



History  
**NEBRASKA**

Nebraska State Historical Society

*Preserving the past. Building the future.*



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2017-2018**

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History  
NEBRASKA

Nebraska State Historical Society



Adobe Officers' Quarters, Fort Robinson Historic Site.

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# History NEBRASKA

Nebraska State Historical Society

## WHO WE ARE

*We are dedicated to preserving and sharing the history of Nebraska. Founded in 1878 as the Nebraska State Historical Society, today's History Nebraska is a statewide team of professional employees, student workers, and volunteers.*

*We exist because Nebraskans believe that our history matters. History shapes our present and future. It strengthens our connection to place. It teaches us the skills of informed citizenship. It shows how Nebraskans play a vital role in the larger story of the United States.*

## JOIN US

*a worthy cause.*

**YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP  
MATTERS**

**When you join  
History Nebraska**

...tens-of-thousands of Nebraska's school children visit Nebraska History Museum admission-free every year.

...over 12,000 of Nebraska's archeological sites have been discovered and over 1.2 million artifacts are preserved.

...major historical sites and museums are open to the public where people all ages learn and experience history hands-on.

...Nebraskans can discover their own family history using extensive collections and archives.



Go to: [history.nebraska.gov/membership](http://history.nebraska.gov/membership)

# WHAT WE DO



Families visit with members of the U.S. Army's Commanding General's Mounted Color Guard at Fort Robinson.



Updated entry sign at Chimney Rock National Historic Site.

## ***Provide historical experiences***

The Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln and historic sites from Chimney Rock and Fort Robinson in the west, to the George W. Norris House in McCook, Neligh Mill in Neligh, the Willa Cather and John G. Neihardt state historic sites in Red Cloud and Bancroft, and the Thomas P. Kennard House and Nebraska Statehood Memorial in Lincoln—plus more than 500 historical markers statewide.



(Above) Dia de Los Muertos celebration at the Nebraska History Museum. (Below) Curator Paul Eisloeffel with part of History Nebraska's film archive.

## ***Educate about history***

We have programs for all ages, and our publications range from scholarly articles to classroom materials to popular blog posts at [history.nebraska.gov](http://history.nebraska.gov).



## ***Make history accessible***

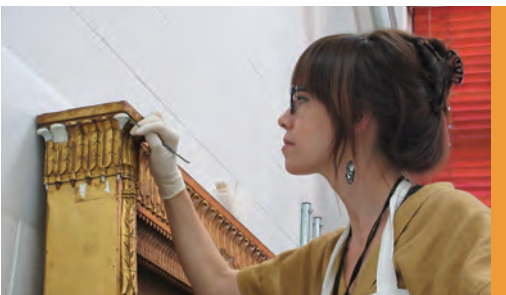
We preserve the state's official archive and collections of rare manuscripts, photographs, and objects. We assist researchers from professional historians to genealogists and students.



Polish culture was the theme at a recent Free Family Fun Day at the Nebraska History Museum.



(Above) Auburn Historic District.  
(Below) Conservator Rebecca Cashman repairs a picture frame. Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, Omaha.



(Below) University students worked under the supervision of History Nebraska archeologists during recent fieldwork in the Sandhills.



## Preserve history

We support economic development by assisting property owners, communities, and local governments in adapting historic buildings for new uses. We do this through tax credits, education, and recognition via the National Register of Historic Places. Since 2015, the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit alone has contributed over \$130 million in economic activity statewide.

## Conserve history

We conserve fragile and damaged objects, paper, and paintings for museums and individuals at our Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center in Omaha.

## Discover history

We discover and interpret our state's rich archeological heritage, chronicling more than 12,000 years of human life and culture in Nebraska.

# OUR AUDACIOUS GOAL

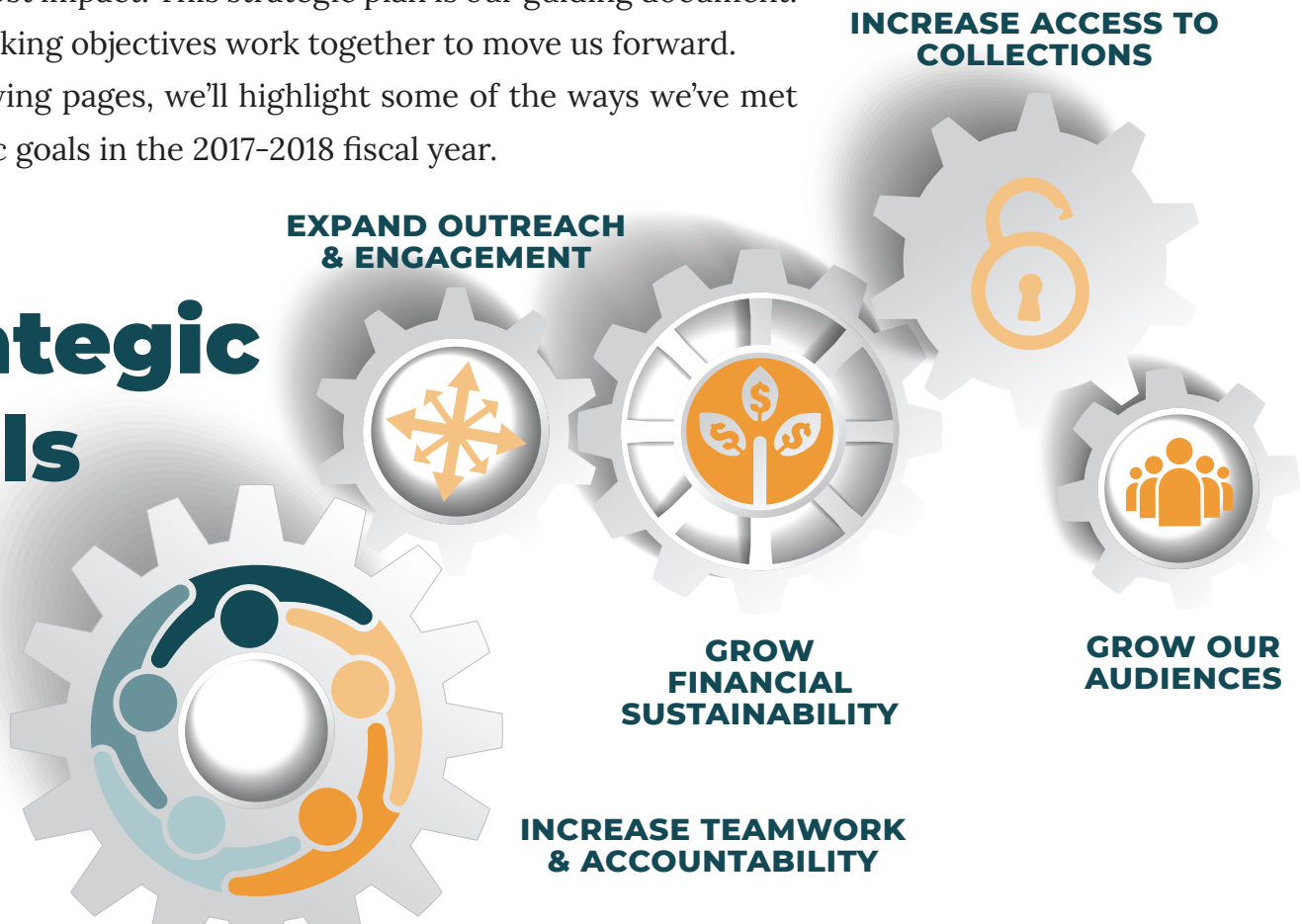


 **We want to be the most engaging and relevant state historical society in the nation.**

## *How do we get there?*

We'd love to do it all, but we have to focus our resources where they make the most impact. This strategic plan is our guiding document. Five interlocking objectives work together to move us forward. In the following pages, we'll highlight some of the ways we've met our strategic goals in the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

## Strategic Goals





**Strategic  
Goal**



# **Grow Our Audiences**

## ***Our New Name***

We changed our name from the Nebraska State Historical Society to History Nebraska on April 30, 2018. This new name and logo confirm what we are—the central place to learn about Nebraska’s rich history. From our sites to our amazing archival collections, we are fortunate to be the home of the greatest collection of Nebraska history in the world.

"History Nebraska" allows us to put all of the services you value under one easily remembered name. It will also be an effective way for us to promote interest in Nebraska history, to be welcoming to all Nebraskans, and to live our mission to “open to all the histories we share.”

This idea has been a long time coming and was reinforced by thorough study. We conducted research across the state, organized focus groups, talked to stakeholders, and discussed intensely with staff and our Board of Trustees. Everything we heard led in this direction, to create a friendly name that showed what we do—which is just about everything related to Nebraska’s history!

## Rising Attendance and Online Engagement

When our museum and historic sites saw an 8.8 percent increase in attendance during fiscal year 2016-17, it would have been easy to credit the Nebraska sesquicentennial and to expect a decline after the festivities.

Instead, we set a goal to grow attendance by another 8 percent in 2017-18. We came close: attendance grew by 7.7 percent during that period.

Growth doesn't just happen. Our rebrand has been part of a larger emphasis on marketing. We're increasing our visibility through print media, TV and radio, our website at history.nebraska.gov, and an active social media presence.

In only two months following our rebrand, website use rose 17.5 percent. Facebook engagement grew 16.2 percent, and "reach" (the number of unique people who saw our content) grew an amazing 122 percent. History Nebraska also has a growing presence on Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. We're using each platform to share historical content, engage audiences, and promote events.



**facebook**

**History Nebraska**  
December 14, 2017

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away... Before you see the new #StarWars movie, watch this clip from our collections of Leta Powell Drake from 1011 News in Lincoln interviewing two young actors (that you're sure to recognize) from The Empire Strikes Back circa 1980.

May the Force be with you.  
24K Views

207 Likes 19 Comments 207 Shares

Share



INDEPENDENT NEWS OPINION BUSINESS SPORT LIFE STYLE ENTERTAINMENT

Thursday 13 October 2016

**News And Finally**

### The 'absolute unit' sheep has a challenger: Lubber the horse

He weighed more than 200 stone.



Lubber was alive in the 1920s (graze/Getty Images)

By Taylor Heyman, Press Association  
May 4 2018 10:27 PM

A photo of an extremely large horse is delighting the internet, prompting some to say it could knock the "absolute unit" sheep off its pedestal.

In case you are unaware of the sheep, it became famous after a photo of it was posted on the Museum of English Rural Life's Twitter feed.

In the tweet it described the Exmoor Horn ram as an "absolute unit". The incredible specimen was owned G. F. Thorne in Somerset.

Dr Ollie Douglas, the curator of collections at the MERL wrote in a blog on the subject: "The reason it was so big is breed was intended for meat and wool production, which meant it had to pack a bit of meaty muscle and sport a fulsome fleece."



**The Museum of English Rural Life**  
look at this absolute unit.  
8:52 AM - Apr 9, 2018  
108K 31.4K people are talking about this

The original tweet went incredibly viral, but a challenger for the title of "absolute unit" has just stepped forward.

Enter Lubber the horse.

Lubber was born in 1921 at the Miller Ranch in Holt County, Nebraska and this photo of him is in the History Nebraska archives.



**History Nebraska**  
Not to steal @TheMERL's thunder or anything, but we've got a unit of our own.

Meet Lubber, the 3000 pound horse. #ArchivesAnimals  
10:05 AM - May 4, 2018  
335 66 people are talking about this

Lubber was fit sin and weighed more than 214 stone. He was exhibited at carnivals during the 1920s as the world's largest horse.

He was owned by A. E. Ponton and Sons of Battle Creek.

Unfortunately he died from pneumonia in 1927. According to an obituary in the Norfolk Press, Lubber's dam was a Percheron and his sire was a cross between Belgian and Shire.

Will he reach the posthumous fame of the MERL sheep? Only time will tell.

(Above) Our active social media presence connects us to people world-wide. Our post about a Nebraska draft horse even made the news in the U.K. and Ireland.

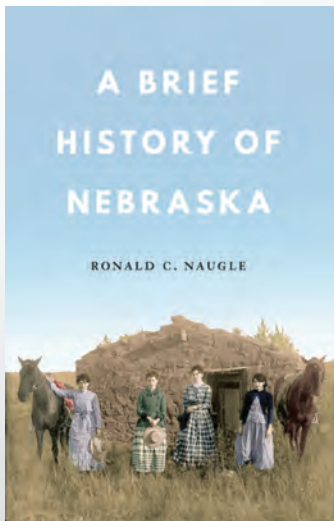
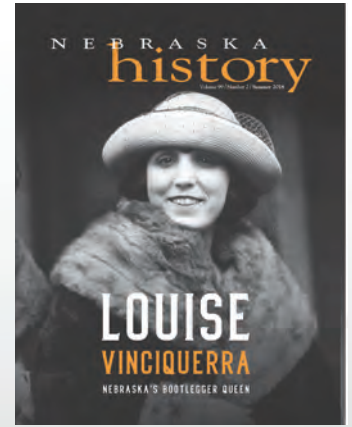
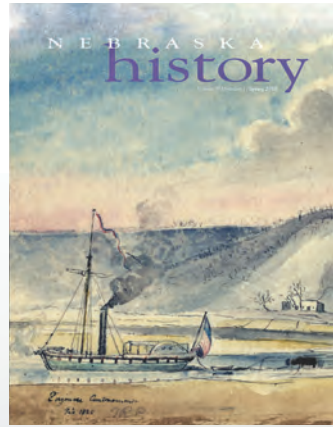
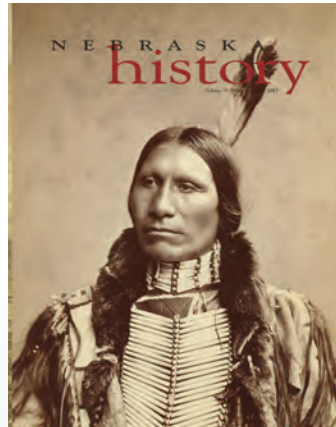
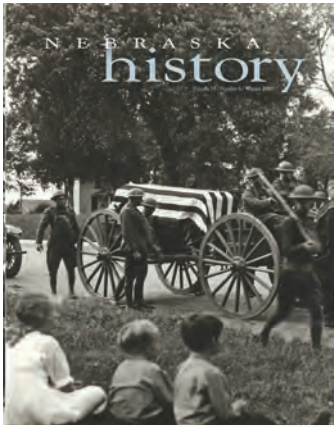
(Left) Our social media is timely and relevant; this post garnered 24,000 views in relation to the release of a 2017 Star Wars movie.



## Special Publications

Two special publications this year brought Nebraska history to a wider audience. A *Brief History of Nebraska* by Ronald C. Naugle tells the story of Nebraska in a small, 144-page paperback written for a popular audience.

A special issue of *Nebraska History*, our quarterly magazine, tells the story of Engineer Cantonment, the rediscovered winter quarters of an early US Army expedition that conducted America's first biodiversity inventory. The issue unfolds the site's history and archeology in non-technical language.





## Strategic Goal



# Increase Access to Collections

### *Preserve and Digitize*

We have several ongoing projects to preserve fragile collections and make them available as digital scans.

A new 42-inch large format scanner allows us to digitize maps, blueprints, posters, and other oversized items. Volunteers are inventorying and digitizing the uncatalogued portion of our map collection. Already more than 100 “new” historic maps are available in our online database.

We’ve completed a multi-year project to inventory, digitize, and rehouse more than 9,000 photographic negatives from the Nathaniel Dewell Collection. The acetate and nitrate negatives were in danger of being lost to chemical decay. The images are now searchable on our website; the negatives are preserved in cold storage.

We’ve also scanned and posted photos by sociologist Hattie Plum Williams (focusing on Volga German immigrants), and more than 1,500 glass plate negatives (ca. 1891-1908) from State Geologist George E. Condra.



**WITNESS  
the WEIRD!**

Get a behind the scenes look at the secret places we keep 151 years worth of the odd, strange and unusual.

**WHEN:**  
**March 3 2018**  
**2:00-4:00 pm**

**WHERE:**  
**NEBRASKA HISTORY MUSEUM**  
131 Centennial Mall North  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

Moving pictures are also part of our preservation and digitization work. The Nebraska Broadcasters Association provided funding to allow us to digitize vintage TV news footage.

## Curiosity Project

Increasing access to our collections isn't only about making things available. It's good to put historical artifacts on display; it's even better to do so in ways that spark curiosity and actively facilitate learning.

This year HN staff have been working with consultants on a grant-funded project to better incorporate curiosity into everything we do. One of the first tangible results opened at the Nebraska History Museum on June 28, 2018. *Color Quest: Explore Nebraska's Colorful Quilts!* not only displays historic quilts, but is also filled with interactive, hands-on exhibits.



(Above) A young girl learning about quilting, using an interactive museum exhibit.

(Below) A colorful interactive demonstrating color theory.





Chimney Rock National Historic Site, Bayard, Nebraska.

## Strategic Goal



# Grow Financial Sustainability

## Chimney Rock Visitor Center Renovation Project

Led by our partners at the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation, we are in the midst of a \$1.7 million fundraising campaign to renovate and expand one of our most popular facilities, the Ethel and Christopher J. Abbott Visitor Center at Chimney Rock National Historic Site. The campaign will continue until September 2019 and we plan to complete construction by May 2020. Donations are appreciated and can be given at [www.nshsf.org](http://www.nshsf.org)



Artist's rendering of future Ethel and Christopher J. Abbott Visitor Center at Chimney Rock.

## Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, Omaha

With a staff of highly-trained conservators specializing in the treatment of paintings, paper, and historic artifacts, History Nebraska's Ford Center offers services to private individuals, museums and libraries, corporations, and state and federal agencies. This year's billable projects brought in nearly \$220,000 to help cover its operating budget.



A "before and after" photo of a partially restored frame.

## Dr. Don R. Gerlach

When Dr. Don Gerlach retired from the history faculty of the University of Akron, he came home to Nebraska and moved into the 1919 home his grandparents owned in Harvard. An early American historian and education advocate, Dr. Gerlach is giving back to his home state, pledging \$1.3 million to the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation. In recognition of the gift, we honored him on September 29, 2017, with the dedication of the Dr. Don R. Gerlach Capitol View Room at our headquarters in Lincoln.



(Above) Dr. Don Gerlach speaks to guests at History Nebraska, September 2017.

(Below) Willa Cather's childhood home.

## Cather Property Transfer

With the approval of the Unicameral, History Nebraska is in the process of transferring six properties in Red Cloud to the Willa Cather Foundation (WCF). The transfer supports the efforts of the WCF, which gave the properties to the State in 1978. History Nebraska will also transfer approximately 8,000 Cather related artifacts—helping ensure that the newly completed National Willa Cather Center will remain the essential location to research this great Nebraska writer for generations to come.





## Strategic Goal



# Expand Outreach & Engagement

*We're building partnerships across the state. Here are some recent examples:*

### **Looking Past Skin Exhibit**

The Mountain-Plains Museum Association honored History Nebraska with a Leadership and Innovation Award for our recent exhibit, *Looking Past Skin: Our Common Threads*. Judges praised its originality and creativity, and its impact on the community.

The University of Nebraska's Minority Health Disparities Initiative (MHDI), Nebraska Extension, and the Nebraska History Museum partnered on the four-part exhibit to present sociological, agricultural, and historical perspectives on migration and the state's more recent demographic shifts. Funding was generously provided by Rural Futures Institute and Humanities Nebraska.

### **Archeology across Nebraska**

The State Archeology Office uses multiple partnerships to explore and preserve Nebraska's archeological heritage. This year we:

- Provided cultural assessments on roads projects for the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). We preserve the past while keeping road projects on schedule.

- Completed three seasons of fieldwork in the Sandhills in collaboration with the State Historic Preservation Office, the National Park Service (Midwest Archeological Center), local landowners, and the universities of Nebraska, Iowa, and Oklahoma. The projects identified over 200 new archeological sites ranging in age from 10,000 years ago to the 1890s. Crews also completed detailed excavations at an Apache village from the 1600s.

- Worked with tribal representatives and NDOT to ensure tribes have a greater role in protecting cultural sites in the path of highway construction. We also completed a final inventory of Native American human remains and associated funerary objects and reached an agreement with over 30 descendant tribes to repatriate the remains of over 500 individuals and 4,200 artifacts.



*Archeological work conducted with the assistance of an excavator.*

## **Preserving Historic Properties**

The State Historic Preservation Office at History Nebraska administers the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit program. This year we led well-attended tours at six historic buildings that have been rehabilitated using tax credits. Together we saw the results of the tax credits and the benefit of substantial historic rehabilitations to local communities.

We've been working with community leaders on several new commercial historic district nominations for the National Register of Historic Places. We listed commercial historic districts in Kearney, Grand Island, and Neligh, and will soon present nominations for districts in Cozad and Hastings. This greatly increases the number of Nebraska properties listed on the National Register, and makes contributing properties eligible for our state and federal tax incentives. Tax credit projects are economic drivers and can help provide essential workforce housing.



*The "Moon Block" in Red Cloud, before (below) and after (above) restoration, facilitated by the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit.*





Conservator Vonnda Shaw treating a George Churley puppet at the Gerald R. Ford Center.

## Strategic Goal



# Increase Teamwork & Accountability

### *Key Strategic Hires*

We completed key strategic hires this year, not only filling positions opened by retirements, but also adding team members who bring new areas of expertise to our organization. They include educators, historic site staff, and our first-ever marketing team.







## Conserving the George Churley Puppets

The Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center does a lot of work for outside clients, but also spent more than 3,000 hours this year conserving objects for History Nebraska. The Objects Lab treated twenty-eight mid-20th century puppets created by Nebraska puppeteer George Churley. Some of the puppets were so chemically unstable that they had to be sealed in oxygen-free environments to help prolong their lifespan. Many of the puppets were featured in the recent Nebraska History Museum exhibit, *Don't Touch That Dial! Kalamity Kate and the George Churley Puppets*.

(Below) Conservators Vonnda Shaw and Rebecca Cashman at the Gerald R. Ford Center.



## Financial Report History Nebraska Fiscal Year 2018\*

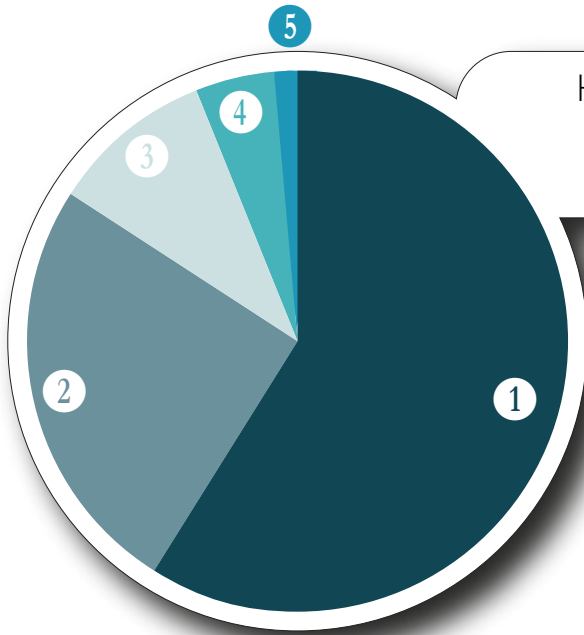
### Revenues

State Appropriations	59.12%	\$4,076,064.07
Earned Income & Membership	25.19%	\$1,736,711.81
Federal Grants & Contracts	9.82%	\$677,353.53
NSHS Foundation Support	4.54%	\$312,871.85
Donations, Grants & Special Events	1.34%	\$92,101.40
<b>Total Revenues</b>		<b>\$6,895,102.66</b>

### Expenditures

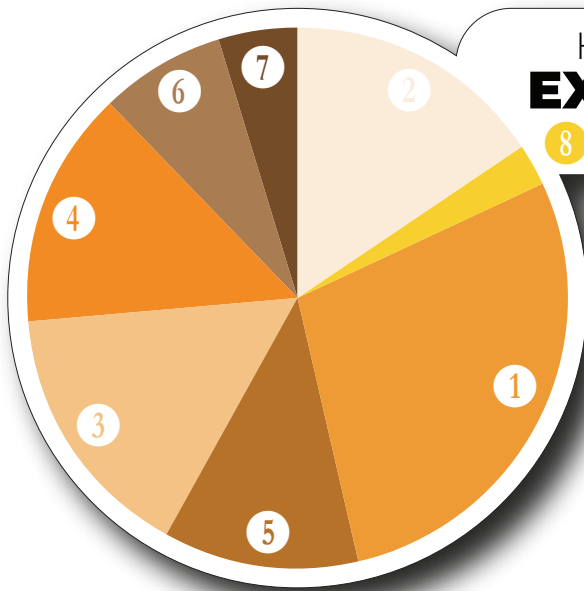
Museum & Historic Sites	28.50%	\$1,842,848.94
Administrative Services	15.67%	\$1,013,395.86
Archeology	15.59%	\$1,007,799.95
Historic Preservation	14.24%	\$920,931.42
Collections	11.52%	\$744,623.96
Conservation	7.33%	\$473,761.26
Research & Publications	4.72%	\$305,082.12
Sesquicentennial Commission	2.43%	\$157,347.20
<b>Total Expenditures</b>		<b>\$6,465,790.71</b>

**Michelle Furby, Chief Financial Officer**



HISTORY NEBRASKA  
**REVENUES**  
 Fiscal Year 2018

	Dollars
1 State Appropriations (59.12%)	4,076,064.07
2 Earned Income & Membership (25.19%)	1,736,711.81
3 Federal Grants & Contracts (9.82%)	677,353.53
4 NSHS Foundation Support (4.54%)	312,871.85
5 Donations, Grants, & Special Events (1.34%)	92,101.40



HISTORY NEBRASKA  
**EXPENDITURES**  
 Fiscal Year 2018

	Dollars
1 Museum/Historic Sites (28.50%)	1,842,848.94
2 Administrative Services (15.67%)	1,013,395.86
3 Archeology (15.59%)	1,007,799.95
4 Historic Preservation (14.24%)	920,931.42
5 Collections (11.52%)	744,623.96
6 Conservation (7.33%)	473,761.26
7 Research & Publications (4.72%)	305,082.12
8 Sesquicentennial Commission (2.43%)	157,347.20



**History**  
**NEBRASKA**  
Nebraska State Historical Society

**Volunteers make it possible.**

*Sharing their passion for history, volunteers with a wide range of skills are vital to our continued work. Students, retirees, and working adults contributed 5,326 hours of service this past year.*

Anna Allison  
Ahmed Al-Saray  
Jordan Anderson  
David Anderson  
Ben Arenz  
David Atkinson  
Gabriela "Gabby" Ayala  
Eric Bachenberg  
Eva Bachman  
Jeff Barnes  
Clark Bates  
Rod Bates  
Barbara Batie  
Benjamin Bay  
Cherrie Beam Callaway  
Cheryl Beery  
Bill Behmer  
Ann Bird  
Gail Blankenau  
Mike Bockoven  
Erin Boyle  
George Bray  
Lance Bristol  
Larry Brooks  
Ron Buchholz  
Erica Busta  
Kathleen Cannon  
Walter Case  
Stephen Cass, Jr.  
John "Jack" Chaffin  
Leslie Childs  
Denise Christensen  
Gregg Christensen  
Pat Churray  
Dennis Clare  
Joan Clare

Cassandra Clark  
Lindsey Clausen  
Beverly Cram  
Brian Croft  
Sara Crook  
Tom Curran  
Alexander Currie  
Spencer Davis  
Steven Eggland  
Josh Egley  
Kim Elder  
Katherine Endacott  
Nancy Faber  
Anne Fargen  
Lauren Feden  
Phyllis Fischer  
Steven Flader  
Deanna Frankforter  
Heather Fryer  
José Garcia  
Mary Geisler  
Vince Goeres  
Graham Goodwin  
Jamesena Grimes Moore  
Molly Haas  
Peter Hajda  
Bob Hanover  
Linda Hein  
Karen Heiser  
Nyla Helge  
Timothy Heller  
Becky Herian  
Roland Hill  
Donna Hinkley  
Sue Hodge  
Bruce Hoffman

Dave Hohbein  
Holly Holle  
Joyce Howe  
Carter Hulinsky  
Ron Hull  
Steve Hunt  
Von Innes  
Christi Janssen  
Nick Jensvold  
Tracy Johnson  
Cordelia Jones  
Chuck Jones  
John Kay  
Tom Kraus  
Lee Kreimer  
Jerry Kromberg  
Donna Kush  
Frank LaMere  
Pamilla "Penny" Lange  
Katherine Latham  
Billie Lefholtz  
Andrea Lemmer  
Mary Lienemann  
Lynnor "Nora" Lorraine  
Marlen Luff  
Donna Lundberg  
Christine Makowski  
Nicole Malone  
Betty Mapes  
Mary Marchio  
Denise Matulka  
Emily Marvin  
Shelley McCafferty  
Jim McKee  
Georgian McReynolds  
Robert Meininger

Jamesena Moore  
Marilyn Moore  
Rose Mulbery  
David Murphy  
Ronald Naugle  
Christie Nelson  
John Nelson  
Danny Nichols  
Shannon Nolte  
Lorelee Novak  
Tatum O'Brien  
Dora Olivares  
Alissa Olsen  
Jackie Park  
Inna Pavlova  
Curt Peacock  
Cierra Pedersen  
Jeanette Peters  
Elaine Peters  
Robert "Bob" Peterson  
Robert "Bob" Price  
Meredith Price  
Richard Quinn  
Bonnie Quinn  
Mary Rabenberg  
Marty Ramierz  
Sandy Reisdorff  
Jennifer Richardson  
Brianna Ross  
Heidi Saner  
Fusun Sayood  
Vickie Schaepler  
Jacob Schlange  
Nora Schmidt  
Livija Shaeffer  
Rogene Silletto

Linda Simonsen  
Samuel Skokan  
Michael Smith  
Jo Ann Smith  
Mary Kay Sorensen  
Connie Spellman  
Jan Staley  
Rod Steinacher  
Marcia Stewart  
Paula Stone  
Jessica Stoner  
John Strope  
Cindy Swanson  
Linda Taylor  
Lacey Tlamka  
Betty Todd  
Kayla Toney  
Marvin Trowbridge  
Justin Walker  
LuAnn Wandsnider  
Jane Waterson  
Leann Widhalm  
Diane Wiehn  
Diana Wild  
Karen Windhusen  
Eileen Wirth  
Donna Wolf  
Betty Wolff  
Marcus Woodman  
John Zimmer  
Brian Zimmer  
Matthew Zmijewski