

YOUR COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

River Towns & Prairie Communities

FREE May 2026



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Northern Cardinal. The Male of a young "couple." Its mate is on page 18.

ARBOR DAY PARADE PHOTOS, PAGES 3 & 17



May 2026 "Your Country Neighbor,"
Recognizes Brownville with this Historic Observation.
(Historical summary compiled from public records.)

Brownville has endured by knowing itself. It has not survived by chasing every passing idea or reshaping itself to fit the moment, but by responding thoughtfully to the people who live, work, and invest here. The places that last are those willing to adapt when necessary, while staying grounded in what made them matter in the first place. That balance between continuity and change is what separates towns that are remembered from those that simply pass through history.

Your Country Neighbor

Your "2-cups-of-coffee" break
 with local photos and articles and
 the flavor of rural America.

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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

P.O. Box 124 Peru, Nebraska 68421

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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

May

by a country neighbor

If April commits, May reveals. What was prepared and set in motion now begins to show itself—quietly at first, then all at once. The land no longer asks if it’s ready. It answers.

Outdoors, May is a month of emergence. Fields take on their first true color, no longer tentative but growing with purpose. In the orchards around Nebraska City, blossoms give way to the early shape of fruit, small and easily overlooked unless you know where to look. The work of April hasn’t disappeared—it’s simply moved beneath the surface, where growth does its best work unseen.

Light has settled into its role now. Days are long enough to stretch without effort, and evenings linger in a way that invites you to stay a little longer. There’s a steadiness to it—less urgency than April, more assurance. The season is no longer negotiating or deciding. It is proceeding. In Brownville, May brings a fuller rhythm. What began as motion in April becomes presence. Visitors arrive without announcement, drawn by something they may not name but recognize when they find it.

The shops are open, the galleries active, the winery in stride, and the café continues as it always has—steady at the center. The River Inn remains what it has long been: a quiet welcome, tied to the river but never confined by it.

In Peru, May carries a different rhythm. The ballfields have gone quiet, and the steady cadence of the school year has come to a close. Students leave—some for the summer, some for good—and the town settles into a brief stillness. It’s not emptiness, exactly, but a kind of pause. What was active just weeks ago has stepped back, leaving behind a sense of completion rather than anticipation.

This is the month when effort begins to show return. Not all at once, and not always evenly, but enough to confirm that what was planted has taken hold. It’s a time for staying with the work, not revisiting it. Adjustments are smaller now, with attention paid to care.

As Memorial Day approaches, May also asks us to pause long enough to remember what was given so that seasons like this could continue in peace, while earlier in the month, Mother’s Day offers a quieter kind of reflection—on the steady, often unseen care that allows life to take hold and endure. Wildlife reflects the same shift. Nesting gives way to feeding, to movement, to the steady presence of life where there was once only preparation. Along the river and across the prairie, the pattern is consistent: what endured, and what began, now continues. May doesn’t ask much of us beyond attention and follow-through. It rewards consistency more than ambition, and presence more than planning. There’s less to decide now, and more to notice. From my place between the river and the prairie, May feels like confirmation. Not dramatic, not final—but certain. What was set in motion has found its footing, and what needed to pass has done so. The season is no longer becoming. It is.



Pioneers Marching Band



Flags of the Armed Forces



A Hot Car!



A Fun Ride!



Antique Ride!



Is this the new one?

A Woman, a Farm, and the Dry Years

The Face Of Drought (circa 2005), by Karen Ott, a former contributor to “YCN”

Dry. No relief in sight.

“Difficult corn harvest nearing end” read the January 30th newspaper headline, “With any luck, producers will complete the 2004 harvest by early February 2005.”

You can take it from me... the nearest Lady Luck ever came to the last year’s harvest was in the newspaper article, unless we’re talking about her big sister, Bad luck; we saw plenty of her stingy old hide in 2004. Where on earth did she find the stamina to stick around so long? The guys spent the last few days overhauling one of the manure spreaders (bottom was rusted out... imagine that), working on an old truck, and generally puttering at a few winter jobs.

We haven’t had our first calf yet but, in anticipation of calving season, Dale bought himself a new ‘quick release’ lariat. He’s not the best roper in the world and to tell you the truth if the cow wasn’t hugely pregnant, and in labor, he’d never be able to get the rope around her neck. I could sell tickets to our corn field pickup rodeos. They’re quite the show. A farmer may buy a new rope but it doesn’t make him a cowboy.

The biggest news of the week arrived last Friday around noon. Our second grandson surprised us (his mother most of all) with an early appearance but, after the initial scare, both are doing fine... although the new father is still a little on edge. The baby is tiny and blond, darker in complexion than his older brother, which caused his father to remark, “At least he won’t sunburn when we are out irrigating.”

Will any of today’s rural America be here when this little bundle of blankets and appetite grows into a man? The prospects seem pretty darn dim at the moment.

If you leave the interstate and travel down Nebraska’s back roads you’ll find yourself driving through a growing number of failing small towns. The irregular heartbeat of empty main streets and the brittle bones of derelict buildings a sure sign the community is ailing, probably fatally so.

So in an attempt to stave off the ravages of old-age, a ‘Save Our Town’ meeting was called for last Thursday evening. As we crowded into the overheated basement room of our library (a red brick structure built during the depression by a public works program), there were the usual greetings: Corn out? How are your newlyweds doing? Heard your mother was in the hospital. Hope she’s feeling better. But after the meeting was called to order things settled down to the business at hand.

As with any meeting, whether it be a congressional caucus or a local school board, a disgruntled few used the occasion to plow up old grudges and sow a handful of new gripes but, for the most part, the meeting was a positive attempt to define the town’s future.



We spent the time talking optimistically of housing and business growth, of past successes and new opportunities but below the bubbling babble of conversation ran a deep undercurrent of nostalgia, a profound and universal desire to turn back time and remake the town we have into the town that was.

To once again be able to walk into the drug store, order a cherry coke from the fountain, and watch it being made by the latest in a long line of high school soda jerks, to dash around the A&W ‘root beer stand’ on a summer Saturday afternoon in your father’s car to see who was car-hopping, or meet a few friends at the Delmar theater for a weekend movie, but most of all to be young again, able to read the promise of limitless possibilities written on each and every street corner.


Although the memories which surrounded us seemed as warm and comfortable as an old coat, they were actually as cold and calculating as a group of slick con-artists. Confusing us with useless yearnings for a past which grows increasingly idyllic the further we find ourselves removed from it, we were hard-pressed to deviate from the poignant, picture-perfect snapshot of small town life we all carried in our hearts. It’s darn difficult to move forward when the past has you hogtied.

Will we come up with an innovative and wildly successful initiative to transform the sleepy streets of our town into a panhandle ‘must see,’ or will we simply spin our wheels until the inevitable catches us up? Can we change our course and convince our young people there is still something left to be in rural America? I don’t know.

One thing’s for sure... as much as I’d like to take Lydia, Cindy, Anita and Marianne for one more spin around town in my dad’s car, it’s not going to happen... life moves on, dragging us along whether we like it or not.

We can’t go back. All we can do is look forward and hang on tight.

Karen



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Haunted?

by a quiet observer

The final bell rings, lockers slam, and before long the parking lot empties. Evening settles in. But in some schools, the quiet never quite takes hold.

Footsteps echo down hallways long after everyone has gone. A door clicks shut. Somewhere, a chair seems to scrape across the floor. More than one custodian has paused mid-task, listening, then deciding it might be best to finish up quickly and head home.

Stories like these aren't unique to one place. Across the country—and here in Southeast Nebraska—teachers, janitors, and even the occasional law officer have shared accounts of strange experiences in school buildings after dark.

It may not be as far-fetched as it sounds.

Schools in this region often stand on ground layered with history. Many date back a century or more, built when towns were young and the prairie still carried the marks of earlier hardship. Over time, generations of students have passed through their doors. And as with any place touched by long human presence, there have been losses—some expected, some sudden.

One longtime educator from a small community near Nebraska City once described the feeling of staying late in an older school building. By day, it was bright and familiar. By night, it changed. Sounds carried differently. The building seemed to settle—and yet, not entirely.

Continued on page 22

BROWNVILLE, NEBRASKA

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Memorial Day at St. Anthony of Padua Cemetery in Farwell, NE

Randy Lukasiewicz, Omaha

I was reminded the other day of an incident with my Grandmother, Emelia Lukasiewicz. Being a genealogy nut, I was very zealous to acquire information from “days gone by.” So, I sent her a book designed for that specific purpose... to answer questions about specific happenings. Needless to say, not much got put in it... for whatever reason, so I thought.

What got the book filled was the regular weekly Monday visitation of my brother Roger, who along with helping her with her much needed things to get done list, also included an occasional question or two of “days gone by.” Would you believe that most of the questions had gotten answered at the time of her death. It has ended up as a beautiful legacy to have and pass on to her younger kin.

My memories of my grandparents Paul and Emelia Lukasiewicz, rang loud and clear this past week because I found myself out at the cemetery one week before Memorial Day, planting flowers and cleaning up for the Big Day. On many occasions, I remember them loading tools, paint, rakes, shovels, prayerbooks and rosary and heading out to St. Anthony’s Cemetery just outside town. This is where the church was originally built in 1887 and where grandma used to walk to school as a kid from town, rain or shine, snow or sleet!

Sure, they would go out to clean up, but more importantly they would go out to converse, and continue community with friends and family of days gone by. It was the Body of Christ, their extended family and community. Having been long-time Main Street business folks plus undertakers in Farwell for years, I can see now that they knew some of these men, women and children their whole life and then assisted many a family burial for the next step of ‘the journey.’ Their cemetery visits were connecting “yesterday with today with tomorrow.” What a rare and rich sense of community!

My life is truly rich for having had the opportunity to have witnessed, heard and seen them in action. I work at continuing the tradition. It’s no longer their tradition, but now mine.

I never thought I’d find myself cleaning up and planting flowers at the cemetery. Last year I told myself I’d go out earlier to spruce up things and by golly, I did. It looks better and more importantly I feel better. My goal next year is to begin logging the names, locations and tombstone markings for posterity and any interested family genealogists.

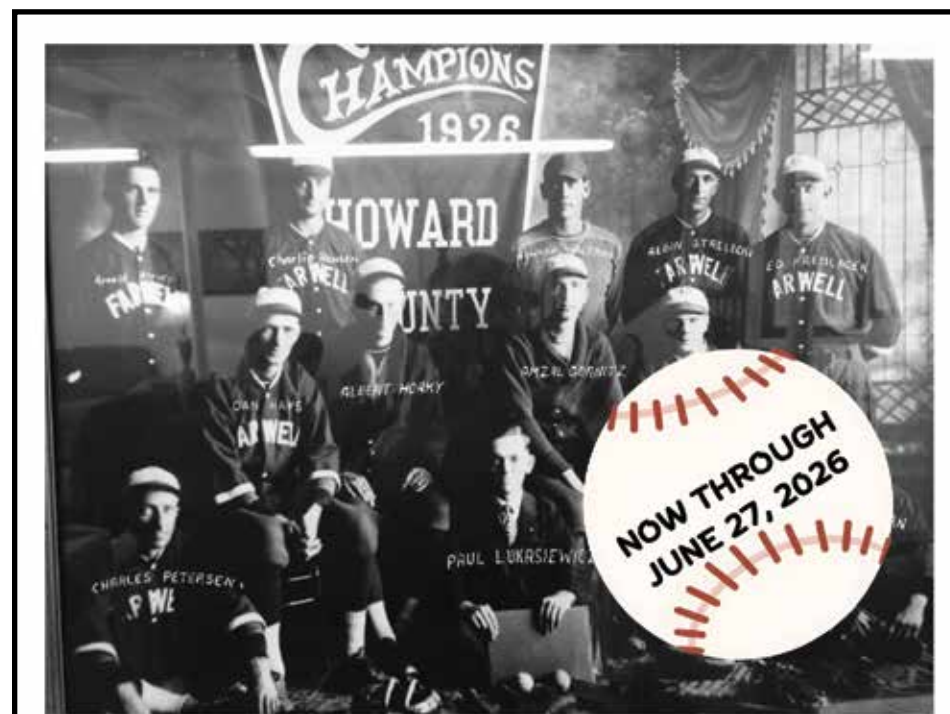
The cemetery needs wildflowers and trees and a bench and a shelter also. An outhouse could certainly fill a void. St. Anthony’s Cemetery Committee does a truly outstanding job of maintaining it’s condition that I rate second to none.

This year’s memories are the hard, hard, SOIL..... I could not get a spade in the soil. It reminded me that you can take the boy out of the country but you can’t take the country out of the boy. It reminded me to pray for my ancestors that braved the blistering hot and freezing cold weather and conditions of days gone by. I guess it’s not so much for them I pray, but for me, that “I can endure.” They persevered, kept the faith in God and each other and survived. May I also have the strength.

Continued on page 22



(Photo by Randy Lukasiewicz) Randy calls it the “circle of life” as it connects the LIVING community of Farwell in the background with the water tower, and it’s DECEASED members in the foreground. This was one of my winning entries in the Nebraska 150 book a few years ago.



ONCE UPON A TIME: The Sherman-Howard County Baseball League

an exhibition that tells the story of townie baseball across Nebraska

The Antiquarium
309 Water Street
Brownville, NE | 660.744.4646

Recall the above referenced baseball players? They are now part of the BECAH-sponsored exhibit at The Antiquarium thru June 28th . The “Once Upon a Time” photos collection etc., highlights the town team era of the Sherman-Howard Baseball League.



Home run with bases loaded!

Peru State College Alumni Gathering

Thursday, June 4th - 6:00PM
 German American Society
 3717 South 120th Street, Omaha

Meet the new College President, Robert C. Mock
 and join in a fun evening of fellowship in
 support of PSC--hors d'oeuvres provided.

RSVP to 402-872-2304 or pscfoundation@peru.edu



Above and below: Action Photos from April 24 win against Clark University.



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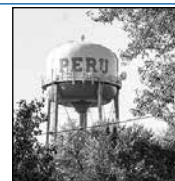
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Tuesday Literary Club Reads

DiAnna Loy, Tuesday Literary Club

Carrying on with Tuesday Literary Club's theme of Celebrating the United States of America's 250th Birthday, Renee Szenasi chose to present *We the Women* by Norah O'Donnell with Kate Anderson Brower. Norah O'Donnell is a multiple Emmy Award-winning journalist with decades of experience covering the biggest stories in the world. This book is self described as "A vivid portrait of the unsung American women from 1776 to today who changed the course of history in their fight for freedom and helped shape a more perfect union."

The book is broken down into five parts with each part highlighting individuals that played a significant role in that era but that many or even most American citizens have never heard of:

Part 1: The First Fifty Years: The Women Behind America's Fight for Independence, 1776–1826

Mary Katherine Goddard, Printer

- o Printed the Declaration of Independence
- o First Female Postmaster, appointed by Benjamin Franklin

Elizabeth Freeman, Freedom Seeker

- o The reason slavery ended in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1783

Part 2: Risk Takers and Rule Breakers: Seneca Falls and the Civil War, 1826–1876

Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, The Medal of Honor Recipient

- o 1st Female U.S. Army Surgeon
- o Served as a spy for Union Army

Sisters, Susan and Suzette La Flesche, The Advocates

- o Suzette defended Standing Bear at his trial when making his "I am a Man" speech.
- o Susan 1st Indigenous woman to earn a medical degree.

Part 3: Blood, Sweat, and Tears: The Gilded Age and the Great Demand, 1876–1926

Emily Warren Roebling, The Builder

o Took charge of finishing the building of the Brooklyn Bridge when her husband's father and her husband were unable to fulfill their commitments as chief engineer, finishing the last 11 years of the project.

Katharine Wright, The Aviator

- o Sister to the Wright brothers, helped run family bicycle shop
- o Managed brother's growing business correspondence and media relations

Part 4: Warriors, Rebels, and Visionaries: Women at War at Home and Abroad, 1926–1976

Patsy Mink, The Mother of Title IX

- o 1st Woman of color and 1st Asian American woman to serve in Congress
- o Her strong and persistent advocacy led to the passage of Title IX in 1972

Romana Acosta Banuelos, The Treasurer

- o 1st Latina to hold a senior U.S. government post
- o Owner of Romana's Mexican Food Products

Part 5: My Lifetime Women's Progress in America, 1976–Today

Part 5 is not separated into paragraphs of individual women but is more a discussion of more modern times and the women who have influenced the current shape of our political landscape.

The book was interesting and worth reading. I had heard about some of the women but not all. I highlighted just a few as there were 35 women covered in the book. This book is available at the Auburn Memorial Library.

"Happy reading!"

Slim's Stories

Submitted by Cheri & Nick Petrillo

The whole world celebrated when the Great War, or the War to End all Wars, (World War I) ended. Auburn was no exception. Never before had there been a war like this one. Twenty-two countries were involved, from all parts of the globe.

Dad and his father sat in the rounded tower on the southeast corner of the stoplight intersection and looked out on all the festivities.

Several years ago I stood looking out this same window and thought of the scene he had described to me.

People were delirious with happiness that the war was finally over. The buildings were hung with red, white and blue bunting. Anyone who could find a flag was waving it with patriotic fervor. A band played and they hung a stuffed dummy of the dreadful German Kaiser in the alley.

A cannon had been set up facing west. When they shot it, the big plate glass windows on the north side of the street broke from the ear shattering boom. Dad was only nine but it was a day he remembered forever.

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THE MAN WHO HELPED HIS WIFE

Sylvie Shires

Not all heroes are flamboyant, dashing, and universally known. Some are even easily overlooked, even though we may benefit from their contributions long afterwards.

Such is the case of a man born in 1892, called Earle Ensign Dickson.

Son of a physician from Massachusetts, he graduated from Yale in 1913 and from the Lowell Textile School in 1914. His professional career really began when he joined Johnson & Johnson (J & J) in 1916 and held a position as assistant manager.

By then J & J, founded by three brothers in 1886, was well established as the first mass-producer of sterile surgical supplies in the world.

With the U.S.'s entry into World War I, some five million men were conscripted, a considerable number in a country of only 103 million. Earle enlisted in the ambulance corps, but he only remained there two months before being appointed, on special duty with the War Department, to the textile section of the National Bureau of Standards (NBS), in Washington, where his textile expertise could be focused on research.

The NBS (established in 1901) was the first U.S. physical science laboratory created to ensure consistency in weights and measures, and later to industrial standards. It served as a dependable laboratory, conducting extensive testing and contributing to technological advancements. (In 1988, it was renamed the National Institute of Standards & Technology).

While there, Earle analyzed and researched fabrics for balloons, airplanes, and gas masks. As part of his duties, he was sent to Great Britain to observe cloth manufacturing, and in France to collect various samples of fabrics used by the Allies and their enemies. Also working at the NBS, as a stenographer, was Josephine Frances Knight. Earle and Josephine soon fell in love and were married in 1917. Their union was blessed with two sons born in 1918 and 1920.

After the war, Earle resumed his work at J & J as a cotton buyer. Meanwhile, Josephine was an active homemaker with two young children. She was, however, singularly accident-prone, especially in the kitchen. She nicked, burned, bruised herself as she worked. To stop any bleeding, the existing bandages were bulky, cumbersome, and required the help of someone else to be properly secured in place.

Earle could not be home all day to bandage his wife and his growing concern grew into a practical idea. On a long strip of adhesive surgical tape, he placed at intervals pieces of gauze which he covered with crinoline, a stiffer type of fabric used as protective layer in bandages. Now, Josephine could cut these short and easy-to-handle bandages as needed, even when her husband was out of the house. Josephine was delighted and Earle was simply happy to see his invention being useful.

As he spoke of it with some of his colleagues, they encouraged him

to share his invention with the management. At first, the idea was received without much enthusiasm. The first Band-Aids were hand-made, which was time-consuming to create, and only 3000 sold.

Then, in 1924, J & J decided to machine-manufacture them in various sizes and to distribute them free of charge to Boy Scouts and butchers, two groups of people obviously most likely to need them. That was all the incentive

that was needed for the Band-Aid to become universally accepted and part of most households in the world.

Although Earle held five patents, he never made a fortune off his invention; he continued to work at J & J, becoming eventually its vice-president, until he retired in 1957. He also organized and headed up the first hospital division of J & J, which delivered medical products directly to hospitals, working closely with doctors to design products fitting needs.

Over the course of the years, the Band-Aids went through various upgrades and variations such as waterproof coating, antiseptic coating, colors and attractive decors, and even an "invisible" version. Since its creation it has sold by millions. And, for young children it even brings psychological pain relief, since simply having an attractive Band-Aid on one's finger suffices to calm tears and alleviate pain.

Various newspaper articles praised Earle Dickson as the "Inventor of the Band-Aid," but his family and friends knew that he preferred to be remembered as, "the man who helped his wife."

Some might object that this hero did not win battles, but in a way, he did. He considered the importance of taking into account small problems and finding solutions for them. He put his expertise in fabrics and pharmaceutical products into practical use for the home. His ingenuity is also quintessential of American creativity and inventiveness.

Maybe even more importantly, his empathy for his beloved wife's plight not only brought her a much-needed solution, it also benefited the world. Thus, he is well deserving of being remembered as we celebrate our country 250th anniversary as one of our good and interesting people that made America.



1921 advertisement with instructions for use. (Band-aid.com)

PERU CITY NEWS

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VOTE

Vote by May 12

The Peru City Council has taken steps to eliminate the grant-writing position—despite the Mayor’s objection—by advancing a proposed ordinance through its second reading.

This position has already delivered real results for our community, including funding for new downtown lightposts, energy efficiency improvements, and ongoing efforts such as north-end cleanup projects. Eliminating it now raises serious questions about priorities.

This action is not final. It can still be stopped before the third reading—but only if voters act. A “YES” vote on the recall sends a clear message about the direction residents want for Peru.

Looking ahead, there will be two—and only two—names on the November ballot for two open Council seats. That means there is currently no competition. If accountability matters, the community should consider putting forward at least one write-in candidate before Fall.

VOTE Yes

On The Recall

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THE COMMUNITY FIGHTS TO KEEP PERU IN PERU

John C. Chatelain

To what extent the plan originated with him is unclear, but President Robert Burns was apparently open to moving Peru State College in the 1990s when he stated, “The board and college leaders were examining the college’s needs, the area’s demographics, the enrollment trends, personnel-recruiting trends and the facilities audit. I think there will be discussion of all kinds of options.” History professor, Sara Crook, pointed out Peru’s remoteness. “We had trouble attracting faculty,” she said, “And we had trouble attracting diversity.” Dan Holtz, professor of English at Peru, stated, “Among the faculty, the mood was kind of split.” Some saw moving to Nebraska City an advantage, but “faculty that had been there a long time were resistant to move because they owned houses in town.” Science professor Daryl Long stated, “The thing that went against it, from my point of view, is that you were moving the campus closer to UNL and Lincoln,” he said. Long thought that Peru’s current location provided better access to more students in rural southeast Nebraska. “If you really want to service the people, you need to put it more outstate,” he said. Kent Propst pointed out that Nebraska City’s proximity to Omaha and Lincoln might have created fears the school could draw students away from UNL and UNO. 1 Nebraska City was not the only suitor for PSC. Beatrice also submitted proposals to the State College Board of Trustees to become its home. The trustees voted unanimously in January 1998, to seek \$16 million from the legislature to build a new campus at the western edge of Nebraska City. The promise of brand-new dormitories, a new student center and field house, new classrooms, a library, ball fields, ponds and waterfalls sold the board on the move. Turbulence on campus surrounding the move, along with controversy over remarks made by a college vice president, resulted in Burns’ announcement that he and the vice president would be leaving their positions. Richard Flynn, dean of education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, became interim president. 2

The state was in the middle of an election year. Gubernatorial candidates Mike Johanns (R) and Bill Hoppner (D) attended a rally in downtown Peru in June 1998. “Here we are on the campus of the oldest teaching college west of the Mississippi River,” Hoppner said, “and it’s going to get a hell of a lot older.” Johanns explained he was getting pulled aside by Peru State graduates across the state expressing support for keeping the school open and in the same spot. “It’s worth asking those running for public office where they stand and expect a straight answer,” Johanns said. “As for me, I support Peru in Peru.” 3

Local leaders expressed support for retaining the campus. Nemaha County Commissioners John George and Corky Jones stressed the importance of the college for local students and the southeast Nebraska economy. Peru State’s men’s basketball coach John Gibbs stated, “the natural beauty of the campus is something money can’t buy.” Bob Engles of Auburn said, “We residents have been guilty for many years of being complacent about the jewel in our backyard. You let us keep our college, we promise to never take our school for granted again.” 4 Observing how the people of southeast Nebraska had been reinvigorated by the issue, the Board of Trustees reversed their earlier action and voted in the fall of 1998 to keep the campus in Peru. 5 Becki Propst, president of the Peru Chamber of Commerce at the time, stated the issue had mobilized the community. Esther Divney, retired professor of Education and City Council member, who had been a one-woman economic development program, buying and renovating homes in Peru, said she had noticed more cooperation in the aftermath of the controversy. She exclaimed, “It’s been the most beautiful change.” 6

1 Nebraska’s First College: Shaping The Future Since 1867, p 191; 2 Ibid: 192; 3 Ibid: 193; 4 Ibid: 193-194

5 Ibid: 195; 6 Ibid: 196;



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Set beneath bare branches and a quiet sky, the tank stands as a grounded reminder of service carried out far from home. The flag moves above it, not in ceremony alone, but in continuation—of lives interrupted, of duties accepted, of sacrifices that do not fade with time. There is no motion here, no urgency, only presence. In a season given to growth and renewal, this place holds steady to memory, asking nothing more than that we notice, and remember. (Nebraska City, near the Wildwood House)

A Prairie Love

Chapter Fourteen: Tying Ribbons – Sept. 1924

The prairie air had begun to shift—lighter, cooler, touched with the first whispers of fall. Goldenrod nodded in the ditches, and the cornfields rustled like a chorus of dry song. In the mornings, mist lay low over the fields, and the scent of change hovered close.

Cora stood in her room, pinning lace along the collar of her wedding dress. It wasn't new, not in the way the city girls might expect. It had belonged to her cousin Marie—worn just once, carefully stored, and now generously offered. Cora had let out the seams and added her own touches: a strip of satin at the hem, tiny seed pearls around the cuffs. As she stitched, her thoughts wandered to the cabin, to the life she would step into so soon.

Downstairs, her mother was humming. A kettle whistled. And somewhere outside, her father's saw rasped against a branch he was trimming for the fence. Everything around her held a quiet rhythm—a kind of preparation, not rushed, but sure. Later that afternoon, she rode out to the cabin again, carrying a small bundle of linens and a tin of buttons Lyle had asked for. The sun was soft behind a veil of clouds, and the breeze tugged gently at her sleeves.

She found Lyle in the front yard, setting posts for a modest garden fence.

"Well," he said, straightening up with a grin, "you're just in time. I was about to talk myself out of digging the last hole."

Cora smiled, handing him the buttons. "Thought you might need a little convincing."

They worked side by side for a while—her gathering dropped nails, him driving them into place. The quiet between them was the kind that grows only in familiarity. The kind that doesn't need to be filled. As the sun dipped lower, Lyle reached into the cabin and pulled out a square of fabric—gingham, faded but clean.

"What's this?" Cora asked, eyebrows raised.

"A tablecloth. I thought we'd try it out. Got the table from Ezra's place—it's a little wobbly, but I tightened the legs."

Inside, the cabin was clean and swept, the cast-iron stove in place, and the corners now occupied by small things: a braided rug, a stack of plates, a book she had left last week. It was starting to feel not just like a house, but like their house.

They sat at the table, sharing bread and jam, and Lyle pulled out a folded envelope from his pocket. "Your mother gave me this," he said. "She said you might want to read it before the wedding."

Cora unfolded the letter. It was from her grandmother—a letter written years before, tucked away, now passed down. The handwriting was spidery, but firm:

'Love is in the little things, Cora Mae. The way you sweep his floor when no one's looking. The way he fixes your stool when the leg breaks. Not in grand gestures, but in the shared quiet of everyday. If you find that, you've found enough.'

She swallowed a lump in her throat and read it again. Then she folded it carefully and placed it in her satchel.

"She was right," Cora whispered. "About everything."

Outside, the sky was streaked with color—lavender, rose, a hint of gold. September was slipping toward October, and with it came the soft hum of anticipation, like the hush before music begins.

Soon, they'd be married. But tonight, they were simply two hearts, tying ribbons around the edges of a shared life.

Continued in June

Letters from the Prairie

September 18, 1888

Nemaha County, Nebraska

*Fourteenth Letter from Anna Wilhelmine
Bauer to her sister Klara in Germany*

My dearest Klara,

The days have begun to change, though not all at once.

Morning comes with a light coolness now, enough that I sometimes reach for my shawl before stepping outside. By afternoon the warmth returns, but it no longer lingers with the same insistence. There is a feeling, difficult to describe, that something is gently withdrawing.

The fields show it first.

The corn stands tall and full, its leaves no longer reaching but settling inward, as though its work is nearly done. Johann walks the rows each evening, breaking open an ear now and then, studying it with a quiet satisfaction he does not speak of directly. There is pride in him, I think, but also a carefulness—as if he knows how much depends upon what these next weeks will bring.

We have begun to gather what we can.

I spend part of each day putting things by—drying, storing, preserving in ways that seemed unnecessary to me only a few months ago. Now I understand that every jar, every bundle, is a kind of promise carried forward. The cellar grows fuller, and with it, my sense of what it means to be prepared.

There is less sound in the fields than before.

The insects remain, but not in such number. Even the wind seems to move differently, less like a constant companion and more like a visitor that comes and goes. In the evenings, a stillness settles over the land that feels both peaceful and watchful.

Yesterday, I walked beyond the far edge of our field, farther than I have gone alone before. The prairie stretched outward without interruption, the grasses touched here and there with the faintest hint of brown. I stood for some time without moving, listening.

It is a curious thing, Klara—the quiet here.

It is not the quiet of absence, but of something held. As though the land keeps its own counsel and reveals only what it chooses. I do not find it unsettling as I once might have. Instead, I feel myself becoming a small part of it, though I cannot say exactly how.

Lena notices the changes as well, though in her own way. She says the windmill turns more slowly now because it is "thinking about winter." I told her perhaps it is simply tired from the long summer, but she shook her head and said, "No—it is remembering."

Children understand such things better than we do. In the evenings, we speak more often of the weeks ahead. Not with worry, but with an attentiveness that was not there before. There is work yet to be done, and we mean to meet it.

I think often of you as the season turns. Of the gardens near your home, and how they must look now, and of the paths we once walked together. It comforts me to imagine that, though we are far apart, we are both living within the same slow movement of the year.

Write when you are able. Your letters carry more warmth than you can know.

With all my love,

Your Anna

Continued in June

Westward With Lewis & Clark

Chapter 11, Part 2, Late August--Among the Buffalo

Morning returned without ceremony. The sky cleared in the night, leaving the prairie exposed beneath a pale, unbroken blue. The wind had not left us. It moved steadily from the west, carrying with it a dryness that settled into the mouth and stayed there. The herd remained.

What had seemed distant the day before now revealed itself as something far greater. The buffalo stretched across the land in numbers difficult to reckon, their dark forms scattered and gathered at once, like debris left by a receding flood. Where they moved, the grass bent low and did not quickly rise again.

We advanced along the river's edge, though progress came slowly. The channels divided more frequently here, and the current shifted without pattern. Several times the boats were forced into water too shallow to carry them. The men stepped out without instruction. There was no longer any need for it.

Boots sank. Shoulders leaned. The hulls resisted, then yielded. Across the water, the buffalo fed.

At times they appeared indifferent to us, their attention fixed entirely upon the grass. Then, without warning, a portion of the herd would lift its heads as one, turning in quiet unison. The effect was not alarm, but awareness—an acknowledgment that something had entered their horizon.

Drouillard watched them closely. He said little, but his eyes moved constantly, measuring distance, wind, and ground. Once he remarked that a bull, if pressed, would not turn aside easily. No one doubted it.

By midday the air carried a new scent—faint at first, then unmistakable. It came across the river in intervals, borne on the wind. Earth, animal, and something heavier beneath it. The men noticed it without comment.

Captain Clark kept the boats moving where he could, though even he seemed to accept that the river would grant only limited passage here. He stood with the pole set firm, reading the water as before, but his gaze drifted more often now toward the prairie. Lewis crossed to the bank again, though not for long. He knelt once among the grasses, examining what the animals had left behind—the torn stems, the pressed earth, the narrow paths worn into the ground by repeated passage. He ran his hand along one such track, as though tracing a line drawn by something older than our presence.

In the afternoon, a portion of the herd began to move.

It started without signal. A shifting at the edge, then a gradual turning. What followed was not haste, but momentum. The animals gathered direction as they went, their numbers folding inward, then extending again across the land.

The sound reached us after.

At first it resembled distant thunder, though the sky remained clear. Then it grew, resolving into the steady, living weight of movement—hooves striking earth in number enough to carry across the open ground. The river did not conceal it. It carried the sound to us.

The men paused in their work.

Even Clark lowered the pole.

We stood listening as the herd passed beyond our immediate view, the prairie receiving them without resistance. The ground itself seemed to remember their movement after they were gone. By evening the horizon had quieted, though not entirely. Here and there, dark forms still marked the distance, smaller now, but no less present.

We made camp on a narrow rise above the river. The wind continued through the grass, steady as before. Drouillard walked the perimeter longer than was necessary. When he returned, he said nothing of it, only settled near the fire and began the quiet work of tending his rifle.

Across the river, the prairie lay open and unbroken. Yet more than once, as the light withdrew, I found myself looking twice at the same stretch of ground, uncertain whether something had shifted—or simply resolved itself differently in the fading light. No signal came. No sound followed. And yet the feeling persisted, as it had before. That we had entered a country not empty, but attentive.

Elias LeGrand

Continued in June

A Prairie Journal

Field Notes from a Dry Spring

The first green hasn't come yet.

You look for it without meaning to—along the ditches, in the low spots, anywhere the ground might have held just enough to start again. But most places still carry the same dull color they've held since the fire went through. No longer black—just bare. As if the land has been scraped back to something earlier than it should be.

The wind has found it.

It doesn't take much now. A steady afternoon and the soil begins to move—not in great clouds at first, just a lifting here and there, a thin drift crossing the road, a haze that wasn't there the day before. There's nothing left to hold it the way there should be this time of year. What cover there was is gone, and what's underneath is lighter than anyone would like.

You notice it most along the edges. Field meeting pasture. Road meeting ditch. The places where one thing used to anchor another.

There's work to be done either way.

Not just fences, though there are plenty of those to mend. Other things gave way in the fire or in the days after—wires, pumps, pieces of equipment that don't look like much until they're gone. A place can still stand and not quite function. Water doesn't move where it should. Power comes back uneven. The kind of problems that don't stop everything—but slow it, one step at a time.

And this is the time of year when nothing should be slow.

The calendar says one thing. The ground says another.

There are fields that should be closer to ready than they are, and others that look ready but don't feel right. Too dry on top. Not enough underneath. A man can stand there and try to read it, boot toe working into the soil, and come away with more questions than answers.

Plant now and risk it. Wait and risk something else.

Those decisions don't sit still. They follow you from one field to the next, ride along in the pickup, settle in at the table whether you invite them or not.

The talk out west is that the year got ahead of itself—that the fire came



Plant now and risk it. Wait and risk something else. Those decisions don't sit still. They follow you from one field to the next... ” sooner than anyone expected, and didn't stay where it usually does when it comes. Ground that doesn't often carry it gave way, helped along by a winter that left little behind—less snow, less moisture—and wind that didn't let up when it should have.

Now the same question hangs over everything that comes after.

What kind of season is this going to be?

There's already quiet mention that the dryness may not ease up soon. Not in any official way, just in the way people talk when they've seen enough to begin guessing ahead. If that's true, then what burned may take longer to come back than anyone wants to admit.

You can feel that in the way people look at the sky. Not hopeful, exactly. Just measuring.

There's a different kind of counting going on now. Not just what was lost, but what might not come if things don't turn. Moisture. Growth. Time.

And then there are the things that don't get counted at all.

A neighbor slowing down to ask what you're seeing. Someone mentioning a field that didn't hold like it usually does. A conversation that starts about one thing and ends somewhere else entirely.

No one says the word for it, but it's there.

The sense that the season is slightly off its mark. That the order things usually follow has shifted just enough to be noticed, but not enough to be explained.

So the work continues.

Repairs get made. Ground gets watched. Decisions get closer.

And every so often, when the wind picks up and the soil starts to move again, you're reminded how little it takes for something steady to come loose.

ARBOR CITY NEWS

Morton-James Public Library Calendar of Events May 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

Lego Club Monday, May 4 3:30PM - 5:00PM

Join us at the Library in the Kimmel Gallery every first and third Monday of the month from 3:30 - 5:00 pm for Lego Club! Free build with Legos at the club or bring your own sets to work on. Ages 8 and older. No reservations, free to attend.

AM Story Time- Stop & Go Story Time!

Wednesday, May 6 10:00AM - 11:00AM

We will sing a song, learn signs in American Sign Language, and read stories with all things that stop and go... cars, trucks, and even bicycles. We will then have coloring pages. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Free! Families are welcome! Repeated on May 7 @ 4 pm

Yarn Crafters Club

Wednesday, May 6 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. MJPL will have some patterns available. Free to attend. Everyone 15 and older is welcome!

PM Story Time

Thursday, May 7 4:00PM - 4:30PM

We will sing a song, learn signs in American Sign Language, and read stories with all things that stop and go... cars, trucks, and even bicycles. We will then have coloring pages. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Free! Families are welcome!

HN Behind "The Meaning of Names"

Thursday, May 7 7:00PM - 8:00PM

Karen Gettert Shoemaker, the author of the One Book One Nebraska 2016 selection, reads from and discusses the role of family stories and historic research in the writing of her historic novel *The Meaning of Names*. This presentation includes discussions of World War I, the Influenza Pandemic of 1918, the experiences of immigrants and first-generation Americans in the early 1900s, and the role of men and women in a changing society, as well as the many subjects readers bring to the conversation.

Library Closed for Staff Training

Friday, May 8 All Day

Engaging Mature Minds- Lilac Field Trip

Wednesday, May 13 10:00AM - 11:30AM

This session will meet at Arbor Lodge, pending weather. Call the Library at 402-873-5609 with questions. Join us to engage your mind by connecting with other seniors while acquiring wisdom through community. Different topics/speakers each class!

Library Board Meeting

Wednesday, May 13 4:00PM - 6:00PM

Domino Day

Friday, May 15 5:00PM - 6:30PM

Adults age 19 and older can come play domino games, have their fortune read with dominoes, and partake in other domino activities, complete with black and white colored snacks! Wear black and white if you want to for extra fun! No registration, adults only. Free! Questions? Call us at 402-873-5609.

Writers Workshop

Saturday, May 16 10:00AM - 11:00AM

Join us for a roundtable-style writers workshop! Share writing and give feedback to others. Zoom option available. 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.

Lego Club

Monday, May 18 3:30PM - 5:00PM

Join us at the Library in the Kimmel Gallery every first and third Monday of the month from 3:30 - 5:00 pm for Lego Club! Free build with Legos at the club or bring your own sets to work on. Ages 8 and older

Afternoon Book Club

Tuesday, May 19 2:00PM - 3:00PM

The Book Club for Troublesome Women by Marie Bostwick.

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

AM Story Time - Butterflies!

Wednesday, May 20th 10:00AM - 10:30AM

Sing a song, learn signs in American Sign Language, and read stories with butterflies. We will then make a colorful butterfly with coffee filters and pipe cleaners. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Free! Families are welcome! Repeated on May 21 @ 4 pm.

Evening Book Club

Wednesday, May 20 5:30PM - 6:30 PM

Bug Hollow by Michelle Huneven

New members are always welcome! Book lists for the year are available at the Library.

PM Story Time - Butterflies!

Thursday, May 21 4:00PM - 4:30PM

Sing a song, learn signs in American Sign Language, and read stories with butterflies. We will then make a colorful butterfly with coffee filters and pipe cleaners. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6. Free! Families are welcome!

Library Closed for Memorial Day

Monday, May 25 All Day

Engaging Mature Minds

Wednesday, May 27 10:00AM - 1:00PM

Join us to engage your mind by connecting with other seniors while acquiring wisdom through community. Different topics/speakers each week! Free to attend, no reservation needed. Optional free will donations to support the library accepted.

Adult Craft Class

Wednesday, May 27 6:00PM - 7:00PM

Call us at 402-873-5609 to register for adult craft class. We will make a beaded plant. Free event! Open to adults age 19 and older.

Chess Club

Every Thursday 4:00PM - 6:00PM

SUMMER READING PROGRAM

June 1 10-11:30 am

Unearth A Story Kickoff Party! We will have face painting and dinosaur activities, including a photo station with a guest dinosaur!

Kimmel Gallery

America's 250 Photography Exhibit
Held over through May 28!
Open during regular Library hours.

Note: MJPL closed May 8th and 25th



The Pioneers Marching Band ‘Makes’ the Parade!



Arbor Day Honorees



The Germanfest Float is a “regular” entry.

ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

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Spring

Sheila Tinkham, Lincoln

The robins are hopping about
Looking for worms
Easter tiptoes into the room along
With April
Holmes Lake was glistening
The waves like diamonds
Two older black ladies were speaking of the gospel
The centurion he was a rich man
Yet he had faith
Jesus could just say the word and his daughter be healed

And I wish each of us to have that faith
To believe we can be healed of sins
And old wounds
And act on Faith this Easter
To believe that maybe one man
Did die for all our sins
And there is a resurrection
And even on my days of little faith
I think of the short story...
A little Jewish boy said why couldn't God have Mary become pregnant
God can do anything...
No one believes the little boy
So he climbs the roof
I am going to jump
Unless you say God can do anything
The Rabbi is called and he gently tells the boy God can do anything
Have faith this Easter
Pray
I believe God can do anything..



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A young female Cardinal, probably the mate of the 'cover' photo.

ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

A Poem For Memorial Day

Bruce Madsen, Nebraska City

OK, I know I'm dead, to be sure, I am
But the reason for my not being alive, is one reason why you are
Conflicts and wars are both pretty much the same
Soldiers die for freedom, and for this, maybe, their souls get a star

There are so many of us everywhere in the corners of the world
Deprived of all the assets that life was bound to give
We were returned to earth for being brave and bold
It was a necessary price to be paid so others, could live

But now, the month of May has come again
A once a year reminder so the remainder can remember
That we were the ones that endured the pain
And therefore, gives us the right to be called 'Hero' or, 'Defender'

We were all young once with common dreams
About how our life would go, or what for a living we'd do
But seems like there's always a dilemma that screws up the scheme
And for each of who died, someone else got to live their life through

I can remember a song about a soldier coming home, his final trip
All decked out in his uniform, but this time in a casket, this time alone
Those words to that song came back to me and were on my lips
When they laid me.....' Beneath the Green Green Grass of Home'

People I knew used to come by for a visit, but now, not so much anymore
I know that year after year, memories will fade ever so gradually
And by now, some of those who loved me may have found their own way
to heavens door

I just hope that we the fallen can be remembered somehow
from now until....well... 'indefinitely'

So this this day in May is important to honor
The headstones you see now replaces the dog tags that each of us wore
The one in the grave served with pride and should never be dishonored
Because the freedom of this country, and you, is what we fought for

So the least that can be done for those of us who gave
Is to give us the right every May, to let our spirits brag
We didn't think about being heroes or trying to be brave
But, at least give us each the honor and respect of having a Memorial Day flag
REMEMBER THE VET

Arbor City News

is a monthly news section in
Your Country Neighbor

A Nebraska Regional Magazine (w/News)

Heartland Workers Center's 2025 Annual Report

highlights how the organization helped immigrant and working families across Nebraska navigate fear, uncertainty, and economic challenges through direct support, leadership development, civic engagement, and workforce training.

In response to immigration-related concerns, HWC distributed 7,721 Family Safety Plans and reached more than 2,100 people through community presentations, helping families prepare for emergencies and protect themselves.

Leadership development remained central to HWC's mission. The organization held 865 mentorship meetings, graduated 297 people from its Family Leadership Institute in six counties, and engaged 366 active leaders in its Core Teams. Many participants reported greater confidence and a stronger commitment to continued education and community involvement.

HWC also expanded civic participation through voter education, outreach, and advocacy. In 2025, it distributed 568 bilingual voter guides, held 367 community conversations, knocked on 867 doors during Omaha municipal elections, and brought 86 leaders to the Nebraska State Capitol. Through its citizenship program, HWC helped 51 people apply for citizenship—more than double its goal.

Workforce development efforts also grew. Through safety and job training programs, 155 people enrolled in workforce initiatives, 148 earned OSHA safety cards, and others received certifications in CPR, forklift safety, and small business skills. HWC also supported workplace rights claims and financial education for 177 participants.

Looking ahead to 2026, HWC says demand is rising as more families seek support. Executive Director Lina Traslaviña Stover emphasized that expanding services will be critical to protecting families and strengthening communities across Nebraska.

The Heartland Workers Center envisions a community where collective power is rooted in each individual's ability to promote, protect, and defend their human rights. Through leadership development, worker advocacy, and civic engagement, HWC works alongside immigrant and underrepresented communities to build power and create lasting change. The impact of this work is clear: stronger families, informed communities, and leaders who are shaping the future of Nebraska from within. Continued support ensures that this work not only continues, but grows to meet the urgency of the moment. To learn more about Heartland Workers Center and its 2025 Annual Report, visit or connect with HWC online: www.heartlandworkerscenter.org

P o e t r y

by Devon Adams, Nebraska City

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TRICKY

Showers and flowers, right? Then comes hail and wind that makes a forecast too tight to call on timing and place to start and end. Scary radar coming in the night hides killer hail that flashes white and deadly in the jerky lightning bolts that strike like bombs falling from the sky. When to run and hide, or stand your ground around the neighborhood to see what happens? Trick or treat, like it's Halloween again, and you may pay to stay and watch! Good luck with that idea.

ROLLER COASTER RIDE

Spring is springing like a hoppy bunny having zoomies in your yard. The barometric pressure is a rocket car speeding up and down all around the rolling prairie, as storms run ragged fronts and highs and lows that drag dramatic changes in the souped up air. Some may ache in stiffened joints, as our tissues swell with pressure changes from dawn to dusk, and then do it again the next day. Then, when we are wishing for a break, we get to sweat in humid air that lays on land like a wet blanket. Nothing boring here, on these open rolling plains. Even when you catch a nap, you're jerked awake by giant hailstones falling on your roof and breaking windows like a thief. Relax. Winter will be here before you know it!

BUGGY

Like a mushroom hunter walking over a yellow jacket nest, Spring jumps and goes from zero to sixty in a flash to get from here to there. Humidity drips and skeeters swarm and gnats are in your eyes and your nose. Mild heat and dry air are history for the duration of the Summer season. No reason, just Mother Nature being a weather witch. If there is a flood from the river again, the bottom land will stink and then you will sink into gumbo without a bottom to stand on until mud recedes and you concede that your jeep wasn't ready for a tour yet. Good luck to hikers walking through the woods. You will carry tiny crawlers home with you, and if you don't find them before they suck your blood you may get very sick! Oh well, Winter trolls will fix all this, eventually!

By Artist, Devon Adams PENCIL AND WATERCOLOR PORTRAITS OF

PEOPLE, ANIMALS, WILDLIFE & BUILDINGS

Done from your photographs.

WATERCOLOR
8x10 mat size: \$45
11x14 mat size: \$70
16x20 mat size: \$100

PENCIL
8x10 mat: \$25
11x14 mat: \$60
16x20 mat: \$90



Send your photo to: Devon Adams
1220 Oak Street, Apt. A, Box 9
Nebraska City, NE 68410
Phone: 402-209-9377
adamsdevon07@gmail.com

CEMETERY FLOWERS

Some are old, with roots in soil and in family going back in time to former generations who gave their legacies to families, who come now with parents placing tributes to the founders and the followers who are still coming into their heritage. Peonies are glowing in the sun, with fragrance kissing all the air around them. Relatives breathe the history and the love that lingers here, leaving memories in tiny children of sweet scents and gorgeous petals that will stay with them all their lives, and comforting the old ones who are living ever closer to a tomorrow that will be forever.

IT'S ALWAYS MOTHER'S DAY

Because they deserve to be honored 24/7 forever, our calendar managed to spare a single square of space in a beautiful month of flowers and growth that is a symbol of love and grace and memories. They are warriors in the war of life that fight every day for their kids and their families so that they will be safe and happy and healthy. That also means writing rules and enforcing them so that those tiny six pound "adults" will have the framework to be able to choose their path and to fight for it. And to win at being compassionate and joyful and thankful every day!

Rainbow Hydrangeas

Robyn Williams

Did I ever tell you about the time?
That marvelous day. The day I got married. My wedding day.
It was a gorgeous day. With serene waterfalls.
And rainbow hydrangeas.

But that's not the beginning of the story.
To get to the beginning of the story.
I have to take you back a few years.
A day in time, by the town lake in Tempe, Arizona.

A friend of mine and I went for a light jog.
Something of a new endeavor for us both. For neither one of us were type athletic.
As we started out, we began the day with stretching and lighthearted conversation.
We enjoyed one another's company and were happy to be out in the fresh air breathing.

This was a developing relationship so I took it in at ease.
Once I was comfortable, I felt the urge to speak to her about a vision. A dream.
For where there is no vision, the people perish.
This vision came just several days earlier.

My now husband,
He and I were still dating at the time of this occurrence.
It was about two years into our courting relationship,
But we knew we were inevitably heading for marriage.

I had a dream of rainbow hydrangeas,
Encompassing vibrant and beautiful colors.
From indigo hues to violet blues.
It was a spectacular view.

But when I awoke from my vision,
I thought "Lord, how am I going to afford all of these bouquets of flowers?"
Sure, I desire, like any bride to be, the grandiose wedding extraordinaire.
And all the bountiful bouquets I could possibly imagine.

But these florets, they were more abundant than I could ever bestow.
For it was a vision from above. Straight from the gates of heaven.
Now I told my friend, after receiving this vision, about these amazing garden-fresh blooms,
And how I didn't know how it was going to come to fruition.

Sometime later, DL and I moved from AZ for our destination wedding.
Soon to be, I'd become his wife in little Hawaii, the evergreen.
That's where we would get married in a beautiful garden,
The Japanese Kubota Garden in downtown Seattle, Washington.

Just us. My future in-laws. The officiant and our photographer.
Sure enough a heavenly sight, being surrounded with all of God's glory.
The time was sunset. In the middle of summer. On Wednesday, July 22nd.
And the whole family plus friends were invited.

Although they couldn't make it to Washington state, I wouldn't change a thing,
For this day was splendid, it was mine and serene.
We strolled through the garden, hand in hand, as red rose petals gently flew in the air.
Soon hitting the ground ever so softly before us, as we took our next steps to walk jointly.

Sitting on the carmine colored Moon Bridge, in my high heels.
DL helped me change out into my 'forever' sandals to explore.
And I still have them to this day, almost a decade later.
He then escorted me up the hills, and over the cliffs to the majestic waterfalls.

Standing. Together. Romantically.
I had no idea that the place that we chose had so much charisma.
And so many destinations that I never dreamed of although we visited the week before.
But we didn't get to finish the garden tour. For we left early.

There were just too many onlookers and it left us feeling a little uncomfortable.
We thought that if this was going to be our wedding venue that we desired, perhaps it was going to be one equipped with strangers.
But the actual day, it was nothing like that day of visitation whatsoever.

The very last time we set a course, was when our Wedding Photographer said, "I know this place like the back of my hand. I will give you the grand tour."
Standing still on the stones in front of the waterfall was just one of the places we ventured.
We then danced down the isle of the Fera Fera Forest.
Then our guide took us to the very last place, upon our exit, the garden's last stop.

The Hydrangea Terrace. Equipped with majestic fragrant prismatic flowers.
We stopped, looked up and praised the Lord on High.
Giving recognition that this vision was coming to pass at this time in our lives.
I thank God for the vision of the Rainbow Hydrangeas.



Wanted: A mate for this Mourning Dove. "One is a lonely number."

“Memorial Day” *Continued from page 7*

I was reminded the other day of an incident with my Grandmother, Emelia Lukasiewicz. Being a genealogy nut, I was very zealous to acquire information from “days gone by.” So, I sent her a book designed for that specific purpose...to answer questions about specific happening. Needless to say, not much got put in it... for whatever reason, so I thought.

What got the book filled was the regular weekly Monday visitation of my brother Roger, who along with helping her with her much needed things to get done list, also included an occasional question or two of “days gone by.” Would you believe that most of the questions had gotten answered at the time of her death. It has ended up as a beautiful legacy to have and pass on to her younger kin.

My memories of my grandparents Paul and Emelia Lukasiewicz, rang loud and clear this past week because I found myself out at the cemetery one week before Memorial Day, planting flowers and cleaning up for the Big Day. On many occasions, I remember them loading tools, paint, rakes, shovels, prayerbooks and rosary and heading out to St. Anthony’s Cemetery just outside town. This is where the church was originally built in 1887 and where grandma used to walk to school as a kid from town, rain or shine, snow or sleet!

Sure, they would go out to clean up, but more importantly they would go out to converse, and continue community with friends and family of days gone by. It was the Body of Christ, their extended family and community. Having been long-time Main Street business folks plus undertakers in Farwell for years, I can see now that they knew some of these men, women and children their whole life and then assisted many a family burial for the next step of ‘the journey.’ Their cemetery visits were connecting “yesterday with today with tomorrow.” What a rare and rich sense of community!

My life is truly rich for having had the opportunity to have witnessed, heard and seen them in action. I work at continuing the tradition. It’s no longer their tradition, but now mine.

I never thought I’d find myself cleaning up and planting flowers at the cemetery. Last year I told myself I’d go out earlier to spruce up things and by golly, I did. It looks better and more importantly I feel better. My goal next year is to begin logging the names, locations and tombstone markings for posterity and any interested family genealogists.

The cemetery needs wildflowers and trees and a bench and a shelter also. An outhouse could certainly fill a void. St. Anthony’s Cemetery Committee does a truly outstanding job of maintaining it’s condition that I rate second to none.

My memory is the SILENCE... No noise up here on the hill. No distractions. Just the inner promptings of MYSELF, to get a move on and rush to go where.? As Grandpa Paul used to say “where are you going once you get there”? How distracting I can be to myself.

My memory is the WIND... So powerful, sometimes brutal, yet so gentle, so healing.

My memory is LIFE... Life that has gone on before me and the life still going on around me, that I am now enjoying; the experience of yesterday, today and tomorrow, life as a person with a family, friends and neighbors, and life with the flowers, trees, weeds, meadowlarks and red-winged blackbirds surrounding me.

My memory is the granite, marble, tin and wood TOMBSTONES that represent relatives and friends I never knew, like great, great grandpa and grandma Romuald and Constanczya Lukasiewicz who helped found St. Anthony of Padua’s, the oldest Polish Catholic church in Nebraska, Nodlinski’s, the Strelecki’s... and my sister Cathy who lived just a couple days. And yes, it is also the people who I delivered newspapers to, who’s yards I ran through, who took time for me, who sold me candy, who put air in my bicycle tire, who I watched play Sunday afternoon baseball and who gave their lives on foreign soil and did the best they could, for MY Freedom. Yes, thank you.

My memory is of the BRASS FLAG HOLDERS beside the veterans’ graves, especially my dad’s. This memory is special this time of year because Dad would take it upon himself to take flags out to all the veterans and put them beside their graves. Matter of fact, I even know and remember where he kept those flags throughout the year.

It’s truly amazing what you remember without thinking you are remembering. Neihardt the poet, once said, “One day you will rejoice to remember.” Yes, today... I do rejoice... as I remember... .

What do YOU remember?

What do you want to make memorable on Memorial Day?

“Haunted” *Continued from page 5*

Local officers occasionally checked the school after reports of lights or noises. Most found nothing. Still, one admitted hearing what sounded like voices when no one else was inside.

What might explain it?

Parts of Southeast Nebraska carry deep historical roots. During the American Civil War era, the region saw military movement, tension along the frontier, and the presence of soldiers and militia units. In some towns, larger buildings—schools, churches, halls—were pressed into temporary service as gathering places, aid stations, or shelters during times of crisis.

While not every story can be traced to a specific event, it’s not difficult to imagine how memory lingers in places that have seen both ordinary life and extraordinary moments.

Students today often laugh off the idea of hauntings. To them, it’s just an old building with creaky floors and aging pipes. But there are a few—staff included—who aren’t so quick to dismiss the stories.

Because now and then, in the stillness of an empty hallway, there comes a sound that doesn’t quite fit. A step where no one stands. A faint echo of voices.

And in those moments, the question quietly returns—
Is it only imagination... or something more?

Life Experienced

Sheri Dowding

They are easy to find, this coffee group of mine. Every week, same day, same time, same place, same table. Even the drinks are the same, diet soda, coffee, iced tea.

Conversation runs the same, what happened in the 60’s--who lives where, who lived there in the 60’s--what ever happened to them, did they move and where to?

A lot of "remember when."

And the kids, grandkids, great grandkids occupy a lot of conversation along with photos on the phones.

If I said this was a caring group that would not be the correct word to describe them. You see, for the past 13 years we have met like this. It started out by accident, just grabbing a sandwich at noon. Some were on their lunch hour from work, some didn't want to cook, some moving into town not knowing anyone but were invited to join for lunch. Somehow it became Wednesday morning coffee. It has become a sacred time, now we go out of our way to not make appointments on Wednesday morning. We tell our kids we will call you later and they understand. Being with this group is more than coffee, more than just friends. It is an unspoken commitment to each other. It is our mental health time, our time to share sorrow or happiness. We all understand that life isn't fair, we all have experienced life, we understand each other. We talk of being old, okay, not old, experienced is a better word for our lives. We have lived through births, deaths, marriages, divorces, kids, grand and greats. We remember--and sometimes we don't. The word squirrel pops up and everyone of us knows that if we don't say what we are thinking right now we will forget it again. And we all laugh.

We understand or we don't, we care or we don't. But we are there every Wednesday, for each other. And if it's not Wednesday we are only a phone call or text message away. Our world and our lives have changed so much over the years. We have over 450 years of living to talk about. Our likes and dislikes are as varied as you can get. There isn't one subject we all could agree on... unless it's food, and we are all tired of cooking. To my Wednesday group, I hold my glass of iced tea high to salute you all and say "Thank you for your friendship, your support and your love. Lets see what life brings us next." And I know they will all be there to share the experience.

Window From The Past (2006)

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Dear Mom,

Happy Mother's Day! A lot has happened since we last talked. I raised some children, like you did, and I married above myself, like Dad did. Not too long ago I returned home to Nebraska. You lived here all of your life, but I wanted to try different things. I've lived in Colorado, Arizona, Texas, New Jersey, and of course, Iowa and Nebraska. But now I'm back. Can you believe that I missed Nebraska blizzards? It took living in Arizona to realize that I love them.

During a recent harsh Winter here in Peru I watched the snow blowing by my window on Fifth Street. I watched with a coffee mug in my hand and a warm blaze in the fireplace. No cows to bring home anymore nor calves to feed. I was living in town, and I could walk to the Grocery Store. Not that I don't miss the farm! I really miss the wide open spaces, the fragrance of alfalfa blooming in June, our walks through the fields and pasture on Summer days, and your fresh lettuce salads at supertime.

Now guess what? I'm publishing a magazine! I love doing it and I know you would be proud. I am fortunate that I know so many people who help and support me. Not only do they help make my publication possible, but they also make it special.

I really wish we could talk again. We didn't talk enough so long ago. I'm thinking of you... Happy Mother's Day, and thank you for being my Mom!

Love,
Your son

p.s. to my country neighbors:

When we were children, we followed our parents everywhere. When we were teenagers we tried to get away from them. As young adults we were too busy for them. But now as we become older we want to know them better and be closer to them. Don't be concerned as to how to go about it. Just take your parent to lunch or coffee or go fishing or shopping. Let the magic happen. And give your Mom a rose; don't wait for Mother's Day.

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

A few days ago, I was out on my front patio potting plants, minding my own business, when a man walked up my driveway. No car in sight. At first, I thought he might be campaigning for someone or conducting a survey or collecting signatures for a petition. But no. He was a door-to-door salesman. And I was more-or-less trapped. I could either be rude and step inside before he reached me or politely give him a chance to make a sale.

He came from Memphis and was selling a concentrated cleaning product. I'm sure this is the same company I bought a concentrated cleaning product from several years ago. He probably referred to his "previous customers" list for Auburn and already knew that I was an easy mark.

He proceeded to demonstrate the product's effectiveness at removing an ink stain from a white cloth and assured me of all the other types of stains his product could remove, including rust on one of my garden tools lying on the concrete. He then asked me a somewhat embarrassing question, "Ma'am, what is the hardest thing for you to clean?"

Awkward silence on my part. Being only a part-time housewife, I am not a particularly fussy housekeeper. (My grandmother would not be proud.) I finally came up with an answer: hard water spots on the fiberglass shower surround! I was assured that this product would do the job. After all, that is one of the seventeen stains specifically listed on the label. I've tried everything else known to man on those spots. I am curious to see if this product will finally dissolve those calcium and lime deposits.

Twenty minutes and forty-four dollars later, I was the owner of a bottle of Advantage 20X Wonder Cleaner in green apple scent. I already have at least a dozen other cleaners designed for specific cleaning jobs – carpet spots, grease stains, tile and grout, tar and bugs on automobiles, as well as the aforementioned rust and hard water spots.

As the salesman walked away, I wondered briefly if he could actually make a living selling door-to-door so far from home. I recalled the Minnesota Woolens man who called at our farm home in northwest Iowa when I was a child back in the '50s. Our kitchen table would be covered with samples of his socks, sweaters, blankets and probably long johns, though the salesman may have been too polite to display those.

Did I mention that Hubby had poked his head out the front door during the salesman's pitch and announced that he was not interested in buying anything? He then ducked back inside, rescued by the dinging of a kitchen timer he had to tend to. Hubby is not so tender-hearted as I am when it comes to door-to-door salesmen. But he has his own weaknesses when it comes to buying things of dubious value. I'm trying to think of one right now to include in my defense. I'm sure something will come to mind as soon as I submit this column to the publisher.

I will be trying out my Advantage 20X on my shower surround as soon as I run out of reasons to continue to put it off. I will let you know if it works. In the meantime, happy spring cleaning to you all.



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NEBRASKA CITY, NE



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Total Savings	\$4,500

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Total Savings	\$3,000



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Starting Price	\$52,565
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National Rebate	- \$3,000
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