

Contents

List of Illustrations	<i>vii</i>
List of Maps	<i>x</i>
Timeline of Nebraska Moments	<i>xi</i>
Preface	<i>xv</i>
1. The Villasur Expedition	<i>1</i>
2. Old Bellevue	<i>9</i>
3. The Oregon Trail	<i>15</i>
4. The Kansas-Nebraska Act	<i>23</i>
5. The Pony Express	<i>30</i>
6. Daniel Freeman and Homesteading	<i>37</i>
7. Nebraska Statehood and Its First Governor	<i>47</i>
8. The Fight for the Capital	<i>55</i>
9. Red Cloud and the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868	<i>63</i>
10. The Union Pacific Railroad	<i>73</i>
11. The Murder of Crazy Horse at Fort Robinson	<i>81</i>
12. The Trial of Standing Bear	<i>92</i>
13. “Buffalo Bill” Cody and the Wild West Show	<i>102</i>
14. The Great Nebraska Migration	<i>110</i>
15. J. Sterling Morton and Arbor Day	<i>121</i>
16. The Blizzard of ’88	<i>129</i>
17. William Jennings Bryan and Agrarian Protest	<i>135</i>
18. The Rise of Omaha	<i>145</i>
19. Charles E. Bessey and the Nebraska National Forest	<i>154</i>
20. Gen. John J. Pershing and World War I	<i>160</i>
21. Fr. Edward Flanagan, the Abbott Sisters, and Nebraska’s Children	<i>171</i>

22. The Influenza Epidemic of 1918 and Nebraska's Doctors	182
23. <i>Meyer v. Nebraska</i> (1923)	192
24. Willa Cather and Her Pulitzer Prize	204
25. The Nebraska State Capitol, Great Plains Icon	213
26. Nebraska's Would-be Vice Presidents	221
27. The Pound Family	234
28. Nebraska's Literary Renaissance	248
29. George W. Norris and the Unicameral	261
30. The Nebraska Home Front and World War II	271
31. Nebraska's Visual Feast	280
32. Nebraska's Scientists	290
33. Offutt Air Force Base	301
34. The Ogallala Aquifer	308
35. Omaha's Gerald Ford and Malcolm X	317
36. Becoming Madam Governor	331
37. The University of Nebraska Football Champions	342
38. The Murder of Brandon Teena	358
39. The Kearney Arch	370
Index	381

Preface

The first edition of *Nebraska Moments: Glimpses of Nebraska's Past* was written by Donald R. Hickey and published in 1992. It was a masterful accomplishment. A full generation of Nebraskans have read excitedly about Don's vision of the Cornhusker State's history. This book is as special as the state itself. Not everyone understood Nebraska, Don reminded us. They didn't take enough time to burrow into its grounded past. He noted in his most very thoughtful introduction that

Most people had never set foot in Nebraska and had no desire to do so. Many of those who had visited the state had seen only what is visible from U.S. 30 or Interstate 80. According to Mari Sandoz, most of these people saw Nebraska as "that long flat state that sets between me and any place I want to go." President John F. Kennedy's chief aide, Ted Sorensen (himself a native of Lincoln), was less charitable. In an attempt to shock Nebraskans out of their conservative complacency, he told a McCook audience in 1961 that the state was "a place to come from or a place to die."

Don's first edition challenged all of that, and we'd like to think this new edition continues the tradition—extolling virtues and exposing flaws while highlighting the past and pointing toward the future.

So we offer a sincere thanks to Don Hickey for his fine book and the opportunity to build upon its legacy. In addition, we also wish to mention a number of people who have helped make the new edition possible. First is Elizabeth Demers, former history acquisitions editor of the University of Nebraska Press, who invited us to take on this project. Then there are the numerous friends and colleagues who have read chapter drafts, made substantive suggestions, and generally been both

interested and supportive. This includes the late Sue Rosowski, Harl Dalstrom, George Wolf, Elaine Nelson, Lisa Pollard, Peter Maslowski, Joe Starita, David Wishart, Margaret Jacobs, Andrew Graybill, Ron Hull, Lynn Roper, Jeanne Bishop, all of the most professional staffs at the Nebraska State Historical Society Library and the picture archives of the *Lincoln Journal Star*, the Nineteenth-Century America group of scholars at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s Archives and Special Collections, the *Omaha Star*, Heather Lundine, Bridget Barry, and Chris Steinke of the University of Nebraska Press, and our daughters Nell C. Wunder and Amanda J. Wunder. We are also most grateful for a research grant from the James Rawley Research Fund of the Department of History at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

When we began this project, we of course knew Nebraska to be a dynamic place. It has always changed over the years, facilitated by its environment and culture even though its citizens like to think that it mostly remains the same. This characteristic—continuity combined with change—means that there is a certain surface placidity to society while a tension resides directly below. Historical moments then identify the changes that reach the surface and suggest through an event or a person just how significant the alterations to that society have been.

Nebraska’s moments reveal a specialness about the state and its peoples. They range from great triumphs—surviving the Oregon and Mormon trails, celebrating Arbor Day, healing the many Nebraskans ill from an early twentieth-century flu epidemic, completing the Union Pacific Railroad, inventing center-pivot irrigation, becoming president, discovering the prelude to DNA and receiving a Nobel Prize, and winning five football national championships—to great tragedies—the murders of Crazy Horse, Malcolm X, and Brandon Teena, the lynchings of Will Brown and Juan González, the loss of lives in the Blizzard of ’88, and the destruction of the Villasur Expedition.

These moments explore the full range of human emotions. Together they comprise a historical drama of many acts in which the great ecologist Charles Bessey, the great Harlem Renaissance artist Aaron Douglas, the great humanitarians Grace and Edith Abbott, and the great writer Willa Cather meet. Hear the passion of Standing Bear’s speech at his trial, Father Flanagan’s pleas for Boys Town, and Louise Pound’s pur-

suit of knowledge and excellence. Their stages included monuments of which Nebraskans are justifiably proud: the building of their unique state capitol, the Neihardt and Sandoz centers, and the Great Platte River Road Archway.

Some of Nebraska's special moments were political. We relive Red Cloud negotiating the Treaty of Fort Laramie, William Jennings Bryan proposing the Populist platform, George Norris campaigning for the Unicameral, and Kay Orr and Helen Boosalis pioneering for women in state politics. It is a family affair, too: the Pounds are introduced to the La Flesche family; the German Lutherans of Hampton confront the kind citizens of the North Platte Canteen; and the Dannebrog Danes salute the Freeman family, Nebraska's first homesteaders. Yes, these moments are colorful and engaging, and they set Nebraska apart.

This new edition of *Nebraska Moments* is significantly changed from the first. Although both editions have the same number of chapters, eight new chapters have been added, one from the first edition has been deleted (chapter 39, "Toward the Future"), and many chapters have been merged. The new chapters include chapter 1, "The Villasur Expedition," that expands *Nebraska Moments* back in time closer to the beginning of Nebraska's history; chapter 23, "*Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923)," that documents one of the most important U.S. Supreme Court cases in constitutional history; and chapter 31, "Nebraska's Visual Feast," that considers the artistic contributions of Wright Morris, Aaron Douglas, and Robert Henri.

In addition, five new chapters have been added that cover the history of Nebraska since 1992, the publication date of the first edition. Chapters 35–39 recall such moments as Gerald Ford becoming the first native Nebraskan president, the assassination of Malcolm X, the first ever gubernatorial election in the United States between two women—Kay Orr and Helen Boosalis, the University of Nebraska's five-time national championship football team, the brutal rape and murder of Brandon Teena, and the opening of the Kearney Arch over Interstate 80.

Changes to first edition chapters involved combining parts of more than one chapter into a single chapter in the new edition. Chapter 2, "The Oregon Trail," and chapter 3, "Fort Kearny," became new chapter 3, "The Oregon Trail"; chapter 6, "Nebraska Statehood," and chapter 8, "Nebraska's First Governor," became new chapter 7,

“Nebraska Statehood and Its First Governor”; chapter 18, “Arbor Day,” and chapter 19, “J. Sterling Morton,” became new chapter 15, “J. Sterling Morton and Arbor Day”; chapter 22, “Agrarian Protest,” and chapter 23, “William Jennings Bryan,” became new chapter 17, “William Jennings Bryan and Agrarian Protest”; chapter 24, “General John J. Pershing,” and chapter 26, “World War I,” became new chapter 20, “Gen. John J. Pershing and World War I”; chapter 29, “George W. Norris,” and chapter 30, “The Unicameral,” became new chapter 29, “George W. Norris and the Unicameral”; and chapter 33, “Mari Sandoz,” and chapter 34, “John G. Neihardt,” became new chapter 28, “Nebraska’s Literary Renaissance.”

All of the chapters have been rewritten, and a number of them have been expanded and retitled. Those with new titles include chapter 14, “Homesteading,” which in the new edition is chapter 6, “Daniel Freeman and Homesteading”; chapter 9, “Red Cloud,” is new chapter 9, “Red Cloud and the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1868”; chapter 10, “Fort Robinson,” is new chapter 11, “The Murder of Crazy Horse at Fort Robinson”; chapter 12, “Buffalo Bill Cody,” is new chapter 13, “‘Buffalo Bill Cody’ and the Wild West Show”; chapter 15, “Nebraska’s Ethnic Heritage,” is new chapter 14, “The Great Nebraska Migration”; chapter 21, “Nebraska National Forest,” is new chapter 19, “Charles Bessey and the Nebraska National Forest”; chapter 25, “Charles G. Dawes,” is new chapter 26, “Nebraska’s Would-be Vice Presidents”; chapter 27, “Boys Town,” is new chapter 20, “Fr. Edward Flanagan, the Abbott Sisters, and Nebraska’s Children”; chapter 31, “Louise Pound,” is new chapter 27, “The Pound Family”; chapter 35, “Nebraska’s POW Camps,” is new chapter 30, “The Home Front and World War II”; and chapter 37, “Loren Eiseley,” is new chapter 32, “Nebraska’s Scientists.”

We have sought to remain faithful to the fundamental goals of the book in making all of the chapter revisions. A true Nebraska moment has been identified and inserted into the beginning of each narrative. Each chapter is brought up to the twenty-first century through brief concluding vignettes. Every chapter includes an emphasis on a particular event or trend that is explained through specific stories of persons and groups. Individuals previously underscored are sometimes highlighted, either through the moment narrative, a revised title of the chapter, or through greater attention to detail. The chapters are arranged in the chronological order of the moments, and to give the reader a general

sense of time without being heavy-handed, we have created a brief timeline. Many of the original illustrations and maps have been kept, but new illustrations grace the pages of the new chapters and some of the retained chapters. Above all, the primary intent is to keep the liveliness and readability of the first edition and to expand upon it further in the new. It will remain for the reader to determine whether or not we have achieved our goals.

§

When we were invited to undertake these revisions and re-create a new edition of *Nebraska Moments* and after Don Hickey and we had all signed our contracts with the University of Nebraska Press, we decided to celebrate with a Chinese dinner. Susan's fortune cookie amazingly brought forth this message: "Time is not measured by a watch, but by moments." A truism and a good omen, indeed! Happy reading.

Susan A. Wunder and John R. Wunder
Lincoln, Nebraska
July 2005