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FLORENCE DAYS

The Florence Historical Foundation Presents

Salute to Education!

SALUTE TO EDUCATION!

2015 Florence Days' Grand Marshal GENE HAYNES Building Legacy as Education Leader

©by Leo Adam Biga, with permission, this article is shortened and reprinted from the December 2014 issue of ENOA New Horizons

It is a marvel Omaha North High Magnet School principal Gene Haynes relates so well to students given how far removed his life experience is from theirs.

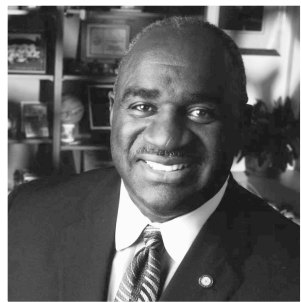
The 70-year-old Mississippi native came of age in a time and place unlike anything his students know. Haynes grew up in the grip of poverty and segregation in the post-World War II South. Yet he's current and cool enough to accept either a handshake or a fist bump from students. He either calls them by name or by "brother man" or "sister girl" as he makes his presence known in the hallways, cafeteria and other common areas every school day.

"When you say their name they know you're paying attention to them," he says. "I take a lot of pride in going to the activities and seeing what the young people are doing and encouraging them to do their best."

He's such a fixture at North High and in the community that he knows most students' extended families. Omaha Public Schools superintendent Mark Evans says, "It makes a huge difference when the person telling you which direction to go knows not only your mom and dad but your aunt and uncle, your grandma and grandpa. I think it makes kids so responsive to Gene - much more so than most administrators."

A message Haynes conveys to students is, "Do your best when no one is around." When he's around and sees students applying themselves, he says he knows "they want to be highlighted" and thus he singles them out. North students increasingly shine academically and athletically in the transformation he's leading.

"When you treat people right, good things happen," he says. "I make it a point every day I come to this building to be outside greeting kids as they come in. I have to do my paperwork on Saturdays or after school. When the kids are moving to and from class I'm out there to see what they are doing. You can't stay in one place, you have to be able to move, and I do, which prompts kids to ask, 'Are there two of you?' I show up when they least expect it, not looking to



North High School Principal Gene Haynes. Credit: photo courtesy of neprepzone.com

catch them in anything but to give them that extra encouragement they need.

"We have a staff at North High School that cares about every student. ... The young people you're working with on a daily basis are going to be your future."

For Haynes, there's no conflict about his mission.

"The bottom line has been and always will be what's best for young people, not personally for me. It's to make a

difference in the lives of young people that you come across in your path."

It's all about setting expectations.

"If you don't expect anything from them they're not going to give you anything but if you have those high expectations and you communicate that, there's no wiggle room."

When he sees students acting out he handles it differently today than in the past, though he still bellows "Hit the bricks" to stragglers.

"If you reprimand or put them down in front of their peers you're not going to get anywhere. The best thing to do is to approach them and treat them with all due respect."

A credo he likes imparting is, "If you tell the truth you don't have to worry about repeating it - it's always going to be there."

Haynes realizes students confront a lot these days between the pressure to have sex at an early age, the lure of drugs, the threat of bullying and the high incidence of teen depression and suicide. He's aware many inner city students come from broken families and live in active gang areas

In the 1960s Omaha Public Schools was in need of African-American educators, and not finding enough suitable college-educated candidates here, the district looked to historically black colleges in the South. The irony of this is that many candidates from Omaha were denied teaching, coaching and administrative positions by a district that practiced blatant racism for much of its history. For decades OPS only hired a small number of black educators and then restricted them to predominantly black schools in the inner city. For years black public educators in Omaha were also restricted to elementary schools. It took a long time for OPS to dismantle those barriers and open the gates of fair employment and placement. One of the educators recruited here from the South under those conditions was Gene Haynes, a native Mississippian who had actually followed his older brothers to Omaha and lived and worked here for a time before going back to Mississippi to attend Rust College, a private historically black college. After he graduated from Rust he applied with and accepted an offer from OPS to teach and in 1967 he began what is now a 47-year career in the district. His first 13 years were at Omaha Technical High School and the last 29 have been at Omaha North High School, where he's been principal since 2001. He's helped lead a major turnaround at North, whose academic and athletic programs are doing great things.

Gene Haynes continued on page 4.

Educating the Educators

by Vern Hauger

The 1870s-1890s were the worst decades ever for the farming economy in America. It was an agricultural depression. Crop prices were low, debt was high, and farm workers were being displaced by machines far more than ever before.

Townships were declining in population, and the rural population was decreasing as the people moved to the cities. According the National Center for Education Statistics, in 1870, the illiteracy rate was around 20 percent in the U.S. The population shift increased the need for more educated people to meet the demand of the changing society.

Public schools were increasing at an unprecedented speed after 1870; however, this increase was restricted by certain ethnic and religious groups who did not want to be intergrated into a uniform public school system. Illiteracy dropped to fourteen percent by 1890. It was mandated that children between the ages of 8-14 attend school.



Women were replacing men as school teachers. The strict discipline and drill method of teaching was changing. The new teachers were high school graduates who completed the required courses to become teachers, and passed the State Certification Exam.

An entirely new concept of education had been created to fulfill the purpose of a new kind of American society. "Schoolmarms" often were forbidden to marry, "keep company" or ride in a vehicle with any man but her father or brother.

She could not wear less than two petticoats, smoke cigarettes, dye her hair, or loiter in an ice cream parlor. On the average they were paid \$250.00 per year. Most of the teachers were dedicated to their profession, and took pride in what they did.

Educating Educators continued on page 2.

No Name City -or- Florence, the Finest Seat in the County

Presented by the Florentine Players

Well, its Melodrama time. Rehearsals are in full swing. We have a fantastic cast, great music and some outlandish characters. So, how did Florence get named? Some would think, it's named after an Italian village, however, it may be due to a pretty little thing that makes a county seat take on a whole new meaning. Although our villain wants Sin City, you don't need to name it Sin City for it to be one.

Come out and enjoy the fun and support the fine Florence community!

Kelly Adams, Director



Letter from the President

Dear Friends of Florence,

I am so excited for our annual Florence Days Parade on May 9. This year's theme is "A Salute to Education!" An amazing community leader and long revered teacher/coach, Gene Haynes, principal of North High School, will be this year's Grand Marshal. Read about him in this issue, then wave, cheer, and salute education when you see him in the parade!

I personally invite you to come out and show your support for the May 9th parade during Florence Days. You'll enjoy all the activities along the parade route. Also, back by popular demand, are the ferris wheel and other rides as well as exciting new games, thanks to the North Bowl who is sponsoring the fair. (See the center spread for location and details.) Our fabulous Florentine Players will be performing their annual Melodrama this week, too, so get your tickets early. Last year's show was sold out every night!

The Florence Historical Foundation continues to work hard to preserve the history and educate the community and visitors about our historically rich town of Florence. Remember that the Florence Depot and Florence Bank are open every weekend during the summer months to continue our goal of educating and entertaining visitors. Plan a family visit!

The Foundation is constantly working to maintain and improve our wonderful Historic Sites. A heartfelt thank you to all our friends and members for your support. Your tax-deductible membership dollars help preserve Historic Florence. Find the membership form on page 14 in this issue and please consider joining or renewing today. Your support is very much appreciated.

Enjoy Florence Days!

Lynn L. Farris, Jr.

President, Florence Historical Foundation

Educating Educators continued from cover page.

Miss Thorp was that kind of a teacher. She was not much older than her students, but she was gifted as a teacher. If there was a discipline problem she took care of it. Somehow it always seemed to get back to the parents and they made sure it never happened again.

Her students wanted to please her, and they all learned under her guidance. Miss Thorp was in Florence less than two years when she received one of the few scholarships ever awarded to a woman by a college at that time. This was one opportunity she could not pass up. She knew in her heart that one day she wanted to be educating the educators on how to teach the children of our country.

This was one goal in her life that she realized. ❖

Trinity Lutheran Church is 100 this Year

by Jean Johnson, Music Director

In the spring of 1915, Ebenezer Lutheran Church in Florence closed and the Rev. C. G. Bloomquist, of Augustana Lutheran in Benson, did a canvas to determine interest in forming a new congregation. Rev. Bloomquist was called to be the missionary to the "suburbs of Omaha" (Florence) and found 50 Swedish Lutherans to start a new congregation.

In June, a worship was held in the Danielson home at 2440 Ellison and the Ladies Aid was organized four days later.

On July 11, a condemned home at 2818 Ames was rented and the Sunday school was organized with furnishings from Ebenezer Church.

In October, everything was moved to the vacant Congregational Church at 25th and Ames.

On November 26, 1915, a charter was signed, creating the Evangelical Trinity Lutheran Church.

In 1917, the congregation voted to begin worshipping in English.

In October of 1921, the southwest corner of 30th and Redick Streets was purchased for a new building.

The 7-room house on the property was moved to 2877 Bauman Ave., and member Harvey Peterson, age 23, drew plans for the new church. The cornerstone was laid in June of 1921.

In the fall, the pastor's sister-in-law went door to door signing up kids to come to Sunday school, raising enrollment to 250.

On Reformation Sunday, October 30, the first worship service was held – in the basement. By Christmas morning, the first service was held in the new sanctuary, and in January of 1922, the building was dedicated. Subsequent additions were to the sanctuary and, after the war, an education wing was added.

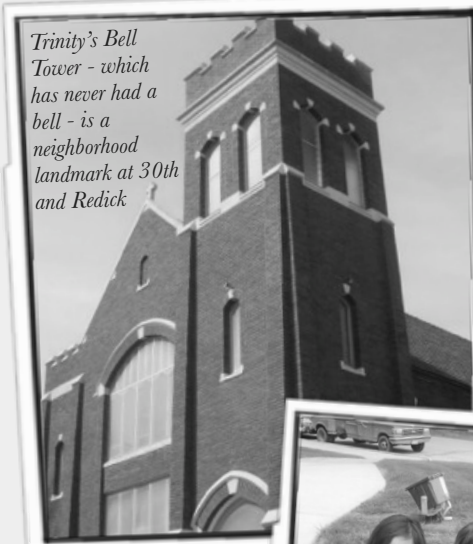
Through the years, Trinity Church has been a place of worship, weddings, baptisms and funerals

for the neighborhood. It has been served by several long term pastors – Pastor Henry Gittler for 25 years and Pastor Mike Knudson for 20 years.

Pastor Mike was instrumental in starting the Lutheran Service Corps in Omaha, which is housed in the former Blessed Sacrament convent. Part of that property contains a Trinity garden.

Music has long been important at the church and the choir and handbell groups have presented programs at several venues in Omaha.

Pastor John and Pastor Elizabeth Backus now serve the church. Service to the community continues as the church has reading programs in four elementary schools, works with prison ministries, partners with North High School, hosts recovery programs and the



Trinity's Bell Tower - which has never had a bell - is a neighborhood landmark at 30th and Redick



Pastor Liz on the front steps of Trinity with some youngsters from the neighborhood. Trinity offers free hot dogs and lemonade on Parade day.



Trinity Lutheran Church's students with tired feet ride on the float in the Florence Days Parade.

Photos provided by Pastor John Backus.

Solomon Girls Center summer program.

For ten years, the church has partnered with a congregation in Tanzania. Nile Lutheran Chapel, a Sudanese

congregation, also holds services in Trinity's building.

Last fall, a capital campaign, "Building for the Next Century," began to raise significant funds for building maintenance and ministry opportunities in the neighborhood.

A new roof was put on the education wing. Parking lot resurfacing and attention to doors and windows will follow. This summer, watch for a new roof going up over the main part of the building.

As Trinity celebrates 100 years of ministry, the congregation remains committed to serving Christ in this neighborhood. ❖

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Former Resident Returns to See New Life Breathed Into the Downs' Old Family Home

by Vern Hauger

Have you ever wished you could return to your childhood home?

Jean Downs Stoner seized the opportunity to see her old home in Florence in 2013, while she and her husband Syd were visiting from their current home in Oregon. They went to Jean's childhood home and simply knocked on the door.

The new owners, Robyn and Kevin Kane, invited them to see the home they were restoring. Jean and Syd kept in touch with the Kanes and, in September 2014, they returned to spend two days in Jean's old home — sleeping in her childhood bedroom.

While the Kanes were remodeling the bathroom, they had found an old letter written by Jean's grandmother to her father, congratulating him on his appointment to Postmaster and his upcoming wedding. They had saved and given that precious letter to Jean.

Jean's father, Arthur Levi Downs, came from Atlantic, Iowa, where he was born in 1870. Arthur's father (Jean's grandfather) owned a store in Atlantic. One might call it a general merchandise store, since they sold so many different items.

Jean told me they sold men's clothing on the top floor and women's clothing on the second floor. She remembers groceries on the main floor and a butcher shop in the basement.

Her father worked in the basement butcher shop, where he was training to become a butcher, but he knew that he didn't want to be a butcher. It wasn't long before he moved to Omaha.

Soon thereafter, the post office in Florence hired Arthur and later on he became the Postmaster. He eventually met the young Nellie Estelle Potter and married her in 1909.

About two years later, the couple built a home on four acres, where they bore six children. Jean said she was born in 1926 right at the front door!

Jean attended the old Florence Grammar School at 31st and Willet

Streets until the sixth grade and also attended Bible school at the Presbyterian Church. She still has the Bible they gave her.

When Jean was in the fourth grade she walked to the Florence Library every Monday and checked out a book. One time while there, she noticed a group of women knitting. With piqued interest, she stopped to watch them. Eventually, they taught her to knit a beautiful blue sweater that her teacher couldn't believe

family's bed of purple irises.

The Downs' neighbors on the west were Leon and Marjorie Lyons and they had a son who everyone called "Sonny Boy." They lived in the house with the Spanish architecture which was situated on ten acres of land and included a swimming pool, a tennis court and a two-car garage.

The Lyons family owned a factory in Omaha that manufactured Dr. Scholl's shoe inserts. They were fond of Jean and always invited her to their big annual employee picnics. When Jean's father passed away, the Lyons approached Jean's mother with a request to adopt her. Of course, her mother said she just could not do that. Nonetheless, the Lyons continued to dote on Jean.

The Downs family also had a vegetable garden and vineyard on their property and Jean remembers picking Concord grapes and selling them along 36th Street. She also sold fresh vegetables door-to-door.

This brought back particular memories for me because, as a boy, I, too, went door-to-door selling fresh veggies from our family garden.

Jean said her father's hobby was raising Rhode Island Red chickens and showing them at Fairs. He forbid her mother cook any of them.

The Rhode Island Red is an American breed of chicken raised as show birds, but also for their delicious meat and extra large brown eggs. The beautiful male cock is a dark reddish brown color with yellow feet and a very bright red comb.

When Jean's father died, her mother proclaimed they would eat Rhode Island Red chicken at every Sunday dinner!

When my wife and I came to interview Jean, she and Syd were having a barbecue with four other former residents of the home at 3604 State Street.

Everyone had a ball reminiscing about the good times spent at that wonderful home.

Florence is truly a friendly community. ❖



The Thompsons organized a big lawn picnic every year for the neighborhood. Everyone had a good time. Credit: Linoblock print entitled "Gossip in the Shade" by Lois Lenski.

she made until the women confirmed her story.

The Downs' neighbors to the east were the Thompsons. Mr. Thompson was an attorney, and he lived in the big white house on the northeast corner of

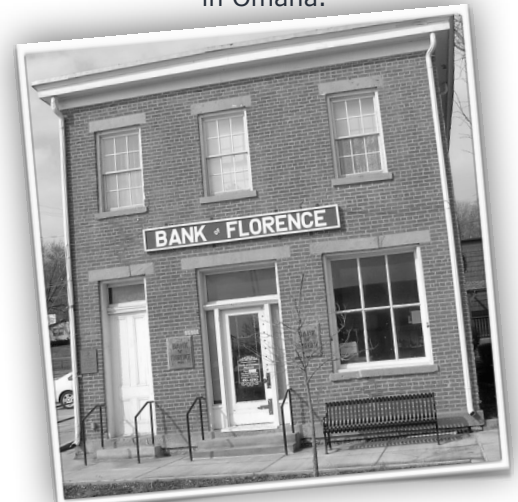
They would eat Rhode Island Red chicken at every Sunday dinner!

36th and State Streets with his two sisters. Mr. Thompson bought a new Packard automobile nearly every year and he would load up the neighborhood kids and take them for a ride. His sisters would often take the kids to Ak-sar-ben events.

The Thompsons also organized a big lawn picnic every year for the neighborhood. Everyone attended and always had a good time. Jean recalls being envious of the yellow irises in the Thompson's yard, so one time she picked some and added them to her

Get educated.

Florence is the oldest city in Nebraska and the home to some of the most historic sites in Omaha.



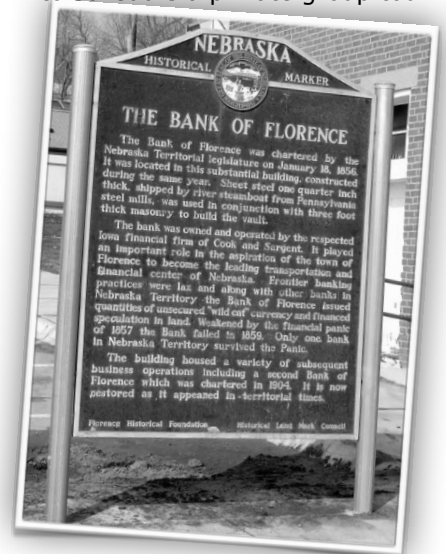
The Bank of Florence

Established in 1856, The Bank of Florence is the oldest bank in the state of Nebraska.

Currently a museum, the bank is open for tours 11am-3pm on Saturdays and Sundays from mid-May thru August 31.

Call 402-453-4462

to schedule a private group tour.



Two Historic Museums Open on Parade Day

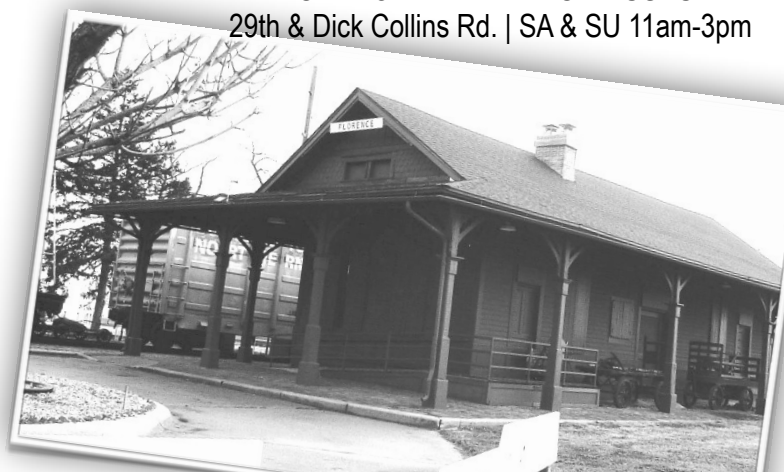
Open every Saturday and Sunday Starting Parade Day | May 9, 2015

BANK OF FLORENCE MUSEUM

8502 N. 30th St. | SA & SU 11am-3pm

FLORENCE TRAIN DEPOT MUSEUM

29th & Dick Collins Rd. | SA & SU 11am-3pm



Florence Train Depot Museum

About 35 years ago, the train depot building, then at its original location a few miles from where it currently sits across from The Florence Mill, was scheduled for demolition. However, the Florence Historical Foundation stepped in and, in 1970, they purchased the building. Today, after loving care and extensive repair, the building stands proudly as a charming relic of bygone days. Visit the Florence Train Depot Museum from 11am-3pm on Saturdays and Sundays beginning on Parade Day!

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McMillan Magnet Provides Innovative Learning

by Sarah Castanos

McMillan Magnet Center is a 7th and 8th grade middle school located at 3802 Redick Avenue. Our magnet offerings provide unique experiences to our students in the areas of mathematics, engineering and technology. However, our staff provides innovative and engaging learning lessons in each of the content areas.

We are particularly proud to be the ONLY Project Lead the Way middle school in the state of Nebraska. Project Lead the Way (PLTW) is a STEM-based curriculum. Through PLTW, we are able to offer classes such as Green Architecture, Medical Detectives, Automation and Robotics, Design and Modeling and Science of Technology. These courses allow students to begin planning their future careers by introducing them to rigorous, hands-on, 21st Century learning.

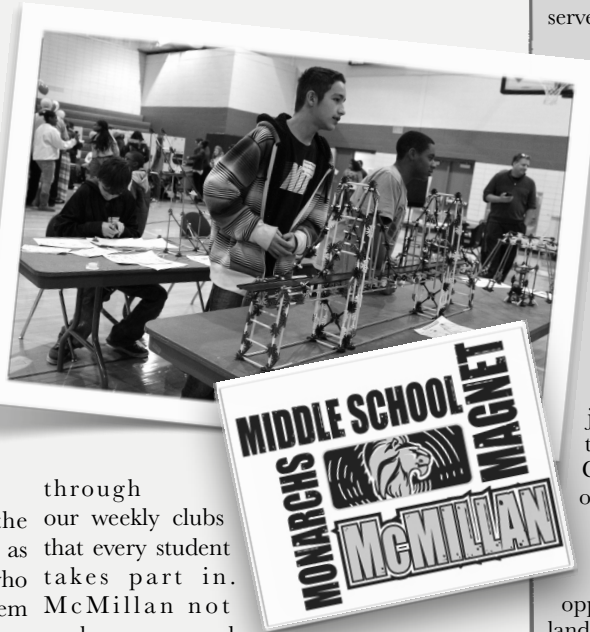
Through a \$125,000 grant, we are able to take our Green Architecture students to The Mastercraft building located in Downtown Omaha, where we have a leased bay, solely for

the use of our pathway (Skinner, McMillan, North High).

Students create blueprints in the classroom and then journey once a week to The Mastercraft to build and create 3-D models of their blueprints. The Mastercraft bay is completely furnished and is full of every supply our students may need for their projects. It also is home to a laser engraver, 3-D printer and 15 state-of-the-art laptops for our students' use. We reap the benefits of working in a building full of young entrepreneurs who are more than willing to mentor and work with our students when we are there.

McMillan is especially proud of the community connections and partners such as Kiewit Engineering and TACK Architects who work closely with our students to enable them to have real-world experiences.

We have a multitude of opportunities for all students and promote school involvement



through our weekly clubs that every student takes part in. McMillan not only succeeds academically, but also through our athletics and multiple club opportunities. ❖

Gene Haynes continued from cover page.

where instability and fear rule.

"I think the biggest challenge we face is we don't have enough time for the magnitude of issues students bring to school. It's not about books, it's about time and effort to convince these young people there's a better way of dealing with issues."

Rather than an extended school day or extended school year, he advocates schools and communities "provide the best opportunities" for students to develop.

He says parents are vital cogs in their children's education and he actively

solicits their participation. "I pick up the phone and call them. If I need to go make a home visit I do that. We make them a part of the equation."

He says "the trust level has improved" among North's parent base. He suspects some had bad experiences in school, making it incumbent on himself and his staff "to ease any apprehensions they feel," adding, "There's a support system in place to eliminate some of those concerns. We have a very strong PTSO (Parent Teacher Student Organization)."

Coming out of Mississippi in an era when blacks were denied basic human and civil rights, he knows about hard times and perseverance. You don't forge a 47-year career without overcoming odds.

In the fully segregated South he attended all black schools that got "hand-me-down" textbooks from the white schools. As a child he walked miles to a one-room schoolhouse. Blacks were treated as second-class citizens in every way.

"That was the way of life back in that time. Growing up in the Jim Crow South toughened your skin up."

His parents never got as far as high school but they stressed education's importance. The black teachers who taught at the schoolhouse boarded with the Haynes family during the week. That close proximity to educators made "a big impact on me," Haynes says.

An influential figure in his life was a landed white man, Vardaman Vendevender, who took an interest in young Gene.

"This gentleman was very dear to my family. On the weekends I worked for him. I did things around his house. I had access to his tractor, truck, jeep. If he needed things from the store I was able to go into town and get them. He once said to me, 'If you ever want to be successful you have to leave the state of Mississippi.' Here was a

white guy sharing that with me. That was a relationship I treasured."

Haynes was in high school, where he excelled in sports, when the civil rights movement came to Mississippi and all hell broke loose. Native son James Meredith integrated "Ole Miss" in 1962 but only with the full force of the nation's highest court and National Guard troops behind him.

"The most frightening thing in my life was riding the bus to school and having federal marshals on every corner. Tensions ran very high."

"My plan was to teach here one year and go to Miami, where I also applied. Forty-seven years later I'm still here, and I haven't saved any money yet," he says, laughing.

Every time activists or lawmakers threatened dismantling segregation, racist stakeholders in that apartheid system reacted violently. In 1964, his freshman year in college, a trio of Freedom Riders were killed. The deaths of the Mississippi Three further heightened fear.

Haynes says despite the obstacles and dangers he never despaired things wouldn't improve. He believed in the power of education and in letting the truth shine through ignorance.

"I could see that because of my training and my teachers, who

Valley State, Rust College or one of the other private black schools, you couldn't go."

During the '60s, some challenged this exclusion but not without the federal government enforcing it. Even then there were serious, often ugly, consequences. It would be some time before blacks were able to attend schools of their choice without incident.

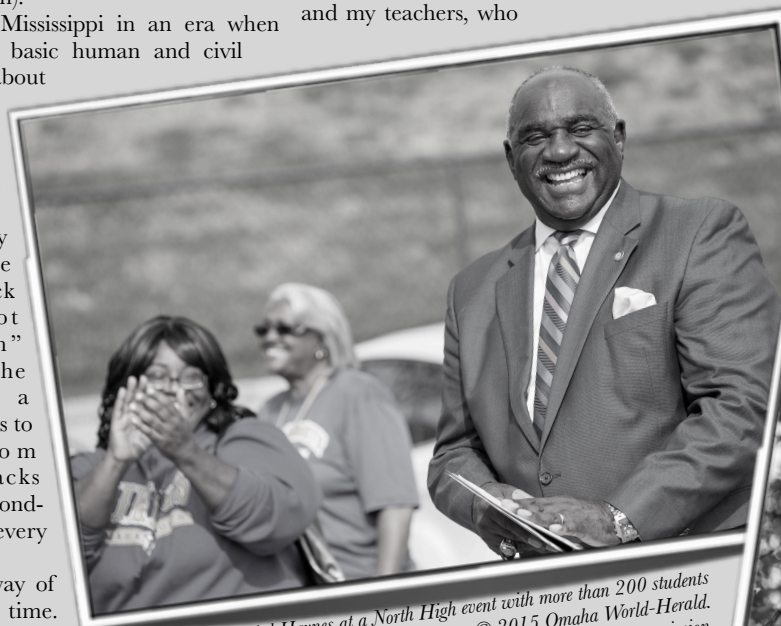
Haynes was fortunate to have as a mentor a male high school biology teacher who also coached him in football.

"He was very instrumental in working with

me from grade 10 on, preparing me for college. He had gone to Rust College in Holly Springs, Miss, and he was very instrumental in my attending Rust. I felt that was the opportunity for me to do the things I need to do."

Before attending Rust, however, Haynes followed his brothers to Omaha, where the extended family put down roots during the Great Migration blacks made from the South to the North in search of a better life. Omaha's booming meat packing plants and railroad operations drew many unskilled blacks and other minorities.

"We had relatives here and they hooked my oldest brother, who came here in '59, with a job. It was a kind of networking that went on. He came here on a weekend and he went to work at the packinghouse on Monday. That started a chain of events," says Haynes, whose other brothers followed. In 1963, Gene did, too. His brothers traveled to Mississippi for his high school graduation and no sooner did the ceremony end then they took him back to Omaha with



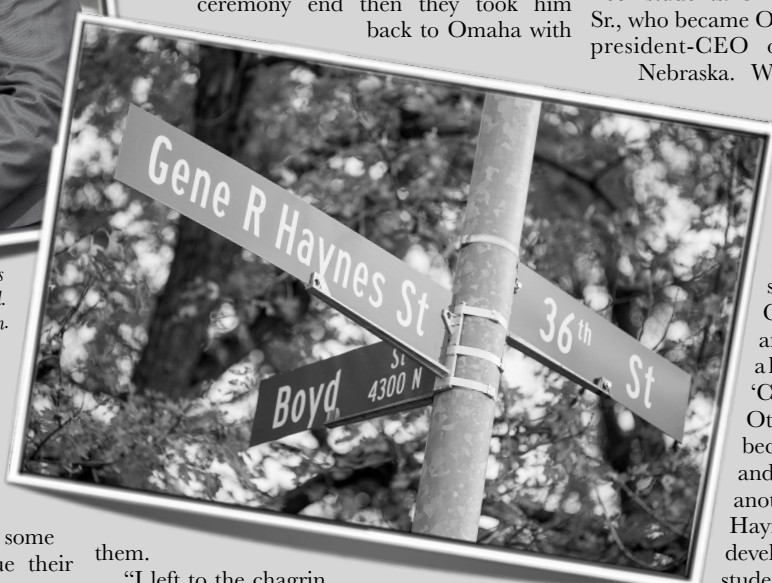
A typically jovial Haynes at a North High event with more than 200 students and family members in attendance. © 2015 Omaha World-Herald. Photographer: Brendan Sullivan. Two photos used with permission.

were always discussing how important it was to get an education. They embedded that into us - that education is a key for success."

Blacks were also resourceful to find some kind of way through barriers to pursue their goals and dreams.

"We managed in spite of the opportunities denied us."

Haynes says that as a college-bound African-American then his higher ed choices in the South were severely limited. In much of the region at that time blacks could not attend anything but historically black colleges. "When I was coming out of high school if you were black and you didn't go to Jackson State, Alcorn, Mississippi



them.

"I left to the chagrin of my mom and dad. I was the baby and now the nest was empty. In 1964 my mother and father pulled up stakes and moved to Omaha. Mom couldn't stand not being around her boys."

Unlike his brothers, Gene didn't work in the packinghouses. Instead, a relative got him on at the fancy Blackstone Hotel, with its distinctive exterior, ornate interior and popular Golden Spur and Orleans Room.

He eventually returned to Mississippi to attend Rust, majoring in social studies and economics.

"They provided me with a great education," he says of his alma mater. The school also served as his introduction to his life partner. "I met a great lady whom I ended up marrying - my wife Annie. We graduated from Rust in 1967 and we got married in 1968."

Work-study and a scholarship put Haynes through college. He toiled in the dorms and athletic offices to pay his way in becoming his family's first college graduate. Given the sway educators had in his life, he naturally looked at teaching as a career.

Places like Omaha had a dearth of black college grads then, so OPS looked to historically black colleges for candidates. He joined other newly minted educators from the South as OPS hires, including Sam Crawford, Jim Freeman and Tom Harvey, all of whom enjoyed long careers like him.

When he started at OPS in 1967, at Omaha Technical High School, he came alone while Annie pursued teaching opportunities elsewhere, which eventually landed her in Cleveland, Ohio.

"My plan," Haynes says, "was to teach here one year and go to Miami, where I also applied. I lived with my parents to save money. Forty-seven years later I'm still here and I haven't saved any money yet," he says, laughing.

After that first year in Omaha Haynes went to Cleveland to court Annie. "I convinced her Omaha was the place she needed to be." She got a job teaching 3rd grade at Lothrop Elementary. Annie ended up teaching 37-plus years in the district.

Haynes, who earned a master's degree in education, administration supervision from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1974, taught and coached at Technical High School until it closed in 1984. He was an assistant football coach when future University of Nebraska All-American and Heisman Trophy

winner Johnny Rodgers played for the school. During his tenure Haynes broke new ground as the state's first black head basketball coach which meant dealing with some racist coaches, officials and fans.

"I had to tell the kids," says Haynes, referring to blatantly bad calls that went against his team and other minority-laden teams then at Omaha Central and Omaha South, "You have to play above that because let's face it, if it's close you can forget it. You have to be twice as good as your competition. And so we tried to prepare them for that."

He says he instilled in his players the philosophy - "You give it your best. Winning is not everything, but a sincere effort is." He says he still believes that today. "It's not about wins and losses it's about the success of the young people at the end of their high school term."

As engaged as he is with his North High students Haynes was equally engaged with his Tech students. One of those is Thomas Warren Sr., who became Omaha Police chief and is now president-CEO of the Urban League of Nebraska. Warren played basketball for

Haynes and remembers his old coach as "a strict disciplinarian who had the respect of his players" because he went the extra mile for them. "I have never seen him give up on a kid," said Warren. "I consider Gene Haynes a friend, mentor and role model and I will always refer to him as 'Coach.'"

Other students Haynes molded became entrepreneurs, lawyers and professionals in one field or another.

Haynes says "the passion the staff developed caring about individual students made all the difference in the world" at Tech "and that's what I've attempted to do and incorporate here at North."

When Tech closed Haynes became assistant principal and athletic director at McMillan Magnet School before joining the North High staff in 1987. At North he served as assistant principal and athletic director for 14 years until assuming the principal post in 2001.

Gene Haynes continued on page 6.

A Salute to Education from Florence Elementary

by Daniel Hoeck, Florence Elementary School Principal

Henry Drummond said it best when he said, "The Florence community is full of history and stories. The people have a love of the past and an excitement for the future. Florence is a community that will live in the hearts of those for many generations to come."

The story of Florence Elementary School is a long but noble story. The story starts in 1857 when settlers founded the Florence Community. After that, the community established their first school. The school location has changed a few times over the years but Florence Elementary is currently located at 7902 North 36th Street in Omaha, NE.

Florence prides itself as being one of the best schools in the area. The students strive for excellence and are proud to be Florence Foxes.

There is a tradition at Florence that we are all in this together and we are all one big family. If one fails we all fail.

Florence Elementary has built a true sense of community. Within the knowledge that it takes a village to raise the youth, the community still continues to maintain close ties to this neighborhood school. Florence

students go out into the community, assist with projects, and learn to give back to their community.

The involvement of parents and business partners in numerous school activities contributes to the academic success of students.

Currently, the school consists of 324 students ranging from kindergarten to 6th grade. The school day consists of traditional academics as well as providing extracurricular activities throughout the school day. These activities include; chorus, band, strings, boys basketball, girls basketball, volleyball, flag football, Do Something Club, Student Council, Gardening Club, and Challenge.

Florence provides a safe and inspiring educational setting that all students can thrive in.

It is our mission at Florence to have our students strive for excellence in everything that they do and to become the best that they can be.

In the hopes that when they continue to talk about their past, when they are older, it is a positive one. We know that we are on the right track here at Florence and know that the future is bright as long as we are in it together. ❖

Worship Times in the Community

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA
6340 N. 30th St. | 402-453-4080 | Trinityomaha.org
Traditional Sunday Service: 8:45 a.m.
Sunday School for All: 9:45 a.m. | Praise Service: 10:45 a.m.
Pastors Elizabeth & John Backus

ST. PHILIP NERI CHURCH - BLESSED SACRAMENT: Catholic
8200 N. 30th St. | 402-455-1289 | www.saintphilipneriblessedsacrament.org
Saturday Service: 5 p.m. | Sunday Services: 7:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
Rev. John Andrews

PROMISED LAND WORSHIP CENTER & (S.O.S.) SAINTS OF SALVATION MINISTRIES
8019 N. 31st St. | 402-455-4883
Wednesday Bible Study: 7-8:30 p.m.
Friday Service: 7 p.m. | Sunday Service: 11 a.m.
Pastors Gary & Denise Hopkins

MOUNT OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH: LCMS
7301 N. 28th Ave. | 402-455-8700
(Two blocks east of Godfather's Pizza)
Sunday Service: 9 a.m. | Educational Hour: 10:20 a.m.
Rev. Roland A. Jank, Jr.

MAPLEWOOD UNITED METHODIST
3535 Maplewood Blvd. | 402-572-1430 | email: office@maplewood.com
Sunday School: 9 a.m. | Sunday Worship: 10:15 a.m.
Rev. Jim Johnson

FLORENCE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
8314 N. 31st St. | 402-455-8343 | Florencepc.org
Adults' Sunday School: 9 a.m. | Children's Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.
Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.
Pastor Al Zimmerman

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH: LCMS
11120 Calhoun Rd. | 402-451-2441 | stjohnomaha.com
Sunday Worship: 9 a.m.
Rev. Ronald Holling

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Gene Haynes continued from page 6.

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A Salute to Education!

Florence Historical Foundation

Florence City Hall is the lifeblood of the Florence Historical Foundation. Help support your community by planning your next event with us. See our ad on page 13 or visit FlorenceReceptionHalls.com for rates and details.

Since taking over at North, whose 4410 North 36th Street campus borders some of Omaha's highest crime areas, he's credited with leading a turnaround there. But he says the transformation began under predecessor Tom Harvey, who changed the school's image. Starting in the 1980s North's once proud reputation suffered under the strain of urban pressures that saw school dropouts and disruptive behaviors rise, along with test scores decline. Haynes says Harvey began the process of turning this wasteland into an oasis of success.

"Tom Harvey was a driving force behind the resurrection of North."

The impoverished neighborhoods around North had fallen into a mire of drugs, gangs, violence, vacant homes and hopelessness but have rebounded with help from community building organizations like Abide.

North High's leaders, Haynes says, made a conscious effort to make the school an anchor and resource in a community hungry for something it could be proud of and call its own. He says if northeast Omaha is to realize its hoped-for revival then North and its companion schools must be actors in it.

Haynes has continued to enhance North's community engagement. "North High School is a key component of this community," he says. "We found that when people in the community feel they are part of something your vandalism goes down. They feel they have ownership in this. The second Saturday of the month the Empowerment Network uses our facility. Every Sunday Bridge Church holds services here."

Haynes welcomes community partners. John Backus, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in North Omaha, says, "When we approached him about ways to be helpful in his school he was ready with ideas, answers and the sort of willing spirit that accomplishes things. Gene Haynes is a capable leader and intensely interested in the well-being of his students."

Perhaps the biggest sea change for North came when it was made a magnet center for STEM - science, technology, engineering and math.

Haynes says, "We wanted the best and the brightest people to be a part of North High School - students and staff. We went out and

brought in the best and the brightest and we will continue to do so."

As a magnet center North draws students from around the metro. Haynes says one third of its students come from outside its attendance area. The school's test scores have soared and the number of academic college scholarships awarded to graduates has exploded.

Evans adds that North's success has a ripple effect on its student body and the surrounding community. "I think it's huge. I think it sends a message of hope that we can and will succeed."

North's academic progress is matched by the success of its athletic programs. Until recently the school was known for its wrestling dominance, including multiple team and individual champions and at least one Olympic hopeful, Vikings grad RaVaughn Perkins. But more recently North's football team has been the

The school's test scores have soared and the number of academic college scholarships awarded to graduates has exploded.

dominant force, winning back-to-back Class A state titles behind superstar running back Calvin Strong, a South Dakota commit, and Husker lineman recruit Michael Decker. The 2014 Vikings finished 13-0 and are widely considered one of the top teams in Nebraska prep football history.

North has done all this without having a true home field to play on. Its football team plays at Northwest High's Kinnick Stadium some four miles away.

A proposal for North High to build a stadium of its own, right in the neighborhood, is being looked at. North students did an initial design. Haynes and the school's foundation are assessing if there's enough support in the community for what would be a privately funded project costing millions of dollars.

Haynes believes the stadium would be another "bright light for this community" and he says the facility would be available for use by nearby Skinner Magnet School and the Buter Gast YMCA.

Haynes keeps long hours at North, whose doors hardly ever seem to close, for all the activity there. He says he goes home satisfied when "I see the kids leaving school with a smile on their face and a pat on the back from the principal and they acknowledge it."

As for how much longer he'll be doing this, he's promised the class of 2017 he'll walk with them at their graduation.

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First Sundays-"Ring of Flutes"

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A Salute to Education, May 9

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June 20 - July 26: UNO Professor of Art Linda Hatfield, paintings on etched wood.

Aug 1 - 30: Mary Day, constructions, mixed media and prints.

Sept 5 - Oct 4: David Helm, photographs & installation, UNO Professor of Art.

Oct 3 - 4: North Hills Pottery Tour.

Hours & Contact Information

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For visitor or vendor information contact

402-551-1233 or theflorencemill@gmail.com

The Florence Mill is located conveniently next to I-680, Exit 13, at 9102 North 30th Street in Omaha, Nebraska



One-room Schoolhouse

by Vern Hauger

I decided to do a little research on the quality of education the children of the homesteaders received during the period 1870-1900.

Some children were self taught. Others were homeschooled by their mothers. They learned to read either from the Bible, the McGuffey's Reader, or the Wilsons Reader. The Swenton's reader came later.

Some were taught in schools and received their education from either a certified or a non-certified teacher, depending on the County Superintendent of Schools or the School Board.

Since most of the boys had to work on the farms they could only attend school about three months out of the year. As a consequence it was not uncommon for the boys to be older than their teachers. Most of them did learn to read, write, and do their numbers. Over-all the quality of education received by the children of the homesteaders was limited but sufficient.

In one story that I really liked, a young girl described a one-room school she attended. A large heater stood in the center of the classroom. The restrooms were outside in the school yard, one for boys in one corner, and one for girls in the other corner. They were not heated and sometimes if the door was not shut and locked snow would drift in.

It's a good thing she didn't have to use the boy's facility because often there would be ice frozen on the seat if someone had not aimed well.

She said she ate cold fried-down meat [a common way of preserving the meat] sandwiches with the lard still on it, and drank water from the well. The water bucket stood by the doorway with the community dipper hung nearby.

Things had not changed much over the next 40 years from when I attended a one-room schoolhouse in the early 1940s. A wood-heating stove still stood in the center of the class room. The restrooms were still outside on the school grounds, and a fenced-in shelter was on the south side of school, where the fire wood was stacked and the students' horses stayed so they could get out of any bad weather. We called the restrooms "outhouses" back then.

I never ate a cold fried-down meat sandwich but the preparation is interesting to say the least. The meat was



Some of the historical one-room schools that survive today remain unrestored, and in disrepair. This one, in Price County, Wisconsin, remains unrestored.

fried and put into a crock; melted lard was poured over the meat until it was covered. When the lard solidified the air was no longer able to reach the meat.

I never much cared for meat preserved this way, even when it was reheated and the lard had melted off, and to this day I don't know how anyone could eat it cold with the lard still on it.

Jellyroll pancakes were a frequent favorite in my school lunches. The other kids wanted them so we would trade lunches if theirs looked good to me.

We still drank the well water and it was delicious, lots of iron. Everyone drank out of the same bucket with the same dipper. I never understood why we had to hang the dipper on the hook after using it, and the next person would do the same. It was never washed.

We used oil lamps for lighting. Rural electricity had not yet reached our part of the country.


One teacher taught all the grades, first through eighth. She must have done a good job. When I started school in Omaha they bumped me up one grade. ❖

Photo credit: "Agenda school 1" by Billertl - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Agenda_school_1.JPG#/media/File:Agenda_school_1.JPG

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~ HENRY FORD



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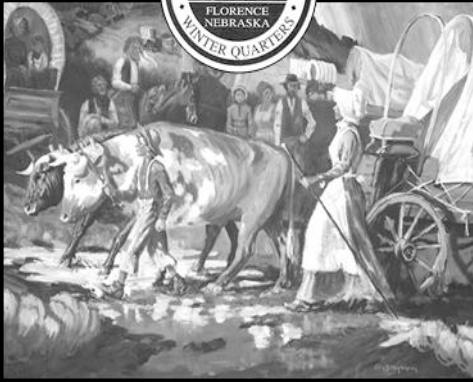
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Learn for Life @ your library

by Cynthia Vana

With this issue saluting education it's a perfect venue to highlight Omaha Public Library's amazing educational resources — this time for adults.

If you're an OPL cardholder (and you should be), you've practically got a gold mine in your pocket.

Some things sound too good to be true, but believe me when I tell you that you can take online, for-credit, instructor-led classes for absolutely free with your library card. The classes are amazing and they are intense!

Whether for personal enrichment or professional development, you will find that lynda.com and Gale Courses offer classes and training which cover a seemingly endless array of topics.

But remember, these free classes and videos are accessible only with your library card.

Lynda.com offers hundreds of video training courses in 3-D & Animation; Audio & Music; Business; CAD; Design; Development; Education & E-learning; IT; Marketing; Photography; Video; and Web.

For example, if you are interested in Development, you might take a lynda.com video course in Mobile Apps or Google Apps. If you're a teacher you might want to take a video course in Evernote or Teacher Professional Development. That just scratches the surface.

Gale Courses also has a vast number of offerings. These courses are similar to online college courses that use blackboard and usually require participation in discussions and assignments that are due on a weekly basis.



Visit omahalibrary.org to access lynda.com and Gale Courses databases, free with your Omaha Public Library card.

Gale Courses offers classes in Accounting & Finance, Business, College Readiness, Computer Applications; Design & Composition, Health Care & Medical, Language & Arts, Law & Legal; Personal Development, Teaching & Education, Technology, and Writing & Publishing.

For example, if you are an aspiring writer, you might want to take The Beginner's Guide to Getting Published or The Craft of Magazine Writing. Or perhaps you want to brush up on your computer skills for that job interview. Take a Microsoft Excel course. Or a Photoshop CS6 class.

Want to explore more? It's simple -- visit omahalibrary.org, click on Resource Center, then click on Online Learning. If you don't yet have a library card, you can apply online. Just look for the Request Library Card link at the bottom of OPL's homepage. Have fun! ❖

North Omaha Commercial Club Works for the Community

NOCC WELCOMES ANYONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO HELP CONTINUE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE FLORENCE COMMUNITY

by Mele Mason

Tangible results of some of the efforts led by the North Omaha Commercial Club include, but are not limited to, the recent streetscape improvements along the North 30th Street corridor in Florence.

Wider parking spaces, storefronts made more attractive with cast-iron decorator benches for pedestrians to relax. Planters. And more. No small feat.

In order to accomplish these goals NOCC first had a vision, then they organized Town Hall meetings and coordinated with Florence Futures to raise money for a Master Plan to submit to City Hall.

Then they worked with the Mayor, City Council and Planning Board to secure funds for the streetscape. We are now enjoying the results.

For more than 70 years NOCC has served the Florence community by living by its motto "To Further the Interests of North Omaha."

This motto is promoted through NOCC's 10-point program:

1. To insure an orderly growth comparable to that enjoyed by other sections of Omaha.
2. A better business climate in which to work and grow.
3. The development of new residential and shopping areas.
4. Increased recreational facilities for both children and adults.
5. The upkeep and improvement of our beautiful residential areas with proper and reasonable zoning regulations.
6. Better educational opportunities for all.
7. The location of new business and industry in our area.
8. Better employment opportunities for all citizens.
9. The improvement and rejuvenation of sub-standard housing and business areas.
10. Greater co-operation between all of our business and professional groups for the common good.

The NOCC traditionally meets on the last Monday of the month (excluding holidays).

The NOCC team currently meets at Harold's Koffee House on 30th and State Streets. Every meeting kicks off at 6 p.m. with a casual 30-minute social time followed by a yummy dinner prepared at Harold's. The special hourlong speaker events begin at 7 p.m.

NOCC also awards The Community Betterment Award each December to a person or group who has impacted the community in a positive, enriching way.

Membership is open to anyone interested in supporting the growth and development of Historic Florence and the businesses that make Florence the amazing community it is. We welcome newcomers!

Annual dues, billed each January, are \$50 per year. A significant portion of the annual dues is used to pay for printing and mailing the monthly newsletter and facility fees for holding Town Hall Meetings. ❖

For more information, please contact NOCC President Mele Mason at 402-455-9422 or meleemason@aol.com.

Visit us at Facebook.com/northomahacommercialclub

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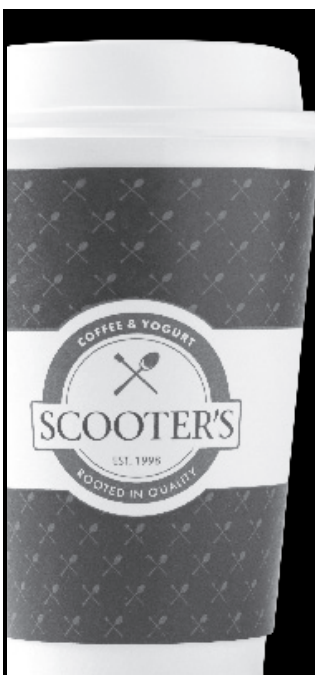
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The All-New Nelson Mandela Elementary School is Scheduled to "Move In" June 1

compiled by Cynthia Vana

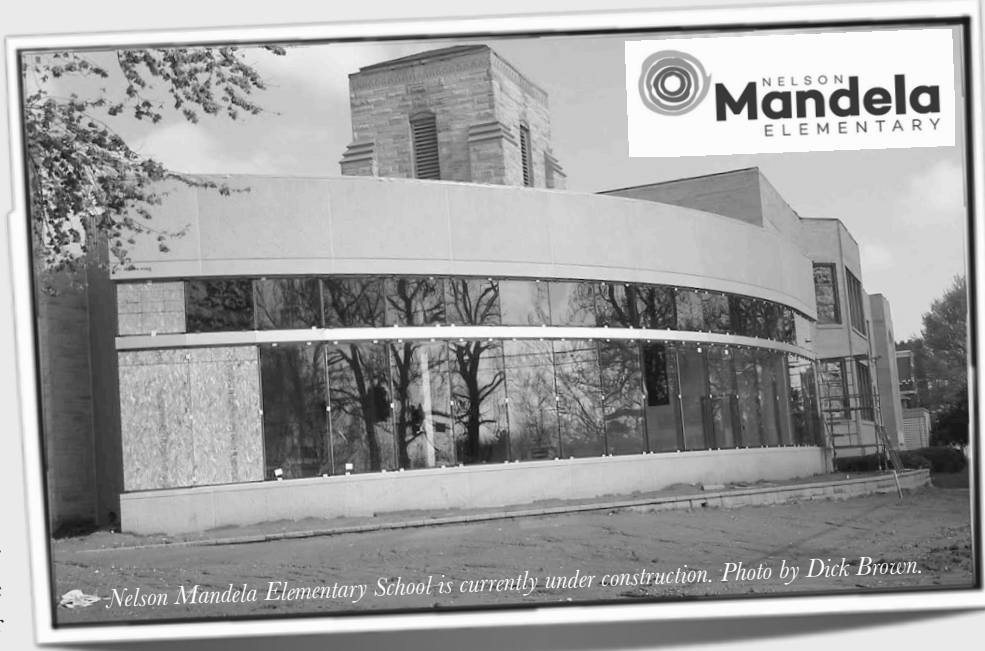
After a number of community input sessions where a variety of names for the new school were discussed, the overwhelming support was for Nelson Mandela Elementary. Nelson Mandela is known for his now famous quote, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." That ideal is the aspiration for the new school.

Mandela School Principal Dr. Susan Toohey says, "I look forward to working with the students of the new school because they are our future and I have so much passion for education and I know they will be the ones to change our city, our state, our world. I am thrilled to be part of this exciting journey!"

The lineup of partners for the new school is impressive: The Big Garden; Boys & Girls Clubs of the Midlands; Charles Drew, College of St. Mary, Cortina Community, Girls, Inc., Goals Center, Heartland Family Service-Solomon Girls Center, Interface Web School, Metropolitan Community College, Omaha Conservatory of Music, Spalding Education, Thrive Center and the University of Nebraska at Omaha College of Education.

The partners will work in a wide range of capacities. The Big Garden, for example, will help construct raised bed gardens, teach students about growing and maintaining a garden, present a curriculum that enhances the school's science and health standards and teach students how to prepare various vegetables grown in the garden.

As a partner, the Omaha Conservatory of Music will provide weekly violin instruction by a certified Nebraska music educator from the conservatory. Regular performances will be held at the school for parents and community members to attend.



Heartland Family Service-Solomon Girls Center will provide transportation each day for the girls to participate in the after-school programming offered at HFS Solomon Girls Club.

And the list goes on.

"The role of a teacher can have such an impact on their students," says kindergarten teacher Jordyn Lewis. "I want to be the person who makes a positive impact on children."

The mission of Nelson Mandela Elementary is to provide quality instruction that demonstrates ALL students can learn and develop academically, emotionally, socially and physically. Nelson Mandela Elementary says it is committed to maximizing the educational success of all students and

bridging learning and achievement gaps.

The new Nelson Mandela Elementary School is located across from Miller Park at 6316 N. 30th St. Their website says the school, which is currently under construction, is scheduled to move in on June 1.

Be sure to explore their well-designed and informative website, provided by Interface Web School's Managing Director, Shonna Dorsey, who developed and maintains the site.

Visit NelsonMandelaElementary.org. ❖

Dr. Becky Pasco from the UNO College of Education was instrumental in finding experts to assist the Mandela school in creating a highly functional and engaging media center. The UNO students enrolled in the Library Science program were essential in assisting with setting up a library collection for the new school.

Charles Drew will provide school physicals, immunizations, and health care to all families. Some services will be rendered on-site to help facilitate healthy children ready to learn.

Metropolitan Community College delivers relevant student-centered education to a diverse community of learners. One outcome of the connection between Mandela and MCC will be that, on all Professional Development Days, the Mandela students will be provided engaging and enriching curriculum extensions by the faculty of MCC. These extensions are currently offered in the summer, on campus. Future projects are currently in the development stage.

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For transportation or more information, call Ann Van Hoff 402-556-3576, Marjorie Willard 402-455-8401, or Ruth Kruse 402-453-4825.

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- MARGARET MEAD



MCC to Provide Much Needed Education in IT, Engineering and Skilled Trades

by Derek Rayment

Three new buildings are emerging on the Fort Omaha Campus of Metropolitan Community College, and they will likely have a considerable impact on the Omaha-area economy.

The \$90 million dollar Fort Omaha Campus expansion is designed to strengthen innovative learning in technology and construction trades and comes at a time

systems, as well as other technology and transportation-related fields.

The Construction Education Center will provide students the ability to learn about fields such as architecture and design, civil engineering, construction technology, electrical technology, electrical apprenticeship, HVAC, industrial and commercial trades, masonry, plumbing



Group of MCC executives breaking ground this spring for the \$90 million MCC Fort Omaha Campus expansion project which comes at a time when skilled trade workers are in sharp demand.

when skilled trade workers are in sharp demand.

A survey by the Manpower Group in 2012 showed the top three jobs employers are having trouble filling in the U.S. are in skilled trades, engineering and IT work.

The Fort Omaha expansion will also allow the College to consolidate programs now spread throughout the system at one campus, with more space and updated equipment.

A fifty-fifty match of private and public money will be used to build the three new buildings on the south end of the Fort Omaha Campus.

The Center for Advanced and Emerging Technology will be home to the MCC FabLab and feature advanced manufacturing studies and automation

apprenticeship, sustainability, weatherization and welding.

The Academic Skills Center will be a hub for student-centered, developmental education with a focus on career navigation, small group communication, general education courses, ReadRight® curriculum and active learning.

MCC has strategically focused its long-range planning toward the evolving workforce needs of our regional economy. With the unemployment rate in the Omaha area below 4 percent, it is vital to get more skilled workers in the pipeline. The Fort Omaha Campus expansion is designed to do just that, by strengthening and broadening instruction in IT and construction trades.

The expansion project is expected to be finished in 2018. ❖

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The Townspeople of the 1800s

by Vern Hauger

This is a story about townspeople who traveled from the east around the time of the mass migration of immigrants heading west across this country from the 1840s through the 1870s.

The settlers came seeking a better life for themselves and their families by homesteading on newly opened government land. Most of the settlers farmed the land or used it for grazing cattle, while the incoming townspeople provided goods and services.

They were the merchants, butchers, bankers, boot makers, saloon keepers, doctors, barbers, traders and so forth. Included in the fold were bad guys, shysters, prostitutes, thieves and other low-life scalawags.

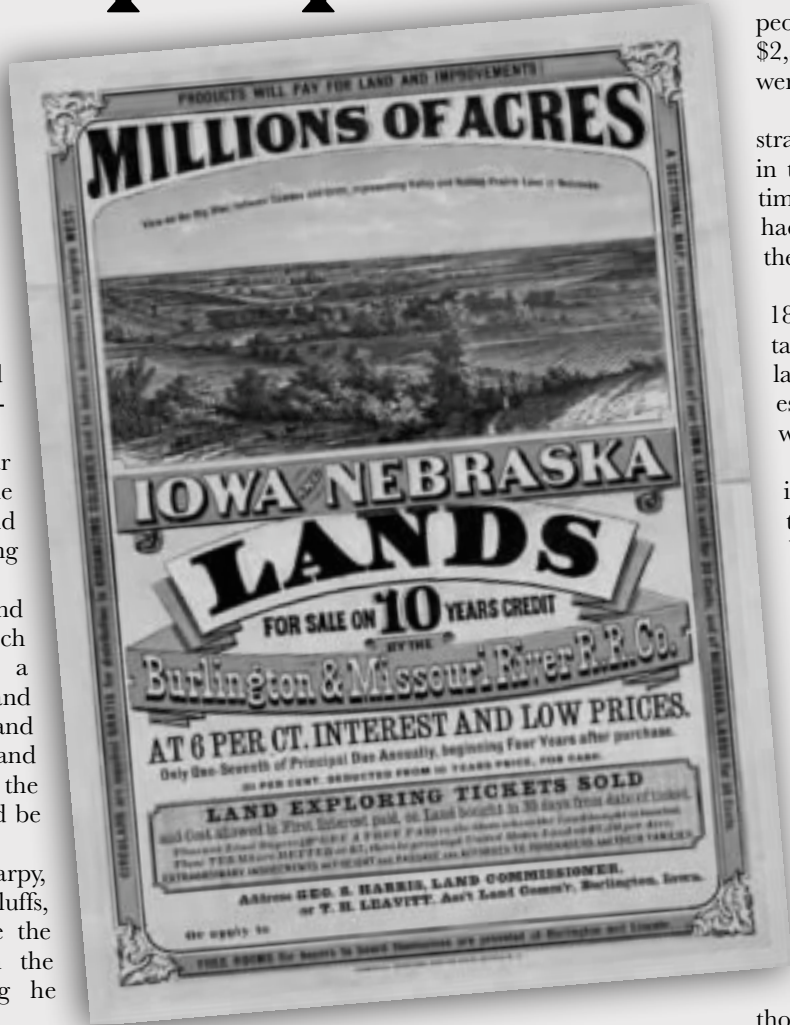
The merchant was usually the most popular person in town and the most indispensable. The blacksmith ranked high in the pecking order, as did the operators of the livery stables and the boarding houses. Most towns also had a newspaper.

In 1854, Nebraska became a U.S. Territory and Congress also passed the Town-site Act which allowed a group settlers or speculators — or a combination of both — to stake out 320 acres and take possession for a sum of \$1.25 per acre. The land was then divided up into lots of 125 by 25 feet and sold to prospective townspeople at whatever price the market would bear. The profit on these lots could be anywhere from \$50 to \$1000.

At the urging of his friend Colonel Peter A. Sarpy, Mr. James C. Mitchell, a merchant in Council Bluffs, laid out the plans for a city to be built where the Mormons' Winter Quarters had been. When the Nebraska Territory opened for homesteading he purchased the land under the Town-site Act.

In 1855, the City of Florence became a reality. Mr. Mitchell had done his homework. The City was quickly populated and Florence flourished for a good spell. If Florence had had the right contacts in the right places like Omaha did, perhaps Omaha would now be a part of the City of Florence.

The railroads, with their huge land holdings, played a major role in where towns would be established. One such city was Merna, Nebraska, whose life came to a



people lived there and some of the better lots sold for \$2,500. In 1857, there were 3,000 people and some lots were valued at \$4,000.

One time, a group of 300 immigrants became stranded when their steamboat ran aground on a sandbar in the Big Blue River in the Nebraska Territory. By the time their craft was freed from the sandbar the people had decided this was a good place to build a town, and so they did. They named that town Beatrice.

How Grand Island came to be is another story. In 1857, a group of speculators in Davenport, Iowa, fast-talked some mostly German settlers into purchasing land in a place called Grand Island. Grand Island was established along the Wood and North Platte Rivers. It was the largest inland island in the world.

The speculators told settlers it was going to be an important railroad center and, since it was located in the center of the United States, it would one day become the Capitol of the United States. But the financial panic of 1857 cost these promoters most of their money. Two years later an emigrant set fire to the City of Grand Island because he hated the Germans. All but one of the houses burned to the ground.

But the tough citizens rebuilt the town. In 1866, when the railroad finally did come through, it missed the City of Grand Island by several miles. The people dismantled whatever they could of the town and relocated close to the railroad.

At one time all of the villages across Nebraska were located about ten miles apart. This allowed the pioneer farmer to make a trip into town to buy whatever he needed and still get home in time to feed his livestock in the evening. Today, most of those smaller towns no longer exist.

When the Nebraska Territory first opened for homesteading there was no judicial system nor any laws on the books. Most cities had their own system of justice which worked rather well for the times. Everyone had a speedy trial — if found guilty, the sentence was quickly carried out and there were no appeals. ❖

quick end when the railroad laid its tracks two miles away! The townspeople solved this problem by abandoning their Merna and rebuilding it next to the tracks.

Town promoters were a special breed of salesman who worked very hard and received large returns on their investment. Omaha was a good example of this. In 1854, Omaha consisted of one small log house. In 1856, 1,600

Sources: Florence Historical Foundation, Google, Wikipedia

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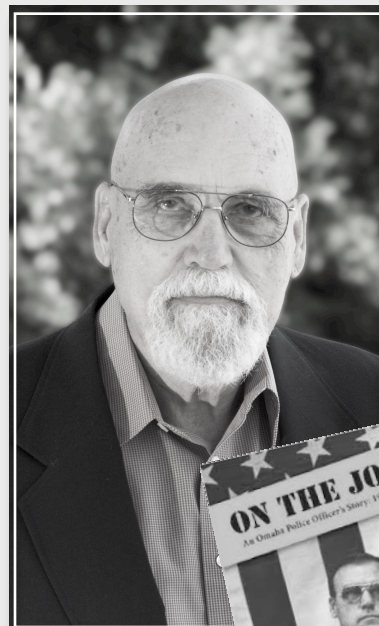
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A Tribute to Vern Hauger

by Keith Hauger



Vern Hauger passed away December 5, 2014, after a long battle with cancer. He was on the board of directors for the Florence Historical Society and found great satisfaction in serving in that capacity.

Vern had been a member of the Florentine Players since 1974. He also served on the board of the Florence Arts and Humanity Council of which he was a charter member.

He was also the author of a book about his life and career as an Omaha Police Officer. Much of his career was spent patrolling the streets of Florence, the community he so loved.

Many of you of you may know him by the articles he has written for the Florence Days Historical Newspaper.

When he first started writing articles, he was very apprehensive as he had never done anything like this. He would sit at the computer for hours researching various historical sites.

Doing this led him to research his own family history and to write a biographical article entitled *Reflections of Life*, which we found after his death.

The following is the final statement in this article. "I wrote this paper because I know little about my father's life before he was an adult. I want my

children to know about mine if they are interested. When I grew up life was 'simple' but it was hard. Was it better than when you grew up? Only you can be the judge. Perhaps you might consider leaving your children a paper. I hope you found this to be interesting."

Vern was an Omaha Police Officer for 30 years before he retired, and he patrolled the Florence area during the 1960s.

Vern and his wife Myrta had a house built in the Florence Area in 1962. They and their four boys lived there for 12 years until they moved out of the area into a larger home. Even

though the drive was longer, they continued to participate in and support the Florence Community.

There is an old saying — you can take the boy out of the country but you cannot take the country out of the boy. This is sure true with the Hauger family. Florence will always be a part of their lives. Their ties to Florence go back to the 1930s and 40s.

Vern was truly a "community" man who remained committed to Florence even long after he and his wonderful family moved out of the area.

A heartfelt thank you, Vern, for all of your contributions. You are truly missed. ❖

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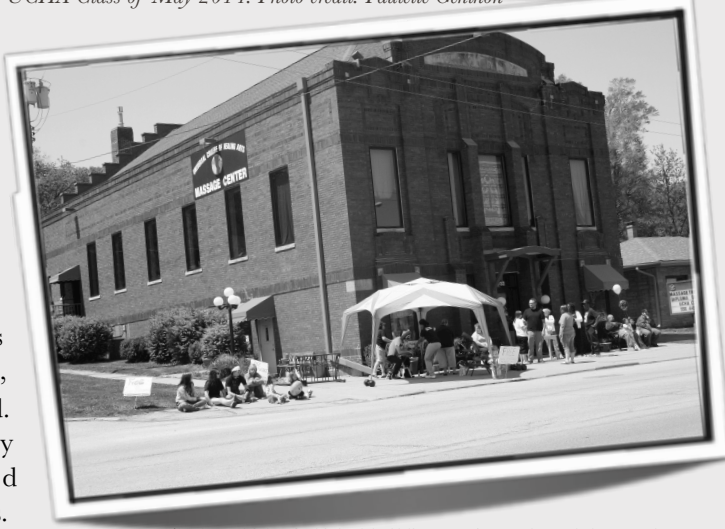
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Through Transformational Learning UCHA Students Enhance Lives and Enrich the Community

by Paulette Genthon



UCHA Class of May 2014. Photo credit: Paulette Genthon



The beautiful refurbished building at 8702 N. 30th houses the Universal College of Healing Arts. Photo credit: Paulette Genthon

The Universal College of Healing Arts (UCHA) began in 1995. It found its home in Florence at 8702 North 30th Street in September, 2005. It was a good decision. The Florence community has been extremely supportive. The building is perfect, with a campus cottage and community garden.

UCHA began from a desire to address the needs of individuals seeking a state approved diploma for licensure in Massage Therapy.

In the spirit of educational scholars, the UCHA climate allows adults to feel accepted, respected, and supported. There is mutuality between teachers and students as joint inquirers.

Studying bodywork offers a unique opportunity for optimum adult learning.

There is a focus on Transformational Learning, which shapes people. They are different afterwards, in ways they and others can recognize.

UCHA professes 'whole person learning.' Many scholars have come to realize that not all learning comes from our heads. Learning, thought, creativity, and intelligence are not processes of the brain alone, but of the whole body. Students focus on movement and eating healthy.

They were bringing peace to our communities, one person at a time.

They become healthier. There is a combination of intellect, emotion, spirit, and body in their learning process. Students focus on their hearts, and listen to their intuitive qualities. They learn from their touch.

UCHA has impacted hundreds of graduates who have an excellent massage technique and, more importantly, they give thanks for the total experience gained. They say the program changed their lives.

They now were in touch with their whole person. They were improving their community. They were bringing stress relief to others, facilitating weight gains in premature babies, giving dignity and comfort to the dying, creating self-esteem through good posture in our youth. They were bringing peace to our communities, one person at a time.

UCHA began with a desire to bring massage

therapy to special populations. Enrolled students have provided over 20,000 hours of community service. They have been at hospice, nursing homes, schools, and many non-profit events.

UCHA provides small class sizes with some of the most experienced instructors. The heart of the program is taught by Paulette Genthon, LMT. She has 40 years of experience in Health Education, and is degreed in Health Education with a Masters in

Adult Education. Paulette and a team of instructors create a nurturing and caring learning environment.

Busy adults really appreciate the flexible classroom hours. UCHA offers a 'blended' program with on-site intensive weekends, enhanced with an interactive online format. The on-site weekends average one or two per month.

Students are able to balance their home and work commitments. UCHA desires diversity. Their oldest student turned 70. His intent was to develop a new skill to be useful during his retirement. Students come from other cities, states, and countries.

Consider joining UCHA for either a program in Massage Therapy or Hellerwork Structural Integration.

Or just come to receive massage or bodywork at the UCHA clinic. Call 402-556-4456. UCHA also provides YOGA for the public every Wednesday at 6 p.m. ❖

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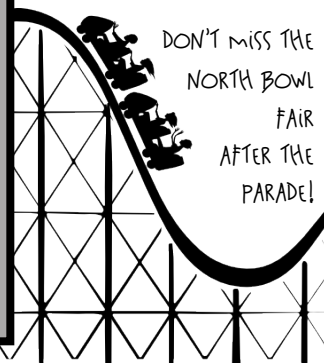
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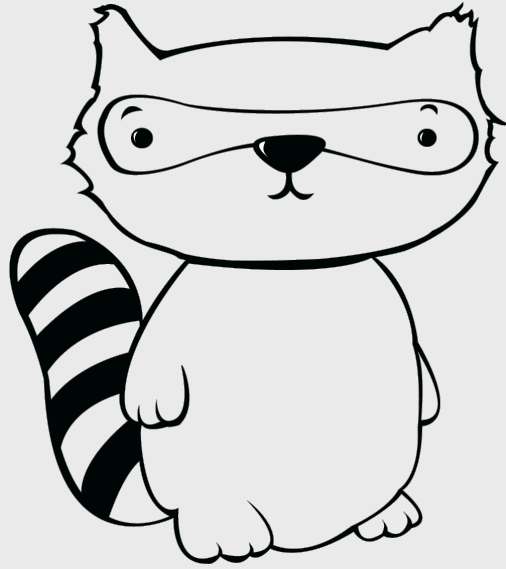
Ponca Elementary: Small School with Big Plans

by Jennifer LeClair, Principal

Ponca Elementary School is nestled in the beautiful Ponca Hills at 11300 North Post Road. Our small, close knit school is home to approximately 150 students in grades Kindergarten through Sixth.

We are going through a modernization this summer and will have a beautiful new look for the 2015-16 school year.

Because we are smaller, we offer an environment where every student is greeted by name and appreciated for their individuality.



Our teachers are innovative and dedicated, creating an environment where students love to learn and are well prepared to be the future of our world.

Ponca's Parent Teacher Association supports our school by providing many "extra" activities for our students! They sponsor after school clubs, field trips, family nights, and school wide celebrations throughout the year.

Ponca is a fabulous place to be. Our doors are always open. We would love to have you visit. ❖

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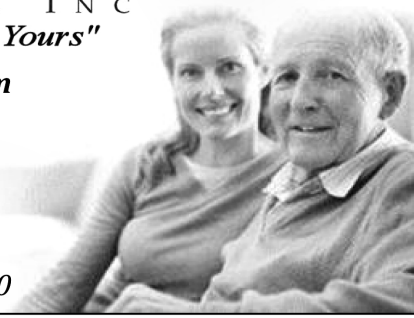
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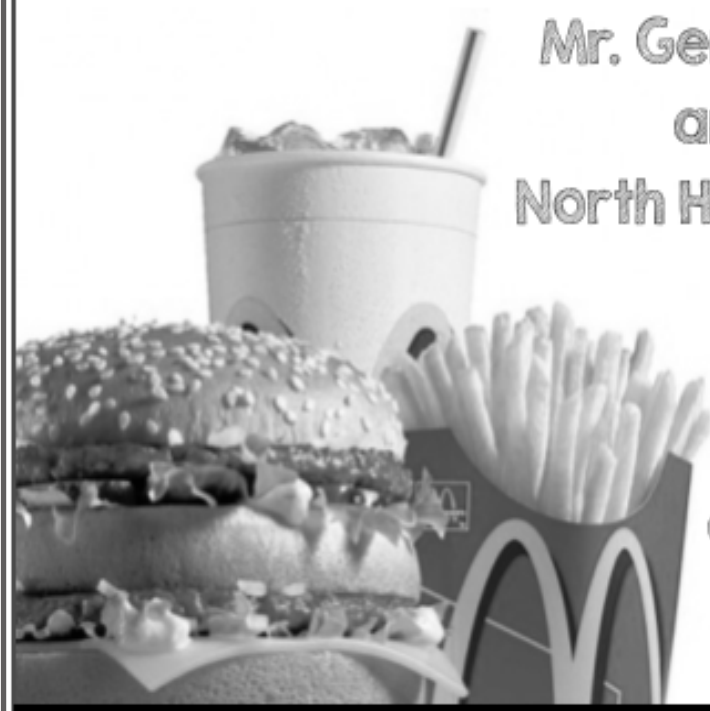
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History of St. Philip Neri School

In 1904, the Bishop of Omaha determined that a Catholic church was needed in the Florence area to serve the faithful in that community. Records show that in 1899 Bishop Scannell bought land for the church from Victor Landry for twenty-five dollars. Four founding families mortgaged their properties to make possible the building of the church.

In 1922, Fr. Driscoll raised enough money to purchase land north of the rectory and church to build a school. Prior to the school being built, the Teaching Sisters of Saint Francis from Clinton, Iowa, were teaching classes to approximately 25 students in the convent.

In 1940, the Teaching Sisters of Saint Francis were needed elsewhere, so the Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine's in Kentucky took up residence at St. Philip Neri. They remained in the parish for 44 years and were in charge of the daily operations of the school.

In 1953, a new church was built. In 1959, the school was condemned because it did not meet Fire Department standards and plans were made to build a new school.

The new school was built in 1960 at a cost of \$400,000.00. At the time, it contained a large parish meeting and recreation hall on the first floor, nine classrooms on the second floor and convent facilities on the third floor.

In 2001, an Activity Center/Gymnasium was built on land donated at 31st and Mormon Streets. In 2005, additional remodeling took place to expand the library, add air conditioning and construct a teachers' lounge/work room.

St. Philip Neri School Today

St. Philip Neri School is a Catholic Pre-kindergarten through eighth grade elementary school located in a section of North Omaha called Florence.



The school has experienced a relatively stable enrollment, for the past ten years, of approximately 185 students. In 2011, Blessed Sacrament School closed and merged with St. Philip Neri School.

Currently, there are 186 students enrolled in St. Philip Neri School. 73% of the student body is Catholic and 27% are non-Catholic. The school welcomes students of all races, religions, and ethnic backgrounds.

Students attend Mass twice a week and have opportunities throughout the year to participate in Reconciliation, Adoration and Benediction. The school has a chapel that is utilized for classroom prayer services. Students also share their faith by participating in service projects throughout the year.

Students at St. Philip Neri School have the opportunity to participate in the following extracurricular activities: Archdiocesan Math Contest and Spelling Bee, Speech, Student Council, the Duchesne Art Contest, Book Bowl, athletics and band.

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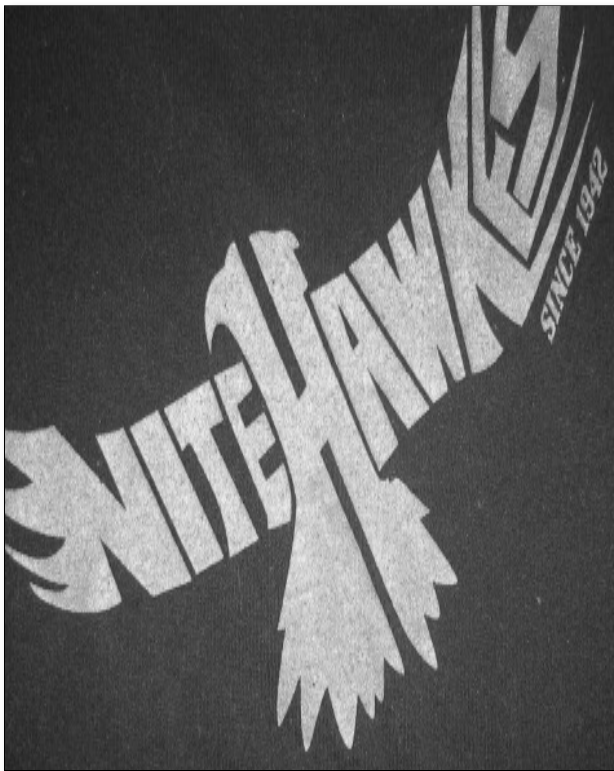
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