



BANNER

Happy Birthday Nebraska!

March 1, 2017 is Nebraska's 150th birthday. In honor of our state's milestone, the Dawson County Museum will be celebrating all year long with special exhibits and events showing the growth of Dawson County since Nebraska became a state. We're calling it "150 Years in Dawson County".

To start off the Nebraska Sesquicentennial festivities we are featuring a new exhibit in the art gallery called ***Yesterday's Vision, Today's Power*** to celebrate Dawson Public Power District's 80th birthday. I'd like to thank Chelsea Gengenbach, with Dawson Public Power, who coordinated this exhibit and a couple of her "helpers" who built part of the display. Without them this would not have been possible. This is a great start to our "150 Years in Dawson County" because getting electric power and keeping it has been a very important factor in our county's growth. Imagine what life would be without it!

Wednesday morning, March 1st, we will celebrate Nebraska's Birthday in the traditional way, by drinking coffee and eating cake. Everyone's invited to drop in for coffee and a chat! This will be our second "Coffee with Carol". We celebrated Carol Nelson's birthday on February 1st and had such fun, we thought we'd have another go at it. So mark it on your calendar – Wednesday, March 1, 10:00 to 11:59 am – morning coffee at the museum!

Watch for other Sesquicentennial events throughout the year! You can find us on our website, on facebook, on KRVN, in Dawson County newspapers, and by talking to other DCHS members.

SESQUI WHAT ?

Join the Dawson County Historical Society for their annual meeting and learn about all the ways Nebraskans can help celebrate the state's 150th anniversary of statehood, also called the Nebraska Sesquicentennial.

Presenter will be Barb Bierman Batie of Lexington, one of 17 Sesquicentennial Commissioners appointed by the Governor to help plan and execute this very special birthday celebration.

DCHS ANNUAL MEETING

**Saturday, February 25th
2:00 pm
Stone Hearth Estates
Gothenburg, NE**

THE BLIZZARD OF 1949

-- Crystal Werger

I think Winter is a beautiful time of year. I love watching snow fall. I love how it covers trees and sparkles in the sun. I love cold weather. But even I have a love limit when it's just downright nasty.

The Blizzard of 1949 began Thanksgiving Week 1948. It started as rain, turned to ice, then snow and then blowing snow. A similar storm happened again around Christmas. January started out nice with mild temperatures and balmy breezes. The Farmer's Almanac wasn't far off in its predictions and most people settled into the new year with good thoughts. Little did they know that the November storm had started a chain of storms that wouldn't end until April, but would be remembered in Nebraska as the Blizzard of 1949.



1949 – Leta Batie

The "Blizzard" was actually a series of storms that produced high winds, freezing temperatures, and lots of snow. Snow fell with 70 mile-an-hour wind gusts, and drifts formed quickly -- stranding people in cars and homes. Central and Western Nebraska took the brunt of it. Since farms and towns were so far apart people couldn't get help for days and even weeks.

There are many stories of folks being stranded in vehicles on January 2 because that storm came up so fast and the day had started out so nice. People perished because they left their vehicles trying to find help. The choice was to freeze in their car or freeze outside when they got disoriented in the blowing snow. But some were lucky. One such couple got stranded just north of Gothenburg. They huddled together in the back seat for 20 hours until the husband finally decided to go find help. With the storm still raging he was lucky to follow a fenceline to a farmhouse not far away. Still, by the time they got back to the car his wife's legs were frozen.

The wind blew and blew while snow continued to fall. Travel stopped. Trains couldn't get through. Mail couldn't get through. People were stuck in their homes because snow had drifted against doors and windows. Some snow drifts reached a height of 40 feet! The North Platte Canteen was put back into operation as trains stalled and a large group of U.S. Sailors were stranded. Many say that the Blizzard of '49 was the worst blizzard in Nebraska History. It didn't claim as many lives as the Blizzard of 1888, but it definitely won the trophy for wind velocity and amount of snowfall.



1949 – Warren Batie with his first loader

Delphine Anthony, a child in Farnam, remembers getting out of school early. Since it was too stormy to go home she stayed with a friend in town. Her friend's brother was there with a few military buddies, so the house was full of people who slept three to a bed. Doll Nielsen, a mother of two young children, remembers being housebound for a while. Her husband had a repair shop behind their home in Lexington, and was still able to work during the blizzard. Both ladies remember the January blizzard and all the snow it produced, but didn't suffer bad consequences because of it. They were fortunate.

When snow stopped falling and wind stopped blowing and road crews could start clearing away the snow, another storm would come in and pile onto the already existing piles of snow! Local road crews couldn't keep up and neither could their old worn out machines. Central and Western Nebraska communities were running out of energy and money.

By the end of January President Harry Truman created "Operation Snowbound", headed up by Major General Lewis Pick. Truman told him to use anything he needed to "break the awful strangle hold of the continuing blizzards." So Pick utilized snow weasels and tanks to move snow and get supplies & help through to isolated farm houses and communities. In the air, Major General Pick used large military transports to drop food, medical supplies and doctors into hard to reach areas. The Red Cross, Salvation Army, and highway crews also organized rescue operations. Men who owned airplanes were asked to fly supplies and mail out to ranches and farm houses drifted in by the storms. Radio Stations broadcast instructions for ground-to-air signals in the snow so isolated persons could "talk" to the rescuers above them.

Finally, after the last blizzard on April 7th, all state highways opened to two-way traffic for the first time since November 17th. They had seen a total of 13 days of storms during the winter. Nebraska lost over 70 citizens and 100,000 head of livestock. It was a devastating winter and is remembered as "the year of the terrible blizzards". But can we call it the worst blizzard in Nebraska's history? Have we had worse since? Possibly. No matter the strength of the wind or the amount of snow, every blizzard is horrible if you're caught in it and live to tell the tale.

Major Blizzards / Ice Storms in 150 Years of Dawson County	
1873	1957
1888	1966
1913	1991
1931	1994
1949	2005
1950	2006-07

What winter storms do you remember as being the worst? Call or email the Dawson County Museum and let us know. If you have photos, we can scan them and put them on file. We'd love to hear your story! Drop in and take a look at our Dawson Public Power Exhibit and their memories of the Back to Back Ice Attack.

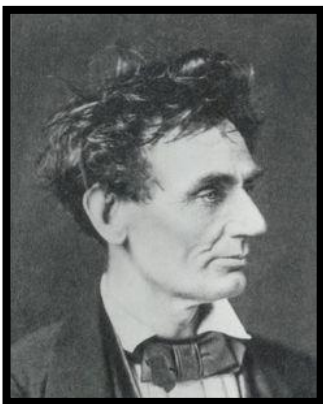
Wish List:

Our museum will be hosting several big events in this year. We would love to have 10 lightweight round 60" tables.

Thank you.

Announcing 2 Classes from the Dawson County Museum Series

PRESIDENTS PAST



ABRAHAM & MARY LINCOLN

GEORGE & MARTHA WASHINGTON

2:00 WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH

2:00 WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND

CLASSES ARE FREE TO THE PUBLIC AND WILL BE HELD AT THE MUSEUM



CONSTRUCTION ON MAINSTREET

A lot will be happening at the museum this year so you're not going to want to miss out on any of it! In addition to the special events and exhibits that we'll be hosting especially for Nebraska's birthday the museum will be working on several projects during the year. The Mainstreet Exhibit that we've been trying to finish for several years now is finally getting its walls! We have seven done and in place, with about ten more to go but oh, it feels so good to finally see the walls! (Cheri's still looking for baseboards, crown molding and beadboard.)

Thanks to **Give Big Lexington 2016** we raised over \$10,000 to begin work on "The Loop". What we have fondly named the "The Loop" refers to the old portion of the building behind the art gallery which will connect the back part of our Mainstreet Exhibit with the Military Hall of Honor. Once that is complete visitors to the museum will be able to walk in a complete circle around the museum instead of having to backtrack once they get to the end of the main gallery. Several of the Dawson County Historical Society Board of Directors have taken on this project and are looking for a few more hands to assist with the remaining demolition that needs done before the electricians can come in to do their work. Once they're done then we can begin the finish work. I'd really like to have "The Loop" completed before the end of 2017 so any extra hands are appreciated! – Crystal Werger



INSULATORS: SOMETIMES IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

Some days around here are really quiet, but some days things are happening several places at the same time. One day last week when I was feeling overwhelmed with everything that I felt needed to happen at once, I took a walk around our indoor block and just looked. Yes, I saw all the big jobs to be done, but what made me smile were little details that had just been finished. Specifically, insulators. A ceramic one on a power pole, with weeds in the background (not what's normally in our Art Gallery), then a series of little attic insulators supporting the wiring to our new front porch light. Insulators keep energy from running amok. Their existence is evidence of energy. I'm an artist, not a scientist, but to me it was a sign that energy exists and work is happening. Next time you visit, I hope you notice and smile. – Cheri Bergman