

YOUR COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Prairie Communities River Towns

Helping people notice beauty in the places they call home.



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Beautiful weather set the stage for a fantastic homecoming parade as the PSC Bobcats celebrated in style.

Harvesting is transforming the countryside, leaves are adding different colors to hillsides and city streets, and migrating geese remind us that the seasons are changing. How will the holidays greet us as Father Time closes out the year? Super El Niño projects warmer, wetter months, quickly melting snows and unseasonably warm temperatures. Has your family changed since last Thanksgiving? Put away the pumpkins. It's time for turkey and Christmas shopping. Be well!



This little butterfly doesn't migrate south for Winter. Instead, it enters diapause, sheltering through the cold months and emerging on sunny days to bask. By Spring—sometimes as early as March—it's among the first butterflies along wooded paths. Meet the Comma butterfly! It has been enjoying our Summery October weather.

Your Country Neighbor
Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha
Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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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

November

November arrives at a time when the countryside is beginning to settle into its late-autumn appearance.

Usually by now, much of the brilliant color we associate with October has passed. But this year may be different. Autumn has been unusually warm, and the potentially historic El Niño developing in the Pacific could influence Nebraska's weather this Fall and Winter. Whether that means a later display of color remains to be seen.

Here in southeast Nebraska, Autumn color usually reaches its peak around the middle of October, although the timing varies from year to year. Some trees may already be bare while others are still holding onto their leaves. That's part of what makes November interesting: by the time this issue reaches you, we'll know a little more about what kind of Autumn we were given this year.

The October "Old Time Autumn" festival in Brownville brought the Civil War reenactors back to town, and you'll find some of my photographs from the event in this issue. Their encampment is always an interesting reminder that history doesn't have to remain in a book.

November also brings Thanksgiving, perhaps the most family-centered holiday of the year. Whether your celebration involves a house full of people or a quieter gathering, it is a good time to pause and appreciate the people and places that make our lives what they are.

And then there is the matter of Christmas. Some people have already started shopping, while others prefer to wait until December is closer. Either way, the transition has begun. The stores are changing, Christmas displays are appearing, and the year seems to gather speed as it moves toward its final weeks.

Before we get too far ahead, though, there is still plenty of November to enjoy—a drive through the countryside, a football game, the last leaves along the roads, or perhaps a stop at Valentino's for pizza or the buffet.

November doesn't ask us to hurry.

It simply reminds us that the year is changing again.

Welcome to November.



Happy Thanksgiving

Drive Safely!

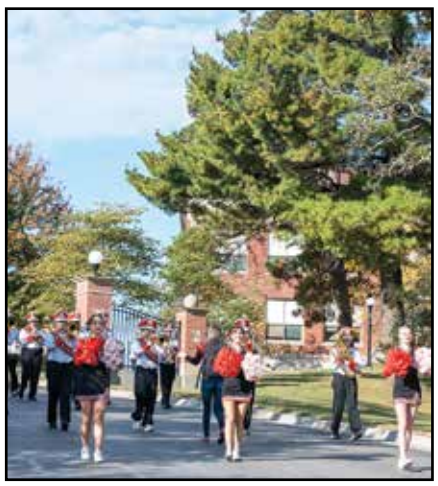
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Dr. and Mrs. Mock toss treats to the parade's on-lookers.



PSC Women's Basketball Team--Game photos on page 11.



PSC Athletes brought candy along with some attitude.

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BROWNVILLE'S TOUR OF HOMES

Saturday, December 5th
1:00 PM to 5:00 PM as part of the
"Christmas in Brownville" Festival
Tickets at Schoolhouse Gallery, 427 Main

Rohman Garden Tree Lighting and Christmas Carols 5:30 PM

www.brownville-ne.com



Civil War Reenactors were part of Brownville, Nebraska's "Old Time Autumn" Festival October10th & 11th.

Brownville
CREATIVE DISTRICT

Christmas in BROWNVILLE

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5TH

Christmas Events for Everyone!



Holiday Tour of Homes

1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Tickets at Schoolhouse Gallery



Historical Society Soup Lunch

11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

at Town Hall



Historical Society Bake Sale

10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

at Carson House



"Mele Kalikimaka"

Merry Christmas at the Antiquarium

Join us to engage in holiday musical fun

* Hands on ukulele and more instruments
* No experience needed – you will do just fine

9:30 am to 1:00 pm



Caroling and Tree Lighting

with refreshments

5:30 to 6:00 p.m.

at Rohman Gardens

Shops and Galleries Open

All will have specials running and most will have treats.

- Evies Place
- Dunn's Fur Trading Company
- Malina's Treasures
- Lone Tree Saloon
- Environs Art Studio and Gallery
- River Crossing Antiques
- Palmerton Gallery
- Lyceum Restaurant
- Bird's Nest Trading Post
- Brownville Market
- Flatwater Folk Art Museum
- Antiquarium
- Whiskey Run Creek Winery and Distillery



Wildlife Migration Photos, October 2026



Pelicans Migrating--Wildlife Refuge



Egrets Migrating--Wildlife Refuge



Monarch Migrating--Omaha Garden



November: The Land Opens Again

By November, the countryside begins to look different.

The corn is just about out of the fields, same with the soybean harvest, and the roads that seemed enclosed by crops only a few weeks ago are beginning to open again.

For much of the Summer, the fields have hidden the country beyond them. A farmstead might appear only briefly between rows of corn. A line of trees along a creek could disappear completely behind the crops.

Now the view is changing.

Harvest leaves the fields lower and more open, and familiar places begin to reappear. The old windbreak comes back into view. A barn that seemed surrounded by crops can once again be seen from the road. The hills and draws that were partly hidden all summer become easier to follow.

The trees are changing, too, November is beginning to look the way we expected October to look.

Here in southeast Nebraska, Autumn often lingers a little longer than it does across much of the state. Some years the best color arrives early. Other years the leaves hold on well into November. This year, with an unusually warm Fall and a very strong El Niño developing, November should be colorful, as long as the trees can hold on to their leaves. We will have to wait and see. Wind and rain can be spoilers.

But perhaps that is one of the things worth noticing about the prairie.

It does not change according to a calendar.

The farmer waits for the crop to be ready. The leaves change when conditions tell them to. The geese move when it is time. The first hard frost comes when it comes.

Even November has its own pace.

And once the harvest is finished, there is another kind of beauty in the countryside. The fields are quieter. The roads are less crowded with farm machinery. The long distances open up again beneath the Nebraska sky.

We can see farther.

Perhaps that is November’s gift.

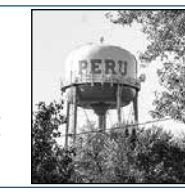
After a Summer of abundance and an Autumn of gathering, the land begins to reveal its shape again.

And if we take the time to look, there is still plenty to see.

PERU CITY NEWS

Communication • Information • Pride In Community

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



BROWNVILLE, FORT KEARNY AND PACIFIC RAILROAD (Part 1)

John C. Chatelain, Omaha

The halcyon days of Brownville were when steamboats made regular and frequent trips between St. Louis and Omaha. As early as 1856, eleven regular packets were engaged in commerce on the river. During the year 1857, forty-four packets were running on the Missouri River. Thereafter it was no unusual thing to see as many as half a dozen steamers at the Brownville wharf at the same time, receiving and discharging freight. 1 There was talk in Brownville about a railroad as early as 1857. Nothing was done about it until the Civil War ended in 1865. Before Omaha was selected, both Brownville and Nebraska City were considered for the Union Pacific Transcontinental Railroad. There was a rumor across the river of a proposal to extend the Mississippi and Missouri River Air Line Railroad through Missouri, with Brownville as the eastern terminus of an inter-coastal rail connection. There were three reasons why Brownville was being considered: 1) geographically, she was on the shortest route between the oceans and was the county seat of the 8,500 residents of Nemaha County, having its "hinterland" of Johnson, Clay, Saline and Fillmore Counties, with 6,000 more; 2) Economically, Brownville was in fine shape, with possible coal in Nemaha County and salt springs in Saline County enhancing any route west from Brownville; and 3) A federal land grant could easily be secured, as there was as yet none in that part of the state, while "at the same time some 500,000 acres of Nebraska internal improvement lands were still undistributed." An enthusiastic meeting was held resulting in two action items. One petition asked the city to appropriate $1,000 for delegates to Washington to obtain a land grant. The other asked the County Commissioners for a $300,000 capital stock subscription. 2

Brownville's railroad would likely have been a significant boost to Peru as well. The right-of-way ran from Brownville up the Missouri River to "Eddie's Switch", thence westward along Honey Creek, a short hike south of Peru, toward Beatrice, via Tecumseh. In January 1868, an election was held and $118,000.00 was voted for railroad construction. John McPherson, Robert W. Furnas and County Commissioner Holmes comprised the delegation to Washington seeking the grant. In 1869, an act was passed providing 500,000 acres of land to aid in the construction of railroad. Two thousand acres per mile would be given as soon as ten miles of road was constructed with a train running over it. Brownville and London Precincts voted $100,000 in bonds and the city of Brownville voted $59,000. They were eight percent, twenty-year bonds. 3

By the Spring of 1869, discouraging news had arrived from Washington. The request for a land grant had failed in the Senate. Officers and directors of the Brownville, Ft. Kearny and Pacific decided to work on a new strategy. They would join with another railroad project in the area to secure a grant. A new bill introduced in the U. S. Senate by Nebraska Senator Tipton joined Brownville's request with that of the Midland Pacific, of Nebraska City. 4

A Brownville newspaper, The Advertiser, reported "Just as soon as the engineers can complete their office business," the first ten miles would be put under contract. "People need have no further doubt as to the Brownville, Ft. Kearny and Pacific Railroad. It will be built." 5

To be Continued!

1. Andreas 1882 History of Nebraska, Nemaha County; 2. The Brownville Story: Portrait of a Phoenix 1854-1974, Marion Marsh Brown, pp: 74-75. 3. Across the Wide Missouri, Peru, Nebraska 1854-1991, by Ernest Longfellow, pp 154-155; 4. Brown p. 78; 5 Ibid pp. 82-83

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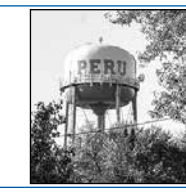
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- Participating locations: Douglas, Syracuse, Sterling, Table Rock, and Nebraska City senior centers, with additional sites planned.
- Resources provided: Each participating center receives fitness equipment and automatic upper-arm blood-pressure monitors.
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- Eligibility and contact: Attendance is free for people age 18 and older. Mark Burch, RN, is available at (402) 274-3993 ext. 115 or mburch@sedhd.org; local senior centers can provide program dates and times.

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Tuesday Literary Club Reads

DiAnna Loy, Tuesday Literary Club

We are at the end of our year of Celebrating the United States of America's 250th Birthday. Our entire group read The Four Winds by Kristin Hannah this month. This book is an historical fiction novel about the dust bowl in the Midwestern United States in the 1930s and the resulting depression. Though many find the book heavy and depressing, any book about that time in our history could hardly be anything else.

We meet the main character of our story, Elsa Wolcott, in 1922 when she is 25 years old. Elsa is the daughter of the oldest family in the town of Dalhart, Texas and has led a sheltered and pampered life up to this point. When she was 14 Elsa contracted rheumatic fever and the doctor told her parents she would always be weak and frail and should lead a quiet life; Elsa has never been allowed to do the things her sisters have done or even considered as a candidate for marriage. At this point Elsa has had enough; at close to six feet tall she sees nothing frail about herself. She makes a new, in fashion dress and heads to the speakeasy over the objections of her family. She isn't admitted but meets a young man from a near by town, Rafe, and allows herself to go for a ride which leads to her feeling and being loved for the first time. After meeting Rafe clandestinely several times, she fines herself expecting. Her father is furious. He has her pack a bag, takes her to Rafe's home, drops her and her bag off on the porch, and declares, "You're no daughter of mine."

She and Rafe are married quietly and begin their life on his parents' farm. Elsa has never been taught how to do anything except embroidery, sewing, and darning and therefore has a steep learning curve but she is ready to learn. She works in the house with Rafe's mother while Rafe works with his father on the farm. Rains have been plentiful and they have a thriving operation. By 1934 their life has changed. They have two children, a girl, and a boy but the rains have stopped and the entire southern part of the United States is a Dust Bowl. The farm barely ekes a living for the family. Totally discouraged, Rafe disappears one night; probably headed to California. There have been ads in all the newspapers placed by the Californian government advertising for people to come to "California, the land of milk and honey".

Eventually, with her in-laws blessing, Elsa and the children head to California, too: the rains have not returned. The folks will stay on the farm and live as best they can, but the young family needs to seek a better life in California. The trip is arduous and when they arrive the only place they can find to stay is a camp with other refugees. There is no running water or sewer system, and they live in their tent with a dirt floor. They are better than some in that they have their pickup they can use to hunt for work. Work is scarce and pays little. Elsa's family is befriended by the family across the way, so they have insight on where to find jobs and food. Living is hard and there is little that makes life easier. Elsa is determined to keep her family together and see that her children are educated through everything that comes.

The book The Four Winds is a true picture of life in these United States during the 1930s and is available at the Auburn Memorial Library.

"Happy reading!"

The Bequest from Across the Ocean

Sylvia Shires

The gifter? A renown British Scientist. The giftee? The United States of America, more specifically, its capital, Washington. This would be surprising enough, but the whole story is even more astonishing when we consider that this unknown benefactor continues to open vast fields of knowledge through the largest museum in the world.

He was born, around 1765, in Paris, the illegitimate son of Hugh Smithson, Duke of Northumberland, and Elizabeth Macie, a wealthy widow of royal blood. He bore his mother's last name for nearly half of life, but. in 1801, after his parents' death (he was 36), he took his biological father's name, Smithson, though the duke neither publicly acknowledged his paternity, nor sponsored his upbringing or education. (At the time, no legal proceeding was required for a name change, as long as it was not done with fraudulent intent, like to steal an inheritance).

At 17, thanks to his mother's wealth, James entered Oxford and obtained his Master's Degree at 21. He was fascinated by various aspects of natural science, from snake's venom to the chemistry of volcanoes, and from the study of various minerals (the smithsonite was named after him) to an improved method of making coffee.

Within a year of graduating, he was accepted as a member of the Royal Society, which was an unusual achievement for someone so young. The Royal Society had been founded in 1660 with the mission of improving knowledge in science for the benefit of Mankind. Science was Smithson's passion; he never married, never had children, instead he traveled across Europe, collecting specimens, taking notes, publishing respected scientific papers.

This was an age of exciting scientific discovery and enthusiastic darings, such as first balloon flights, discovery of the planet Uranus, first successful vaccine, to name a few. It was a time of intellectual optimism in which scientists were expanding knowledge and believed they would bring prosperity and happiness to the world, in part because their scientific advances united them above their national identities and allegiances.

Smithson inherited a considerable fortune from his mother, which he increased by savvy investments. In 1826, he wrote his will. His estate and all his wealth would pass on to his nephew, Henry. However, if Henry died without heir, legitimate or not, everything would go to the United States of America to create an establishment for "the increase and diffusion of knowledge" under the name "Smithsonian Institution."

When James Smithson died in 1829, his will was printed in The Times of London and reprinted in America by The New York American.

Continued on page 9 >>>>

The Bequest *Continued from page 8*

Although Henry was in his twenties, he only survived his uncle by 6 years. The U.S. government was soon notified of this extraordinary bequest. Surprisingly, not everyone was thrilled by this situation. In fact, there was much debate in Congress as to whether it would be constitutional for the United States to accept a foreign gift, a British one at that, and preserve our country's national dignity at the same time. After all, it was only a mere 20 years since the War of 1812 had ended. Thankfully, John Quincy Adams saw in the bequest the hand of Providence and the opportunity to serve Mankind. The gift was accepted in 1836. However, it took another 10 years to settle on what the institution would look like. At long last, the first building, known as the "castle," opened in 1855.

Smithson had died and been buried in Italy, in a Protestant cemetery near Genoa. In 1903, the local authorities decided to move the cemetery. Alexander Graham Bell proposed to bring the remains of James Smithson to Washington. And this is how a man who had never set foot in the United States during his life, was conveyed there, with great honors, long after his death, to receive a fitting burial in the crypt of the Smithsonian Institution he had made possible!

Interestingly, upon arrival, his skeleton was examined for 48 hours, before the coffin was sealed. It was determined that James Smithson had been 5'6," possessed an extra vertebra, had died of natural causes, and smoked a pipe!

Still, the mystery remains as to why Smithson chose the United States as the recipient of his incredible gift. He left no explanation. Some think he was bitter against England for the stigma of his illegitimacy. Personally, I believe the answer is simpler. Britain already had several museums and institutions to preserve and spread knowledge, including the British Museum (established in 1753) which was the world's first national public museum.

America, on the other hand, was a new nation that did not have many museums, and certainly nothing like what The Smithsonian would be. It was also a Nation that embodied the impossible made reality by the miracle of its very existence, a new David that had defeated a Goliath. A great scientist like James Smithson, convinced that science and knowledge would eventually bring happiness to Mankind, could only be enthralled by the possibilities that seemed endless in this country, and he wrote his will accordingly.

Today, the Smithsonian is the world's largest museum—actually a conglomeration of 21 museums, a zoo, and 14 education and research centers, whose entrance is free to the public. Thank you, Mr. Smithson, for such a gift that continues to open knowledge to millions of visitors!

Incidentally, the original Star-Spangled Banner that valiantly stood over Fort McHenry during the War of 1812 and prompted Francis Scott Key to pen our National Anthem is preserved in a place of honor at the Smithsonian; so, the Congressmen of old who feared accepting Smithson's gift might diminish our national identity and dignity can rest reassured.

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yourcountryneighbor.com

Haunted?

Smitty’s Curve

by a wandering neighbor

There is a stretch of country road outside Geneva where the road curves, two bridges cross a creek and, according to local legend, a young man named Smitty never quite made it home.

The place is known as Smitty’s Curve, and it has acquired a reputation as one of Nebraska’s most haunted roads.

Exactly what happened there is difficult to establish. The story has been repeated for years, but I could find no reliable historical record confirming that a man named Smitty actually died there. That doesn't make the story any less interesting.

According to the legend, Smitty was driving a new car on a winter night. He was unfamiliar with the road and apparently traveling much too fast. As he came around the curve, he discovered a bridge ahead too late to avoid it.

His car crashed through the bridge railing and plunged into the water below.

Remarkably, Smitty survived the crash. He managed to get himself out of the wreckage, climb up from the creek and make his way toward a nearby barn, apparently searching for help.

But the night was bitterly cold.

One version of the story says that Smitty died from his injuries before anyone could find him. Another says that he succumbed to the cold after reaching the barn. In either version, he died alone.

And that's where the haunting begins.

People who tell the story say that Smitty never really left the place where he died. On a dark night, motorists have reportedly heard a man's cries or groans coming from the area. Others claim to have seen a figure moving along the road or struggling up the hill toward the barn.

The strangest version of the legend involves the second bridge.

According to the story, a visitor who parks on the bridge, honks the horn three times and flashes the headlights twice may find himself in trouble. After getting out of the car and closing the doors, the visitor supposedly discovers that the doors are locked. Some versions go even further, claiming that Smitty will somehow interfere with the car's engine.

There is another ghost story attached to the same stretch of road. Some people say that a young boy once hanged himself in a barn nearby and that his spirit also remains in the area. Whether that story refers to the same barn associated with Smitty is unclear.

The more skeptical explanation is that the Smitty story grew out of the very real dangers of rural roads: a sharp curve, a bridge hidden from view, winter weather and the consequences of driving too fast.

In other words, perhaps the ghost story came after the warning.

That is one of the things I find interesting about stories such as Smitty's. They don't necessarily need to be true in every detail to tell us something about the people who have passed them along. A dangerous curve becomes the scene of a tragedy. The tragedy becomes a cautionary tale. And eventually, someone sees—or thinks they see—a figure beside the road.

So, is Smitty still out there? I can't tell you that.

But if you find yourself on Road R outside Geneva on a cold, moonless night, approaching a curve with a bridge just beyond it, there is one piece of the legend I would recommend taking seriously: Slow down, and perhaps don't honk three times.



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Peru State College Sports Action Photos--October 2026





PSC Homecoming v Graceland University--Win



PSC Women’s Basketball v Waldorf University--Win



PSC Volleyball v Mount Mercy University--Win



PSC Volleyball v Missouri Valley University--Win



PSC Football v Mount Mercy University--Win

A Prairie Love

Chapter 20 — A New Year — 1925

New Year's Eve came quietly.

There was no party at the cabin, no neighbors dropping by, and no reason to stay awake until midnight. The work of the farm did not change because the calendar did.

Still, Cora felt something different about the evening.

She had been married only a few months, yet when she looked around the cabin she no longer thought of it as the place they had moved into. It was simply home.

After supper, she and Lyle sat near the stove while the wind moved against the walls.

“What are you thinking about?” she asked.

Lyle smiled. “You already asked me that the other day.”

“And you never answered.”

“I told you. Next year.”

“That isn't an answer.”

He laughed softly. “All right. I want to make the farm a little better.”

Cora waited.

“I want to get the hog pen built before spring. A few sows. Maybe another cow if we can afford one. And I want to get more of the fencing finished.”

“That sounds like a lot.”

“It is. But we don't have to do it all at once.”

Cora nodded. That was becoming Lyle's way of looking at things.

He had no desire to make the farm something it wasn't. He wanted to make it a little more useful, a little more productive, and a little more theirs. “We'll need to save some money,” he said.

“We've been doing that.”

“I know.”

The room grew quiet again.

Outside, the horses shifted in the barn, and somewhere beyond the house a loose piece of wood tapped against the side of a building.

Cora thought about the year that had just passed.

They had built the cabin. They had married. They had planted crops and brought in a harvest. They had begun raising their own livestock. None of it had happened quickly, but when she looked back, she could see how much had changed.

“What do you suppose next year will bring?” she asked.

Lyle looked toward the window.

“I suppose we'll find out.”

She smiled. “That's not much of a prediction.”

“No,” he said. “But it's usually a safe one.”

At midnight they were still awake, though neither had been watching the clock.

When the new year arrived, there was no sound to announce it except the wind moving across the prairie.

Lyle reached for Cora's hand.

“Happy New Year.”

“Happy New Year.”

They sat together for another moment.

Then Lyle stood.

“We'd better get some sleep.”

Cora laughed. “That's your way of celebrating?”

“Tomorrow is still a workday.”

And so it was.

But as Cora followed him toward the bedroom, she found herself smiling.

There would be work in the new year.

There would be plans.

There would be things they could not yet afford and things they had not yet thought of.

But they had a place of their own, and they were beginning to understand how to make it grow.

For now, that was enough.

Continued in December

Letters from the Prairie

Spring, 1889 Nemaha County, Nebraska
20th Letter from Anna Wilhelmine Bauer to her sister Klara in Germany

My dearest Klara,

Spring has finally come, though I think Nebraska makes a person cautious about saying such a thing. The snow disappeared almost as quickly as it came, leaving the fields brown and wet and full of last year's dead grass. For several days the ground was too soft to walk across without sinking into the mud, and the children thought this was great fun until their boots became so heavy they could hardly lift their feet.

Lena was the first to find a patch of green.

She came running into the house one morning with a handful of grass and announced that Spring had arrived whether her father agreed or not.

Johann looked at what she was holding and smiled.

“I believe your daughter has made the decision for us,” he said.

I told him that I had already suspected as much.

The boys have been eager to begin working in the fields. They ask their father every morning when they may help, and every morning he tells them that the ground must dry first. They do not understand why waiting is necessary. To them, Spring means work can begin immediately.

Perhaps that is the difference between children and farmers.

A child sees the green grass and thinks of what might be done. A farmer looks at the ground and wonders whether it is ready.

Johann has been spending long hours preparing the fields. The plow moves slowly through the heavy soil, turning over the dark earth and leaving long straight furrows behind it. I have always liked the smell of freshly turned earth. There is something about it that makes the coming season seem possible.

I have begun working in the garden, too. The first seeds are in the ground, though I have learned not to plant everything at once. The prairie has already taught me that patience is necessary.

Lena still asks every morning whether the flowers have grown.

I tell her that flowers do not appear simply because one wishes for them.

She tells me that perhaps I am not wishing hard enough.

I think she may have inherited Mother's determination.

The garden seems smaller than I remember the gardens at home, but I am beginning to know it well. I know where the sun reaches first in the morning and where the soil stays damp after a rain. I know which corner is protected from the wind and which one is not.

I never imagined that I would one day know a piece of Nebraska soil so well.

There are changes beyond our farm, too. The roads have become busier as the weather improves. Wagons pass more often, and we hear news from neighbors who have been away during the winter. There is always something to talk about—the price of grain, the weather, someone's new cow, someone's new baby.

Life seems to wake up all at once.

The birds are everywhere now. In the mornings I hear them before the children are awake, and sometimes I lie still for a few minutes listening to them. It is a different sound from the birds I remember in Germany, though I could not tell you exactly how.

Perhaps I only think it is different because I am different.

I still think of home.

That has not changed.

Sometimes a smell or a sound will bring Germany back to me so suddenly that for a moment I forget where I am. I remember Mother's kitchen. I remember the garden. I remember the sound of voices outside the window.

Then I hear the wind moving across the prairie, and I am here again.

Continued in December

Westward With Lewis & Clark--Chapter 15

Narrated by Elias LeGrand (fictional member of the crew)

The river seemed different after our meeting with the people along its shore. Perhaps it was only that I was different.

Before, I had looked at the Missouri as something to be conquered—a river that slowed our progress, tested our strength and seemed determined to turn us back. Now, whenever we rounded a bend, I found myself wondering who might be watching us from the trees or the tall grass.

We were no longer alone in this country. That thought stayed with me.

The morning was cool, and a thin mist hung over the river. The men worked quietly as we pushed away from shore. Oars dipped into the water, rose and dipped again, making a steady rhythm.

The captains had ordered us to keep our eyes open. Not because they expected trouble, but because there was much to learn.

We watched the banks for trails, campsites and signs of recent fires. We looked for animals and studied the plants growing along the water. Whenever we saw smoke rising in the distance, someone would point toward it.

"People," one of the men would say.

Sometimes it was only a small fire left by hunters. Sometimes we never discovered who had made it.

One afternoon we saw a narrow trail leading from the river into the grass.

The trail was well worn. Men stopped to examine it.

"Buffalo," someone said. Another man shook his head.

"Too narrow."

We followed it a short distance before turning back. It belonged to people. There were places where the grass had been pressed down, and once we found a small piece of wood that had clearly been worked by hand. It was a simple thing, but I studied it for a long time. Someone had stood there. Someone had made it. Someone had held it in his hands. I put it back exactly where I had found it.

That evening, after the boats were pulled onto shore, I walked a little way from camp. The prairie stretched away beneath the evening sky. I could hear the men talking behind me, the occasional laugh, the clatter of cooking utensils and the horses moving about. But beyond the camp there was only the wind.

I looked west. Somewhere out there were people who had never heard of Virginia or Kentucky or Philadelphia. They had never seen a keelboat like ours. Perhaps they had never seen a man dressed as we were dressed. And yet this was their country. They knew its rivers. They knew where the buffalo traveled. They knew which plants could be eaten and which could make a man sick. They knew where water could be found when the river was miles away.

We had maps. They had knowledge. I wondered which was more valuable.

The next morning brought a strong wind. It pressed against the boats and made our progress slow. At times we seemed to move no farther than a man could walk.

The men complained. There was little point in complaining. The river did not listen.

We pulled at the oars until our hands were sore.

When the wind shifted, the captains ordered the sail raised. The great canvas filled, and for a while the boat moved with surprising speed. The men cheered. Even the captains smiled.

Then, without warning, the wind died. The sail collapsed.

We drifted. Someone laughed. Someone else swore.

It was difficult to remain discouraged for long on this journey. One moment the river defeated us; the next it carried us forward as though it had changed its mind.

That afternoon we saw our first herd of buffalo. They were farther inland, dark shapes moving slowly across the prairie. I had seen buffalo before, but never so many. The sight quieted the men.

There seemed to be no end to them. They moved together in a long, dark mass, sometimes disappearing behind a rise in the land and then appearing again.

One of the hunters said that where there were buffalo, there would be people.

That evening I thought again about the trail we had found. The country was beginning to speak to us. We simply had to learn how to listen.

Days passed. The river bent north, then west again. The banks changed from open prairie to wooded country and back again. We saw deer, birds and other animals we could not always identify. We collected plants and made notes about the country.

Everywhere there were signs of life. But there were also signs of those who had come before us.

A fire burned low beside an abandoned campsite. A broken branch marked a trail. Once we found a small shelter made of branches. It was empty. I stood beside it for some time. I wondered who had slept there. A hunter? A family? A man traveling alone?

Had he watched the same stars I had watched the night before? Had he listened to the same wind moving through the grass?

The questions followed me back to the boats.

We had begun this journey believing we were going into an unknown country. I was beginning to understand that was not quite true.

It was unknown to us. That was different. The country was not empty. It had never been empty. People had walked these trails long before our boats appeared on the river. They had hunted here, raised their children here, buried their dead here and watched the seasons come and go. We were the strangers.

That realization made me look at the land with a little more humility.

One evening, as the sun dropped behind the western horizon, I stood near the bow of the keelboat.

The river ahead turned gold in the fading light. Beyond the bend was another stretch of country we had never seen. Another trail. Another camp. Another people, perhaps. I wondered what they would think when they saw us coming. Then I wondered what we would think when we met them.

And for the first time since we had left St. Louis, I found myself looking forward to the answer.

— Elias LeGrand

Continued in December

ARBOR CITY NEWS

Morton-James Public Library Calendar of Events November 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 https://mjpl.org/ **All Programming is Free and Open to the Public**

Chess Club Every Thursday
4:00PM - 6:00PM
ALL ages and experience levels are welcome to join Chess Club on Thursdays. If you have never played, members will teach you! Chess boards provided.

Lego Club Monday, November 2
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.

Library Story Time - Autumn Leaves
Wednesday, November 4
10:00AM - 10:30AM
We will read stories, learn some signs in American Sign Language, then make a tissue paper tree craft. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6 and families. Repeated 11/5 at 4 pm.

Yarn Crafters Club
Wednesday, November 4 1:30- 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!

Smithsonian Salon: The American Table: 10 Cookbooks That Shaped a Nation Wednesday, November 4 6:00 - 7:00PM
Cultural historian Leslie Goddard explores 10 landmark cookbooks that helped shape the nation's culinary identity. From the groundbreaking guidance of Fannie Farmer and Irma Rombauer to the sophisticated influence of Julia Child and Craig Claiborne, these best-selling volumes introduced new techniques, flavors, and ideas to generations of home cooks. Replay on 11/7 at 11:00AM.

Library Story Time – Autumn Leaves
Thursday, November 5 4:00PM - 4:30PM
We will read stories, learn some signs in American Sign Language, then make a tissue paper tree craft. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6 and their families. Free, no registration

Humanities Nebraska: The Role of Music During the Holocaust
Thursday, November 5 7:00PM - 8:00PM
Did you know music was performed in concentration camps during the Holocaust, and that many camps and ghettos even had orchestras? In this informative lecture-recital, Dr. Christine Beard will discuss the Nazi's cultural 'purification' objectives in relation to music, the affected musicians and composers across Europe, the type of music performed in camps, and the role music played during the Holocaust. Free.

Smithsonian Encore: The American Table: 10 Cookbooks That Shaped a Nation
Saturday, November 7 11:00AM – Noon
Replay from 11/4 Cultural historian Leslie Goddard explores 10 landmark cookbooks that helped shape the nation's culinary identity. From the groundbreaking guidance of Fannie Farmer and Irma Rombauer to the sophisticated influence of Julia Child and Craig Claiborne, these best-selling volumes introduced new techniques, flavors, and ideas to generations of home cooks.

Library Board Meeting Tuesday, November 10 4:00PM - 5:00PM

Library Closed - Veterans Day, Wednesday, November 11

Engaging Mature Minds
Thursday, November 12 10:00 - 11:30AM
Join us to engage your mind by connecting with other seniors while acquiring wisdom through community. Different topics/speakers each class. Free to attend, no reservation needed. This week will be a holiday celebration and is the last session for this year.

Youth Royal Dance Party
Friday, November 13
6:00PM - 7:00PM
Dance party inspired by Prince and Princesses for children ages 5. Glow sticks, coloring pages, and lots of your favorite Prince and Princess songs to dance and sing to. No registration, free to attend. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Registration Required
Build-An-Animal Workshop
Saturday, November 14 10:00AM - 11:00AM
Kids 18 or younger get to build their own stuffed animal for free! Limited spots available. *Must register ahead of time in person or by calling the library at 402-873-5609.

Lego Club Monday, November 16 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.

Afternoon Book Club
Tuesday, November 17 2:00PM - 3:00PM
The Antidote by Karen Russell
Afternoon Book Club meets the third Tuesday of the month at 2:00 pm at the library. New members are always welcome! Call 402-873-5609 with any questions.

Library Story Time- Turkeys!
Wednesday, November 18 10:00AM - 10:30AM
We will read stories, learn some signs in American Sign Language, then color a wood ornament. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6 and their families. Free, no registration. Repeated 11/19 at 4 pm.

Evening Book Club
Wednesday, November 18, 2026 5:30PM - 6:30PM
Story of My Life by Lucy Score
Evening Book Club meets the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30 in the Kimmel Gallery. New members always welcome! Call the Library at 402-873-5609 with any questions.

Library Story Time - Turkeys!
Thursday, November 19 4:00PM - 4:30PM
We will read stories, learn some signs in American Sign Language, then make a tissue paper tree craft. Story Times are geared toward children ages 2-6 and their families. Free, no registration.

Library Decorating Party
Friday, November 20 5:00PM - 6:30PM
Register to help decorate the Library in holiday cheer and enjoy pizza and snacks at our decorating party! Ages 12 and up (ages 12-16 must be accompanied by an adult) are welcome to participate. Call us at 402-873-5609 to sign up! All decorations and supplies provided.

Writers Workshop with Bruce Arant
Saturday, November 21 10:00AM - 11:00AM
Arant maintains a very active speaking schedule with regard to his writing and illustrating work. Prior to launching Arant Creative Group as a full-time illustrator, author and editor, he enjoyed a career of nearly 20 years in the magazine and custom publishing industry, where he held a variety of editorial and creative positions.

Library Closed November 26-27 Thanksgiving Holiday

Kimmel Gallery Exhibit for National Native American Heritage Month

Oscar Howe on view November 4-25

Yanktonai Indian artist Oscar Howe (1915-1983) depicted Native American traditions through a modernist aesthetic painting style. He used his Dakota heritage to provide subject matter for his works. Howe elevated himself from illness, poverty and prejudice, to a position of international admiration and respect as an artist and teacher. Learn more about the artist and see reproductions of his art as well as the original "Origin Of Corn" painting.

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YCN Consumer Notice

Nebraska Hospital Association warns against Medicare Advantage

The Nebraska Hospital Association released its 2026 Medicare Advantage Report Wednesday, October 15th.

The report says reimbursements from Advantage plans are "significantly less" than those from traditional plans.

It says that nearly all Nebraska hospitals say "the shift to Medicare Advantage has negatively impacted their financial position."

"Many seniors rely on insurance agents and brokers to help them choose a Medicare plan," the NHA says in the report. "However, unlike with Traditional Medicare, these agents are compensated by insurance companies to sign seniors up for Medicare Advantage plans. Seniors should know an agent may have incentive to sell you a plan even if it isn't ideal for you."



A Dad's Love

Bruce Madsen Nebraska City

I've got a story I'd like to relay
Did not happen currently but back a couple yesterdays
During a time of turmoil and conflict
Doesn't matter which war or which conflict
It could apply to any with just a simple edit

But the one I want to relate
Happened to a soldier back in '68
It's a story about the essence of love and time apart
And made me realize how love can endure
Regardless of the circumstance
That created its start

A soldier who fought in World War II
Made the military his choice and stayed for Korea too
The ravages of war created heavy mental pain
PTSD was diagnosed, but back then it had no name
He left his family, couldn't deal with his life
Took his vengeance and anger out on everyone including his wife

He walked away from everything, and totally disappeared
Not to be heard from again for another fifteen years
But somehow, he found out his son was Infantry in Nam
Fought in the battle of the Au Shau Valley and at KheSanh
Years with no connection, but now all he felt was compassion
For his son at war fighting in a dangerous situation

He re-upped, volunteered, retained and went back to active duty
Through the chain of command his request moved very slowly
But after appeals and petitions and orders from higher ups
His wish was granted, although he was older than before
He still made the cut

Away to war across the ocean
His mission was clear, there was no hesitation
To replace his son in combat was his soul motivation
To keep him out of harms way
Was his wanted realization

It was years before his son ever knew
Why he was pulled out of his unit
After six months fighting, just out of the blue
Reassigned to a peaceful unit to finish his tour
He knew not the reasons, whatever they were

They both came home and sometime later
Found out the Dad, he hardly knew, was his donator
He had always wondered how and why
And now that he knew…
He could barely keep a dry eye

A Dad's love goes way beyond the limits of existence
To find out how far sometimes takes a special circumstance
This story ends with a happy consequence
It's an example of a dad's never ending love
And allows this story to make perfect sense.

Arbor City News

is a monthly news section in

Your Country Neighbor

A Southeast Nebraska

Regional Magazine (w/News)

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ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

Cody's USave Pharmacy

It's that time again…
Medicare Part D Open Enrollment runs now through December 7.

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Hours: Mon-Fri 8:30 - 6:00, Sat 8:30 - Noon



Peru State College Cheerleaders in Homecomng Parade, 10/24.

November

Sheila Tinkham

Thanksgiving greets me
Tryptophan turkey
Mashed potatoes piled high
Gravy and stuffing
Apple pie a la mode
Family and friends gather
To give thanks and celebrate
Our blessings
What a wonderful day!

Winter knocks at my door
Snow and ice galore
Gales of wind and snow
Reminds me of Pioneers' lore
Walking miles to school
Freezing temperatures
Hands of ice
Derriere so cold
Heat and warmth
Fires crackling in the hearth
Propane gas that warms one's heart
Modern life has its perks
Welcome Winter do your worst.



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Poetry

by Devon Adams, Nebraska City

by Devon Adams, Nebraska City

WAITING FOR WINTER

As the color riot of Autumn
loses it's burnish and the sky
turns moody, winter waits
for it's own turn. For now the
landscape wears a coat of worn
browns and tans and some pink
in the grass that glows on a
rainy day. With harvest done
and one month remaining on
the calendar, fields are wearing
the tattered work coats that
were thrown into the stripped
fields after the trucks and wagons
hauled their last load to the
elevators. Houses are already
cold around the edges, with little
drafts sneaking in through cracks
and moaning threats to keep the
rooms chilly until green is growing
again! No matter how you bet on
it, the weather always wins!

BORN TO HOWL

As a short winter day eases
into evening and dusk descends
with a depth of invisibility that
hides details and inspires one's
imagination to conjure figures
moving in the gloom, the air is
shaken with heart-stopping shrieks
that hang in space like ghost music.
To add to the scene, creatures of
the night appear on the faint edge
of the horizon where light is barely
there. But they are there, these
soldiers of death on the hunt for
prey. Their chorus of deadly howls
is broadcasting their intent to kill.
Listen carefully, coyotes are speaking!

MAPS

We make maps with lines
to fit over landscapes that
have been where they are
for so many years now.
Down the road of eternity
we will go, and the lines
won't mean anything and
the books and bits of data
will be trash facts in the
future without our human
race to read them. Or will
some of us time travel to
other places and take our
knowledge with us? We
can ask that question, but
we cannot answer it.

FEATHER ON THE PATH

Like a silent thought,
a feather drifted down
from the wing of a bird
flying over the path.
It landed at my feet,
like a message just for
me from somewhere
I'd never been before.
Sound and motion all
around me seemed to
stop, and peace settled
over my heart as I realized
it was the first time ever
that I had felt safe.

GIVING THANKS

Holidays are meant to be savored
with the flavor of love from a family
of friends, whether they are blood
related or not.
Time will go right past us if we don't
remember that. Topics are transient
thoughts and feelings that change
and disappear from our minds, but
we won't have peace until our hearts
know what matters most will go with
us forever into the infinite space of
the future.

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adamsdevon07@gmail.com

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

From the time I was five years old until I turned 16, my family lived on a 160 acre farm in Northeast Nebraska. When we moved in, there was no plumbing, no electricity, no phone, no insulation in the house. My father carried buckets of water from the windmill up to the house, a distance of about 100 yards.

I sometimes wonder who lived in that old farmhouse before I did. How many children lived there? Did they play in the orchard? Who picked the cherries? Did they play with purple mulberry faces? One of the two apple trees was a crab apple. Was the lady of the house a canner? Many farm women had gardens and canned during the 30s and 40s—even before there were "Victory Gardens."

Who did my bedroom belong to before I was born? Was it a boy like me? Did he build "treehouses" of a few planks across two sturdy branches, fish in the crick with a safety pen and a string on a stick, catch toads hopping around the barnyard in the late evening? Did he read about constellations so that he could connect some meaning to the lights in the night-time sky? Did he gaze at the full moon from his upstairs bedroom, dreaming with wonder? Did he scrunch up in a corner of the living room and read comic books?

Did he help his mom or dad plant the lilacs, the peonies, the beautiful yellow antique rose bush? Did he carry potatoes and preserves up from the damp, brick-lined cellar to his mother for dinner?

Did he have a sled to ride down a snowy hill in Winter? Did he have any brothers or sisters to play hide and seek with in the Summertime? Did he walk to the one-room school during Autumn, a half mile away? Did he carve Jack-o-lanters out of pumpkins during harvest? Did his family have an Aunt Mary to visit on Thanksgiving? Did he experience the magic of Christmas lights and tree decorations?

Whose idea was it to plant cedar trees bordering the sidewalk just before the porch-steps? How many cows lulled around the barn or filled the milking stalls? Were there pigs and chickens in the sheds, hay in the barn loft, grain in the corncrib?

At the southern end of the "barnyard," adjacent to the hog pens was the windmill. The squeaking of its metal in the breeze resulted in a strange lullaby of contentment. It pumped water and pointed toward the direction of the wind. Decades later, the windmill no longer whined in the breeze. No animals wandered the barnyard.

In time, the barnyard disappeared, too. The buildings that had sheltered several families through years of work, childhood, and changing seasons were bulldozed to make room for crops. Our small family farm became part of a larger operation.

The people who planted the orchard, raised children, tended the garden, and listened to the crickets on quiet evenings have mostly disappeared from the stories we can tell. What remains of the lives lived there? Memories, perhaps some old photographs, and maybe a mention or two in letters sent to relatives in Omaha or back in Germany. Their house is gone, and with it the rooms that might have prompted questions we never thought to ask while we were there.

Still, I wonder about those families. I wonder what they loved, what they looked forward to, and what their children remember, because their lives mattered too. And if all that remains are memories and a few photographs, perhaps that is enough.

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It's online at;
yourcountryneighbor.com

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Today I learned a new descriptive phrase related to fall in the novel I'm currently reading: seasonal fatigue. The phrase was applied to trees that were losing their leaves and were generally looking worn out. It's one of those expressions that can be aptly applied to most any living thing.

The vegetable garden is played out, awaiting the pulling of scraggly tomatoes and egg plants, and the return to storage of the panels and cages that supported the weight of their fruit throughout the summer.

Most of the patio plants that were so vibrant last spring have faded and been thrown out, replaced with displays of pumpkins and dried grasses in muted shades that complement the few remaining blooming perennials.

I am experiencing my own version of seasonal fatigue along with my landscape. The chore of picking, preserving, or passing on excess produce wears on all gardeners, I expect. Avoidance of food waste – not to mention the "waste" of effort already spent on tending the garden – compels me to try every avenue for distribution of vegetables. But ultimately, the seasonal fatigue of trying to give away the last few eggplants wins out over my compulsion to NOT waste food. Thankfully, the fall clean-up occurs when the weather is invigorating instead of exhausting. My fatigue turns to eagerness to be outdoors.

Paring down the outdoor plant material provides the same kind of satisfaction as clearing away household clutter. It's freeing, and almost like living in a different environment altogether. Instead of a Victorian-style abundance of natural décor, the outdoors takes on a more streamlined Frank Lloyd-Wright simplicity. One's senses get a break from too much visual stimulation.

That said, I confess that in a few short weeks I will feel the allure of indoor and outdoor holiday decorating. But I manage to keep that to a fairly restrained level. The decorations won't be up long enough to require dusting, and I won't have to find "takers" for my Christmas tree ornaments when the tree comes down. Nor will anything rot or stink in the storage boxes.

It's all good and I'm thankful I still have the ability to indulge my gardening and landscaping and decorating whims as I desire. I wish you all a joyous and thankful autumn, with a minimum of seasonal fatigue.

Larson Motors
NEBRASKA CITY, NE



New 2026 Ram 1500 Lone Star	
MSRP	$65,200
Doc Fee	+$199
Larson Finance Savings	- $1,000
Final Price	$64,698
Sale Price	$53,669
Total Savings	$11,029



New 2026 GMC Sierra 1500	
MSRP	$66,405
Doc Fee	+$199
Larson Finance Savings	- $1,000
Final Price	$65,903
Total Savings	$1,000



New 2026 Ford F-150 STX	
MSRP	$52,040
Doc Fee	+$199
Larson Trade Assist & Savings	- $2,000
Larson Ford Discount	- $1,971
Final Price	$48,567
Total Savings	$3,971



New 2026 Ford F-150 XLT	
MSRP	$70,850
Doc Fee	+$199
Larson Trade Assist & Savings	- $2,000
Larson Ford Discount	- $4,713
Final Price	$64,635
Total Savings	$6,713



New 2026 Chevrolet Trax RS	
MSRP	$27,990
Doc Fee	+$199
Larson Finance Savings	- $1,000
Final Price	$27,488
Total Savings	$1,000



New 2027 Chevrolet Equinox ACTIV	
MSRP	$39,485
Doc Fee	+$199
Larson Finance Savings	- $1,000
Final Price	$38,983
Total Savings	$1,000

(402) 873-5507 1801 Frontage Road P.O. Box 580 Nebraska City, NE 68410

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