



BANNER

Sesquicentennial Party **ALL YEAR!**

Just because March is over doesn't mean we stop celebrating Nebraska's 150th birthday! This is a year-long celebration and we don't intend to quit now, so board the party bus with the Dawson County Museum and let's show Nebraska how we really celebrate a birthday!

There are many events throughout Nebraska that have been recognized as special Sesquicentennial Celebrations. The best way to find them is to go to www.ne150.org and click on Events & Programs. There are too many things to do this year in Nebraska to be able to accomplish them all, but the Dawson County Museum wants to get in on some of the fun, and we want to celebrate with you.

I Am Nebraska is an oral history project that invites citizens of all ages to share their Nebraska experience via social media by recording a short video and uploading it to Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram accounts under the hashtag #IAMNEBRASKA. You could do this on your own. OR you can come to the Museum where we can record and post your story. If you share fun memories of growing up, moving to, or traveling through Nebraska with us, the clip will also be saved in our archives.

A fun and healthy way to celebrate Nebraska's Sesquicentennial is the *NE150 Challenge* to complete at least 150 miles of physical activity throughout the year. **This could be walking around the Dawson County Museum and our grounds!** Three laps through our hallways plus the walk to & from your car equals a half mile. Log on to www.ne150.org click on Events & Programs, and then *NE150 Challenge* to register your daily activity.

The Dawson County Museum is always looking for volunteers to help on a regular basis or with a special project. Think about how much could be accomplished in 150 hours of volunteer time! Now you can sign up with the *Nebraska Impact Initiative* that was created to increase volunteer engagement in the state during the 150th Birthday celebration. When you volunteer your time at the Dawson County Museum (or anywhere else) you are encouraged to go online to www.ne150.org and log your hours on the Nebraska Impact Event page. Reaching 150 hours at the museum would be fantastic, but it's also just nice to see how many Nebraskans are volunteering their time to help others.

We would love to honor the Sesquicentennial with you! Let us know how we can help you meet any of these challenges. Stay tuned for more chances to celebrate in the coming months! Happy 150th!





DAWSON COUNTY NUGGETS

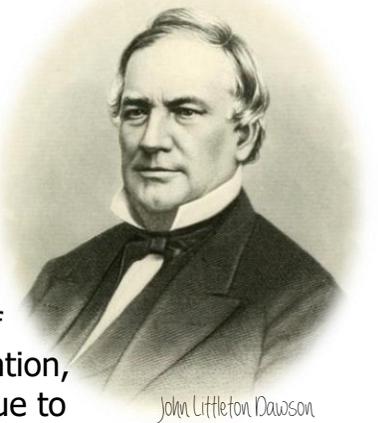
Crystal Wergsen

I love trivia! Especially history trivia! As a child I remember sitting around the table with my family playing Trivial Pursuit. I wasn't very good at it but, boy did I try! 30 years later and I'm not really that much better at trivia but I still love it! And I love to bless my family and my students with little known facts about history. You just never know when you might need to use it--so here's some of the lesser known facts about our beautiful county of Dawson!

Did you know that Dawson became a county before Nebraska became a state? On January 3, 1860, a bill was introduced in the House of the 6th Nebraska Territorial Legislature to create and define the boundaries of Dawson County. The bill was passed and made law January 9th by a vote of 21 to 11.

During my years at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln I lived in an apartment near the state capitol building. For exercise my roommate and I would walk around the capitol and run up and down the steps. (Oh, to be young again!) As we were walking I would read all the counties inscribed around the building. I often wondered how they got their names...there is always a reason and a story behind everything.

Believe it or not, Dawson County was named in honor of a Democratic Congressman from Pennsylvania! John Littleton Dawson had promoted a homestead act which was introduced as a bill to congress in 1854. Since Nebraska was a predominately Democratic territory at that time it was not unusual for its counties to be named for prominent Democrats.



John Littleton Dawson

The *Council Bluffs Bugle* ran an article on January 18, 1860 stating, "...the counties and towns of our Confederacy are made to perpetuate the name of our distinguished men. Among those who are deserving of this commemoration, by the people of the west, none stands more prominent than Mr. Dawson due to his persistent and able efforts for the last few years, both in and out of Congress, to secure the National Homestead law, and his warm advocacy of all measures tending to promote the prosperity of our Territories and New States."

Even though Dawson legally became a county in January of 1860 it was not until July 11, 1871 that the county held its first election in Plum Creek at the store of Daniel Freeman. According to *Johnson's History of Nebraska*, "a full board of county officers was chosen at this election, as follows: J.W. Delahunty, Joseph Smith, and Otto Hansen, Commissioners; Daniel Freeman, Clerk and Superintendent of Public Schools; Richard O'Keefe, Probate Judge; Patrick Delahunty, Treasurer; John Kehoe, Sheriff; David Meek, Surveyor and Patrick Gaffney, Coroner."

Plum Creek (what we now know as Lexington) was incorporated on March 7, 1874 and became the county seat. At that time it had a population of 750 and had quite a number of businesses including several general stores, lumber yards, hotels, and a newspaper. Other communities quickly sprang up in Dawson County including: Willow Island which was laid out in March of 1873, Overton in June of 1873, Cozad, founded by J.J. Cozad in December of 1873, and Gothenburg, founded by Olof Bergstrom in 1882.

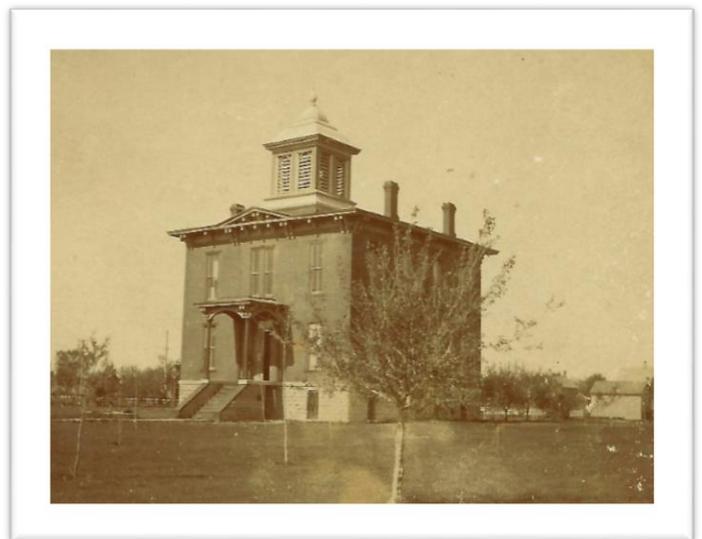
The first school district was formed in 1872 and embraced the entire county. By 1879, the county had a population of 3,871 and twenty-four school districts with 14 school houses as reported in *Johnson's History of Nebraska*. As you can see, it didn't take long for Dawson County to establish itself as an upstanding and prosperous county in the new state of Nebraska!

Another little known but interesting bit of Nebraska history is that it had been said that no crops could be raised west of Fort Kearny. Dawson County was known and valued by cattle owners for its immense and valuable grazing grounds of prairie grass. So efforts were made to prevent settlement by spreading rumors about the land's inability to grow good crops. Of course, that was quickly proved a fallacy because by 1882 three-fourths of Dawson County's population resided on well-tilled and productive farms as recorded in *Andreas' History of the State of Nebraska*.

Supposedly in 1873 gold was found a mile and a half east of Plum Creek. Rumor was that pieces of metal, said to be "gold", had been taken out of the earth. Before long prospectors and treasure hunters from all over the nation came out here only to find there wasn't really any gold. Imagine what Dawson County would be like to today if they had struck gold! We're probably lucky they didn't. Makes one wonder though what it was they actually did find....

Every place has its tragic history and Dawson County is no exception. For the most part Dawson County didn't have much crime in its early days but there is one story that stands out. In June of 1876 there had been trouble between two men regarding a homestead claim. The authorities were called in and Deputy Sheriff Charles Mayes along with two other men went to the home of Tom Hallowell to execute a writ of ejectment. Hallowell had previously threatened to shoot anyone who tried to remove him so when Deputy Sheriff Hayes broke through the front door, he was shot by Hallowell and killed instantly. Hallowell shot again and wounded one of the other men with the Deputy Sheriff. After two shots his gun was empty, so he was shackled and taken to Plum Creek to the Dawson County Courthouse where he was jailed to await trial.

Deputy Sheriff Hayes was a good and well-loved man by the community, so it came as no surprise when the jail was broken into by several masked men later that evening. The jailer was blindfolded and bound to a chair while Hallowell was taken from his cell. He was gagged and a rope placed around his neck. He was dragged to the back of the courthouse where he was hanged from an iron staircase that led to the second-floor courtroom. The body of Thomas Hallowell was found at daybreak the next morning but the participants in his hanging were never discovered. Though I doubt much time was spent on the search.



Old Dawson County Courthouse

So, there you have it . . . Dawson County Trivia for those moments when you need to fill an awkward silence or if you just want to show your friends that you know something they don't! You're welcome!

DCHS Board of Directors

Dawson County Historical Society held its Annual Meeting on Saturday, February 25, 2017 at Stone Hearth Estates in Gothenburg. The topic of the day was Nebraska 150th Anniversary Events as explained by Barb Bierman Batie, Sesquicentennial Commissioner. Board of Directors were elected. New board members are Courtney Anthony and Scott Foster.

Courtney Anthony grew up on a Dawson County farm. She is a graduate from Cozad High School and UNL with a bachelor's degree in Fisheries and Wildlife. Besides working on the family farm,

Courtney enjoys singing in church, reading, kayaking and competitive pistol shooting. She has been involved at the museum since she was a child, and our mammoth occupies a soft spot in Courtney's heart. She has already put in time learning our computer inventory program.

Directors & Staff:

Back Row: Judy Andres
Wayne Howard
Don Batie
Scott Foster
Courtney Anthony
Jerry Lashley
Crystal Werger

Front Row: Carol Nelson
Cheri Bergman
Donn Newquist
Pat Gaudreault
Jan Wightman
Shail Kumar

Not Pictured: Mike Hudson



Scott Foster is a San Diego native who grew up in Neligh, NE. He is also a UNL alumnus. Scott was a History and Social Science teacher and coach. He and his family have lived in Gothenburg for 17 years. Most afternoons you can hear him on KRVN's three stations giving voice to the news and sports. Scott says if he could be any animal it would be a giraffe since he's not used to having much headroom. We're excited to exploit his broad knowledge and bask in the elevation of his humor.

Welcome to the fun!

The Dawson County Historical Society was organized in 1958. The Articles of Incorporation state three purposes for the organization. It is to gather, preserve and hold records and property relating to the history of the county and state. Secondly, the Society is to stimulate interest and knowledge of that history. As a way to centralize the work, there is a directive to operate an institution which preserves and displays the collected items. That's us!

The Historical Society is looking for new members. Over the past 60 years we have had many very committed people working to maintain and develop our museum and the treasures held here. Now we need new help. Please consider how you can contribute and who you can send our way.

Dawson County Historical Society Board Meetings are open to the public. Most meetings are held in the evening of the first Monday of the month. If you would like to attend call the museum for details.

Museum
and
Depot

1969



Barn Quilts of Dawson County

The Cozad Chamber of Commerce is working on establishing a Barn Quilt Trail in Dawson County. A Barn Quilt is painted on signboard to represent a quilt design then mounted outdoors. Blocks often tell a story unique to the maker or location. A list and map of Dawson County barn quilts is being developed.

The goal for the Summer 2017 travel season is to have sufficient blocks on display to encourage bus tours of Dawson County Barn Quilt Trail and other attractions.

Dawson County businesses and individuals are encouraged to develop their own quilt blocks and put them up for display. If you are interested in participating please go to cozadchamber.com/m/listing/view/cozadtourism and sign up your quilt today!

Call Julie (784-2010) or Laurie (784-2019) if you have questions.

NET, Nebraska's PBS Station produced a documentary called "Patchwork of the Plains: Nebraska's Barn Quilt Culture".

The program includes footage from Dawson County.

Visit netnebraska.org/basic-page/television/patchwork-plains



Here's a teaser of the Dawson County Museum Barn Quilt! Stop by to see the whole thing!



Dawson County Historical Museum received the Lexington Chamber of Commerce Friend of Tourism Award at their Awards Banquet in February.

Thank You to Dawson Public Power for the Exhibit!



We have been privileged to house a show from Dawson Public Power for a couple of months. Thanks to Chelsea Gengenbach for compiling the information and to DPPD staff for building us a model pole. It's been a good show! We've had many former DPPD employees stop in to share the exhibit with family. Several people from the general public have dropped by the office to say they learned a lot from the display.

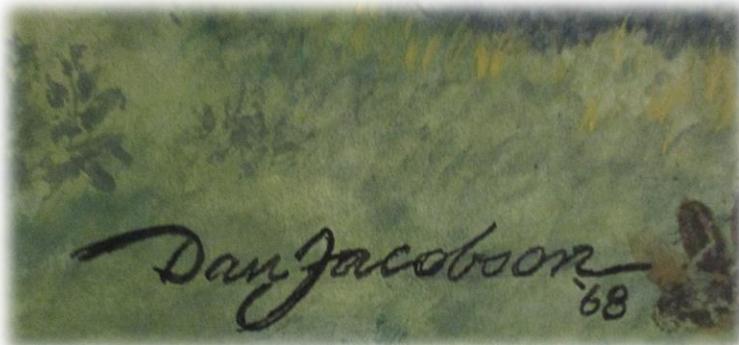
Happy 80th Birthday to Dawson Public Power District! We appreciate you!

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| <p>Wish List:</p> | <p>Our museum will be hosting several big events this year. We would love to have 10 lightweight round 60" tables.</p> <p>We have made good progress building walls for our house & Mainstreet. We are looking for 20' of wood moldings & wide baseboards for rooms.</p> | <p>Thank you!</p> |
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Next Up in the Art Gallery . . . DOHS Artwork

After Easter we will open a new art exhibit. This show will be original artwork from the museum's collection. Most of the art that has been on display over the years has come on loan and left when the show was over. However, we do have several pieces that have been donated for us to keep.

Some art comes to us well-documented. But other pieces are surrounded by mystery. We will have some of those pieces on display. Our hope is that patrons who come to see the art will be able to add to the story of mysterious creations. Here's an example. Can you help?



This is the signature on a painting of the Turkey Leg Raid. Does anyone know who this artist is?

