

Your
June
2025

Country Neighbor

Free!
Take One



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



The Quiet Watcher of Morgan Hall
Page 3

In *"A Prairie Love,"*
Lyle and Cora's
feelings deepen
for each other.
page 3

In *"Westward with the Corps,"*
Elias Le Grand's backstory is
included, just as the
expedition's oars are about to
slice into the Missouri River
toward the unknown.
page 4

Letters from the Prairie, page 22

Based on diaries, letters and other historical records.

The letters from Anna Wilhelmine Bauer to her sister Klara in Germany are fictional, but they are inspired by authentic immigrant histories and letter-writing traditions of the late 1800s.

Anna's character is a fictional composite meant to evoke the real voices of women who built homes on the prairie. Her stories, emotions, and surroundings are rooted in historical detail, including emotional and spiritual ties to both the homeland and the new land.

I want to continue Anna's letters each month. Do they remind you of your grandparents' stories? Please send your comments to;

countryneighbor@windstream.net

Or use my mailing address on page 2.

Thank you!
Stephen

CONTENTS

Your "Window With a View"

of Small Town and Rural America

<i>"June is a Jewel"</i>	2
<i>"A Prairie Love"</i>	3
<i>"Westward with the Corps"</i>	4
Summer in Brownville.....	5
Peru State College Graduates.....	6 - 7
Peru City News.....	8 - 11
<i>"Tragedy Strikes Peru"</i> by John Chatelain.....	9
♥ Valentino's Coupon for up to Six!	12
<i>"Project Roar"</i> Ribbon Cutting.....	13
July 4th Poems by Sheila Tinkham.....	14
Arbor City News.....	15 - 19
Nebraska City's Morton-James Public Library.....	15
Bruce Madsen's <i>"For My Son On His Birthday"</i>	17
<i>"Quilt and Needlework Show's"</i> New Location.....	19
Devon Adams' Poetry & Portraits.....	21
<i>"Letters From The Prairie"</i>	22
Merri's Diary.....	23
<i>"Window On Fifth Street"</i>	23
Coupon for Oil Change!	24

“Your Country Neighbor” is delivered to the following communities in Southeast Nebraska & NW Missouri.
Auburn • Brownville • Cook • Falls City • Johnson • Julian • Nebraska City
Nemaha • Papillion • Peru • Rock Port • Syracuse • Tecumseh • Verdon

Your Country Neighbor

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

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Peru, Nebraska 68421

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www.yourcountryneighbor.com

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This Month’s Writers & Contributors

Devon Adams 21
John Chatelain 9
Nancy Feeney 19
Stephen Hassler 14, 23
Merri Johnson 23
DiAnna Loy 10
Bruce Madsen 17
Morton-James Public Library Calendar 15
Marty Peregoy 8 - 11
Sheila Tinkham 14

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 for-
get what you did, but people will never forget how
you made them feel.”*

Maya Angelou

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

Ghandi

June is a Jewel!

June steps in quietly but quickly fills the world with life. Trees
are now in full leaf, gardens are lush with color, and the long
daylight hours seem to stretch time just a little. Roses bloom with
abandon, birds sing before sunrise, and the hum of lawnmowers
and bees fills the air. It’s summer’s gentle beginning—a season
that doesn’t shout, but certainly knows how to sing.

Now is the time for porch sitting, strawberry picking, and lei-
surely drives along country roads bordered with green fields and
wildflowers. Black raspberries ripen in quiet corners, and fireflies
begin to flicker at dusk. If May was the season of promise, June
is the season of presence, here, now, in full bloom.

Local farmers’ markets are in full swing, offering everything
from fresh greens and herbs to early berries and homemade
jams. It’s a perfect month for slowing down just enough to savor
what’s growing, both in the ground and in your own life.

So whether you’re watching clouds roll by, tending tomatoes,
or enjoying a backyard barbecue with friends, take a moment to
really notice June. She won’t stay long, but while she’s here, she
offers us her best.

And enjoy this issue of “Your Country Neighbor,” filled with
local reflections, photography, poems, and community voices.
And the second episodes of three new historic-fiction series.

Omaha-area readers, be sure to stop by the Papillion Library in
Papillion, Nebraska. Sadly, the tea room has closed, but you can
still shop at Bureikou Tea & More if you will visit them online at
<https://www.bureikouteaandmore.com/dianas-tea>.

**Here’s to a full and beautiful June—and don’t forget to clip
that Valentino’s coupon on page 12 and carry it with you,
because a good meal is always in season!**

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

Pope Francis

A Prairie Love, Chapter Two: The Stitch of Summer, June 1923



Cora Ann stood at the sewing table beside her mother, measuring cotton against the sunbeam spilling through the window.

The morning light caught the cotton fabric as Cora Ann smoothed it against the sewing table, her mother's wordless hymn threading through the kitchen like the melody of Summer itself. Outside, the June heat had already begun its slow burn across the prairie, turning the pastures the color of old leather.

Cora Ann's thoughts drifted to the walk she had taken with Lyle Sutter. The way he'd stopped mid-stride when she mentioned her dream of teaching, how his eyes had focused on her words instead of wandering to the horizon like most boys did. Something about his attention made her feel seen in a way that was both thrilling and terrifying. The windmill's blades turned with the laziness of hot afternoons, their slow groaning a constant companion to the season's torpor. Cora's father had taken to muttering curses at the well pump each morning, dispatching her brothers with buckets to ensure the livestock troughs stayed full. The drought was settling into their bones like dust into fabric.

It was on such an evening, when the air hung thick as molasses and even the crickets seemed too tired to sing, that Lyle appeared at their gate with a small wooden box tucked under his arm.

"This is for you," he said simply, placing it in her hands with a care that made her breath catch.

Inside, nestled in wood shavings, lay a carved lark. Each feather etched with a precision that spoke of patient evenings and steady hands. The wood still held the sweet

scent of cedar.



"It's beautiful," she whispered, tracing the delicate curve of its throat. "You made this?"

Color rose in his cheeks. "Took me the better part of three evenings. The wing gave me trouble—kept breaking where it joined the body."

That night, Cora Ann placed the wooden bird on the mantelpiece beside the daguerreotype of her grandparents. From where she sat on the porch afterward, the windmill's rhythmic complaint seemed almost musical, as if the old blades were offering their benediction to whatever was growing between her and Lyle. She had given him something too, that day—a poem folded small as a secret. Nothing elaborate, just lines about cottonwoods dancing and a boy whose smile came slow as sunrise. The way he'd colored when reading it made every scratched-out word worthwhile.

They were balanced on the edge of something, she realized. Still young enough for carved gifts and handwritten verses, yet old enough to sense the weight of what lay ahead. The corn was reaching toward the sky with the urgency of Summer, her hands had learned to work without conscious thought, and her heart had begun its own quiet revolution—tilting toward Lyle Sutter like a sunflower toward light.

In years to come, she would remember this as the Summer before everything changed. The Summer when love first showed itself not as the grand passion of storybooks, but as something quieter and more enduring—carved from patience, kindness, and the simple gift of being truly heard.

Continued next month...

The Quiet Watcher



"Morgan Hall inhabitants are never truly alone. Someone still tends the light."

On Peru State College's eastern edge, rolling hills meet riverside views where future teachers have trained for generations. Yet students in Eliza C. Morgan Hall share whispers of something more—a presence that never quite departed. Eliza Morgan wasn't just a name on the building when it opened in 1929. As the college's devoted matron, she maintained strict order in an era of 9:00 PM lights-out and supervised courtship. She believed in dignity, structure, and protecting "her girls" with unwavering care. According to stories spanning decades of student life, Miss Morgan's watch never ended.

A Keeper of Time

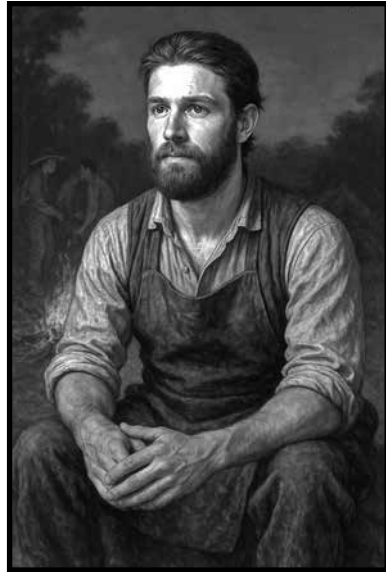
Custodians notice Morgan Hall runs warmer than expected during winter months, particularly around the main floor's original hearth. On stormy nights when lights dim, students glimpse a shawled figure moving silently through corridors. She never speaks, only seems to ensure everything remains secure. Her presence brings comfort rather than fear. Those claiming encounters describe feeling protected afterward—supervised, not spooked.

Whether Eliza C. Morgan continues caring for residents or simply left behind her protective spirit, one certainty endures: Morgan Hall inhabitants are never truly alone. Someone still tends the light.

Next month, Brownville's Haunted Mansion.

Narrator of a Journey, Westward with the Corps Who Was Elias Le Grand?

At Camp River Du-
bois, Elias has found
his place among the
Corps of Discovery.
He sharpens the blades
that will cut their path
westward, mends the
harnesses that will bind
their burdens, repairs the
rifles that may mean the
difference between sur-
vival and catastrophe.



The anvil's ring had been Elias Le Grand's first lullaby, born as he was in 1777 to the rhythm of his father's hammer in the French-rooted Kaskaskia, a village on the Mississippi River. While revolution raged in distant colonies, young Elias grew up in a world where allegiances shifted like river currents—Spanish governors replacing French, American surveyors measuring what had never been claimed, and his own identity forged in the space between competing empires.

His mother, Marie Celeste, refused to let English cross her lips even as American flags sprouted above the Spanish-tiled roofs of their neighbors. She spoke only in the liquid cadences of Creole, her words flowing like the Mississippi itself—ancient, unhurried, carrying the memory of older worlds. His father Marcel, a blacksmith whose reputation reached from the Illinois Country to New Orleans, served whoever needed iron bent to purpose. “Metal don't care what flag flies above it,” he would tell his son while teaching him to read the color of heated steel. “Hot iron knows only the hammer's truth.”

By the time he could reach the bellows handle, Elias was learning the language of fire and metal. By ten, he could shoe a restless mule without flinching. By fifteen, he possessed the rare skill of reading a musket's ailments by touch alone—understanding where the mechanism caught, where the spring had weakened, where rust had crept between the working parts like doubt into a man's resolve.

The boy grew strong in body and quiet in temperament, shaped by a childhood spent translating between worlds. French flowed at his mother's table, English governed the trading posts, and the native tongues of Illini and Potawatomi he learned through gesture and friendship, watching how hands could speak when words failed. He became fluent in the universal language of need—the way a broken wagon wheel spoke of stranded families, the way a dull blade whispered of hunger in the wilderness.

When word reached Kaskaskia in 1794 that General Anthony Wayne was recruiting for his Legion, Elias felt the pull of something larger than the village smithy. He didn't march away seeking glory or blood, but carrying the perhaps foolish notion that peace might be hammered out like horseshoes—with enough heat, pressure, and patient skill. The Battle of Fallen Timbers taught him otherwise, leaving him sprawled in the Ohio mud with a musket ball in his thigh and his illusions bleeding out into the forest floor.

He should have died there among the fallen timber and broken treaties. Instead, a Delaware scout named Mechinquot found him semi-conscious, studied his face with eyes that seemed to weigh his soul, and for reasons Elias never learned, dragged him to safety rather than leaving him for the crows. The wound healed crooked, leaving him with a scar that ached before storms and a slight hitch in his stride that would mark his gait forever.

When he limped home to Kaskaskia months later, he found his world scattered like cold ashes. His father lay beneath a wooden cross, taken by the fever that had swept through the river towns. His mother had departed for St. Louis with cousins, unable to bear the empty forge and the silence where hammer-song had once filled their days. The house stood hollow, filled only with echoes and the ghost-smell of coal smoke.

So Elias took to drifting, carrying his father's tools and his own hard-earned skills from frontier post to frontier post. He sharpened plows for farmers scratching at virgin soil, repaired rifles for hunters and soldiers, mended the endless parade of broken things that followed civilization into the wilderness. Fort Massac, Vincennes, Cahokia—he worked where work was needed, sleeping in lean-tos and borrowed corners, accumulating little beyond his reputation for honest craft and fair dealing.

It was in Cahokia, in the winter of 1803, that destiny found him bent over a cracked wagon axle. Captain William Clark had come seeking men for an expedition that would follow the Missouri River to its source and beyond, to where the maps ended and speculation began. When Clark asked about his hands, Elias simply held them up—broad palms crosshatched with old burns, fingers stained permanent black from coal dust, knuckles bearing the small scars that were a blacksmith's true credentials.

“They've never failed me,” he said simply.

Clark studied those hands as if reading a man's entire history in their lines and marks. “That's all I need to know,” he replied.

Now, at Camp River Dubois, Elias has found his place among the Corps of Discovery. While younger men boast of the adventures ahead or worry about the perils of unmapped country, he tends to the expedition's practical needs with quiet competence. He sharpens the blades that will cut their path westward, mends the harnesses that will bind their burdens, repairs the rifles that may mean the difference between survival and catastrophe.

In the evenings, when the camp settles into the rhythm of men preparing for the unknown, Elias sits by the fire with his mending, listening to the conversations that swirl around him like river current. The younger men respect his silence, recognizing in it not emptiness but the depth that comes from having walked between worlds and found his footing.

Beneath his narrow bunk, wrapped in oiled cloth, sits a small tin box containing the few things he couldn't bear to leave behind: a flint striker worn smooth by his father's thumb, a Spanish coin from his childhood in Kaskaskia when silver was scarce and precious, a scrap of parchment bearing his mother's name in her own careful script, and a carved wooden heron—fashioned years ago with painstaking care for a girl whose laughter once filled the smithy, whose name he keeps locked away with other beautiful, painful things too sacred to speak aloud.

Next Month -- Westward with the Corps, Chapter Two

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“PAINTS AND THREADS”

CAROL SKINNER HAMMOND, Artist

May 30 to June 30, 2025

Artists Talk and Reception: Friday, May 30, 2025, 6 pm

Schoolhouse Art Gallery, 427 Main Street, Brownville, NE

Free and Open to the Public



This show presents watercolor and acrylic paintings in her favorite subject matter, florals and landscapes. The stitchery pieces are created from wool, silk, and cotton fibers embellished with hand stitching, beads, buttons, lace, ribbons, yarns, and various trims.

Gallery Hours:
Saturday 10 am - 4 pm
Thursday, Friday, Sunday 1 to 4 pm
Or by appointment: Call 402-414-2082

Sponsored by the Brownville Fine Arts Association

Whiskey Run Creek

WINERY & DISTILLERY

Wine-Tasting Hours:
Thursday through Sunday 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Closed Monday through Wednesday



A Bright Debut:

2024 Itasca from *Whiskey Run Creek*
Introducing a fresh face in the vineyard: the 2024 Itasca, the first-ever release of this unique variety at *Whiskey Run Creek*. Crafted with care and curiosity, this off-dry white wine captures the spirit of exploration with a crisp, inviting profile. Expect lively notes of grapefruit, lemon, and an exotic twist of star fruit, making it an excellent choice for spring and summer sipping.

Sip a glass of wine on the deck with a view of the waterfall, the rustic well, and Summer greenery.

And now gift cards are available.

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402-825-4601 702 Main Street
www.whiskeyruncreek.com Brownville, Nebraska 68321

HISTORIC BROWNVILLE, NEBRASKA’S

FREEDOM DAY CELEBRATION

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

7:00 AM Freedom Run departs from corner of H-136 and Main St.

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

8:30 PM Dinner Cruise on Spirit of Brownville (Boarding at 8)

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



Among the photos are PSC 2025 Grads.
 Next page, Interim PSC President Wendy Waugh
 awards “Teacher of the Year.”
 Foundation Director Ted Harshbarger speaks to Grads.



School's Out!



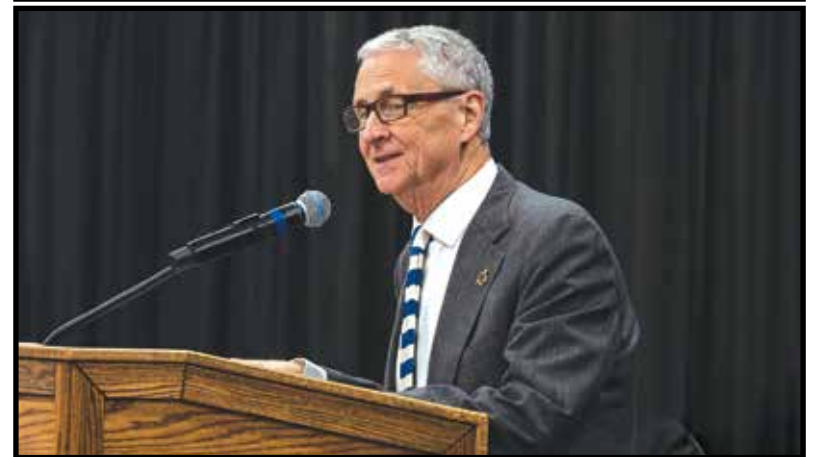
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Hours: Mon-Fri 8:30 - 6:00, Sat 8:30 - Noon





BROWNVILLE FINE ARTS ASSOCIATION

2025 Speaker Series & Art Exhibition

Speaker Series Schedule

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Saturday, December 6, 2025

Brownville Tour of Homes
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Rohman Garden Tree Lighting
& Christmas Carols**
5:30 p.m.



Art Exhibition Schedule

Schoolhouse Art Gallery

427 Main Street • Brownville, Nebraska

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

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

May 29 to June 29

"PAINTS & THREADS"

by Carol Skinner Hammond

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

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



July 3 to July 27

"CLEARVIEW STAINED GLASS"

by Deb Costello

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



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

July 31 to August 31

"OUT OF THE CHAOS COMES BEAUTY"

by Jodie Leabee

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

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



September 4 to September 21

"SOME OF NEBRASKA'S FAVORITES"

Artist Reception:

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

Mary Lauber - Jewelry

Susan Sisco - Pottery

Natalie Sisco - Glass and Pottery

Cate Wycoff - Watercolor



October 7 to November 2

"A SEAT AT GRANDMA'S TABLE"

by GK Callahan

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



Follow us on Facebook: Brownville Fine Arts Association

Memories Abound On Peru's Pike's Peak

Marty Peregoy

Last March, Auburn's Jerry Sayer approached me, wanting to relive the good times he and his childhood gang experienced on Pike's Peak, here in Peru. I live on Pike's Peak in the former Blankenship House.

Where is Pike's Peak, you might ask? It's the southern edge of the Missouri River Bluff that starts at the edge of the City of Peru's re-use pit (former temporary water treatment plant) at the corner of 7th and Mulberry and extends west through the northern edge of my property onto Kristi Nies's property.

Pikes Peak Continued on page 9 >>>>



L-R: Billy Kizer, Bill Simpson, Jerry Sayer, Donnie Stivers, Loren Stivers, Richard Stivers, Larry Morris and Lester Blankenship.



Jerry Sayer happily headed off the beaten path in search of memories of his childhood on Pike's Peak.



Devin Peregoy took the opportunity to experience the natural climate control of the former Davis fruit cellar.



Several foundation stones are marked with what appears to be "Miracle Hollow Block" and "Laid June 9, 1901."

PERU CITY NEWS

Communication • Information • Pride In Community

A volunteer project

supported by the Peru Community.

Thank you to everyone who participates!



<<< Pikes Peak *Continued from page 8*

The land along the ridge is considered a protected archeological site by the Nebraska State Historical Society, and the Nies property is on the Nebraska National Register of Historic Places as the Thomas J. Majors Farmstead. The Blankenship Place is the original Majors Family Homestead built in 1871.

But the value of Pike's Peak and its surrounding area is more than just historical or archeological to Sayer. It's where he played as a child 75 years ago. He and his friends that lived in the immediate area, Billy Kizer, Bill Simpson, Donnie Stivers, Loren Stivers, Richard Stivers, Larry Morris and Lester Blankenship, spent much of their youth playing on each other's properties.

If you take a moment to picture yourself standing at the intersection of Mulberry and 7th Street facing south and focusing on properties west of 7th Street, the Blankenship (Marty Peregoy 2025) property is directly behind you, the Setzer (Michael Murphy 2025) property is in front of you across the creek, and the former Stivers property is further south of the Setzer property where 7th street no longer runs and no houses exist.

Directly east of the Blankenship property on the north side of Mulberry Street was the Davis property (re-use pit/ former temporary water treatment plant 2025), and adjacent to the Davis Property, was the Comstock property, which ended on the ridge just before the current Mike Tynon property.

On the south side of Mulberry east of 7th street was the Ashcraft (Steve Adams 2025) property. As 7th street curves into Olive Street, the Ed and Vera McConaughy (Josh Arban 2025) property is north of Olive, and the Simpson (Josh Arban 2025) property was south of Olive. Further along Olive Street where the road no longer runs were the Sayer Place and the Morris Place adjacent to 5th Street. In decent weather, the boys gathered at

Pikes Peak Continued on page 10 >>>>

TRAGEDY STRIKES PERU, Part 2

John C. Chatelain

The GI Bill of Rights, signed into law just 16 days after D-Day in 1944, transformed college campuses nationwide. Peru State College was crawling with newcomers by 1946. President William L. Nicholas scrambled to find instructors to fill out the faculty roster. Freshman made up half the student body for the 1946-47 school year. By 1950, however, the post-war enrollment bubble had burst. Dr. Nicholas approached department heads regarding positions to eliminate. Dr. Paul A. Maxwell, head of the Education Department, indicated his department could eliminate one faculty position. On June 23, 1949 Maxwell and Nicholas met with Dr. Barney Baker.

Nicholas had a reputation for tact and skill in handling people. When he became President, he had given retiring president W. R. Pate an office on campus as a courtesy. Known for his benevolent nature, Nicholas had proved adept at resolving the concerns of former service men who had entered college. They often came to the president's home or office for counseling.

At the June 23 conference, Nicholas and Maxwell advised Baker to secure another position, telling him they would take no dismissal action immediately, but they did not plan to employ him after the summer of 1950. Nicholas offered to assist Baker in finding another job and later expressed concern to his secretary that Baker had never asked him for a letter of recommendation or other help. Because Nicholas and Maxwell kept the dismissal confidential, only a few faculty members knew of it.

Baker sent out job applications to schools in Oklahoma and Kansas during the autumn and winter of 1949-50. When he received only rejections, he apparently became deeply discouraged. He had not taken advantage of Nicholas' offer to help him relocate. Some people considered Baker sullen and aloof because he seldom spoke to people on campus and had few close friends. His neighbor, Professor Wesley Sweetser, described Baker as a "taciturn individual." Baker's business agent, C.A. Huck, later reported that Baker "was insanely jealous of his job and felt he wasn't given credit for his ability." Professor John Christ once heard Baker make bitter comments about the administration.

Most of the faculty knew nothing of Dr. Baker's dismissal until the new college catalog came out on the evening of April 24, 1950. The catalog was widely circulated on campus the following morning. Baker's name, usually at the top of the alphabetical list of professors, was absent. His dismissal was public and final. In the president's office, secretary Dorothy Stephen responded to Dr. Christ's comment that Baker's name had inadvertently been left out of the college catalog. "It's not a mistake," Stephen responded.

Shortly after 11:00 a.m., April 25, Stephen took some papers into the president's inner office. Baker calmly waited outside Nicholas' office, with his .32 Colt semi-automatic pistol under his coat, while two Kirk Typewriter Company representatives from Omaha met with the president. After the salesmen left, Stephen told the president that Baker wanted to see him. Nicholas nodded his approval. Dr. Baker then entered the office and closed the door, as was usual in discussing confidential matters. He drew his gun and fired at Dr. Nicholas from close range, striking him twice in the head and twice in the chest. Nicholas died leaning back in his chair with his head resting against the radiator. As Baker emerged from Nicholas' inner office, he kept his gun trained on the president's secretary as he backed out into the hallway. TO BE CONTINUED IN PART 3.

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

June 2025

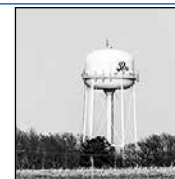
Your Country Neighbor

9

PERU CITY NEWS

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Tuesday Literary Club Reads

DiAnna Loy, Tuesday Literary Club

Continuing with our theme of senior authors, in May Alice Holtz chose to present **Most Honorable Son: A Forgotten Hero's Fight Against Fascism and Hate During World War II** by Gregg Jones. **Most Honorable Son** is a work of non-fiction that is fast paced and written in a manner that makes it very readable. It is the story of Ben Kuroki, the son of Japanese immigrants to the United States. The Kuroki family lived on a farm near Hershey, Nebraska just west of North Platte. Ben was born in Gothanburg. Their Japanese heritage had not been a problem for them as they raised their family of 10 children on their farm where they grew potatoes and sugar beets. Then the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and everything changed.

Ben, 24, and his brother Frank immediately wanted to enlist in the Army Air Command and their father encouraged them to join. They attempted to enlist at the North Platte recruiting center but were turned away because of their nationality. After first calling the Grand Island recruiting center, they drove there and had no problem signing up for the service. The recruiter told them nationality was not an issue as he received \$2.00 for each man he enlisted. Ben saw serving in the Army Air Corps as his way of proving his patriotism and loyalty to the United States. Ben and Frank were two of the first Nisei (pronounced ni say) to enlist. Nisei means second-generation Japanese Americans, specifically those born in the United States or other countries outside of Japan, to immigrant parents from Japan.

Ben was assigned to the 93rd Bombardment Group at Fort Myers, Florida. He was told that Japanese Americans would not be allowed to serve overseas. Ben must have had an angel on his shoulder because when he petitioned his commanding officer, he was allowed to work as a clerk for the Eighth Army Air Force in England. The need was high for aerial gunners; Ben volunteered and was allowed to train as a gunner. As his unit was assigned to each new posting, the order would come down that Japanese American troops would not be allowed to participate. Ben immediately went to his commanding officer to plead his case and was ultimately allowed to accompany his unit to their new posting. Ben had a tough time getting a captain of a crew to include him on his team. Not until a team was a man down was Ben selected to accompany a crew on a bombing run. After that he had no problem serving as both window and tail gunners. In all, Ben flew a total of 58 combat missions in the European, North African, and Pacific theaters.

Between his European and Pacific tours, Ben was stationed in California and was asked to speak to many groups. He was extremely critical of FDR's incarceration of more than 100,000 American citizens of Japanese descent in internment camps. He continued his speaking engagements after returning from his combat missions in the Pacific theater. He never failed to speak out about his hatred of the internment camps. He considered these speaking engagements his 59th mission. He spoke out about racism and discrimination in the military.

Ben married and raised three daughters. He used his GI Bill earning a bachelor's degree in journalism at the University of Nebraska. He eventually settled in California. He owned several newspapers and retired in 1984. He was always in demand to tell his story. He spoke to groups whenever possible; never hesitating to speak about the racism in the military and in the United States.

By the end of his 98 years, Ben knew that he had proven his loyalty to the United States. "Ben's extraordinary story is an American one of patriotism, principle, perseverance, and courage."

"Happy reading!"

10 June 2025 Your Country Neighbor

<<< Pikes Peak Continued from page 9

one place or another from sun-up to curfew. The two outdoor lights at that time, one between the Sayer place and the Morris place, and the other at the southeast corner of Olive and 7th Street, made it possible for the boys to gather on the Simpson place for games of softball during the summer. They also played hide-and-go-seek, kick-the-can, and hare-and-hounds.

Sayer recalls staying out past dark and being scared of the Hoot Owl in the oak tree on Sam Adams (Michael Douglas 2025) place, where Olive Street turns into 6th. Ruth Simpson, Bill's older sister, would walk with him toward home until he could see his house, and he would run the rest of the way home.

On days when the Blankenship property was the gathering place, the boys would climb Pike's Peak and build forts and hideouts at the crest between the Davis and Blankenship properties.

As Sayer, my son Devin and I climbed the hill on a breezy day in April, we were on the lookout for divots in the ground indicating a fort from 75 years ago. The hill is just as steep as it was back then, but that didn't seem to cause any problems for Sayer. Armed with a walking stick and a scope for distance viewing, he scaled it nimbly, searching for landmarks and memories. Two divots indicating the former locations of the childhood forts were found.

We poked among the leftover foundation stones of the Davis house, where the scent and color of lilacs once filled the senses. Mrs. Davis took her home-making duties very seriously, and few fruit cellars rivaled hers. It was cut back into the hill and below ground where it was naturally climate

Pikes Peak Continued on page 11 >>>>

PERU CITY NEWS

Communication • Information • Pride In Community

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



<<< Pikes Peak Continued from page 10
controlled. Today the cellar is empty, but Devin was happy to jump down into it to experience the difference in temperature. As we left Pike's Peak by way of the Comstock property, we were able to find stones from the long-gone house's foundation. They still retained the builder's identification information, though nothing else of the home was left.

From there, we crossed through the property once owned by Blankenship and then the Virgil Adams family, located just south of Mulberry to the west of where the bridge used to run. We used the natural steppingstones within the almost dry creek bed to cross back and forth between the current Perego and Murphy properties.

In his youth, Sayer collected numerous fossils in the area, and just to the west, the sides of the natural cliffs on the south side of the creek bed yielded natural red clay for brick making. The dark orange color of yesteryear has now faded to a dry terra cotta color, and the fossils are a thing of the past, but the memories of a childhood well spent haven't dimmed a bit.

If you're in the area and want to relive your own childhood memories, be sure to ask current owners before exploring their properties. Fallen buildings, earthen hollows, steep hills and half-buried barbed wire can pose a hazard to those unfamiliar with the dangers of the terrain.



Downtown Peru, Nebraska, May 22, 2025

Peru City News
is a volunteer project promoting
**Communication, Information,
and Pride in the Peru Community.**

Peru City News is supported
by a few community members.
Thank you to everyone who participates!



St. Clara's Catholic Church
604 6th Street
Pastor Fr. Timothy Danek
Mass - Sunday 8:30 am
Confessions - Sunday 8:00-8:20 am



Northridge Church
808 5th Street
Pastor Daniel Hutchison
Services - Sunday 10:00 am



Peru Community Church
520 Nebraska Street
Pastors Raymond & Rebecca Girard
Services - Sunday 10:45 am

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Student Representatives Perform the ribbon-cutting on May 3, 2025 for the largest building of
“Project Roar,” Renewed Opportunities for Activity and Recreation.
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Also shown are Wendy Waugh, Interim President of Peru State and Ted Harshbarger, Peru State Foundation Director.



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When Water Was Work

Stephen Hassler

The tall metal frame held the propeller-like blades of the windmill. Few people today are aware of any life with no running water in the house. When I was five years old, I remember my father would carry a bucket of water from about 100 yards away, pumped by hand from the well beneath the windmill, whose blades would do the same work when there was a breeze of any measure.

The bucket was placed next to the one-hole porcelain kitchen sink, set on a wooden frame waist-high, with a basin for washing and rinsing, and a bucket under the drain to catch wastewater.

The wooden cook stove would be a prize antique today. It served us well until we added a gas range to the kitchen, although my mother was forever annoyed with her cakes "falling," seemingly related to the uneven heating of the wood-burning stove.

Our newly purchased farm had no electricity and no telephone, either. My father's idea of a bargain was the cheapest of whatever he was looking for. This place had been abandoned for years, and so it was cheap. When my mother needed to use a phone, she would drive about half a mile to the nearest neighbor, who after some weeks of this, scolded the phone company which finally placed poles and strung a line to the new homestead and the farm wife who was pregnant with my sister.

And it wasn't long before we had an electric pump that filled a 40-gallon metal tank, sending water on demand up that 100 yards to the house. And magic! We had indoor plumbing.

And now, decades later, I find myself turning on the faucet without a second thought, until asked to ration. A dry Winter. A dry Spring. A low water table. We're told to skip watering the garden, let the car stay dusty, turn off the tap when brushing our teeth, and take "military" showers.

Now, reflecting on an echo of that windmill groaning in the breeze, I remember when water was work. When every drop earned its keep. When you didn't let it run down the drain unless you had to, because someone, often someone you loved, had brought it there by hand. And maybe that's not such a bad thing: to remember water's worth. To slow down, even briefly, and treat each drop as the gift it's always been. The windmill may be gone, but I can still hear it turning, creaking and groaning from a time when water was work. Its lesson still turns, slow and steady.



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outside our country neighborhood.

It's online at;

<http://www.yourcountryneighbor.com>

4th of July Poems by Sheila Tinkham

We Are The Sum Of Our Actions

America saved Europe in World War 1 and 2
Rebuilt South Korea and Japan and Europe
We put our lives on the line for freedom all across the globe
But what moves me most are the stories:
The ragged feet and torn clothes of George Washington and his soldiers
They fought not for money but to obtain freedom from England
and its rules and onerous taxes
During the War of 1812, the American flag was held aloft by
American after American who died
To keep it aloft, inspiring Francis Scott Keys to pen The Star Spangled Banner...
The young soldier from Valentine who died at Choisen Valley in South Korea
The grandparents from Mexico who always want American flag themed items
From their American granddaughter
From sea to shining sea people share stories
The toy train collection in the garage built especially for it
in a small town in Nebraska
The car collection of Dalton in Hastings, Nebraska
The best apple pies and Elvis themed Town and Country restaurant in Kansas
What makes America great is the people
And the search for freedom of expression and possibility
Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness
God bless the United States of America!
Happy 4th of July!

America, America

My heart sings of your 50 states
You fought wars to free other countries
Not to enslave them
You fought wars both in Europe and here during The Civil War
You helped resurrect Western Europe, Japan and South Korea
You live for ideals:
Freedom, God, responsibility
The American way
America, America
My heart sings of your 50 states
George Washington fought to create the USA
And his men fought with rags and feet bleeding and very little food to eat..
Their food was the food of love of country and love of God and
most of all love of freedom
Wily Benjamin Franklin enlisted the French help,
The British surrendered at Ticonderoga
The United States of America became a reality
But much earlier on July 4, 1776 the delegates signed the Declaration of Independence
"We hold these truths to be self evident
That all men are created equal...
Life, liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness"
God bless the USA!
Happy 4th of July!

ARBOR CITY NEWS

Morton-James Public Library Calendar of Events June 2025

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

All programming listed is free of charge!

Summer Reading (SR)
Color Our World Kickoff Party. Color, enjoy snacks and enter a drawing to win books!
Monday, June 2
10:00AM

Lego Club
Must be 8 years and older to join.
Monday, June 2
3:30-5:00PM

Story Time-Mr. Oakley’s Favorite Color
Wednesday, June 4
10:00AM

Yarn Crafters Club
Join us to work on your crocheting or knitting skills and projects. Club is for all levels of crafters. Bring your own hooks, yarn, needles, whatever you need to make your yarn craft. Club members will be here to help those beginning. Free to attend. Everyone welcome 15 and older!
Wednesday, June 4
1:30-3:00PM

Science Heroes (SR)
Interactive story and fun science experiments
Thursday, June 5
10:00AM

Humanities Nebraska w/ Paul Siebert
“Echoes of an Era” – a musical presentation
Thursday, June 5
7:00PM

Scrapbook Club
Bring your own project to work on.
Library provides paper, stickers, tape & markers.
Ages 15 and older welcome.
Saturday, June 7
9:00AM-Noon

Story Time-Guest Reader from
Keep Nebraska City Beautiful
Wednesday, June 11
10:00AM

Library Board Meeting
Wednesday, June 11
4:00PM

Stomp, Chomp, Roar! (SR) Dinosaur Program
Thursday, June 12
10:00AM

Farmers Market Booth at Veterans Memorial Building parking lot
810 1 st Corso
Stop by to pick up a free craft kit and other fun giveaways.
Play at the bubble station! Visit local food vendors while you’re there!
June 12
4:30-5:30PM

Lego Club
Must be 8 years and older to join
Monday, June 16
3:30-5:00PM

Day Book Club
The Saturday Evening Girls by Jane Healey
Tuesday, June 17
2:00PM

Story Time- Guest Reader from
Kimmel Orchard
Wednesday, June 18
10:00AM

Evening Book Club
Lessons In Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus
Wednesday, June 18
5:30PM

Jeff Quinn Magic (SR)
A summertime favorite guest!
Friday, June 20
10:00AM

Writers’ Workshop
Join us to get feedback on your own writing and to learn more about the craft of writing!
Attend in person or by zoom- call 402-873-5609 for info.
Saturday, June 21
10:00AM

Butterflies of Southeast Nebraska
Photographer Presentation
Sunday, June 22
2 pm

Story Time-Guest Reader from
Lifetime Vision
Wednesday, June 25
10:00AM

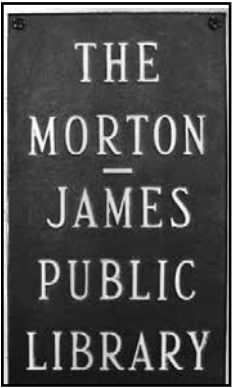
Wildlife Encounters (SR)
Thursday, June 26 10am
at Nebraska City Middle School
Entrance on 1st Corso
Guests always enjoy the animals they get to visit with during these programs.

Farmers Market Booth
at Veterans Memorial Building parking lot
810 1st Corso
Stop by to pick up a free craft kit and other fun giveaways. Kids can play at the bubble station!
June 26
4:30-5:30PM

Chess Club
Every Thursday
4:00PM-6:00PM
All programming listed is free of charge!

Kimmel Gallery
Butterflies of Southeast Nebraska
Photography exhibit June 4-28

Sunday, June 22, 2:00PM
Meet the photographer,
Stephen Hassler,
for a big screen presentation
featuring
over twenty butterfly species,
plus insights on where and when
to find them in the wild,
followed by Q&A.



ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

NEBRASKA CITY'S ANNUAL TREESTOCK FESTIVAL SCHEDULED FOR JULY 5 & 6

Nebraska City is gearing up for their fifth annual Treestock Independence Day Celebration, a festival centered around the 4th of July. The 2025 event is scheduled for Saturday, July 5, and Sunday, July 6.

"We keep growing Treestock, adding new events every year," said Nebraska City Tourism & Commerce executive director Amy Allgood. "I think this year is going to be the best yet!"

The majority of events will take place on Saturday, July 5, at Steinhart Park in Nebraska City. Activities will begin at 11 a.m. in the gravel parking lot just east of the Steinhart Aquatic Center with pony rides. The food court opens at noon, and the rest of that area will be filled in by the Children's Entrepreneur Market taking place from 1 to 5 p.m.

Across the street to the north of Steinhart Park is Bethel Church (2400 Central Avenue). Starting at noon on

Saturday, they will offer face painting, bounce houses, a dunk tank, a watermelon feed, and vendors. The Shelter Show & Shine Car Show will take place in Bethel's north lot from 12 to 5 p.m.

The Treestock Beer Garden, hosted by Little Ted's Pub & Grill, also opens at noon in the grassy area of Steinhart Park along Central Avenue. The live music portion of Treestock begins at 1 p.m. when Savanna Chestnut takes the stage. Other musical acts include Lucas Minor (3 p.m.), Jason Mayer (5 p.m.), and the Drew Phillips Band (7 p.m.). In between acts, at 2:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m., and 6:30 p.m., riders with Nowear BMX will amaze the crowd with stunts and freestyle tricks.

A cornhole tourney and competitive pickleball tourney are both planned for Treestock. The pickleball tourney starts on July 4 and continues through the weekend. Proceeds benefit Nebraska City's

Riverview Nature Park. The cornhole tourney is set to begin at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday. It is a fundraiser for new mats for Big Dog Wrestling.

Throughout the afternoon on Saturday, Nebraska City's Morton-James Public Library will have a kids activity table with crafts and games. Keep Nebraska City Beautiful will set up water stations in the Beer Garden.



Above: Nowear BMX out of Unadilla will be performing during Treestock.

Saturday culminates with the Nebraska City Jaycee's annual Ice Cream Social at Steinhart Lodge overlooking the Steinhart Aquatic Center followed by the Jaycee's Fireworks Show. The Ice Cream Social begins at 6:30 p.m. and will feature music from the Southeast Nebraska Community Band and local barbershop choruses. The Aquatic Center, which will be open Saturday from 1 to 6 p.m., will once again rent out their lounge chairs to those wishing for a comfortable place to watch the fireworks, which will start at dusk.

Sunday's events include a continuation of the pickleball tourney and a golf scramble at Wildwood Golf Course.

More details about the 2025 Treestock Celebration, including specific event registrations, can be found online at the Nebraska City Tourism & Commerce website.



Left: Live music is a staple of Nebraska City's Treestock Celebration.

Above: A cornhole tournament is scheduled for Saturday, July 5, in the Treestock Beer Garden.



ARBOR CITY NEWS

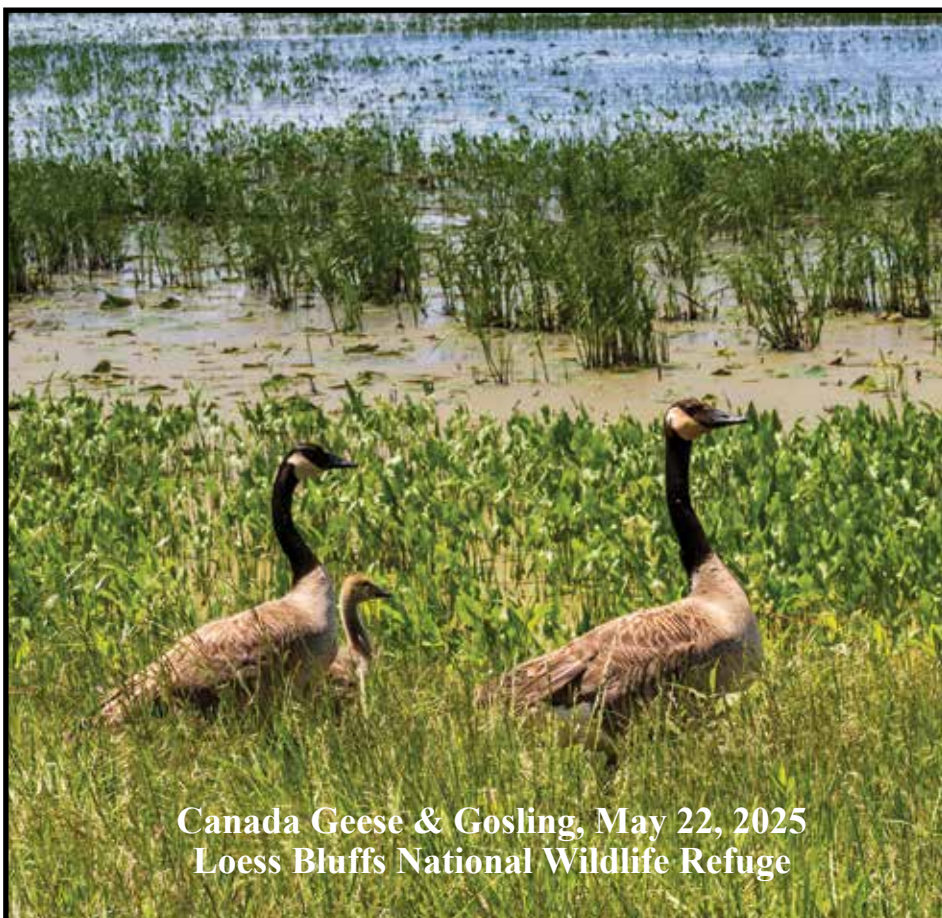
News from Nebraska City

JULY 5, 2025

TREESTOCK
INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION



LIVE MUSIC **BMX**
BEER GARDEN **FAMILY FUN**
PICKLEBALL TOURNEY **FOOD TRUCKS**
YOUTH MAKERS MARKET
SWIMMING & FIREWORKS



Canada Geese & Gosling, May 22, 2025
Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge

For My Son On His Birthday

Bruce Madsen, Nebraska City

Farming is not easy and it demands so much time
There is always something to plant or feed or fix and refine
Not every man can do it with patience and finesse
But I say with great confidence, you've excelled above the stress

In the years ahead, some will be good and some will be bad
Poor markets, bad weather and other things that will make you mad
But you'll come shining through when all is said and done
And be ready to go again with the next morning sun

Many years of happiness and joy is what I hope for you
And a satisfied feeling when all your work is through
But today, is your day, so take some time off and have some fun
And remember, Mom and I love you and are so very proud that you are
our son.

Dad

ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City

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Great Egret



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ARBOR CITY NEWS

News from Nebraska City



Red-winged Blackbird



Heritage Needlework Guild's "Quilt and Needlework Show" Moves to a New Location

Nancy Feeney, Nebraska City

The Heritage Needlework Guild members are packing their bags and moving the 2025 Quilt and Needlework Show. The new location for this annual event is First Evangelical Lutheran Church, 315 S. 16th St., Nebraska City. Held during the annual Applejack Festival, this three-day show opens Friday evening and runs through Sunday afternoon, Sept. 19 – 21.

Considered one of the best quilt and needlework shows in southeast Nebraska, people flock to this Nebraska City show every year to view the scores of member-made quilts and other needlework items on display. There will also be a special display of the many quilts created by this year's Featured Quilter/Guild Member Sara Velder.


This year's Raffle Quilt is called "A Quilter's Neighborhood." Several months ago, the 65 Guild members were asked to create several house blocks for this year's raffle quilt. When you look at these 225 individual houses on this 82 x 104 inch quilt, you might see your own neighborhood on display. Guild members gathered to stitch these houses into a quilt, just like neighbors getting together to make their community more beautiful.

The extremely popular Raffle Baskets are back again this year. These baskets are created by Guild members and contain a variety of items and sewing goodies based on varied themes, such as Baby, Christmas, Huskers, etc.

Tickets for both of these raffles are \$1 each or 7 tickets for \$5.

Since the Guild's member-made potholders have become such a huge hit with show attendees, they will be back this year. These unique potholders make handy gifts for so many occasions, ranging from Christmas, birthdays, Mother's and Father's Day and wedding showers. After all, everyone needs to cook!

Entry fee for this show is \$5 at the door, which is used to support the Guild's community service projects.



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by Devon Adams, Nebraska City

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FOLLOW THE MUSIC

It must be a flute
floating through the
trees, because beauty
can't describe the
liquid notes that are
falling on my ears.
I search among leaves
that tremble in soft
summer wind until I
find a bright streak
flashing. He is doing
his performance
for a rapt audience,
with no regrets that
the theatre isn't full.
My presence is all
that he needs to
pour out his heart,
and his oriole voice
is enough to make
my day gold!

REUNIONS

We wear disguises to
our class gatherings
that define our now
time. But the reality
of meeting is that we
are the same, as if the
calendar is wrong, and
our eyes see only the
young faces and bodies
we lived in at high
school graduation.
Every memory is pristine
as our eyes move from
face to face, and emotions
churn inside our guts,
the same ones that we
felt during those long ago
social ups and downs.
Growing up is only an
illusion that becomes
less real as time ticks.

DREAMS AND MEMORIES

Sometimes at night
when you sleep, if you
sleep, you walk with
those you love, or hate,
or simply recognize.
Conversations can be
deep or shallow, but
they are as real as the
current headlines, or
your last phone talk
before your brain crossed
the barrier between here
and there into never-never
land. Waking is confusing,
as a few words and phrases
come back, but you can't
figure out if they happened
or you dreamed them.
Welcome to the bridge
between memory and
dreams and fiction.

NIGHT WHISPERS

In the country dark of
dirt lanes and dozing
cows, the stars are
brilliant in a field of
haunting black that
has no horizon. It is
an endless space of
time that numbers
can't define. Here, in
the wild waving grass,
lightning bugs are doing
a silent imitation of the
universe. But if you
listen with your mind,
the whispers from the
stars will talk to you
about eternity and
peace.

BOXES OF MEMORIES

They are alive, these pages
of your life, stored in dusty
boxes. Stacked for years in
dark corners, they are waiting
for love and attention. Each
photo and card and letter,
every clipping or obit or
wedding or birth is here. Left
alone to be read later, you
promised them that you would
be back. But life got in the way
and now time is knocking at
your door. I hope you are a
fast reader. Good luck with that.

By Artist, Devon Adams PENCIL AND WATERCOLOR

PORTRAITS OF PEOPLE, ANIMALS, & BUILDINGS

Drawn from your photographs.



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8x10 mat: \$25
11x14 mat: \$35
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WATERCOLOR

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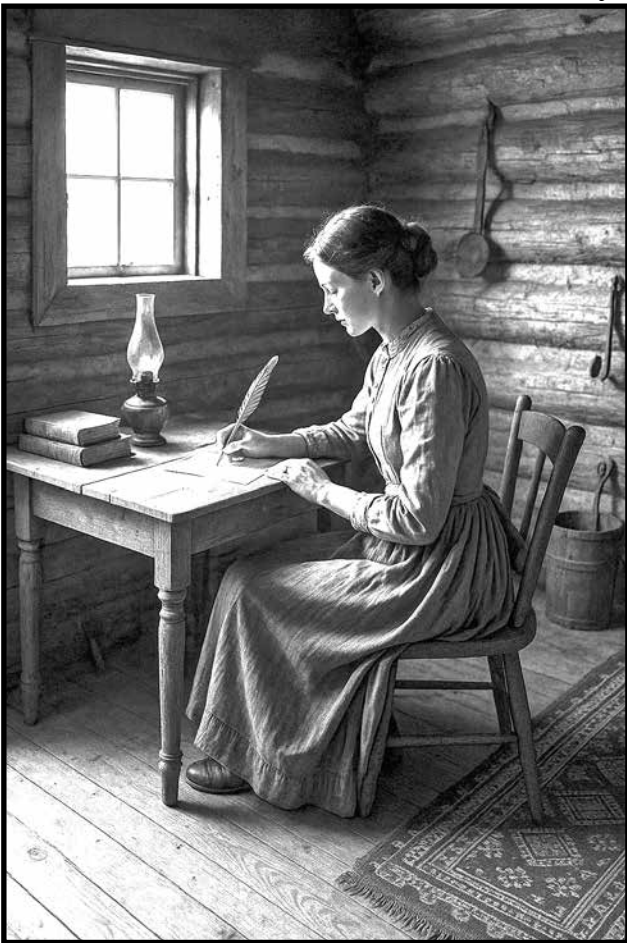
Send to:

Devon Adams

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

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Letters from the Prairie
Autumn, 1887, Nemaha County
Third Letter from Anna Wilhelmine
Bauer to her sister Klara in Germany



My dear Klara,
The corn is in, and the air carries
cider and dry husks. My hands are
raw from husking, but the full bins
bring contentment. We had frost last
week—early, though the pumpkins
survived. I've arranged them on the
porch like glowing orbs.
Johann went to Brownville and re-
turned with news—a letter from your
Emil! My heart soared. Knowing our
brothers still meet each Sunday com-
forts me. Tell him Lena plays his old
harmonica now, though badly.
After chores, I sit by lamplight with
needle and thread, mending while
coyotes call. It's a lonely sound, yet
known, like this place claiming me as
both stranger and settler.
Love to you all,
Anna

22 June 2025 Your Country Neighbor

Winter, 1887 – Nemaha County
Fourth Letter from Anna Wil-
helmine Bauer to her sister
Klara in Germany

My dearest Klara,
Snow came like a white wall across
the prairie. We woke to silence that
echoed. Even the rooster stood con-
fused.
Johann and the boys dug paths for
two days, yet wind builds new drifts
constantly. We lost a hen to cold, and
the old cow weakens. But the stove
burns true.



Evenings, Lena sits close while I
teach her to mend. She talks of ev-
erything—her doll, lessons, frost
patterns on glass. Sometimes I see
your face in hers, especially when she
listens intently.
Your Emil sent a drawing of their
Christmas wreath with all our names
circled around it. I wept, Klara. How
distant we are, yet how close through
such gestures.
We'll cut our tree soon. Not fir—just
scrubby cedar from the creek. But
with ribbons and gingerbread, it will
gleam.
With love that warms even this fro-
zen season,
Anna

December 24, 1887, Nemaha County
Fifth Letter from Anna Wil-
helmine Bauer to her sister
Klara in Germany

My dear Klara,
It's Christmas Eve, and I write by
lantern light while the children sleep,
their stockings hung by the stove with
hope. No oranges or peppermint this
year, but I found walnuts, and Lena
helped stitch dolls from scraps. She's
hidden one behind the woodpile—a
secret gift for Jakob. Such sweetness
here.

We cut a cedar by the frozen creek
and decorated it with gingerbread,
dried apples, and tin bits. When Jo-
hann lit the candles, it felt like home
again—our old home.
I thought of Papa singing Stille
Nacht, of how we pressed hands to-
gether during the last verse. Do you
remember? That melody followed
me across the ocean. I hum it stirring
porridge or scrubbing pails. It softens
everything.

Johann reads the Nativity while we
listen. Even the youngest feels the ho-
liness. Something about a stable and
baby brings tears to mothers repeat-
edly.

Tell Emil his harmonica tunes echo
in our parlor, making him part of our
celebration.

Christmas here is quiet, humble, cold
but joyful. I carry you all like a song
that never fades.

With love and candlelight,
Anna

*I want to continue Anna's letters
each month. Do they remind you of
your grandparents' stories?
Please send your comments to;
countryneighbor@windstream.net*

Or use the mailing address on page 2.

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

It must be summer: I've had my first tick bite.

I'm a member of the Nebraska Master Naturalists organization, which involves performing volunteer service and participating in continuing education opportunities. So, a couple weeks ago I attended training at Schramm Park to learn how to volunteer as a butterfly monitor. Logically, part of the training was held outdoors in a rural setting, where deer are sure to be roaming about helping to spread ticks.

I'm pretty sure my getup gave the impression of extreme overkill for spending 30 minutes walking along a mowed pathway, yards away from any long grass. I wore long pants, socks and shoes, a long-sleeved shirt, and my naturalist's hat. I even used insect repellent. BUT, I fear that I neglected to tuck my pantlegs into the top of my socks. At any rate, following the outdoor session, I began to feel a tickle inside my left pantleg. I repeatedly tried to squash whatever it was with vigorous rubbing through the denim. But the tickling sensation resumed as soon as I quit. I showered when I got home and found nothing.

Two mornings later, I got up and found a tick latched onto my upper left thigh, inconveniently close to the groin crease. I had to exert all my powers of contortion to bend over far enough to actually see the little devil, let alone get at it with a tweezers. But I got it. At least, I thought I had gotten it all. I should have examined the horrid arachnid with a magnifying glass (and kept the tick!) because two days later there was a red ring around the site.

I went to the doctor who applied iodine, dug around some more, and removed more bits of insect. He also prescribed anti-biotic for potential infection, which I was more than happy to take.

A week after my training, the weather finally cooperated for my first butterfly monitoring walk. Temperature, cloud cover, wind speed and moisture all affect butterfly movement. So, in order to achieve maximum results and get research-grade data, one must observe the protocol. I parked at Whiskey Run Creek Winery in Brownville and walked approximately half a mile along Whiskey Run Creek trail and then returned to my car via Main Street. My total observations for my hour of sauntering were two silver-spotted skippers nectaring on (what I think was) wild mustard right across the street from the winery where I started!

I dutifully reported my "sightings" to the iNaturalist website as per protocol and am hoping the weather cooperates again before the end of May. Part of the protocol is to visit my site at least twice a month, but at least seven days apart, from May through September.

I certainly hope to see more than silver-spotted skippers after all the training I've had. I'll be taking my binoculars along next time to be sure I don't have to wade into any tall grass or other underbrush to get close enough to a butterfly to identify it. I was warned that, in addition to ticks, there's a lot of poison ivy in Brownville. Great.

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

June is the most lush month. Everything spills over—roses, grasses, birdsongs at dawn. The trees wear their green with pride, blocking most of the view from my window on Fifth Street. School's out, lawn mowers hum, and windows are thrown open. It all feels permanent once it arrives.

But it isn't.

As a boy, summer felt endless. Now, I see June as a gentle teacher. She reminds me that nothing lasts forever—and that's not a reason for sorrow. It's an invitation to notice. To linger a little longer on the porch. To call someone you've been thinking about. To savor the freshly picked black raspberries.

Each year, I pick a few and eat them straight from the bramble—tart and sun-warm—the taste no grocery berry can match. And every year, I think, these won't last long. But that's part of the gift. They aren't meant to be hoarded but savored.

In a world that urges us forward, June pauses just long enough for us to remember what truly matters: moments that don't need to be perfect, only present. A breeze through an open window. A quiet walk after supper. The joy of biting into a ripe, garden-fresh strawberry.

We need that pause—the quiet moment between what has bloomed and what is still budding; a cricket's song in the warm grass, the scent of rain on dry earth, or distant thunder warning us that this too shall pass—the fleeting joy of right now.

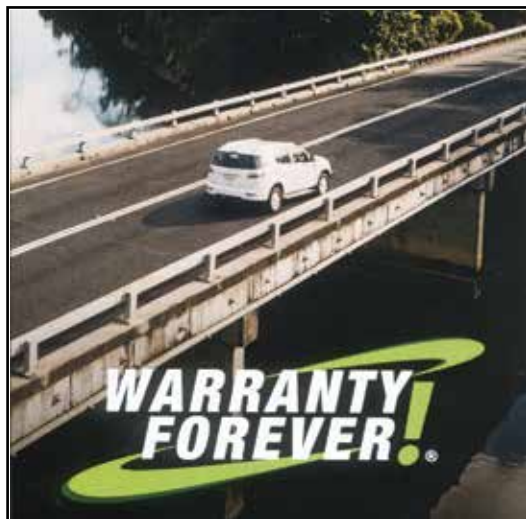
June never announces her departure. She doesn't linger like September or blaze out like October. She slips away quietly—through longer evenings and the slow fade of peonies. One day, you look up and realize the fireflies are fewer. The strawberries have peaked. Even the wind feels different.

As a boy, I loved June's arrival—running through fragrant, blooming alfalfa, chasing butterflies. Now, I've learned not to chase June. I try not to think about how long it will be until she returns, but instead, I watch her from my window on Fifth Street and enjoy her while she's here.



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