



Florence Historical Foundation  
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1PM May 13  
2017**

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# FLORENCE DAYS

The Florence Historical Foundation Presents

## NEBRASKA - 150 YEARS!

### Anniversary of Nebraska's Statehood: The Florentine Players Play Grand Marshal in 2017 Florence Days Parade *by Derek Kowal*

*"If You're Happy and You Know It Say Hooray, OR The Untimely Sinking of the Bertrand," an original melodrama written by Derek Kowal and David Frolio and also directed by Mr. Kowal.*

In late March, 1865, under the command of Captain James Yore, the Steamboat Bertrand left St. Louis, Missouri, and was bound for the newly-discovered goldfields of Montana. On April 1, about 30 miles north of Omaha, Nebraska, the boat hit a submerged log. The Bertrand sank into the depths of the Missouri River, and after initial salvage efforts, her cargo was written off as a complete loss.

In the long history of shipwrecks, the sinking is not exactly a Titanic event (the Bertrand was one of more than 400 steamboats wrecked in the Missouri during the riverboat era). A gangplank was lowered, and everyone walked to shore, **including this cast**© In less than 10 minutes, it sank in 12 feet of water. No people died, but almost the entire cargo was lost (estimated loss was c. \$100,000). Some of Omaha notables (Cap't James Yore, Fannie and Anna Campbell, Mr. Millard, etc., as well as other notable members of Omaha's history) were on the steamboat.

How did the members of what is now known as Florence survive their new future? Join us for our version of this quest, which includes – of course - a villain, hero, heroine, villainess, a French Chef(?), and a band. (Some liberties were taken with our story's interpretation.) BUT, how did they cope - perhaps they were all influenced by the **"Happy, He Knows It, & Says Hooray"** HERO!! ❖

Join us:  
**MELODRAMA #53**

May 11-13, 2017

**RESERVE YOUR SEAT NOW! 402-455-6341**

Florence City Hall . 29th & State Streets

All proceeds support the Florence Historical Foundation  
[florencetheater.org](http://florencetheater.org)



Photo: John Lemen chewing paper, from florencetheater.org website.

### WILDCAT CURRENCY RETURNS TO FLORENCE *by Nick Batter*

In 1856, the Bank of Florence issued its own "Wildcat Currency," which could be used at local businesses and farms. In honor of that tradition, the Florence Historical Foundation is releasing an updated community currency, accepted by businesses throughout Florence and surrounding neighborhoods.

The Omaha Note project is the result of a collaboration between the Foundation and American National Bank, which traces its history to the original Bank of Florence. This nonprofit endeavor has a simple goal: support and promote local businesses and the community.

The currency is available to everyone at American National Bank's Florence Branch at 3022 Willit Street. Eleven Omaha Notes can be exchanged for

ten dollars, and are accepted like regular currency at all participating businesses. This means that anyone using the local currency saves money, and businesses are encouraged to spend their money within the community. The project is also expected to attract visitors to Florence, for dining and shopping.

Each note features hand-drawn illustrations symbolizing the community's rich history of pioneers and settlers. The front of the note features Susette La Flesche, a journalist and civil rights campaigner of the Omaha Tribe who played a central role in the trial of Chief Standing Bear at Fort Omaha. The reverse side showcases Omaha's 1898 world's fair, brought to northeast Omaha by

local resident George Miller, namesake of Miller Park.

Dozens of local businesses and community organizations are participating in the project. It is organized by volunteers Joey Wolfe and Nick Batter, board member of the Florence Historical Foundation.

"The greater Florence neighborhood is the most culturally and economically diverse part of Omaha, which makes it the perfect place to launch the project" said Batter. "It's home to three of the World Herald's favorite restaurants, the midwest's best culinary program, the highest concentration of historical landmarks in the state, great hideaways where you can feed raccoons or sit on the bank of the Missouri River, and a farmers market held at a

pioneer mill. In short, northeast Omaha is affordable, worth visiting, and full of history."

For those looking for more information about Omaha Notes, visit [omahanote.com](http://omahanote.com). A growing list of all participating businesses, descriptions behind the illustrations on each Note, and answers to frequently asked questions can be found on the website. Omaha Notes are available at American National Bank's Florence Branch, during regular business hours. ❖



# Letter from the President

Dear Friends of Florence,

We are excited this year for our annual Florence Day parade saluting 150 years of Nebraska. We invite everyone to come out and enjoy the parade and support the Florence area. Make sure you check out all the festivities going on in our neighborhood.

We are proud that our Florentine Players were chosen as the Grand Marshals for this year's parade. It is a privilege to support the talented people included in this group which continues to entertain our neighborhood with their many productions. Make sure you check out this year's Melodrama performance and get your tickets early.

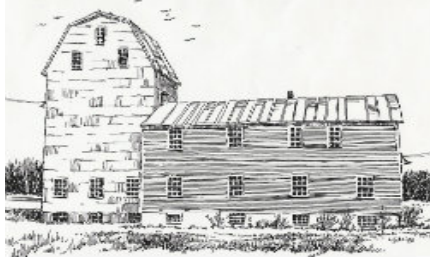
The Florence Historical is constantly at work trying to keep up with the maintenance of all our historic sites. This is where our friends and members come into play. Your membership dollars help us preserve our historic Florence and are tax deductible for the 2017 tax year.

Please consider sending your support again this year if you have not already done so to help continue our efforts.

Enjoy Florence Days!

*Lynn L. Farris, Jr.*

President, Florence Historical Foundation



## Florence Mill

### Museum, ArtLoft & Country Market

Enjoy Fresh Local Produce, Crafts, Music  
Visit Alpacas at Opening Market 10am to 3pm on Sunday June 4  
And every Sunday June thru October

**Mill Museum & ArtLoft Gallery Hours**  
Wed - Sat 1PM to 5PM and Market Sundays

9102 N 30th St, next to OJ's and I-680/Exit 13  
facebook.com/theflorencemill

## Q: Where does Agriculture, History and Art live under the same roof? A: The Florence Mill

The Florence Mill is part of the fabric of Florence. The old hand-hewn Mormon timbers were a landmark of Florence when the little town was first chartered in Territorial Nebraska. By 1998, the mill had long since become a dilapidated pink landmark filled with piles of fermented grain. Although it's since been transformed into a popular destination, it remains the only physical link connecting the eras of the Overland Pioneer Trails and the Territorial settlement. Since the 1999 Bicentennial event "Gold Rush Days," Mill Director Linda Meigs has been instrumental in making vital contributions to this community's physical as well as cultural improvements.

### 2017 Summer Events at the Florence Mill:

**Saturday, May 13: Florence Days "NE150: Stories" 3:30 pm \***

"A Brief History of the 5 Tribes of Nebraska: Omaha, Ponca, Pawnee, Santee, and Winnebago." by Nebraska Humanities speaker, Nancy Gillis

**A Vision for Florence: "Native American Interpretive Center Feasibility Study"** created and funded by Florence Futures to explore adding the omitted Native story to our neighborhood's rich history. Copies will be available for viewing. Also a special display in the mill's drive-shed: Dale Thornton's replicas of historical sites from Fort Atkinson to Fort Omaha.

**Saturday, May 20: 10 am - 2pm: "World Herb Day at the Mill"** The Prairie Herbalists of Nebraska bring workshops, lectures, crafts, activities for kids, live music and herbal vendors. Join their herb walk and learn to identify native herbs.

#### **Florence Mill Farmers Market, starts**

**Sunday, June 4: 10am - 3pm with special guest Alpacas.**

Country Market, fresh farm produce and artisans through September.  
NEW: Every 4th-Sunday FREE Pony-Rides, Giant Bubbles, Miss Joan's Craft Table

**Saturday June 17, 3:30 pm: "NE150: Stories"**

"Overland Trails: Children on the Trail"

Nebraska Humanities speaker and Nebraska farm girl Renae Hunt knows Mormon and Lewis & Clark trails.

**Saturday July 29, 3:30 pm: "NE150: Stories"**

"Promise in a New Land"

Nebraska Humanities speaker, Cherrie Beam-Calloway delivers spell binding plays that bring laughter and tears.

**Saturday August 19, 3:30 pm: "NE150: Stories"**

"Courage to Continue"... Cherrie Beam-Calloway, Part two.

**Saturday September 9, 3:30 pm: "NE150: Stories"**

"Grit 'n' Gumption"... Cherrie Beam-Calloway, Part three.

**Sunday October 1: 4-7pm: "Blues & BBO"**

Florence Mill Fundraiser with No More Empty Pots.

**Saturday October 7, 10am -7 pm and Sunday Oct 8, 10-5pm Sunday:**

**Omaha North Hills Pottery Tour** with a mill-full of ceramic artists.

Pumpkin patch and Sisters of Notre Dame Kolache Bake-Sale.

**Monday October 9, the Florence Mill closes for Winter hibernation.**

\*NE150:Stories is supported in part by a Humanities Nebraska & NE Cultural Endowment.

**THE FLORENCE MILL** (9102 North 30th St. next to I-680 Exit 13 & OJ's)

**HISTORIC  
FLORENCE DAYS**

check out this proud new website: [FLORENCEDAYS.org](http://FLORENCEDAYS.org)

2017's Theme:

"Nebraska, 150 Years!"



# Happy Birthday Florentine Players

## 2017 Florence Days Parade Grand Marshals *by Carol Hodges*

CONGRATULATIONS to The Players on being selected as the 2017 Florence Days Parade “Grand Marshals”. . . Yep, the Florentine Players share a birthday with Florence Days. The Players are 53 years old, having originated those many years ago as entertainment for Florence Days. Thanks to the genius of our Florence family – including Dan Lynch, Paul Bogard, Una Lemen, Alice Davis, Leo and Lucille Byrnes, Tom Mendicino, and many others. The first production was presented as “Where Is My Wandering Girl Tonight?”. The first shows, performed at the original Florence Community Center, were not musicals; were produced FREE (Can Can girls “solicited” donations during intermissions); and throwing popcorn was permitted (no beer allowed). The concept of a melodrama was a huge hit and The Florentine Players’ family tree has blossomed over the years.

You may recognize the names of “offshoots” of the original Players – Una and Larry Lemen (John, Diane, Sandy, etc.), Lucille and Leo Byrnes (Patti – original heroine, Maryellen, Susie – Can Can, etc.), Lynn and Shirley Farris (Nancy and Mike Westphalen, Carrie, Lynn and Laurie, etc.), Vern and Myrta Hauger (Keith, and brothers; ), Linda Andresen Quistad and Rick (Luke - & new bride to be, Amanda, Lynn), Judy and Richard Collins (Mikki, Laura Hayden, Kirsten a/k/a



*In character as “Patty,” Patti Baughman scolds villain Francis Desmond, played by Eric Green, during a dress rehearsal of the Florence Melodrama at the Florence City Hall. Credit: Omaha World-Herald photo for a 2014 OWH article by Michael Kelly.*

Mrs. Chris Perry, Breanna, Cady), Jeff and Marianne Frolio (David, Nikki and new baby Holly, who will surely become a singing Can Can dancer); the Hodges clan (Carol, Del and Hal, Jordan, Julia, and Carolyn Schluckebier (Deb’s sister) – and it goes On and On!

It’s a family, with family values and commitment to the Florence Community. Today the Florentine Players produce four or five presentations a year: a Battle of the Improv Allstars in Feb, Melodrama in May, a farce in August, an annual Halloween horror tale (October) and the return of Breakfast with Santa.

Nothing says it better than our titles over the years: “Happy Birthday Florence” home of “A Creep on the Deep”, located under “Bridge Over the River Mo” where “the Dirty Deed is Done, who are “Rock Bottom, or the Days of Swine and Roses”, and “If You’re Happy And You Know It Say Hooray!

Come to one, or all of our shows and say, “Hooray !” ❖

May 11-13, 2017

29th & State St. Reserve your seat! **402-455-6341**  
All proceeds support the Florence Historical Foundation  
[florencetheater.org](http://florencetheater.org)

*The Mormon Trail Center marks the location of the Mormon Cemetery and Winter Quarters settlement; on where tens of thousands of pioneers begin their migration west. Free guided tours are given daily from 9 am to 9 pm.*

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Announcing Florence Theater’s 53rd Annual Melodrama!  
May 11-13, 2017  
If You’re Happy and You Know It Say, ‘Hooray!’ or  
The Untimely Sinking of the Bertrand  
tickets at [florencetheater.org](http://florencetheater.org)



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The seed collection depends on donations and seasonality. You'll see different seeds available at different times, so check the library catalog frequently to see what's available. Visit [omahalibrary.org](http://omahalibrary.org) and search for "seed library." Have fun! ❖



## Spring Plant Sale

**May 12-14 & May 19-21**  
 9AM-2PM each day  
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## Worship Times in the Community

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 Traditional Sunday Service: 8:45 a.m.  
 Sunday School for All: 9:45 a.m. | Praise Service: 10:45 a.m.  
 Interim Pastor James Holthus

**ST. PHILIP NERI CHURCH - BLESSED SACRAMENT: Catholic**  
 8200 N. 30th St. | 402-455-1289 | [www.saintphilipneriblessedsacrament.org](http://www.saintphilipneriblessedsacrament.org)  
 Saturday Service: 5 p.m. | Sunday Services: 7:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.  
 Father D. Mario Rapose

**MOUNT OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH: LCMS**  
 7301 N. 28th Ave. | 402-455-8700 | [MountOliveOmaha.com](http://MountOliveOmaha.com)  
 (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**  
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 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](http://Florencepc.org)  
 Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.  
 Pastor Al Zimmerman

**ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH: LCMS**  
 11120 Calhoun Rd. | 402-451-2441 | [stjohnomaha.com](http://stjohnomaha.com)  
 Sunday Worship: 9 a.m.  
 Rev. Ronald Holling



*Happy 100th Anniversary Boys Town  
from the Florence & Minne Lusa communities*



**1917**

Father Edward Flanagan borrows \$90 to rent a boarding house at 25th and Dodge Streets in downtown Omaha, Nebraska, and officially opens Father Flanagan's Home for Boys.



Omaha Public Library's 2017 Summer Reading Theme: Build A Better World  
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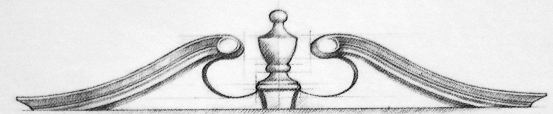
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**(402) 341-3400**  
[rcjhenkenius@aol.com](mailto:rcjhenkenius@aol.com)  
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# How do I learn about growing seeds in the Common Soil Seed Library?



Common Soil offers year-round classes on growing, seed saving, and other relevant topics taught by community gardeners and experts. Growing instructions are available for seeds

offered through Common Soil at Omaha Public Library's Benson Branch, Bess Johnson Elkhorn Branch, and South Omaha Library. Order seeds online now. Visit [omahalibrary.org](http://omahalibrary.org) and search for "seed library." Yes, it's that easy! Have fun. ❖



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# How the Florence Bank Courier Service Worked in the 1900s

just for fun




When banks transfer money today, they use armored trucks. More than 85 years ago it was done like this ....


... the bank president took his 16-year-old "courier" into the back room where he would remove his shirt and then strap pouches filled with money onto him. Putting his shirt back on, he would climb into the bank's leaky old car. "Leaky" meaning if it rained he would have to use an umbrella inside the car to keep dry. He would drive to the main bank in Omaha. Upon obtaining what change was needed, he would drive back to the bank in Florence. Easy-peasy! ❖

Source: Reprinted from a copy of the "20th Annual Florence Pioneer Days" program, published in 1980.

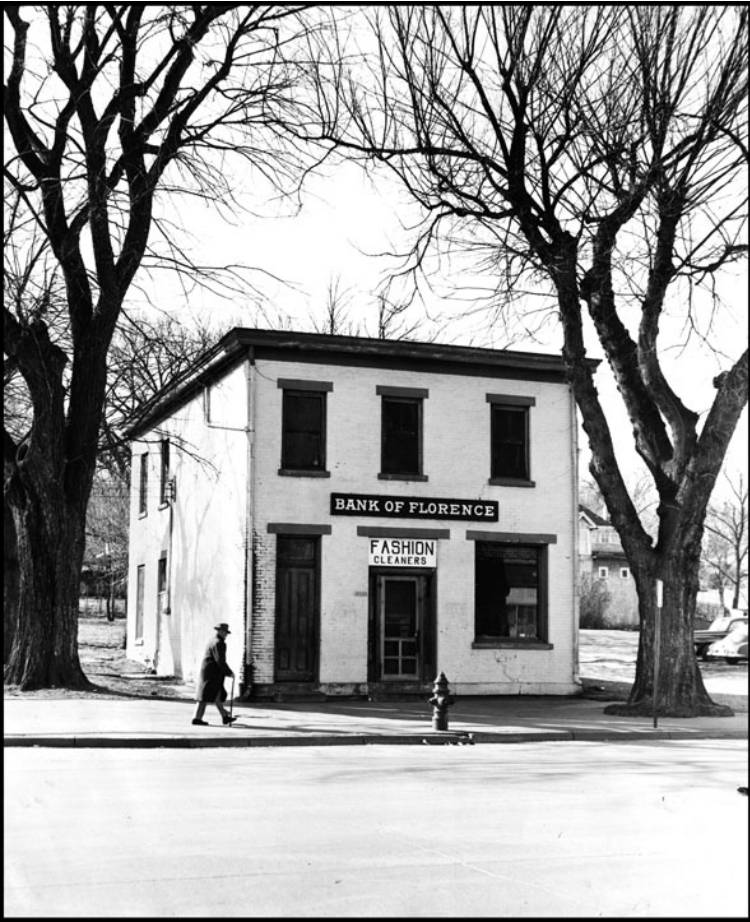
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Photos from the archives of the Historic Bank of Florence Museum.

The old Bank of Florence building has had an interesting history. Among other enterprises, it served for many years as a telephone company with the Florence Telephone Company switchboard residing on the second floor of the bank. For other fun facts, you'll enjoy the R. Sanders' "Financial Safety" article on page 2. The old bank is now a museum that attracts historians, school groups, and tourists. It's open for tours 11a.m.-3 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays from mid-May thru August 31. Call 402-453-4462 to schedule a private group tour.

**Database by Design**

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*Non-members Welcome!*

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Hooray  
for the  
Florentine  
Players  
Grand  
Marshals!



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**OPPD is a proud supporter of Florence Days**



# Remembering THE BERTRAND: 1865-2015

by Tina Shaw, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Regional Office, External Affairs

It was just two years ago that DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge marked the sesquicentennial of the sinking of the steamboat Bertrand March 27 through 29, 2015 near Missouri Valley, Iowa. History buffs commemorated the event by joining for a weekend of learning along with refuge staff, volunteers, Friends of Boyer Chute and DeSoto Refuges and other community members.

A century after the Bertrand sank on April 1, 1865, it was rediscovered inside the boundaries of the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge buried, under 30 feet of soil. Supervised by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service, the Bertrand site was excavated in 1968 and 1969. More than 250,000 artifacts were uncovered, leaving the wooden hull in the ground.

The site itself, 25WN14, and its associated cargo were placed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 24, 1969 under National Significance. The entire collection is curated at the refuge visitor center, with many items on display for the public. Many of items are very rarely found at archaeological sites such as wooden tools, textiles, leather objects and food stuffs and they go a long way to inform what Civil War-era life was like.

Midwest Chief of Refuges Charlie Blair was pleased to attend the event and show his support for the agency's preservation and

interpretation of this nationally significant collection. Museum Program Manager with the Department of Interior, Dr. Terry Childs and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Archaeologist Eugene Marino were also on hand to mark the occasion.

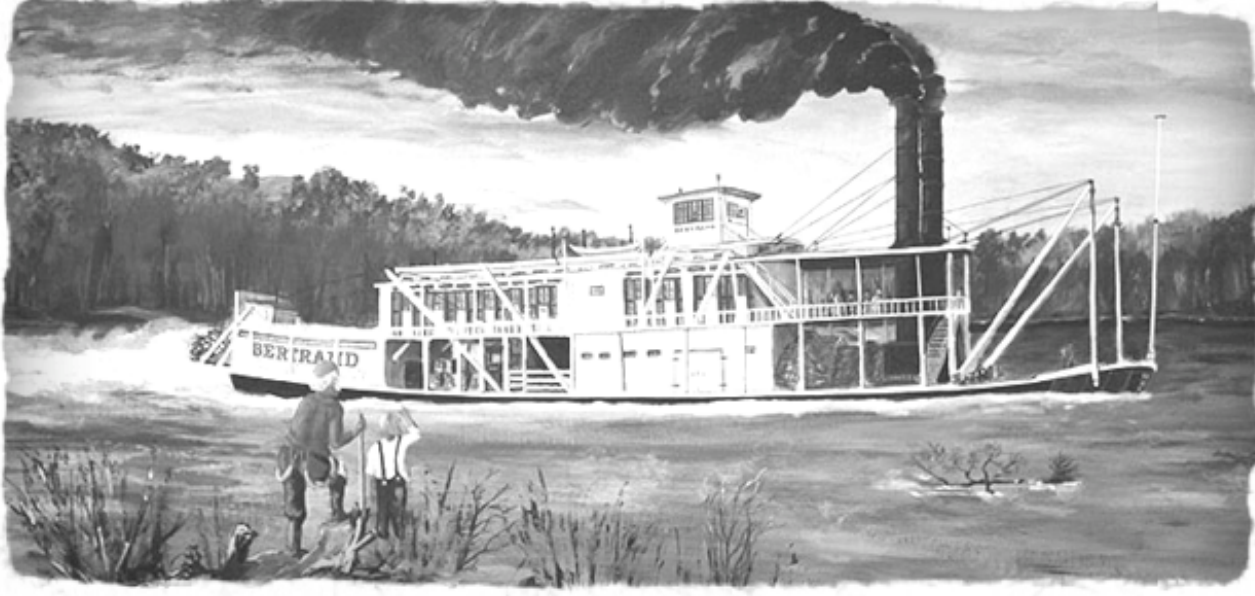
"The Bertrand is a time capsule and gives us a glimpse into what life was like during President Abraham Lincoln's time, a time when the Midwest was still very wild," remarked Blair.

"While the sinking of the Bertrand was seen as a sizable loss at the time, we have the opportunity today to see this wreck as a gift," continued Blair.

The artifacts in the collection help us make a personal connection to the people and place of that time period and that connection has a value that cannot be measured in dollars.

Many people think of guns and artillery when they hear "Civil-war-era," but most of this collection is made up of everyday objects, that people are familiar with in their daily lives.

Things like socks, slippers...even pickles! Attendees had the opportunity to hear from archaeologist and retired National Park Service Superintendent Ronald R. Switzer, who spoke about the early preservation of the Bertrand artifacts, as well as the thriving partnership between the



Steamboat Bertrand. Painting and article reprinted with permission by USFWS.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service, two sister conservation agencies.

On the second day of the special events, Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center Conservation Specialist Megan Griffiths shared her experiences in conserving the metal objects in the Bertrand collection.

Prominent during the weekend was the Missouri River herself, an ever-changing force that made this all possible. The river created a resting place for all of this history and the stories that are wrapped up in these artifacts.

That same river, even though it has changed it's path over the years, threatened to reclaim the collection back in 2011, when spring flooding engulfed the area.

Thanks to the planning and sweat equity of dedicated refuge staff, students and other community partners the collection was evacuated and saved, for a second time. As with any operation of this magnitude, there were a lot of moving parts. Because of the professionalism and passion of all involved, the collection is still here to enjoy today. ❖



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Photo credit: ne150.org



## OUR HISTORY

Nebraska was granted statehood on March 1, 1867. The state will commemorate its Sesquicentennial beginning January 1, 2017, with a yearlong celebration involving a wide variety of programs and projects across the state. Planning for the Nebraska 150 Celebration began in 2012 when a group of active citizens from across the state formed the Friends of the Nebraska 150 Foundation. In 2014, the Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commission was established by the state Legislature and 17 members from across the state were appointed by the Governor to lead the initiative. In 2015, the Celebrating Nebraska Statehood Foundation was established to help coordinate efforts and direct everyone toward collective success.

## OUR MISSION AND GOALS

Our 150th birthday presents a unique opportunity in time to honor our heritage, celebrate our growth and plan for our future. We will commemorate this historic occasion and celebrate the great State of Nebraska and its diverse history and cultures by engaging, educating and inspiring our citizenry and leaving a legacy for future generations. We strive to create a celebration that will serve as a catalyst for a movement that goes beyond 2017 – a strategic initiative that promotes a spirit of pride,

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# TASTY RECAP

## and what's coming for Taste of Florence

by Mark Kresl



The 1st Annual Taste of Florence was held on September 11, 2016. Over 1100 people from every zip code in Omaha attended and were treated to fantastic food from 16 restaurants from Florence and the North Omaha areas. Over 10,000 samples of food were served. Guests were also treated to jazz music by the Matt Wallace Fusion Force as well as Omaha's finest Beatles tribute band "Come Together".

KFAB's Scott Voorhees served as Master of Ceremonies in an afternoon that honored the Black Professional Firefighters Association and the Ponca Volunteer Fire Department. There were also games and activities for kids. The day was finished off with a pumpkin carving contest with two surgeons squaring off against two local chefs. Omaha saw the very best that Florence has to offer that afternoon, as this was truly a community event with support and participation from local restaurants and volunteers from throughout our community. ❖



*Mark your calendar now!*

*Taste of Florence 2017, Sunday Sept 10, 2017, 1-5 p.m.*

*Florence Home Healthcare, 7915 N 30th St.*

*This year will feature over 20 restaurants, music by "Come Together," activities and games for kids. Pumpkin carving contest will round out the afternoon and promises to be fun for all.*

*Visit [tasteofflorence.net](http://tasteofflorence.net) for details and tickets.*

*Friendly, local, delicious*

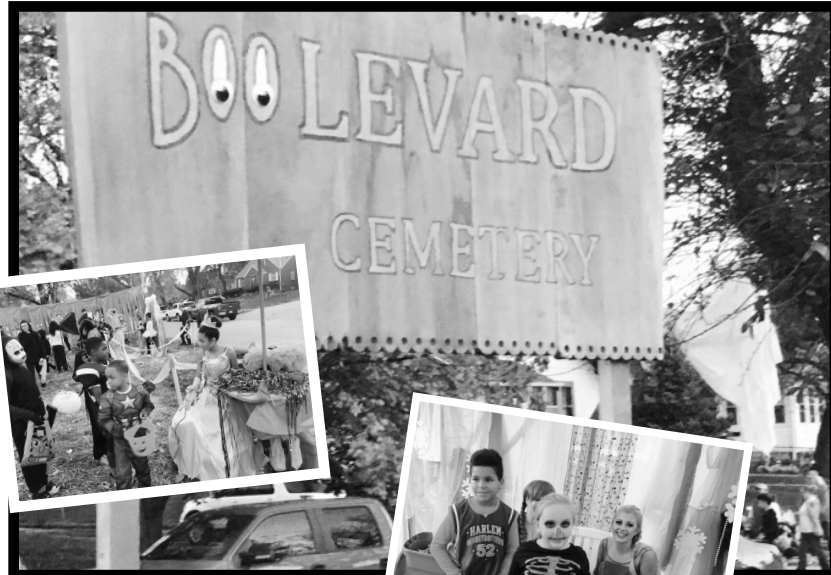
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## Trick or Treat on the Boulevard 2016 ... a recap

Sponsored by the Minne Lusa Neighborhood Association, the 2016 Trick or Treat on the Boulevard event this past October drew 2000-some kids. All those big grass islands along Minne Lusa Boulevard were decked to nines in an amazing array of themes including Walt Disney's "Frozen," -- which was sponsored by the Earlywine family, longtime Florence/Minne Lusa residents -- and many others. What an awesome community! Thank you to the Minne Lusa House and everyone who made it so fun and successful! ❖



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# Florence Firemen's Annual Fund Raiser

by Vern Hauger

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The Fund Raiser was held on the first Friday and Saturday in September. Friday was a busy day, but it was a fun day. Anyone wishing to do so could have someone put in jail for a five cent fee. A warrant was issued for the party. They

Booth were brought in. Games were set up for all ages. There was Bingo and Horseshoes. They had foot races, three-legged races, sack races, fat men's races, and canoe races on the river. There were egg tossing games, and a kissing booth. For

it, and it was delicious.

After dinner, the annual water fight between the Omaha firemen and the Florence firemen was held. Two horse drawn fire engines were lined up in the center of the North Market Square. When



Photo credit: Vern & Myrta Hauger. Original Florence Fire House and Fire Department.

were arrested and put in jail where they stayed until one dollar was paid for their release. If anyone was not released by 7:00 P.M. the Mayor would pardon them. No one had ever needed to be pardoned. All of the city fathers and most of the businessmen spent some part of the day in jail as did some of their wives. The money went for a good cause: "New equipment for the Firemen."

Saturday's events took place in the North Market Square. A steam powered Carrousel with a Calliope, and a Dunkin

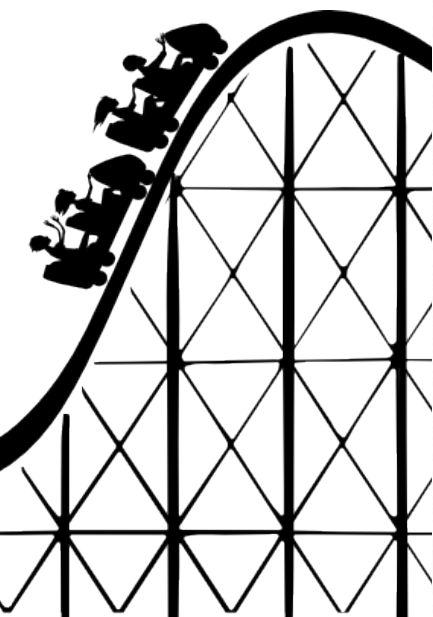
only five cents you could get a kiss on the cheek or forehead from a pretty young lady. There was the tug-of-war contest. They had a greased pig contest for the boys. The Firemen and their families with the help of friends were in charge of the events; ribbons and Certificates were awarded to the winners.

The Biggest fund raiser and the main attraction for most of the people was the BBQ Beef dinner. The meat was pit cooked. It had been cooking in the ground just over twelve hours when they removed

a shot was fired the two teams of firemen blasted each other with their fire hoses. The firemen wore their protective gear so they did not get very wet, but by the time one team was able to overrun the other team the crowd was soaked, but they loved it. The people did not want to leave, but the farmers had chores to do so they were the first to leave. The town crowd began to thin out, and soon the people were gone. This was one event the people of Florence always attended, and they looked forward to going again the next year. ❖

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# Neighborhoods Where History Matters

## 2017 NUSA: Touring Historic Florence & Minne Luse

by Linda Meigs, Bill Morris, Joan Allen and Nancy Smith



As Omaha hosts "Neighborhoods USA" from May 24-27 -- conference that celebrates neighborhoods as the building blocks of every city in our nation -- this is our chance for Florence and Minne Lusa to shine!

We have teamed up to host a "Neighborhood Pride Tour" on May 26. We'll share our unique history and hospitality on a tour designed to educate, entertain and feed a busload of folks from across the country as well as locals who have never been So-Far-North in Omaha.

We will see Tom Wood's restored Prohibition-era home; follow our beloved boulevards to Miller Park, Omaha's first golf course; visit Minne Lusa House, a creative community hub opened and operated by neighbors; and explore the historic Florence Mill, home of the Winter Quarters Mill Museum, ArtLoft Gallery, and Sunday Farmers Market. The evening ends with a meal contributed by generous community donors at No More Empty Pots and tour their innovative business-incubator and collaborative food-hub.

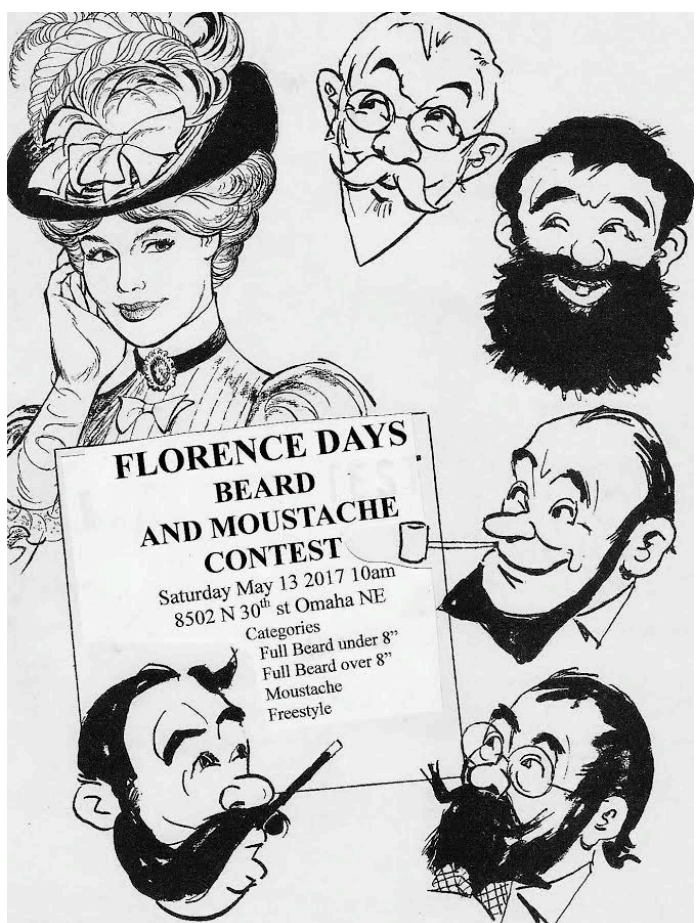
Our tour will discover the rich history of what was once an independent town between two Frontier Forts with the 1856 Wildcat Bank, Mormon Trail Center, Pioneer Cemetery and Fort Omaha.

The Minne Lusa/Florence tour is about community, history, fresh ideas and revitalization... topped with plenty of local flavor! ❖

### Please help! "Clean-up & Shine Weekend" May 19 & 20:

Meet and pick up supplies at Florence Park Friday, May 19 between 9 am & 4 pm and Saturday, May 20 from 1:30 - 4 pm.

*Thank you!*



# MOUSTACHE MAN

by Keith Hauger

Many years ago Florence held yearly beard contests during their Pioneer Days. Over the past few years, I have been involved with the Omaha Facial Hair Society and have rediscovered the fun you can have at beard contests.

Therefore, I decided to bring it back this year for Florence Days. If you or someone you know, has a beard or moustache of any kind this is your chance to show it off.

Come out and join in the fun and enter in one of the following categories:

There will be four categories Full Beard under 8 inches, Full Beard over 8 inches, Moustache and Freestyle.

So join us at 10:00 AM, May 13 next to Florence Bank before the parade. ❖

There is no place like this place anywhere near this place ... so it must be the place!

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## HERE'S A BLAST FROM THE PAST



"There's Willard Scott circa 1963-ish in a one of his very first television appearances as Ronald McDonald."

Source: Nerdist.com

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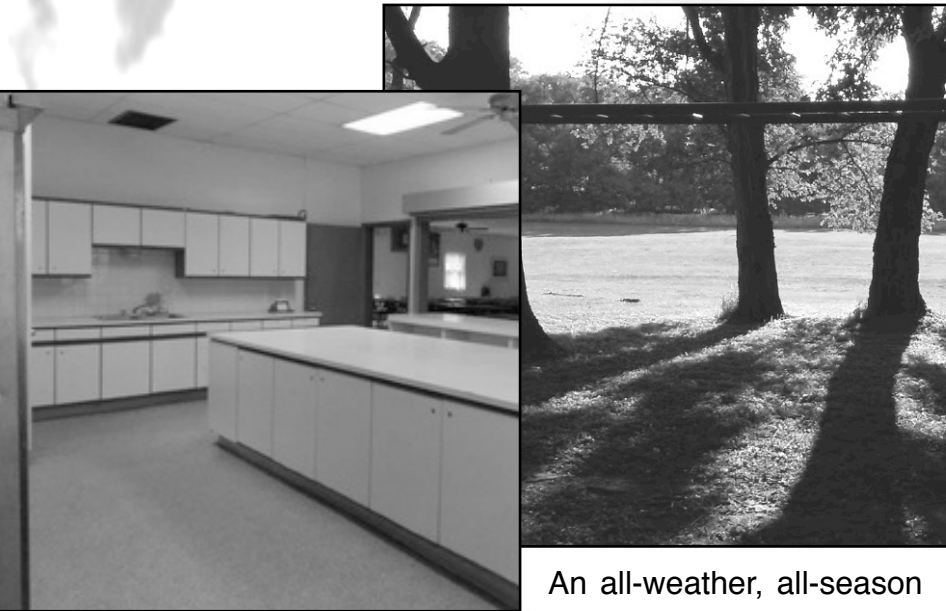
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# Welcome to Danish Vennelyst Park

by Arnette Skyles

Located on 20 wooded acres, the Danish Vennelyst Park is a private park in a beautiful setting with lush trees and open areas, on the north edge of Florence. Established in 1934 by men of Danish descent, the park and all-season pavilion now serve as a wonderful place for parties, weddings, anniversaries and family reunions. Children have ample space to run and play without street traffic. The park offers options to play ball, horseshoes, volleyball, fly kites and drones. Kids love the playground.



An all-weather, all-season pavilion, Vennelyst Park

provides an air conditioned and heated facility that can accommodate up to 200 people. Renters will find all they need for any event -- a stove, refrigerator, restrooms, a service and bar area, tables and chairs for indoors, picnic tables and patio area for outdoor events.

Established more than 80 years ago to honor and celebrate Americans of Danish heritage, the Danish American Club meets at Vennelyst Park every fourth Tuesday of the month from March through December. Danes love to eat and we always provide something yummy at the meeting along with an interesting program. ❖

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# Beautification of the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor

by Joan Allen, Northern Lights Garden Club

Northern Lights Garden Club (NLGC) has made one of its missions the beautification of Florence. Since 2009 NLGC has maintained the History Garden on the 8500 block of 30<sup>th</sup> street, planting flowers common to Florence's early days. As part of the 30<sup>th</sup> street redevelopment and revitalization projects of 2012 and 2015, six bioretention gardens and twenty-four garden beds were constructed. One tree per bed was planted, common hackberry, American hornbeam, or serviceberry. Most of the beds were established with bedding plants but were soon overgrown with weeds due to lack of care.

During the summer of 2015, NLGC and Florence Futures Foundation members spear headed an effort to turn the neglected garden beds---now bindweed beds--- into colorful and attractive flower beds, volunteering untold hours and effort. (We hope you have noticed our effort. You can spot us in our neon green T-shirts.) Many of the beds are maintained by the businesses, some by families in the community and many are orphans looking for a kind soul to adopt them.

In preparation for a May 26, NUSA Neighborhood Pride Tour of our community (see NUSA article), NLGC is organizing a Florence/Miller Park neighborhood clean-up day for May 20-21. Our goal is to beautify the 30<sup>th</sup> street corridor from Miller Park to McKinley. We hope the entire community will participate. Great things are happening in our area. We want to show our pride!

NLGC was established in 1993 and is affiliated with Omaha Council of Garden Clubs. Meetings begin at 7PM on the third Tuesday of the month (exception of no meeting during December and January) at our new location at the Mormon Trail Center, 3215 State Street in Omaha. Our June 20<sup>th</sup> program will be a garden walk. We welcome visitors and new members.

For information on NLGC, adopting a bed on 30<sup>th</sup> street or for volunteering opportunities call Joan Allen at 402-350-3300 or joanLallen@gmail.com. ❖



Left to Right: Dorothy Polan, Lucy Burrell, Mary Cleasby-Grimit, Paige Wagner, Lowen Kruse, Deb Knight, Joan Allen (front), Liz Backus, Linda Meigs, Connie Rose. These lovely volunteers represent Omaha Public Library's Florence Branch, North Omaha Commercial Club, Kiwanis Club of Florence, Florence Historical Foundation, Northern Lights Garden Club, Florence Futures Foundation, North Omaha Kiwanis and friends.



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Photo credit: Nebraska Historical Society

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# Florence, Proud Rich History

and significant influence on Nebraska's early history *by Myrta Hauger*

The City of Florence played an important role in the in the early history of Nebraska. At one time it was in contention to become the Capitol. The idea for a new town being built on the former site of the abandoned Mormon Winter Quarters came from Colonel Peter A. Sarpy, the American Fur Company's trader at Bellevue. He urged James C. Mitchell of Council Bluffs to consider buying the land and building a new town there. Mitchell thought it over and determined it would be a good investment. He bought the land, and had it surveyed. In the fall of 1853 the town was laid out, and resettlement began. Mitchell named the town Florence in honor of his wife's niece Miss Florence Kilbourn.

Other people became interested in laying out the village, and the Florence Land Company was organized promoting the project. In the fall of 1854 the town was resurveyed by L.F. Wagner a surveyor, and platted into 270 blocks. Buildings were erected, and Florence had a bright outlook. About this time The Florence bank was established by J.M. Parker, a member of the Florence Land Company. The Mississippi & Missouri Railroad was



"Winter Quarters" public domain art by C.C.A. Christensen.

expected to cross the river from Iowa to Florence. The first survey had been made, however, the railroad never got there. The route was changed to Council Bluffs. The Florence

Bridge Company was organized; its goal was to build a bridge between Florence and Iowa. The Mormon Bridge was built at the site in 1953.

In 1856 the Florence town company was formed. The Banking House of Cook,

Sargent & Parker, of Davenport Iowa was interested in it. Due to their efforts the town which had been chartered as a city that year continued to grow quite rapidly. During the winter of 1857-1858 nearly every banking house in the country went under during the memorable financial crises of that period, and then the town began to go backwards. A newspaper called the Courier was published in 1857, but it was short lived, and went under. The City of Florence had been larger than Omaha during this time. In 1883, ex-Mayor Deland stated he remembered the time when Florence was a large place, and there was almost as much difference between Florence and Omaha as there is now between Omaha and Florence. ❖

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# Steamboat Acomin' by Vern Hauger



The steamboat played a very important role during the time of our western expansion. The Missouri river from 1819-1890 was the most important single means of entry to the land west of the Mississippi river. The first time a steamboat was used in the Missouri river was in 1819. The little steamer "Independence" turned into the Missouri river, and began the 250 mile trip upstream to the village of Chariton where it delivered its cargo. This was quite the feat. In those days the river was forever changing its course. Sandbars appeared and disappeared as the channel dictated. Snags were abundant. Floating trees and unknown hazards lay in waiting just below the surface of the muddy Missouri.

Many of the early steamboats that followed the "Independence's" lead in steaming up the Missouri sank, broke down or blew up. An astonishing 300 boats were lost during the Missouri Steamboat era.

A Missouri steamboat would last about eight years before it had to be replaced. The new boats were wider, had more powerful engines, rode higher in the water, and could carry more weight. Most of the Missouri river pilots were now St. Louis

Frenchmen who had learned the river in a Keelboat. They could read the river, and were very good at what they did. In 1832 the steamers had reached what is now North Dakota. Most of the traffic was still in the lower Missouri. Their cargo consisted of freight and passengers.

In 1837 the St. Peters while in route to Fort Union from St. Louis touched off an epidemic of smallpox that infected nearly every tribe from the Platte to the Rockies. Some 15,000 Northern Plains Indians died. In 1859 a true Missouri steamboat was built. It could carry 350 tons. With a draw of only 31 inches it was able to maneuver in most waters. A state of uneasy cooperation existed between the Missouri steamboat people and the railroads. In 1865 the steamboats were lined up at the Omaha docks waiting to unload supplies used in building the first stretch of the Union Pacific Railroad. By 1870 it was clear that the rivermen were on the defensive against the railroads. ❖



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# Community Alive & Well at Minne Lusa House

by Joan John

For those of us old enough to remember front porches and knowing our neighbors, it is refreshing to see neighborhoods reviving tradition. Minne Lusa House is one of the best examples thanks to two women with a dream – a dream of creating an environment where neighbors would again get to know each other.

Minne Lusa residents and friends Sharon Olson (retired phone company employee) and Beth Richards (her retired mail carrier) began their search for a location to build their dream on.

The Minne Lusa neighborhood is an example of a substantial, affordable single-family residential development within the city limits that was platted, developed and constructed between 1915 and 1941. The neighborhood is filled with bungalows and other styles that were popular in the era... most with front porches.

Beth and Sharon purchased a bungalow-style house with their own money and began the project of renovation. In addition to offering a gathering place for neighbors, their goal was to try to change the reputation for crime in North Omaha. They opened the doors to the Minne Lusa House at 2737 Mary Street in May of

2011 and Saturday mornings have been a favorite gathering place for neighbors, friends and visitors from near and far.

Frequent visitors include former Minne Lusa residents (and families of those whose history includes relatives with stories of the great neighborhood they grew up in). Minne Lusa is drawing new neighbors to their area from surrounding areas because of their reputation for affordable housing in a nice neighborhood that cares.

You are welcome at the Minne Lusa House any Saturday morning between nine and noon to have a cup of coffee, some of Sharon's delicious cooking, lots of friendship and a true sense of neighborliness. I promise that even if this is your first time, it will not be your last.

Because of the camaraderie in the Minne Lusa Neighborhood, lots of residents came together to push for recognition of their neighborhood as a Residential Historic District and it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014. Y'all come.

You have to see it to believe it. ❖



Top photo: Front porch neighborliness lives at Minne Lusa House Lower photo: Beth Richards (front) & Sharon Olson Teach Canning Classes

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Florence & Minne Lusa have teamed up to help build stronger communities through our First Annual Neighborhood Pride Tour. See page 15 for details.

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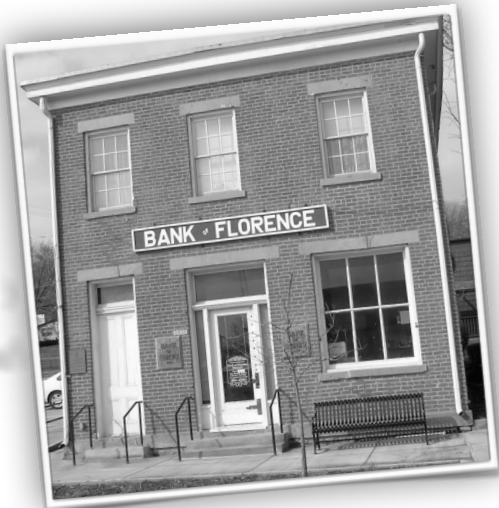
goes to all the volunteers — React Team, Boy Scout Troop 20, Omaha Police Department, the Florence Historical Foundation Board and its active members, the Shriners and all the parade entrants for making this year's 2017 NEBRASKA – 150 YEARS! success! Thanks also go to our wonderful advertisers, the Kiwanis Club of Florence, and the FD Newspaper Committee for their work getting this paper to press — and on schedule!

Sincerest Gratitude from *Dick Brown*  
Chairman, 2017 Florence Days Parade & Newspaper



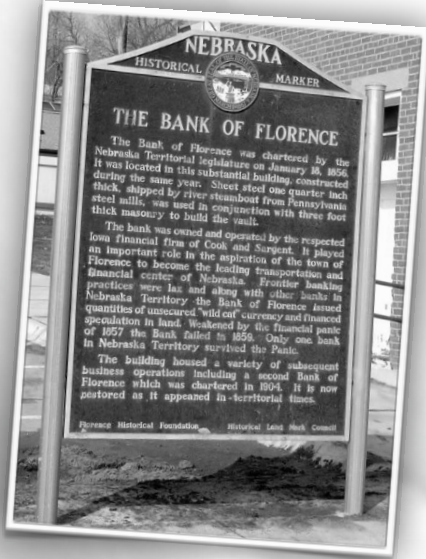
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HISTORIC DISTRICT

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[millerparkminnelusa.com](http://millerparkminnelusa.com)

\*Citizen Patrol Meeting at 6:30 p.m.



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