



BANNER

Tales Along the Way

Since our attention hasn't been darting away to events this year, we have had time to do research and paperwork that frequently gets pushed aside. Often when we are working on exhibits the background becomes the real story. We have so many great artifacts to choose from that editing what actually goes on display is difficult. The choice often comes down to which piece has more of a story. Unraveling those tales is what makes our job so fascinating! We are using this newsletter to tell a few of those stories.

On the next few pages you will find our political stories—not arguing about what's happening right now, but looking back at elections from the past. We also want to honor Veterans Day by remembering some Dawson County women who served this country during The Great War.



Little Leah Eulalie Westhafer who wore this lace dress grew up to be a stenographer for Wm Jennings Bryan. She was friends with two Murray sisters who grew up on the Johnson Rancho north of Elwood. Rena & Ethel Murray as well as Josephine Back from Gothenburg sailed to Europe as Medical Personnel during World War I. (See! How many questions came to your mind in that one paragraph?)

Rena, Ethel & Josephine served as nurses in different units, but all in southern France in 1918-19. Rena writes about working through her whole first night just dressing wounds "with no heat, no hot water and not much in the way of supplies". Ethel came back to train and work in Chicago as an anesthetist and later as a teacher at Lincoln High. Josephine married Jack Pfusch – at the Gothenburg Cemetery you can see their bench "Jack & Jodie, 1955", and her family's markers all have their signatures in bronze. (Even answers lead to more questions. 😊)

The poem below, *Life's Book* was written by Josephine's mother Josephine Cheney Back.

*With life's book nearly finished, its closing chapter in sight,
We turn back to the pages where we first began to write;
Back to the scenes of childhood, glad days of innocent play,
Where we'd like to linger longer but childhood cannot stay.*

*Once more turning the pages, comes the chapter of youth,
That we find quite exciting, very alluring in truth;
Our life is all before us, heart hopeful, joyful and light,
Though often that gay chapter is irksome as well as bright.*

*In youth we equip for the future, 'tis preparing time,
When strength of our metal is tested to perfect our prime;
Then with pulses throbbing, all faculties keen and awake,
There comes maturity and our place in the world we take.*

*Of romance and adventure, frequently mingled with care;
For on this wonderful planet during the course of life,*

*Leaves in that chapter are many, deepest joys written there,
None escape free of trouble through all its hurry and strife.*

*Yet when reviewing life's story, the dark pages are faint,
On the walls of memory only bright pictures we paint;
Priceless treasures of memory! Pause – look backward again,
And for the chapters well written, give a thankful Amen!*

New Exhibits

Baubles, Bangles & BEADS

PLETRON

US PRESIDENTS COLLECTION

Children's Exhibit

Elections, Drawing Straws and a Dead Crane

by Crystal Werger

Preparing for the Baubles, Bangles & Beads exhibit Cheri came across lovely beadwork from the wedding dress worn by Nelle Emerson Crane. Nelle was the Grandmother of Dorothy Rosenberg Kain and the Great-Grandmother of Jeanne Kain Kelly. Nelle's husband, David Crane, was a minister in Lexington 1896-1901. He kept a diary during his time in Lexington, and in it he wrote about a special city election in 1898.



REV. and MRS. D. W. CRANE in San Francisco, in 1907 awaiting to leave for Honolulu, where he entered the Missionary Field. He had previously served as Lexington's Methodist Church Minister.

The Lexington Clipper (run by the Kains & Kellys) shared Grandpa Crane's story in 1972:

In 1898, a city election was being held in which the main issue was wet-vs-dry. A Law and Order League was formed by church people of the community. Rev. Crane wrote that 153 ballots were cast in each of the two wards in the city. The Law and Order League candidates lost by 7 in one ward and won by 7 in the other ward. The opposing side wanted to declare the election null and void, keep the present mayor in office, but allow the licensing of liquor. Because Mayor John F. Kutz was on their side, the Law and Order League would agree to that, but not to the licensing. After many conferences among city officials and both parties in the election, it was decided to draw straws. The following evening, at 8:00 pm, both the mayor and treasurer candidates of the Law and Order League drew the longer straws. Rev. Crane wrote in his diary that 'great gobs of gloom hung from the countenances of the saloon keepers'. A victory bonfire was held, and during the night a large crane was nailed to the door of one of the closed saloons.

I became curious about the length of time this dry period lasted so I dug out the 1898-99 Daily Pioneer newspaper from the museum archives and began to search. On May 6, 1898 I read:

There is not at present a licensed saloon in Lexington. W.A. Lomax closed the "Capitol" Saturday night last, and S.D. Dunn shut the doors of "Scotty's Place" Thursday morning. It has been a long time since Lexington was without a saloon, but that is the state of affairs here at present, to the great joy of a part of the citizens and the disgust of others.

I kept reading. This was interesting. Old newspapers are so much fun to read through and I was hooked. It didn't take me long to find more. Two weeks later the Pioneer reported:

A plain drunk was run in last night and two more this morning by Marshal VanCleave. For a dry town Lexington is keeping up a good wet gait.

A couple months later in July the Pioneer reports:

There are no saloons in Lexington. Patrick McTygue, of Eddyville, was arrested last evening by Marshal VanCleave, and lodged in jail. He was found on the streets by the officer drunk and disorderly and indulging in loud and boisterous language. This morning he was taken before Police Judge Little who imposed a fine and costs amounting to \$3.10, which was paid, and the prisoner discharged. There are no saloons in Lexington.

A few days later the paper reported more drunks on the scene in Lexington's dry town. This seemed to be the way of it for several months. There were obviously no saloons in Lexington (that was made quite clear) but there were still drunks. Would this ever change?

Almost a year after the initial election I found what I was looking for in the March 11, 1899 issue of the Pioneer.

***For High License:** In response to a call issued last Thursday for all those who believed in high license to meet at the courthouse that evening, quite a party assembled at 8 o'clock.*

(For anyone like me who didn't get that—High License is allowing the sale of alcoholic drinks but charging a high fee for the privilege of doing so.) Then I found this in the April 1st Daily Pioneer:

Three saloons in Lexington at \$1200 each is better than no saloons and no revenue and the traffic carried on just the same.

And by April 9 the vote had been cast. I can't really say I was surprised...

***The City Election:** The result of last Tuesday's election in Lexington was a victory for the license forces. It was a hotly contested fight from start to finish, and much activity was manifested by both friend and foe of the license proposition. Politics cut no figure in the contest – it was simply a question as to whether Lexington should be wet or dry for another year. Last year's municipal election was fought upon the same proposition and resulted in a tie, which was decided by drawing straws, and resulted in the dry candidates being seated. But this year a majority of the people were of a different mind and cast their votes in favor of a wet administration, every candidate on license ticket being elected by from 5 to 35 majority.*

My curiosity sated (for now), I put the newspaper back into the archives and thought to myself how fascinating Dawson County history really is. I'm sure "wet vs dry" happened all over the United States during the late 1890's but this is the place I call home so it's much more exciting when I read about events that took place on the streets I walk every day. The Dawson County Museum's archive is full of information just waiting to be discovered again. I wondered what we'd come across next!

CAMPAIGN BUTTONS, PEZ DISPENSERS AND HIPPIES

BY CHERI BERGMAN

The next story came out of the Plectron and Presidents exhibits. David Collins and his sister Janet Gottula have been working with us for several years to assemble and build a Plectron exhibit. When David passed away unexpectedly this summer, we hosted a memorial reception here at the museum and officially opened the Plectron exhibit. Janet offered to let us display David's collection of US Presidents memorabilia.

Dave started this extensive collection as a child and kept adding to it until his death. A childhood friend remembered the miniature plastic figures of the Presidents from Dave's room when they were boys. I remember Dave's fascination with all things political during high school and his participation in the Ford and Reagan campaigns during college, so I was not surprised to see his photos with public figures. Campaign buttons dating back to the 1920s, models of Presidential Vehicles, replicas of US Monuments and Presidents' Homes, and even PEZ Presidents round out the collection. Displaying his collection was a labor of love. Dave was a personal friend as well as a good friend to the Dawson County History Museum.



DAVID WAYNE COLLINS

My favorite piece is Dave's report on his trip to the Nixon Inauguration in 1969. I vaguely remember him telling us about it back in our day, but I had never thought about that he was only eleven at the time. Once Crystal read it too, we decided we needed to share it. The following is Dave's story.

MY TRIP TO THE INAUGURATION, JANUARY 16-21, 1969 AS DICTATED BY 11-YR-OLD DAVID COLLINS

I wanted to go to the inauguration real badly, so I asked my mother if I could write to Senator Carl Curtis to see if I could get a ticket. As the inauguration was only a week away, she didn't think this could happen, so she said if I got a ticket she would send me to my Aunt who lives in Maryland, so I could go. On the Thursday morning before the Inauguration day I received a Special Delivery Air Mail letter from Senator Curtis. (The letter said there would be a ticket waiting for him in Washington.)

Mother was contacted by Joe Edwards of the Republican Committee. He said I could go on their plane if I could be in Omaha by 9:00 Friday morning. Mother then talked to Dennis Jackson and they said they would take care of me in Omaha.

The plane got off at about 10:00 Thursday night (January 16). We made a nonstop flight to Lincoln because of bad weather and there were no passengers for other towns (en route). The next stop after Lincoln was Columbus for a couple of minutes; then to Omaha.

Dennis Jackson met me at the airport. He had been waiting for an hour. My baggage was half an hour late getting to the baggage area. We got to Jackson's at 1:00 in the morning. None of the other Jacksons were up. I got up at 6:00 in the morning (that was murder). We had breakfast and then waited around until the kids were ready to go to school. Then Judy, Mrs. Jackson, took me to the airport and we checked in my baggage and walked down to Gate 8. When I got there I waited a while and then went down to the gift center for a minute. I left Judy there and she went on home.



DAVID AND GOVERNOR TIEMANN AT THE AIRPORT GIFT SHOP

After that I walked back to Gate 8 and talked to some people there. They served breakfast there as the plane we were supposed to go on had shattered glass, so we had to wait for a new plane. Later I was talking to Mr. Edwards when Governor Tiemann came up. I took a couple of pictures of him and he was asking me about my camera when I noticed the TV cameras. Then he left. They announced our flight and we were ready to leave, and I boarded the plane.

I was seated in row 13, seat F. The people in front of me were from Stapleton. In the seat with me were Lowell Johnson and his 17-yr-old son, Jim. I talked to the Governor several times on the plane. When we landed at Dulles Airport, Mr. Edwards met me in the bus and had saved me a seat across from Governor Tiemann. I got a few more pictures of him and he asked me some questions like what part of Nebraska was I from. When we got to the end of the bus ride, right away I met Aunt Eva.

We talked to Mr. Edwards for a while and picked up my luggage. Then we went to the Tysons Corners Shopping Center to buy me a new jacket. We drove up to IBM where my Aunt Eva works. I met some people she works with and talked with them about Republicans and Democrats. On the way to Aunt Eva's home, we stopped for groceries.

After dinner we drove over to visit some friends of my Aunt Eva whom I had met before, the Bruners. Amy showed me her gerbils and we played a game of Booby Trap. We went home early and called my mom. I heard then I had been on the 6:00 News and was to be on the 10:00 News which thrilled me a lot.

David tells how on Saturday he visited two Congressmen and describes their offices as filled with awards and photos of US Presidents, one with a collection of donkeys and the other elephants. Then they met Senator Hruska at the Senate dining room and David asked him how to have a flag flown over the Capitol. That night he watched a TV show about President-Elect Nixon.

After church on Sunday he visited the graves of President Taft and the Kennedys at Arlington Cemetery and made a quick trip though the Custis-Lee Mansion. Then they went to see the Monuments – “The Man” (Lincoln Memorial) and he walked up the Washington Monument. David also describes seeing the “big tent for the Counter Inaugural and all the hippies roaming about”. That night they did family stuff.

Monday, January 23, 1969 - Inauguration Day

We got up early, but I didn't really wake up until we got downtown about 9:00. We had to wait a while for Mr. Edwards to come down and bring us our tickets for the Inaugural and the Parade. We took a cab to the Capitol grounds where I wormed my way up to the front to see as much as possible. (Poor Aunt Eva says she didn't see a thing.) I had forgotten my binoculars but some people who were standing by me were kind and let me look through theirs. We watched Spiro Theodore Agnew and Richard Milhous Nixon being sworn in. Senator Dirksen issued the oath to Agnew and Chief Justice Warren to President Nixon. Mrs. Nixon held two Bibles for the President to be sworn in.

After the Inauguration was over, we walked down Capitol Hill to the National Art Gallery where we had lunch in the cafeteria. We found our seats on the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue between 10th and 11th Streets. We had front row seats, so we were able to see the Parade very well. It was a great moment when President and Mrs. Nixon drove by; Senator Dirksen was with them. (I understand that up the street a few blocks the dumb Yippies threw rocks and mud when the President and the Vice President went by – and for no reason at all.) I saw the governors from most of the states – a few sent a substitute. It was thrilling to see Ronnie, Rocky and Nobby go by. I nearly made myself hoarse cheering. We watched the parade almost to the very end, leaving about a quarter to five. We took a bus back to New Hampshire Avenue and Q Street, where Aunt Eva had parked her car at the AFME parking lot, and so home to pack. Mom called to say the weather was bad in Nebraska so that she may not be able to meet me in Omaha. We are to call her in the morning for further details. I may have to stay overnight in Omaha or fly to Grand Island on the 8:30 flight if I can.

On Tuesday morning Aunt Eva dropped him off for the Nebraska Delegation Breakfast at the Capitol.

Following breakfast a photographer took pictures of the group, and each guest was interviewed and was asked to state opinions and what they thought about the inauguration and to tell what part of Nebraska they were from. When it was my turn to speak, I said: “I attend the Overton Public School, in which I am a sixth grader. This is my fifth time in Washington, DC and it gets better each time.”

Afterwards the ladies congratulated me on my speech and said they thought I would be a politician someday. After this Roman Hruska's Secretary said that she would take us through the Capitol. I saw parts of the Capitol which I had never seen before. The secretary knew Dirksen's secretary, so she took us to his office. He was on the phone, but we shook hands and saw his office including the Bible that was used to swear in Vice President Agnew.

I was on the main floor of the Congress and Senate Chambers. I saw where Humphrey presided over the Senate but was not able to sit in his chair! Afterwards, being sure that I was going in the right direction, Mr. Edwards put me in the care of a State Senator from Nebraska.

When we arrived at Hotel America, I decided to purchase a flag that would be flown over the Capitol on my birthday (February 6th). I called a taxi and went to the nearest Post Office where I purchased a money order and mailed it to Congressman Miller.

Shortly after, buses arrived to take us to Dulles Airport. We boarded the chartered plane that took us nonstop to Omaha. When we arrived at the Omaha airport, I discovered that my Mother was unable to be there to meet me, and I would have to make other arrangements to get home. Mr. Edwards and I had met a lady from Ansley who had attended the Inauguration, and she agreed to take me to her home, providing we could get my mother's consent. After contacting my mother and getting her permission, I accompanied the lady to Ansley and my mother met me there that night.

That was the end of a very exciting trip I shall never forget!



Give BIG Lexington 2020

It's almost here! After a year full of uncertainty, it is nice to know something is still the same. On Thursday, November 12th donate to your favorite causes by going to givebiglexington.org. Then click on the organizations you want to support. Or to go directly to OUR page on the Give BIG site, click on or copy & paste this link.

www.givebiglexington.org/story/Dawsoncountyhistoricalsocietyandmuseum

Help us finish our funding project to restore the fire engine and steam engine that sit in our front yard! We need \$10,000 to reach the goal and get things rolling. With your help we will be able to start the restoration process next spring.

But you don't have to wait until November 12. You can log on or send your donation by check to the Dawson County History Museum or the Lexington Community Foundation any time before November 12th. Just be sure to write Give BIG Lex on your check so we know where to put it.

Thank you so much for your continual support of the museum. We wouldn't be here without such amazing donors!

Stories & Trees

What are your favorite Christmas Stories?
Could you turn one into a Christmas Tree?

We're excited to fill our halls with trees again for the holiday season! This year we've decided to do something a bit different. Our theme is *A Christmas Story*. We are asking everyone to decorate their tree according to a story about the Christmas Season.

All you need to bring are decorations and the book with your chosen story to display under the tree. As usual, we will provide the trees and the lights (unless you have specific lights you want to use).



Tree Decorating will be December 1-5. Contact the museum and reserve your tree and story now. Due to the current situation we will not be hosting a Christmas Open House this year, but we will still be celebrating Christmas throughout the month of December. Everyone is welcome to visit during regular hours. There is lots of space here to social distance. Bring your family and tell your friends to come to the Dawson County History Museum in Lexington to enjoy the stories of Christmas.