

NEBRASKA HUMANITIES

February 2004

Volume XIII



*“Mato-Tope, a Mandan Chief,” by Karl Bodmer.
Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.*

featuring
“Through Native Eyes: Karl Bodmer’s Other America”
by James P. Ronda

and including
The 2003 NHC Annual Report



When we ask who we are and what our lives ought to mean, we are using the humanities. The Nebraska Humanities Council enhances the quality of life in communities across our state through programs that study the human race, its achievements, its creations, its dreams and aspirations, its failures and triumphs. The NHC promotes a better understanding of Nebraska—who we are and where we have been—to build a better future.

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Contents

Volume XIII

February 2004

HUMANITIES BRING NEW PERSPECTIVE by Kit Dimon	2
THROUGH NATIVE EYES: KARL BODMER'S OTHER AMERICA by James P. Ronda	4
REMEMBER YESTERDAY AND CHANGE TOMORROW by Bob Wickersham	11
30 YEARS CULTIVATING OUR HISTORY AND CULTURE	12
GOVERNOR'S LECTURE BENEFIT PHOTOGRAPHS	14
NEBRASKA HUMANITIES COUNCIL 2003 ANNUAL REPORT by Jane Renner Hood	16
DONORS TO THE NEBRASKA HUMANITIES COUNCIL IN 2003	18



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Photo and Art Credits:

Reproductions of artworks by Karl Bodmer (1809-1893) are used on the cover and to illustrate "Through Native Eyes: Karl Bodmer's Other America," a lecture by James P. Ronda that begins on page 4. The cover art is "Mato-Tope, a Mandan Chief." On page 6 is "Makuie-Poka, Piegan Blackfoot Man ('Child of the Wolf')." On page 7 is "Chan-Cha-Uia-Teuin, Teton Sioux Woman ('Woman of the Crow Nation')." On page 8 is "Addih-Hiddisch, Hidatsa Chief ('Maker of Roads')." All are courtesy of the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. The photo of Selene Phillips as Sacagawea on page 2 is by Peter Beeson. The photo of "Yesterday's Tomorrows" book cover on page 3 is an NHC file photo. The photo of the "By the People" discussion on page 3 is courtesy Nebraska Public Television. The photo of James P. Ronda at the Joslyn Art Museum on page 4 is by Peter Beeson. The photo of Ronda on page 10 is courtesy of James P. Ronda. Photos of the NHC benefit on pages 14-15 are by Daniel Flanigan.

Humanities bring new perspective

By Kit Dimon, Chair, Nebraska Humanities Council

In the 2002 Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Thomas Friedman called the humanities the very "bricks of civilization." In a January 2003 speech at Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha,

James Ronda said that "changing the angle of vision changes everything," that sometimes we need "fresh eyes to see."

Those thoughts, I think, encompass what the humanities do for civilization, and why they are so important. During the 30 years of programming that the Nebraska Humanities Council has helped bring to Nebraska, the "bricks of civilization" have given Nebraskans "fresh eyes" with which to see.

I first began to understand the power of the public humanities

projects to provide "fresh eyes" when I listened to an NHC program about how whole communities came together over projects in their towns. For instance, in Cozad, the Smithsonian project sponsored by the NHC and called "Produce for Victory" became a community-wide event.

The project's posters showed war efforts at home, spurring citizens to bring their own

pictures and memorabilia from the war efforts to "Produce for Victory" community events. Several people told of collecting milkweed from pods to stuff pillows for the soldiers. Others brought in their war buttons, and one veteran became so caught up in the stories that he was, for the first time since the war, able to talk about his war experiences.

Under the big blue-and-white-striped Chautauqua tent, scholars portraying members of Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery have shown us several views of the trek west that helped open up our country. We have asked Sacagawea about childbirth on the Plains and medicine available to the corps, as well as that used by Native Americans. William Clark told us about the weapons the corps carried, how they navigated by the stars, rarely off more than a few feet. Other members were able to tell us about the interaction between the corps and the various Native American tribes and about how the corps ate, kept warm and survived.

Historic barns pictured in the "Barn Again" program have evoked rich memories and histories from the members of those communities.

In another project, Gering Middle School students developed a website research and store information about the history of their community. They interviewed senior citizens and others, collecting stories and pictures and amassing histories around which they can continue to build community pride.

High school seniors have studied ethics in U.S. foreign policy planning through Capitol Forum. They have chosen how they might



In the Great Plains Chautauqua, Selene Phillips portrays Sacagawea, a Shoshone Indian who was the only woman with Lewis and Clark.

vote in future foreign policy scenarios, and they have met and questioned their U.S. Congressmen on a variety of current issues. Their thank-you letters underscore their growing realization of the importance of using their vote to affect change.

Would-be writers of all ages have had chances to learn from Nebraska authors and other writers, and have honed their skills at a variety of writers' workshops. Cowboys have entertained us with tales of the West preserved in cowboy poetry. Native Americans have come together to celebrate their histories and plan for the future.

The NHC has collaborated with NETV over the years to bring a variety of programs to Nebraska on our history and culture, including "Next Exit," "If These Walls Could Speak" and "Bethsaida."



"Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future" toured Nebraska in 2003.

Families have enjoyed picnics outside while listening to Shakespeare in a lovely setting at Elmwood Park in Omaha.

With council grants, El Museo Latino in Omaha has brought exhibits on pottery from Mata Ortiz, Mexico, photography and woven arts from South America, and speakers from all over Latin America. The Nebraska State Historical Society and the NHC have collaborated on numerous projects, includ-



Nebraska Public Television tapes "By the People" discussion.

ing the recent Smithsonian touring exhibit "Yesterday's Tomorrows," which traveled to six communities across the state.

Ronda has truly helped me to view "with fresh eyes" the Bodmer paintings at the Joslyn by recalling all the influences that have been brought to bear over the years on the subjects of Bodmer's paintings—the Native Americans, the land, the buffalos, the hunters and the pioneers.

What if these wonderful paintings hadn't been preserved? What if President Jefferson hadn't insisted that Lewis and Clark make a record of everything on their Voyage of Discovery? And what if we didn't have historians, writers, painters, and photographers to help us preserve our history? What if we fail to emphasize the teaching of our history in our schools? What if we fail to learn from the past, to make educated, just and informed decisions about our future?

Our lives would be diminished. Please join the Nebraska Humanities Council in assuring that this does not happen in Nebraska. We look forward to working with you for another 30 years.



Through Native Eyes: Karl Bodmer's other America

Lecture delivered at Joslyn Art Museum,
Omaha, Nebraska, January 5, 2003

By James P. Ronda

This is a magnificent picture palace. We are surrounded here by the most marvelous images and objects, the creations of the human spirit and boundless imagination. Walking through the galleries there are discoveries to gladden the eye, brighten the spirit, and challenge the mind.



*James P. Ronda speaks at Joslyn Art Museum
in Omaha, January 5, 2003.*

Surrounded by all this visual wonder, I thought it would be good to do something dangerous—something that involved more words than images. At the risk of being sacrilegious, I am reminded of the biblical line, “in the beginning was the word”—the pictures came later. So, let’s talk about these powerful Karl Bodmer paintings without saying much about the artist himself.

Now, I don’t want to erase him—or Prince Maximilian for that matter—but I’d like to move the prince and the artist just a bit off center stage. We see so much through Bodmer’s eyes; let’s try to see through other eyes, perhaps even native eyes.

We all know that superb University of Nebraska Press book called “Karl Bodmer’s America.” Just for a moment let’s retile it, something like “Speaking Thunder’s America” or “Four Bears’ America.” Changing the angle of vision changes everything—and we might come to see with fresh eyes. Jazz musicians talk about having “big ears”; sometimes we need fresh eyes.

In every compelling work of art there is a story—perhaps several stories—that hovers over it or swirls around it. This seems especially true of those paintings or photographs we call “documentary.” We look at them and expect stories or messages from the past. Examples are everywhere. A Charlie Russell painting of Montana cowboys seems to say, “This is the way it really was in the days of the open range.” A photograph of the battleship Arizona on December 7 tells its own story of deception, tragedy and courage under fire.

We like to think that these images are doing the talking and we are just the listeners. But what really happens when we meet a Bodmer or a Catlin face to face is never quite so simple. Most often we are the ones who do the talking. We are the storytellers. We fit these faces and landscapes into the schemes and narratives of our own making.

So we look at the Bodmers and say something like, “These are reminders of a long-dead past” or, “These are just pretty pictures from some romantic Wild West” or, “The faces here are the faces of the victims in the American conquest of the West” or perhaps even, “These are the faces of my relatives.” But all of these are stories from us. It is as though we have appropriated these paintings—and the people and landscapes in them—and made them part of the furniture, the interior decoration of our lives.

Perhaps it is time to set these paintings free, to talk less about our stories and more about theirs, more about the people and landscapes in those paintings. Let’s ask what seems a simple question. What were the events, forces, individuals, technologies and diseases that shaped the worlds of northern Plains native people? What would Horned Rock or Distant Bear tell us about their worlds? Unless we ask that kind of question, these paintings will be just mirrors—reflecting us, our passions and obsessions. We need more windows and perhaps fewer mirrors.

Before we open the windows, we need to be clear about one central fact. What Lewis and Clark saw, what Bodmer and Maximilian saw was not some static, changeless world. The Native American

Perhaps it is time to set these paintings free, to talk less about our stories and more about theirs, more about the people and landscapes in those paintings.

West was not a pristine Garden of Eden, unimaginably remote and beyond the hand of change. Thomas Jefferson, Maximilian, and Bodmer thought that native people lived in what amounted to museum display cases. If you wanted to know what white, Euro-Americans were like in an earlier stage of social development, you could see that in the changeless Indian West.

But Jefferson and his successors were profoundly wrong. What Lewis and Clark found, what Bodmer and Maximilian experienced was a native world filled with change, some of it welcome and some terrifying in its frightful consequences. All up and down the great river Missouri native people knew all about hunger and privation, suffering and death. This was no Garden of Eden, no lost paradise to satisfy the fantasies of Euro-American intellectuals. Whether they fully grasped it or not, by the 1830s native people throughout the West were part of a wider world—and as Bob Dylan used to say, “the times they are a-changin’.”

The winds of change—from the 1730s to the 1830s they blew hard on the Missouri and across the Plains. And, as the ancient writer once said, “the wind blows where it wants to blow, and you hear it, but you can’t tell where it comes from, and where it’s going.” So here is the paradox—we look at these paintings and they seem like still lifes, moments frozen in some distant time. But the truth is that they are filled with change and stories about change. There is movement here, and sometimes even great chaos and confusion.

Let’s begin with motion. Think of the Missouri and the northern Plains as the Grand Central Station of the West. This is one of the western crossroads places. The people that Bodmer met and painted tell that story, the story of moving.

Continued next page

Consider “Child of the Wolf,” painted by Bodmer in August 1833. This young man was the son of a Kutenai father and a Blackfeet mother—and Child of the Wolf’s Kutenai father had become a prominent Blackfeet chief. Consider “Woman of the Crow Nation,” painted by Bodmer at Fort Pierre on June 1, 1833. This Crow woman was now living with the Teton Sioux. These are just two emblems of motion.

Pause and think about what the century from the



Makuie-Poka, Piegan Blackfeet Man (“Child of the Wolf”). Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska; Gift of Enron Art Foundation.

1730s to the 1830s witnessed in the movement of human actors across the Great Plains stage—the Lakota Sioux expanding steadily from east to west; the shifting locations of Arikara, Mandan and Hidatsa village farmers; the trading visits to those village farmers made by Assiniboine, Cheyenne, Arapahoe and Crow traders; the raiding adventures made by Hidatsas, including the one that scooped up the young woman who became Sacagawea. Then add in the European traders coming down from Canada and up from St. Louis.

What was behind all this motion? Look closely at the paintings; the clues are everywhere. First, it was business. We think about international trade and the global marketplace as uniquely modern—something that emerges in the last century and a half. But globalization began long before container ships, express air delivery and the Internet. So much of the motion on the Missouri was about trade. Look at the beads, the shells, the guns, the silver jewelry, the cosmetics, the hides in the Bodmer paintings. They remind us that native peoples on the Plains were part of a vast trading system that stretched from Western Europe to China. Think of it as a great circle of hands—buffalo robes exchanged for English-made guns;

Mandan corn traded for fancy Crow leather work; horses offered in return for vermilion face paint from China; beaver pelts handed over for shells from Long Island.

Business set people in motion; so did war and the raids that shaped so much of male life on the Plains. And there was visiting. Over and over again in the historical record there are stories of native people making long journeys to visit distant friends and relatives. Perhaps the great American vacation is not so new after all.

The point is a simple one, but easy to miss. What Bodmer froze on paper was a world in motion and a world shaped by motion. Movement changes things. No traveler ever returns from a journey untouched in some way. Look carefully at the people in these paintings. Like us they were travelers; their comings and goings every bit as filled with consequence as any of ours. So if we look at these paintings with knowing eyes, we can see a world in motion.

But there is something else here, something that might catch your eye and reveal a second truth about a century of change. We all know how things, objects, stuff can change our lives. The examples are everywhere: Cell phones, computers, CD and DVD players, to say nothing of television, air conditioning and the electric light. We love these things. They change our lives, even if some of us still have trouble programming a VCR. Bodmer and Maximilian walked into a Native American world filled with the objects of change.

Look at the paintings, and what do you see? Things, stuff from the outside world, the wider world. European-manufactured goods—especially guns, powder, knives, kettles and awls—had been part of Northern Plains life even before the 1730s. One French explorer writing in the 1730s reported that Assiniboine merchants were regularly bringing those kinds of goods to Mandan and Hidatsa consumers. Over the next half century what began as a trickle became a flood. By the time Lewis and Clark arrived at spend the winter of 1804-5 at Fort Mandan, Indians on the Missouri knew all about iron axes, glass beads, and shiny mirrors.

Some of those objects of change were luxuries, and Bodmer drew the likenesses of many native people decked out in fashion finery from all over the world. Perhaps the best examples are the stunning portraits of Eagle's Beak, a Mandan dandy, or the Hidatsa chief Maker of Roads. They tell us stories about prosperity, pride, and even some ostentatious showing-off.

Perhaps more important than these fancy fashions were the objects that had become not luxuries but necessities. By the late 1790s, thanks to suppliers from Canada and St. Louis, native people on the Missouri were using European iron, brass and textile goods as part of everyday life. Archaeological evidence reveals an astounding variety of objects—everything from iron arrow points and brass bracelets to heavy butcher knives and gun parts.

But what about the consequences of those goods in the lives of the people seen by Lewis and Clark and by Bodmer and Maximilian? Objects—especially those that connect quickly to daily life—do change our lives. Reflecting on that question some 30 years before Bodmer and Maximilian, Meriwether Lewis believed that some Indians imputed spirit power to European-made objects. Lewis guessed that some Indians considered white traders as “the most powerful persons in the nation.”

There is little doubt that some Indians considered some objects as carrying special, life-altering power, whether for good or ill. In one interesting case, a Cheyenne chief refused to accept an American peace medal from William Clark, fearing that it might possess the ability to do him great harm. But as manufactured goods from distant places became more common, the medicine seemed to wear off. Bodmer and Maximilian met native people who treated things from Philadelphia or Venice or Sheffield as the stuff of everyday life, the daily ordinary.

And perhaps that is just the point. Bodmer shows us that these things had become part of routine. The story here might be: “We found these things useful and after the wonder and the strangeness wore off, they became just another object.” While

the growing dependence on the products of the Industrial Revolution was a fact of life on the Missouri, it is also clear that native people were quick not just to adopt but also adapt European objects to their own needs.

Take, for example, sewing thimbles. Sewing thimbles were a common item in the fur and hide trade. But there were certainly more thimbles than nimble fingers to use them. Indians quickly realized that thimbles had other uses. They could be pierced at the top and made into pendant earrings. And what about those trade guns once they were broken and beyond repair? Burned out gun barrels were often salvaged, one end pounded flat, and made into useful hide scrapers.

But perhaps the most interesting story of one object being transformed into another comes from the Lewis and Clark years. When Jefferson's travelers went up the Missouri they carried along two hand-operated corn mills. One was destined for the Arikaras, the other as a gift to the Mandans. Several Mandans properly accepted the grinder but soon found other uses for it. After all, Mandan women could grind corn much more efficiently than this strange gizmo.

So the Mandans promptly took it apart. When a Canadian trader saw it several years later, the grinder was no longer recognizable. It had crossed the cultural divide. Mandans had salvaged the valuable iron parts, employing one large piece as a pounder for making grease from buffalo bones. There is a little bit of Frank Lloyd Wright here with his “form follows function.” The form of the grinder changed to fit the function of getting grease from bones.



Chan-Cha-Uia-Teuin, Teton Sioux Woman (“Woman of the Crow Nation”). Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska; Gift of Enron Art Foundation.

Continued next page

So the stories here are all about motion and the objects of change. And to that we might add a third set of narratives, a third collection of stories. These stories are all about conflict—imperial conflict—the rivalry of nations and empires. The history of the West can be told as a story about empires in collision. Spain, France, England, Russia, the United States and dozens of native nations all fought for imperial domain in the West. And the emblems of that struggle are everywhere in the Bodmer paintings.



Addih-Hiddisch, Hidatsa Chief ("Maker of Roads"). Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska; Gift of Enron Art Foundation.

You can see those emblems most vividly in the presidential peace medals that hang around the necks of powerful chiefs and prominent warriors. Look at the portrait of the Hidatsa chief Maker of Roads. He wears a peace medal and on his hat is an American military badge. American diplomats probably thought that those emblems made him a junior partner in the American empire; he surely thought about them as signs of his own status and power.

Flags, medals, and the ambitions of great powers drew native people into struggles beyond their control and with consequences unforeseen by anyone. And as Bodmer and Maximilian learned, the imperial tug-of-war was by no means over. The great fur trading companies—the American Fur Company and the Hudson's Bay Company—continued the imperial fight in the West, waging a shadow war that would not end until the 1840s.

So far we've been thinking about things that are in some way or another visible, things that Bodmer could illustrate in portraits of people, animals and landscapes. But nothing so completely dominated the century from the 1730s to the 1830s on the

Plains and along the Missouri as the invisible hand of disease. Most of us know something about the horrific pandemic of 1837 that devastated the earth lodge people. But that catastrophe was just the terrible conclusion to a whole history of contagious diseases that roared up the Missouri a century before Bodmer and Maximilian.

Nothing spread change more rapidly than epidemic disease. Small pox in North America is a powerful case in point. The disease not only killed millions of native people but it killed particular parts of the Indian population. Variola major—the most deadly kind of small pox—attacks elderly folks, children and pregnant women. That means that this disease destroyed links to the past and wiped out the future. And the disease had a spiritual dimension as well. So much Native American ritual and ceremony centered on healing. But here was a disease that resisted all traditional cures. Perhaps, thought some, the old ways no longer have power. Perhaps we need to find a new way. Small pox killed not only the body but the spirit, as well.

From the 1730s on, everywhere you looked on the Plains and along the river you could see or hear or even feel the ways that small pox and other contagious diseases had transformed the human landscape. On the Missouri in what is now South Dakota, Arikara villages suffered the destructive effects of one epidemic after another.

Anyone traveling the Missouri would have agreed with William Clark that the Grand River Arikaras were a people "much reduced." Before the terrible pandemic of 1780-81 there were thousands of Arikaras living in dozens of villages along the Missouri. After the disease had burned itself out, 75 percent of the Arikaras were dead.

This depopulation had consequences for all to see and hear. When a French trader from St. Louis visited the Arikaras in 1795 he saw first hand the surprising political consequences of the epidemic. Struck by the intense factionalism and bickering that marked Arikara life, the visitor discovered villages filled with disease survivors. Arikara leaders—another trader called them "captains without com-

panies”—were constantly engaged in verbal squabbling and open discord. There were so many leaders, so few followers—captains without companies. The tensions were so great that some Arikaras moved south to live among the Pawnees while others headed north to join the Mandans.

At the end of the 18th century wave after wave of small pox and other contagious diseases swept up the Missouri. The general Western pandemic of 1780-81 was followed by disease assaults in the 1790s and 1801-2. As sedentary farmers living close to each other, the earth lodge people (Arikaras, Mandans and Hidatsas) were especially vulnerable to what epidemiologists call “virgin soil epidemics.” These were disease outbreaks among people without previous exposure to a particular illness and thus lacking sufficient immunities.

The modern world is no stranger to such catastrophic events. The reality of AIDS in Africa and China is on the evening television news, and after 9-11 this nation was haunted by the specter of anthrax and small pox. Few forces in human history are more powerful than disease and the fear of disease. It lurks around every corner, turning bright dreams of tomorrow into nightmares of the darkest future.

Say the word “landscape” and what comes to mind? Perhaps what dances in the imagination are Bodmer’s luminous Missouri River scenes, filled with graceful cottonwoods and herds of grazing buffalo—or maybe the stunning rock spires that reach skyward on the Upper Missouri, what Meriwether Lewis later called “scenes of visionary enchantment.” But there are other kinds of landscapes, the ones of human experience.

They are the ones we carry in our minds. They are the maps of everyday life that guide us through a maze of city streets or in a crowd as we sort out friends from mere acquaintances. Think of Bodmer landscapes not just as pictures of terrain—of rivers, hills and valleys. Instead, consider these paintings as depictions of a landscape of home.

This all reminds me of one of my favorite Nebraska writers, Wright Morris. His book “The

Few forces in human history are more powerful than disease and the fear of disease. It lurks around every corner, turning bright dreams of tomorrow into nightmares of the darkest future.

Home Place” is, I think, one of the most miraculous evocations ever written of Nebraska and our sense of place on the Plains. Do yourself a favor—get a copy of “The Home Place” and savor its wonders and mysteries. The Bodmer paintings are like that book. They ask us, “What was this home place like? Who lived here? What shaped them and kept them rooted in the home place?”

What I’d like to suggest is that this landscape of home, the one portrayed so vividly in the works of Karl Bodmer, was shaped by five things. Let’s take a page from one of my favorite Jack Nicholson movies and call them “Ronda’s Five Easy Pieces.”

First: Motion. In the modern world everything moves. The road, the highway, the automobile, the airport, and the airplane—these are the emblems of modern life. We are “on the road” with Jack Kerouac and “on the road again” with Willie Nelson. In so many profound ways our history has been shaped by motion, by the journeys that we have made bringing us all here from someplace to this place, the home place. The Bodmer paintings are a constant reminder that the Native American world of the Plains and the Missouri was in motion. This was indeed the Grand Central Station for much of the West.

Second: Things, the objects of change. Bodmer and Maximilian went in search of objects that represented what they thought was the traditional past. What they found was something else. Poncas, Mandans, Blackfeet and Crees had become part of a global market place. Bodmer and Maximilian were looking for something they imagined from the Stone Age. What they found were complex human beings living in a home place shaped by the products of the Industrial Revolution.

Continued next page

Third: Conflict, the clash of empires on the Plains. Stand on the banks of the Missouri anywhere from St. Louis or Omaha to Pierre or Bismarck. Watch the parade of warriors, diplomats and merchants. Look at their banners and flags, their painted war shirts and shields, their uniform coats and fancy hats. Here is the march of empire. Here are the ambitions of powerful leaders, peoples and nations on the make.

Fourth: Disease. Whether he fully appreciated it or not, Bodmer painted landscapes of homes shaped by disease and teetering on the brink of a disease holocaust. Human life hangs by a thread, and we are reminded of that each time we look at the portrait of Four Bears or some nameless child. Their future is our past. We know what lies in store for them. We know what will consume them, and that knowledge should keep us from the sins of pride and arrogance. We are them; they are us.

Fifth: Complexity and ambiguity. We look at these paintings and imagine we see simplicity, an untroubled golden age once upon a time in the West. But the lives and landscapes here are every bit as complicated as ours. There is much that separates us in 2003 from them in 1833 but we are bound together in one thing—we all face difficult choices in a world that was and is suspect terrain.

I began this talk by asking us to look at the Bodmer paintings not so much as mirrors reflecting us and our stories but more as windows into a past time. But no speaker ever plays completely fair with an audience, and so only now at the end of the talk comes the full disclosure.

The paintings are windows, openings into a past time. But as William Faulkner reminds us, the past is never dead. It is always with us, shoving its way into our present, and shaping our many futures. In a strange, almost paradoxical way the Bodmer paintings are also mirrors. What they reflect is our common humanity, our common struggles to lead decent, humane lives. They reflect our diversity, our variety, our complexity. These are the faces and landscapes of America.

The Bodmer paintings are also mirrors. What they reflect is our common humanity, our common struggles to lead decent, humane lives. They reflect our diversity, our variety, our complexity. These are the faces and landscapes of America.

In doing that—in being both windows and mirrors—the Bodmers are national treasures. And this place, the home place for these treasures, becomes not so much a picture palace as a palace of memory. And without memory we are lost. In his wonderful book “Where Dead Voices Gather,” Nick Tosches writes the following:

“True history seeks, it does not answer; for the deeper we seek, the deeper we descend from knowledge to mystery, which is the only place where wisdom abides.”

And some of our best wisdom is here, for all to see and for all to share.

James P. Ronda holds the H.G. Barnard Chair in Western American History at the University of Tulsa. The University of Nebraska Press recently republished his popular book “Lewis and Clark among the Indians” in a bicentennial edition. The lecture “Through Native Eyes: Karl Bodmer’s other America,” was underwritten by the Omaha World-Herald Foundation and is reprinted here with the author’s permission.



Remember yesterday, and change tomorrow

Dedication of the Cheyenne Outbreak Barracks
Fort Robinson, June 7, 2003

By Bob Wickersham

We are here today to remember yesterday and to change tomorrow. First let us remember yesterday.

On October 18, 1874, the United States Army completed a cavalry barracks at this site built from logs harvested in the Pine Hills near what was to become and remain Fort Robinson. It was only one of several log buildings and would not be worthy of particular mention except for events that took place in and around it during the winter of 1878-1879.

In October of 1878, this building became the prison for more than one hundred Cheyenne men, women and children led by Chief Dull Knife. What crime had they committed?

The Cheyenne had roamed the Northern Plains as a relatively peaceful people until the westward expansion caused the United States government to decide to move them to Oklahoma. Life in Oklahoma was hard, with too little food and other harsh conditions, so the Cheyenne traveled the 1,500-mile journey on foot back to their beloved Plains only to be arrested. Rather than be shipped back to Oklahoma, the Cheyenne risked escape during the cold winter on January 9, 1879, in hopes of reaching what is now the Rosebud Reservation in Montana.

They took a route up over the steep buttes to the west of here. Over one half of the escapees died in this attempt.

This story of dates and numbers may give us the facts of yesterday but it does not prepare us to change tomorrow. Only valuing the beliefs, strength and courage of a people different from us will do that.

I cannot hope to give you a complete description of Cheyenne beliefs so let me quote from "Cheyenne Autumn" by Mari Sandoz:

"The old Cheyennes even more than their High Plains neighbors, had a rich and mystical perception of all life as a continuous, all-encompassing eventual flow, and of man's complete oneness with all this diffused and eternal stream. It was a stream of many and complex dimensions, one in which man, the tree, the rock, the cloud, and all the other things were simultaneously in all the places they had ever been; and all things that had ever been in a place were always in the present there, in the being and occurring."

For their beliefs and freedom the Cheyenne were willing to die, and did. . . men, women and children. The last nine men died forming a cover of corpses over a few survivors in a shallow pit northwest of here.

The deaths of the Cheyenne will not by themselves change tomorrow. Rather, our reflection upon and recognition of the broken promises, the failure to recognize a great people and culture, the drive for conquest and the consequences of those acts can change our tomorrow.

Keep our promises, recognize and honor other people and beliefs, become a conqueror only as a last resort. Those actions will change tomorrow. Our remembrance of the sacrifices of the Cheyenne today and every time we visit this barracks can change the course of history.



30 years cultivating an understa

1973-1977

- William Brandenburg chairs organizing committee Bob Manley hired as planning coordinator, 1972-73
- First Nebraska Committee for the Humanities office established in Kearney, 1973
- First theme developed: "Nebraska's Heritage and our Modern World: The Role of the Individual in Relationship to Family and Community," 1973
- Mike Holland is named executive director, 1973
- First grant awarded, 1974
- First newsletter published, 1974
- Regional Humanists first named, fall 1976
- Bicentennial Chautauqua "American Issues Forums," 1976
- Nebraska "Forum on Human Values," 1976-1978 NEH allows state councils to go beyond public policy focus. One of the new emphases for NHC is museum exhibits, 1977

1978-1982

- Keith Blackledge elected to founding board of Federation of State Humanities Councils, 1978
- First Nebraska Humanist published, 1979
- First exhibits funded: "Dust Bowl Descent" and "Dreams in Dry Places," 1980
- Committee office moves to Lincoln, 1980
- First Sower Awards, 1980
- Summer stipends for scholars first awarded, 1980
- Congress threatens to eliminate NEH, 1981
- Anne Cognard is named co-director, 1981
- Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities organized, 1981
- NCH selects Bill Kloefkorn as state poet, 1982
- Sarah Rosenberg is named executive director, 1982
- In response to "A Nation at Risk," NCH establishes grant emphasis to foster better relations between schools and college humanities faculty, 1982

1983-1987

- Humanities Resource Center established, 1983
- NCH one of six state humanities councils to receive \$50,000 Merit Award from National Endowment for the Humanities, 1983
- Great Plains Chautauqua begins in Beatrice and Gering-Scottsbluff, 1984
- NCH announces program emphasis on "Work, Commerce and Values," 1985
- NCH establishes Founders Program with 100 contributors, 1985

- NCH issues report on improving K-12 humanities education and holds statewide conference in response to Governor Bob Kerrey's call for education reform, 1985
- \$67,385 Exemplary Award from NEH in 1986 for "Continuity and Change on the Great Plains Museums Project"
- Second \$50,000 merit award from NEH, 1986
- NCH Chairman Charles Dougherty elected to board of Federation of State Humanities Councils, 1986
- Jane Hood is named executive director, 1987
- "Continuity and Change" exhibit opens in Plattsmouth, Wahoo, Red Cloud, Holdrege, Lexington, and North Platte historical society museums, 1987
- "Project 1987: Bicentennial of Constitution Project" in home extension club forums, 1987; awarded Schwartz prize at 1988 National Meeting of the State Humanities Councils

1988-1992

- NCH announces program emphasis on "Science, Technology and the Human Condition," 1988
- "Library of America" Project in 62 libraries, 1988
- NEH Chairman Lynne Cheney visits Nebraska, 1988
- Nebraska Committee for the Humanities changes name to Nebraska Humanities Council, 1989
- Friendraisers begin. Initial programs on French Revolution hosted in Omaha and Lincoln, 1989
- Chautauquans Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson debate before Legislature, 1989. Elizabeth Cady Stanton addresses Legislature, 1990
- NHC receives first state appropriation, 1990
- First "Nebraska Humanities" magazine published, 1991
- First "Connections" program on Nebraska Public Radio Network, 1991
- NHC-funded "American Dream" receives Academy Award for best documentary film, 1991
- First Nebraska Literature Festival in Omaha, 1991
- Nebraska Museum Association is established, 1991
- "Nebraska Voices" weekly essay published year-long in 64 newspapers for state's Q125
- Celebration and special Q125 Chautauqua at State Capitol, 1992
- Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities reorganized, 1992
- Eleven-state "Lewis and Clark" Project, 1992

1993-1997

- Humanities Council receives Jane Geske Award from Nebraska Center for the Book, 1993

- Multicultural program emphasis, "Community and Diversity," in response to Legislature's mandate for K-12 multicultural education, 1993
- 125th Anniversary of State Fair features 11 days of humanities programming, 1994
- National Book Award reading-and-discussion series in local libraries with Philip Levine, 1994
- Jane Hood elected to board of the Federation of State Humanities Councils, 1994
- Congress threatens to eliminate NEH, 1995
- NEH Chair Sheldon Hackney visits Nebraska, 1995
- Smithsonian's "Produce for Victory" exhibit tours Auburn, Cozad, Fairmont, Geneva and Harrisburg, 1996
- Governor Nelson inaugurates Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, featuring Ted Sorensen, 1996
- NHC-funded "Troublesome Creek: A Midwestern" receives Academy Award nomination for best documentary film. Named best film at the Great Plains Film Festival, 1997
- Council announces program emphasis on "Building Nebraska Communities," 1997
- Council begins coordinating 4th grade Nebraska Statehood Essay Contest for the secretary of state, 1997
- Nebraska Cultural Trust proposed to Legislature with Nebraska Arts Council, 1997
- Nebraska Literature Festival receives Lincoln Mayor's Arts Award, 1997
- Friend of Festival Award from Nebraska Tourism Convention, 1997
- Martin Marty delivers 2nd Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, 1997

1998-2002

- Governor Ben Nelson signs proclamation declaring 1998 the 25th Anniversary Year of the Nebraska Humanities Council, January 1998
- Silver Sower donor campaign begins, 1998
- Libraries in 12 communities host "Choices for the 21st Century" global issues discussion groups, 1998
- Legislature passes and Governor Ben Nelson signs LB 799, which creates the Nebraska Cultural Preservation Endowment Fund of \$5 million, 1998
- First Nebraska Chautauqua at Joslyn Arts-on-the-Green, 1998
- Cooper and Woods foundations award council a three-year grant to increase private fundraising, 1998
- Stephen Ambrose delivers 3rd Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, 1998

- Second National Schwartz Award given to the NHC for "Un Tesoro de Nebraska" at national meeting of the state humanities councils, 1998
- Nebraska high school students discuss U.S. foreign policy at first "Nebraska Capitol Forum on America's Future," 1999
- David Broder delivers 4th Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, 1999
- First Community Cultural Development Grants, 1999
- NEH Chairman William Ferris visits Nebraska, 2000
- Karen Levin hired as director of Nebraska Cultural Endowment, 2000
- Scholars-In-Residence program begun with Cultural Endowment funds, 2000
- Nell Irvin Painter delivers 5th Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, 2000
- Council begins Lewis and Clark emphasis with first teacher institute, 2001
- First Youth Chautauqua in Crete, Nebraska, 2001
- David McCullough delivers 6th Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, 2001
- Nebraska Educational Telecommunications awards NHC its 2001 Partner Award
- NEH awards council \$450,000 challenge grant for NHC's portion of Nebraska Cultural Endowment, 2001
- Smithsonian "Barn Again!" exhibit visits Gering, McCook, Belvedere, Bassett, Broken Bow, Madison, Tekamah, Springfield, Lincoln and Grand Island, 2001-02
- St. Paul sets Great Plains Chautauqua's attendance record for "From Sea to Shining Sea," 2002
- Thomas Friedman delivers 7th Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, 2002

2003

- James P. Ronda inaugurates 30th Anniversary with sell-out lecture in Omaha
- Governor Mike Johanns proclaims 2003 as 30th anniversary for NHC, January
- "Humanities Desk" broadcasts begin on Nebraska Public Radio
- Six-community tour of Smithsonian's "Yesterdays Tomorrows" begins in Wayne and travels to Aurora, Wahoo, Bassett, McCook and Gering
- 30th Anniversary Circle donor campaign begins
- William Safire delivers 8th Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, Sept. 18



Governor's lecture contributors gather at pre-lecture benefit

Supporters of the Governor's Lecture in the Humanities attended a benefit, co-chaired by Barb Haggart, Carol Russell, Deb Trowbridge and Judy Ueda, in honor of New York Times columnist and Pulitzer Prize winner William Safire. Gathering Sept. 18 at the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, they shared an appreciation for the humanities.



Gov. and Mrs. Mike Johanns and William Safire



*Marjorie and Bill Rist, Kathryn Wells, Tim Austin,
Dennis Wells and Bette Anne and Dr. Hal Thaut*



Elvira Garcia, Ann and Chuck Trimble and Judy Ueda



Jane Renner Hood and Jeanene and Roger Wehrbein



Jack Campbell and G. Woodson Howe



Carol Maddux and Pat Thompson



*Marianne Simmons, Louise Bereuter
and Fred Simon*



Carol Russell, William Safire and L. Dennis Smith



Ben and Diane Nelson and Don and June Pederson



*Michael and Isabelle Cherney (left) and Tim Austin (second from right)
with Creighton University students*



Irene Zimmerman and Jane Brondstetter



Diane Oldfather and Elaine Spire



William Safire and Father John Schlegel



Suzanne Wise and Wally and Martha Richardson

Anniversary year 2003 marked by challenges and opportunities

By Jane Renner Hood, Executive Director
Nebraska Humanities Council

The 30th year anniversary of the Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities was in many ways emblematic of our 30 years in Nebraska; it was marked by challenges and opportunities.

The challenges were largely financial in 2003. The council's state appropriation was reduced by 10 percent after a cut of 25 percent in 2002. The declining stock market meant that the council had received no earnings from the Nebraska Cultural Endowment for nearly three years. Other foundations and businesses were similarly affected, and their gifts to the council declined or disappeared.

The council's individual donors were the bright spot financially during 2003. Nebraskans kept giving to the council, and many of you increased your contribution level. We thank you—you made it possible for the council to continue most of our programming.

Funding from the Omaha World-Herald made it possible for the council to partner with the Joslyn Art Museum to inaugurate its 30th anniversary year with James Ronda's public lecture Jan. 6, which is reprinted in this issue. Our partnership with Creighton University and other generous donors enabled the council to present Pulitzer Prize-winning author William Safire as the 8th Annual Governor's Lecturer in the Humanities Sept. 18.

Capitol Forum brought 65 high school students from across the state to the State Capitol on March 25 to meet with Nebraska's Congressional delegation, Secretary of State John Gale, and Gov. Mike Johanns to discuss American foreign policy. The student delegates returned to their schools to share Congressional insights with 450 classmates participating in the project and cast a national ballot on the role the United States should take in international issues.

The council brought a new Smithsonian exhibit, "Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future," to Wayne in March with programming that included a film series of futurist movies ranging from "Buck Rogers" to "Blade Runner." The exhibit traveled next to the

Edgerton Explorit Center in Aurora, where school children developed projects describing their visions of the future, and then to the Saunders County Historical Society in Wahoo, Kaleidoscope Gallery in Bassett, the Museum of the High Plains in McCook, and completing its tour in December at the North Platte Valley Museum in Gering.

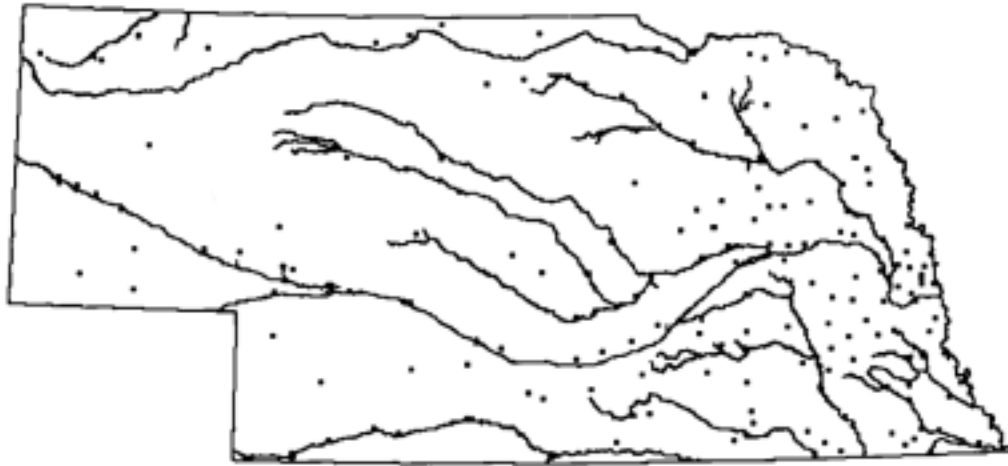
In July, the Great Plains Chautauqua, "From Sea to Shining Sea," brought visitors from across the Plains and as far away as New Zealand to Plattsmouth to discuss westward expansion with scholars portraying William Clark, Sacagawea and York from the Lewis and Clark Expedition, as well as John Jacob Astor, Tecumseh and Dolley Madison. The weeklong event won the state's tourism award for the community of Plattsmouth.

"Humanities Desk," a collaborative with Nebraska Public Radio, debuted in 2003 with short humanities features that air during "Live at the Mill" on Friday mornings and on Saturday and Sunday's "Weekend Edition." The council recognized Christine Lesiak's "Monkey Trial" with its Best Humanities Film Award during the Great Plains Film Festival in July at the new Mary Reipma Ross Film Theatre. The Nebraska Book Festival began on Creighton University's campus Oct. 24 with a Youth Writing Festival and continued that weekend with programs and poetry readings at various sites around Omaha. It featured the Nebraska debut of Mark Moskowitz's documentary film "Stone Reader" and a discussion with the filmmaker.

During the year, the Nebraska Humanities Council funded programs in 136 communities with 367 Speakers Bureau programs and 41 grants to local organizations.

The Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities thank U.S. Reps. Doug Bereuter and Tom Osborne and Sens. Chuck Hagel and Ben Nelson for supporting President Bush's request for new funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities' "We The People" initiative, which will bring an additional \$48,030 to the Nebraska Humanities Council in 2004.

Most of all, we want to thank Nebraskans who value our history and our culture. You make the work of the Nebraska Humanities Council possible. Thank you!



In 2003, the Nebraska Humanities Council funded programs in the following 136 communities:

Abie, Ainsworth, Albion, Alliance, Alma, Amherst, Ansley, Arapahoe, Arthur, Atkinson, Auburn, Aurora, Bancroft, Bassett, Battle Creek, Beatrice, Bellevue, Benedict, Bennet, Big Springs, Blair, Bloomfield, Brainard, Broken Bow, Brownville, Cambridge, Chadron, Clarkson, Columbus, Cook, Cordova, Cozad, Crawford, Creighton, Crete, Crofton, Curtis, Dannebrog, David City, Denton, Deshler, Eagle, Ellsworth, Eustis, Falls City, Franklin, Fremont, Fullerton, Genoa, Gering, Gibbon, Gordon, Gothenburg, Grand Island, Gretna, Halsey, Hampton, Harrisburg, Hartington, Hastings, Herman, Holdrege, Homer, Howells, Humboldt, Imperial, Kearney, Leigh, Lewiston, Lexington, Lincoln, Louisville, Lynch, Lyons, Marquette, Mason City, McCook, Milford, Millard, Minden, Nebraska City, Neligh, Newman Grove, Niobrara, Norfolk, North Bend, North Platte, Ogallala, Omaha, Orchard, Ord, Palmyra, Papillion, Pawnee City, Paxton, Peru, Platte Center, Plattsmouth, Ponca, Ralston, Red Cloud, Richland, Rising City, Riverdale, Schuyler, Scottsbluff, Seward, South Sioux City, Spencer, Springfield, Stanton, Stapleton, Sterling, Stromsburg, Superior, Sutherland, Syracuse, Tecumseh, Tilden, Unadilla, Valentine, Valley, Verdigre, Wahoo, Wausa, Waverly, Wayne, West Point, Wilber, Winnebago, Wood River, Wymore, Wynot, York

2003 Financial Overview

Our Dollars Working in Communities Across Nebraska

Support

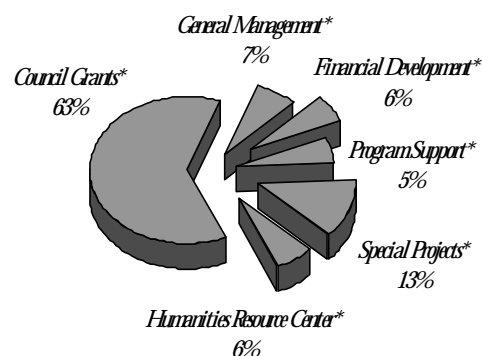
National Endowment for the Humanities Grant.....	\$485,200
State Appropriations.....	\$92,953
Nebraska Cultural Endowment.....	\$0
Private cash contributions.....	\$242,020
Earned Income.....	\$21,735
Miscellaneous income.....	\$1,271
Interest income.....	\$3,493
Cost share, cash and in-kind.....	\$1,052,549
Total revenue.....	\$1,899,221

Expenses

General management.....	\$132,611
Financial development.....	\$121,586
Program support.....	\$102,866
Special projects.....	\$251,751
Resource Center/Speaker Bureau Programs.....	\$123,211
Council regrants.....	\$125,405
Cost share by grantees and volunteers.....	\$1,052,549
Total expenses.....	\$1,909,979

Excess (deficit) of support and revenue over expenses (\$10,758)

Summary of Expenses - 2003



*Includes cost share

Audited financial statements from Dana F. Cole and Co. are available for inspection at the NHC office.

Contributors January through December 2003

The Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities thank the following donors for their contributions during the 2003 calendar year. We extend special thanks to those who are members of the 30th Anniversary Circle (\$1,000 a year), the Silver Sower Club, (\$250 a year), and the Sower 500 Club (\$100 a year). The caret sign (^) indicates 30th Anniversary Circle members, the plus sign (+) indicates Silver Sower members, and the asterisk (*) indicates Sower 500 members. We also appreciate those who donated \$29 or less to support the NHC in 2003.

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EducationQuest Foundation Inc.
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Gifts of \$10,000-\$19,999

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