper by lamp light. Her father was quiet, his hands sore from chopping wood. Lyle arrived late, hat in hand, eyes apologetic. "Tire went out halfway up the lane," he explained, sliding into the seat beside her. After dishes were cleared, Cora stepped

onto the porch. Lyle followed.

"You ever think about writing to someone out there?" he asked, nodding toward the letter in her coat.

She hesitated. "Sometimes."

He leaned on the post, watching his breath fog in the cold. The windmill in the distance creaked and groaned, its blades turning with a sound that felt like time itself whispering. "If you ever left, I'd write you. Every week, I think."

Cora smiled, touched and shy. "Then I'd have to stay away just to keep the letters coming."

A pause. Then, quietly, he said, "Or you could stay, and we could write our story here."

She turned toward him. "We're already writing it, aren't we?"



The wind rustled the dry stalks, and in the distance, the shed lantern flickered like it knew a secret, while the windmill's slow, rhythmic turn felt like the world's quiet approval.

To be Continued in August

Your Country Neighbor
Your "2-cups-of-coffee"
companion including
local photos and articles
with the flavor of
Rural America.