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Memorial Day Kick-off for WanderNebraska *Local Historical Organizations Have A Lot To Offer*

LINCOLN, Nebr. (May 30, 2022) – When the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation (NSHSF) kicked off its inaugural grants program for local museums, historical societies, and libraries in 2021 it unearthed some of the treasured stories, records and artifacts maintained by these largely rural organizations. To promote their work, the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation has released a new statewide travel adventure program, aimed at increasing awareness of what is found in the local sites along backroads and in communities that are often overlooked by the typical tourist. Every organization that was funded from Foundation’s Statewide Grants Program in 2021 was given the opportunity to participate.

Twenty-seven locations are being promoted in a special “heritage” tour of the state, called WanderNebraska, that encourages travel to some of these hidden places. Holders of the WanderNebraska tour booklet will be eligible for prizes, depending on how many places are stamped by the participating organizations. For those that prefer day trips or weekend adventures, each entry includes nearby historical attractions mapped by regions of the state.

“Over 700 brochures were requested within weeks of the announcement,” said Sue Quambusch, coordinator of special projects for the Foundation. “We are thrilled with the level of interest in this program and hope that many people are able to visit and learn more about Nebraska’s history.”

For a glimpse at what you might find on the WanderNebraska tour, here are two amazing stories of survivors of the Titanic.

When the great ocean liner Titanic sank in 1912, over 1,503 lives were lost. But fate was with two immigrants who survived and reached their destinations in Nebraska. When Miria Guftassen left her native Sweden to take a job as a domestic servant to a family in Oakdale, Nebraska she took along a wooden trunk built by her brother. It held all her possessions, including her prized embroidered dress. As she was boarding the ship, she was told that there were no more accommodations for passengers and was turned away. Miria continued her trip and arrived safely later that year. Today, the Swedish Heritage Museum in Oakland proudly displays her dress.

Another Swedish immigrant, Carl O. Johnson, was travelling to Swedeburg, Nebraska where he was going to join his brother. He held an "Inspection Card" given to immigrants and steerage passengers when he boarded the liner at Southampton, England. On the evening of the tragedy, all the passengers were told to go to the upper deck. Johnson and three friends went to the top deck. They were told that they could not board the last lifeboat that was being released. They were plunged into the cold water of the North Atlantic. When they emerged, they found a large door to cling to. The lifeboat they attempted to board, however, went down with the liner. "Titanic" Johnson became a contractor in Wahoo. A copy of his card is on display at the Saunders County Museum in Wahoo. His card has been verified by the Titanic Historical Society for authenticity. Given its substantial value, the original is safely secured at another location.

"Local communities are proud of their heritage, and their communities' contributions to our shared history. They are eager to demonstrate how they are preserving their written history, artifacts, and special collections," said Leslie Fattig, Executive Director at NSHSF. "The twenty-seven organizations participating in the WanderNebraska program are working hard to preserve the history of our state and they look forward to sharing these stories with many more summer visitors."

A major funder of this year's tour was the Nebraska Lottery. The tour will run through Labor Day.

To receive the 2022 WanderNebraska booklet or if you have questions about the program, visit <https://www.nshsf.org/projects/wandernebraska/>

About the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation

Now in its 80th year, the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation raises money in support of the cause of history, including projects of History Nebraska, the state agency formerly known as the Nebraska State Historical Society. The Foundation solicits funds and support from individuals and organizations across the state and beyond, who value Nebraska's unique heritage and who wish to play a personal role in ensuring that Nebraska's history will be accessible to future generations.

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