

YOUR COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

Prairie Communities River Towns

FREE
July 2026



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Keep your cool.

Keep your cool. At least it's not snowing! Read about heat safety, page 3.

July 2026 Historic Reminder AUBURN, NEBRASKA is

Recognized by
"Your Country Neighbor."

(Historical summary compiled from public records.)

Auburn sits at the crossroads of history and community in southeast Nebraska. Born from the merger of two rival railroad towns in 1882, it soon became the seat of Nemaha County and developed into a center of commerce, government, and culture with proud agricultural traditions.

For generations, residents from across the county have come to Auburn to conduct business, attend community events, and gather around its historic downtown district. Many of the buildings that line its streets today reflect the optimism and growth of an earlier era, preserving a visible connection to the town's past.

From the courthouse square to the historic opera house and the excitement of rodeo season, Auburn blends history, hard work, and hometown pride in a way that still feels distinctly Nebraska. Today, Auburn remains a place where small-town life, local pride, and Nebraska tradition still meet at the crossroads.



Your Country Neighbor

Your "2-cups-of-coffee" companion

including local photos and articles

with the flavor of rural America.

This is “Your Country Neighbor” Territory

**Auburn • Brownville • Cook • Falls City • Johnson • Julian • Nebraska City
Nemaha • Papillion • Peru • Rock Port • Syracuse • Tecumseh • Verdon**

Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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

July

by a country neighbor

If June settles in, July makes itself at home. The Summer season no longer feels new. The days have found their rhythm, and most of us have adjusted to it. Mornings arrive early with bright skies and birds already at work. By afternoon, the heat has settled across the countryside like a heavy quilt, encouraging people and livestock alike to seek a patch of shade.

The fields tell the story best. Corn stands shoulder-high in some places, rustling softly whenever a breeze finds its way through. Soybeans have filled the rows with deep green, covering ground that seemed bare only weeks ago. From the road, everything looks healthy and confident. The growing season has moved beyond promise and into commitment.

Gardens are producing now. Tomatoes begin to show color. Cucumbers seem to appear overnight. Zucchini has a way of multiplying when no one is looking. A walk through the garden becomes less about checking on plants and more about deciding what to do with what they have given you.

Along the river, summer reaches its fullest expression. Boats move steadily through the water. Fishermen launch before sunrise, hoping to beat both the heat and the competition. The cottonwoods provide welcome shade, and the river itself seems to carry a slower mood, even though the current never truly rests.

July evenings have a character all their own. The sun lingers late, stretching the day well beyond supper. Fireflies begin their silent conversations across lawns and pastures. Crickets and tree frogs take over where the songbirds leave off. Front porches fill with people who have finished the day’s work but aren’t quite ready to go inside.

In Brownville, visitors arrive with summer on their minds. The shops, galleries, and winery welcome familiar faces and first-time travelers alike. The town moves comfortably between quiet moments and busy weekends, never seeming surprised by either.

In Nebraska City, Summer is impossible to separate from the trees. Streets and neighborhoods are shaded by canopies planted generations ago, offering relief from the July sun. Visitors find their way to the orchards, historic sites, and downtown shops, while residents move through familiar routines that feel no less enjoyable for being familiar. In Auburn, the pace remains comfortably steady. The courthouse square, local businesses, and community events provide a quiet rhythm to daily life. Like much of southeast Nebraska, both towns seem to understand that Summer is best appreciated not by rushing through it, but by taking time to enjoy where you are.

In Peru, Summer has settled into routine. Mowers make their weekly rounds, gardens demand attention, and neighbors pause to talk from driveways and front walks. The excitement of spring has faded, replaced by the steady work and simple pleasures of the season.

This is the month of maintenance and reward. Gardens need watering. Lawns need mowing. Weeds still find ways to get ahead of us. But there is satisfaction in these tasks. The effort invested earlier in the year begins to show itself in tangible ways.

Wildlife follows suit. Young birds have left the nest and are learning independence. Deer emerge cautiously along field edges in the evening light. Rabbits seem to appear wherever vegetables are growing, convinced they have been invited.

July does not ask for attention the way Spring does. It simply offers abundance. The fields are full, the gardens are generous, and the countryside hums with life from dawn until well after dark.

From my place between the river and the prairie, July feels less like a destination and more like a season fully realized—Summer standing at its peak, comfortable in its own skin.

Saturday, **July 18th** in Julian is a Time
to **Celebrate**, Reminisce, and **Have**
Fun!!



You're Invited to "The Little
Village That Could"



From 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Join the residents of Julian as they dedicate a renovated post office and maintain the history that began in the 1880's

- Enjoy grilled burgers
- Listen to live music and admire vintage cars on display
- Take a tour of historic Julian, reminisce over the magnificent display of photos and see the restorations.

Sponsored by the Nemaha County Visitors Committee and the Friends of Julian.

Julian Bar-b-que to be held Saturday July 18, 2026

The Julian Preservation Committee warmly invites you to attend a barbecue and dedication of the refurbished post office building on Saturday, July 18th. The celebration will start at 11:00 a.m. with the dedication of the post office building followed with the bar-b-que that will conclude at 3:00 p.m. Come and help us celebrate preserving the rich history of our little village – once the largest primarily French immigrant community in southeast Nebraska.

Come and admire the work that's been completed on the 1930s post office building and the 1928 gas station.

Hamburgers, hot dogs, and all the trimmings will be served and a free will donation will be accepted.

Proceeds will be used for future community improvement projects.

Area car clubs will have their vintage cars on display and live music entertainment will be on site for those attending to enjoy.

Tour the current projects and join us as we celebrate and embrace our heritage.



Julian, Nebraska's gas station & refurbished post office building.
Post office dedication & barbecue July 18 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM.

Public Service Note

Heat Safety: Taking Summer Temperatures Seriously

Summer is one of the most anticipated seasons of the year. Longer days, outdoor activities, gardening, county fairs, vacations, and family gatherings all encourage us to spend more time outside. Yet summer also brings a risk that is often overlooked because it develops gradually rather than suddenly.

Unlike tornadoes or severe thunderstorms, excessive heat rarely announces itself with dramatic warnings. However, heat-related illnesses can become serious quickly, particularly during extended periods of high temperatures and humidity. Health experts recommend drinking water regularly throughout the day, especially when working or spending time outdoors. Waiting until you feel thirsty may mean your body is already becoming dehydrated. Alcohol and excessive caffeine can contribute to dehydration and should be balanced with adequate water intake.

Whenever possible, strenuous outdoor activities should be scheduled during the cooler morning or evening hours. Frequent breaks in the shade or an air-conditioned environment can help prevent heat-related problems before they begin.

It is also important to recognize the warning signs of heat exhaustion. Heavy sweating, dizziness, weakness, headache, nausea, and muscle cramps may indicate that the body is struggling to cool itself. If these symptoms occur, move to a cooler location, drink water, and rest. If symptoms worsen or confusion develops, seek medical attention immediately.

Older adults, young children, and individuals with chronic health conditions are especially vulnerable during periods of extreme heat. A simple phone call or visit to a neighbor, friend, or relative can make a meaningful difference during a heat wave.

Pets require special attention as well. Fresh water and shade are essential, and animals should never be left in parked vehicles. Even with windows cracked open, temperatures inside a vehicle can rise rapidly to dangerous levels.

Recent years have brought a growing number of very warm days across the Midwest. Whether temperatures are setting records or simply remaining above normal for several days, preparation and awareness remain the best defenses.

Heat-related illnesses are largely preventable. A little caution, adequate hydration, and attention to those around us can help ensure that summer remains both enjoyable and safe.

Every summer, heat claims more lives nationwide than many weather events that receive far more attention. The good news is that most heat-related illnesses are preventable with awareness and a few simple precautions.

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Eagle nests in the area are empty. The chicks ventured out in early June. Watch for families soaring near river towns.

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10:00 AM Parade on Main Street between 6th Street and Hwy 136

FREEDOM FUN RUN - STRUT YOUR MUTT DOG SHOW - LORETTA'S DONUTS - PARADE

BREAKFAST BY LOCAL EASTERN STAR CHAPTER - QUILTS OF VALOR PRESENTATION

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES - BOUNCE HOUSES - FACE-PAINTING

BROWNVILLE VILLAGE THEATRE MATINEE

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The Sandhill Cranes migrate through the Grand Island, Nebraska area each Spring. They move on by early April, but I spotted a pair in the Loess Bluffs Wildlife Refuge on May 7th, apparently having made it their home. Note the little one; lower left. This is a rare sighting. Visit nature for excitement.

Drive Safely!



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I've seen Robins in February, but the Red-winged Blackbird is a sure sign of Spring



The closest bird I've ever seen to a Whooping Crane is the Great Egret, which is a type of heron.



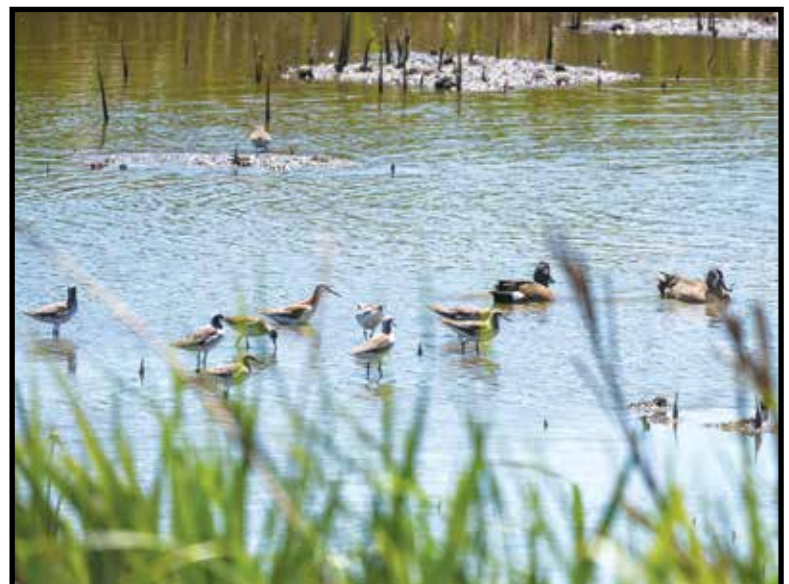
The Great Blue Heron is another graceful shore bird.



Canada Geese with their goslings in early Spring.



The Milkweed plant blooms through most of June.



I've never seen these wader birds before. Their name is "Wilson's Phalarope."

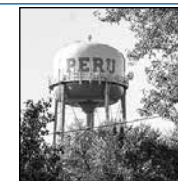
PERU CITY NEWS

Communication • Information • Pride In Community

A volunteer project

supported by the Peru Community.

Thank you to everyone who participates!



Slim's Stories

Submitted by Cheri & Nick Petrillo

Once upon a time a magnificent grand house stood at 1517 I Street. Although smaller than Arbor Lodge, it resembled it very much.

I first saw and heard of this house when I was browsing at the antique store that used to be by the stoplight. It was pictured on a postcard. I went and got dad to verify this house actually existed in Auburn. I could see it wasn't Arbor Lodge but the similarity was amazing. He took one look and told me where it had been located.

And then I heard another story from his boyhood. The house had been built in 1899 by Peter Berlet. He was President of the German American National Bank, which later became Auburn State Bank. Mr. Berlet later became a state legislator. It was designed by a famous Nebraska architect, George Berlinghof. He designed several other buildings in southeast Nebraska: the Beatrice library, the Nemaha County Courthouse and the library, the Chapel (the old gym now), the library and the administration building at Peru State College. He was named the Nebraska architect of the year.

In 1909 a fire started in the attic and could not be contained. Sadly for everyone, Auburn and the Berlets lost this beautiful house. Mr. Berlet was quoted in the 1909 Auburn newspaper as saying he planned to rebuild immediately but obviously this never happened.

Dad said when he was a boy it was the thing to do to dare someone to walk across this large empty lot with its crumbling chimneys and tall pine trees blowing in the nighttime breeze. Knowing him I'm sure he took the dare laughing all the way.

There was quite a bit more information about Peter Berlet on Google. He sounded like quite a strong headed, stubborn man.

PROFESSOR HERBERT BROWNELL

By John C. Chatelain, Omaha

Louise W. Mears wrote, "It was fortunate for both Peru and the University of Nebraska that the schools could supplement each other in the crucial pioneer days in education." Professor Nicholson came to Nebraska in 1874, taught eight years at Peru before moving on to the University where he established the Chemistry department. Miss Rosa Bouton, a graduate of Peru in 1881, established the department of Home Economics at the University. She was succeeded by another Peru teacher, Alice Loomis, alumna of 1896. Loomis Hall, "Co-operative House for Economic Girls" was named after her. Alice rose to distinction as a professor in the Institute of Human Relations at Yale. Nels Benstsen, 1902 Peru alum, became chairman of the department of geography at the University. Clifford Hendricks, 1906, went into the physical sciences; and Clyde Filley, 1899, headed up the department of Rural Economics. 1 Professor Herbert Brownell was among those renowned educators who migrated from Peru to Lincoln. He taught at Peru from 1895 to 1907 before becoming "teacher of teachers" at the University Teachers College. According to Mears, Brownell's "prestige attracted many young men of science." 2

The Brownells lived in the house just north of the former Methodist Parsonage on Fifth Street, later resided in by Susan (Adams) Palmer and currently by the Wykoffs. 3 While at Peru Brownell supervised the installation of the poles to bring a telephone line to campus in 1897. 4

While at Peru, Professor Brownell inspired native Peruvian, Edison Pettit (Class of 1910) to pursue a career in science. Pettit later received a PhD from the University of Chicago and eventually joined the staff at Mount Wilson Observatory in California. Craters on the moon and Mars are named for him. 5

Professor Brownell's textbooks on Physics and Chemistry included Handbook for School Trustees (1886), Lessons in General Chemistry (1911), Textbook in General Science and Economics of Daily Life (1918), A First Course in Physics (1929) and Physical Science (1931). He was born in New York on February 12, 1868. He died September 15, 1936, and is buried at Wyuka Cemetery in Lincoln. Brownell Elementary School in Lincoln was named for him. 6 A point of pride for Peru State College during the 1950s was that two sons of Professor Brownell were serving in the Eisenhower administration. During his time as U.S. Attorney General, Herbert Brownell, Jr. was involved in several civil rights cases, including Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. He was considered a strong contender for U.S. Supreme Court, vacancies in 1957, 1958 and 1969. Samuel Brownell, served as U.S. Commissioner of Education and superintendent of Detroit Schools. 7 Samuel married Esther Delzell, daughter of the "beloved dean of the college," W. N. Delzell who came to Peru as a student in 1891 and to teach in 1905. 8 Delzell Hall is named for him. 9

1 HILLS of PERU, Nebraska Lore, Louise W. Mears, p.51;

2 Ibid;

3 Across the Wide Missouri, Peru, Nebraska 1854-1991, by Ernest Longfellow, p. 72;

4 Nebraska's First College: Shaping the Future Since 1867:p. 48

5 Ibid p. 54;

6 Ibid p. 48;

7 Ibid: pp. 122-123;

8 Across the Wide Missouri, Peru, Nebraska 1854-1991, by Ernest Longfellow, p.72;

9 Ibid p. 70

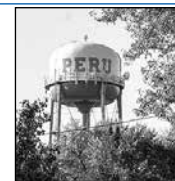
PERU CITY NEWS

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Tuesday Literary Club Reads

DiAnna Loy, Tuesday Literary Club

Juneteenth: The History and Legacy of the Holiday that Commemorates the End of Slavery in the South

Charles River Editors

Celebrants of the first Independence Day took little time to ponder the status of equality between the races. Primarily, their attention was taken up with the overthrow of a foreign colonial power, one not accomplished through the will of an overwhelming majority. The bold move shaped by colonial legislators and promoted to the colonies by the founding fathers represented a first-of-its kind emancipation, as no European colonel had so completely faced down its mother country in a test of wills. John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail that he hoped to see such a day solemnized with "Pomp and parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires, and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forevermore." Americans have lived up to Adams' vision, and the Independence Day celebration has remained vigorous through the centuries.

Galveston's Juneteenth Story: And Still We Rise

W. Dwayne Jones, Galveston Historical Foundation, Tommie Boudreaux

Galveston was the birthplace of Juneteenth. Issued in Galveston on June 19, 1865, General Orders, No. 3 announced to the people of Texas that all slaves were free. It is one of the Island's most important historical moments. Although Juneteenth has now become the basis for a national holiday, many Americans wonder how and why this date emerged as the basis for the oldest continually celebrated commemoration of the end of slavery. To even begin to answer these questions, it is necessary to return to the historic roots of the event itself. The Galveston Historical Foundation's African American Heritage Committee tracks Emancipation Day observances through previously unknown images and untold stories which are also part of an interactive exhibit experience at Ashton Villa, the site of Galveston's city-wide Juneteenth celebration.

On Juneteenth

Annette Gordon-Reed

Weaving together American history, dramatic family chronicle, and searing episodes of memoir, Annette Gordon-Reed's *On Juneteenth* provides a historian's view of the country's long road to Juneteenth, recounting both its origins in Texas and the enormous hardships that African-Americans have endured in the century since, from Reconstruction through Jim Crow and beyond. All too aware of the stories of cowboys, ranchers, and oilmen that have long dominated the lore of the Lone Star State, Gordon-Reed—herself a Texas native and the descendant of enslaved people brought to Texas as early as the 1820s—forges a new and profoundly truthful narrative of her home state, with implications for us all.

Martha Louise Rayne

Sylvia Shires, Peru

Once, while visiting a small museum, I came across a fascinating 1881 volume opened on display upon a Victorian table. The author was Martha Louise Rayne; I had never heard of her. Titled *Gems of Deportment & Hints of Etiquette. A Manual for the Home*, it proved to be far more than a how-to-behave-in-polite-society handbook. For one thing, etiquette books were written either for women or men, not for both, as this one was. While it contains loads of advice on hygiene, hospitality, horseback riding, and more, it also offered various chapters that were of a "food for the soul" caliber. For instance, on the section concerning weddings, she bluntly writes, "The girls of the present time are more sordid than their grandmothers were. . . they have luxurious tastes and. . . govern their lives accordingly." She blames the absence or negligence of the sacredness of marriage as the cause for divorce.

Among the most arresting chapters is the one on reading. The Bible and Shakespeare head the list, which comprises the great authors of Antiquity, then Plutarch, Dante, Hugo, Moliere, Dickens, Milton, Bunyan, German writers like Goethe and Schiller, and many more, as well as reference books that provide a solid knowledge of history, geography, philosophy, biographies. As if this was not enough, she also recommends reading newspapers and good periodicals. Her reading list would put to shame many of today's college students! Other chapters concern music and art, the value of learning new languages as well as traveling abroad.

Captivated by this book, I needed to know more about its author.

Born in Nova Scotia in 1836, Martha (Woodworth) Rayne moved to the U.S. in 1854. At 19, she married Robert Rayne, of whom we know little, except that he was an unsuccessful businessman. This means that Martha was the family's steady bread-winner. The marriage seems to have been a loving one and withstood the deaths of eight of their ten children. Martha was largely self-taught, which explains her views on the importance of reading.

Continued on page 9 >>>>>

<<<< Martha, Continued from page 8

The years 1870-1890s saw a rise in journalism, the number and distribution of newspapers increased. Furthermore, even though most journalists were men, the number of women rose significantly. Martha seized this opportunity and wrote for The Chicago Tribune, under the pen name of "Vic." She moved to Detroit and worked for the Detroit Free Press. She also became the owner and editor of The Chicago Magazine of Fashion, Music & Home Reading.

Being a woman offered her the advantage of being granted, in 1875, a private interview with Mary Lincoln, who had been interned in a mental asylum, after a rather slipshod trial declared her insane. Martha's report was a major factor in facilitating the release and rehabilitation of the grieving widow of President Lincoln. Through this, Martha gained recognition in exclusive interviews such as one with President Grover Cleveland and with poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

In 1886, Martha wrote *What Can a Woman Do? Or Her Position in the Business & Literary World*. The book was a comprehensive guide to help women find a variety of jobs that could either support them, if they were single, or complement the family income. It sold 100,000 copies. Today's feminists interpret it as the work of early feminism and rebellion against "a man-dominated" society. In this, however they are mistaken, because Martha always respected and ardently supported the concept of "True Womanhood," who saw piety, purity, domesticity as core feminine values. Martha did not reject these at all, but believed that adding self-reliance would, in fact, improve the partnership in a loving marriage. Consequently, the last chapters of the book focus on the "Kingdom of Home."

However, the work describes a variety of jobs women could do, from housekeeper to telegraphist, entrepreneur, dress maker, bee keeper, gardener, keeping a boarding house, musician, government clerk, photograph colorist, nurse, doctor, writer, and, of course, journalist. It provides our 21st century with an instructive window into Victorian America and the discovery that women had access to a significant variety of professions.

In 1886, Martha opened her own school of journalism for women, the first in the world, which served as blueprint for later university courses in the field of journalism and reporting.

She also wrote poems, short stories, five novels, opened a second school of journalism in Chicago, became the Michigan representative of the Women's National Press Club in Washington DC, the charter member of the Michigan Women's Press Association, before she was finally inducted posthumously into the Michigan Journalism Hall of Fame in 1998. After the death of her husband in 1899 and until her own in 1911, she lived with her married daughters but continued to contribute articles to various newspapers.

So, what makes Martha Louise Rayne worthy of being remembered? She was one of our nation's unsung heroes, who contributed to make our Nation. Like many of her contemporaries, she had her share of hardships, but she did not let difficulty and loss destroy her. With true American spirit, she "stepped up to the plate" and not only secured her family's financial stability, but she also contributed greatly to society by her writing and by pioneering professional journalism for women.

Haunted?

The Sign

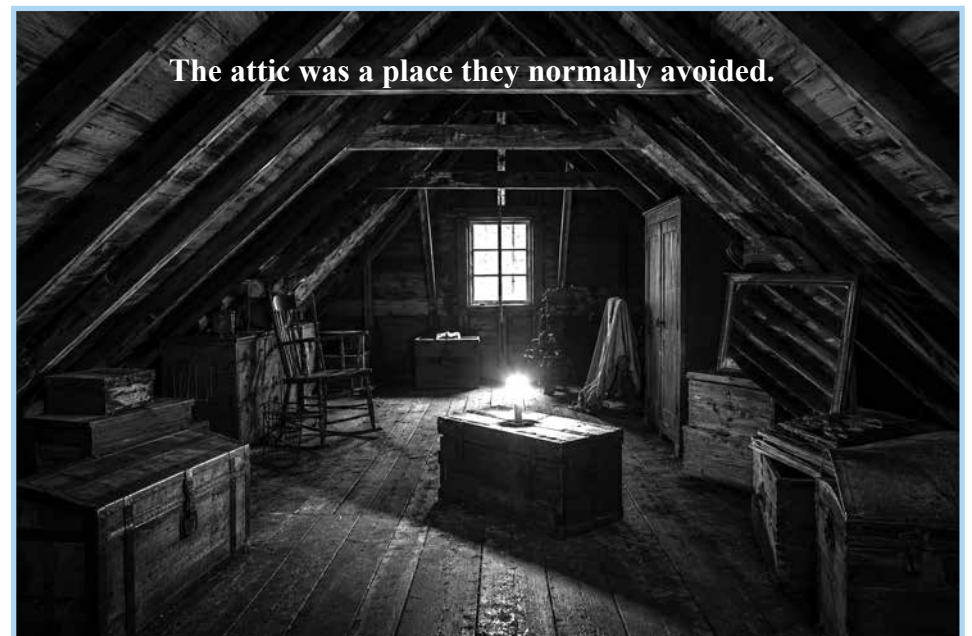
by a wandering neighbor

The following story is based on a tale told by Omaha schoolchildren many years ago. Whether it happened exactly this way is impossible to know. Like most good ghost stories, it has changed a little with every telling.

Three children were playing with an Ouija board on a rainy summer evening. At first they sat around the dining room table, giggling as they asked foolish questions about buried treasure, movie stars, and whether school might somehow be canceled forever.

After a while, one of them had an idea.

"Let's take it up to the attic."



The attic was a place they normally avoided. The steep stairs led to a dim space beneath the roof where trunks, old furniture, and forgotten boxes sat beneath thick layers of dust. A single window looked out over the backyard, but by evening it reflected more darkness than light.

Armed with a candle, the children climbed the stairs.

The board was placed on an old wooden crate. The candle flickered beside it, throwing long shadows among the rafters.

For nearly an hour they asked questions. Their fingertips followed the moving planchette around the board. Some answers were nonsense. Others seemed strangely direct.

One of the children asked, "Is anyone really there?"

The pointer slid slowly.

Y-E-S

The children exchanged nervous glances.

"Who are you?" another asked.

The pointer moved again, spelling letters one at a time.

W-A-I-T

That answer unsettled them. Nobody spoke for several seconds.

Then the boldest of the three laughed nervously.

"If there's really a spirit here, give us a sign."

Continued on page 17 >>>>>



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Waiting: Field Notes from the Western Plains

The waiting has begun.

Not the kind that comes in Winter, when everyone knows little can be done. This is a different sort of waiting. Summer is supposed to be a season of movement. Crops grow. Grass climbs. Hay gets cut. Calves gain weight. The year pushes forward whether you're ready or not.

But some years seem to pause.

The fire is no longer the story.

The smoke is gone. The headlines have drifted elsewhere. Most people who weren't directly affected have moved on to other things. Summer always brings a new subject to talk about.

Out here, though, the questions remain.

Will the grass come back?

Will there be enough moisture?

How much of what was lost can be rebuilt before another winter arrives?

The answers are slower than anyone would like.

There are places where the prairie is beginning to show itself again. Small patches of green appear where there was only ash and bare soil a few months ago. The land has always known how to recover. Long before there were roads and fences, fire was part of its story.

But recovery has its own timetable.

You cannot hurry grass.

You cannot bargain with rainfall.

You cannot force a season to become something it isn't.

So people wait.

They watch the sky.

They measure what little rain falls.

They drive past the same fields and pastures day after day, looking for changes that are almost too small to notice.

Sometimes the waiting extends beyond the weather.

There is waiting for assistance.

Waiting for claims to be settled.

Waiting for repairs to be completed.

Waiting for decisions to be made in offices far away.

And yes, waiting to see whether a federal major disaster declaration will finally arrive.

All of it takes longer than expected.

Perhaps that is why neighbors seem more willing to stop and talk this year.

Not because they have answers.

Because they have the same questions.

A conversation that begins with rainfall totals may drift into pasture conditions. A discussion about fences may end with speculation about what the rest of the summer will bring. Nobody knows much for certain, but there is comfort in comparing notes.

The prairie has always encouraged that.

Distances are too great and challenges too large for anyone to carry entirely alone.

For now, there is little to do except continue.

Repairs get made.

Fields get checked.

Plans get adjusted.

The sky gets watched.

And somewhere beneath it all is the quiet understanding that much of life on the Plains has always involved waiting for things beyond our control.

Waiting for rain.

Waiting for growth.

Waiting for recovery.

Waiting to discover whether this difficult year was an exception—or the beginning of something different.

The season will answer in its own time.

Until then, we wait.

A

Prairie Love

Chapter 16:

A Vow in the Wind – October 1924

The prairie had turned gold with the season, the grasses tall and rustling, the trees touched with fire. The windmill creaked softly in the distance, its blades catching the morning sun as it spun slow and steady—a silent witness, like always. Cora stood before the small mirror in her childhood room, fastening the clasp of a simple necklace her mother had laid out that morning. The pendant, a worn silver locket with a faded engraving, had once belonged to her grandmother. Her “something old.”

Her mother had already gone to help with the food and chairs, leaving the house hushed. Only her father remained, waiting at the bottom of the stairs.

She descended slowly, dress brushing the walls, heart full. He looked up and smiled, eyes damp with memory.

“You look like your mother did,” he said, voice gruff with pride. “The morning we married.”

Cora stepped to him, looping her arm through his. “I’m glad you’re walking me there.”

He cleared his throat and nodded, leading her toward the door. Outside, the sky was clear and wide, the breeze crisp with October’s breath. They walked the narrow path to the clearing beside the cabin, where chairs had been set up under a canopy of turning cottonwoods.

Lyle stood at the front, Henry beside him, straightening his collar one last time. Henry had joked about being best man but had taken the role to heart—he even wore a tie, despite his protests.

When Lyle saw Cora, his smile steadied, quiet and sure.

The ceremony was simple. No preacher—just her uncle, who had been appointed Justice of the Peace years ago. Friends and family gathered in their Sunday best, children squirming and elders whispering. The leaves overhead rustled in gentle applause as the vows were spoken.

“I give you my hand, and my days,” Lyle said, his voice rich with emotion.

“And I give you my trust, and my tomorrows,” Cora replied.



“They paused at the gate, fingers entwined.”

When the kiss was shared, someone rang an old bell from the barn, and laughter followed.

Later, quilts were spread on the grass, and dishes passed from hand to hand. There was fresh cider, cornbread, ham, and apple pie. A fiddle began to play, and the young folks danced barefoot in the leaves.

Lyle and Cora slipped away just before sunset, walking the short distance to the cabin. The windows glowed with warmth, and the windmill turned gently above.

They paused at the gate, fingers entwined.

“I feel like we built this,” Cora whispered. “Not just the house. All of it.”

“We did,” Lyle said. “And we’ll keep building it. One season at a time.”

Inside, the stove was already warming the room. Outside, the prairie stretched wide and ready, the windmill spinning slow and faithful, just as it always had.

Continued in August



Letters from the Prairie

November, 1888 Nemaha County, Nebraska

16th Letter from Anna Wilhelmine Bauer to her sister Klara in Germany

My dearest Klara,

The first true cold has arrived.

For several mornings now the water pail has worn a skin of ice, thin enough to crack beneath a finger but thick enough to remind us that autumn is slipping away. The grass sparkles white at dawn, and the cattle breathe clouds into the air as though they carry little chimneys within them. By midday the frost usually disappears, yet the warmth of summer feels very far away.

Next week we shall celebrate Thanksgiving.

I wonder what you would think of this American custom. When we first came to Nebraska, it seemed only another curious holiday belonging to other people. We knew harvest festivals in Germany, of course, and days set aside for prayer and gratitude, but this was something different. Here, even those with little to spare make an effort to gather around the table and give thanks for what the year has provided.

Over time it has become one of my favorite days.

There is comfort in stopping for a few hours before winter begins in earnest. The work never truly ends on a farm, but Thanksgiving asks us to pause and notice what has already been given.

Yesterday Lena helped me polish the good dishes while the boys carried extra wood into the shed. Johann says there may be company if the roads remain passable. The Millers from two farms over may come, along with old Mr. Eckert, who has no family nearby. We have done the same for others in years past, and I suspect one day our children will do likewise. Out here, neighbors often become something very much like relatives.

The pantry shelves are fuller than they were a year ago. There are jars of peaches and beans, sacks of potatoes, and enough flour to carry us well into winter. Looking at those shelves, I found myself remembering our first seasons here.

Do you remember how uncertain everything seemed when we left home? There were evenings when I lay awake listening to the wind and wondering whether we had been foolish to cross an ocean. The prairie felt endless then. Every task seemed larger than our strength.

Yet little by little a life was built.

A fence post driven into the ground. A garden planted. A roof repaired. A child born. A friendship formed. None of it happened quickly. Looking back, I think gratitude grows much the same way. It arrives one small blessing at a time until one day you realize it has filled the whole field.

Last Sunday our pastor spoke of giving thanks not only for abundance but also for endurance. I have thought often about those words. Most years are not remarkable. They contain disappointments, worries, illnesses, broken tools, dry spells, and unexpected expenses. Yet they also contain laughter around the supper table, warm bread from the oven, healthy children, and another sunrise over the prairie.

Perhaps that is enough.

As Thanksgiving approaches, I find myself grateful for something else as well—your letters. Though so many miles separate us, your words still bring me back to the days when we walked together beneath the chestnut trees and imagined what our futures might become. Life carried us farther than either of us expected, but I am thankful that it did not carry us entirely apart.

When our family gathers next week, know that I shall think of you. Somewhere across the ocean another table will be set, another lamp lit against the early darkness. The distance between us remains great, yet love has a way of crossing even the widest spaces.

May God keep you warm through the coming winter.

With a grateful heart and enduring affection,

Anna

Continued in August

Westward With Lewis & Clark

Chapter 12, Part 2 *The Prairie Fire* Late August, 1804

“It travels faster than a horse in good wind,” one of the engagés remarked quietly.

Whether true or not, none argued.

By late afternoon the smoke dimmed the sun enough to cast an amber light across the plains. Ash drifted intermittently through the air, settling upon the boats and water alike. One small blackened fragment landed upon my sleeve and remained there several moments before the wind carried it off again. Strangely, the country did not appear lifeless beneath the smoke.

Quite the opposite.

Birds moved constantly ahead of the advancing burn. Rabbits darted through the grass in sudden bursts. Once we watched a lone wolf emerge from the haze upon a distant ridge, pause long enough to study the river below, then disappear again into the rolling ground beyond.

Toward evening we made camp upon a gravel bar where the river bent sharply eastward. The captains judged the water wide enough there to protect us should the fire turn unexpectedly north.

The men spoke little while gathering wood.

Smoke softened the sunset until the entire western sky glowed dim red, as though the horizon itself retained heat beneath the earth. After supper several sat watching the distant line of flame long after darkness settled.

It moved most clearly at night.

There could be no mistaking it then. The prairie flickered in broken ribbons of orange stretching across the far country, appearing and vanishing behind rises in the land. At times the flames seemed still. Then suddenly an entire section would brighten and advance, bending low beneath the wind like something alive.

No one called it beautiful.

Yet no man looked away easily either.

Near the fire, Drouillard sat cleaning his knife with slow, deliberate motions. Someone asked whether the Indians set such fires intentionally.

“Sometimes,” he answered. “Sometimes lightning does it. Prairie burns either way.”

After that, silence returned.

I remained awake longer than usual. Across the river the moving line of fire continued its distant passage through the dark, consuming what stood before it and leaving behind ground that by spring would grow again.

Watching it, I understood something I had not fully grasped before.

This country does not resist change. It expects it.

And those who travel through it must learn the same.

—Elias LeGrand

Continued in August

July 2026

Your Country Neighbor 13

ARBOR CITY NEWS

Morton-James Public Library Calendar of Events July 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

Independence Day Story Time
Wednesday, July 1st 10:00AM - 10:30AM

Yarn Crafters Club
Wednesday, July 1st 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!

Farmers Market
Thursday, July 2nd 4:30PM - 5:30PM

The Library will have a table at the Nebraska City Farmers Market with free craft supplies and other giveaways.

Library Closed for Independence Day
Saturday, July 3rd & 4th

*Library at Treestock July 4 (Steinhart Park) 11-1

Lego Club Monday, July 6 3:30 - 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.

Story Time with Lifetime Vision
Wednesday, July 8th 10:00AM - 10:30AM

Library Board Meeting
Wednesday, July 8th 4:00PM - 6:00PM

Engaging Mature Minds
Thursday, July 9th 10:00AM - 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. Optional free will donations to support the library accepted. Topic is Poverty.

HN: "Behind the Meaning of Names" with Karen Gettert Shoemaker
Sunday, July 12th 2:00PM - 3:00PM

Author will discuss the role of family stories and historic research in writing her novel that was selected in 2016 for the One Book One Nebraska title.

Picnic-Themed Story Time
Wednesday, July 15th 10:00AM - 10:30AM

Evening Book Club
Wednesday, July 15th 5:00PM - 6:30PM
How to Age Disgracefully by Clare Pooley

Farmers Market
Thursday, July 16th 4:30PM - 5:30PM

The Library will have a table at the Nebraska City Farmers Market with free craft supplies and other giveaways.

Adult Renaissance Mini Party
Friday, July 17th 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Costumes encouraged, not required. Circus Performer, map making, trinkets, fantasy Books, Photo Station and necklace Making. Come join the fun! No reservation required. Ages 19+

Lego Club
Monday, July 20th 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, July 21st 2:00PM - 3:00PM
Time Traveler's Wife by Audrey Niffenegger

We Love the Library Story Time
Wednesday, July 22nd 10:00 - 10:30AM

Engaging Mature Minds
Thursday, July 23rd 10:00AM - 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. Optional free will donations to support the library accepted. Topic is Keep Nebraska City Beautiful

Sizzlin' Summer Book and Treat
Thursday, July 23rd 5:00PM - 7:00PM

Adults 19+ are invited to match their next great read anytime between 5-7 pm enter to win gift baskets and get a treat!

Strawberry Shortcake Tea
Saturday, July 25th 2:00PM - 3:00PM

REGISTRATION required and includes a spot for one child over 5 years and one adult. Refreshments include various teas and Apple juice along with catering by Whispering Pines. Call 402-873-5609 or visit Library to register.

Zachary Lane, Author Visit
Sunday, July 26th 2:00PM - 3:00PM

Zachary Lane is Nebraska's Old West storyteller, bringing history to life through gripping tales of the frontier. His novels—including **Death Rode to Lodgepole Creek, At the Point of a Gun, and Gunfight at Camp Clarke Bridge**—capture the grit, danger, and courage of the Great Plains in the late 1800s. His latest novel includes **Ride That Glory Train, An Adventure on the Underground Railroad** (Book One), published by Dusty Saddles Publishing, a leading publisher of novels about the Old West.

Youth Snack and Scribble
Wednesday, July 29th 10:00AM - 10:30AM

Story Times are geared for ages 6 and under. No registration. Families welcome!

Adult Craft Class: Beaded Coaster
Wednesday, July 29th 6:00PM - 7:00PM

Registration required - call 402-873-5609 or visit the Library.

Farmers Market
Thursday, July 30th 4:30PM - 5:30PM

The Library will have a table at the Nebraska City Farmers Market with free craft supplies and other giveaways.

Kimmel Gallery

EXTENDED Through July 31!

FOLLOW YOUR PASSION!

Photography by Teresa Fields

Open during regular Library hours.

Reminder, MJPL will be

closed on July 3 & 4.

ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City




Singles In Agriculture

Remembering Rural Roots — and Making New Friends

The national organization of Singles In Agriculture is hosting their annual convention in Nebraska City, NE the weekend of **July 16-19, 2026**. It also marks the 40th Anniversary since the group was founded. Singles in Agriculture(SIA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated in providing social and educational opportunities to single persons with a background or interest in agriculture. Members and guests enjoy reasonably priced events across the United States.

We encourage singles to come and see what we are all about. We invite you to come for the meet and greet on Thursday. Or any part of the weekend. We would love to meet you. Thursday night, July 16th: Meet and Greet 7-9 pm at the Best Western, 2515 South 11th Street.

Some of the events planned for the weekend: Tour of the Kimmel Orchard and vineyard, a play at the Brownville Village Theatre, tour of the Southeast Nebraska Cancer Memorial Garden in Humboldt, NE and much more. For more information contact Cindy (308)920-0364 or Larry (712)269-3414 or visit the website: singlesinagriculture.com



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ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

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Show!



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Your Country Neighbor

A Southeast Nebraska

Regional Magazine (w/News)

Heritage Guild Quilt Raffle Returns for 2026

The Heritage Needlework Guild of Nebraska City is once again offering a beautiful handcrafted quilt as its annual raffle fundraiser.



This year's quilt, titled Heritage Square, measures 90 inches by 90 inches and showcases the talent and craftsmanship of Guild members Carol Woerlen, Sharon Clark, and Pam Estrada. The quilt will be awarded during the Guild's annual Quilt and Needlework Show held during the Applejack Festival in September.

Raffle tickets are available for \$1 each or seven tickets for \$5. The drawing will take place at 4 p.m. on Sunday, September 20, and the winner does not need to be present.

In addition to the quilt raffle, the Guild will also award several themed raffle baskets created by members. Popular themes often include Christmas, Baby, Husker, and other family-friendly favorites.

Funds raised through these activities help support the Heritage Needlework Guild's community service projects and educational efforts throughout the year.

For quilt lovers and anyone who appreciates fine craftsmanship, the Heritage Square raffle offers a chance to take home a one-of-a-kind creation while supporting a worthwhile local organization.



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ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

<< HAUNTED, *Continued from page 9*

At that exact moment, the candle went out.
Not flickered.

Not sputtered.

Out.

The darkness was immediate and complete.

A scream erupted from somewhere in the attic.
Later, none of the children could agree whose
scream it had been.

Within seconds the attic was empty.

The children raced down the stairs, collided with
one another in the hallway, and burst into the
kitchen breathless and pale.

The adults found the story amusing.

“A draft,” one said.

“Old houses do that,” said another.

No one believed the children.

The Ouija board remained in the attic.

Or so everyone thought.

The next morning, one of the children gathered
enough courage to return upstairs.

Sunlight streamed through the dusty window.
The attic appeared perfectly ordinary.

But the board was no longer sitting on the crate
where they had left it.

It was leaning against a far wall nearly twenty
feet away.

Across the wall’s dusty surface, traced by what
looked like a single finger, was one word.

HELLO

The child never entered the attic alone again.

Years later, all three would remember that night.

Two of them eventually decided it had been a
prank.

The third never did.

Because he never told the others what he saw in
the split second before the candle went out.

Standing behind them, beyond the circle of
light, was the faint outline of a woman watching
quietly from the darkness.

And when the flame disappeared, so did she.

Melanoma Vaccine

Researchers are testing a very promising personal-
ized mRNA vaccine for melanoma, especially for
people with high-risk melanoma after surgery. It
is not yet FDA-approved, but it has advanced into
large Phase 3 trials and is getting a great deal of at-
tention in cancer medicine.

The leading program is being developed by Mod-
erna and Merck. The experimental vaccine is called
intismeran autogene (also known as mRNA-4157 or
V940). It is given together with the immunotherapy
drug Keytruda.

Here is what makes it unusual:

- It is custom-made for each patient.
- Doctors analyze the genetic muta-
tions in that person’s melanoma tumor.
- The vaccine is then designed to
teach the immune system to recognize those specific
cancer markers (“neoantigens”) and attack remain-
ing melanoma cells.

The results so far have been encouraging:

- In a Phase 2b study of 157 patients
with Stage III or IV melanoma after surgery, the
combination of the vaccine plus Keytruda reduced
the risk of melanoma recurrence or death by about
49% compared with Keytruda alone.
- More recent five-year follow-up
data presented in 2026 also suggested a 59% reduc-
tion in distant metastasis or death.
- Overall survival trends also ap-
peared better in the vaccine group, although re-
searchers still consider that exploratory until larger
trials are complete.

A large Phase 3 trial involving more than 1,000
patients is now underway.

One important point: this is generally considered
a treatment vaccine, not a preventive vaccine like
measles or polio vaccines. It is intended to help pre-
vent melanoma from returning after treatment rather
than preventing melanoma in healthy people.

There are also other melanoma vaccine approaches
being tested by companies such as BioNTech and
several academic cancer centers, but the Moderna/
Merck program is currently the furthest along clini-
cally.



Arbor Lodge

Bruce Madsen, Nebraska City

Arbor Lodge is a place you might want to see
It’s nestled right here on the edge Nebraska City
Serene and green and full of comforting shade
It’s quiet and peaceful and beautifully displayed

Mowed and trimmed with Lilacs in bloom
And trees surrounding a mansion full of elegant rooms
Paths to walk on and room for kids to play
A nice place to relax at the end of the day

Trees planted over a hundred years ago
Are now tall and stately and create an appealing show
There is so much to see at this manicured estate
To see it all, just drive through the gate

I’ve spent some time here over the years
Always brings the feeling of nature near
A magnificent asset to this part of the state
Bring your family and enjoy it, the beauty awaits

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It’s online at;

yourcountryneighbor.com

P o e t r y

by Devon Adams, Nebraska City

WALK IN THE WILD

Down
by the
water at
the bottom
of a hill in the
pasture on the farm
by the railroad track with
the train that goes clickety-clack
behind your back as you walk on a
path cut by the cows on the way back
from a drink deep in the creek, is a deer
in the shade made by a cottonwood grown
high as the sky, with waxy leaves shiny as glass.
She is watching me walk away through brome that
is blowing in the wind of a day full of sun and shadows
and songs sung by birds in the bushes and sky and trees.
Now I'm huffing and puffing from shuffling up hill
in a hurry to get back to the kitchen and cook
up some bacon and eggs and beans to go
with the raspberry pie and ice cream
waiting for a date with a plate!

MARBLES

Out in the oldest part
of the cemetery is a very
small grave. It has marbles
set in cement on top. They
spell out the name of the
little girl who sleeps there
forever, under the shade
and the violets.
She was six or so, from a
poor family, but they loved
her with colorful marbles
that speak of fun and a
future that never came.
Some say she sings and
plays there yet, because
they have heard her tiny
voice when walking past.
Some day we might meet
her and sing along.

CANYONS OF THE NIGHT

Deep in the caverns of sleep
are rivers of dreams that flow
through endless canyons in our
minds that are made of pieces
of our lives mixed with fantasy.
Vivid and disturbing or wild and
lovely, we ride the thought waves
as they wind through time, like
braided rivers weaving stories
that feel true. People from life
or who have passed greet us
and join our journey or not.
Waking is an adventure as the
bonds that hold us captive in
sleep begin to break and we
have no choice except to come
back.

By Artist, Devon Adams
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1220 Oak Street, Apt. A, Box 9
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Phone: 402-209-9377

adamsdevon07@gmail.com

DARK RED ROSES

The house still stands, with
all the ground around it planted
full of corn. It passed knee high
long before the fourth of July.
The gravel road still runs in the
same place along the square mile
block of the county plat, as the
rows of corn form lines inside the
old quilt block that dates back
to when the first generation of
homesteaders stuck a shovel in
the dirt. Embroidered on the worn
ground are the flowers that Great
Grandma planted as a bride. Dark
red roses were her favorite, and
there they are now, by the sagging
front steps, entertaining bees and
butterflies, as Grandma Ida, lovely
and young again, is waving to us.
We can't see her, but her ghost is
happy to see us here.

CELEBRATE

Sound and fire will come from
matches and fuses instead of
clouds and lightning for a few
hours of celebration on July 4th.
It will sound like a war and our
ancestors fought and won wars
to give us freedom to think and
be independent. Through the
years, that right has been won
over and over again, because we
have to learn the hard way about
truth: that you don't appreciate
being free until someone takes
it away from you.

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Have you noticed that some of the employees at McDonald's, Walmart, and other stores seem a little older these days? Not older like the rest of us perhaps, but certainly older than many of the employees we saw just a few years ago.

I'm reminded of those job applications that ask for a birth date. Employers aren't supposed to discriminate based on age, yet for years many older applicants felt quietly pushed aside. Now the situation seems to be changing. Why?

Some employers say younger people are harder to find or harder to keep. Whether that's entirely true or not, the result is that more opportunities are opening for older workers. Many businesses are discovering that experience still matters. Reliability matters. Showing up on time matters. Courtesy matters.

An aging workforce doesn't necessarily mean slower or less capable workers. Often it means friendly service, dependable performance, and people who take pride in doing a job well. Employers who once overlooked older applicants may be finding themselves pleasantly surprised by the results.

For many older Americans, a part-time job isn't just about earning a paycheck. With grocery prices, gasoline costs, and other expenses climbing, a little extra income can certainly help. But work is not always about money.

A few shifts each week can provide purpose, friendships, and structure. It offers a reason to get out of the house, meet people, and remain connected to the community. Many older workers genuinely enjoy being useful and contributing in a meaningful way.

Some companies even offer tuition assistance for employees taking college classes. Some go as far as paying for tuition and books. Think about that for a moment. A benefit often intended for younger people can also open doors for someone in their fifties, sixties, or beyond. Imagine taking an American History course, learning a new language, creative writing, or finally trying out that musical instrument you've always wanted to play. It's a different world than the one many of us expected. Parts of it are confusing. Parts of it are messy. But some of the changes are opening doors that were once closed.

The next time you're checking out at a store, look at the person behind the counter. They may be working because they need the money. They may be working because they enjoy meeting people. Or they may simply have discovered that over "60" doesn't mean sitting still. Whatever the reason, they're helping prove that usefulness doesn't come with an expiration date.

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

We recently returned from a two-and-a-half-week trip to Arizona. The trip was great, but as typically happens, we were happy to be back home. When we left, the tomato plants were only 8 inches tall, and the coneflowers were barely blooming. But three inches of rain during our absence resulted in 2-foot tomato plants badly in need of staking, and a jungle of coneflowers. Oh, and plenty of weeds. Not that I'm complaining. After last summer's outdoor watering restrictions, I'm very happy to have lots of rain and the weeds that come along with it. Rain or no rain, being gone during the first half of June is not ideal for maintaining flower or vegetable gardens. And Hubby is already talking about a trip next June to Taos, New Mexico! I may have to lodge an objection to that timeframe.

Our resident bunnies (see last month's column) have almost outgrown their bunny stage. They have lost their chubby, cuddly shape and are like pre-teens now: long-legged and lean. I am observing their eating habits in the hope of deterring them from destroying too much. So far, clover seems to be their favorite meal. Luckily, it is fairly abundant in our neighborhood, though Hubby doesn't consider that lucky.

Hubby and I see things differently on a number of topics. Topics like the acceptability of leaving shoes in the living room on a perpetual basis; leaving the kitchen hand towel lying on the countertop instead of hanging it up; leaving cabinet doors open; leaving the torn-off tear-strips on resealable packages lying around. You can probably guess who the offender is in these scenarios. Hubby is blind to these clutter-making habits, so I pick up after him, being the long-suffering, part-time housewife that I am.

I'm sure you're thinking that these annoyances seem pretty inconsequential. You might even be feeling sorry for Hubby having such a nit-picky wife. And you're right. Hubby more than makes up for my picking up after him by doing the heavy lifting for me. It's Hubby who plants most of the garden and mows the lawn. And if a rabbit needs to be dealt with, it's Hubby who will do the dealing.

Soccer Football

Sheila Tinkham, Lincoln

Whoosh
GOAL ZOOM
Go USA
Soccer football
We play
We watch
TEAM USA
We are all fans
Go team Go!



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