



BANNER

Sesquicentennial Commission A Day at the Museum

Friday, August 4th we were privileged to host Nebraska's 2017 Sesquicentennial Commissioners and Foundation. Their breakout groups got to meet in various areas of the museum. Breakfast and lunch were a taste of Lexington's multi-ethnic cuisine. DCHS Treasurer Don Batie and I gave tours of our facility. By the time they left I know they were quite impressed with Dawson County and all it has to offer. Their next stop was North Platte where they caught the Nebraska 150 Express. According to one of the Commissioners, who resides in Dawson County, they were still talking about their visit to the Dawson County Museum on Saturday!

What's Coming Up

August

- 21 Solar Eclipse – Museum's Closed
- 29 Decades of Fashion Exhibit opens
- 31-2 Truckin' Through Nebraska open

September

- 6 Coffee with Carol
- 9 Historic Homes Tour & Tea
- 12-28 Volunteer Blitz – Military Uniforms

October

- 1 Joe Jeffrey – Fenceposts
- 17 Looking Past Skin Exhibit opens

November

- 1 Painting the Legacy Exhibit opens
- 5 Celebrate Dawson County Open House



Nebraska Centennial Exhibits Caravan

Fifty Years Ago: 1967 from Dawson County Herald

Fifty years ago, a caravan of 3 trailers travelled the state with specially prepared exhibits to celebrate Nebraska's Centennial. Two units were concerned largely with Nebraska history, while the third was a special exhibit of Nebraska art, curated by the Joslyn Art Museum.

This is the stop the caravan made in Lexington in August 1967. Helping with the exhibit were Jennie Allen - president of DCHS, Blair & Mildred Heath - publishers of the Overton Observer, Olga Sheldon - member of DCHS, and Jerry Pritchard – manager of the caravan.

If you can volunteer to help with the Sesquicentennial version of this caravan while it is on display at the museum, please call Crystal at the museum. (See back page TRUCKIN' THROUGH NEBRASKA for dates & time.)

OUR SIDE OF THE POND

In June, a group of 30 students and four adult volunteers from the Lexington Middle School summer school program cleaned out several areas around the pond behind the museum. Sophie and Neil Risinger are volunteer certified fishing instructors for Nebraska Game and Parks who teach an advanced fishing class at the Lexington Middle school. They have wanted to bring their students to fish in the museum's pond for a long time but growth around the pond made it impossible for several kids to fish there at one time. So, they decided to take matters into their own hands and asked if they could bring the kids one morning and clean out.



Although adults wielded chainsaws and grass trimmers the students used clippers to cut down smaller trees and bushes, and pile them away from the water's edge. One member of the Dawson County Historical Society who volunteered to help them told me he was impressed with how hard the students worked. Some of them even wanted to come back the next day to clear out more space!

After about 4 hours they had made quite a difference in the landscape and a very big pile in the middle of the yard. The following week they returned to fish and realized just how much their efforts paid off. Sophie said several of the students asked, while they were working, why no one had maintained the area or cut the trees while they were still little and easier to cut down. She said it was a great lesson for the students to learn just how much work it takes to maintain an area like that and hopefully walked away with a greater respect for Lexington's parks and fishing areas. And what a great way to learn about the importance of volunteer work and pride in your community!



This is our Museum volunteers clearing away the pile. It took a front loader and dump truck over an hour to remove the trees and brush! It's amazing what 30 Middle School students can do when they put their minds to it!

A big thank you goes out to Craig Howard, Tim Anthony, and Wayne Howard for taking time out of their busy schedules to remove the huge pile of trees!

Thanks also go to Pat Gaudreault for sprucing up our log cabin and the growth surrounding it.

We had the honor of hosting a wedding this month! After everyone's work we had to make use of the clean green space! Kaitlyn and David Smith said their vows behind the museum with the lake in the background and a beautiful flowered arch above them. Cheri and I attended the wedding along with about 75 others. It was a gorgeous day (the bride and I had been a little stressed about the weather forecast) and the couple and their bridal party stayed afterwards to take some pictures on the museum grounds.

- Crystal Werger



A TALE OF TWO BROTHERS

When I began my research of the Olive family from Williamson County, Texas, I initially intended to find out more about Ira Olive. Since becoming the Director of the Dawson County Museum I have heard the story about the Olive brothers and the hanging of homesteaders Ami Ketchum and Luther Mitchell so many times I was sick of it. And the stories were usually wrong. I always felt bad for poor Ira because people so often mixed up his and his brother's first names. Although Isom Prentice was called *Print* by most people, his name is many times written as *Ira* Prentice. My story begins with a search to find out the difference between the brothers and why Print took the way of the outlaw and Ira went the way of the businessman.

I really thought it would be easy: simply go through Ira's files in our museum archives and then search through Print's. Presumably they would each tell separate tales and the differences would present themselves. I would have my clean-cut answer. But, as a historian I should know that life is never easy and history is never clear. For two weeks, I immersed myself in Olive history, reading about the parents Jim & Julia and how they got to Williamson County, Texas. I studied their nine children. I looked at the parents' relationships with their children and the rapport between the boys. I learned why they left Texas for Nebraska. Most importantly I understood more about who Ira was, and why he gets eclipsed by his brother.

You see, it's really not "a tale of two brothers" but a tale of four brothers. Isom Prentice (Print) was born February 7, 1840. Thomas Jefferson (Jay) was three years younger and Ira Webster another four years younger. Then Robert Allen was born in 1855, fifteen years after Print. You'd think the age difference would have kept Print & Bob from being close, but their bond was strong.

Shortly after Jim Olive brought his family to Texas he became enamored with the wild "horned" cattle found close to the area in which they settled. Jim and many of his neighbors began to go on "cow hunts" to round up the long-horned cows and use them for food and clothing. Their meat was tasty

and their hide was tough and good for making clothing and furniture. This soon turned into a way of life for the Olives, and longhorns became a very prosperous business for the Olive family.

In 1861 Print enlisted in the Williamson County Mounted Volunteers. He was the only Olive boy to fight in the War Between the States. Jim did not believe in Secession and kept his other boys home. By the time Print returned from the war many things had changed. Jay (23) and Ira (18) now ran the place and managed over 4,000 longhorns. Print was astonished as his father divulged there were still thousands more to be claimed and branded. But the end of the war brought more men to Texas, and problems started to develop with cattle rustling. Print who had once had an easy, friendly manner, though a quick temper, had been hardened by the war. He was quieter now, the horrors of the battlefield taking their toll on him. He wasn't going to let anyone take his family's cattle and he would deal with it the best way he knew, with his six-shooter.

Print quickly got back into the role as oldest brother and took back leadership as his brothers stepped aside to let him take his rightful place. He loved the cattle and the life he had with his family in Texas and fought hard to preserve it.

As the years went by the Olive boys grew up, got married, and started their own families. Bob, the young brother who idolized Print, seemed prone to trouble. At 14 he was arrested and put in jail for stealing a horse. He insisted on carrying a gun, even though it was illegal at his age. He so badly wanted to be recognized and appreciated like Print. Most of the time Ira was frustrated with Bob, even though he had quite a temper himself. One example of Ira's rashness made me realize that all the Olive brothers tended to shoot first and deal with the consequences later.

The story goes that in 1876, when Ira and his hired men were moving cattle through the Republican River Valley in Nebraska, Ira got angry when some of the riders weren't being careful enough moving the herd out of the canyon. He told his men to move the

cattle carefully to avoid broken horns and flesh wounds that would likely end up festered with screw worms. A hired man they called "Mexican Leon" was carelessly pushing cattle through, and Ira lost his temper. Leon grabbed his knife while Ira grabbed for his gun and fired. They rolled Leon's body into a deep crevice in the canyon and threw some dirt over it. Court records show that Ira sent consolation money to the man's widow, who took the money and promptly married the man she'd been living with. In 1913 a road crew unearthed some human bones and Texas-type boots with spurs. At that time, no one knew the history of the area and just assumed it was a Texas Cowboy. Later, after Harry Chrisman's book The Ladder of Rivers was published, the bones were identified as belonging to Mexican Leon.

Print and Ira talked about relocating to the wide-open space that was central Nebraska. Cattle rustling was getting worse in Williamson County, and they really wanted to get away from it all. Little brother Bob's worsening troubles spurred the decision. They hoped to take their herds to Nebraska with the endless prairies and open range, and start over. They would get Bob out of Texas so he could start with a clean slate.

Brother Jay chose not to go with them. He was content to remain in Texas, but wished his brothers well. The three brothers built homes for their families in Nebraska and settled them in. Ira was tired of trail life. He longed for the security that staying in one place provided, and knew his socially conscious wife would not take well to life on an isolated ranch. Print was starting to feel the same. More and more homesteaders were coming to the area and breaking ground to farm. On several occasions Print and Ira made generous payments to families because Olive cattle had overrun garden plots and cornfields. Then to make matters worse, cattle rustling reared its ugly head once again.

When Bob found out who was taking Olive cattle, he was furious and went straight for the Sheriff. He was deputized and asked by the Sheriff to arrest the men responsible. But, of course, it wasn't that easy and in the ensuing fight with the cow thieves, Bob was shot and killed. While Ira went to Texas to attend to his brother's funeral, Print went seeking justice for the murder of his brother.

Exactly how things went down is unclear, but two rustlers were dead. The decision made by Print to shoot the man who shot his brother and hang the one responsible for stealing his livestock would haunt him the rest of his life. But it was a decision he never regretted.

Life changed that day for the Olives. Print was tried and found guilty for murder, though many people supported him and still called him friend. After 20 months at the Nebraska State Penitentiary, Print was released for a retrial and was acquitted. He and his family moved to Dodge City, Kansas where he took on a new life as a cattleman-businessman-traveling man and he was happy. But since history has a way of repeating itself with stories such as these, this life for Print Olive would be a short one. On August 16, 1886 at the age of 46, he was shot and killed by a man who owed him money.



*Lou & Ira Olive in Winter
House at 401 East 13th Street, Lexington*

Ira Webster Olive quit the trails and stayed closer to home raising horses as well as cattle. He grew to love the little community of Plum Creek and became involved with its business and politics, eventually assisting in renaming the booming town *Lexington*. Ira and his wife, Lou, raised a son and daughter to adulthood, remaining in Lexington until they died. Ira Olive became a well-respected businessman in the community. The beautiful Queen Anne home Ira built for his "socially conscious" wife still stands as a testament to the life the Olive brothers hoped to find in Nebraska.

Historic Homes Tour & Edwardian Tea

1:00 – Bring your ticket to the museum for a map for the tour.
Visit some of Lexington's historic homes.

3:00 – Meet back at the museum for an Edwardian Tea.

Saturday, September 9, 2017

You will need to show your ticket at every stop.

Tickets are available at Dawson County Museum, Lexington Chamber of Commerce, and U-Save Gifts.



New Marker for Mitchell & Ketchum

Custer County
Historical Society
recently dedicated
a new marker
designating the
Mitchell & Ketchum
Homesteads.

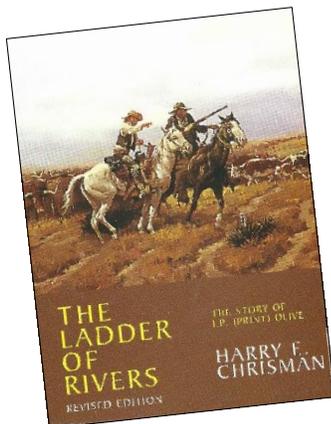
For more details
go to

<http://www.custercountymuseum.com/>

CATTLEMEN 150



Main Gallery Exhibit



Read the Story

The Isom Prentice Olive Story

told by Harry Chrisman

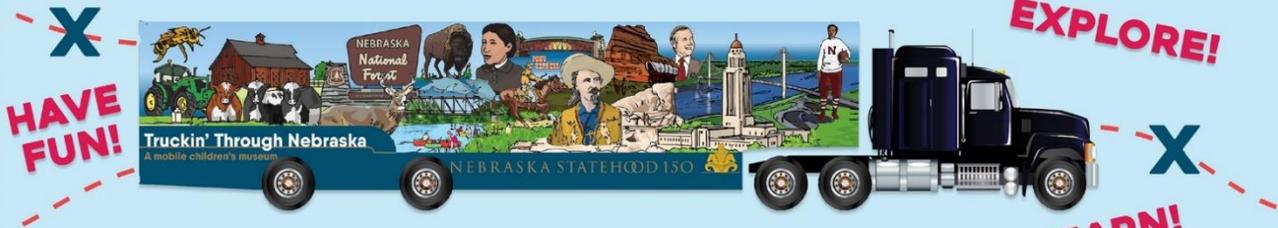
Available in our Museum Gift Shop

Published by Dawson County Historical Society

TRUCKIN' THROUGH NEBRASKA

A MOBILE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!



THURSDAY, AUGUST 31 • 11:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1 • 11:00 A.M. – 6:00 P.M.
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2 • 11:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.

Dawson County Historical Society & Museum
805 Taft Street



NEBRASKA
STATEHOOD 150

LEARN MORE AT
NE150.ORG/MUSEUM

History cannot give us a program for the future, but it can give us a fuller understanding of ourselves, and of our common humanity, so that we can better face the future. Robert Penn Warren

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HONOR VETERANS

As part of our Sesquicentennial focus we want to look at 150 years of Veterans in Dawson County. We need help doing an inventory of our military uniforms. We plan to devote several days in September to organizing our collection, filling in holes in old documentation, transferring documentation from old spread sheets to our museum software, and assembling the stories of men and women represented. If you can be part of this process, we would really appreciate your help!

We will be working on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays for 3 weeks in September.
September 12-14, 19-21, and 26-28 from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

To volunteer your time please contact Crystal at the museum by email crystalwerger@gmail.com or call her at 308-324-5340. Let us know we can count on your help!