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Intersections of Place, Time, and Entertainment in Rural Nebraska in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

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INTERSECTIONS OF PLACE, TIME, AND ENTERTAINMENT
IN RURAL NEBRASKA IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

by

Rebecca A. Buller

A DISSERTATION

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INTERSECTIONS OF PLACE, TIME, AND ENTERTAINMENT
IN RURAL NEBRASKA IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES
Rebecca A. Buller, Ph.D.
University of Nebraska, 2009

Adviser: David J. Wishart

As newcomers developed Nebraska settlements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they began to shape the space. This study explores the intersections of place, time, and entertainment in rural Nebraska from the beginning of European American settlement in the late 19th century to the end of the Great Depression. Through such examinations, we can better understand the historical geographies of individual and collective human experience. With such knowledge, we can then recognize how entertainment reflected social life, sense of place, place attachment, and the intricacies and larger scale trends of race, ethnicity, gender, age, class, nationality, and religion.

In this work, a variety of sources are mined and examined through primarily qualitative methods. The acknowledgment that research is subjective and selective is present in researching, writing, and producing the narrative. Literature from a variety of disciplines informs the research. Such a study adds to scholarship by incorporating contemporary approaches, methodologies, and theories, such as humanistic, post-modern, feminist, and post-colonial, to the geographic case study approach that has been criticized for being too descriptive and lacking theory.

Each chapter contains an examination of leisure activities. Chapter 1, entitled “Everyday Leisure Activities,” explores a wide variety of common entertainments available to people living in and visiting rural Nebraska. The rest of the study examines specific activities via case studies. The Walter Savidge Amusement Company in the early 20th century is the heart of Chapter 2, “Traveling Shows.” Chapter 3, “Ethnic-Religious Entertainment: The German Russian Mennonites of Henderson” demonstrates how leisure activities could vary from the mainstream depending upon a group’s ethnic, national, and religious characteristics. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the state’s amusement parks in the early 20th century by discovering the personality of The Long Pine Amusement Park during its first eight years. The last section, “The Broader Context,”
sifts out themes of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, nationality, and religion, illustrating how they were manifested in entertainment.
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This work is dedicated to Grandma Chaney, Grandpa Chaney, Brian, Dad, Mom, Kim, Keith, Troia, Cambria, Uncle Mike, Aunt Marge, Jason and family, Jared and family, Rudy, Bob, Delores, Jesse, Gert, Jiggs, Pete, Al, and anyone else who has had, or ever will have, a love for Hidden Paradise…

and…

to Great Grandma Bertha, who had a room in the Care Center next to Mabel Savidge.
As with any task, this work would not have been possible if not for the immense amount of help provided to me by numerous people.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART I.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I. Everyday Leisure Activities</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II. Traveling Shows: The Walter Savidge Amusement Company</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III. Ethnic-Religious Entertainment: The German Russian Mennonites of Henderson</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART II.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV. Amusement Parks: The Long Pine Amusement Park, 1910-1911</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V. Amusement Parks: The Long Pine Amusement Park, 1912-1918</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Broader Context</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF MULTIMEDIA OBJECTS

Prelude

Figure 1. Railway map of Nebraska issued by State Board of Transportation, 1889........1
Figure 2. Chautauqua........................................................................................................2
Figure 3. Contemporary outdoor recreation....................................................................3
Table 1. Subjects of Great Northern Promotional Imagery.............................................16

Chapter I. Everyday Leisure Activities

Figure 1. Sicangu [Brulé] Lakota Sioux joyriding in Valentine, 1915.........................20
Figure 2. Peg O’ the Ring.................................................................................................23
Figure 3. The Journal’s Biggest Offer...........................................................................26
Figure 4. We Heartily Recommend Today’s.................................................................27
Figure 5. Every Woman Needs Today’s Magazine......................................................27
Figure 6. 10 Great Serials.............................................................................................28
Figure 7. Naylor’s Novelty Shop, 1930s.................................................................29
Figure 8. Inside Naylor’s Novelty Shop, 1930s...........................................................29
Figure 9. Snooker.........................................................................................................30
Figure 10. Get Your War Garden From this Case.......................................................32
Figure 11. 1915 Nebraska State Railway Commission Map of Cherry County........34
Figure 12. Children of the Speese and Meehan families gathered to celebrate Christmas in 1914 at William Meehan’s sod house near the Brownlee and DeWitty communities....35
Figure 13. Good for Boys.............................................................................................38
Figure 33. Barma for That Motor Tour.................................................................61
Figure 34. Barma After the Golf Game.................................................................61
Figure 35. Barma at the Camp..............................................................................61
Figure 36. Peter Unruh, a German-Russian Mennonite, listening to his Columbia phonograph. Date unknown..........................................................64
Figure 37. The Brunswick Plays All Records......................................................64
Figure 38. The Battle of Cameron Dam...............................................................68
Figure 39. Confess Thy Sins................................................................................68
Figure 40. Morey boys with first automobile seen in Valentine, 1910...............70
Figure 41. Delivery of Maxwell Autos received by William Krotter Company, Stuart, Nebraska. Agents for Northern Nebraska and Gregory County, South Dakota, 1910....72
Figure 42. Enjoy Big Out of Doors....................................................................73
Figure 43. Back to Nature This Summer.............................................................73
Figure 44. Hour After Hour Over Any Road......................................................74
Figure 45. For Everybody Everywhere.............................................................74
Figure 46. Photograph of trailer camp attachment for autos............................74
Figure 47. Cartoon about automobile tourist camps.........................................75
Figure 48. Spectators in the stands at a Valentine baseball game, 1913.............76
Figure 49. The 1907 Blue Jay and Grey Eagle women basketball teams in Ballagh....79
Figure 50. Women’s “wrap for after the [tennis] game.” ..................................80
Figure 51. Women’s sport hats.........................................................................80
Figure 52. Women's sport outfit.................................................................80
Figure 53. Women’s “sensible costume for outdoor sports.” .........................80
Figure 54. Girls’ swimming suit................................................................. 81
Figure 55. Women’s swimming suit................................................................. 81
Figure 56. All Wool and Wool-and-Silk Bathing Suits................................. 81
Figure 57. Camp with a Kodak................................................................. 82
Figure 58. David Buller, Jr. and Margaret Buller pausing before heading back up the hill for another round of sledding. Date unknown.................................................. 83
Figure 59. Cherry County Hackberry Club Manager Neil Provost, 1920s........ 84
Figure 60. Shooting prairie chickens near O’Neill, 1915............................... 85
Figure 61. Brownlee fishermen with their Loup River catches, date unknown.. 87
Figure 62. It’s Real Sport........................................................................ 88

Chapter II. Traveling Shows: The Walter Savidge Amusement Company

Figure 1. J.H. Eschman Shows........................................................................ 91
Figure 2. Christy Brothers Greater United Wild Animal Exposition.................. 92
Figure 3. Robbins Brothers Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus United with Ponca Bill’s Wild West................................................................. 94
Figure 4. The Old Reliable Virginia Ministrels.............................................. 96
Figure 5. The Palace...................................................................................... 97
Figure 6. Anna Mae Winburn, director of the Cotton Club Boys...................... 97
Figure 7. Show of Shows.............................................................................. 98
Figure 8. The Lure of the City........................................................................ 99
Figure 9. Chautauqua tent in Bassett, 1915..................................................... 100
Figure 10. Long Pine Chautauqua............................................................... 101
Figure 11. Play.................................................................................................................102
Figure 12. The Chautauqua Puts Your Town on the Map........................................102
Figure 13. Nebraska, 2000...............................................................................................104
Figure 14. Central Aviators, the Savidge Brothers of rural Ewing on October 2, 1912..105
Figure 15. The Flying Baldwins, date and location unknown........................................107
Figure 16. Inside the tent theater where the Savidge Players performed.........................108
Figure 17. Blue complimentary ticket to the big feature, the Elwin Strong Dramatic
Company, of the Savidge Brothers Amusement Company.............................................109
Figure 18. Opera House...................................................................................................112
Table 1. Examples of Performance Sites by Season........................................................113
Figure 19. A little book of piano pieces that Mabel Savidge used.................................115
Figure 20. Walter Savidge Amusement Company..........................................................116
Figure 21. Long Pine Summer Carnival..........................................................................118
Figure 22. Walter Savidge Amusement Company..........................................................119
Figure 23. Coming Walter Savidge Amusement Company.............................................120
Figure 24. Autographed photograph of Walter T. Savidge.............................................122
Figure 25. The Savidge Players Orchestra, 1912 or after..............................................122
Figure 26. Waiting in line for a ride on the Eli Wheel....................................................123
Figure 27. New and expensive rides, including, left to right, a Eli Wheel, revolving
swings, and merry-go-round............................................................................................124
Figure 28. King, the trick horse, and his trainer, M.C. Freed, 1918.................................125
Figure 29. Banner for the Madagascar Pygmies, misspelled as “pigmys.” ....................125
Figure 30. A clown and his "giraffe" in the Sallardo Trio's "Oddities in Jungleland."...126
Figure 31. Rides and shows as part of the ballyhoo while at Sturgis, South Dakota from July 26 to 31, 1926.................................126
Figure 32. George Thompson and son.................................................................127
Figure 33. Ballyhoo side show for Ma-Ho, the Man Ape.................................128
Figure 34. Baby May featured as a side show in the Walter Savidge Amusement Company......................................................................................129
Figure 35. Lyle Talbot and Ginger Rogers in A Shriek in the Night (1933). ........131
Figure 36. Walter and Mabel at their home at 214 West Second Street in Wayne........136

Chapter III. Ethnic-Religious Entertainment: The German Russian Mennonites of Henderson

Figure 1. Nebraska, 2000........................................................................................142
Figure 2. Pencil drawing of the inside of a Mennonite immigrant house in Kansas in the late 19th century.................................................................145
Figure 3. Loafers of Henderson.............................................................................146
Figure 4. \textit{Zwieback}.........................................................................................148
Figure 5. Buggies common for traveling to Sunday visiting....................................150
Figure 6. Foods commonly served at a \textit{faspa}.....................................................151

Chapter IV. Amusement Parks: The Long Pine Amusement Park, 1910-1911

Figure 1. The cool, clear spring-fed waters of Pine Creek, 2009..........................170
Figure 2. Bath Room..............................................................................................171
Figure 3. Nebraska, 2000.....................................................................................175
Figure 4. The Chicago & Northwestern Railroad's Depot in Long Pine, located roughly 1/4 mile north of the Amusement Park ................................................................. 177

Figure 5. The Plunge Bath's original water wheel, 1912 ........................................ 179

Figure 6. Wading in Pine Creek ............................................................................. 180

Figure 7. The Glorious 4th .................................................................................... 181

Figure 8. Mammoth Plunge Open ........................................................................ 185

Table 1. Agricultural Exhibitions at the September 10th, 1910 Fraternal Picnic .... 188

Table 2. Contests and Prizes at the September 10th, 1910 Fraternal Picnic ............ 190

Figure 9. The Merry-Go-Round, an addition to the Amusement Park introduced in 1911 .................................................................................................................. 195

Figure 10. Early camping at the Amusement Park .................................................. 197

Figure 11. The Plunge Bath ................................................................................... 197

Figure 12. Looking to the northeast, from left to right, unknown buildings, the open air dance Pavilion, and the swimming hole with slide ..................................... 198

Figure 13. Second Annual Fraternal Picnic ........................................................... 199

Figure 14. Early cottages, date unknown ............................................................... 201

Table 3. Name categorization of some of the 1911 cottages ................................. 202

Figure 15. Left, Angel's Rest cottage in the Long Pine Amusement Park .......... 202

Figure 16. Restful outdoor dining, date unknown ............................................... 203

Figure 17. Looking east down at The Plunge Bath before the roof ..................... 205

Chapter V. Amusement Parks: The Long Pine Amusement Park, 1912-1918

Figure 1. Enjoying the newly covered Plunge Bath ............................................. 208
Figure 2. An advertisement for the opening of the 1912 Amusement Park season...........209

Figure 3. “Firing up” to heat the waters of the enclosed Plunge Bath.............................210

Figure 4. An advertisement for the Catlercar car, a high-wheel motor buggy, which
supposedly could handle the northern Sandhills along Pine Creek canyon...............212

Figure 5. The Rim Drive in the Amusement Park...........................................................212

Figure 6. Dance................................................................................................................212

Figure 7. A photograph of Buttner Byron, date unknown.............................................214

Figure 8. Everybody Enjoy the Grand Celebration at Long Pine....................................215

Figure 9. The Chicago and Northwestern Railroad Ticket Office and Eating House.....216

Figure 10. Berger’s Cash Store in Long Pine.................................................................218

Figure 11. Long Pine Boosters in Ainsworth, 1920.........................................................219

Table 1. The 1912 Long Pine Chautauqua Program........................................................221

Figure 12. A postcard featuring Long Pine Creek, 1907................................................227

Figure 13. Skurfan Postcard showing a main street scene of Long Pine in 1910............228

Figure 14. Postcard from Long Pine, 1912.....................................................................228

Figure 15. Looking from the southwest at the Pavilion in its 56’ by 96’ form, built for the
1913 season......................................................................................................................230

Figure 16. The Cotterill Sisters Orchestra playing on the new stage in the dance area of
the Pavilion......................................................................................................................231

Figure 17. 2 Big Days at Long Pine.................................................................................232

Figure 18. Central Aviators, Savidge Brothers. The Savidge brothers of rural Ewing,
1912..................................................................................................................................234

Figure 19. A narrow scenic drive.....................................................................................239
Figure 20. Saturday May 23rd

Figure 21. Special Park Opening Program

Figure 22. Everybody is doing it now. Amusement Park, Long Pine, Nebraska, 1914.

Figure 23. Program for July Fourth

Figure 24. Fraternal meeting of some kind at the Long Pine Amusement Park

Figure 25. Long Pine’s Lentz-Freeman Ford Garage, owned by Tom and Elmer Lentz and Romey Freeman, in the mid 1920s

Figure 26. Where Shall I Spend My Vacation?

Figure 27. Grand Celebration

Figure 28. Notice

Figure 29. 4 Big Days Baseball Tournament

Table 2. Elkhorn Valley Editorial Association Meeting Program

Figure 30. Grand Celebration

Figure 31. Programme

Table 3. Population at the Long Pine Amusement Park, Wednesday August 9th, 1916

Figure 32. Big Dance and Concert Entire Evening

Figure 33. Safety First

Figure 34. O’Neill Photo Company

Figure 35. O’Neill Photo Company

Figure 36. Program for July 4, 1917

Figure 37. Free Band Concert

Figure 38. Fourth of July
Long Pine, Nebraska, located in the north-central part of the state, was one of thousands of Great Plains communities created during the late 19th century (Figure 1). Settlers moved in to take advantage of free lands by way of the Homestead Act (1862), Timber Culture Act (1873), and Kinkaid Act (1904). In the early 1880s cattle ranchers\textsuperscript{1} and workers from the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad\textsuperscript{2} were among the first settlers to present-day Brown County. A cycle of boom and bust settlement characterized the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Construction of the town exploded during the 1880s, but then hesitated during the drought of the 1890s. Despite severe out-migration caused by the drought of the early 1890s, by 1895 the town had grown to a population of over 800.\textsuperscript{3} But the drought continued and by the spring of 1898 the town’s population had fallen to 151. The passage of the Kinkaid Act in 1904, an enlarged homestead act offering 640 acres free, enabled another (albeit brief) settlement boom.\textsuperscript{4}
Like many areas, once the initial details of settlement had been established, a need for socialization and entertainment arose. By the second decade of the century, if you either lived near or visited Long Pine you would find a long menu of entertainment selections. People of all ages were involved in church and school activities as well as other group organizations. You could go to establishments such as the billiard hall, saloon, restaurants, or theatres and opera houses. Individuals could spend their free time visiting or reading. Summer was a popular season to attend chautauquas (Figure 2), traveling shows, and 4th of July celebrations.

![Figure 2. Source: Progress on the Prairies: Ainsworth-Brown County Diamond Jubilee, Official Historical Souvenir Booklet, August 6-9, 1958, 41.](image)

Like almost all Great Plains towns, Long Pine was founded near a fresh water source. This community, however, was unique in its geography. From the earliest times of European American settlement, people took note of the features of Pine Creek, whose cool, clear, spring-fed waters ran year-round from a source only six miles south of town. One *Omaha Bee* reporter described the creek as “remarkable.” Early entrepreneurs had big ambitions of capitalizing on the potential medicinal properties of the waters. Soon resorts as well as amusement and tourist parks were constructed. By the 1910s, one of these, Hidden Paradise Park, could boast of sixty-five cottages, a café, lake, concession stand, golf course with sand greens, bingo stand, dance pavilion, ice house, newspaper,
plunge, public telephone, trail rides, and baseball team. It also offered boxing exhibitions and taxi service. During the Roaring Twenties, locals and visitors to the small community of Long Pine had a wide variety of entertainment options. A day could be spent tubing down the cool waters of the natural spring fed creek, swinging for a hole in one, whooshing down the slide at The Plunge, canoeing across the tranquil waters of the mill pond, meeting friends for drinks and a steak, catching the latest flick at the theater, spending a quiet evening reading in a rented cabin, or dancing the night away at the Pavilion.

Today, Long Pine has a steadily decreasing population of less than 1,000. As with so many towns in the Great Plains, the discontinuation of the railroad brought a corresponding decline in population. New construction and successful businesses in town are rare. Demographically, the population is older than the average age in most American towns. Wide spaces, empty buildings, neon bar lights, and card playing at the Senior Center dominate main street. Although the resort areas, too, have seen a decline from their heyday, they are not abandoned. Many people continue to cherish a nostalgia for the past as well as present-day activities such as tubing (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Contemporary outdoor recreation. Photo by Pat Wax.
As European Americans developed Nebraska settlements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they began to shape the space. While community entertainment might have taken on similar themes in many settlements, some areas possessed distinctive geographies that enabled them to establish exceptional entertainment opportunities. An examination of modes of entertainment reveal the character of Long Pine, including place development, consumption, sense of place, and place attachment. From 1900 to 1941, in particular, settlers and visitors especially utilized outdoor recreation as an avenue of relaxation. In Long Pine, as well as arguably in all Nebraska communities, an examination of the historical geography of the place conveys the ways in which entertainment activities reflect broader hegemonic relations of gender, class, race, and ethnicity.

Literature Review

Humans have probably always participated in leisure and entertainment activities, but until recently such topics have rarely been studied in depth. Certainly various Plains Native American groups, for example, took time away from agriculture and hunting to perform bead work, gamble, play sports, and visit with others in the village and elsewhere. In the western world, a leisure boom began with the Industrial Revolution. Mechanized production decreased the average person’s work load and thus allowed for an increase in leisure time. The 20th century found workers, with changing expectations, insisting on shorter work weeks and increased vacation time. Tourism, “the idea of leaving home and work in search of new experiences, pleasures, and leisure,” was emerging. New forms of entertainment emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries
in an effort to deal with the uncertainties brought by rapid industrial, population,
technological, and social change. Work-caused stress could be alleviated through time
spent exercising, recreating at an urban park, relaxing at a spectator sport, watching a
vaudeville or moving picture, hanging out at the local dance hall, taking a drive in the
new Model T, or driving to a resort or tourist camp.  

The study of leisure and entertainment had a slow start, however, because many doubted that such research was an academically rigorous pursuit. Even today some disciplines—including anthropology-- are still hesitant to fully accept such studies as valid scholarship. Recently in the United Kingdom, an anthropologist studying tourism on a Greek island was accused, first by the tabloids and later by the House of Commons, of wasting governmental monies. The fact that the scholar’s main area of research was Mediterranean tourism and that the case study was part of his lifelong work on economies and societies of the region was not publicized. Instead he was portrayed as an unscrupulous academic, abusing the system, and taking a vacation on taxpayers’ monies. Although researchers may indeed enjoy their projects, especially aspects of field work, they are by no means simply on vacation when they study travel and tourism.

Focusing on historical leisure in Europe, Spalding and Brown’s 2007 anthology Entertainment, Leisure, and Identities contains articles that “challenge the ‘common-sense’ assumption that entertainment activities have no function but to fill up otherwise empty moments.” People who participate in entertainments are actively shaping their identities, revealing intricacies of social, political, and class relationships. In their 2003 article, “Recreation, Tourism and Sport,” in Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21st Century, Meyer-Arendt and Lew note that leisure studies truly are worthy of
geography’s attention since, at their very core, they involve spatial aspects such as place, time, distance, and activity patterns.\textsuperscript{14} It was not until the 1930s that geography began to seriously research topics such as recreation and tourism.\textsuperscript{15} Early studies fell under the umbrella of “leisure” studies, taking on the European conceptualization that all present time could be divided into the two categories of either work time or non-work time. The term “leisure” can be troublesome to use, however. Does leisure refer to “free time, an activity, or a particular state of mind?”\textsuperscript{16} Is the word synonymous with recreation and tourism? Scholars vary in their assessments. In my dissertation, leisure will refer either to activities that people engage in as a form of entertainment or the time spent in such activities. Depending on the situation, leisure may or may not then be synonymous with recreation and tourism.

In geography, recreation and tourism soon came to be distinguished as separate areas of study. Recreation involved those activities that required active participation by people who generally traveled a short distance to their destination. Recreational activities have a short duration. A person cross-country skiing for a few hours on a trail a near their home would thus be categorized as recreating. In contrast, geography defined tourism as being characterized by participation taking longer periods of time and travel to more distant locations. Booking a five day package that involves traveling on a charter bus one thousand miles from home to experience the Grand Canyon would, therefore, be considered tourism. Mitchell and Smith find that the term “recreation geography” was first used in 1954. This remained the focus of North American geography’s leisure studies through the 1970s, when society in general was especially receptive to conservation and preservation issues.\textsuperscript{17} Tourism studies slowly gained popularity in the
1960s and 1970s, as the private sector became interested in understanding and capitalizing on such activities.\textsuperscript{18}

Common themes of recreation studies have been, and continue to be, leisure, management and impact assessment, resource inventory and valuation, and parks.\textsuperscript{19} John C. Lehr, a historical geographer at the University of Winnipeg, has contributed several works on park recreation. His research on parks has varied in topic, including articles on spas,\textsuperscript{20} Manitoba’s lakeside resorts,\textsuperscript{21} provincial parks,\textsuperscript{22} and urban parks and recreation.\textsuperscript{23} An investigation into late 19\textsuperscript{th} century public parks in Manitoba-- including their origins, functions, and implications to society— was the topic of Cavett, Selwood, and Lehr’s 1982 “Social Philosophy and the Early Development of Winnipeg’s Public Parks.”\textsuperscript{24} Lehr’s 2001 “The Origins and Development of Manitoba’s Provincial Park System” proposes and describes four park “generations,” each with its own characteristics of management styles and utilization purposes.\textsuperscript{25}

Numerous disciplines began to study the history of leisure in earnest in the 1970s. Criticisms soon followed. Early scholarship that attempted to tie social theory and leisure was condemned as being ungrounded in theory and historical knowledge.\textsuperscript{26} Likewise, geography scholarship that has taken on a regional or case study approach, such as that on parks, was criticized in that it tended to be “descriptive and historical,”\textsuperscript{27} and therefore (apparently) limited in its methodologies and approaches. Where is the theory? Indeed, there is plenty of work to be done\textsuperscript{28} on scholarship that goes beyond the idiographic “the geography of (insert park name here)” template.

Meyer-Arendt and Lew (2003) find that the common themes of geography’s study of tourism include travel, historical tourism, perception, environmental aspects,
destination studies, specialized tourism, marketing and economic aspects of tourism, and planning and management. Because there are so many themes of study, a wide variety of methodologies exist in tourism studies. Perception studies were especially prominent in the 1970s and 1980s when behavioral geography, with logical-positivistic assumptions, was a major paradigm. Destination studies, descriptive in nature, are often similar to the regional studies common in the dominant geographical paradigm of the first half of the 20th century. As with park recreation works, these studies are criticized on the grounds that the scholarship is “merely” descriptive, lacking theoretical approaches to inform and shape the research.

Though scholarship in recreation, tourism, and sport has abounded in the last twenty years, few studies incorporate interdisciplinary approaches, contemporary theory and methodologies, or an historical perspective. Articles in *Journal of Travel Research* and *Tourism Geographies: An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place, and Environment* are frequently set in either the present, or they anticipate the future. The historical approach is fairly uncommon because it is assumed that “mass tourism is a fairly recent phenomenon.” What is not acknowledged is that tourism, recreation, and sport have long existed and that studying a small population of travelers does not negate the significance of that research. Certainly a mixture of historical, geographical, and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of entertainment can be very insightful.

Karen M. Morin’s approach to scholarship demonstrates post-modern historical geography styles that incorporate feminist and post-colonial approaches to studying travel. In her 1999 article “Peak Practices: Englishwomen's "Heroic" Adventures in the Nineteenth-Century American West” Morin demonstrates intersections of gender, class,
race, age, and imperialistic biases in women’s travel writings. Humanistic and qualitative frameworks guide her narrative style of researching and presenting historical geographies. Reminiscent of perspectives of scholars such as Pratt and Blaut, Morin argues that various tropes were present in middle and upper class Englishwomen’s writings as they described their “adventures” to the popular tourist destinations of present-day Yosemite National Park in California and Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. Women’s writings also reflected aspects of a woman’s perception of self. Morin writes:

Middle- and upper-class British women who traveled abroad in the late nineteenth century as missionaries, wives of colonial administrators or military men, professional travel writers, reporters, or leisure-class tourists [represented a variety of images of themselves, such as] intrepid adventuresses defying racial and sexual boundaries [and the] vulnerable “lady” upholding hegemonic versions of femininity associated with gentility and class privilege.

Specifically, Morin’s “Peak Practices” examines the travel writings of seven Englishwomen that were published in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. Exploring the Rockies, the travel writer Isabella L. Bird, going against societal and class norms, was the only woman out of the case studies who traveled without a companion. Her descriptions of her travels depict her as being renewed and reinvigorated by the raw power of nature. In contrast, women like Lady Theodora Guest, traveling with her husband to both Yosemite and the Rockies, was often appalled by the crudeness of both nature and the “primitive” state—of local people— that she encountered. Overall, Morin finds that
these women situated themselves somewhere in between the passive Victorian ideal of womanhood and its antipode of an aggressive, independent, and powerful explorer.35

Historical geography increasingly employs interdisciplinary approaches to examining the history of leisure and recreation. For example, Blodgett’s 2007 paper, “Defining Uncle Sam’s Playgrounds: Railroad Advertising and the National Parks, 1917-1941,”36 focuses on dissecting the intricacies and identities of National Parks. By examining the ways in which railroads attracted patrons to the American West, Blodgett reveals advertisements’ roles in changing tourist identities as well as the public’s conceptualizations and use of governmental lands.

What, then, about the historical geography of leisure in Nebraska? What might it tell us? Although the everyday lives of people in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in rural Nebraska, involving settlement, agriculture, economics, and hardships, have been thoroughly studied, little research has examined how people spent their free time. The little literature that does exist on entertainment in rural areas of the Great Plains during the late 19th and early 20th centuries focuses on topics such as the history of chautauquas,37 opera houses,38 and white and African American male baseball39 and often has limited approaches and subjects. What other leisure and entertainment activities did people in rural Nebraska engage in? How might an interdisciplinary approach incorporating various theories and methodologies to inform the narrative illustrate the social history and landscapes of entertainment in the late 19th and early 20th centuries?
Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to reveal ways in which people in rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries spent their free time and how such activities were expressed on the landscape. It aims to study entertainment at the regional and local scales, but also to add to the scholarship by framing the work within contemporary approaches, theories, and methodologies. The first research objective is to examine various modes of entertainment that were available to people living in or visiting rural areas of Nebraska from the early years of European American settlement in the 19th century to the end of the Great Depression. The second objective is to understand how such entertainment reflected social life, sense of place, place attachment, and the intricacies and larger scale trends of race, gender, ethnicity, class, age, nationality, and religion. It is arguable whether or not some of these constructs truly exist. Such is the case with race, which is more of a societal construct than a genuine reality. Since race was a real classification to people at the time, however, the study will deem it as a category.

The following questions guide the research.

- What modes of entertainment were available to people living in or visiting rural areas of Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries?
  - How can such modes be categorized?
  - How much time did people spend in such entertainment, and in what capacities?
  - Where did such activities take place?
o How did such activities vary at the differing scales for the individual, small group, and large group?

• How and to what degree did modes of entertainment reflect:
  o social life;
  o sense of place;
  o place attachment;
  o and the intricacies and larger scale trends of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, nationality, and religion?

• How was entertainment manifested on the historic landscape? What were the characteristics of leisure landscapes?

Methods and Materials

Study Area

The state of Nebraska, as well as more focused case studies within the state, serve as the study areas. Though most likely other parts of the northern Great Plains would share the same characteristics of entertainment during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in an effort to keep the work containable, the area of study is limited to Nebraska. I employ case studies because many scholars have found that detailed microstudies are more valid representations than large macrohistories, which can be suspect to abstraction and over generalization. Various factors informed the decision as to which case studies were used. Instead of using a systematic selection process, sampling from various parts of the state, the amount of data available, as well as the degree to which I deemed it to be representative or significant, were considerable
determinants in selecting case studies for each theme. Hidden Paradise, for example, was chosen as a case study to illuminate the concept of an amusement park because it is simultaneously unique and representative of parks in Nebraska, as well as because I am familiar with the place.

Approaches and Theoretical Frameworks

Because I agree that we should write for non-geographers as well as for specialists, I shaped the dissertation with two audiences in mind-- academics and non-specialists. Cultural theory informed the study. My aim, nonetheless, is to write in language that is accessible both to scholars and the general public.

The approach taken in investigating and writing this study acknowledges that the project is both selective and subjective and should be informed by interdisciplinary perspectives. It is clear that given the same research topic and sources, no two people will produce the same study. When a historian writes about the past, limited accounts of what actually occurred exist, providing a small pool of potential sources to draw from. With many voices missing, authors of the past are left to choose which pieces of information they deem to be facts, and they are forced to reconstruct events with educated, but sometimes incorrect, assumptions about the historical record and the past itself.

The writing of the narrative is likewise subjective. The way an author chooses to represent history depends upon numerous factors, including the writer’s experiences, mood, personal values, and preference of writing style as well as the attributes of the time period that the historian lives in. The type of theory that runs through such studies,
therefore, is implicit in the author’s personal decisions about the order of topics, which evidence to include and which to exclude, and the writing style. It is this delicate dance between narrative, representation, selectivity, subjectivity, and theory that I strive to balance.

The theoretical frameworks used to inform and guide the study includes elements of humanistic, post-modern, feminist, post-colonial, and both new and old cultural geography approaches. Axioms of post-modernism and feminism-- such as the principle that knowledge is constructed as well as an expression of power issues-- are incorporated. Humanistic perspectives focusing on the individual human experience help to breathe life into the data.

Sources and Methodologies

A variety of sources and methodologies were utilized to answer the research questions. Archival mining was the primary instrument employed in data collection. The exact sources tapped depended upon the specific questions being asked. The main sources used included advertisements, brochures, census documents and records, county histories, letters, maps, magazines, memoirs, newspapers, newsletters, pamphlets, and photographs. One such valuable source was The Nebraska Farmer Sod House Letters. The collection, available at the Nebraska State Historical Society archives, contains letters written to the magazine by people who lived in rural areas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Microfilms of The Long Pine Journal newspaper were essential in constructing the study. These sources were imperative in understanding aspects of social
experiences and life, and allowed the voices of people who lived in such places and times to be heard.

Other data collection instruments included content analysis, interviews, and fieldwork such as landscape observation. Mixing elements of content analysis and visualism aided in interpreting advertisements and photographs. Interviews of individuals who lived in the study period gave depth to archival documents by providing examples of personal experiences. Landscape observation aided in the interpretation of historical landscapes.

A blend of primarily qualitative methodologies was utilized when interpreting data. In the great tradition of cultural geography, landscape interpretation additionally was useful in understanding how the human shaping of places has varied over both space and time. Landscape analysis was essential in understanding place attachment and sense of place. Furthermore, the more recent methodology of visual analysis, or visualism, was essential. Visualism, a methodology that mixes several theoretical approaches, provides scholars with an expanded repertoire with which to analyze data and better understand and interpret their research subjects. Gilian Rose’s 2001 *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* serves as a primer in reading visual texts, just as Peirce Lewis’s 1979 *Axioms for Reading the Landscape* serves as a primer in reading the cultural landscape. Theoretical concepts-- such as compositional interpretation, content analysis, and psychoanalysis-- supply scholars with significant foundations on how to go about reading visual documents. Scholarship utilizing such approaches is vital when people realize that what is seen--sculptures, paintings, advertisements-- is often loaded with social significances and symbolic meanings. In the
case of this study, visualism was useful in decoding sources such as advertisements, landscapes, maps, photographs, and promotional materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>1911–1920 (%)</th>
<th>1921–1925 (%)</th>
<th>1926–1930 (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL NUMBER</strong></td>
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<td><strong>491</strong></td>
<td><strong>508</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,092</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: GN 1911-1943. Some of the 796 photographs examined contain multiple subjects.*

Scholarship has increasingly utilized visualism as an interpretative methodology. As seen in Table 1, Wyckoff and Dilsaver (1997) studied how the Great Northern Railroad promotional advertisements of Glacier National Park from 1911 to 1930 contained similar iconic themes, including Native Americans, scenery, and recreation, to promote tourism (Table 1). Subjects such as wildlife and celebrity personalities became more lucrative in attracting visitors to the Glacier National Park and other areas served by the Great Northern Railroad from 1921 to 1930.

The reading of postcards has been the topic of several articles. In the Fall 2005 edition of *Material Culture* John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle presented their research on how downtown urban hotels represented themselves through postcards to current and potential customers in the early 20th century in “The American Hotel in Postcard Advertising: An Image Gallery.” At the Great Plains/Rocky Mountain Regional AAG Conference held in Lincoln, Nebraska in October 2006, Kansas State professor Dr. Karen
DeBres and then doctoral student Jacob R. Sowers presented their research “Greetings from Main Street! Using Post Cards as Tools for Geographic Interpretation.”

Mary Louise Pratt’s Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (1992) mixes several post-modern hallmarks. The author’s work is significant in that it introduced many new key terms—such as “contact zones,” “transculturation,” and the “tourist gaze”—that have since become commonplace in post-colonial literature. Focusing on travel writing and exploration by Europeans about Africa and South America since 1750, Pratt demonstrates how these practices both reflected and appropriated the ideological constructs of imperialism. Furthermore, Pratt’s research examined how Alexander Von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland’s travels in, and documentations of, the “new Continent” (South America) in the early 19th century served as a reinvention of America in the European mind. Following the end of Spanish colonial rule in South America, both Europe and South America had to reevaluate and reconceptualize themselves. Pratt argues that Humboldt served as a “transculturator” in that he engaged in a type of “mirror dance of colonial meaning-making” whereby he “transculturated to Europe knowledges produced by Americans in a process of defining themselves as separate from Europe.” Pratt concludes that he “revindicat[ed] America within European-based planetary paradigms.” Humboldt and his writings helped to create a Euromyth in which only nature speaks, and inhabitants of South America are barely, if at all, present.

Pratt also separates herself from much earlier scholars studying recreation and tourism geography in that she described and analyzed how the experiences of social explorers differed depending upon gender. Though both men and women served as
explorers, they often had different perspectives through which they viewed and documented their experiences. Male travelers, termed by Pratt as “capitalist vanguards,” often emphasized a “goal-oriented rhetoric of conquest and achievement” in their writings, seeing only economic potential in landscapes. Women’s discourse instead melded politics and the personal, in which women—such as Flora Tristan and Maria Callcott Graham—provided a different way to reinvent America. Their writings were laden with descriptions of social, political, and military upheaval caused by independence movements. Some female travel writers realized that their identities “in the contact zone reside[d] in their sense of personal independence, property, and social authority.” Ideas of gender— in their ability to interpret intersections of identity and landscape—will thus have a significant role in my dissertation.

The purpose of the study is to explore the intersections of place, time, and entertainment in rural Nebraska from the beginning of European American settlement in the late 19th century to the end of the Great Depression. By examining types of entertainment, we can better understand the historical geographies of individual and collective human experience. With such knowledge, we can also then recognize how entertainment reflected social life, sense of place, place attachment, and the intricacies and larger scale trends of race, ethnicity, gender, age, class, nationality, and religion. A portrayal of how a wide variety of rural Nebraskans spent their free time in their everyday lives reveals how such activities were expressed on the landscape. A variety of sources are mined and examined through primarily qualitative methods. The acknowledgment that research is subjective and selective is present in researching, writing, and producing the narrative. The study fills a large gap in the geographic
literature and adds to the understanding of day to day life in the past on the Great Plains. Literature from a variety of disciplines informs the research. Such a study also adds to scholarship by incorporating contemporary approaches, methodologies, and theories, such as humanistic, post-modern, feminist, and post-colonial, to the case study approach that has been criticized for being too descriptive and lacking theory.

Following this introduction, chapters examine types of leisure activities. Chapter 1, entitled “Everyday Leisure Activities,” explores a wide variety of common entertainments available to people living in and visiting rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The rest of the study examines specific activities via case studies. The Walter Savidge Amusement Company in the early 20th century is the heart of Chapter 2, “Traveling Shows.” Chapter 3, “Ethnic-Religious Entertainment: The German Russian Mennonites of Henderson” demonstrates how leisure activities could vary from the mainstream depending upon a group’s ethnic, national, and religious characteristics. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the state’s amusement parks in the early 20th century by discovering the personality of The Long Pine Amusement Park during its first eight years. The last section, “The Broader Context,” sifts out the common themes of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, nationality, and religion and how they were manifested in entertainment. Through such a framework of study, we better comprehend the elaborate intersections of a human’s individual experience with the historical geographies of rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
When we now imagine what people did in their leisure time (if they even had any) in rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, we presume that they had few options. We assume that activities had to be creative and self-initiated. Maybe we picture European American homesteader families gathered in their small sod shanty on a Saturday night, dancing barefoot, by candlelight, to father’s fiddle playing. Our limited perceptions of that time evoke a situation in which people were so isolated on the vast prairie that they did not have much opportunity to socialize. If they did, it is taken for granted that it was with a neighbor or local community, and involved activities such as sewing bees or church and school activities.
But such a picture is inaccurate and incomplete. A variety of entertainments were available to people living in rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. You could read, garden, visit, play chess, socialize at the bar, go to a party, be a member of a club, and enjoy drinks and edibles with others. Perhaps you were a youngster who liked to go to the playground, compete in dandelion digging contests, or be involved in the local Blue Birds chapter. Maybe you were fond of group activities such as going to Sunday School, traveling to the state fair, or enjoying a national holiday. If you were really adventurous you might like to try new types of entertainment like aviation, automobile touring, and moving pictures. Perhaps you enjoyed recreations such as dancing, music, or sports.

Whatever leisure activities you preferred, entertainment at individual, small group, and large group scales was available. But many leisure activities are not so easily categorized into a distinct scale. Socially partaking in drinks and edibles, for instance, depending upon the circumstances could be an individual, small group, or large group endeavor. You could play cards solitarily, with a few friends, or numerous people. No matter what the scale at which you participated in leisure activities, one thing is for sure: people living in and visiting rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, just like people now, had a wide variety of entertainment options from which to choose.

SOLITARY ENTERTAINMENT

You could enjoy numerous types of entertainment by yourself. Reading was perhaps one of the most common of these activities. Newspapers were common in the smallest of communities. When ownership changed, the new entrepreneurs frequently
changed the name of the paper to distinguish it from previous versions. In Long Pine, over a course of sixty years, the town’s paper was called *The Republican Journal, The Long Pine Journal*, and *The Brown County Republican*.

Newspapers were versatile. To their readers, they not only provided news, but also, with brief serial stories, such as those featuring Buster Brown or those by Jack London, supplied a source of amusement and adventure. Several serials appeared in the smallest of community newspapers, frequently taking up several pages of print. When one serial was about to end and another begin, the companies that provided the fiction began a marketing campaign. Several weeks, if not several months, before the first installment of a story was printed, advertisements for the upcoming serial appeared in the newspaper. An ad for *Peg O’ the Ring* (Figure 2) appeared in the July 7, 1916 issue of *The Long Pine Journal*. Hailed as “one of the best pieces of fiction ever written,” the serial would depict the saga of Peg, a wretched, circus animal trainer’s daughter that fate had stricken with a “strange malady.” You didn’t want to miss this serial, for it was sure to be full of drama, emotion, and intrigue!

The content of *Peg O’ the Ring* is indicative of serial stories popular in the U.S. in the 1910s and early 1920s. Many serial stories—whether they appeared in newspapers, magazines, or silent movies—contained an adventurous plot that focused on the trials and tribulations of a young single working-class woman struggling to live a respectable life. More often than not, despite immense challenges, the heroine eventually conquers her challenges, earning her “dignity, respect, and power.” People perceived such themes differently. Middle-class men and women regularly shuddered at the atrocious
The Sins of the Parents
Are Visited Upon the Children

So says the old adage—and in the case of “Peg O’ the Ring” it was true. Through the sins of Peg’s mother, Peg was afflicted with a strange malady which no one could solve. It led Peg and her admirers into heaps of trouble, trials and tribulations that no one could forestall. When Peg’s mother, the skilled handler of wild animals, was attacked—and killed, it left—

A Strange Fate in Store for “Peg”

This fate hung over Peg like a dark cloud, threatening her at the most inopportune moments. It drew her into dangers. It drove her friends to despair. It—but why tell more—you can learn it all by reading our new serial—

Peg O’ the Ring

A Thrilling Story of the Circus and Circus People

You’ll Miss One of the Best Pieces of Fiction Ever Written if You Don’t Read It!

Figure 5. Source: The Long Pine Journal, July 7, 1916, pg. 1.
situations that the pitiful, delicate young women often were forced to go through; young working-class single women commonly celebrated the possibility that they could be happy and successful with such a life.\textsuperscript{54}

In addition to their home newspaper, people took pleasure in reading magazines and other newspapers. Newspaper reading was so popular in Long Pine, that a visiting reporter from \textit{The Omaha Bee} noted that in the community his paper was purchased at twice the rate of any of the other Omaha papers.\textsuperscript{55} Community newspapers frequently offered discounted prices to readers who would add a subscription of another periodical onto their order. In 1901, a one year subscription, made in advance, to \textit{The Long Pine Journal} cost $1.00; you could receive annual subscriptions to both \textit{The New York Weekly Tribune} and \textit{The Long Pine Journal} for only $0.30 more. \textit{The Journal’s} “Clubbing List” included periodicals, such as \textit{The State Journal, Nebraska Farmer, The Homestead}, and \textit{McClure’s}.\textsuperscript{56}

Over the next few decades, \textit{The Long Pine Journal} continued to offer “clubbing lists” discounts. In December 1914, just in time for the Christmas gift-giving season, the newspaper, combined with magazine publishers throughout the country, gave “one of the greatest subscription bargain offers” (Figure 3). For a measly $1.75, nearly the price of one year’s subscription to \textit{The Long Pine Journal}, you could purchase a club package which included three magazines and one year’s subscription to the paper. One club even consisted of four magazines and the year subscription! You could choose from thirty-five packages. The magazines covered a wide range of topics, including drama, inventions, and vegetables. Club #16 offered a little something for the whole family, with subscriptions to \textit{Boy’s Magazine, Home Life}, and \textit{Gentlewoman}. The package, Club
#12, containing *Green’s Fruit Grower, Everyday Life*, and *Farm Life* would probably be enjoyed by men. Housewives might subscribe to Club #34, which included *McCall’s, Everyday Life*, and *Household Guest*. A nice bonus of this package was that *McCall’s* would throw in a free sewing pattern!\(^{57}\)

Magazines also offered discounted prices for packages of multiple magazine subscriptions. Such was the case with *Today’s Magazine for Women* (Figure 4). In 1914, if you didn’t want *The Long Pine Journal*, you could purchase any of the clubs that *Today’s* presented and still pay less than those available through Long Pine’s paper. Packages ranged in price from $0.60 to $1.60. The most expensive that *Today’s* offered was a yearly subscription to *Today’s* and *Woman’s Home Companion*. Like *McCall’s*, *Today’s* would gift a complementary pattern with the purchase of a subscription.\(^{58}\) In 1916, civic minded Christian church women had even more incentive to buy a subscription (Figure 5). Even though you had to inquire for more details about how to receive the money, the possibility existed that the magazine might donate $100 to the church of your choice.\(^{59}\)

According to the frequency of advertisements in *The Long Pine Journal, Today’s* was one of the most popular magazines in the mid 1910s. The magazine’s promoters presented the periodical as essential and multidimensional, providing women with vital information on a range of topics including mothering, fancy work, and frugal housekeeping. With stories and artwork, the magazine served as a source of entertainment for “every woman who ha[d] at heart the health, welfare, progress and happiness of her family.”\(^{60}\)
$1.75—Our Paper and Any One of These Clubs—$1.75

Several leading publishers of magazines have joined with us in one of the greatest subscription bargains ever put out in this country. Through this combination everybody will be able to get a yearly subscription to three magazines in combination with our weekly paper at practically the same price of our paper alone. In this list you will find forty different periodicals formed into thirty-five different clubs. Each club has 3 magazines, except one Special Club which has 4 magazines; some of these magazines sell for as much as $1 a year. They are all good and cover a large variety of choice reading matter, including History, Music, Religion, Education, Fashions, Fancy Needlework, Illustrated Current Events, Home Decorations, Fiction, Literature, Drama, Art, Science, Inventions, General Farming, Dairy Farming, Livestock, Vegetables, Fruit and Poultry.

On account of the splendid contract we have made with the publishers of these magazines, we are able to give our readers a choice of any one of the clubs in combination with our paper one year for $1.75. Just 25c more than the price of our paper alone.

This offer is made to everybody. If you have never subscribed to our paper before, we ask you to take advantage of this offer. If you are a subscriber to our paper we ask you to renew so that you too, may get 3 magazines extra. Look over the list and select the club you like best. Send your order today or give your order to our representative or call at our office when in town. If you are a new subscriber to any of these magazines and want to renew just send your order to us and we will have your subscription extended. If your subscription to our paper is past due, we advise you to pay up and take advantage of this bargain. If you are in the habit of buying your magazine through other channels, we ask you to justify compare our clubs and prices with that of any other offer you receive. You, no doubt, are now a subscriber to some of these periodicals. You can save money by sending your renewal order to us. Here is a chance to get your home paper and a yearly supply of good reading at a real bargain. If you want one or more of these magazines sent to different addresses, just mention it.

Tell All Your Friends and Neighbors About This Big Offer.
Figure 7.

Figure 8.
Reading materials for children were also common in the early 20th century. *American Boy* and *The Youth’s Companion* (Figure 6) were popular magazines in the mid-1910s. Similar to other periodicals of the time, *The Youth’s Companion* featured serial stories, information geared specifically to different genders, and news on medicine and science. The promoters of the magazine tried to set it apart from others by featuring material that appealed to all ages and members of the nuclear family, and by issuing weekly, not monthly, editions.61

Eventually the magazines and newspapers were useful in other ways. The home that Iris Jackson grew up in near Purdum, Nebraska, for instance, contained a kitchen that was papered with flour paste and pages of *The Youth Companion*.62

![Image of The Youth's Companion cover](image)

**Figure 9.** Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, December 18, 1914, pg. 4.

Books provided reading pleasure for all ages. In Long Pine from the 1910s on in
you could purchase books at William B. Naylor’s little novelty store (Figures 7 and 8). William, who more commonly known by his nickname “Red,” ran a small store filled with entertaining, inexpensive items, similar to those available in contemporary dollar stores. In his shop in June 1916, for instance, you could purchase a “beautifully illustrated” book on the Mexican-American War for only $1.00. Some of the most popular books during the 1910s were those with war themes, including H.G. Well’s *Over the Top* and Robert W. Service’s *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man*. Other well-liked books included Zane Grey’s *Wildfire* and Edgar Rice Burrough’s *Tarzan of the Apes*. You might even be able to purchase some of Robert Frost’s or Ezra Pound’s published works of poetry at Naylor’s Novel Shop.

Figure 10. Naylor’s Novel Shop, 1930s.

Figure 11. Inside Naylor’s Novelty Shop, 1930s.

Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.

**SOLITARY AND SMALL GROUP ENTERTAINMENT**

In the 19th and early 20th centuries in rural Nebraska, there were many activities that you could enjoy both by yourself and in a small group. Though reading was often a solitary amusement, small groups-- such as those made up of families and school
children—might read together. Both individuals and small groups could enjoy billiard hall games, cards, chess, crafts, gardening, and toys.

Though many with conservative views saw the leisure activities as taboo, many people enjoyed billiard hall games, cards, and chess. As a male dominated space and place, billiard parlors were common in many communities. Games like Snooker (Figure 9) were among the many amusements that men enjoyed at billiard halls. Other small games, such as chess and card playing, were not as gender or place exclusive as billiards. Some considered chess to be a more civilized, intellectual, higher class endeavor. Though playing cards was not as popular as it would be by the mid 20th century, many enjoyed a good game of Bridge, Euchre, Pitch, or Gin Rummy.

![Did you ever play Snooker?](image)

*Figure 12. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 12, 1924, pg. 12.*

Individuals and small groups also could take pleasure in crafts and handiwork, like sewing and quilting bees. Some liked making stylish fashions. Occasionally, you could fabricate apparel and accessories using nature’s materials. Helen E. Storms’
grandparents, from the town of Western in Saline County, were resourceful when they made jewelry beads. Helen recalled:

Grandmother Sawyer would sometimes make rose petal beads. Grandfather would roll them in the evenings. Wild rose petals were run through a sausage grinder with a fine blade. Salt was added for curing which caused them to become dark brown or black. The petals and salt were mixed well and allowed to dry somewhat. Overnight it was kept in a cloth bag so that it didn’t dry out too much. The mixture was formed into balls about the size of a bean and shaped by hand. There were strung on wire, pins or hairpins and allowed to dry for several days. The rose petal beads were very pretty, especially, when they were strung with black or gold or other colored beads.

Gardening was an often a gendered activity that could be both purposeful and leisurely. If a garden’s main purpose was to serve as a kitchen garden, providing vegetables for a family’s food, women were usually the ones to plant, nurture, tend, and harvest it. Whether or not caring for a kitchen garden was considered to be entertaining depended upon the woman and her preferences. Certainly accounts exist in which horticultural indigenous women, such as those from the Omaha nation, celebrated tending their gardens. Gardening was more of a form of entertainment when people used the plants as a source of aesthetic and olfactory pleasure. Men were more likely to be involved in gardening when it involved adding trees, shrubs, and bushes to beautify a home’s outdoor landscape.
Whether or not you viewed gardening as entertaining was beside the point when it came to times of war. During the Great War, the American government encouraged civilians to increase their gardening efforts by planting war gardens (Figure 10). By diligently tending, producing, and consuming food out of a home garden, citizens might aid the war effort by freeing manufactured foods to nourish and strengthen the American military. Home front patriots could help win the war by being faithful to their victory gardens.

Figure 13. Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, May 3, 1918, pg. 5.
As a child, playing with toys could be entertaining whether you were by yourself or with a group of others. In the late 19th and early 20th century, children normally had only a few toys. Ava Speese Day remembered the playthings that were around when she was a child in the 1910s living in rural DeWitty in Cherry County:

Toys were simple, all girls had dolls, the most loved often the rag doll. Celeste had one made of an old purple “portiere” that she absolutely refused to part with. Baseballs, of course, [were common] though rubber balls got crayon marks to resemble the horsehide [version] sometimes. Home made sleds with strap-iron runners were more common than the catalogue variety.66

Ava Speese Day’s early childhood was spent with her family near the Brownlee and DeWitty communities in southwestern Cherry County. Since they were exoduster communities made up of African American homesteaders, Brownlee and DeWitty were distinctive communities in rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Speeses lived closer to DeWitty, a small settlement (Figure 11) ten miles north and west of Brownlee that existed from 1907 to 1936. During that time, DeWitty was the state’s largest and most permanent settlement of African American homesteaders.67 In 1912, an estimated seventy-nine African American homesteads were located near the community. By 1913, 183 African Americans lived in the area.68
If times were especially hard economically on the parents, they gave their children toys only once a year, at Christmas. Even then, it was not guaranteed that the children would receive multiple toys. Nevertheless, many youngsters cherished the exciting holiday. Ava Speese Day relates:

We looked forward eagerly to Christmas, dad and mom always managed to have a toy for each one [of we 18 children] as well as needed clothing. At Christmas our own stockings were found hanging from our own drawer of the chiffonier. Santa always ate whatever had been set out for him. Lena was heartbroken the year she received teen-age presents instead of toys. An unforgettable Christmas found the family with no toys. The other kids got caps, scarves, mittens, stockings, whatever they needed most. I had been sick quite
awhile with asthma, unable to attend school. I got a beautiful bisque doll. Mom made her a dress of red silkish material, left over scraps from better times. I don’t think the others were jealous because I got a toy while they did not, dad and mom explained that they could go outdoors and play while I had to stay in bed. 70 And I couldn’t wear outdoor clothing so I got the doll to keep me company while I was at home and they at school. 71

Figure 15. Children of the Speese and Meehan families gathered to celebrate Christmas in 1914 at William Meehan’s sod house near the Brownlee and DeWitty communities. Source: Ava Speese Day, “Ava Speese Day Story,” in Sod House Memories Volumes I-II-III, 274.

SMALL GROUP ENTERTAINMENT

Other types of activities provided children with entertainment and recreation, in social settings. Because they spent so much of their time there, youngsters often got much of their entertainment at school and school functions. When her family lived on the 80-acre homestead seven miles northwest of Brownlee, Ava Speese Day and her siblings
attended the Riverview, District 113 School. In addition to serious studying, the students enjoyed many fun times. Ms. Day recollected:

In [the] front [of the schoolhouse] there was lots of room for pump-pump-pump away, kitty wants a corner, baseball, etc. If a teacher caught us throwing spitballs we had to stand in a corner, or she spanked our hand with a ruler. It was a pretty bad offense if you got spanked, teacher sent a note home with you and you got another spanking.

[We had] good teachers but of course Uncle Bill [Meehan] was our favorite. When he was teaching he meant it and we knew it, but come noon, he would join in the roughhousing.

School graduations were an especially exciting time. Since it meant that the pupils could soon attend high school, eighth grade graduations at rural schools were an important event that brought communities together. Often called the annual school picnic, these graduations, complete with ice cream socials, provided numerous activities, like softball and playground games, for all ages.

Ava Speese Day witnessed the crowds of people that attended the eighth grade graduations at the Riverview, District 113 School near Brownlee. She remembered:

There were not enough seats to go around at the first Graduation I remember. They brought in boards and laid them across chairs, and the spring seats from the wagons. There were recitations, speeches, singing, I still hear them singing, “Wait for the wagon, wait for the wagon, and we’ll all take a ride.”
The young men graduated in new suits, and the girls had ribbons in their hair, long sashes and full skirts. Everyone seemed to glow. This was the last 10th grade taught in country schools, thereafter you went only through the 8th grade and then to town for further learning.75

Attitudes towards child rearing changed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Progressives adopted popular philosophies of the time, including those from conservation and nature movements. Researchers, the psychology profession, medical workers, and society in general urged parents to get their children out of the home and into the great outdoors. Gone was the day in which the masses viewed nature as a dangerous and uncivilized wilderness. The European American populace had finally conquered nature. The West had been won. In the newly domesticated America, no longer should children be cooped up in the household, weakened by their doting mother’s spoiling. Boys, in danger of their mother’s emasculating nurturing, especially should be free to strengthen themselves through outdoor recreation.76 Camping, for instance, was viewed as an excellent form of masculine outdoor recreation. Quick to jump on the social bandwagon, the company that sold Grape-Nuts advertised its cereal as the perfect sustenance to help nourish strapping young boys in their outdoor adventures (Figure 13).

New types of children’s formal outdoor activities boomed from the 1910s through the 1930s. Outdoor contests, such as dandelion digging competitions, got the children engaged with, and strengthened by, nature, not to mention active in beautifying lawns.77 Communities constructed playground equipment in parks, with mothers taking turns organizing and supervising groups of children at play. Proponents of child development—such as child psychologists and Christian missionaries—created organized
Good for Boys

Camping time is a time of joy for the youngsters. Very few things are needed for a cracking good time - a tent, blankets, plain, stout clothing, and plenty of good, wholesome food.

A splendid food to take along is Grape-Nuts

It's an ideal camping food - nourishing, appetizing and always ready to eat.

This delicious wheat and barley food contains great nutrition with little bulk. It is made from the natural, whole grains, retaining all of their vital mineral salts, particularly necessary for building health and strength in growing boys and girls.

Grape-Nuts is ready to serve direct from the package - just add good milk or cream. Summer rains won't hurt the supply - packages are wax-wrapped and moisture-proof.

"There's a Reason" for Grape-Nuts

-sold by Grocers everywhere.
wilderness play experiences in the form of youth camps and clubs. The Boy Scouts of America, created in 1910, (Figure 14) was just one of many organizations active in Nebraska.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 17.** Boy Scouts of America recruiting station for Troop Number 1 at Valentine, 1910. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.

Because society believed that both sexes could benefit from nature, youth clubs were created for both boys and girls. In the 1920s and 1930s, Girl Scout troops could be found in many Nebraska communities. Many females joined the Blue Birds and its counterpart for older girls, the Camp Fire Girls. Like the Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls were present throughout the state. You would find them, for example, at their campground near Kearney or, in the 1920s, exploring and learning in the canyons near Long Pine (Figure 15).

Child development specialists Dr. Luther H. Gulick and Charlotte Gulick established the Camp Fire Girls and its feeder Blue Birds, in 1910. The Camp Fire Girls organization “was the first national, non-sectarian, interracial organization for girls in the United States.” In the 1910s and 1920s, the Camp Fire Girls was the country’s most popular girls’ organization, even more so than the Girl Scouts, a club created in 1912.\(^{78}\)
Indicative of the time, the Camp Fire Girls organization focused on intersections of youth development, nature, gender, class, and race. It married the former Victorian ideal of femaleness and the later Progressive ideal that children should be robust, having time to play and develop in nature. By teaching young women to idealize hard work, contentedness, and striving to make the home a happy place, the Camp Fire Girls organization showed that women could be effective, yet still feminine, in both the private and public spheres.

The organization mirrored dominant attitudes towards class and race. The group utilized European American conceptualizations of Native American symbology, lore, and myth in the young women’s development. Institutionalizing the white man’s imagery of indigenousness, Camp Fire Girls learned so called traditional indigenous survival techniques, ceremonies, songs, customs, chants, and dress. Meant to resemble native language, their slogan of “Wo-He-Lo” (work, health, love) represented the most important tenets of the Girls.

The organization was so popular that various authors wrote a series of more than eighty Camp Fire Girl adventure series novels between 1910 and 1940. The books taught...
Sample Themes Found in
Jane L. Stewart’s 1914 *The Camp Fire Girls on the March*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To have the characteristics of a &quot;nigger driver&quot; is something to be proud of.</td>
<td>109</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too much charity ruins the receivers.</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should be content with what material goods you have.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This contentedness is a key to happiness.</td>
<td>145</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is part of the female's gender role to feed others, especially hardworking men.</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is part of the female's gender role to take care of and help others.</td>
<td>90</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard work can solve any problem.</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard work can make you prosperous.</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard work makes you happy.</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laziness causes problems.</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laziness can make you poor.</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.</td>
<td>106-107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp Fire Girls are smart, quick, and witty.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearly all other people are liable to be the opposite.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should be courteous, but straight-forward and tell it like it is.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.

and reinforced the organization’s principles. Some of the early books, or volumes, in the series include the 1914 *The Camp Fire Girls in the Woods, The Camp Fire Girls on the Farm, The Camp Fire Girls at Long Lake, The Camp Fire Girls in the Mountains, The Camp Fire Girls on the March, and The Camp Fire Girls at the Seashore*. Jane L. Stewart’s *The Camp Fire Girls on the March*, also known as *Bessie King’s Test of Friendship*, espouses many of the regular themes of the organization (Table 1). These themes include the idea that hard work can solve any problem as well as make one
prosperous and wise. The author likewise implies that laziness can do the opposite. The narrative highlights the organization’s hegemonic beliefs towards gender, class, and race. To have the qualities of a “nigger driver,” for instance, was something to be proud of.\(^{82}\)

Parties and celebrations of events such as birthdays and graduations were reason for social gatherings. Often people got together informally just to visit, entertain themselves, and enjoy one another’s company. Get-togethers were common in the DeWitty and Brownlee area. Ava Speese Day recalled activities at the socials.

'[T]here were recitations, songs, readings, etc…. by adults. I remember grandpa paraphrasing “The boy stood on the burning deck,” with “a boy stood on the railroad track”’ He could be counted to lend comedy, as when at a “hard time party,” he pulled a handkerchief out of his inner coat pocket, and pulled and pulled and pulled and pulled, at… three yards, it was a riot.

Dad, Albert Riley, Boss Woodson and Harrison Steele sang not only at [the] Sociables but around the country as well. They were a good looking quartette. Dad could sing tenor or go way down on “down in the deep, let me sleep when I die.”\(^{83}\)

Visiting was a popular way to pass the time and socialize, especially for females. Certain fashions existed especially for the purpose of visiting. Two women’s outfits appropriate for visiting appeared in the July 3\(^{rd}\), 1924 issue of The Long Pine Journal. Supposedly, a white silk dress, with a sleeveless dropped-waist blouse and long skirt, would be perfect for short visits or morning homemaking. If you were going visiting, a formal activity, you mustn’t forget to wear gloves (Figure 16). A pleated sleeveless
frock, also with a dropped-waist blouse and long skirt, complete with a shoulder bow would be fashionable to wear for afternoon visits or dances (Figure 17). Unfortunately, it is unclear why stylists considered these fashions appropriate for visiting.

Visiting sometimes literally took place. In the late 19th century, a windmill near the main street of Long Pine, for instance, was nicknamed the “Gossiping Mill” due to the regular occurrence of people gathering around it to visit.\textsuperscript{84} An individual’s private movements often appeared in the “Purely Personal” section of the newspaper. Martha White “made her bi-monthly visit to her parents Saturday and Sunday, and returned” in the spring of 1901. That same week both Mr. and Mrs. E.W. Hahn traveled to Chadron for a ball while Bassett’s Miss Ollie Burke “visited J.L. Vargison [the previous week] and returned home Monday.”\textsuperscript{85} Everyone’s private business was everybody else’s public business.
If you wanted to formally visit someone in the late 19th century and first decade of the 20th century, you had to follow special etiquette. In order to portray themselves in certain elevated social standings, women, and some men, utilized calling cards to follow proper behavior guidelines. Calling—a structured, formal version of visiting—and calling cards were very much reflections of gender and class in Victorian, including Western Victorian, society. Although both men and women “called,” it was the females who were socially required to call on others in order “to hold Society together.” Most of the time males exchanged calling cards with other men, and females exchanged them with other women. Females used the cards much more frequently than men. Proper social etiquette, an essential quality for females who wanted to demonstrate, or at least give the illusion of high class and social standing, demanded calling and the use of calling cards. Supposedly, only members of “polite society” and the middle or upper classes owned and utilized calling cards. However, people who aspired to ladies and gentlemen practiced calling card behavior as much as, if not more, than those who were actual members.

The format of a card depended upon your gender and the person(s) the card represented. A man might have his own, a woman might have her own, and a married couple might have a joint card with the names of both the husband and wife. Traditionally only the card holder’s name and, if applicable, the person’s title were printed on the card. However, “in the late Victorian era it was not uncommon for calling cards to… include engraved monochrome graphics or even color lithography.” Although both men and women used the cards, men’s cards were more frequently pragmatic and used in business settings, similar to the contemporary practice and purpose
of business cards. Ladies’ and couples’ cards, often sized two and one-half by three and one-half inches, were larger than others. Gentlemen’s cards normally were one and one-quarter by three inches. Cards frequently were unglazed, made of white or cream pasteboard, and could have engraved or embossed printing with Old English lettering (Figure 18).  

![Image of a calling card](image)

**Figure 21. An example of what a man's calling card might look like.**

European Americans found function and societal interaction through various group organizations. Many communities throughout the state had fraternal organizations like the Modern Woodmen of America (MWA), Degree of Honor (D. of H.), and the Ancient Order of Workmen (AOUW). In Benedict in 1907, for instance, these three groups combined their resources of $3,000 to build a shared fraternal hall that later became the town hall.  

There were many fraternities in Long Pine at the turn of the century. If accepted, you could be part of the Royal Arch Masons and/or Independent Order of Odd Fellows lodge. The Great Army of the Republic (GAR) met in the upper room of a main street building. As of 1901, other civic societies, each with their own Long Pine division, met regularly on one or two specified days of the month. Headed by W. Ritterbush, Camp Number 4262 of the Modern Woodmen of America met the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. Some organizations were not as well established as others and
had yet to schedule specific meeting times. Lodge 4250 of The Princes of the Orient, for instance, advertised in the May 3, 1901 *Long Pine Journal* that it would meet “whenever sufficient candidates are found to feed the pups.”92

Numerous women’s organizations existed. You might join a literary club, the Women’s Club, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), Daughters of Rebekah, and/or the Woman’s Relief Corps. In Benedict, you might want to become a member of the Garden Club, the Birthday Club, the Dorcus Club, the Gay 90s Club, and/or the Stitch and Chatter Club. The Stitch and Clatter Club grew out of a situation during the Great War when women got together to roll bandages for the troops. The women enjoyed the company so much that they continued to meet after the war, bringing along their mending. Over time, when the women had less mending to do, they renamed their club the Pitch and Chatter Club, most likely trading mending for card playing.93

**SMALL AND LARGE GROUP ENTERTAINMENT**

Churches and schools were often the initial organizations in newly created communities, and school and church activities provided settlers with some of their first opportunities for entertainment. Ladies Aids frequently organized benefits and events that also helped to promote socialization and close in the wide-open spaces.94

Prior to building a church, services were often held in homes. In the late 1900s and early 1910s, Christians of various denominations in the Brownlee and DeWitty areas gathered together in homes to have services and prayer meetings.95 A Catholic priest from Valentine sometimes traveled to Long Pine and held mass in nearby homes.
Episcopalian Reverend Bates lived in a building on Long Pine’s main street and held services and Sunday School there.  

Long Pine citizens also used other buildings to serve as their temporary houses of worship. Methodists held their first meetings at the Railroad Eating House. Reverend I.H. Skinner named his home Pilgrim’s Retreat since his residence first housed the community’s church services. Later he would allow both the Congregationalists and the Methodists to use his hardware store for a meeting place. The Methodists used the structure on Sunday morning and the Congregationalists occupied it in the afternoon.

In the early communities, settlers mixed church and state. School houses regularly served as temporary church buildings. An anonymous person who grew up in rural southwestern Nebraska in the 1890s and 1900s remembered how formal Christian gatherings were held:

Our spiritual needs were well cared for in those early days, with Sunday School in rural areas. Very often a minister from Ogallala, a distance of twenty miles away, or from Grant, twelve miles from our little school house, would be there for Sunday services. My mother painted a lovely decoration sign with ‘Welcome’ on it, which hung in the school for many years. It now hangs in our museum in Grant.

Congregations organized social gatherings to fundraise for their church. In DeWitty in the early 1910s, after a pastor, Reverend O.J. Burckhardt, came from Lincoln, locals held a bee to raise funds to construct a church building. So many supported the benefit that they were able to quickly construct the church, St. James Reformed
Methodist. Locals helped to furnish the house of worship, with furniture, two stoves, and a large Bible. ¹⁰²

If donations were not an option, fundraisers might also gather monies to purchase church supplies. In 1901, the Fairview School near Long Pine held a social that grossed a profit of $14 to go towards the purchase of an organ for a nearby church. Possibly they eventually would buy the organ from the A. Hospe Company in Omaha that offered pianos, organs, and other musical instruments as well as strings, sheet music, and Regina music boxes with slot attachments. ¹⁰³

When churches were finally built and furnished, different types of events and socials brought the congregations and the public together. An annual Children’s Day exercise, such as the one held in Long Pine on the evening of Sunday, June 19th, 1904, could pack an entire church with family, friends, and general supporters. ¹⁰⁴ At the Methodist Church you could be as involved as you chose. The church offered numerous activities, including Sunday School, morning worship, Junior League, Epworth League, sermons, midweek meetings, and prayer meetings. At the Congregational Church you could participate in Sunday School, morning and evening preaching services, Junior Endeavor, and Senior Endeavor. ¹⁰⁵

LARGE GROUP ENTERTAINMENT

Community celebrations, fairs, and holiday celebrations provided a generous amount of amusements to large groups. Settlements frequently held community celebrations that had activities for all ages. Old Settlers Picnics were common throughout much of Nebraska. Though the festivities were originally focused on commemorating the brave, bold efforts of the area’s European American pioneers, all
ages participated in the festivities. The Picnics were a fun time especially for youngsters. Not only did they get to go to town, which was an adventure in itself, but they got to play while they were there. Gustav (Gus) Fritz and his siblings, who lived near the community of Western in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, had a glorious time when his family went to town for Old Settlers Picnics.

On picnic mornings, our whole family climbed into the lumber wagon. With hay for the horses and a basket of food for the family, we spent the whole day in town, the same as most other families did. There was a pump on the corner where the Community Hall now stands and we pumped water into a long trough for the horses. Ball games, horseshoe playing, and visiting made the day pass quickly. Mr Iodence designed a board, padded with straw, through which balls were throw in order to ring a bell. At one time the Laufman brothers used their 16 horse steam engine to make the merry-go-round go. There was a lot of fun and excitement when some of the boys would try to slow down the merry-go-round, the belt would slip and smoke would be seen curling up from the wood. Merry-go-round tickets usually cost 5 cents.

Since fairs contained numerous activities for all ages, they were often a well-attended event. As in other states, fairs were so popular that they were organized at the local, county, and state levels. The 1914 Springview fair, which doubled as a homecoming, included numerous activities such as baseball games, a carnival, concerts, horse races, a hot air balloon demonstration, and political speeches (Figure 19). That
ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS
IN RACE PURSES AND FREE ATTRACTIONS

SECOND ANNUAL

Springview Race Meet & Carnival

September 3-4

Ten Hours of Fast Racing
It will take five hours each day to dispose of the race program. You will see the largest field of horses of the season on the fastest track in this section.

Balloon Ascension Daily
Prof. Scott Ryan, the most daring and successful Aeronaut in the middle west, will present his sensational and spectacular high altitude leap.

Other High Class Free Acts

Big Political Rallies
September 3 -- Speakers of state wide fame representing the democrats.
September 4 -- Candidates for state office will speak for the republicans.

Speaking will commence promptly at 10 a.m.

Great BALL GAMES
BURTON vs SPRINGVIEW
AINSWORTH vs SPRINGVIEW

SPRINGVIEW CONCERT BAND
Will furnish plenty of good music each day and will give an open air street concert, with minstrel songs and jokes each evening.

Race Meet, Carnival, Fair Home Coming, Ball Tournament and Political Rallies

48 HOURS OF FUN AND HIGH CLASS AMUSEMENT

Figure 22. Source: The Long Pine Journal, August 28, 1914, pg. 4.

Figure 24. Source: The Long Pine Journal, July 26, 1923, pg. 8.
same year, to the west in Valentine, the Cherry County Fair featured bronco riding (Figure 20). Though it was a long journey for most rural residents, the Nebraska State Fair in Lincoln was also popular (Figure 21). Railroad companies frequently reduced prices on fares going to Lincoln in late August and early September. Often the only reason that people traveled to the state’s capital was to go to the fair. The State Fair offered amusement and recreation to attendees. It also served as a source of pride, by showcasing the state’s agricultural, industrial, and educational resources.  

National holiday celebrations also gave large groups reason to entertain themselves. The celebration of the Fourth of July was a major event in many communities. Long Pine hosted an especially large 4th of July celebration in 1904. The town’s citizens invited people of Brown, Rock, and Keya Paha counties to attend the “Grand Tri-County Celebration” that would “be the biggest celebration ever attempted in the three counties (Figure 22).” People truly had an adventurous time commemorating the nation’s birthday. According to H.P. McKnight, M.D. “to properly celebrate” the holiday you must purchase, available from him, two necessities: paint and fireworks. But
you must be careful with your purchases. Towards the bottom of the newspaper ad, the doctor noted that “after the 4th we will sell you liniment for your wounds.”

In Brownlee, the 1887 Independence Day gala was one of the first and largest celebrations in the community. In 1946, Charles S. Reece, one of Cherry County’s first European American settlers, told a detailed account of the exoduster community’s festivities:

An impromptu band was organized from the residents of the locality, and lumber for a dancing floor was hauled from Wood Lake. They had a ball game, horse racing, dancing, and singing. Miss Mamie Lee, teacher in District No. 37, was selected to read the Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the Constitution.

In one of the races, Miss Rose McCutcheon, wearing a new fashioned divided skirt, and her blonde curls flying in the wind, attracted much attention. The fashion of divided skirts became general and by the turn of the century, the side saddle passed out of the picture. Miss Mamie Lee mounted on her brother Frank’s race mare, “Pet” and riding a side saddle also entered the race. Interest in this race was intense. Miss Lee passed under the wire first and was declared the winner. She was presented with a silver mounted riding whip. There were five hundred people in attendance at this first celebration, according to estimates made by those present.

Thanksgiving was another popular national holiday that brought large groups together to socialize. Though many lived through hard times, perhaps because of this
most were indeed thankful and shared their blessings. Ava Speese Day’s family had one exceptional holiday.

One Thanksgiving, Aunt Annie, Illinois, sent our grandparents a dressed goose. Grandma promptly invited ALL the family for dinner. This was about twenty. We walked over to their house through two feet of snow. Mom wrapped the baby warmly, then laid her diagonally on a blanket, folding the corners up over the feet and around her, then lightly laid the top corner over her face. Thinking back, it seems the baby was Lena (Figure 23).  

![Figure 26. From left to right in 1919, Ava, Lena, and Celeste Speese. Source: Ava Speese Day in Sod House Memories Volumes I-II-III, 264.](image)

ENTERTAINMENT ACROSS ALL LEVELS

Some activities spanned the entire spectrum from solitary to large group entertainment. You could enjoy drinks and edibles, music, dancing, moving pictures,
touring, aviation, and sports whether you were by yourself, with a few people, or in a large group.

Drinks and edibles were a usual ingredient of leisure activities. Numerous kinds of church events and socials featured a potluck. In its newspaper advertisements, the Wrigley’s Company tried to persuade people that all kinds of socials, including porch parties, could benefit from having some fresh, long-lasting spearmint gum on hand (Figure 24). The Post Corporation comforted women who might not be able to afford a vacation that there was plenty of joy in having a “staycation” if you had Post Toasties at home (Figure 25).
Drinks were an essential part of leisure. In Long Pine in the 1910s, Coca-Cola and Barma were two popular drinks that you could enjoy anytime. Since there was a Coca-Cola plant in the community, the town’s people were spoiled by the large selection of beverages that they had at their choosing. The factory distributed many types, including Coca-Cola and Barma. No matter what your age, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, race, or religion, as long as you had enough money to buy a bottle, the Coca-
Cola Corporation assured you that its drink could be your drink. Anyone, supposedly, could enjoy this, the national beverage. In 1916 Long Pine, a simple joy of life might merely consist of buying a Coca-Cola at Red Naylor’s Novelties, Confectionary, and Soft Drinks store (Figure 26). After buying one from Red, you might want to sip on it as you took a leisurely stroll around town with friends.113 Perhaps the cocaine in the Coca-Cola added to its addictive popularity.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 29. Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, June 12, 1914, pg. 3.

Starting in 1917, the Long Pine Coca-Cola distributor offered a new drink whose characteristics were indicative of the times. Despite the state’s new law banning alcoholic drinks, people who liked beer could continue to savor the drink, excepting the alcohol, in the form of the Blatz-Milwaukee Brewing Company’s new drink, Barma (Figure 27). Blatz advertised Barma as a grain, full bodied, non-alcoholic beverage that anyone could enjoy any time and any place. With supposed medicinal properties, the beverage could invigorate you emotionally, mentally, and physically.
Figure 30. Source: The Long Pine Journal, May 25, 1917, pg. 5.
In 1917, Blatz launched a huge marketing campaign promoting its product in the newly dry state. From May through August, nearly every weekly issue of The Long Pine Journal contained a Barma ad. The Company assured people of all ages that all types of entertainment could be improved if you were drinking from a bottle with an orange label, red triangle, and white “Barma” font. For the businessman relaxing in his favorite chair at home after a stressful day of work, Barma could be a real pick me up (Figure 28). That’s because it was “a lively, snappy, sparkling, foamy drink… that quenches the thirst, refreshed, exhilarates, revives, and satisfies.” Barma could provide fishermen, “drythroated and thirsty” with “a good long drink” (Figure 29). “After the movies,” everyone, including “ladies and young folks” might enjoy a drink “at the drug store on the way home” or “at home” (Figure 30). Barma would be “the right thing to drink” “[f]or the picnic” (Figure 31). “At the garden” party “real pleasure” could only be complete if you had the beverage in hand (Figure 32). If you didn’t have a bottle along, dry throats were inevitable on a dusty motor tour (Figure 33). Barma could “put new life into those tired muscles... [and] insure the benefits of the game” after a round of golf (Figure 34). While back at camp after hiking or fishing, a quick bottle could fix “frazzled nerves” and provide nourishment for the “hardy camp life” (Figure 35).
Figure 31. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 1, 1917, pg. 5

Figure 32. Source: The Long Pine Journal, July 13, 1917, pg. 4.

Figure 33. Source: The Long Pine Journal, July 20, 1917, pg. 4.

Figure 34. Source: The Long Pine Journal, August 3, 1917, pg. 4.
At parties and get-togethers, some people had favorite drinks and edibles that they, no matter what the social occasion, served. When they hosted, Helen Jochim’s family of David City, who loved to dance polkas and waltzes, liked to dole out Poppy Seed Cake. If someone served you Poppy Seed Cake, or people of an area commonly dished up foods containing poppy seeds, it was likely that many Czechs and Slovaks lived in the area. According to Czech tradition, “you can tell a Czech by the poppy seed in his teeth.”

In the DeWitty area, “sandwiches, cake, cookies and coffee and milk were the general fare at parties.” Occasionally people wanted to serve other foods, but had a limited selection to give to their guests. Ava Speese Day noted that at the socials, “[s]ometimes there was more substantial food. One hostess served sandwiches of muskrat meat but she didn’t tell what it was till after lunch.”

When times were tough, pragmatic entertaining was the rule. During the Great Depression, people often had to make do with fewer ingredients. With the mantra waste-not-want-not making its way into the kitchen, chefs had to use ingredients that were on hand to prepare foods to serve their guests. Depression Soup, an entrée that used few basic ingredients like bacon and milk, and corn cob jelly were common foods that hostesses might serve when guests came to visit.

Music was a catalyst for entertainment. In rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, nearly every community had its own band. Community bands, at the minimum, were made up of four members and a brass and percussion section. Sometimes the percussion section was one bass drummer. The band frequently did not have a special name and simply went by the town’s name, such as the one from Stuart
suitably being referred to as the Stuart Band. Since they often were made up primarily of brass instruments, the band might also be referred to as the (Community’s Name) Brass Band. The bands frequently played at events both in town and in nearby communities. Sometimes a community band would play regularly, giving weekly walking concerts up and down main street. The Lushton band frequently held concerts at the intersection of the town’s primary roads.124 It was not until the 1920s and 1930s, when school bands became popular, that community bands began to dwindle.

Having special musical talent made you very popular. Often girls from the community who were capable pianists played in opera houses during silent movies, if a player piano was not used.125 Lucinda Dixon, daughter of Hector Bell and Julia Dixon, who grew up near Bliss had a gifted voice. When she was old enough she attended college at a finishing school for African American girls in Kansas City, Missouri. When she completed her schooling, Lucinda returned home, where she taught voice and piano lessons.126 Though they had no formal training, exodusters Moses and Susan Speese—who homesteaded the southwest and northeast quarters of Section 30, Township 17, Range 18 in rural Custer County beginning in 1883— were musically gifted. They taught their children to play instruments like the piano and violin.127 People regularly asked them to sing and play at church and social functions. One of their sons, Radford, became a music teacher.128

Phonographs were especially popular in homes in the early 20th century. Someone, sometime, snapped a photograph of Peter Unruh, record and sleeve in hand, as he, hunched over, listened to his Columbia phonograph (Figure 36). Different companies made the equipment that became radio’s forerunner.
Figure 39. Peter Unruh, a German-Russian Mennonite, listening to his Columbia phonograph. Date unknown. Source: Voth, *Henderson Mennonites*, unknown page.

Figure 40. *The Long Pine Journal*, June 22, 1917.
If you were in Long Pine in 1917, you could inspect a Brunswick phonograph (Figure 37) at The Variety Store. The Brunswick Company attempted to distinguish its products from those of other companies by stressing that its phonographs could play any and all makes of records. Complete with numerous modern features, the Brunswick phonograph produced clear, live-like sounds. At The Variety Store, you could buy any number of models ranging in price from $70 to $175 through agent C.H. Lyman.129

If you had music equipment, such as phonographs, in your home, people were likely to visit you. Ava Speese Day remembered that:

Anyone owning a [V]ictrola was sure of a large turn-out for a party. [Two of my uncles] endeared themselves to the young girls by always asking them to dance. My biggest “tragedy of the danced” was Uncle Ed telling me later that he came to ask me to dance and I was already asleep. Needless to say this was the last time I went to sleep at a party.130

Ava recalled that her family was more fortunate than most because they had a cottage organ in their home that provided them with countless hours of entertainment:

You pumped the pedals to force air through the reeds. Dad used to play Sunday evenings and we all sang. Dad taught all of us to chord on that organ for exercise. He would play his violin and one of us would chord to keep him company. Later some of the children learned to play the guitar, ukulele, violin, piano, harmonica, all by ear. Mom had a way of playing that we loved, and never mastered. We had fun around the organ, wore two of them and a piano [out].131
Dances were a common social get-together in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But dances could be more of a complex event than a simple nicety. They might reflect geodemographic patterns and social behavior customs. In Jefferson County in the late 19th century dances were held only where there were European American settlements—ranches along the creeks that crossed the Oregon Trail. Since the area was so newly settled by non-indigenous people, 4/5ths of the people at the dances were male, most of whom were single. Despite their strained efforts to find female dancers, if they wanted to dance, many men had to play the female partner. These men promenading as female dancers wore handkerchiefs around one arm to demarcate themselves.¹³²

Dances could also be the site of violent social resolutions. Fights, especially between young men, were common before, during, and after dances. They were part of the entertainment. While fiddlers were getting ready to play or resting after playing songs like “Fisher’s Hornpipe,” “Devil’s Dream,” and “Arkansas Traveler,” disgruntled men out back were revving up to duke it out. George Hansen was used to fist fights taking place at the dances in rural Jefferson County. He recalled:

In those days the accepted policy was that if you threshed your adversary soundly, the controversy was settled—there was no further argument about it. At one dance on the Little Sandy some “boys” from the Blue decided to “clear out” the ranchers before the dance, and in the lively melee that followed, Frank Helvey inadvertently got his thumb in his adversary’s mouth; and he will show you yet [as of 1916] a scar and cloven nail to prove this story. The ranchers more than held their own, and after the battle[, they] invited the defeated party to take part in
the dance. The invitation was accepted and in the morning all parted good friends.  

Since many of members of the forty African Americans families near Brownlee and DeWitty were excellent musicians, live-music dances at homes were common social gatherings. Ava Speese Day again remembered:

Turner… Joe Price and Boss Woodson were the mainstays. They played the violin, guitar, mandolin, piano, organ, harmonica, [and] ukulele. [There weren’t any brass instruments. They spelled one another so everyone did some dancing. Plenty of waltzing, two-step, one-step, schottische… [and] we danced, six inches apart. They were colorful affairs. The kids danced inside the circle of adults. It was a rare occasion when [someone] was missing, people came no matter how far they had to travel.

A square dance put everyone on the floor. Sometimes even the caller was on the floor. Each caller tried to outdo the last, or put you through what the dancers liked best. Maurice Brown, Mack Boyd, and his brother Joe, also did [most] of playing for dances. Boss Woodson always went to sleep about two… but he never missed a note. I’d say square dances and waltzes were the most popular.

When hard economic times came, dancing provided a source of cheap entertainment close to home. In Benedict in York County in the late 1920s, Eugene and
Art Belcher renovated a building, making it into a dance and roller skating hall. The place was a popular recreation spot through the 1930s.\footnote{135}

Before silent movie theatres, many communities had an opera house. A center of entertainment and sort of community center, an opera house could host a variety of events, including “home-talent plays, graduation exercises, school programs, [and] New Year’s Eve celebrations.” When silent moving pictures came out, many of them were initially shown in opera houses, which eventually were converted into movie theaters.\footnote{136}

Because of the new entertainment’s popularity, several movie theatres might exist simultaneously in one community. Such was the case in Long Pine. In 1912, the Star Theatre showed three thousand feet of motion pictures every night of the week except Sunday. For variety, the management changed the picture each Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. They opened the doors at 7:00 pm with two shows nightly. Ticket prices were 5¢ for audience members from five to twelve years of age. Those older than twelve years had to pay double that, 10¢ admission.\footnote{137} During the summer of 1915, the Star Theatre played a wide variety of the latest films such as \textit{The Battle of Cameron Dam}\footnote{138} (Figure 38) and episodes of the serial photoplay, \textit{Confess Thy Sins} (Figure 39).\footnote{139}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.45\textwidth]{Figure41.png}
\caption{The Long Pine Journal, May 28, 1915.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.45\textwidth]{Figure42.png}
\caption{Source: The Long Pine Journal, August 6, 1915.}
\end{figure}
The Theatorium was The Star’s competition. In 1912, without exception, the management, run by Iris Daly, showed motion pictures every night of the week. Daly changed the feature every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Ten cents was the admission fee regardless of your age.\textsuperscript{140}

Since the new entertainment technology of moving pictures drew large crowds into a town, many business people attempted to capitalize on the situation. In Benedict, for instance, local merchants sponsored free movies on Saturday nights in the summer. People of all ages came to the free entertainment downtown, which was “an effort to keep people shopping in Benedict.” An anonymous person living in the community at the time recalled the excitement of the warm weekend evenings:

> The movies were preceded by band concerts, presented by the school band. A pop corn stand operated by Mildred Lafler and Mrs. Leroy Overstreet did a lively business in front of the newspaper office. The movies were shown just west of the Co-op Service Station and in one or two other locations.\textsuperscript{141}

Even before automobiles, many people entertained themselves by taking leisurely drives. Peter Jansen, a German-Russian Mennonite sheep rancher who lived in rural Jefferson County twenty miles southwest of Beatrice, remembered the pleasure of the wagon drives that he and his wife took in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{142}

> We used to drive to Beatrice every other Sunday to see our folks and to attend church. What lovely drives we had! There were no fences, and the prairie was open and uninhabited for the most part. No section lines had yet been established, the trail leading diagonally across the rolling expanse of prairie.\textsuperscript{143}
The world of touring changed with the automobile. Here was a new kind of transportation that provided both purpose and entertainment to individuals, and to small and large groups. Because they were such a novel technology, people kept track of the first automobile that came to their area. In 1906 the Valentine jeweler, O.W. Morey, was the first person to own an automobile, a Rambler (Figure 40), in Cherry County. Jerry Freeman, an African American mail carrier, purchased the first auto, a Mitchell, near Bliss in south-central Holt County. Dr. Chidister owned the first car in Western. When he let his grandson, Raymond King, borrow his new red contraption, busybodies, thinking that they had seen a bright red light whish by, swore that there would be hell to pay. When King “drove through town at 20 miles per hour, onlookers said, ‘He’ll never come to any good end, speeding along like that’!” Perhaps these busybodies were simply accustomed to the 1904 law that established a maximum speed limit of twenty miles per hour. Incidentally, the same law also required automobile drivers to stop on the side of the road when they met a team of horses, for the new contraptions were frequently referred to as “horse scarers.”

Figure 43. Morey boys with first automobile seen in Valentine, 1910. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.
In the early 1910s, Chester G. Fink opened the first car dealer for the Ford Car Company in Ellsmere in the Cherry County area. Since he brought a new, unfamiliar technology into the area, Fink often worked around uncomfortable people. When he drove a car home, he accidentally scared his two sons who were playing in the corral. The boys “scrambled under two barb wire fences [and] ran into the house crying into their mother’s arms.” Because the operation of automobiles was so foreign to many, Fink often had to “give driving lesson to the car purchaser which was sometimes very funny.”

Gary Scheer, Fink’s great-grandson, remembered the stories his great-grandfather used to tell. When having their first driving lesson, people would become...

...excited and frightened at the wheel. They would throw up their hands and lose control of the car and C.G. would have to grab the steering wheel. Sometimes people would get confused on stopping the car and would holler whoa, as if driving a team of horses. People took out the ends of sheds, gates and fences, by not getting stopped in time or else using the wrong lever.148

Some people used their new purchases to visit neighbors’ homes. One evening, when Isaac D. Peters and his wife of the Henderson area felt that they had become accustomed to driving their new vehicle, the couple headed out to visit some friends. But the headlights on the Peters’ Maxwell car (such as those pictured in Figure 41) were none too bright. Soon the couple, unable to see far ahead, crashed into a wagon with a problem wheel that a farmer had left in the middle of the road. The sudden stop threw Mrs. Peters out of the car and onto the wagon.149 Though not too badly hurt, the couple,
instead of spending the night visiting their friends, most likely turned around and went home.

![Image of Delivery of Maxwell Autos received by William Krotter Company, Stuart, Nebraska. Agents for Northern Nebraska and Gregory County, South Dakota, 1910. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.](image)

People found new ways to amuse themselves with their automobiles. In the late 1900s and early 1910s, car owners in Valentine held a race to see “who could go the slowest and keep his car moving.” Fred Rauback won. Records don’t state how sluggish his winning speed was.

With an increase in use of automobiles, people demanded more and better roads. Slowly the government and individuals created dirt roads. U.S. Highway 20, in its east to west construction across northern Nebraska, didn’t reach Cherry County until 1932. Four years later workers completed it and continued into Sheridan County.

Automobile touring—driving long distances and enjoying the scenery, company, and journey—became popular in the late 1910s and 1920s. Companies picked up on the trend and advertised their products as the perfect means to enjoy a vacation in nature. In
1916, a Long Pine garage assured all those who were weary that “trees, scenery, [and] all the out-door joys [could be] yours if you [had] a Ford or an Oakland Six” (Figure 42). If you had a Ford touring car in the summer of 1924, you might get “back to nature.” “You, your family and friends [could] benefit by pleasant trips at minimum cost— evening drives, weekend excursions or a long tour on your vacation” (Figure 43). The beautiful Chevrolet took you over any rugged road that you might encounter on your vacation (Figure 44). It supposedly was an affordable car that “brought the nation’s wonder places and play-grounds within the reach of everybody, everywhere” (Figure 45). If you wanted to be gone for several days, you could take your automobile camping and stay at tourist camps overnight (Figures 46 and 47).
Figure 47. Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, June 16, 1927, pg. 8.

Figure 48. Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, July 14, 1927, pg. 5.

Figure 49. Photograph of trailer camp attachment for autos. Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, June 1, 1917, pg. 7.
The new technology of airplanes certainly entertained. Many people, such as Ava Speese Day, took notice when airplanes first came to their community. She recalled that:

Someone took a shot at the first airplane to fly down the valley, and later Lena, Celeste and I (Figure 23) happened to be in Brownlee the day a plane landed there and took up passengers for $5 a person. Doug and Ruby McDonald took a ride, they were both our school teachers later.\(^{155}\)
Some operators offered plane rides to the public. Residents of Lushton noticed when Ira Sloniger flew his bi-plane. They were especially excited when he flew it to his Uncle George’s farm, “where he would give rides for $2.00 each.”

Numerous people enjoyed the recreation that organized sports—such as rodeos, football, and basketball—offered. Horse races were quite fashionable. But other types of races existed, too. According to the York County Historical Society, “[i]n the late 1890’s Gresham boasted of having one of the finest ‘Bicycle Tracks’ racing tracks around.” The state’s love affair with football began early, with the sport being played nearly everywhere by the early 20th century. Soon the Husker Nation would be born. An advertisement in the October 2, 1941 issue of The Long Pine Journal heralded the beginning of a new era for sports media. Henceforth, anyone could listen to University of Nebraska-Lincoln Cornhusker football games live over the radio! Baseball, for players and spectators alike (Figure 48), was perhaps the most popular sport in early 20th century.
century rural Nebraska. Occasionally people of different races played together without societal tensions, especially if the minority was exceptionally talented. Known to be a “very good player,” Oscar Freeman, son of an African American settler and mail carrier, grew up playing ball with the Bliss and Ewing teams.159

Women increasingly participated in organized sports in the early 20th century. In 2009, 93 year old Madelyn Elder remembers playing on her high school girls’ basketball team in Mitchell in western Nebraska. From the 1900s through the 1920s, there were numerous girls basketball teams throughout the state. Look at county centennial books today and you’ll often find a few pictures of girls’ high school basketball teams with the teenagers, grinning widely, in their bloomer uniforms. But the girls’ high school basketball was short lived. In the late 1920 and 1930s, people viewed the activity as unbecoming of ladies. It would not be until the late 1950s that teenage girls in Nebraska could once again play on organized basketball teams.

Though not as common as high school girls’ basketball, adult women also played on basketball teams in the early 20th century. In 1980, Sylvia Dye recounted the memories of her mother playing on a community team in Ballagh in Wheeler County:

There were goal posts set on the Ballagh schoolhouse grounds; the floor was the earth itself, and the floor guard lines and center, etc., were measured off and scratched in proper places with a stick.

The Elmer McGrews, new arrivals in the community, had brought with them a basketball rules book, a basketball, and the enthusiasm needed to arouse the interest of the entire community.
Soon the women were divided into two teams and their supporters. My mother was center for the ‘Blue Jays’ and though I was very young at the time, I can still see how she dashed around in the blue, full bloomers and short sleeve blouse.

The “Grey Eagles” had outfits just like the “Blue Jays”, and all suits were alike except for color. The players all came in buggies and wagons drawn by horses, and most of them brought their entire family to watch and cheer for their team.

They traveled from one to six miles and played in the early afternoon because most of them had to make the slow trip back home to do chores and milking before dark.

I was three years old at the time (1907). Later, my mother, Bessie Wilson, told me about the good times they had and the community’s interest in their games. They had two well-dressed and very enthusiastic teams who played some exciting games; that is, as long as the McGrews were in the area. They were a family who had some money, good clothes, were quite well-educated, loved to be with other people, but were not ambitious enough to stick with prairie life. And so the McGrews had a big farewell dance and supper and moved away. With them went desire for a women’s basketball team.

The ball suits were cut up and made into children’s clothing, the goal posts made into swings for the school, and the basketball stayed in the hands of one of the players, Annie Ballagh, and many years later was given to me and my school.
children (1923, my first year of teaching). Annie said that she thought because my mother had done so much for the team that the basketball should go to me.\textsuperscript{160}

Figure 52. The 1907 Blue Jay and Grey Eagle women basketball teams in Ballagh. 

Stylists designed new women’s sports fashions. No matter how many sets of tennis you played, you should keep your muscles warm in a trendy wrap as you cooled down after the match (Figure 50). Any number of sporty millinery styles could be worn in the summer for low impact kinds of recreation (Figure 51). Short sleeves and short bloomers would allow females to move quickly and freely in nearly any sport (Figure 52). Long sleeves, bloomers, high boots, and a short-brimmed hat would be a “sensible costume for outdoor sports” (Figure 53). Modest all wool and wool and silk bathing suits in numerous styles, weaves, weights, and colors were available to women of all ages who wanted to go swimming (Figures 54 through 56).
Figure 53. Women’s “wrap for after the [tennis] game.”

Figure 54. Women’s sport hats.
Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, June 12, 1924, pg. 5.

Figure 55. Women’s sport outfit.
Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, June 12, 1924, pg. 5.

Figure 56. Women’s “sensible costume for outdoor sports.” Note the pants.
Figure 57. Girls’ swimming suit.

Figure 58. Women’s swimming suit.

Figure 59. Source: The Long Pine Journal, July 3, 1924, pg. 4.
With society stressing the health benefits of nature, people made outdoor recreation fashionable in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Numerous activities were available to those who wished to soak in the great outdoors. As long as you were physically capable, any age of person could go wading and swimming. Whether it be in tents, cabins, or your automobile, camping was especially fashionable in the early 20th century. With so many people camping, the Kodak Company attempted to capitalize on the trend by persuading campers to purchase a camera to document their adventures (Figure 57).

Figure 60. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 12, 1924, pg. 4.
Sledding was a well-liked winter activity among children. During a clear day, someone who had easy access to a portable camera, possibly a Kodak Brownie, snapped a shot of Margaret Buller and her brother David Buller, Jr. as the German-Russian Mennonite children got ready to trek back up the hill for another round of sledding (Figure 58).

Fishing and hunting entertained many. In Cherry County in the early 20th century, people could camp, fish, and hunt on state-owned recreation properties such as near Merriman and Ballard Marsh. Cherry County even had its own organization, the Hackberry Club, made up of rugged men, whose sole purpose was to enjoy the pursuits that the great outdoors, like fishing and hunting, had to offer (Figure 59).
Fishing was, and is, often a solitary sport. Hence, the long periods waiting for a fish to bite are excellent opportunities for deep thinking. While having a line in the water, German Russian Mennonites were known to scan the landscape around the water body, picking out which trees they wanted to plant on their properties. According to Stanley Voth, “Johann Doell found the cottonwood trees, which he planted along his lane, while fishing in the Platte River.”

The state government established hatcheries throughout Nebraska. In 1905, the City of Valentine donated 480 acres two miles north of town along the north bank of the Minnechaduza Creek to create the Valentine Hatchery. The hatchery produced numerous kinds of fish, including bass, bluegill, crappie, and trout. The venture was so successful that, twenty years later, an appropriation of $25,000 enlarged the hatchery and created several new ponds. Though a flood in 1928 took out the dams, the ponds were rebuilt
elsewhere. By the late 1930s, workers constructed twenty-eight ponds, making the Valentine Hatchery the largest in the state.\textsuperscript{164}

Many people, since they lived in remote areas, frequently saw abundant wildlife. In the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Peter Jansen saw lots of game fowl in rural Gage County. In 1921, he related some of his memories:

In the spring many flocks of prairie chickens would be drumming, making their peculiar noise. [W]e had all the game we could use in season and sometimes out of season. I have shot chickens from our back door, and I remember bringing home one day nine big Mallard ducks, killed with three shots. Sometimes I would hitch up “Kolie” towards evening, whistling to my faithful dog, Don. Gertrude[, my wife,] would drive, and in the course of an hour or so we would gather up a mess of fat chickens or quail. The latter were plentiful, and ‘quail on toast’ was a frequent dish for breakfast. I remember my wife telling me not to bring in any more game, as she did not know what to do with it and everybody was tired of it, preferring a change to ham or bacon.\textsuperscript{165}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure63}
\caption{Shooting prairie chickens near O’Neill, 1915. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.}
\end{figure}
Other parts of the state, like the Sandhills, had similar large game populations. A cameraman standing in a dangerous position snapped a picture of a hunter, alongside his dog, shooting at a flock of prairie chickens near O’Neill in 1915 (Figure 60). Howard A. Thayer grew up in the early 1900s in his grandparents sod house sixteen miles northwest of Burwell and seven miles northeast of Taylor. Near the house was a small hill called the cooing ground, where prairie chickens gathered *en masse*.

Just about sunset, thousands of prairie chickens would begin to arrive and the cooing sound would last till just after dark. The chickens would rest there all night and as it began to get light in the morning they would begin cooing again. By two hours after sunrise they would all be gone, and no one was allowed to shoot chickens while they were on this cooing ground. There was another cooing ground to the northwest of use on the John Bolby Homestead.  

For many, though, fishing and hunting were not so much leisure sports as they were methods of obtaining essential nourishment. Near Brownlee and DeWitty, there were plenty of fish, game, and wild fowl. Since the men were busy working, it was usually the women and children who did the fishing (Figure 61).  

When their father hunted, Ava Speese Day and her siblings had their own special chores. “Dad shot game when he saw it, so there was grouse or prairie chicken to pull the inside out of and stuff with hay so it could not spoil before evening.” The maxim was: “You never shot more than you needed for today and tomorrow.”
When their rural school near Brownlee closed in the late 1910s or early 1920s, Ava’s mother, Rosetta, moved the children to the nearby community of Seneca where they could attend school. Here Rosetta and the children, separated from Charles who stayed on the homestead, rented a small three-room house. Though physically separated to prove up on the claim, Charles continued to hunt as one method of providing food for his family and visited them often. Ava remembered, “How happy we were when Dad came into town with grouse, duck, prairie chickens and rabbits, plus a sack of corn to shell and grind for cornbread and mush.”

Some locales were better suited for outdoor recreation than others. The area near Long Pine offered numerous activity opportunities. You could go swimming, trout fishing, and tubing in the Pine Creek. Town stores often stocked sporting goods merchandise for the adventurous (Figure 62). J.C. Castle, The Hardware Man, bought an ad on the front page of the Friday June 24, 1904 edition of *The Long Pine Journal*.
claiming that his store had always had “the best stock of fishing tackle.”172 If a young male wanted to play baseball, he could play either on the “younger boys” team that had been established back in 1901173 or the local resort’s team. The always popular Long Pine Amusement Park, later known as Hidden Paradise, southwest of town offered a myriad of activities.174 With abundant game—such as pheasant and mule and whitetail deer—nearby, hunting was a popular pastime. Firearms were easily attainable at the town’s stores or through mail order, such as via the Marlin Fire Arms Company of New Haven, Connecticut.175 With hunting so well-liked, many locals took pleasure in shooting as a hobby. In 1911, the Long Pine Gun Club held two-day “shoot[s]” with prize monies in August. The competitions started at 9:00 am with shells, for a price, available on the grounds.176

Figure 65. Source: The Long Pine Journal, August 6, 1925, pg. 5.
Certainly, numerous everyday leisure activities were available to people visiting and living in rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But occasionally, the fact that such entertainments were so common made them mundane. Some people, especially youngsters, longed for recreation that was novel and exciting. Many adults also enjoyed a break from the repetitiveness of ordinary entertainment. For countless rural Nebraskans, traveling shows--filled with exotic attractions, new rides, and aerobatic, comedic, dramatic, and musical acts--broke the monotony of everyday leisure activities.
Traveling shows were a popular form of entertainment in the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Shows varied in size; they could be made up of anywhere from one person to hundreds of employees. Some served as a family’s informal source of side income while others were large business operations. The Ed Plunkett family, children and all, of Dickens had a small orchestra. They showed in Nebraska, as well as many other places throughout the country, playing, singing, and performing in dramas. The White Horse Ranch of rural Naper sent its White Horse Troupe, with numerous trick riders and American Albino horses, all over the U.S. and southern Canada.

Late spring and summer were popular times for theatrical troupe performances, carnivals, and circuses. Such was the case with shows that came to Long Pine. On Saturday, May 18, 1912, for example, Wanda Revere and her Broadway cast, sponsored by the Brandon Amusement Company, came to The Theatorium, an opera house/moving picture theater. In its “seventh successful season,” the troupe gave a one-night-only comedic drama performance of “Lena Rivers.”

Shows incorporated multiple entertainment styles, blending elements of comedy, dramatics, exhibitions, hands-on amusement, and music. The J.H. Eschman World’s United Railway Shows (Figure 1) rolled in into town in August 1917. With so many other shows out there, the company attempted to distinguish itself from others by focusing on the value that a ticket buyer got. By coming to the J.H. Eschman’s, with two rings and two stages, you got “ten fold more for the money than any other show on
Figure 66. Source: The Long Pine Journal, August 17, 1917, pg. 5.
Earth.” You couldn’t miss this fantastic show, that was filled with “[a]mazing [g]ymnastic, [a]crobatic, [s]pectacular, [a]erial and [e]questrian [sensations].” In 1921, the Christy Brothers Greater United Wild Animal Exposition (Figure 2) attracted patrons by featuring comedic acts by clowns and “one hundred performing animals from the four corners of the Earth.” The amusement showcased free afternoon exhibits as well as afternoon and evening performances with “101 big new feature acts.” This was the place to go if you wanted to see exotic animals, not in a book, but up close and personal. All you had to do was buy a ticket, which granted you views of trained zebras and Rajah, the “largest elephant on exhibition.”
Traveling shows had to get bigger and better in order to continually attract customers. The Robbins Brothers Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus united with Ponca Bill’s Wild West (Figure 3) that came to Long Pine in July 1924 was jam packed with entertainment. By purchasing one ticket you bought your way into two different shows, one that showcased wild animals and the other that featured frontier adventure! With two stages and four rings of simultaneous activity, the Robbins Brothers Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus presented one hundred wild animals, 300 horses, and 600 educated animals, including African lions, tigers, panthers, pumas, leopards, zebras, camels, elephants, sea lions, polar bears, ponies, monkeys, dogs, cats, and birds. The animals and their trainers performed numerous acts. One such presentation involved Captain Tiedor with his ten sea lions, including Nero, the talking seal. You could even watch a leopard ride a horse!

Ponca Bill’s Wild West featured rough riding talented celebrities like Oklahoma Dan, Montana Joe, and Prairie Lilly who performed a plethora of horse tricks and frontier acts. It took two electric light plants, 500 people, over one hundred wagons, ten acres of tents, and thirty double length train cars—the equivalent of sixty freight cars—to run the show. If you couldn’t be entertained by Robbins Brothers Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus united with Ponca Bill’s Wild West, you never would be.

Circus shows—featuring acrobatic tricks and wild animals—combined with Wild West shows—full of rootin’ tootin’ cowboys and “savage” Indians—traveling by railroad were common in the early 20th century. W.H. Coulter’s Famous Railroad Show and Indian Pete’s Wild West Combined came to Long Pine on Monday, August 28, 1911.
Figure 68. Source: The Long Pine Journal, July 17, 1924, pg. 4.
Two hundred performers, “the pick of the circus world” as well as 200 horses, “the finest on Earth,” took up “an entire train load [of] double length cars filled with the wonders of two hemispheres.” A gigantic spectacle to behold, the show was described as a circus, hippodrome, museum, and menagerie all in one. A noon parade helped stir up excitement, enticing people to buy tickets for the main performances. The entourage gave performances during the afternoon and evening. The group offered a free act in an effort to lure the public into purchasing tickets for the entire exhibition. In this case, the free act was a tight rope walker. Though such a feat was often viewed as a “stunt casually accomplished by the ordinary school boy,” supposedly this performance was so stellar that the editor of The Long Pine Journal placed his professional reputation on the line by recommending it.182

In rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the majority population and dominant power being European American, minority groups often were seen as valuable only when they were non-threatening and able to be reshaped as entertainment. The dominant European Americans frequently maintained their class, social, and racial status by being the consumers of traveling groups that featured minorities.

For example, the dominant culture frequently exploited indigenous peoples, both those who were part of traveling shows and those who were local. The Robbins Brothers Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus united with Ponca Bill’s Wild West as well as W.H. Coulter’s Famous Railroad Show and Indian Pete’s Wild West featured indigenous peoples in their entertainment. In Ponca Bill’s Wild West show “a band of Sioux Indians,” among other acts, would perform an attack on a covered wagon.183
Local indigenous people, Lakotas, though not part of a formal traveling show, also occasionally provided entertainment for rural Nebraskans. For several years, a thirty-day race near Long Pine attracted horsemen from miles around. Lakotas from the Pine Ridge Reservation regularly came to compete in contests such as the saddle horse races. In the Fall, they would camp west of town, where they made “authentic” goods, such as beef jerky and moccasins, and provided entertainment, like performing “traditional” dances, to tourists.184

Except for a small number of small exoduster communities in the Sandhills and ethnic enclaves in western towns, few African Americans lived in rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Therefore, almost the only time that a Caucasian European American might see an African American in rural parts of the state was when he or she visited as an entertainer. Even then, only Caucasians of a certain class could see a member of this unfamiliar population. You had to have enough free time and money to attend a traveling show. For instance, evidently only upper income European Americans were able to see, not “blackface,” but true African Americans perform

Figure 69. Source: Long Pine Journal, May 28, 1915.
vaudeville. On May 31, 1915, a band, concert, and street parade accompanied the arrival of The Old Reliable Virginia Minstrels in Long Pine, a troupe which boasted “40 real Negro[s]” (Figure 4). A few years later, Brown’s Tennessee Minstrels, “the favorite fun makers,” performed at the opera house theater (Figure 5). Both The Old Reliable Virginia Minstrels and Brown’s Tennessee Minstrels would dance, sing, and perform until the hearts of the local whites were merrily content. Twenty years later, in 1936, African Americans, supposedly from The South, could still be found in the area, though once again, only as performers (Figure 6). On Sunday June 21st, singer, dancer, and player Anna Mae Winburn performed and directed the Cotton Club Boys, a jazz band of twelve African American men from Omaha.

Figure 70. Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, June 1, 1917, pg. 1.

Figure 71. Anna Mae Winburn, director of the Cotton Club Boys. Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, June 18, 1936, pg. 8.
Knowing that they were going to be performing in conservative areas, several traveling groups took pains to advertise their shows as morally pure and family friendly. The Brown’s Tennessee Ministrels advertised itself as “the show that is free from anything unclean.” Wanda Revere and her Broadway cast that performed “Lena Rivers” on May 18, 1912 in Long Pine was considered to be a show “without a prurient or suggestive line” and was hailed by The Chicago Tribune as “a pure play that [would] live forever.”

As time passed, traveling groups took on more sensational advertising in hopes of attracting patrons. Many events took place during the week of June 17th at Long Pine’s Hidden Paradise’s Pavilion (Figure 7). Frankie Ormsby’s New Yorkers was among the features on Sunday the 17th. Wednesday the 20th was auction night. In order to attract more bidders, someone advertised that there would be “a young lady completely attired [who would] auction off her clothes.” Though such scandalous marketing probably drew people’s attention and increased the number who attended, the ad says nothing about the female removing her clothes in front of the public as the garments were auctioned off. Most likely some who attended the auction were greatly disappointed.

Figure 72. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 14, 1934, pg. 5.
Indeed, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries there was a concern that traditional Victorian American morality was under fire. Many felt, for instance, that the industrialized city was increasingly a place of corruption and stifling evil. If the American people-- native-born European American Christians that is-- were to progress and flourish as a race, they must get out of the evil city. Some traveling shows capitalized on social fears by promoting conservative, rural values.

![Image](image-url)  

Figure 73. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 20, 1913, pg. 5.

The chautauqua was one of the main traveling shows that addressed people’s fears of a declining moral culture (Figure 8). Starting in Chautauqua, New York, in the late 19th century, the chautauqua movement focused on strengthening rural people’s Christian moral and spiritual improvement. Made up of a wide variety of entertainers, often from
the east, chautauquas were a group of entertainers that traveled to rural areas throughout the country promoting Americanization, Victorian American style.

Especially popular during summers of the last decade of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century, the chautauqua, held each year under the shade of a tent (Figure 9), provided a source of entertainment for all ages. Special areas near communities were frequently set aside as the “chautauqua grounds” for the days-long educational and theatrical bonanza of events. Many would make a vacation out the trip to the chautauqua, with frequently hundreds coming to the grounds to camp for days, if not weeks, on end. The several days-long event would include a variety of presentations, like Christian sermons and music by orchestras and “world famous” opera singers. Acts by magicians might also be featured, as at Long Pine on June 4, 1915 (Figure 10).
Supposedly the chautauqua provided multiple benefits to its patrons. Although it was good for the improvement of people of all ages, chautauquas could especially aid in the development of children. Special features, called The Children’s Chautauqua, would especially foster the physical and mental growth of young people through play (Figure 11). The shows would also aid in keeping teenagers and young adults away from cities and all their attendant evils. Children who were raised going to chautauquas would know the values of rural life and the detriments of an urban existence. Once the children grew up to be teenagers and young adults, ages at which they would most likely leave the home that reared them, chances were that they would stay in rural areas. Hence, the rural areas of the country would remain morally, spiritually, mentally, and physically strong for generations to come. Finally, if nothing else, a chautauqua would “put people, as well as towns, on the map” (Figure 12), because having the week long event attracted
attention and revenue, chautauqua companies encouraged businessmen, citizens, town
boosters, and anyone interested in the welfare of their community to sponsor an event.\textsuperscript{193}

Figure 76. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 19, 1914, pg. 8.

Figure 77. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 26, 1914, pg. 1.
The Walter Savidge Amusement Company

One of the most prominent traveling shows that performed in small towns in rural Nebraska and surrounding states in the early 20th century was the Walter Savidge Amusement Company. From 1906 to 1941 the business and its entourage, originally known as the Savidge Brothers Amusement Company, spent April through September journeying to, and working in, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Kansas communities. Though the length of engagements varied, the Company usually spent several days at one location. Once there they offered customers a wide variety of entertainments, including carnival rides and freak shows.

The leading figure behind the business was the company’s namesake, Walter T. Savidge. Savidge was born in August 25, 1886 in the post-office community of Deloit in southeastern Holt County. As a young boy, Walter’s family moved to Humphrey and also to Leigh. Savidge’s love for kinesthetic entertainment began early in his life. His love for the traveling show business began when, at the age of twelve, he went to a Ringling Brothers Circus in Humphrey. He was so excited by the show that from that point on he filled his childhood with exhilarating adventures. After witnessing the stunts that employees in all kinds of traveling circuses performed, he attempted, using what he could find as props on the farm, to replicate them himself. He especially enjoyed tight rope walking acts and attempted them often. If you stopped by the farm when he was a boy, you might witness Walter walking across a rope tied between his family’s barn and shed. You might also see him traversing a rope from the top of a windmill to the ground, using an umbrella as a backup, yet ineffective, parachute.
Not surprisingly, Walter came from an adventurous family. Members of his extended family, who lived near Deloit and Ewing, in the late 19th and 20th centuries, were famous for their risk taking. In 1911, the Savidge Brothers Aviators (Figure 14) earned the distinction of being the first people in the state to build and successfully fly an airplane. The Aviators traveled rural Nebraska putting on shows, demonstrating their barnstorming and aeronautic skills for years afterwards, until an accident killed one of them. In the spring of 1916, while attempting to write his name in the sky with the exhaust, Matt Savidge’s airplane malfunctioned, plummeting him and the plane to the ground.

Figure 79. Central Aviators, the Savidge Brothers of rural Ewing on October 2, 1912. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.

Though deeply shaken, the rest of the brothers continued putting on shows. The summer of 1917, for instance, found them putting on Auto Polo shows, in addition to aerobatics with their three airplanes. Then known as the Savidge Brothers Auto Polo Players, or more commonly simply as “a family of daredevils,” they promised audiences
much excitement. In some auto polo shows, they guaranteed “to turn... cars over at least
3 times and to smash 1 to 6 wheels at each game and to raise hair on a bald man’s
head.”199 With such exciting beginnings, it is no surprise that Walter built a career for
himself that involved entertaining people with novel showmanship.

As a young adult, Walter Savidge got his foot into the doorway of the traveling
show industry. At sixteen, he ran away from home in hopes of “joining the circus,” or
similar ventures. Soon picnic and fair organizers hired him as a tight rope walker.200 In
the very first years of the 20th century, the president of the Wayne County Fair board,
Frank M. Griffith, hired Walter, giving him a wage of $5.00, to perform at the event.201
The young daredevil impressed astonished spectators with his skills.202 In between his
acts, Walter had spare time so he visited and got to know some of the other performers.203
Someone introduced him to one young lady who had watched his performances. After a
few moments, the young tightrope walker was overtaken by his new acquaintance’s
charm, grace, and personality.204

In 1906, at the age of twenty, and with his ambitions for entertainment and
business high, Walter got together with his brother, Arthur, and created the Savidge
Brothers Amusement Company.205 Arthur served not only as one of the managers, but
also worked as a performer with the stage name of Elwin Strong.206 The business started
out as a one tent show.207 The length of stay in one location usually varied between one
and three days. In 1910, for instance, the troupe was in Battle Creek on July 16th and
showed in Elgin by the 19th.208 In the summers of the early 1910s, the Savidge Brothers
Amusement Company used the Flying Baldwins (Figure 15) as its main attraction.
Because the aerial act brought in so many paying customers to the carnival, the Savidges paid the group a hefty sum of $300 each week.\(^{209}\)

Figure 80. The Flying Baldwins, date and location unknown.  

Another big draw for the Company was the Savidge Players. Dramatic companies from Chicago and New York, known as the Savidge Players, performed within the specially made canvas tent, which was capable of seating 1,600 people (Figure 16). All of the Savidge Players, except for Arthur, were professional actors. They put on a variety of popular plays, including “Abie’s Irish Rose,” “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” “Mother’s Millions,” and “Three Wise Fools.” Arthur, going by the stage name Elwin Strong, was especially known for his abilities to play a convincing Dr. Jekyll. In between the scenes of a play, vaudeville acts performed. Having such a theatrical production required a good number of employees, including usually about fifteen actors, eight stage men, and numerous vaudeville entertainers.\(^{210}\)
The Savidge Brothers Amusement Company traveled to many towns (Table 1). The Company always opened its season with a showing in Wayne, the town where the business was headquartered.\textsuperscript{211} Because it meant an inside peak at the show and a potential free ticket when the show came to town local boys often helped set up the carnival (Figure 17).\textsuperscript{212} Though the business primarily held shows in northern and northeastern Nebraska, they also booked appointments in south-central South Dakota. During the 1910 season, for instance, the Company worked in eighteen communities. Most of the communities, including Laurel, Crofton, and Creighton, were located near Wayne in northeastern Nebraska. That year the entourage also traveled to the nearby

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\textbf{Figure 81.} Inside the tent theater where the Savidge Players performed. Photograph taken from the stage, date and location unknown. Source: The Nebraska State Historical Society Archives, RG1667:1-13.
south-central South Dakota towns of Gregory and Bonesteel. Gordon, in northwestern Nebraska, was probably the farthest community away from Wayne that they worked.213

Figure 82. Blue complimentary ticket to the big feature, the Elwin Strong Dramatic Company, of the Savidge Brothers Amusement Company.
Source: The Nebraska State Historical Society Archives, RG1667, Box 1 of 3, Folder Series 1 Ledgers, Volume 1915.

As time went on, though he and his brother were busy with their corporation, Walter thought it important to take college courses. So he decided to attend Wayne’s Nebraska Normal School. But something unexpected was about to happen. While a student, Walter came across an old acquaintance on campus. Years earlier, he had met Mabel Griffith when they both worked at the Wayne County Fair. She had played the piano and performed tricks with her family’s horses. Walter had walked the tight rope. Here was the young lady that he had been so charmed by. Now, Mabel was one of the music instructors at the college.214 With their common history, the two had many warm recollections to share and had reason to spend much time with one another.
Like Walter, Mabel Griffith had spent most of her life in rural Nebraska. Originally from the Wayne area, she had grown up on a homestead four miles north and one half mile west of town. Both of her parents, the Griffiths, had been born in Iowa. Her father, Frank, originated from Red Oak while her mother, Elizabeth Reid, came from Burlington. Like Walter, Mabel came from a tough and adventurous family. Before they had children, Frank and Elizabeth lived in a chicken house as they waited for their farm house to be built. Mabel’s parents then moved into their completed home that had architecture indicative of the period, including a wrap-around porch and white picket fence. Once the couple moved in, they could get down to the business of farming, raising cattle and horses, and having a family.215

As one of six children growing up in the country on a farm, Mabel sought out exciting activities. Using a red-plush side saddle, she loved to ride her family’s horses. She later learned to ride astride. When she was eight, she began to learn the piano. With her father serving as president of the Wayne County Fair, Mabel’s talents soon were no longer private. At the fair, she drove teams of horses, then played the piano for spectators. At such a tender age, she was so skilled at handling the “high-spirited” team of horses, that she and her animal friends earned awards of $5.00 each for being the best driver and the best team.216

Since her parents were fairly well off financially, they could give Mabel the schooling that was befitting of a young, cultured Victorian lady. After high school, Mabel took classes at the Nebraska Normal College in Wayne, finishing her teaching course in 1902. Much of her training was in music, especially in piano. Following her graduation, she briefly served as the assistant teacher of music at the college. Her
education, skill, marital status, and money enabled her to attend the Boston’s New England Conservatory of Music in 1903. She taught there one year before returning to the Great Plains. Once back, she spent several years teaching music in numerous communities as well as creating and selling oil landscape paintings. She was the epitome of a Victorian cultured lady when she had returned to Wayne and was teaching music at the college, she got reacquainted with Walter. Although their statuses differed—Walter a student and Mabel a teacher—the two took a liking to one another and soon decided to marry. Since it was customary for women to give up their careers once they married, on May 2, 1911 Mabel traded her teaching career in exchange for love and a life on the road, where she would be an important part of the Company.

With the success of the Savidge Brothers Amusement Company in the late 1900s and early 1910s came disagreements. Soon Arthur and Walter began to differ over the way business was being conducted and money was allocated. The traveling show was about to change. Though the precise reasons remain undocumented, sometime after the 1910 summer season and before the 1912 summer season, the brothers had “managerial disagreements” and decided to discontinue their professional arrangement. Arthur kept his stage name of Elwin Strong and created the dramatic troupe Elwin Strong and Company. On Tuesday October 13th, 1914, his group could be found at the Long Pine opera house performing “The Call of the West” (Figure 18). This cowboy play, “a romance of the early seventies” with “special scenery and effects,” would show only once.
Wanting to stay in the traveling show business, Walter and Mabel used $500 capital to create their own production team, the Walter Savidge Amusement Company. With so little to go on, would the young couple be able to make it as the new managers? Most likely, 1912 was their first year alone. That year, the new Company’s management decided to stay closer to home, appearing only in northern, northeastern, and east-central Nebraska towns.

In 1913 Walter and Mabel tried a few new tactics. They decided to travel farther and to more communities. After the usual season opener in Wayne, the entourage immediately traveled to the west, playing in towns like Ainsworth, Valentine, and Rushville. Next they appeared in Chadron and Crawford. The Company then continued west over the state line into Wyoming, where they performed in Casper and Lander.
### Examples of Performance Sites by Season*

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<th>Savidge Brothers A.C.</th>
<th>Walter Savidge Amusement Company</th>
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*not a complete list

**known as Newman Grove today
Lander was the farthest west appearance that the business had that year. After appearing there, the Company backtracked to the east to show in Douglas before turning to the south to play in Wheatland and Cheyenne. Once again the Company continued south and east over another state line into Colorado where they worked in Sterling.224

In the second half of the summer season the entourage slowly made its way back to Wayne. From Sterling, it headed east through communities like Scottsbluff and Gothenburg. It then traveled to the northeast, through towns like Silver Creek. After Tekamah, it finally turned north, traveling northwest back to headquarters via Pender and Wakefield. Overall, during the 1913 season, the Walter Savidge Amusement Company showed in twenty-two communities, including 16 in Nebraska, five in Wyoming, and one in Colorado.225

Walter and Mabel’s lives revolved around the Company. From late Spring to late Fall, usually April to October, the couple was busy traveling and working with the business. When the weather cooled, the outdoor carnival shut down. Many of the performers returned to their homes across the country, waiting for the next summer season.226 Meanwhile, during the first few years of the business, the Savidges hit the road with roughly 18 others, giving vaudeville performances at opera houses throughout Nebraska, Iowa, and South Dakota.227 After a show’s finale, the Company might remain behind and put on a dance. Traveling during the winter, however, was often not as comfortable as journeys during other parts of the year. Instead of enjoying the usual luxuries of their Pullman train cars, the employees stayed the nights in a local hotel, many of which “had heat only in the hallways.”228 Mabel referred to the time spent in the “dreary, cold hotels” as “miserable.”229
As wife of the show’s namesake and, arguably, a major decision maker, Mabel worked with different aspects of the show. She was the accountant and secretary, keeping the finances and books in order. She occasionally worked with the ballyhoo—the rides and side shows. Whether it was winter or summer, with her formal musical training, Mabel frequently played piano for the shows. She even kept a special little book, the 1899 *A Graded Course of Studies and Pieces for the Piano-Forte* (Figure 19), filled with song titles to help inspire her with tunes appropriate for different occasions. She used the book often, for it is filled with her hand written notes and symbols, such as a star next to tunes that she liked best. During the winter, Mabel played piano for the vaudeville acts.

Figure 84. A little book of piano pieces that Mabel Savidge used.

Source: The Nebraska State Historical Society Archives.

In early spring, performers returned to Wayne, where they practiced for the upcoming summer season in the city hall. For instance, in 1918, dramatic rehearsals began on April 24th and band and orchestra practices on May 1st. The season opened in Wayne on May 8th.
When it came time for the 1914 summer season, the management decided, in contrast to the 1913 summer season, to cut down on the number of out-of-state showings, probably to reduce expenses. The Company opened in Wayne and stayed primarily in northern and eastern portions of the state. It added locations—like Oakland, Newman’s Grove, and Leigh -- to its appointment book. From September 15th through the 19th, the Company played for the Brown County Fair at Ainsworth (Figure 20). The five-day event would feature a family friendly ballyhoo. You could, for example, take a spin on a Merry-Go-Round or Ferris Wheel. You might also take part in various athletics. If you were more of a spectator, then you could watch an aerial bar performance or flying machine exhibition. If the arts and dramatics were more your style, you could enjoy the band concerts or vaudeville shows. After Ainsworth, the Company slowly moved on, making its way to southeastern Nebraska and northwestern Missouri. In October, after an appearance in Falls City, the troupe’s train crossed the state line with the last show of the 1914 season in Concordia, Missouri.232

![Figure 85. Source: The Long Pine Journal, September 4, 1914, pg. 8.](image)

After a few years alone, the new Company’s management continued to modify their business in order to better fit its niche and, thus, maximize its profits. During the
In its first few years, the Walter Savidge Amusement Company proved to be a success. After the split, Walter and Mabel did not have to wait long before they had another flourishing entertainment venture. What had started out as a one boxcar show, by 1916, took eight boxcars to haul equipment and more than one hundred employees to run.

The business was able to make new purchases, including an “African ostrich farm, oriental reptile museum, and [numerous exotic] birds,” to add to its already well-liked attractions (Figure 21). During the afternoon and evenings, the Company would provide concerts played by the Savidge Challenge Band and free acts on a community’s streets. People could visit the many side shows or take a whirl on a number of rides. In the evening, they could also attend theatrical presentations put on by the Savidge Dramatic Players.

During the 1910s and 1920s, the Savidge Dramatic Players seemed to be the most popular attraction of the entire show (Figures 22 and 23). The Company took its dramatics very seriously. Because the public had loved her when she toured with the show five years prior, in 1916 the Company again hired the popular Katherin Dale to be its lead actress. Al C. Wilson was stage director. Fritz Adams, May Wilson, O.T.
Long Pine Summer Carnival
June 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17

WALTER SAVIDGE
AMUSEMENT CO.
INCLUDING THE SAVIDGE DRAMATIC PLAYERS

See the Oriental Reptile Museum
Visit the Clouds on the Ferris Wheel
Free Band Concerts Morning, Noon and Night

A FEW OF OUR PLAYS
Call of the Cumbelands
Graustark

FROM THE MARKET STREET MERRY-GO-ROUND
A FEW OF OUR ACTS
Feature Free Acts Afternoon and Evening

Visit the African Ostrich Farm
Take a Ride on the Merry-Go-Round

Figure 86. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 2, 1916, pg. 4.
AT
Long Pine, Nebraska
ONE WEEK COMMENCING
Monday, May 24th
WALTER SAVIDGE AMUSEMENT CO.
Featuring
The Walter Savidge Players
Presenting the Latest New York and Chicago Successes
REPERTOIRE

MONDAY NIGHT
"PAL O' MINE"
BY JOSEPH NIEL

THURSDAY NIGHT
"The Unkissed Bride"
BY CIAS. DEMOREST

TUESDAY NIGHT
The Girl He Left Behind
BY RALPH KITTINGER

FRIDAY NIGHT
"Civilian Clothes"
BY THOMPSON BUCHANAN

WEDNESDAY NIGHT
A Woman's Way
BY THOMPSON BUCHANAN

SATURDAY NIGHT
"A Thief in the Night"
BY EDWIN BLOCK

Midway Attractions
Mox—The Man Who Knows
The Old Curiosity Shop
The Royal Midgets
5-in-one Show 5

Take a Ride on the Merry Go Round
Spin Around on The Ferris Wheel
Band Concerts and 2 Free Acts
DAILY

Figure 87. Source: The Long Pine Journal, May 20, 1920, pg. 4.
The Company continued to grow, until it eventually took a “20 car private Pullman train” to carry its “125 employees, concession stands, tents and equipment.”\textsuperscript{237} The Company must have been profitable, for the trademark red and yellow train alone cost $65,000!\textsuperscript{238} Since the train served as the employees’ temporary home, numerous cars were set up as living suites. Many of them contained glamorous amenities, such as silver basins connected to hot and cold running water and mahogany sleeping berths surrounded by mirrors.\textsuperscript{239}

Possibly one reason for the new company’s success was that Walter (Figure 24) kept his scruples, holding his employees to his high standards. Because such characteristics of a traveling show were unique, many were impressed with the Company and had no reservations attending the show when it was in town. A writer for \textit{The Omaha World Herald} sung of the attributes of the Walter Savidge Amusement Company.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{The crew is not made of crude fellows who ‘flop’ in strange places, no indeed. \hfill Savidge and his company are welcomed with open arms each year in towns that he has played before.}\textsuperscript{240}
\end{quote}

The rides and side shows of the ballyhoo were located outside the big tent. Because it was so big, the Company “owned is own light plant and maintained a 14-man orchestra” (Figure 25). Though today carnival rides are cheap and common, in the 1910s the Savidge Brothers Amusement Company, and later the Walter Savidge Amusement Company, paid high prices to have new, unique rides. These included the Eli Wheel (Figure 26), a Ferris Wheel made by the Eli Company, merry-go-rounds, and revolving swings (Figure 27).\textsuperscript{241}
Figure 89. Autographed photograph of Walter T. Savidge.

Figure 90. The Savidge Players Orchestra, 1912 or after.
Source: The Nebraska State Historical Society Archives, RG1667: 2-1.
Figure 91. Waiting in line for a ride on the Eli Wheel. Date and location unknown. Source: The Nebraska State Historical Society Archives, RG1667: 3-1.
Like other carnivals of the time, the Savidge Brothers Amusement Company and its successor showcased numerous “oddities.” The exact novelties featured varied each year. Snake charmers, trick horses (Figure 28), and wild animals like Madagascar pygmy birds (Figure 29) were common. One year, a group called the Sallardo Trio combined drama and peculiarity into a feature called “Oddities in Jungleland” (Figure 30).

The Company also had ballyhoo “freak” shows. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the western world, it was common for sideshows to feature persons with abnormal physical conditions. Because such people were rarities who frequently did not live very long, the public, fascinated by their conditions, considered them to be freaks of nature. At the time, people with such physical conditions supposedly had trouble finding long-term substantial jobs, so many chose to take on work in traveling shows, where they would be appreciated and almost celebrated for their condition.
Figure 93. King, the trick horse, and his trainer, M.C. Freed, 1918. 

Figure 94. Banner for the Madagascar Pygmies, misspelled as “pigmys.” 
Figure 95. A clown and his "giraffe" in the Sallardo Trio's "Oddities in Jungleland."

Figure 96. Rides and shows as part of the ballyhoo while at Sturgis, South Dakota from July 26 to 31, 1926.
Though the exact features varied year to year, there were people with many different kinds of abnormalities featured in the ballyhoo as part of the Savidge freak shows. Nearly each freak had his or her own stand. There were Siamese twins. “Armless Owens [was] a chap who ate with his feet.” Then there was the George Thompson family. The only thing different about this family was George, the husband and father, who as a little person at a height of thirty-two inches, was the shortest person in his family (Figure 32). Reflective of the times, a popular attraction, advertised as “Darwin’s Original,” who supposedly was the missing evolutionary link between ape and human beings, was a man known as Ma-Ho, the man ape (Figure 33). Most likely Ma-Ho was simply a man who had the rare condition, hypertrichosis, which causes the entire body to be covered with long, thick hair.

Figure 97. George Thompson and son. Date and location unknown. Source: The Nebraska State Historical Society Archives, RG 1667PH: 6-1.
And then, of course, there was Baby May (Figure 34), weighing 480 pounds, the country’s heaviest woman with the smallest stature. If you wanted to visit her, a friendly looking gal, all you had to do was go to her stand and walk up the stairs to the stage. There she sat, in a plush chair, in the front center of the platform. You could stare at her, examining as you walked all around her, and then come back down the stairs on the other side. In addition to her size, people found Baby May fascinating because of her linguistic skills. If you wanted to, you could visit with her and ask her to speak in one of seven languages.
By contemporary standards, these attractions exploited people who lived with “abnormal” physical conditions. Since that time, with medical advances and improved social awareness, medical practitioners are better able to treat the conditions, causing many people to live longer, and sometimes more “normal,” lives. Recognizing such people as fellow human beings, many have become less tolerant of their exploitation and mistreatment.

But at that time, freak shows were a common part of traveling shows. When interviewed for an article in *The Wayne Herald* in 1967, Mabel Savidge argued that the Company did not exploit such persons. Speaking for them, she noted that the people featured as attractions took it well and viewed being a part of the traveling show as an honest career which made them good money. Unfortunately, there are no records that

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Figure 99. Baby May featured as a side show in the Walter Savidge Amusement Company. Source: The Nebraska State Historical Society Archives, RG1667.PH: 7-2.
contain these people’s thoughts in their own words to validate or refute Mabel’s arguments.

Moreover, patrons viewed the Amusement Company as positive, family friendly entertainment. Mabel told of a time when one local Indian chief visited. He was so impressed by the carnival that he told Walter, that he would bring his entire family. Walter was surprised when the Indian later returned with 200 others.248

The Company strove to keep its business morally pure for a general audience. The traveling show and its workers did not have the sordid reputation that “carnies” have today. Newspapers reported that the show “never skinned [the] public.”249 Walter was especially strict, holding high behavioral and moral expectations of his employees. He only hired someone if the person was heterosexual and married. Supposedly he immediately fined and fired any workers who gambled, swore, or smoked. Your employment would also be terminated if you were untidy or caused trouble. Thus, in the area that it frequented, the business earned the reputation of being “the cleanest show in America,” with people referring to it as “The Sunday School Amusement Company.”250

The Company exuded an aura of friendliness to the traditional nuclear American family. Traveling shows were such a part of Mabel and Walter Savidge’s lives that they could not spend much time away from them. They introduced their only child, Walter Jr., to show business when he was three weeks old.251 But with a new responsibility the couple couldn’t remain living the way they previously had. With the birth of their son, Walter and Mabel ceased their winter travels in exchange for quiet time at home with the family in Wayne.252
Walter Jr. was not the only child who traveled with the Company. Many of the entertainers brought their children along. Some of the parents even allowed their sons and daughters to be involved in the entertaining. A Mr. and Mrs. Henderson who worked for the Company, let their son, Lyle Hollywood Henderson, perform too. After several years of working for the Walter Savidge Amusement Company, young Lyle, went to Hollywood. Once there, he took his mother’s maiden name and changed his name to Lyle Talbot. From 1931 to 1987, he worked hundreds of jobs. As one of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) founders, he acted in numerous movies, such as *A Shriek in the Night* (1933) (Figure 35), *Shirley Temple in Our Little Girl* (1935), and *Untamed Women* (1952). He appeared in tv shows, like *Hopalong Cassidy, The Lone Ranger, Leave it to Beaver*, and *The Lucy Show*. A spot in a 1987 episode of *Newhart* was his last gig. Other future entertainers, like Fritz Adams and Dick Elliot, also got their professional feet wet while working for the Walter Savidge Amusement Company.

![Figure 35. Lyle Talbot and Ginger Rogers in *A Shriek in the Night* (1933).](source)

*Source: Obscure Classics: Shining a Light on the Forgotten Films of the Golden Age.*
With so many employees and expenses, the Company had to keep books, or ledgers, to manage finances. Mabel was in charge of the ledgers. She kept track of business correspondence and financial transactions, such as employee salary records. In addition to their wages, employees earned a bonus if they stayed with the show for the entire season. Included within the yellowed, worn pages of a ledger representing a season are signatures of employees. By signing the ledgers, the workers verified that they had received their wages in full.\textsuperscript{257} Many of the ledgers also contain loose receipts and statements. For instance, because the Company frequently paid for some of its employees’ clothing, in the 1916 ledger there is an itemized statement of charges for Ivan Totten’s garments. Unfortunately the handwriting of the name of the person, or clothing company, to which the charges were made is illegible. It is also unclear what kind of work Ivan did; furthermore, unfortunately, the types of clothing that he charged do not help to clear up the mystery. Nevertheless, among other purchases, in November of 1916, Ivan charged a pair of “sox” for $0.35, overalls at $0.95, a cap for $1.00, a pair of pants worth $1.00, a suit valued at $15.00, and three sweaters-- one at $1.50, the second at $4.00, and the other at $5.00.\textsuperscript{258}

People of all ages could enjoy the Company’s entertainments. Like Walter in his own childhood, children and young adults could especially be enticed by the adventure, excitement, and romanticism of traveling shows like the Walter Savidge Amusement Company. Though today we take the phrase lightly, in late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century America, children really did dream of running away to join the circus. In some cases the situation became so troublesome that authors wrote fictitious children’s books with exciting plots, but moral lessons, that taught of the negative realities of running away to
join a circus. James Otis’s 1881 *Toby Tyler*, also known as *Ten Weeks With a Circus*, chronicles the story of a boy who discovers the miseries of trading his carefree childhood for the drudgery life of working for a corrupt traveling show.\(^{259}\)

But in rural Nebraska in the early 20\(^{th}\) century, regardless of moral lessons, children and teenagers still dreamed of leaving home to join a traveling show. Walter occasionally received letters from parents granting their permission for their child to work for the Company. For example, on a small, lined paper ripped from a complimentary Ellwood Fence Company notebook, Mr. and Mrs. H.P. Hendricks wrote perpendicularly to the lines, scribbling a signed, yet undated, note to the Savidge Amusement Company giving their permission for their son, Earl or Carl, to join the show.\(^{260}\) It is not clear whether this note was written in the time of the Savidge Brothers Amusement Company or the Walter Savidge Amusement Company. It is also unclear whether or not such a messy, hastily written document could be legally binding.

As another example, the following letter came from a mother, and was most likely written in 1916.

*Dakota City, Nebr- May 9*

*Dear Sir*

*At my son[^s] request to [go]with to you and give my consent for him to go with your show, wich Mr and Mrs Fred Hugart as our Friends wanted him and said it would be all right for him to go. I am willing if you think that he is not to young (as he is 15 years) and it would be all right if not he can come home from Wayne be for your leave. I hope it will be all right. Alex is well thought of here and will be missed by many*
From Alex Mother

Mrs Julius Quintal

Such a letter simultaneously reveals and conceals information about the matter of young people joining the Walter Savidge Amusement Company. From such a letter, it appears as if that Alex Quintal’s mother was his primary caretaker and guardian. Otherwise, in such times, it would have been customary for Julius Quintal, as legal guardian and leader of the family, to grant permission for his child to leave the family. Although we don’t know for sure, it is quite possible that Alex’s mother was in a situation that caused her to be the uncustomary leader of the family. Perhaps Julius was physically absent; he might have left the family, been incarcerated, or maybe he was dead. Perhaps he had a disability or lack of education that prevented him from writing.

Neither the letter, nor other available documentation tells how Walter responded. Did he automatically allow children and teenagers to join his employ if the individual’s parent had given their written consent? What was his policy on hiring children, other than those of employees? If he only hired married adults, at what age did he consider the boundary between child and adult? If Walter didn’t consider a male fifteen years of age to be an adult and didn’t allow teenagers who weren’t the children of employees to work for him, why did Mrs Julius Quintal write such a letter? What made Mrs. Julius Quintal think that Walter would accept her son as an employee? Was Alex the primary income maker for the family and she needed him to make money to help support the family? Who were Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hugart? Were they, perhaps, a married couple who worked for the Company? In the end, such a letter asks more questions than it answers regarding
the Company’s practices on dealing with children who wanted to leave home in exchange for ostensibly romantic life of working for a traveling show.

But the Walter Savidge Amusement Company did not always know good times. Because it always dealt with the public, accidents that involved people who were not employees were bound to happen. When, in the summer of 1916, C.R. Rightfield of Omaha was working on the Company’s Ferris Wheel in Creighton, something went wrong. Whatever happened, Rightfield suffered injuries to his foot “and person.” The Company eventually paid him $15.00 in damages. As documentation of his agreement to a settlement, Rightfield wrote a letter on letterhead from the Millard Hotel, the Headquarters for Stockm[e]n, located at 19th and Douglas streets in Omaha. Dated December 2, 1916, he acknowledged that he had received the cash settlement and that he would no longer “in no way hold Walter Savidge Libel for Damages which may accrue.”

One of its worst experiences for the Company was when typical Nebraska summer weather reared its ugly head. While appearing in Neligh one year in the 1930s, strong winds and rains suddenly came up. Catching them off guard, the rains doused everyone. “[A] fearful ostrich joined a scrambling crowd.” Though the wind threw the bass drummer into the nearby river, no one was severely hurt. Mabel was able to assist some of the female patrons. She took roughly twenty of the women, who had been inside the tent watching the play, to the train where she gave them dry clothing. Though no one was badly hurt, much of the carnival’s infrastructure was. The severe weather destroyed the large tent and most of the ballyhoo.
In the late 1930s, most likely due to newer types of entertainment like radio and motion pictures, interest in the traveling show dwindled. Transportation changed. The Company left the trademark yellow and red train on the tracks and instead used trucks to transport the show. Over several years, Walter slowly sold the train in pieces. In 1941, after thirty-five years of “traveling the circuit,” the Savidges finally decided to call it quits and sold their business to Art Thomas. The couple retired to their home in Wayne (Figure 36). The exact reasons for the decision to retire are undocumented. The couple was growing older and, perhaps, they were simply tired of being on the road.

Possibly they were obliged to stay put in one place due to health reasons. Walter suffered from gall bladder disease, acid reflux, and Parkinson’s Disease (PD). In order to treat his gall bladder condition and acid reflux, his doctor gave him a detailed
description of the foods that he could and could not eat. To treat his illness, the doctor told Walter that he should drink plenty of water at specific times. For instance, he should “drink plenty of water on arising, between meals, and on retiring,” but he shouldn’t “drink with meals,” or force himself to drink the water. The diet also included the stipulation that he eat plenty of fruits of vegetables. There was an exception, however: he should avoid eating “too many potatoes” and not eat them at the same meal when he ate bread. When he started to feel better, Walter could eat items like sour milk, mutton, and gelatin deserts. Above all, Walter should avoid overeating.

Though this special diet might have helped with Walter’s gall bladder and acid reflux troubles, it could not fight his PD. Multiple attempts at treating the disease did any good. For the last ten months of his life on earth, the once vibrant showman lay ailing in his bed. Within eight years of retiring, Walter Savidge died in Wayne on September 20, 1949 at the age of sixty-three.

Mabel went on to live for forty more years. Her memories of the carnival days were not always pleasant. When asked if she enjoyed the work, she replied, “No, not really.” She tired of the “hectic” lifestyle when the couple was “always on the go.” She did, however, find the work “interesting.” Despite the fact that Mabel was essential to the success of the Walter Savidge Amusement Company, she did not feel as if she was a major part of it. Typical of the mentality of gender roles for American men and women during the early and mid 20th century, Mabel viewed the business as her husband’s. In her eyes, he was the one who was involved with it. However, in 1967 she said that, if given the chance, she would not do it all over again. She simply dedicated her life’s ambitions to those of her husband, and in doing so followed the gender norms of the day.
During the 1970s and 1980s, when she was too frail to look after herself, Mabel stayed at the Care Center, a nursing home, in Wayne. In 1989, at the age of 104, she, too, passed, taking with her countless memories of the heyday of the traveling show industry in rural Nebraska.
CHAPTER 3

ETHNIC-RELIGIOUS ENTERTAINMENT:
THE GERMAN RUSSIAN MENNONITES OF HENDERSON

Today, in 2009, Arnold and Lorena Buller have a small home in rural north central Nebraska, roughly twenty miles northwest of the town of Atkinson. Soon after getting married in the 1950s, the Bullers moved to the area, an agriculturally rural landscape made up of corn and soybean fields, rolling dry Sandhills, and riparian woodlands. The couple farmed and raised two children. The children soon grew, married, and raised their own families near by.

Though all families have certain entertainment and family holiday traditions, those of the Bullers were and are different from those of the mainstream. Now in their early 70s when many rural Nebraskans are retired and relaxing in their golden years, everyday life still finds this couple engaged in hard, satisfying work. While they enjoy brief periods of leisure, certain entertainment activities are considered to be taboo. Sundays are always a mandatory day of worship and rest. At wedding receptions, if you ask her, Lorena will tell you stories of how she remembers partaking in charivaris. For the Bullers, life revolves around their spiritual life, hard work, traditions, and family.

Family birthdays and holidays such as Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas are special occasions that are cause for the extended family to get together and have a sit down dinner at the Buller home. If it’s cool outside, the small home is warmed by the heat of an exterior wood stove. Even in the winter, when temperatures are below freezing, Lorena might have done laundry before the festivities and have it outside drying on the line. She has thoroughly cleaned the house. The couple has paid attention to
detail when preparing the dinner table. Arnold has helped to place in the leaves, extending the table to accommodate the ten or more family members who will be sitting around it. Lorena has draped her finest table cloths and set out her nicest dishes and silverware. When all is ready, everyone gathers around the table, all join hands, and Lorena requests that their son, a lay pastor, also a farmer, asks the blessing. After all take their seats, the conversations resume, and the dishes and platters of food begin to be passed around. With much of the food traditionally prepared mostly by Lorena: fare such as zwieback (“two bakes” buns), pluma mos (plum pudding-like soup), and oppel shnetya (apple filled pastries) decorate the linen covered table. Conversation turns to talk of the farm, harvest, recipes, church life, family and friends, health, and memories. Almost always, the dialogue also includes reference to German words for foods on the table, the German language, and who can remember how much of the language. After dessert and coffee is served, the men retire to the living room for conversation while the women clear the kitchen, hand wash and put away the dishes, and remove the table cloth and leaves from the table, all while visiting.

If it is Christmas, a few more special customs are in store. After finishing with the dishes, the ladies get out their festive trays brimming with sweet goodies, such as papanekata (peppernuts), that they brought along and place them on the table for all to enjoy. Everyone congregates in the cozy living room and listens to one of the grandchildren, whoever’s turn it is this year, recite the Christmas story—Luke 2-- from the Bible. Then the Lorena and Arnold ask the grandchildren what they have brought. This means that the couple is asking the grandchildren what kind of informal program presentation talent they have brought to share with everyone. Mostly musical and literary
talents are presented. A grandchild might play a Christmas carol on the piano or trumpet or recite a family appropriate poem. However, over time, this tradition has faded away since all but one grandchild are now adults. Then comes the opening of presents. The ceremony begins with Lorena handing out a brown paper lunch sack—labeled with that person’s name in black permanent marker, and filled with an assortment of edibles including an orange, red delicious apple, small store-bought chocolates, orange slice jellies, unshelled peanuts, and homemade chocolate peanut clusters—to each person. Also included in the brown paper bag, often hidden in the top of a can of nuts, is a money check. Then others give their gifts to Arnold and Lorena, allowing them to open their gifts before a men and women’s gift exchange ensues. After all the gifts are open and the wrapping is cleaned up, visiting, eating, and coffee drinking resume, until it becomes late in the evening and all leave for their homes. When New Years rolls around a week later, *portzilka* will need to be made. Lorena and Arnold will go to a friends’ home, where Lorena will help the lady to made New Years cookies and Arnold will visit with the man.

Hard work, *zwieback*, low German, charivari, Bible readings and grandchildren’s presentations at Christmas. Indeed this family’s ways of entertainment are slightly different from those of many in rural Nebraska. Why? Because the Bullers come from a long line of German Mennonites from south-central Nebraska. When they moved to the north-central part of the state, they came from the Henderson area in York County (Figure 1). Their heritage and ways of life emanate from a small colony of Mennonites, Germans from Russia to be precise, that immigrated to York County in the early 1870s. And, like many ethnic-religious groups, the Henderson Mennonites had—and to an extent still have—their own distinct human geography.
Figure 1.
Mennonites Coming to America

In the late 19th century, thousands of German Mennonites living in Russia emigrated to the Great Plains of North America. Due to persecution, the European Mennonites were accustomed to frequent moves. The Mennonite version of Christianity sprung from the Anabaptist Movement of the early 16th century in Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland as a protest to some of the customs of the Catholic Church. Many European Mennonites, with their seemingly heretic beliefs and practices-- such as adult baptism and the refusal to bear arms or participate in warfare--that went against the teachings of the Catholic Church, had slowly moved to eastern Europe, where they were able to some extent escape religious persecution. Many locals soon came to take note of the industrious Mennonites who worked as sea-farers and farmers. But political and religious persecution continued, causing many to flee their new homes. Some emigrated to America, many of whom became the Pennsylvania Dutch. Others took up an invitation extended by Catherine the Great in the late 18th century and moved to the Molotshna Colony in southwestern Russia.

But the religious freedom and political exemptions from some taxes and military responsibilities that the powerful Russian empress offered eventually waned. In the late 19th century, under pressure to give up their cultural ways and become Russified the Mennonites had to leave Russia for the same reasons that they had come. Most emigrated to the Great Plains of Canada and the United States. Large settlements began appearing in southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan and the northern American Great Plains. By 1910, 31,910 German Russians lived in North Dakota; 16,311 in Kansas; 13,189 in South Dakota, and 13,020 in Nebraska. In rural Nebraska, a number of
Mennonites settled in Hamilton and York counties. An especially large group made their home near the new town of Henderson in southeastern York County.

**German Russian Mennonites of the Henderson Area**

In 1874, thirty-five German Russian Mennonite families arrived in Henderson, Nebraska. As a communal colony without much money, the group spent their first winter living in an Immigrant House (Figure 2) constructed by the Burlington Railroad. The building, made up of two rooms, was long and narrow, 20 by 80 feet, with walls nearly nine feet tall. As the weather warmed, the families divided up land and began setting up their farms and constructing their homes. Because their faith was an inseparable aspect of their culture, people began organizing opportunities to have Sunday Schools and worship services.275

During the first few years, residents held school, often referred to as “German school,” in their homes. Male elders served as teachers, instructing children in the subjects of the Bible, the German language, and, occasionally, arithmetic. The teachers frequently used the New Testament as a text when teaching students to read German.276 But changes in state law—that mandated children have nine months annual education for eight to ten years-- soon made it difficult to continue such elementary level “German schools.” As early as 1888, area residents established formal, public schools that even the German Russian Mennonite children attended.277 Nevertheless, some private German Schools remained, in county and in town. In Henderson, the Mennonites created a private, high school version of a German School. The four-room German School graduated its first seniors-- three female and four male seniors-- in 1923.278
For the most part, the German Russian Mennonites of the Henderson area were a hardworking, God-fearing people who made little time for leisure. To spend too much time in idleness was selfish, wasteful, irreverent, and sinful. People who did so were often looked down upon, considered to be loafers (Figure 3). In Mennonite eyes, God’s people were to be hard laborers who were good stewards of the time, talents, and treasures that He had blessed them with. However, the Mennonites did occasionally allow themselves rest from their labors, especially if the activities were inspired by Biblical teachings. The Sabbath, Sunday, was a mandatory day of rest. Family events—such as weddings and birthdays—could be cause for much entertainment. Since they were a communal society, school, church, and other community events were popular activities. Because of their strong Christian faith, Mennonite holidays were calibrated to the Christian calendar. Numerous customs were common on the two most significant Christian holidays—Christmas, the day celebrating the birth of the Jesus Christ and
Easter, the day of Jesus Christ’s resurrection, the date marking the gift of redemption and everlasting life to all believing and repentant people. When unable to work, the Mennonites spent their leisure time in fellowship. Secular days like New Years, rainy days, or wintertime found people visiting one another.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 3. Source: Voth, *Henderson Mennonites: From Holland to Henderson*, 232.

Though they partook in some entertainments that were similar to other rural Nebraskans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as having a community band, the Mennonites would not participate in some activities that they viewed as lavish and sinful. You would not find a self-respecting Mennonite dancing, gambling, drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, playing cards, shooting billiards, watching movies, participating in secret societies, or being a member of a fraternal or sorority organization. You could tell, in fact, whether or not a Mennonite owned a business or building in Henderson simply by the type of establishment it was. Non-Mennonites owned the Modern Woodman of the World lodge, dance hall, and motion picture theater on main street. But Henderson’s people would not support all types of entertainment simply because they were
fashionable and part of the time’s dominant popular culture. Owners had to close the
dance hall, opened in the 1890s, in the 1920s, most likely due to a lack of patronage by
area residents. An “outsider,” a traveling gambler known as Big Jack, opened a motion
picture theatre, which didn’t even last one year.280

The entertainment that the Mennonites did partake in, in their eyes, should not
only glorify God and His blessings, but also perpetuate the people’s traditions and
customs. No matter how they spent their leisure time, the distinct ethnicity of this
religious group permeated and was reflected in every aspect of their entertainment.

Sunday was a crucially important day of the week. Not only was it the Sabbath,
the Lord’s Day, a day spent in formal worship at church, but it was also a day away from
work, a day filled with rest and leisure. *Faspa* and visiting with friends and family were
common ways to spend your leisure time on Sundays. A *faspa* was a late afternoon lunch
that usually occurred around between three and four o’clock.281 Such meals could occur
on any day of the week.282 A *faspa* served in the summer might consist of *shnetya*
pastries and *pirishki* (dumplings).283 On Sundays, however, *faspa* was expected and
took the place of the evening meal.284 Henderson Mennonites considered cake, cheese,
coffee, jelly,285 lumps of sugar,286 *schmont* (cream cookies), and *zwieback* essential
components of such a Sunday meal.287

*Zwieback* (Figure 4) was the meal’s main course.288 Along with rye breads,
*zwieback* was one of the main food staples in low German Mennonite societies. It was
not only a requirement for Sunday *faspa*, but was also an essential for weddings, funerals,
and holidays. No matter what the occasion, it was customary to serve *zwieback* with
coffee and sugar cubes. Dunking your *zwieback* into the coffee was acceptable, as well
as was sweetening both the coffee and the buns with sugar. Saturday mornings usually found women of the household baking numerous batches of the zwieback. The women made enough to last for all meals from Saturday through the mid part of the next week. For instance, if you got hungry Sunday evening, long after the faspa, you could have a snack of brucka milck, a hot porridge-like food made of cubed zwieback, milk, butter, and salt. If, by Thursday, there still were some buns left around from the previous week around, they were toasted in a slow oven.

![Zwieback](image)

**Figure 4. Zwieback.**  

The low German term zwieback, meaning (zvie= two; back= bake) two baked, is a yeast dough bun, or roll, made out of two smaller buns. When fashioning, you roll a small piece of dough into a ball, roughly the size of an egg, and place it on a pan. You then roll another smaller ball, placing it on top of the first and firmly securing it by pressing down on it with your thumb. Many agree that this delicate balance that ensures that the top ball doesn’t move “is part of the art and challenge that must be
mastered by the baker." The following is a recipe that appears in the Homemakers Club *Cook Book*.

**Zwieback**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Quantities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 cakes yeast</td>
<td>½ cup cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup water</td>
<td>¾ cup lard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tablespoon sugar</td>
<td>2 tablespoons salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cups milk</td>
<td>8-9 cups flour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Soak the yeast in 1 cup water and add the sugar. Let rise, add warmed milk, cream and lard. Add the flour and salt by cupfuls, mixing thoroughly after each addition until you have a soft dough which can be kneaded. Knead until smooth and most all stickiness has disappeared. Let rise until double in bulk. Form into small balls, placing one on top of the other. Let rise until double in size and bake in a hot oven for about 15 to 20 minutes. Makes about 45.

**Variations**

1. Take *zwieback* dough and shape into bun. Make a hollow in the middle and fill with fresh or canned sweetened fruit. Let rise and bake. Then frost them.

2. Make a bun and dip into sweet cream. Then dip into cinnamon and sugar mixture. Let rise and bake. These are best when fresh.

3. Break apart leftover *zwieback*. Toast them in the oven. These can be dunked in coffee. Sprinkle with sugar and eat to your heart’s content.

On rare occasions when *zwieback* had not been made for Sunday *faspa*, bread could take its place. The menu for Sunday *faspa* for Mennonites in other areas of North America at the time was quite similar, with those in Saskatchewan, for instance, also having butter and sausage or a sliced meat.

Because it was uncommon for people to eat a Sunday *faspa* alone in their homes without company, it was almost always wise for a hostess to plan on having visitors to feed. Sunday *faspas* and visiting went hand in hand. Nearly everyone that was physically capable visited. An anonymous source remembered that “[e]ither you were
company on Sunday or you had a houseful of company.” Since Sunday was a special and social day, families traveled to others’ homes by way of their best horses and buggies (Figure 5).

![Image of buggies and people](image)

**Figure 5.** Buggies common for traveling to Sunday visiting. Source: Voth, *Henderson Mennonites: From Holland to Henderson*, 51.

A hostess regularly expected visitors, invited or uninvited, and she planned accordingly. When the company finally arrived at a home, the sexes often split, with men and women conversing in separate rooms. The children frequently played and visited with one another. The oldest boys of the hosting household were in charge of caring for the horses and buggies that the guests brought. They “unhitched, fed, watered, and groomed” the horses.” When it came to the *faspa*, if too many unexpected visitors stopped by and the hostess ran out of *zwieback*, she might have to quickly run over to a neighbor’s home to borrow some more buns and/or resort to using crackers as a substitute. Older girls of the house-- if they were around, able, and allowed to cook on the Sabbath-- might help out their mother by quickly baking some bread or *schnetya*
(Figure 6) to serve their guests. After visiting and their late afternoon meal, families returned home in the early evenings to finish their chores before retiring for the night.

![Figure 6. Foods commonly served at a faspa. Counterclockwise from left to right: apple prieshki, shnetya, zwieback, jelly, and sugar lumps. Source: Voth, Henderson Mennonites, 46.](image)

Though not as common as other staples, moos was also regularly featured on Sundays. Moos, a cold, sweet cream or milk porridge, was frequently made out of fruits and served for breakfast. On hand fresh and dried fruits were used to make common variations including apple, cherry, gooseberry, mixed fruit, and pluma (plum) moos. Less popular were those that included ingredients other than fruits. Kleeta (clod) moos was made from flour and water balls, mixed in with egg, milk, salt, bacon, butter, and crackers. A rice moos could also be made using rice, salt, water, milk, sugar, and cinnamon. Most households ate some variation of moos once or twice a week. Having a moos of some kind was a must at holiday dinners.
Some families celebrated birthdays with nearly as much gusto as a holiday. If the family was well off financially or if it was a particularly important birthday of a relative or friend, a goose dinner might be prepared. Just like other Nebraska towns in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Henderson had community music groups, enjoyed school activities, and held an annual community celebration. Aptly named, the Henderson Corn Show served as a spring fair and socializing opportunity for people of the community. People of all ages and both sexes got involved. Children representing their rural schools competed in academic contests to earn the highly coveted traveling Henderson Corn Show trophy. The Show’s contests and events focused particularly on agricultural and domestic economy themes. Women entered their creations, such as their quilts and baked and canned goods, into contests that the county extension agent would judge. Extension agents also evaluated the contest that the men entered, a seed-corn competition. The Parent Teacher Association, most likely the women of, provided foods like chili and pie. The last major event of the day was a talk by a professor from the University of Nebraska Agriculture Department.

Christmas, along with Easter, were one of the two most important holidays of the year. Teachers and students of rural schools frequently spent much energy on celebrating Christmas with a special program. An anonymous person remembered the preparations in great detail.

In rural schools the school Christmas program was an event attended by all who lived in that district—whether they had kids or not. For weeks before the program most lessons stopped and students directed their energies towards practicing the play and/or chorus to be performed, in some fashion. They strung
wires across one end of the school room and hung curtains by safety pins to create a make-shift stage for the production. Any holes created by mice or last year’s exuberant actors, were covered by stars of some paper decorations made by the younger ones. The last few days a tree appeared which the children helped decorate. On the last day, all desks were shoved to the side or back of the room to make way for folding chairs and that night’s audience.

In the evening, everyone came dressed in their Christmas best, families brought cookies and students brought presents for a gift exchange. The program was performed and then Santa appeared to hand out the presents and invites everyone to share cookies and news.\footnote{306}

The Mennonites observed exceptional entertaining customs in celebration of the Christian holiday. Women spent the two days prior to Christmas Day cooking and baking for the dinner, so that they would have time to attend the morning service instead of having to worry about getting the food ready.\footnote{307}

On Christmas Day, after attending the morning church celebration service, families frequently traveled to the homes of the children’s grandparents. People’s accounts of the day tell of the memories of entering Grandpa and Grandma’s home only to be inundated with the aroma of coffee, din of chatter, and commotion of a crowded house filled with relatives. After the women had completed the dinner preparations, the grandparents and fathers sat down to the feast. Women served the traditional Christmas dinner foods including, among others, bologna, fried potatoes, ham, \textit{pluma mos, shinka flash}, and \textit{zwieback}.\footnote{308} The meal could also include rye bred and butter, boiled ham,
pickles, and condiments such as ketchup, horseradish, and mustard for the meats. If there were young men around to butcher hogs a few days before Christmas, the feast might include liverwurst and spare ribs. After the grandparents and fathers were done eating, it was the children’s turn. Occasionally the children ate in another location. Henry Bergen, Sr. remembers how he and other grandchildren often ate Christmas dinners in a small room with a dirt floor covered with sand between their grandparents’ house and barn. Finally, after all others were done eating, the women sat down to the Christmas feast, only later to clear, wash, and put away the dishes, food, and table. While the men visited.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity to the children, when the women were finished cleaning up after the dinner, the kids, with gleeful anticipation, congregated in the living room. Before they could open their gifts, however, they had to give a gift of their own. The adults required the all the “little children” to vensh, to “wish…say a piece… or sing a song.” When all the children had given their venshes, the males of the family, grandpa and the uncles, gave their gifts, “shining new coins, usually pennies,” to the youngsters. Then grandma would take the presents, often placed together in a basket, and walk around the room, handing out the gifts to each child. She also would give each child a tootya, “a sack of nuts, peanuts, candies, and an orange, apple, or cookie.”

Following the opening of gifts, while visiting, everyone ate another smaller meal, a faspa with dinner leftovers, papanata (peppernuts), candies, peanuts, and homemade goodies. If the family had another set of grandparents, this entire schedule would be repeated the next day, called Second Holiday, at their house. After eating the evening lunch, the women cleaned up and everyone went home to do their chores before heading
off for the evening Christmas church service. It was at this evening service that church
choirs and the Sunday school classes gave their programs.  

Though they might be made for any time of the year, *papaneata*, peppernuts, were
especially popular during the Christmas season. These small, dense peppered cookies
were fairly simple to make with common ingredients like flour white sugar, milk, eggs,
lard, baking powder, salt, and, of course, table pepper. At Christmas time, however,
much more care and ingredients went into their making…

**Christmas Peppernuts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>syrup</td>
<td>4 quarts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sugar</td>
<td>3 quarts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milk</td>
<td>1 quart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butter</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lard</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cinnamon</td>
<td>1 tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cloves</td>
<td>1 tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nutmeg</td>
<td>1 tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allspice</td>
<td>¾ tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mace</td>
<td>1 tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cardamom</td>
<td>2 tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sternanise</td>
<td>1 tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baking powder</td>
<td>3 tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coconut</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citron</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vanilla</td>
<td>1 tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orange</td>
<td>peeling of 2 or 3 oranges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flour</td>
<td>flour to make a very stiff dough, approximately 25 pounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roll out in sheets ¼ [inch] thick and cut into pieces. Bake in moderate oven until a
golden brown.

Mennonites believed in simple living without longing for materialistic goods.

Thus, even something as basic as peppernuts could be tied to a common Mennonite
sentiment for how you should live and view your everyday life.

*Vern daut kliena niche eat,*
*Es daut grota nich veet.*

Who isn’t satisfied with small things,
Isn’t worthy of big things.
Though New Years festivities were less elaborate than those of Christmas, the beginning of the calendar year was also celebrated with visiting and special foods. Often people would travel to the homes of friends and family to spend the day visiting.

Portzilki, New Year’s Cookies, was the main food featured at this holiday. A New Year’s lunch, for instance, might simply consist of portzilki and milk. Women had been busy making, along with the other holiday cookies, the portzilki both days before and the day of New Years. A popular rhyme even talked about the making of the holiday treat…

**New Year’s Rhyme**

_Eck sach dem Shorshstein rooka,_  
_Eck visst voll vaut za monka,_  
_Za backta Niejoash kooka._

I saw the chimney smoking,  
I knew what they were making,  
They were baking New Year’s Cookies.

Though called a cookie, this holiday treat was more of a deep fat fried, irregularly shaped, drop dough raisin donut or fritter glazed with powder sugar frosting. Sometimes referred to as neeyoesh koke, the name for the New Year’s cookies comes from the motion that the fritters make when frying. The low-German term portzilki literally means “tumbling over.” Though several recipes exist for portzilki, the main ingredients and instructions are the same. Dry ingredients include flour, yeast, white sugar, raisins, salt, and sometimes baking powder. Water or milk and eggs, occasionally along with butter, hold the dough together. Lard or hot vegetable oil is used for the deep fat frying. For those who liked an even sweeter treat, the portzilki could be glazed with powdered sugar frosting or rolled in sugar before or dipped in sugar while eating. The following is a
typical recipe for New Year’s Cookies that comes from the Homemakers Club *Cook Book.*

**New Year’s Cookies**

Dissolve a cake of yeast in ¼ cup water and add to 2 cups milk which has been scaled and cooled.

Add:

- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 ¼ teaspoons salt
- 3 eggs well beaten
- ¼ cup butter

Plump ¾ lb. raisins in hot water for a minute or two. Drain and add to the above mixture. Add enough flour to make a soft dough perhaps using 4 or 5 cups. Let rise until doubled. Heat oil in kettle or deep fat fryer to 350-375 degrees and dip spoon in hot fat, then dip spoon into dough dropping dough by spoonful into oil. Turn to fry golden brown.

Whether or not it was a Sunday or holiday, getting together to visit was a popular form of entertainment for the German Russian Mennonites in the Henderson area. In fact, visiting during the week was one of the most common ways to spend your leisure time. No matter what day of the week or what time of day it was, it was always a good idea for the women of the house to have “a colander of cooked potatoes with ‘jackets’ setting on a kitchen cupboard or worktable just to be prepared” for the potential of feeding company. During the week in the evenings when it was still light out, if all work and chores had been completed, horses were bedded down, and the supper dishes washed and put away, families frequently walked the short distance, “often across a field,” to a neighbor’s house to visit.

If it had rained during the spring, summer, and fall, the following day was an automatic visiting day since the men could not go out to the muddy fields to work. It was not uncommon for a large number of people to visit a family’s home on such “rain days.”
Thus it was again wise if the lady of the house was prepared to feed a large number of people, possibly with soup or ham and potatoes. Married children who lived nearby might take the opportunity to visit their parents, or vice versa. Women frequently visited with other women, and men visited with other men. The women might sew, knit, or help their hostess. The men might play dominoes or walk around the farmyard, talking about the *wirtschaft* (business).323

Though often closely supervised, teenagers had opportunities to enjoy their leisure time, occasionally with the opposite sex. Free time after church activities such as choir practice, evening service, and weddings provided young men and women the chance to socialize. When their parents were visiting on Sunday afternoons, older adolescent males frequently met at a friend’s house and enjoyed themselves all the more if their friend had similarly aged sisters. When they went to visit on weekdays, parents sometimes worried, however, when they left their children home alone. When the parents returned, children had almost always completed their chores, but they might also have had the opportunity to smoke “behind the barn” and/or sample some of “Father’s schnapps.”324

Along with visiting and church activities, women had numerous other occasions in which to entertain themselves. Girls and young and adult women got together to help one another with work and made the labor into a time of socializing. Work that involved sewing, cooking, and creating bedding was common. Females experienced and old enough to cook helped one another to make large meals for the hungry field crews when it was threshing season.325 Women of all ages came together to tie comforters,326 participate in quilting bees, and mend clothes or corn husking gloves.327 “Widows
clubs,” for instance, might meet to allow women to enjoy one other’s company, quilt, and eat a pot-luck meal. Supposedly, these young girls enjoyed this activity since much of the down would be used to fill pillows and feather beds that would go into each girl’s hope chest.

The idea of a young girl – Mennonite or not-- having and building up her hope chest had been around for centuries, but was especially popular during the Victorian era. This did not mean, however, that all young women took the tradition seriously. Some found the practice to be distastefully old fashioned, where a young woman was too dependent on what a man might give her, placing all of her dreams in the hopes of one day marrying, having a beautiful home, and raising blissful children. The popular young women’s fiction writer, Lucy Maud Montgomery, from Prince Edward Island, Canada illustrated such sentiment in her 1909 book, *Anne of Avonlea*, the second in the set of eight in the famous *Anne of Green Gables* series. In Chapter 29 “Poetry and Prose,” Montgomery’s heroine, Anne Shirley, is visiting with her best friend, Diana Barry, from a well-to-do farming and dairying family about Dianna’s engagement and upcoming marriage to the farmer Fred Wright. In the secrecy of Anne’s upstairs gable room, Diana reveals to Anne, that at the age of eighteen, she has procrastinated and not yet built up her hope chest. As Diana confides her fears about getting married, however, she also makes comments that keep her ever the pure, stoic, and idyllic Victorian maid. It would be three years before Diana and Fred would be married. Diana says:

“But three years isn't any too much time to get ready for housekeeping, for I haven't a speck of fancy work made yet. But I'm going to begin crocheting doilies
tomorrow. Myra Gillis had thirty-seven doilies when she was married and I'm determined I shall have as many as she had.”

Anne, stubborn in her determination to make it through life on her own talents as a female and snobbish towards the idea of females depending on males, sarcastically retorts to Diana:

“I suppose it would be perfectly impossible to keep house with only thirty-six doilies,” conceded Anne, with a solemn face but dancing eyes.

But Anne’s quick wit hurt Diana and her Victorian ideals, and Anne had to quickly apologize, recognizing that hope chests and young women’s dreams-- of living happily ever after through a young handsome husband, beautiful home, and children—were still very much alive and well in much of society.

Diana looked hurt.

“I didn’t think you’d make fun of me, Anne,” she said reproachfully.

“Dearest, I wasn’t making fun of you,” cried Anne repentantly. “I was only easing you a bit. I think you'll make the sweetest little housekeeper in the world. And I think it's perfectly lovely of you to be planning already for your home o'dreams.”

Most likely, Diana would place her thirty-seven doilies, whether she made or received them, into her hope chest. A bride making and collecting items to “complete” a hope chest was a common practice in many cultures in the United States up to the mid 20th century. Though the custom began in Europe in the Middle Ages, it experienced a
resurgence of popularity in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries with middle and upper classes in Europe. European immigrants to America, of all classes, regularly bought the practice with them, soon making the custom common in the United States as well.\textsuperscript{331}

A hope chest was a large, often wooden, trunk like container that contained items, as well as her dreams and hopes for the future, which a bride would use to furnish her household after marriage.\textsuperscript{332} Sometimes a father or another close male relative or friend who was an excellent woodworker might construct a hope chest for a young female. In such cases, the furniture varied in style from primitive to elaborate. If the chest was sturdy enough, it was often passed down from mother to daughter through many generations. Mary Burt-Marshall of Connecticut, for example, passed down her hope chest, setting in motion a transfer that lasted nearly 300 years until the chest was donated to the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum in Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{333}

Sometimes such a chest or trunk was unavailable. In such circumstances, the female might simply fill extra dresser drawers or designate areas of her closet for the storage of materials.\textsuperscript{334} Lon Schleining, author of the 2003 book \textit{Treasure Chests: The Legacy of Extraordinary Boxes}, remembers his mother’s original hope chest being an apple crate that she filled with linens her mother had made her during the hard years of the Great Depression. After the financial struggles of the 1930s were over, Schleining’s mother was able to purchase a more traditional hope chest.\textsuperscript{335}

Household goods like linens and silver might be collected.\textsuperscript{336} Quilts, aprons, and doilies might also fill the chest.\textsuperscript{337} Women customarily spent several years gathering items. Herbert A. Otto, a family counselor in the early and mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century, found that occasionally young women had begun to build their hope chest in their pre-adolescent
The hopeful brides-to-be, sometimes even long before she had a beau, sewed, created, and purchased the items that would fill the chest. Occasionally female relatives of her family helped her. After the woman became engaged, it was common for other female friends and acquaintances to give her gifts that would add to her hope chest.

In the 1950s and 1960s the hope chest practice became less common. In a 1967 study of predominantly eighteen to twenty-four year old female college students, researchers and social workers Otto and Andersen found that only 36% of the women were ever involved in assembling a hope chest. They also found that “the maintenance of a hope chest was not found to be significantly associated with” a woman’s father’s occupation, income, or her “membership in a religious group.” In contemporary times, even with the Henderson Mennonites, the hope chest is a fading tradition, rarely practiced. The supplies that the hope chest once provided to the newly married couple’s home are frequently now replaced by those goods that couples receive as wedding gifts.

With the German Russian Mennonites of the Henderson area, traditions regulated nearly every aspect of life. When a man and woman began to take romantic interest in one another it was expected that they followed certain rules and customs. The pair frequently did not go out alone together, in the modern sense of “going out on a date.” The few times that single, unrelated men and women were allowed to enjoy one another’s company was at public events, usually involving the church or family members. A man walking or taking his “sweetheart” home was a chance for the couple to momentarily be alone. When they arrived at her parents house, however, it was expected that the suitor would come inside, spending time visiting with the woman’s family in the parlor. If
eventually the couple wished to marry, the man would ask the woman, most likely after first securing permission from her father, for her hand. If she accepted, the soon to be groom would give some token of promise, such as a gift or ring, to his fiancé. 342

Before the wedding day came, the newly engaged couple was obliged to follow certain customs. Because the couple was a part of the community it was now necessary to publicly announce their engagement. They would do so in church, possibly as many as three times, to inform the rest of the community of their betrothal. The making and sending out of wedding invitations even followed certain rituals. The bride’s father would make the invitation. In addition to creating several copies of the invitation, he would also write out the guest list, separating the names onto several cards, with each one accompanying one invitation. Thus, a portion of the guest list was sent with each invitation. The bride’s father would then either deliver or have the information delivered to the first family member at the top of each guest list. The invitee would make note of the occasion and then deliver the invitation and guest list to the next party on the list. The practice would continue until all of the guests had been informed of the couple’s upcoming wedding. 343

German Russian Mennonite weddings were a large community affair in which families entertained numerous people. In Stanley E. Voth’s 1975 edited work, *Henderson Mennonites: From Holland to Henderson*, in which he meticulously describes many of the traditions of the people, three pages, under the heading “Happy Times and Special Occasions,” chronicle the typical festivities that went along with a wedding. Both men and women associated with the couple were frequently busy the day before the wedding. Women would gather at the bride’s home to help make dough for the *zwieback*
that would be served. Once it was ready, the groom would pick up the dough and transport it to the houses of friends and neighbors who would then bake the buns. After the *zwieback* were baked and cooled, either the groom or the friends and neighbors would take the rolls back to the bride’s home.344

Meanwhile, men were busy tidying up their farm yards for the company that would come the next day.345 Keeping a house and yard orderly was always important, for even though some Mennonites might have been lacking financially, they were prideful and did not “‘want to appear poor.’” Attention to detail and quality of work [would] keep event the most modest homes pristine.”346 Often the wedding ceremony would be held outside of the bride’s home, in a machine shed or under a tent, either because a church structure did not yet exist or because of the family’s wishes. For example, Heinrich Kliwer and Katherina Nachtigall of the Mennonite Brethren Church, married October 19, 1911, had a tent to protect guests during wedding day celebrations. Thus, frequently the day before the wedding, men picking up the yard could also be found cleaning out sheds or putting up large tents. If it was going to be muddy, straw was placed on the ground to protect the guests’ shoes. Sometimes other pains were taken as well. Friends and family of Heinrich Dueck put up eighty fence posts, at the June 25, 1899 wedding, which would be used as hitching posts for guests’ horses and buggies.347 A make-do lean-to was also quickly constructed next to the Bergen’s, the bride’s parents’ house, to serve as a reception hall.348

Another common practice, occurring on the night before or of a couple’s wedding, was a charivari. A charivari was originally a quiet, calm *pulta ovent* (gift giving evening). The couple’s family, friends, and neighbors would gather, often at the
bride’s home, to bring and watch the opening of presents by the bride and bridegroom. Regularly, the groom’s parents gave him a pair of horses while the bride’s family usually gave their daughter a cow or laying hens. Since the occasion was meant to be a formal evening with several people attending, the family had spent much time and effort cleaning up their homestead.

Over the years, the *pulta ovent* developed more into a *charivari* in which the visitors engaged in mischievous, yet acceptable, boisterous behavior. In celebration of the wedding, the younger people, most likely those closer in friendship to the couple, frequently were the most troublesome. The youngsters pulled pranks while the older adults stayed inside the home. The young merrymakers were known to bring and sound noise makers, such as firecrackers and tin cans connected by wire. Even though the bride’s family had taken care to tidy up the farm yard, the charivariers would make messes out of trash from the rubbish piles. To cause problems for the other guests, they might even move machinery in front of the home’s entry. The pranksters often took the bride and groom, perched atop “an old weather-beaten buggy, a hay rack, or some other lumbering vehicle,” on a short ride. When everyone returned home, the groom would serve everyone “treats,” like candy bars and cigars. In order to be served the treats, however, the young pranksters finally had to enter the home, where the older adults might finally see who it was that was causing all the commotion.

On the wedding day, formal festivities usually did not begin until around noon. The bride’s family, at her home, fed a small lunch of cold beef, *pluma mos*, and *twieback* to the immediate family members of the couple. Soon guests would begin to arrive. The ceremony was frequently held at two pm, with only the minister and the couple serving as
the wedding party. A small lunch -- with bologna, store-bought cookies, coffee, sugar lumps, and twieback -- would follow the ceremony. Usually the adolescent girls served. Men and women sat at different tables, with the bride and groom frequently sitting at the end of the men’s table.

When the tables were cleared, the men, women, and children often separated to do their own socializing. Men might go outside to play horseshoes. The women frequently spent the late afternoon visiting in the home. Because she now was one of them, the bride visited with the married women. As she sat visiting, it was a common custom for another married woman to sneak up behind her and quietly place a Mennonite cap on the bride’s head, formally welcoming her into their cohort.

After the reception meal, youngsters enjoyed some free time. Children could play games such as Go In and Out of the Window and London Bridge. Adolescent boys took time out to entertain themselves. The girls frequently took walks, enjoying one another’s company. When evening came, the teenage girls helped the adolescent boys milk the host family’s cows. Supposedly this was an activity that the girls, and most likely the boys as well, looked forward to.

After the reception, guests would leave for home to do chores. Some, especially close family, friends, and youngsters, would return later to play singing games, visit, and watch a planned program, similar to those at Christmas veneshes. After the wedding day, the couple set out to establish their home and farm. They usually did not go on a honeymoon.
Today, in 2009, nearly 190 miles to the northwest of Henderson lives a couple who grew up as Mennonites in the area in the 1930s, ‘40s, and ‘50’s. Arnold and Lorena, in their mid ‘70s, continue to enjoy their time living on their small farm in north central Nebraska. Above all, they value hard work and their Christian convictions. If you look closely, the couple very much resonates the Henderson Mennonite way of life.

Though Arnold and Lorena are officially retired, you wouldn’t think it if you watched them. Arnold works outside, whether in one of his shops, the wood stove building, or out in the yard. Lorena works inside, cooking, baking, cleaning, sewing, exercising, reading, knitting, quilting, crocheting, working on service projects for church, and praying. Arnold will also have his Bible devotions and regular prayer time at various times throughout the day. Occasionally, he will come inside to work, such as a to fix a broken washing machine, and Lorena will go outside to help work, like when cutting and stacking wood for the stove. Their every day is filled with tasks. Each morning, except for Sundays, the couple is up early to work a little before breakfast. After breakfast they continue to work until lunchtime. After Lorena has cleaned up and washed and put away the dishes, Arnold usually takes a nap, just short of an hour, in his living room recliner. Then refreshed, he returns outside to continue his work until suppertime. She’ll have her nap later, in between working in the house. The couple keeps their farm yard neat and tidy, clear of machinery piles and debris. Outdoor cats-- two to four depending on disease, weather, and whether or not there recently has been a new litter-- serve as food garbage disposals, getting rid of kitchen scraps like potato peelings or chicken bones.

Like many other rural Nebraskans, Arnold and Lorena celebrate special occasions with various modes of entertainment. On family and friends’ birthdays, the couple
invites people over for a special dinner, with Lorena almost always serving zwieback.

Sundays will find the couple at church in the mornings, frequently having company over to eat dinner and visit in the afternoons, and later napping, reading, watching PBS, and studying their Bibles in the evenings. If it is a special occasion, such as family or friend’s baby shower, birthday party, or graduation or wedding reception, the gift that the couple gives is most likely a blanket that Lorena has crocheted, knitted, sewed, or quilted. When it is Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, the couple invites their two children and their families over for visiting and dinner, with zwieback once again on the table. For other entertainment, they might occasionally relax and visit others, but you won’t ever see them dance, drink alcohol, smoke tobacco products, gamble, or play cards. Although Sundays, family and friends’ special days, and holidays are times to entertain, Arnold and Lorena allow themselves little leisure time during the rest of the year. To them, their continued hard work glorifies their Christian God and, thus, will enable Him to bless them. Too much time spent in leisure and entertainment activities, unless on the Sabbath, is unacceptable and repulsive.

Overall, with their agricultural, rural lifestyles, traditional gender roles, focus on hard work and conservative Christian values, the Bullers seem a typical older generation rural Nebraskan Caucasian couple. Look closer, though, and you might notice that they have their own ways of doing things—like drying laundry outside on freezing winter days, having buns for nearly every meal, and working practically from sun up to sun down. Such characteristics cause some to see the couple as doing things differently, a bit more quirky than the average rural Nebraskan. You might look at Lorena and Arnold and say to yourself that they do the things the way they do, simply because that’s the way that
Lorena and Arnold do things. But such an assessment falls short. Yes, Lorena and Arnold Buller do the things the way they do because that’s the way they do things. But this couple is not alone. Other rural Nebraskans have and continue to live their lives similar to the Bullers. Arnold and Lorena do things the way they do and live their everyday lives the way they do because that’s simply the Henderson Mennonite way.
Like almost all Great Plains towns, Long Pine, Nebraska was founded near a fresh water source, Pine Creek. Long Pine, however, was unique in its nearby natural features. Pine Creek was a clear spring-fed creek with 55°F waters that ran year-round. The creek’s canyons were (and are) exceptional in that they were lined by large oaks and Ponderosa pines marking, from the Pine Ridge area along the Niobrara basin, the farthest contiguous eastern extent of Rocky Mountain coniferous evergreens. This was and is an ecotone, where Eastern ecosystems meet those of the West. In the area, for instance, one might find both mule and whitetail deer. The Pine Creek canyon near Long Pine therefore truly was a natural oasis, with an island of spring-fed Ponderosas amidst the vast semi-arid Sandhills that contained only the occasional cottonwood or ash.
From the earliest times of European American settlement, people took note of the special features of the Pine Creek canyon. Before the late 19th century, fur trappers preferred the beaver pelts that were acquirable from the banks of the creek.\textsuperscript{360} Similar to other locations--such as the natural springs near then Paddock, Nebraska to the east in Holt County--\textsuperscript{361} early entrepreneurs had big ideas and ambitions of capitalizing on the potential medicinal properties of the waters (Figure 2).\textsuperscript{362} The initial namesake of the town of Long Pine was even under debate, with some individuals wanting to entitle the community Seven Springs for the source of the creek, five miles to the south of the town, while others argued for Long Pine.\textsuperscript{363} One \textit{Omaha Bee} reporter described the creek as “remarkable,” with an average velocity of seven miles per hour, width of twenty-five feet, and depth of three feet. He assured that anyone making the effort to travel to the seven springs to see the waters bubbling from the earth would be well repaid.\textsuperscript{364}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{bath_room}
\caption{Source: \textit{Republican Journal}, July 22, 1896.}
\end{figure}

Many thought that Long Pine could and should capitalize on its unique geography. From 1881 to 1893, despite periodic droughts and the resulting loss of
population, C. R. Glover, an early settler, promoted the little town, arguing that it “was the only place in Nebraska worthy of being called a ‘summer resort’.” An *Omaha Daily Republican* newspaper reporter known as “The Frontierman” visited the area and penned a description of what he observed. His article, entitled “Our Veteran ‘Frontiersman’ Concludes His Observations on the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad. How the Terminal Town is Thriving,” appeared in the Thursday, January 5th, 1882 edition of the paper. He estimated that the “creek forms a strong body of waters, and affords in its gradual falls a force of at least thirty horsepower.” In words that almost appeared as if the article was a travel advertisement for the area, the reporter noted that a meticulous adventurer might even discover petrified wood, bone (such as the skeleton like a mastodon recently discovered), moss agate, and stones along the banks of the creek. An eventual prophet of the times, “The Frontiersman” remarked that the beautiful creek and country of the Pine Creek canyon would provide the makings of a “grand summer resort.” True to the prediction, twenty-eight years later, in 1910, three local entrepreneurs established an amusement park that doubled as a health and vacation resort a few miles southwest of Long Pine.

The Foundations of American and Nebraskan Amusement Parks

The period from roughly 1893 to 1929 was the golden age of Amusement Parks in America. Jim Futrell, a member of the National Amusement Park Historical Association, is a historian who has written numerous books on the history of the Amusement Park industry in America. In a short overview, Futrell notes that the first outdoor entertainment parks were created on the peripheries of European cities during the
medieval period. These “pleasure gardens” featured “live entertainment, fireworks, dancing, games, and even primitive amusement rides.” Remarkably, one of these parks remains operational yet today. In Denmark, north of Copenhagen, the Bakken park, which opened in 1583, has the status of being the world’s oldest amusement park.369

The roots of the modern American amusement park began after the Civil War in cities with electricity and trolley cars. Trolley car companies were looking for ways in which to increase weekend ridership, and thus brainstormed the concept of creating entertainment centers at the end of the lines that people of all ages might patronize.370 In 1875 the completion of a railroad line to a seaside resort on Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York enabled the beginning of mass transportation to what was soon to become one of the most popular amusement parks in America. The introduction of the George Ferris Giant Wheel and the Midway Plaisance at the 1893 World’s Colombian Exposition in Chicago gave the American amusement park two of its most defining characteristics.371 Thus began the golden era of the traditional American amusement park. The parks’ popularity quickly spread throughout the nation: by 1919, more than 1,500 parks had opened. The parks enjoyed a heyday until the crash of the stock market in 1929. Motion pictures, the Depression, and World War II greatly crippled the American amusement park industry. By 1935 the number of parks open dwindled to 400. Hard times continued, however, causing many of these few remaining parks to close over the next ten years.372

Like other states, Nebraska was home to several amusement parks in the early 20th century. In western Lincoln, there was the popular Capitol Beach. In rural parts of the state, there were, among others, Porky’s Park east of Crete, Valentine Park373 near
Valentine, Oak View Park west of Verdigre, and The Amusement Park southwest of Long Pine. These amusement parks, however, did not have the great number of rides and were not large scale like the amusement theme parks of today. However, rural Nebraska’s historic amusement parks did share some similarities with contemporary parks. Like contemporary parks, Nebraska’s historic amusement parks generally created a family friendly atmosphere; provided fun foods and beverages, games, music, shows, and rides; were places in which visitors spent a brief period of time-- usually only a day or two; and were visited typically in the months of late spring, summer, and early fall.

Several amusement parks, including Kruse, Oak View, and Young parks, made Knox County their home. Oak View Park, along the Middle Branch Creek in the southwestern part of the county seventeen miles southwest of the Czech village of Verdigre, was one of the most developed of Nebraska’s amusement parks. Constructed by the John Pospeshil family, Oak View Park opened on August 28 and 29 in 1926. Construction of a dance pavilion, and a lake for swimming and boating, cost $25,000.\textsuperscript{374}

Oak View Park’s thirty acres of oak-shaded hills and valleys made for the perfect summer and picnic retreat. Over the next few years, the Park continued to grow. Electricity provided power to numerous buildings.\textsuperscript{375} The Pospeshil family, with a mother, father, two daughters, and two sons, enjoyed music and created the Oak View Concert Band. They played numerous instruments, including a French horn, trumpet, clarinet, trombone, snare and bass drum, and the piano.\textsuperscript{376} The Pospeshils eventually could also brag about the Park’s bandstand, barbershop, baseball and rodeo grounds complete with grandstands, baseball team, bathhouse, cabins, camp kitchen, children’s playground, gas station, ice cream stall and two lunch stands, and swimming pool. The
dance pavilion was used for roller skating, as well as dancing. Perhaps, above all, locals could boast that the famous Lawrence Welk and his seven-piece band frequently played at their Oak View Park. In the early 1940s, with the rationing of gasoline during World War II and the aging of the owners, the Pospeshils, in their eighties, decided to close the Park that had been a summer recreation hotspot for so many.

The Long Pine Amusement Park

Roughly one hundred miles to the west from and twenty-six years before Oak View, another amusement park had been opened. The Long Pine Amusement Park was one of the most developed and longest lasting of all amusement parks in Nebraska. In 1910 three local entrepreneurs—R.A. Hunt of Bassett and Frank Hoag and Carl Pettijohn of Long Pine—created the Long Pine Amusement Park, a health and vacation resort, a few miles southwest of Long Pine. Carl Pettijohn led the efforts in transforming what was known to locals as “one of nature’s pleasure grounds,” nestled in the canyon along the rustling waters of the cool Pine Creek, into a “beautiful park.” In the canyon, old brush and vegetation were cleared. The bluegrass and clover were nurtured. There were beautiful places to picnic in the shade among the “lofty oak and pine trees.” Tables and lawn chairs were provided in these picnic areas for those who brought their lunch. Small bridges were built. All ages could enjoy the cool, refreshing waters of the creek. Children could grow and play in “nature’s nursery” while supervising adults could “rest… their weary bod[ies].” It was the investors’ hopes that the summer playground would soon attract hot, weary visitors from near and far.
One of Pettijohn’s first priorities was to create a road, less than one-fourth mile, that connected the western end of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad (C.N.W.R.R.) yards, located south of town, to the new park. Pettijohn took great pains in ensuring that the steep, sandy road would be safe and easy for automobile travel. The decision to connect the railroad to the park would be vital in the park’s success over the next twenty years, in that it enabled hundreds of people traveling by rail (Figure 4) to have a quick, easy, and direct route to the park.

![Figure 4. The Chicago & Northwestern Railroad's Depot in Long Pine, located roughly 1/4 mile north of the Amusement Park. Date unknown. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.](image)

Writers of the local newspaper, *The Long Pine Journal*, helped to boost the venture by predicting that the “fine park” would eventually be a fine summer resort with “great camping grounds.” Even city people would want to come, they claimed. According to the paper editor, the canyon was a “must-visit”—no prettier place could be found in the state. He set the scene with his writing, noting that near the cool, shaded, and lush picnic areas.
[T]he clear waters of Pine Creek wind in and out furnishing one of the most beautiful scenes God ever made. Many springs of sparkling, cold water enter the stream from the hills on all sides, furnishing an abundance of the purest and coldest water ever tasted. A unique little foot bridge crosses the stream from the east side to the main spring and makes a fine place for storing perishables parts of a picnic dinner.

He continued,

It is beyond our power to explain the beauties of such a place. The brightest dreams you have ever entertained of an ideal camping spot cannot be compared with this corner of nature’s garden, containing a beautiful creek bubbling over grav[e]l and moss beds.\(^{384}\)

Who wouldn’t want to visit after reading the editor’s description?

The Park might also improve your health. At a time when it was believed that hot and cold water baths, as well as plenty of sunshine, might cure chronic diseases such as pneumonia and scarlet fever, the new park could promote itself as a health spot. Why pay to go to a formal private sanitarium-- such as at the Long Pine Hospital, or Dr. Race’s in Omaha which promised health through their sunny, bright rooms and baths at moderate prices—when one could simultaneously reap such benefits and have your children enjoy the outdoors at the nearby park?\(^{385}\) The Park was also to be a place where moral health was promoted and nurtured. Gambling and “drunkenness” would not be tolerated. Upstanding morals and safety would be maintained. Promoters noted that one could relax here and not worry about “regret[ing it the] morning after.” The environment would be one where men could bring the most delicate of moral beings--- in the form of
their mothers, sisters, wives, and sweethearts-- without the fear of them being hurt or offended. All who were morally upstanding were welcome at the Park, free of charge.386

The investors were building up the area, with numerous up-to-date attractions, to serve as an amusement park. Long Pine Amusement Park’s main attraction in the beginning, as well as for several years after, was the plunge bath house. The “plunge,” a glorified swimming pool, was to take on a similar form as the famous one in Hot Springs, South Dakota, roughly 250 miles to the northwest. Measuring fifty by eighty feet the plunge would vary in depth from three to six feet. Separate dressing rooms for men and for women would be on the opposite sides of the structure. Because Pine Creek, however, was fed by cold springs, measuring 55ºF year-round, instead of hot springs, a boiler would heat the water transported from the creek via a water wheel (Figure 5) to the bath house.387

Figure 5. The Plunge Bath’s original water wheel, 1912. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.
Pine Creek was an attraction in itself. Those who could endure the cool waters could go wading or swimming, enjoying the creek as a refreshing respite from the summer’s scorching temperatures (Figure 6). The cool waters also created an ecosystem, one of the few in Nebraska, in which brown and brook trout thrived. In fact the creek is the longest self-sustaining trout stream in the state.\textsuperscript{388} Hence, fishing for brown and brook trout was (and is) popular. In early June 1911, for example, the district manager of the Woodmen of the World fraternity visited with his family, taking in camping, swimming at the Plunge, and trout fishing.\textsuperscript{389}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{pine_creek_wading.jpg}
\caption{Wading in Pine Creek. Precise date unknown, most likely in 1910s. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.}
\end{figure}

The Amusement Park held its first big shindig in 1910 with a 4\textsuperscript{th} of July celebration. Weeks before, promoters advertised the importance of coming to the park to take part in the festivities since it was the only area in Long Pine, as well as surrounding towns, where Independence Day events were scheduled. Numerous free activities were
Figure 7. Source: *The Long Pine Journal* July 1, 1910, pg. 1.
planned, and families were encouraged to spend a healthful day, “in the shade of the lofty pines away from the dust of the town.” You could enjoy listening to the music of a hired band at the dancing pavilion and then local judge J.S. Davisson’s hour-long address. Free acts were in the early afternoon. Roseinski, the “champion buck and wing dancer of the West,” would perform dancing and comedy stunts. All might be both terrified and amazed at the wonder of Dare Devil Jim. He planned to cross the canyon floor along a wire hanging 175 feet above, by simply biting a pulley device connected to the line. Music as well as races filled the afternoon. The races had numerous categories for different ages, sexes, and body structures. Men weighing a minimum of 240 pounds, for instance, might try their chance, and health, at winning a monetary prize. Bronco busting, even of the most stubborn horses, would take place in the early evening.

Not surprisingly, arrangements were made to keep visitors up-to-date with the progress of the Johnson-Jeffries fight taking place in Reno, Nevada. After three in the afternoon the scores following each round would be written on a large, publicly-displayed blackboard. Not only in Long Pine, but the nation and world over was interested in the boxing match. Epitomizing race relations at the time, the fight pitted African American Jack Johnson, the first black man allowed to compete for a boxing prize, against Caucasian American Jim Jeffries. In 1910, and ever since, the match was heralded as The Prize Fight of the Century. The fight remains significant in that it represents a turning point between black America and white America, because, after fifteen rounds, Johnson came out victorious. After learning the outcome of The Prize Fight of the Century, visitors could enjoy the evening of the 4th at the Amusement Park.
As soon as it got dark, a “grand display of fireworks” would be shot off, followed by
dancing at the newly constructed, open air “mammouth [sic]” sized pavilion.\textsuperscript{395}

The Amusement Park’s first major event was so well attended that promoters
were optimistic for its future. Writers from the July 8th edition of \textit{The Long Pine Journal}
reported that “large crowds” came from all around to visit the new park. Farmers,
ranchers, and townspeople riding the train from the west arrived with their families in the
morning. The evening train brought people from the east. Picnickers ate their meals both
outside and at the newly constructed VanMater dining hall. Arguably, the “best and most
daring attraction of the day” was when Dare Devil Jim, otherwise known as Clarence
Porter, slid down a cable, attached only by his teeth, from the top of to the bottom of the
canyon. It was such a popular attraction, that promoters planned on having Porter’s
“Slide for Life” repeated at the future three-day official opening of the Park. Several
rough riders, eager to break stubborn horses, were disappointed when the bronco busting
contest was cancelled since no visitors brought their broncos in to be busted. Ten pieces
of the Ainsworth Band and Orchestra entertained visitors throughout the day. They also
played at the evening dance, where countless young people enjoyed themselves until
looming clouds-- threatening rain-- cut the dance short at midnight.\textsuperscript{396} Not all came away
happy from that day, however. Dr. Lawson posted an advertisement in the July 15\textsuperscript{th}
paper that anyone who lost a baby ring at the Park on Independence Day and wanted it
back should request it of him.\textsuperscript{397}

The continued construction at the Amusement Park in July benefited many of the
local craftsmen and businessmen. Therefore, when the C.N.W.R.R temporarily closed
down the crossing, blocking the only entrance, to the Park, many were frustrated. A
petition asking that the crossing be opened without delay and that a permanent one be created in its place was soon penned and signed by local businessmen. Three days later, C.N.W.R.R. officials sent a telegram to Long Pine instructing that the crossing to the Park be immediately repaired and reopened. Finally, work that had been postponed could continue. Before the ordeal, the cement work on the Plunge was finished. Now builders could install the newly arrived boiler and construct the enclosement, which would shelter bathers from the sun’s rays.398

The next few weeks saw continued construction. Electric lights were erected so that people could enjoy the Park well into the evening.399 All the buildings had electric lights.400 A local man, Zane Musfelt, was busy building a 16 by 30 feet short-order restaurant near the Plunge. The Plunge itself was almost completed. The boiler had been installed. One hundred fifty swimming suits had been preordered for patrons to rent or buy when enjoying the swimming hole.401 The Park’s management had hired several acts and planned attractions for the big official three day opening. The Kohls family, for example, was scheduled to perform. Known for their “high class vaudeville..., gigantic See-Saw, Rolling Glob[e]..., Novelty Slack Wire, Comedy Talking… with boxing and professional Bag Punching” acts and stunts, the family was sure to please.402

Finally, the big day arrived. Saturday August 5, 1910 was the first day of the Amusement Park’s grand opening.403 Even though much of the construction was not fully completed, because not enough laborers could be employed in time, management went ahead with the festivities.404 People could stay at hotels or camp over night (Figure 8). Music played nearly all day long.405 The management hoped to show people the time of their lives.406 They focused on emphasizing the health benefits of the outdoors to
attract visitors. People were encouraged to “spend [their] vacation in one of Nature’s [o]wn [g]arden [s]pots” supplied with the “best water in the world and the best trout stream and camping grounds in Nebraska.” “Cool nights and invigorating fresh air” was good for the body and soul.407

What was originally planned as a three day event was prolonged into a week.408 Though rainy weather no doubt prevented some from coming, others came from nearby towns, such as Bassett and Ainsworth, to check out the new attraction. Many camped for days on end. Visitors enjoyed attractions, dances, and the Plunge. The Kohls Family acts, including vaudeville, were especially popular, and heralded by Journal reporters as the “best ever [free attraction] witnessed by the Long Pine people.” On opening day, the Cotterill Sisters Orchestra from Bassett played the music for the Saturday night dance that lasted until midnight at the Pavilion.409

Figure 8. Source: The Long Pine Journal, August 12, 1910, pg. 6.
The Plunge had opened Thursday, two days before all other attractions.\textsuperscript{410} Engineer “Foxy” Bowers, as master of ceremonies, led its dedication on Sunday the 7\textsuperscript{th}. Bowers wished to christen the bath by being the first official person to go down the slide. His enthusiasm was curbed, however, when, dramatically leaping onto and whooshing quickly down the slide, he realized too late the shallowness of the water. Bowers emerged—with a skinned nose and dampened pride—to concerned sympathy by the female witnesses and a roar of applause by the male observers.\textsuperscript{411} Nevertheless, the heated swimming pool with its slide was perhaps the most patronized and popular of attractions during the Park’s Opening Week. Swimmers, from “hundreds of miles around,” could be found there nearly anytime of the day. Promoters sensed the popularity of the Plunge and planned on holding several events there before the summer’s end.\textsuperscript{412}

In August, after only two months of being open, the Amusement Park needed to close its first season. The summer vacation season was ending and the school year was about to begin. The Cotterill Sisters Orchestra would play for the last dance on August 27\textsuperscript{th}. Since most of the basic construction was completed, future summers promised longer seasons, with the Park capable of being opened in May.\textsuperscript{413}

Although most of the establishments had closed, some remained opened, and the Park could still be booked for functions. The Plunge Bath would still be open. Evidentially, though, the first heating system did not heat the Pine Creek’s waters enough to keep all patrons warm. Thus, after tinkering with the heating, a new water heating system was installed. The management was so sure that the new system would keep even
the most finicky patrons warm, that they established Tuesdays as Ladies Day when the Plunge was reserved strictly for females.\textsuperscript{414}

A fraternal picnic—hosting orders of the Modern Woodmen of America, Royal Highlanders, Ancient Order of United Workmen, and the ladies’ Degree of Honor Protective Association—would be held on Tuesday September 13\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{415} Members and non-members alike would be welcome.\textsuperscript{416} Organizers anticipated that the gathering would be so well attended by people in the surrounding towns that special committees were created. These committees tackled numerous issues, such as planning activities and prizes for the gathering as well as attempting to persuade the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad to schedule a special train from O’Neill. Since many people would be in the community that day, all townspeople were encouraged to help organize the event, “to stub a toe, wake up and get busy.”\textsuperscript{417} Townspeople were so insistent about boosting Long Pine to outsiders that businesses would close the afternoon of the picnic and a five dollar prize,\textsuperscript{418} in gold,\textsuperscript{419} would go to the farmer who brought the largest number of people to the event!

A \textit{Long Pine Journal} writer was adamant, through his story advertising the picnic, that all readers should make a point in attending. He did not even care what mode of transportation that people used, arguing that “[i]f you haven’t a horse or mule of your own, steal one. It will be worth ten years in the pen to be present on this occasion.” Though the writer’s enthusiasm for town boosting was clearly evident in the story, his patronizing attitudes towards females were as well. In attempting to encourage all to attend the event of the year, the journalist’s cynicism towards extended family female relatives was revealed. He pushed married men to bring their “mother-in-law and her
knitted [sic] and give her a chance to talk herself hoarce [sic] and lengthen the lives of the whole family.” Young men, enjoying an opportunity to be with their sweetheart, were meant to buck up and let the sweetheart’s (seemingly unattractive) “red-headed sister” tag along. The writer even disclosed distaste for modern women’s fashions by advertising that a prize at the picnic would go to the “prettiest girl wearing real hair.”

At the picnic there would be numerous activities to participate in, each with its own prize donated by local business men (Table 1). Farmers were encouraged to show off the bounty of their land and fruits of their hard work in the agricultural exhibition. You could show off your spring or winter wheat, oats, potatoes, corn, onions, cabbage, watermelon, muskmelon, and/or butter. Money prizes went to best entry in each contest—such as the largest and best-filled six ears of 1910 corn—with an additional $5 award granted to the farmer who won the most contests. Large scale agricultural goods like spring wheat, traditionally produced by males, and smaller scale garden goods such as onions, traditionally produced by females, were highly valued. In fact, the highest value prize-- $2.50 cash and 250 envelopes—went to the largest head of cabbage, a crop conventionally produced in a woman’s kitchen garden.

### Agricultural Exhibitions at the September 10th, 1910 Fraternal Picnic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contest</th>
<th>Prize</th>
<th>Prize Donator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>largest watermelon</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>H.W. VanMeter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>largest muskmelon</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>Thomas and Lamb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>best 2 lbs. of butter</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
<td>Dr. T.J. Lawson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pk. winter wheat</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>H.J. Henry Land Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pk. oats</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>Wallenstein &amp; Peterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pk. potatoes</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>Chas P. Nelson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 ears 1910 corn, largest and best filled</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>W.A. Bucklin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pk. spring wheat</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>H.J. Henry Land Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 pk. onions</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>C.I. Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 largest potatoes</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>W.H. Mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>largest head of cabbage</td>
<td>$2.50 and 500 envelopes</td>
<td>C.I. Day and The Long Pine Journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those attending could enter a wide variety of contests at the picnic (Table 2). All
events were free to enter, though some had entry restrictions. The athletically inclined
could enter the standing jump, hammer throw, run and jump, and/or shot put. The
winner of the hammer throw could feed his hunger by earning the prize of a strip of
premium bacon, valued at $2.50, donated by C.M. Robinson. Other sport contests were
reserved for certain demographics. Citizens from the towns of Ainsworth and Bassett
could prove which community was stronger through a friendly competition of tug of war.
The winning team members would share a box of Robert Burns cigars. Girls less than
fourteen years of age could participate in two competitions especially reserved for them--
the foot race or the potato and spoon race. Boys under twelve years of age had more
options and could compete in seven special contests requiring athletic or gluttonous skill.
The top prize of a razor and strop, valued at $3.50, would go to the one boy, eighteen
years of age or younger, who was the fastest in the 35 yard hurdle race.422

Prizes often reflected the gender and/or the age of those participating. Boys’ competitions had cash, sporting, and shaving prizes. A baseball mitt worth $2.25 would go to the boy eighteen or under who won the sack race. Girls’ competitions had clothing and food prizes. Girls fourteen years of age and younger could enter a foot race and win a pair of shoes valued at $2.50. Misses, wishing to win four ten pound sacks of graham flour or one hundred calling cards, could enter the bread mixing contest. Women could
earn a skirt, petticoat, or flour for winning an event. Interestingly, women’s competitions involved contests that required skills that were atypical of the Victorian female. Nail driving, wood sawing, and ball throwing were more associated with the Victorian man.\textsuperscript{423} Perhaps such competitions were meant to be more humorous than serious, giving spectators an opportunity for a good laugh. It must have been some spectacle, a reversal of accepted gender roles, with women engaging in activities that society viewed as men’s work.

Proud mothers could dote over and enter their precious angels into one of two baby contests. One contest was meant for infants less than one year old. Since judges might be familiar with them and therefore biased with their decisions, local Long Pine infants could not be entered into the contest. Toddlers one to two years of age could be entered into the second category. There were no residency restrictions for the toddler competition. Though it was not directly stated, discrimination permeated the baby contests. In both age brackets, only blonde and brunette babies could win the top prizes.\textsuperscript{424} What about red heads or black haired babies? A red haired baby, possibly with Irish or Irish American heritage, evidently could not win. And certainly the black haired children of Native or African Americans would not even be considered for a prize of most beautiful baby. Here, in the form of a seemingly innocent baby contest, there was an element of racial, ethnic, and national discrimination. Organizers and local citizens, whose ancestry most likely was from Northern and Western Europe, maintained dominant control over society even in the most mundane of events.

Baby contests were a big deal. Parents, and the country as a whole, focused more and more on the health and upbringing of children. Pediatrics, the study of child
development, emerged during the late 19th century with studies promoting the “scientific understanding of children’s emotional, physical, and sexual development.” Out of this new focus of studies emerged the scientific childrearing advice movement and the modern concept of adolescence. Scientific understanding, studies, and their applications to everyday life was very much part of the Progressive Movement. In her 1995 book *Linoleum, Better Babies & the Modern Farm Woman, 1890-1930* Marilyn Irvin Holt studied the Progressive Movement and the impact that scientific experts had on the education and lives of agricultural women, such as through home extension programs. Some women in rural areas actively embraced the managerial and scientific domestic economy advice that they received and applied it to their everyday lives in homemaking, childrearing, farming, and ranching.

Charles Darwin was one of the first to study and comment on infant development. In 1877, thinking back thirty-seven years to the first few weeks of his son’s life, Darwin reflected on what he had observed when interacting with his newly born son—what his reflexes were, what emotions he appeared to exhibit, etc. Darwin then attempted to analyze the memories of his observations, trying to “determine which of his son’s behaviors were instinctual and which were the product of nurture.” His thoughts were published in 1877 in “A Biographical Sketch of an Infant.” Thus, Americans increasingly looked to scientists and away from religious tenets on how to raise their children. Childrearing was becoming a systematic, secular process.

Social Darwinism and “recapitulation”—the idea that “the development of each individual mirrors the evolution of the species from savagery to civilization”—were becoming influential. Baby contests, as a way of displaying societal and human
evolutionary progress, were therefore taken very seriously. “Better baby” and “fitter family” contests, such as those at state fairs, were popular, rivaling the size, scope, and attraction of agricultural exhibits. With America’s infant mortality decreasing, the contests manifested society’s celebration of the success of positive eugenics, “the effort to increase the production and survival of healthy babies.”

Few academics have studied baby contests simply because many often view the competitions as ridiculous spectacles. They see the public health workers more as quacks than experts and the whole activity as a failed attempt at the early scientific study of children. However, a few scholars have recently uncovered and argued the importance of these baby contests. For instance, in their rejection of former ways and in celebration of adopting new scientific techniques, the baby contests “represented criticisms of both the traditional father and the tradition[al] farmer.” Alexandra Minna Stern, in her study of baby contests in Indiana, was one of the first academics to demonstrate the significance of the baby contests. In his 2002 article, “Taking Better Baby Contests Seriously” Martin S. Pernick digests and builds on Stern’s arguments. In the baby contests, the Progressives asserted that they were promoting positive eugenics, instead of negative eugenics measures, such as sterilization, “intended to prevent the reproduction of those who were judged hereditarily inferior.” But, in reality, as can be seen in Long Pine’s baby contests having prizes for only brunette and blonde babies—progeny who could only come from certain European and Caucasian heritages—both informal positive and negative eugenics operated within the competitions. The baby contests in a way were government-sponsored propaganda that, through social pressure and financial rewards, clearly articulated the state’s views on who should and should not reproduce.
In Long Pine, after the day of the Fraternal Picnic had passed, reports on the festivities filled an entire column in the weekly paper. Since he was well known for his moral actions and fiscal conservativeness, the address by the state auditor, Silas R. Barton, had been one of the most well attended events of the day. The picnic had not been well attended as town boosters might have hoped. Promoters blamed the low turnout on causes outside of their control, such as tyrannical railroad corporations that would not allow for a special train from the east, coming from O’Neill, and a rouge bunch of hooligans in the town nearest to the west, Ainsworth, tearing down bills advertising the celebration. Long Pine boosters, however, tenaciously deemed the picnic as a success overall and remained optimistic, since it had been decided that in the future the annual picnic would be held at the Amusement Park.434

Work continued during the spring of 1911 in anticipation of the Amusement Park’s first full season. Management purchased a Merry-Go-Round (Figure 9). So invested in the Park’s success was R.A. Hunt, one of the three managers, that he packed up his family and moved them from nearby Bassett to Long Pine. Another manager, Frank Hoag, built a home within the Park, as did the third manager, Carl Pettijohn. Pettijohn’s home, however, was a summer vacation house. The managers, in fact, worked on plans to have many cottages built in the Park that summer.435
An appetizer of entertainment of sorts, meant to whet visitors’ hunger for the upcoming season, was planned for May 23rd, a little over a week before the official opening. The Hopkins lady baseball team was invited to play against the Amusement Park’s newly created team. Another attraction that came along with the Hopkins’ team was the world famous Greek champion wrestler Gus Pappas. In addition to playing in the baseball game, all of the Amusement Park Team’s players who weighed 160 pounds or less would be required to wrestle Pappas. Thus, the Park’s baseball team was pitted against Pappas. The management offered a $200 prize to whichever side won the competition. In order for the newly created team to win the much-needed funds, however, they each would wrestle the Greek champion. In order for Pappas to win the money, he would have to beat all of the Park’s baseball players, and do so within thirty minutes. Unfortunately, no known records exist of exactly how many players made up
the Park’s team, the number of men that Pappas would have to beat, or which side was the eventual victor.436

By this time, the entire town had noticed how, and to their own pocket books, important the Park was to the economy of the Long Pine. So when the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad shut down the last north-south street railroad crossing left open in town so close to the Park’s season opening, citizens protested. The crossing not only was the solitary entrance to the Park, but it was also the only road that crossed the tracks that hadn’t been closed yet. How were people supposed to travel from south of the tracks into town, or vice versa? The Journal writers joined in the call to action for the towns’ people to persuade the Railroad to open the crossing. If the CN&W wouldn’t do that, citizens were encouraged to call for a more drastic measure, compelling the Railroad to reopen all of the crossings.437 The town’s outcry must have been effective, since future newspaper articles regarding the opening of the Park did not mention the issue.

The Amusement Park’s 1911 season officially opened on Saturday June 3rd and Sunday June 4th. The weather was good, and all events went off without a hitch. Ainsworth ended up beating a pick-up team, 13 to 5, in a game of baseball. Since numerous people “bathed” there, it was clear that the improved heating of the water at the Plunge was a success. No matter what they were doing throughout the day, people could enjoy the music of the Ainsworth Band or the Cotterill Sisters Orchestra. Concessions, including food and drinks, were served so that patrons did not have to leave the Park to eat and could, thus, stay all day. No matter what time of day it was, people could buy something cold since ice cream and refreshments were served from a make-shift, yet contemporary, ice cream parlor on the veranda of Hoag’s newly built home. In the
evening under the show tent, a vaudeville act, motion pictures, and the Cotterill Sisters Orchestra entertained all ages.438

Thus commenced the 1911 Amusement Park season. The management continued to promote the “Long Pine Amusement Park and Pleasure Resort,” advertising what people could expect the rest of the season. “The Fun Center of Northwestern Nebraska” would be open each weekend, on Saturdays and Sundays, during the summer season. Campers could spend the entire two days there if they so wished. A variety of amusements, for both sexes and all ages, would be available. The Park Concert Band and the Cotterill Sisters Orchestra would provide musical entertainment. After checking out the old water wheel nearby, swimmers could go inside to the newly enclosed Plunge (Figure 11), take a whirl down the “shoot,” and enjoy all of the amenities, like running water, which the Bath had to offer. Free exhibitions on the Pavilion’s stage could be viewed on afternoons and nights. Vaudeville acts, changed every weekend, and motion pictures would be featured under the show tent each night. The energetic could expect a
dance in the open air pavilion (Figure 12) every Saturday night. On Sunday mornings, visitors could try their skill at blue rock shoots. Later, on Sunday afternoons, they could watch the baseball games.\footnote{439}

![Figure 12. Looking to the northeast, from left to right, unknown buildings, the open air dance Pavilion, and the swimming hole with slide. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.](image)

The owners designed more attractions. Since they knew that many might enjoy it, the management also planned to have a roller skating rink installed.\footnote{440} In addition to the weekend festivities, the Park would also be open on Wednesday nights for dances at the Pavilion with music again by the well-liked Cotterill Sisters Orchestra.\footnote{441} The Park was becoming such an attraction that groups, such as the Nebraska Bankers Association, who had annual conventions in Long Pine, would visit and take in the amusements after a long day of meetings uptown.\footnote{442}

The 1911 4\textsuperscript{th} of July celebration at the Park was held in conjunction with the 2\textsuperscript{nd} annual Fraternal Picnic (Figure 13). The Ancient Order of United Workmen (A.O.U.W.), the Degree of Honor, Royal Highlanders, and Modern Woodmen of America (M.W. of A.) would be the main societies hosting. As was typical, a wide variety of activities were
A. O. U. W. M. W. of A.
Royal Highlanders, Degree of Honor

SECOND ANNUAL
FRATERNAL PICNIC!

AT AMUSEMENT PARK, LONG PINE, NEBR.

2 BIG FREE BALL GAMES
2 BANDS, VALENTINE and JOHNSTOWN

JULY 4TH 1911

9 a.m. Concert by all Bands on Main Street.
10 a.m. Ball game Valentine vs. Bassett, $50.
11 a.m. Band Concert at Amusement Park.
12 m. Dinner.
1 p.m. Band Concert at Amusement Park.
2 p.m. Ball game, Bassett vs Springview, $50.
3 p.m. Band Concert at Amusement Park.
4 p.m. Races and Sports, at Plunge. See Program.
6 p.m. Band Concert.
7:30 p.m. Sports at Pavilion. See Program.
8:30 p.m. Concert by Cotterill Orchestra.
9 p.m. Dance begins and lasts until morning.

Free Check Tent on Grounds. No Fireworks Permitted on Park Grounds. Come and Bring Your Family and Eatables For Dinner and Supper and Stay ALL DAY □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Park Hotel on Grounds will Serve those who do not wish to bring their Lunches.

Figure 13. The Long Pine Journal, June 30, 1911, pg. 5.
planned for the day with all people encouraged to “spend the Fourth close to nature.” Everyone should have incentive enough to go, since the baseball games were free and prizes could be won in all sport contests. As usual, food could be obtained, this time at the Park Hotel, bands (Valentine’s and Johnstown’s) and as always the Cotterill Sisters Orchestra would provide music, and a dance would finish off the day.443

Local Sunday School classes also began to hold events at the Park. Nearly 200 people attended Ainsworth’s Congregational and Methodist Sunday School annual picnic on a Thursday in early August. Most traveled the nine miles to the east by the morning train; others came by buggy and automobile. The day could be spent enjoying a basket lunch, friends, and all the attractions that the Park had to offer.444

By early August, many additions were being made. In late July, the management advertised that roundtrip transportation from town to and from the Park was to be $0.25. Any visitors who might be charged differently were asked to immediately notify one of the owners.445 A toboggan slide was being installed at the Plunge.446 A new attraction, no doubt near the rapids, would be Shoot-the-Shoots.447 Numerous fun foods could be enjoyed. W.H. McKnight bought the ice cream parlor and made it ready to serve only the most up-to-date ice cream and cold beverages. A Pop Corn Festival was held on Pine Beach on a Monday night.448 The occasion was so popular that another such Festival was held the next Monday evening, this time at Elm Beach.449 “Wienie roasts,” the cooking of wieners and hot dogs on a campfire, were also a popular way to simultaneously enjoy good food, friends, and the outdoors.450

Workers were still constructing cottages. Previously, visitors had used tents for overnight accommodations. Though still very small and primitive, the painted wooden
cottages, complete with rubber roofs (Figure 14), provided more protection from the weather and elements than flimsy canvas.  

Figure 14. Early cottages, date unknown.  
Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.

To add to their mystique, charm, and attractiveness, owners named the cottages. Quirky puns and the outdoors served as inspiration for the nomenclature (Table 3). Angel’s Rest was one early cottage (Figure 15). Signs displaying a cottage’s namesake were even painted and placed on the exterior of the cabins. People were astonished to find out that it was a young man of only eighteen years, Fay Miles of O’Neill, who did such a fine, professional job of painting the signs. The Pettijohn family made themselves at home in the East End Cottage. The Hunts stayed in Peep Inn. Some cottages were for rent by the management. Others were being built by visitors. People from areas as far away as Omaha were known to build and buy the cottages. People could spend days, weeks, or even months at the Park. Some families, like the
The Sanders family from Norfolk who were staying at the First Inn, vacationed the entire summer there.455

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cottages</th>
<th>Inns</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
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<tr>
<td>East End Cottage</td>
<td>All Inn</td>
<td>Angels Rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Side Cottage</td>
<td>Dew Drop Inn</td>
<td>Between the Waves</td>
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<td>Sleepy Hollow Cottage</td>
<td>First Inn</td>
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<td>Inn Side Out</td>
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<td>Out Side Inn</td>
<td>The House of Dreams</td>
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<td>Pop Corn Flat</td>
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<td>Seldom Sweat</td>
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Table 5. Name categorization of some of the 1911 cottages.

Figure 102. Left, Angel’s Rest cottage in the Long Pine Amusement Park, date unknown.
Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.

Already people from all over Nebraska had begun to visit. Both men and women from areas within one day’s automobile drive, such as Johnstown, frequently loaded up their motorcars with friends and family and made a day trip to the Park.456 Visitors from
Bassett, O’Neill, and Norfolk, were common. Vacationers from Council Bluffs, Chadron, Lincoln, and Pierce also came. People from New York City visited the Park when they were in town. If visitors wanted to send word home describing their holiday, postcards with views of the Amusement Park could be purchased at the newspaper office.

With so many people coming to the Park, accidents, along with a bit of excitement, were inevitable. One Monday afternoon, for instance, a young girl suffered a fright when her father’s horse backed the buggy she was riding in into the creek. Someone soon came to the rescue, with no harm resulting. Adults could also get into scrapes. The O’Neill newspaper, The Holt County Independent, reported that both the local jeweler, Graves, and The Independent’s editor, George Miles, had visited and mischievously enjoyed themselves. By the paper’s description Miles either must have been a physically well-endowed man or an overly enthusiastic man whose dramatic use of the new toboggan slide caused much displacement of water. Either way, Miles’ entrance into the water was so abrupt that it caused the sides to overflow and other patrons to become nervously agitated. So much havoc resulted that Manager Hunt had to
calm people and banned *The Independent*’s editor from ever swimming in the Plunge
again. A witty writer concocted a poem about the incident, which was published in both
the O’Neill and Long Pine papers.

There was consternation in the crowd,

When Miles went in the plunge,

The women screamed both long and loud

When Miles went in the plunge.

The water overflowed the tank,

And Pine Creek ‘rose beyond its banks,

The people hollered, ‘shoot that crank,

When Miles went in the plunge.

A cruel nail just pierced his hide,

When Miles went in the plunge.

The girls, they say had several fits,

And Dick Hunt promptly swore a bit,

And ruthlessly told George to git,

When Miles went in the plunge.460

Women also traveled distances to visit the Park. Dick A. Hunt’s sisters, Anne
Hunt and Gertrude Savage, traveled the long distance from Aurora in southwestern
Nebraska to bathe, camp, fish, and visit. They vacationed for two weeks. The Hunt’s
visit must have been bittersweet, however. Hunt was in the process of relinquishing his
share of the management, due to health and business complications, to Pettijohn. The
Hunt family would leave their cottage and return to their home in Bassett.\textsuperscript{461} Thereafter, he would not be held accountable for any debts that the Park owed.\textsuperscript{462} Hoag and Pettijohn now were the two sole investors with interests in the place. Thus, after a scant two years in operation, the Long Pine Amusement Park experienced its first change in ownership and management. Though the Park was to endure in one form or another for a century more, this sale was the first in what was to be a long line of changing ownership.

One of the last formal events of the season was a Tuesday night boxing exhibition. The ten-round competition was to pit a local man, Mat Kane of O’Neill, against Butte, Montana’s “Mont” Gene Sullivan. All did not go as planned, however. Though it might have been a good idea in an attempt to attract many visitors to the Park, there was neither a suitable place for the fight, nor enough people to prove the ten rounds profitable enough. Thus, after a bit of problem solving, the men decided simply to hold an exhibition, displaying their speed and skill, and saving their blood and bruises for another time.\textsuperscript{463}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{plunge_bath_before_roof.png}
\caption{Looking east down at The Plunge Bath before the roof. Date unknown- most likely 1910 or 1911. \textbf{Source:} Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.}
\end{figure}
No matter what time of the summer it was, Park improvements were being made. Because so many of the visitors were children, the management purchased two miniature burros to roam free and provide entertainment for the little ones. In early September, despite being late in the season, the management had a roof constructed over the Plunge, allowing bathers to enjoy the warm waters rain or shine. Soon after, the weather cooled and the Park officially closed.

And so ended the summer of 1911, Long Pine’s Amusement Park’s first full season. Three entrepreneurs had recognized and capitalized on the natural beauty and unique geographies of the place. Before 1910, the elm, cedar, oak, and pine-lined canyon and cool waters of Pine Creek combined into a nature playground, a place of beauty and peace. The soft melody of the whispering pines and murmuring of the creek were enough to relax the most uptight person. With such a perfect setting and natural advantage, it was easy for Hoag, Hunt, and Pettijohn to attract visitors to their newly opened Amusement Park in 1910, even when it was in its most primitive state. Visitors could travel to the Park by foot or, more commonly, by buggy, taxi, railroad, and automobile. The majority of visitors were those who lived within 150 miles. You might come for the day, for a special event perhaps, or longer, camping for days, weeks, or months on end.

Within a short two years, the Park, open roughly May to September, had become a popular attraction, known for its peaceful outdoor recreation, modern amusements, and family entertainment. Outdoor activities such as auto touring, camping, hiking, picnicking, walking, enjoying campfires, hanging out along the beaches, and trout fishing, swimming, and wading in Pine Creek could be enjoyed any day. The
management had built up the area, complete with the modern accommodations of cottages, a hotel, ice cream and cold drinks parlor, merry-go-round, open-air dance pavilion, and plunge bath. Special events—such as dances, moving pictures, sport contests, and vaudeville shows—were held on the weekends in 1911. The 4th of July and large group meetings also served as occasions for activities. The management held activities—such as dances, baseball, boxing, and wrestling—during all days of the week.

As always, town boosters were optimistic about the future of their community, arguing that the Long Pine Amusement Park was soon destined to “become the greatest Summer Resort of the Northwest.” What the boosters could not foresee, however, was that the next few years would bring worldwide warfare. War always affected economies. Would the war bring economic hardships to north-central Nebraska? The management of the Park had already lost one member. Would the remaining two owners be able to withstand the economics of the future? What if people, so focused on war efforts and everyday survival, did not have time or money to spend vacationing? What did the future hold for the Long Pine Amusement Park?
CHAPTER 5

AMUSEMENT PARKS:
THE LONG PINE AMUSEMENT PARK, 1912-1918

Figure 103. Enjoying the newly covered Plunge Bath. Precise date unknown, most likely 1912 or after.
Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.

The years 1912 through 1917 would be good to the Long Pine Amusement Park. With Long Pine being a major railroad town, complete with a roundhouse, visitors continued to pour in to the Park, nature’s summer playground, to enjoy recreations such as camping, dancing, fishing, and swimming. Associations, chautauquas, and organizations found the place ideal for meetings. The area would become so popular, that The Park Company could make numerous improvements. But, no matter how far from Europe, the Long Pine Amusement Park could remain untouched only so long. By 1918, the Great War would affect the place’s prosperity.

1912 Season: Town Boosting, Chautauqua, and United States Postal Service Cards
While the Titanic was sinking in April 1912, the Long Pine Amusement Park management was preparing for yet another summer season. With the first two seasons
Figure 104. An advertisement for the opening of the 1912 Amusement Park season.  
being incredibly popular, the Park did not have to advertise much, nor did *The Long Pine Journal* staff need to write extensively elaborate articles to attract visitors for the 1912 season. People from the area, and many from around the state, had already either visited or heard about the Park. An advertisement for the Plunge Bath, arguably the Park’s most popular attraction, in the May 10th issue of *The Journal* would suffice to announce the opening of the 1912 summer season (Figure 2). As usual, the management took great pains to ensure that all necessities were easily available so that all patrons had an enjoyable time at the Plunge. Since a roof had been built at the end of the 1911 summer, this would be the first season that swimmers could enjoy the totally enclosed Plunge (Figure 1), free from the brightness and hot rays of the summer sun. If you did not have a bathing suit, one could be purchased on site. The water heating mechanisms were still fairly new, but could heat the 55°F Pine Creek spring waters to a warm temperature for the most cold blooded of patrons. As if the enclosed bath, heated waters, dressing rooms, and new bathing suits and toboggan slide run were not enough to convince clientele that the Long Pine Plunge Bath possessed “first class” accommodations, those who swam on Sunday afternoons from 2 to 4 pm could also be entertained by the Park Orchestra.466

![Figure 105. “Firing up” to heat the waters of the enclosed Plunge Bath. Precise date unknown- most likely 1912 or after. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.](image-url)
Increasingly, visitors traveled to the Park using a newer form of transportation. Though most people still traveled longer distances by way of horse- or rail-drawn transport, some were beginning to purchase those new fangled contraptions called automobiles. Only one year into the future, in the summer of 1913, Ford’s conveyer belt system in Detroit would be producing 1,000 Model Ts daily.\textsuperscript{467} In Long Pine in 1912 you could buy a type of high-wheel motor buggy called the Catlercar from E.P. Skillman (Figure 4). But worries still surrounded the reliability of motor buggies. The geography around Long Pine could be challenging. This was the northern Sandhills, where open areas of dunes could present surfaces that could be difficult to maneuver through. Steep ravines existed near creeks. Would the thin wheels of motor buggies get stuck in the inches deep sand? How would the machine do on the steep canyon terrain, such as going down the hill to the Amusement Park? How sturdy was the vehicle if you went off the road on the narrow Canyon Rim Drive (Figure 5)? Through their advertisements, however, the Catlercar company, and therefore Skillman, assured everyone that this car was up for any challenge that Long Pine’s unique geography could throw its way: for their car, there were “no hills [were] too steep, no sands too deep.”\textsuperscript{468}

No matter what advertisements stated, locals remained skeptical. In order to go down to the Amusement Park by way of the main entrance, you had to go down a steep hill that was frequently several inches worth of sand deep. In early July, concerns about the road lingered. Even though a new wagon road had been finished from southwest of town to the Park, writers at \textit{The Long Pine Journal} noted that little had been remedied since the entrance was still “a hard hill for team or autos.”\textsuperscript{469} Nonetheless, the Park management was persistent, maintaining that the “new road and hill [were] in good
condition and autos [would] not have any trouble making the trip” (Figure 6).470

Figure 106. An advertisement for the Catlercar car, a high-wheel motor buggy, that supposedly could handle the northern Sandhills along Pine Creek canyon.

Figure 107. The Rim Drive in the Amusement Park.
Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.

Figure 108. Source: The Long Pine Journal, July 19, 1912, pg. 4.

Because Hidden Paradise was becoming an increasingly popular source of outdoor recreation for out-of-town vacationers, land owners whose properties were not
meant for profit producing recreational lands often had difficulties with trespassers. As a summer progressed, more and more notices appeared in *The Long Pine Journal* warning visitors to stay off private lands. In the June 21, 1912 edition seven landowners got together to fund one notice that gave the legal descriptions of their lands, advising people that “no hunting, fishing, trapping, or trespassing” would be tolerated on such premises.471

Many of these warnings, however, were not new. In 1901, less than two decades after the community was founded, such warnings could be found in the newspapers. “Hunting, trapping, fishing, digging trees, removing wood, picking wild fruit or walnuts, or smoking on Buttner-Bryon’s park forest or timber land, or going with teams or horses through his meadow or camp…[would] not be allowed, and [violators would] be prosecuted.” Three years later, in the June 17, 1904 newspaper, two identical ads by the Buttner-Bryon family appeared on the same page, this time with a harsher caution that violators would “be prosecuted to the highest extent of the law.”472 Even with such warnings, trespassing appears to have continued to be a problem. In June of 1912 Buttner-Bryon (Figure 7) continued to post such advertisements in the local paper, nearly identically worded as those from eight years prior. Since his land was south of the railroad bridge and near the Amusement Park, he must have had constant frustrations with trespassers, forcing him to place repeated trespassing warnings in *The Long Pine Journal* until his death in May 1915.473
Meanwhile, entertainment at the Long Pine Amusement Park continued as usual. Visitors rented cabins and local organizations sponsored dances at the Pavilion. Seth Howell and family camped at the All-Inn Cottage. The local ball club put on a well-attended dance on the night of Tuesday June 24th, with proceeds going towards ball ground improvements. Perhaps organizations reserving the Pavilion, however, should have been more careful in their scheduling of benefit dances for when the local chapter of the Woodmen of the World held a dance on Wednesday evening, the day after the ball club dance, attendance was meager.474

Long Pine citizens and the Park’s management were once again gearing up for another “Grand Celebration” of 4th of July. Events were to be held both uptown and down at the Park (Figure 8). The day’s formal events would begin early, at 4 am, with a grand salute of guns. A shooting contest at the Ball Park would follow at 9 am, with a Caluthumpian parade, “headed by the famous Clown Band,” on main street would start at 10 am. Before hearing Judge Davison once again give a patriotic address at 11 am,
EVERYBODY
Enjoy the Grand Celebration at
LONG PINE

Plenty of room in the cool shade. A big crowd is expected and a genuine old-time gathering of friends and neighbors will take place.

PROGRAM

4 A. M. Grand salute of guns.
9 A. M. Shooting contest at Ball Park.
10 A. M. Caluthumpian parade, headed by the famous Clown Band.
10:30 A. M. Free acts at Amusement Park.
11:00 A. M. Speaking by Hon. J. S. Davisson.

12 M. DINNER. Bring your baskets.
1:30 P. M. Grease pole climbing and Tug-of-War.
Baby show, 1st prize.
2:30 P. M. Ball game. Atkinson vs Long Pine.
4:00 P. M. Boy’s race, under 12 years, 1st and 2d prize.
Men’s race, free for all, 1st and 2d prize.
Girls’ race, under 12 years. 1st and 2d prize.
Young ladies’ race, under 21 years. 1st and 2d prize.

Fat man’s race, over 200 pounds, 1st prize.
Sack race, free for all, 1st prize.
Three-legged race, free for all, 1st prize.
Potato race, ladies free for all, 1st and 2d prize.
Standing broad jump, free for all, 1st prize.
Swimming race in plunge, free for all.
Longest dive in plunge, free for all.
Pie eating contest, free for all.
Cracker eating contest, free for all.
Banana eating contest, free for all.
Wood sawing contest, ladies, free for all, 1st prize.

Prizes in the different contests and sports will be paid immediately after each contest.
The management are making arrangements to announce returns from the big Flynn-Johnson contest after each round.

Plenty of seats are being built in the shade to accommodate those who wish to spend the day at the park. A rest tent and free check stand for those who care to check their lunch baskets and parcels.

Meals will be served on the grounds at 35 cents.
Auto livery to and from park. Round trip 25 cents.

Dancing in the Evening at the Big Pavilion. Every third number a square dance.

See management for concessions.

Figure 110. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 28, 1912, pg. 9.
people could go down to the cool shade of the Amusement Park to watch the free acts starting around 10:30 am. The Park management planned on announcing boxing match scores after each round. This year, it was the Flynn-Johnson contest that people were all hyped up about.

Lunch and other meals could either be purchased on the Park grounds for a whopping 35¢. Or, if you preferred, you could bring your own food basket and leave it at the rest tent and free check stand, then pick it up when needed. Food could also be purchased at the railroad eating house (Figure 9), the uptown restaurants, or the hotel. During the day, if you didn’t want to simply rest and relax in the shade and coolness of the Park, you could partake in the numerous afternoon activities. This year, among others, festivities included a grease pole climbing competition; banana-, cracker-, and pie-eating contests; a ladies wood sawing contest; dive and swimming competitions at The Plunge; and evening dancing at the Hidden Paradise Pavilion- where every third song was a square dance!

Figure 111. The Chicago and Northwestern Railroad Ticket Office and Eating House. Exact date unknown. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.
Despite rain the night before and periodically throughout the day, hundreds of people enjoyed the 4th at Long Pine. The July 3rd evening train from the east brought several visitors, while some 300 people arrived on the morning train came from the west. Celebrants from the surrounding countryside and towns arrived early in the morning, staying throughout the day, causing the streets of Long Pine to be “crowded until 10 o’clock” at night. Although the day was almost over, even more people arrived on the evening train from the east to celebrate the night’s dancing at the Pavilion and fireworks at the Park. Some must have been disappointed, though, when an accident caused a large box of fireworks to explode prematurely, taking out many of the fireworks that were to be shot off that evening.479

A new event came to the Amusement Park during the late summer of 1912. Long Pine had held a chautauqua for twenty-five years, with the first one being sponsored by the Northwestern Christian Assembly in August 1887. Many people made it a custom to leave their homes to attend, spending an entire week camping on the grounds. But some people were leery when leaving their relatively newly constructed home, and rightly so. While the T. Winters family was attending the 1887 Long Pine chautauqua, their home was struck by lightning and burned to the ground.480 Despite such risks, large numbers of people attended the popular summer event. For decades the Long Pine chautauqua had been held on grounds near Pine Creek northwest of town. In 1912, the Chautauqua Association, the committee in charge of planning the weeks-long cultural event, voted unanimously to hold the annual celebration at the Amusement Park.481

Since the Long Pine chautauqua would be held at a new location in 1912, many
details had to be worked out. There was the issue of how to get visitors to the Amusement Park, so the Chautauqua Association decided that a special committee would be in charge of transporting people southwest of town to the grounds. People who had season tickets to the chautauqua would not be charged for the transport. Season tickets, costing $1.50 for adults and $1.00 for children between the ages of eight and fourteen were available at numerous locations around the area, such as Bergers Cash Store (Figure 10), the Commercial Bank, and Reverend Wells. People without season tickets, who purchased single entrance admission tickets to the lecture tent, would only get a free ride down to the Park. They would have to pay for the journey back. Once at the Park, admission would only be charged if you wanted to enter the main canvas tent, where concerts, lectures, and performances would be held. The first 400 tickets sold would go for $1.50 each; afterwards the price increased to $2.00. Thus, people were encouraged to buy early and “join the 400.” Tents would be available to rent from the Park management if you wanted to camp for an extended period on the chautauqua grounds. If for some reason, you weren’t interested in going to the chautauqua, but simply wanted to go down to the area on your own to visit and relax at the Amusement Park, you would not be charged any admission fees.

Figure 112. Berger’s Cash Store in Long Pine. Exact date unknown. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.
Boosting your local town and its events was an elaborate affair in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Figure 11). It was common for communities, especially those that were small, to have a boosting committee to promote the settlement’s growth. In July, a group of Long Pine “boosters,” made up of eighty local businessmen and the Chautauqua Association, traveled to nearby communities to advertise the 1912 Long Pine chautauqua. Chautauqua supporters were so enthusiastic that they loaned sixteen automobiles to the boosters to transport them. Though today’s roads measure the tour at roughly eighty miles, the 1912 infrastructure caused the round trip to be nearly one hundred miles long, an impressive distance to travel in one day at that time. Before leaving town early on the Monday morning, the boosters, complete with the Ainsworth Brass Band, gathered their sixteen automobiles on Main Street and decorated them. The boosters would spend the entire day traveling east to the nearby towns of Bassett, Newport, Stuart, and Atkinson.487

Figure 113. Long Pine Boosters in Ainsworth, 1920.
Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.
Even though some towns that they visited, such as Bassett and Atkinson, occasionally sponsored their own chautauquas, the Long Pine boosters traveled there anyway to promote their own. Upon arriving in a town’s main business area, the Long Pine brigade advertised their cause. The community’s citizens must have been informed that the boosters were coming since many of them showed up to greet the chautauqua supporters. Once in Bassett, the band began the promotion by playing a few pieces. While advocates passed out promotional fliers, the local judge, J.S. Davisson, introduced the boosters and their cause, imploring listeners on the streets of Bassett to attend Long Pine’s “five-day intellectual feast” in August. The honorable Davisson was a local celebrity of sorts who frequently gave speeches, such as at 4th of July celebrations. He was well-known and well-liked. In an August 1892 issue of the Long Pine newspaper a staff member warned that the office would close if Davisson kept bringing them “petrified turtles and mastodon bones.” The writer humorously suggested that, instead of the putrid fossil specimens, the newspaper office would welcome Davisson if he brought in “a good juicy soup bone or leg of mutton.”

Local community members generally welcomed the Long Pine chautauqua boosters. Upon arriving in Newport, for example, the boosters were treated to a luncheon of “sandwiches, pickles, cheese, coffee…ice cream and cake,” prepared and served up by a local ladies committee, in the town’s opera house. One of the ladies, Mrs. Dodd, provided entertainment by playing the piano for the gentlemen while they ate. Soon the boosters left, continuing east. The Stuart citizens were likewise generously hospitable in welcoming the boosters. William Krotter, a local business man and prominent citizen, along with the community band greeted them before they even got into town. Once in
town, a street concert and the mayor gave a formal welcome and introduction before the boosters did their bit. The community also provided the men with food and a place to rest. Occasionally, as the boosters left the town, local citizens might join the traveling group and their cause as they proceeded to the next community. Men from Bassett and Newport, for example, joined the Long Pine brigade. Even though Atkinson also held a chautauqua, the Long Pine boosters decided to advertise their cause there as well. They were greeted by friends and old acquaintances who “revived [them with] mild liquor refreshments.” Around 9:45 pm, the weary boosters who had traveled by car returned home, claiming that they had driven “100 miles in twelve hours and forty-five minutes.” Others had opted to take the evening train home. 489

The chautauqua and boosting your local town in many ways were commonplace in the early 20th century. Following the day-long excursion, *The Long Pine Journal* carried a story, three and one half columns long on a front page made up of six columns, detailing the events of the “boost.” What a day the boosters had had! It is unclear whether the boosters were more successful at advertising the moral culture of the upcoming Long Pine chautauqua. What is apparent, though, is that the rowdy group of good old boys enjoyed the adventures of the day’s

The 1912 Long Pine Chautauqua Program

*Saturday August 3rd*
*Afternoon (admission: $0.25)*
- Opening- The Nashville Serenaders
- Lecture- Frank L. Loveland
*Evening (admission: $0.35)*
- Prelude- The Nashville Serenaders
- An Evening of Magic- Alonzo Moore

*Sunday August 4th*
Afternoon (admission: 25¢)
   Prelude- The Riner Sisters, Miss Lathrop
   Sermon-Lecture- J. Everest Cathell
   Vesper Service

Evening (admission: 35¢)
   Sacred Concert- The Riner Sisters, Miss Lathrop
   Literary Sketches- Halwood Robert Manlove

**Monday August 5th**

**Afternoon (admission: 25¢)**
   Prelude- Dunbar Singing Orchestra
   Lecture- James G. Whiting

**Evening (admission: 35¢)**
   An Evening of Music and Entertainment- Dunbar Singing Orchestra

**Tuesday August 6th**

**Afternoon (admission: 35¢)**
   Concert- Imperial Guards Band
   Lecture- Alva M. Reitzel

**Evening (admission: 50¢)**
   Grand Concert- Imperial Guards Band

**Wednesday August 7th**

**Afternoon (admission: 25¢)**
   Prelude- The Litchfield Trio
   Lecture- Chancellor G.H. Brandford

**Evening (admission: 35¢)**
   Joy Night- The Litchfield Trio

*afternoon programs began at 2:45 pm; evening programs at 7:45 pm

Table 6. Data source: *The Long Pine Journal, August 2, 1912, pg. 1*

outing. The Long Pine citizens were a playful bunch. Before leaving that day, the boosters suggested that it was best if the town marshall stayed home to watch over everyone; the marshall retorted by saying that all “the good people were still at home [and that] he knew who needed watching.” While on the promotional trip, the boosters
were characterized in several ways, such as having “crimson beaks, head lights, ripe Wine Sap, cherry tips [and a general] disfigured appearance.”

The five-day-long Long Pine chautauqua commenced at 2:45 pm on Saturday, August 3rd. The occasion certainly brought the town together. Long Pine churches, like the Congregational Church, organized to hold a joint Sunday morning service at the chautauqua grounds at the Park. Christian worship was an exception to the chautauqua admission fee. Even though they were on the grounds, church attendees would not be charged for the attending the 10:30 am service.

The schedule for the rest of the occasion was jam packed. A junior chautauqua, complete with playgrounds, would be held for children. Everyday, morning activities and workshops centered on “the duties of the home, the store, the shop and the field.” Afternoons and evenings would be focused more on relaxation and entertainment. Afternoon programs would begin at 2:45 pm with evening programs starting at 7:45 pm. A variety of speakers and acts were scheduled (Table 1). These included George W. Bradford, the all-female Dunbar Singing Orchestra, Frank L. Loveland, Halwood Robert Manlove-the Man of Many Faces, J. Eversist Catchell speaking on Abraham Lincoln, Dr. James C. Whiting, The Litchfield Trio, The Nashville Serenaders and Alonzo Moore, The Riner Sisters and Bereniece Lathrop, and Signor Tassoni and the Imperial Guards Band from sunny Italy.

Advertisements in *The Long Pine Journal* encouraged locals to attend the chautauqua. The advertisements also reminded locals that the acts were not free. The engagements cost the local businessmen sponsoring them roughly 15¢ per act. One announcement read,
Let Up for a Week

You like music, entertainment and lectures by big, brainy men.

A week of letting-up in your work-- of mixing recreation and care—is none too much.

If you are a busy person, you need the inspiration of this Chautauqua.

You will get a thousand new ideas, and old ideas you will see in a new way.

It’s worth what it costs—15 cents a number—IF you have a season ticket—worth that much to you and every member of the family.

Get the tickets and all go.

Chautauqua

Businessmen attempted to capitalize on the increased number of potential customers that would be in town during the week by holding specials at their stores. The Perry Photo Company would remain open every day during the chautauqua. At the hardware store, A.F. Schafer held a 25% off sale, which even included the Domestic sewing machine. Following the chautauqua, possibly inspired the week’s moral themes, the Long Pine Amusement Park’s management became vigilant in protecting the area. The administration was “careful in keeping everything quiet and free from everything undesirable, so that [visitors could] feel safe in having their families or their daughters at the [P]ark. All undesirables [were] sent back up the hill without ceremony.” Knowing him well, friends of the superintendent of grounds, Frank Hoag, warned potential misfits that Hoag himself might chase them out if they got out of hand.
The promotion efforts seemed to have worked. The Roy and Christ families from Chadron, for example, came and spent numerous days resting and relaxing at the Park. Long Pine residents would even leave their homes for several days to go down to and camp at the Park.\footnote{500} If anyone wanted to stay in a tent, but didn’t have one, they could purchase one from Mrs. Hull’s millinery store.\footnote{501} For those who preferred a more substantial roof over their heads, they could stay in one of the management’s newly constructed cottages, named Hillside View, Seven Oaks, Tumble Inn, Paradise, and South Park.\footnote{502} Vacationers would invite their friends and family who lived nearby to join them at the cottages. On a Tuesday evening, for example, a group of young ladies staying at Seven Oaks had friends over for an evening of cards, light refreshments, and visiting on Evans Flat. The area was so busy that Mr. Bunker, the Park bus driver, was publicly teased in The Long Pine Journal about a mysterious incident that broke his lamp. The staff writers encouraged newspaper readers to ask Bunker how his lamp was broken.\footnote{503}

Exchanging and sending postcards and postal cards was a popular activity at the Park. While camping, young Jesse Brady, most likely from Atkinson, “received a postcards shower from her many gentlemen friends at Atkinson which she enjoyed very much as did also her friends.”\footnote{504} A year later, in 1913, frequenter George Miles would take photographs of the Park’s scenery. He would have them made into post-card views and put them on sale on the Pavilion.\footnote{505}

Postal cards and postcards were a national and international fashion during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Postcards were different from postal cards in that they did not have preprinted stamps on them and, therefore, required postage. Postal cards came first, when, in 1869, Austria began using small note cards with postage imprinted
on them. They became almost an instant hit! The fashion quickly spread throughout most of Europe. In November 1870, only a year after they had been introduced in Austria, the U.S. Postmaster General tried to sell the idea of having a one cent postal card to Congress. After two years of thought, the Congress finally passed an act that permitted the creation and distribution of postal cards that cost one cent to send. The Springfield, Massachusetts post office department mailed the country’s inaugural penny postal card on May 12, 1873, with the rest of the country being able to follow suit the next day. As in Europe, the postal cards soon became wildly popular, almost literally overnight, in the United States. New York City’s postal clerks reported selling 200,000 cards in two and a half hours on the first day they were available.\(^{506}\)

Postcards were similarly popular. Many of the first postcards were produced, not by the United States Postal Service but, by private businesses. The famous penny postcard was not birthed until May 19, 1898 when Congress “approved a special rate for ‘private mailing cards,’ or postcards, of one cent – the same rate used for the postal cards issued by the Post Office Department.” \(^{507}\)

The cards came in different styles. On their fronts, one might have a graphic, advertisement, notice, or a photograph.\(^{508}\) Photograph cards were often used as souvenir cards. In her 2004 book, *As We Were: American Photographic Postcards, 1905-1930*, Rosamond B. Vaule noted that, of the billions of postcards sold in the U.S. in the early 20\(^{th}\) century, only a few million contained photographs made from negatives or glass plates. She noted that these “real photo” postcards are especially representative of American mass culture because it was average Americans from all classes and areas “who bought, sent, or saved these postcards.”\(^{509}\)
Whether living in or visiting Long Pine in the early 1900s, you could purchase a variety of cards, many of which were real photo postcards. In 1907 Ethel (last name unknown) sent someone a note on a postcard telling of her vacation along Long Pine Creek (Figure 12). Skurfan Postcards offered a card with a 1910 photograph, most likely taken sometime from late Fall through early Spring-- of Long Pine’s wide unpaved main street (Figure 13). Perhaps you missed someone that had moved away and wanted to tell them so by sending a card that contained a bit of linguistic humor (Figure 14). This card was very much dramatic, though, for no where near Long Pine was there a body of water large enough to hold an ocean liner steaming off into the distance.

Figure 114. A postcard featuring Long Pine Creek, 1907. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.
Campers at the Long Pine Amusement Park in 1912 had several reasons to buy souvenir postcards to commemorate their leisure time there. And why not? The Park administration worked hard to ensure the comfort of its patrons. When there was an
event nearby that the campers might like to attend, the management made arrangements to provide travel arrangements. On the evening of Friday, July 26th, an aviation meet was to be held in Ainsworth. Since many Park vacationers, especially the O’Neill and Atkinson “camps,” wanted to go, the management put together a horse-drawn hayrack and wagon to take the twenty-eight campers the nine miles west to Ainsworth. The campers were so excited about the journey that they adorned their modes of transportation with “bunting, flags, posters, and signs.” Overall, the management must have been pleased with the efforts in making the trip possible, since the campers were such a lively group, or a “drawing card at the aviation meet,” that they served as a jovial living advertisement for the excitement that might be had at the Park.510

The management was no doubt particularly happy with the increasing number of people visiting and opportunities that they had to sponsor events at the Park. When school began in late August, the Park closed. Nineteen hundred twelve had been another successful year for the Long Pine Amusement Park.

1913 Season: Renovations and Newport Day

In between September and May, the Park management prepared for what they hoped would be an equally profitable season in 1913. Culbertson, Engle, Hoag, and Mesars made up the Long Pine Amusement Park administration, sometimes referred to as the Long Pine Amusement Park Company, with Hoag serving as the superintendent of grounds.511 As usual, they were busy making improvements. Employees worked on widening and grading the sandy, hilly road along Pine Creek so as to make travel along the scenic boulevard easier and, therefore, more enjoyable. They also lengthened the
road so that automobile travelers might trek a few miles more to the southwest to Seven Springs. Tents and cottages would provide lodging for visitors. The management planned to add twenty more cottages, so that, when finished, the Park’s cabins might accommodate nearly 300 campers. The management gave some of the cabins names, and, running out of options perhaps, others numbers, such as Cottage 58. The cabins that already existed were revamped. Workers dug eighteen wells, placing pipes below the creek, so as to provide fresh spring water to campers. Staff moved the cottages, placing them on cement block foundations, and whitewashed them. The Plunge had also been given a fresh coat of paint. Builders constructed ten more dressing rooms, complete with modern conveniences, to accommodate additional bathers.

The Pavilion got the royal treatment. The managers decided that, with regular dances making it such a popular place, they should make the Pavilion an even better structure. The once open-air concrete slab was vastly improved. More concrete was

![Figure 117. Looking from the southwest at the Pavilion in its 56’ by 96’ form, built for the 1913 season. Exact date of photograph unknown. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.](image)
poured, enlarging the entire area to a 56 by 96 feet space (Figure 15). In addition to a
dance floor, the space now included an auditorium and veranda. Workers built the
auditorium on the west part of the Pavilion while a covered veranda, 16 by 96 feet, was
constructed on the south. Builders worked on the 40 by 80 feet dance floor, laying down waxed maple flooring and enclosing the area with open walls and a roof. On the eastern side of the dance floor, they constructed a 16 by 40 feet stage. In addition to dancing, the management wanted the space to be used for other activities, such as for convention meetings and the showing of moving pictures. Right up through late May, the management continued making improvements and taking reservations for cottages and tents. The Park administration was intent on making The Long Pine Amusement Park “the best health and summer resort in the state of Nebraska.”

Figure 118. The Cotterill Sisters Orchestra playing on the new stage in the dance area of the Pavilion. Photograph most likely taken in 1913.
Source: Nebraska State Historical Society.

Though minor renovations continued throughout the Park, once work on the Pavilion was completed in late May, the Park opened for the 1913 season. The ever
BIG DAYS
AT
LONG PINE
JUNE 10 & 11

Savage Bros. with their new 80-horse power Bi-Plane will make two flights on each day and guarantee to fly 20 miles each flight and light at place of starting. Your admission will be refunded if they fail to make good.

In addition to the two flights there will be two good Ball Games on the same grounds, and a good time and a rare treat is assured to the public.

The Amusement Park, with its beautiful new Dancing Pavilion, its magnificent remodeled plunge, and its thousands of splendid attractions will be open to the public.

REMEMBER
THE DATES
JUNE 10 AND 11

Figure 119. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 6, 1913, pg. 8.
The popular Cotterill Sisters Orchestra from O’Neill provided music for a dance, attended by nearly fifty couples, which served as the official opening event. The orchestra was so well-liked that the Park management hired the ensemble for the entire season (Figure 16).

It was likely that the sisters’ mother, Sarah, planned on staying with her daughters throughout the season since it was noted in the “Local News” section of the May 30, 1913 Long Pine Journal that a Mrs. Cotterill had arrived and planned on spending the summer in town.

Back at the Park, the Park Hotel opened and was taking reservations for the season. Lodgers and visitors alike could enjoy a Sunday dinner there. At the Pavilion, the new dance floor was going over nicely. With three dances held within the first two weeks of the season opening, people seemed to be enjoying dancing on something other than concrete. Writers from The Long Pine Journal commented that “the dance floor of hard maple… makes dancing a pleasing pastime instead of strenuous exercise.” A group of men from town were organizing a basketball team that would be known as the Amusement Park Basketball Team. They arranged to play games on a court at the Park. Now all they had to do was to wait for the mail-ordered basketball to arrive! To keep the momentum of the 1913 season going, the management planned “2 Big Days” on Tuesday June 10th and Wednesday June 11th to entice people to visit the Park (Figure 17). Young and old alike might take interest in two of the newest attractions, a burro and a caged monkey. You could enjoy baseball games as well as the remodeled cottages, Pavilion, and Plunge Bath.
You would certainly take pleasure in the days’ feature attraction, the Savidge Brothers (whose name was often misspelled as Savage). The Savidges were a group of young brothers from rural Ewing who were known for being the first to build and fly an airplane in Nebraska. They had ingenuously built the plane from factory parts. They flew it successfully on their parents’ farm near Ewing on May 7, 1911. For their enjoyment as well as a source of income, the brothers put on shows, highlighting their aeronautic skills and tricks. At the Long Pine Amusement Park, they would fly once each day, covering roughly twenty miles, in “their new 80-horse power Bi-Plane.” Evidentially some were skeptical about the reliability of the new contraptions, and possibly of the brothers’ skill, for the management promised to refund spectators’ admission fees if something were to go wrong.

![Figure 120. Central Aviators, Savidge Brothers. The Savidge brothers of rural Ewing, 1912. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.](image)

In between major events, most visitors simply enjoyed their time relaxing in the shade and coolness of the Park. Area Sunday School teachers, like Reverend Lindeman of Ainsworth, frequently brought their classes for picnics and recreation. Some visitors spent their time exploring the Park’s topography, including local features such as
Lookout Point. Middleton Gulch, Pavilion Row, Point Comfort, and Trout Hill were other well-known sites. Elm Beach was also a popular locale. Some campers, like Wes Evans the owner of the Golden Hotel in O’Neill, enjoyed trout fishing in the cool waters of Pine Creek. Groups of young, single women frequently had get-togethers, like “picnic parties,” to enjoy one another’s company. The Plunge Bath was, as always, such a popular attraction that it required constant maintenance. It was “drained and cleaned every Monday morning.” In late June the water pumping mechanisms were having some difficulties and needed repair. Soon again, water was constantly running from Pine Creek to fill the pool.

Many visitors camped for days and weeks on end; some stayed the entire summer. Even Chicago and Northwestern Railroad employees, like conductors and their families, appreciated the area and rented cabins. Some visitors enjoyed the Park so much that, instead of renting cottages, they constructed their own getaways. Many followed the cues of architecture that was popular on the Pacific Coast and built their cabins similar to the bungalow style. The George Miles’ family, who had frequented the Park since its beginning, began building a three-room cottage in early July. By July 18th, the family was “nicely settled in their new bungalow near Middleton Gulch.” George Miles was editor of the O’Neill Holt County Independent. He was infamous for his boisterous behavior two years earlier, which caused Manager Hunt to ban him from ever returning to the Plunge Bath. Carl Pettijohn, the other Park manager, evidentially moved his family out of their former cabin, the East End Cottage. In early July he was almost done constructing the family’s new cottage. The Pettijohns must have made the East End a
rental cottage, for occasional notices in the paper told particulars of the people renting it.  

For the second year in a row, the Amusement Park served as the Long Pine chautauqua grounds. This year, the chautauqua was held during late June and early July, earlier than usual. Another unique aspect of the 1913 chautauqua was that the nearby community of Newport held its town celebration, Newport Day, at the Long Pine Amusement Park on July 1st. A passenger train, scheduled for arrivals and departures at different times than usual, had been secured so that Newport citizens could leave their station at 9:00 am, arrive in Long Pine to celebrate, and return home by midnight the same day. It was a good thing, too, because almost all the 275 people who attended Newport Day rode on the train. Long Pine citizens, riding in autos, as well as the chautauqua’s Redpath Italian Band met the celebrants at the train and showed them around town. Some stayed uptown while others moved down to the Park since, in the morning, all attractions would be free to Newport citizens. Meanwhile, the Park management set up a special tent and prepared a meal in honor of Newport Day. At lunchtime, a crowd congregated at the Park for the meal. During the afternoon, visitors could attend the chautauqua, watch the Newport-Long Pine baseball game, take in the many attractions of the Park, or simply rest and relax in the shade. In the end, Newport citizens must have greatly enjoyed themselves. The baseball team and fans must have especially taken pleasure in the day since their team was victorious over the Long Pine team.

Later that week in Long Pine, as usual, a large number of people came to the Park to celebrate the 4th of July. Many visitors came early, before the 4th to spend a few days
in or around Long Pine. Those who couldn’t get lodging at the Park stayed in hotels uptown. Many were filled to capacity. There were so many passengers in the coach cars on the morning train coming from Wood Lake, Johnstown, and Ainsworth to Long Pine that some men had to ride in the baggage cars.\textsuperscript{541} In all, the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad sold over 600 tickets with the destination of Long Pine on the 4th to riders living in between the towns of Valentine and O’Neill.\textsuperscript{542} Clearly Long Pine had become a major attraction.

The formal program for Friday, Independence Day, was filled with the standard events of years’ past, such as patriotic addresses by a local judge. The Stuart Band would provide small concerts of patriotic tunes throughout the day. But this year there would also be some new activities. Isabel Haven of Atkinson, celebrated for her orator talent, would make a presentation, reading the Declaration of Independence. The former co-manager, Dick Hunt, would also give a speech, telling the story of the history of the Long Pine Amusement Park.\textsuperscript{543}

On Thursday July 17\textsuperscript{th}, the Sunday Schools of the Ainsworth Congregational Church held their annual picnic at the Amusement Park.\textsuperscript{544} Since there were no other major events hosted, the Park was a fairly quiet place during the rest of the summer. Yet, it remained an active spot. Campers continued to enjoy the relaxing atmosphere and choice of activities. Dancing was such a popular pastime that Mary Aid of Council Bluffs, Iowa, most likely a camper just visiting for a short period, organized a dance class that was fairly successfully.\textsuperscript{545}

When other celebrations were being held uptown, the Park might participate by sponsoring a few of the activities. In late July, in an early type of community celebration,
Long Pine threw an event called Frontier Days. The Park got in on the action by holding dances at the Pavilion and giving a fireworks display.\textsuperscript{546} There were hosted exhibition dances showcasing the talents of Brulé Sioux and Crow from the nearby Rosebud Reservation.\textsuperscript{547} Whether or not these dances were authentically traditional or simply a showcase put on to entertain gullible spectators is unknown.

As usual towards the end of the summer, visitors stayed, camping through August and early September until the Park would yet again close, marking the end of the 1913 season.

1914 Season: Governor Visit, a Baseball Field, and Local Organizations

The 1914 season did not start any differently from those of years’ past. The few months prior to the Park’s opening saw the management once more working on improvements. Two of the most significant enhancements for the 1914 season included the building of an eating house and the development of a new road into the Park. Lumber was delivered and construction began on the eating house in late April. At the same time, workers were busy creating a new road, 55 feet wide, with graded slopes. Evidentially, prior roads has been too narrow (Figure 19)—Culbertson, one of the managers of the Park, assured everyone that the new path would enable “autos… to meet and pass anywhere on the road.”\textsuperscript{548} Most likely this was because there was an increase in traffic. Another major addition to the Park in 1914 was a summer theater. As the Park Company readied for the Saturday, May 23\textsuperscript{rd} grand opening (Figure 20), they renovated the Plunge Bath, repainted the dance Pavilion, and added other “minor attractions” that would be available all season long.\textsuperscript{549}
Figure 121. A narrow scenic drive.
Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.

But inclement weather intervened and the official Park opening had to be postponed to Wednesday June 3rd. This might have been seen as a blessing. After the date was moved Governor Morehead sent word of his intention to attend. As usual, auto transportation would be available and the Cotterill Sisters Orchestra, as well as local brass bands, would provide musical entertainment. The management of the Park and prominent local citizens would attend a banquet in the Governor’s honor at the Park Hotel on Wednesday evening.

To Long Pine residents late June of 1914 might have seemed just another early summer, but they would soon know better. To the east, half a world away, on June 28th a Serbian nationalist assassinated Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife, setting the stage for events that would lead to the Great War. Though daily life did immediately change for the community and its Park, the events in Europe would soon reverberate throughout the Western world. It would be only a few years before the Park felt the effects of the Great War.
The Amusement Park Company wish to announce that the Park will be open to the Public on SATURDAY, MAY 23RD.

The new and spacious Summer Theater will be open on that date and will be under the personal supervision of Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Van Meter.

The new eating pavilion will also be open on that date and will be managed by Mr. and Mrs. C. I. Day.

The Plunge Bath which has been thoroughly renovated will also be open on this date.

The Dancing Pavilion has been repainted and fixed to furnish both comfort and pleasure to all.

Figure 122. Source: The Long Pine Journal, May 15, 1914. pg. 8.
Meanwhile, the Long Pine Amusement Park Company, undisturbed by what was happening on the world scale, continued making improvements on the Park. In late June they finished two new rental cabins. Out-of-town demand for the cottages was high. The management rented one out to a family from Omaha for the period from July 1st to September 15th; the other cabin was rented to a man from Seneca, Kansas for six weeks. Since an increasingly number of campers were traveling to the area by auto and, thus, needed a place to park the vehicles while staying, the management constructed a ten stall garage. The Park and its healthful waters were so popular with out-of-towners that the Company thought it might be profitable and began shipping some of Pine Creek’s fresh spring waters to Omaha. The management continued to strive to keep their Park...
a wholesome, family environment. They occasionally took out notices in the local newspaper warning that partaking in “any kind of intoxicating liquor… [was] forbidden on its premises.” Evidentially some visitors had been boosting their relaxation by partaking in alcoholic drinks, and they probably continued to do so.

Figure 124. Everybody is doing it now. Amusement Park, Long Pine, Nebraska, 1914. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.

Soon Independence Day rolled around again. As always, it was a prominent time for the Long Pine Amusement Park. The Long Pine Journal encouraged everyone to in its readership to celebrate in the community. A writer was blatantly proud of the locale when he described it.

There is only one place to go on the Fourth where there is plenty of shade, cool water, bathing, sports, speaking, chautauqua program day and evening, and many other attractions and that place is Long Pine.
Stores uptown, if open at all, would close no later than 10 am that day. In the meantime, some of the businesses attempted to capitalize on the holiday. In an ad in the paper, the Berger’s Cash Store did its best to persuade men that they would need a new suit in order to celebrate the nation’s birthday in style.

For years, locals knew that the place to be over the Independence Day holiday was at the Amusement Park. It would have been be futile for any other local organization to schedule its own events. When the Long Pine Citizens’ Meeting group met in late May, they decided that, in lieu of the town attempting to host a 4th celebration, they would just leave the merriment up to the Park management. Members of the Citizens Meeting group were fine with such a decision. They looked forward to joining in on the festivities, while “watch[ing] the eagle as he… hover[ed] over the Amusement Park that day.”

The program for the 1914 Independence Day celebration in Long Pine (Figure 23) was similar to that of recent years. Related events that would be held uptown included a band concert and parade, baseball games, and athletic competitions and races. The Park would host patriotic speeches, dancing, relaxation, swimming, music provided by the Ainsworth Band and Cotterill Sisters Orchestra, and evening fireworks. A candidate for State Senator, the Honorable Earl D. Mallery, would give one of the oratories. As the representative from Sheridan and Box Butte counties and the youngest member of the Thirty-Third Nebraska legislature, Mallery was known for his young, powerful ambition that greatly aided western portions of the state.

Because of the additions to the Park in the 1914 season, visitors could now take their meals at the Eating House. They could also eat at Mr. Day’s Park Café.
People who didn’t enjoy the outdoors or those who simply took pleasure in watching moving pictures might go to the new summer theatre that showed from 2:00 pm to 12:00 am. Campers might enjoy the mandolin, violin, and flute playing piano that local Will
B. Naylor, also known as Red, had recently purchased and installed at the Park. Soon, Red would run his own small candy and novelty shop uptown that would secure his place as a prominent Long Pine businessman right through to the 1960s. If you enjoyed the sport, you might also enjoy trout fishing, for in the early summer of 1914 it had been good. You might even try your luck at beating the 1914 Pine Creek record. In early July, C.R. Travis had landed the largest trout of the season. No one but he, though, knew the true measurements of the fish.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, baseball was such a popular sport that the Amusement Park Company wanted to create its own ball fields. In late July, the management leased part of S.H. Kyner’s alfalfa field, which was north of the Park and on the west edge of town, for the rest of the season. The Company hoped that it would be possible to make the place into a permanent ball field, the Amusement Park Diamond. They started constructing spectator stands and added all the features necessary for the fields to become a great attraction.

In hopes of drawing attention to the new baseball field, the management hosted a four-day baseball tournament. Eleven teams from nearby towns competed in seven games. The competition of both the opening and ending games was so close that the two match-ups each required fourteen innings. The ultimate winner of the tournament would be decided at a game between the Burton and O’Neill teams on August 9th.

As for the opening of the Amusement Park Diamond, though, the Company must have been a little disappointed. Even though the ball players put on an exciting spectacle during the four day tournament, only a small crowd of spectators came. Perhaps future games would bring in larger crowds. In their entrepreneurial optimism, the management
continued to schedule games. They expected that the Sunday August 23\textsuperscript{rd} contest between O’Neill and Springfield teams, for example, would “no doubt be the best game of the season.”

Throughout the season, various local and regional groups used the Park as a location to host their events (Figure 24). Many women hosted club meetings. For example, with Mins VanMeter hosting, six members of the local women’s Kensington Klatter Klub (KKK) as well as six visitors met at the Park on July 16\textsuperscript{th}. The Klub enjoyed their time together, gathered under the shade of the trees, partaking in music, needle work, refreshments, and visiting. Late August found the Klatter Kub at the Elliot ranch with Mrs. Elliot hosting. In the morning, the ladies took a hiatus from their normal embroidery work and, armed with yarn and needles, darned hosiery and socks in the old fashioned way. The ladies were in such a nostalgic spirit that they dressed up in period fashions, adorned with “long-sleeved aprons and dust caps.” After their work was completed, the women enjoyed a lunch and time together, visiting in the cool shade of the trees. They had their picture taken to commemorate the day, and planned to meet at the Park again on September 10.

Figure 126. Fraternal meeting of some kind at the Long Pine Amusement Park. Exact date unknown, most likely in 1910s. Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.
One of the most significant events held at the Park during the 1914 season was a meeting that gave birth to the Northwest Nebraska Medical Society. On Wednesday July 22nd, twenty-five doctors from rural parts of northern Nebraska gathered at the Park. The physicians met with the purpose to establish a medical fraternity of rural physicians. That evening, thirty-six people attended a banquet at the Pavilion’s dining hall. The evening would be full, with local prominent citizens giving welcome speeches, demonstrations, and leading physicians presenting papers. Dr. Johnson of Creighton spoke on the differences in the responsibilities of rural and urban doctors, arguing the importance of creating a fraternity of rural physicians. Doctors from Ainsworth, Long Pine, and Wood Lake also gave talks that supported Dr. Johnson’s position.

The group of twenty-five physicians decided to establish a new fraternity, the Northwest Nebraska Medical Society, which would include all rural doctors in Nebraska north of 41º latitude and west of the 6th prime meridian. That evening the men created and approved a constitution, complete with bylaws. Among other aspects, the constitution established a meeting schedule. In the future, the Northwest Nebraska Medical Society would gather three times a year. The spring meeting, the third Tuesday of March, would be held at one end of the district; a summer gathering would take place at the Long Pine Amusement Park the third Tuesday in July; and the third Tuesday in November would find the Society at the opposite end of the district from the March meeting place. The group decided that their next meeting, in November 1914, would be at O’Neill, near the district’s eastern end. Since it was a new association, the group also elected their first officers.573
As of July 31st, every cabin in the Park was occupied; some cottages even accommodated two families.\(^\text{574}\) The Cotterill Sisters Orchestra was in the Long Pine area so much that they lost things there. In late July, they put an ad in *The Long Pine Journal* saying that they had lost a “gold chain with opal and pearl pendant, in [a] green box, [that was] valued as [a] family keepsake.” The Sisters offered a reward as an extra incentive for anyone finding the necklace to return it to its rightful owners.\(^\text{575}\)

Fishing was a major attraction in Pine Creek and elsewhere in the area. You almost always could catch at least one brown or rainbow trout in Pine Creek. Often visitors traveled to nearby lakes and streams. In early August, campers filled four automobiles and ventured to the nearby Dewey and Enders lakes, returning a day later with several bass.\(^\text{576}\)

Traffic in and out of the Park was of such a great volume that some entrepreneurs took the opportunity to capitalize on it. G.A. Cole leased the private road to the Park from the Company and provided transportation for visitors going to and from Long Pine. Because it was a private road, however, Cole had a monopoly and strongly cautioned others not to use the road going in and out of the Park to transport people or they would “be prosecuted to [the] full extent of the law.”\(^\text{577}\)

When the Long Pine Amusement Park was started in 1910, one of its major selling points was that it was a natural, peaceful spot that would aid in improving human health. Four years later, many people still believed that the Park was such a place. The abundant sunshine, as well as the shade, pure air, and fresh spring waters, might benefit anyone. Certainly the regular Wednesday and Saturday night dances provided good exercise. Just relaxing in the cabins in the peaceful locale was reason enough for many to
spend time recuperating after a surgery. Such was the case for S.P. Alderman from Bassett. He recently had undergone an operation and had brought his entire family along with him to the Park. Harry McConner from Albion, in “poor health,” also brought his family along. Both Alderman and McConner planned on staying, resting for a long period, until the snow flew. Within one week’s time, both Alderman and McConner had improved. Alderman, for instance, had gained one pound for each day that he had spent recuperating in his rented cabin, Cottage 48. Even doctors were persuaded that the Park had health benefits. While vacationing, Dr. H. Millard Fulton, a surgeon from Chicago that was famous for saving the life of Cyrus McCormick, Jr., tested the waters of the Plunge Bath and found them to have healthful properties. Fulton was so intrigued by the waters that he spoke with the management about the possibility of constructing a forty room sanitarium that would open in the 1915 season.

Despite being well known around the state, the Park still remained to be discovered by some. J.E. Tuthill, a prominent businessman of Omaha, and his wife spent several weeks vacationing at the Park. Tuthill was so impressed with the place that he urged the Company to advertise better, since, in his opinion, there were thousands of people in the Omaha area that might come and vacation at the Park “if they had any idea of there being such a perfect summer resort in Nebraska.”

When the weather prematurely and temporarily cooled in late August, many campers left the Park in a mass “exodus.” Mrs. H.P. Thorpe and her daughter, Muriel, had enjoyed three weeks of “camp life” and returned to their home in Norfolk via the Number 8 train. Some people left in such a hurry that they had lost things in the process. A notice appeared in the September 4th edition of The Long Pine Journal noting
that a hand bag had been lost at the Park and anyone finding it might leave it at The
Journal’s office. The management soon closed the area to the public, and so ended the
4th season of the Long Pine Amusement Park.

1915 Season: Accidents, the Northwestern Nebraska Medical Society, and Baseball

In anticipation of another season, May 1915 found the Amusement Park Company
reworking the Plunge Bath, building cabins and restoring older ones, grading the hill on
the road down into the Park, and creating new attractions. Supposedly they rebuilt and
modernized the Bath. One of the new features was a 6 inch pipe to bring in the spring
water which, as usual, would be electrically heated. The Company, under the guidance of
manager Harry M. Culbertson, also revamped the theatre building, changing it into a
bowling alley and pool hall. Workers made the Park Café’s dining hall larger. The
Company hired several employees. For the 1915 season, W.F. Gilmore and his wife
would lead the Park Orchestra. The Freeman Garage (Figure 25) would be in charge of
transporting passengers to and from the Park.

Figure 127. Long Pine’s Lentz-Freeman Ford Garage, owned by Tom and Elmer Lentz and Romey
Freeman, in the mid 1920s.
Source: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.
Attempting to further capitalize on their unique site, Long Pine citizens continued to “boost” their town in 1915. Some made plans to invest in, and build, a private fish
hatchery along the spring-fed waters. Advertisements appeared in the May 28, 1915 edition of *The Long Pine Journal* soliciting anyone who could assist in such a venture to “BOOST.” The same advertisement went on to push for other entrepreneurial opportunities for the community. Arguing that no other location within Nebraska was better suited for a new private college than Long Pine, residents were cheered on to “wake up some man for the place” and again encouraged to “BOOST.”

Mother Nature intermittently hampered some of the Park’s activities. Rain forced the postponing and cancellation of baseball games. The occasional downpour engorged Pine Creek, causing it to take out several footbridges. But the Company remained optimistic. They worked hard, for example, on maintaining the Park’s hill and roads so that, despite heavy rains, the avenues would still be passable. In 1915 at least, their efforts paid off.

![Figure 129. Source: The Long Pine Journal, May 28, 1915.](image)

Meanwhile, it seemed to be a typical summer for the Amusement Park. In late May, Long Pine’s appropriately named “Entertainment Committee,” was already
encouraging locals to plan on celebrating the Fourth of July at Long Pine (Figure 27).  

Men who owned land near the Park continued to warn people that any trespassing activities—such as swimming, tubing, and hiking—were closed to the public on private lands (Figure 28). The ladies Kennsington Klatter Klub (KKK) continued to occasionally meet and hold their meetings at a cottage in the Park. This time, ten members, ten visitors, and seven children assembled on the morning of June 30th at Mrs. Rice’s cabin to do fancy work, visit, have a business meeting, take walks, and eat lunch together.

Locals continued to build cabins at the Park. In early July, H. Gallaher, for instance, was busy working on his and planned on spending the “rest of the season at the Park.”

The new Amusement Park Diamond baseball field uptown was getting plenty of use. The company had assembled a team, suitably called the Amusement Park Team. The team was scheduled to compete in three games, one each day, on the weekend of Saturday July 10th through Monday July 12th. Rain caused the cancellation of the Saturday game between the Park Team and Newport, but fair weather allowed the games on Sunday and Monday. The Park Team was pitted against O’Neill on Sunday and Springview on Monday. The company’s team put on a good showing, coming out victorious in both contests. With a score of 12 to 9 against Springview, they didn’t even have to play the bottom of the 9th inning.
As always, the 4th of July was a big celebration attracting large masses to the area. In 1915, the 4th of July was on Sunday, making it an entire weekend celebration. The train coming from the west on Saturday July 3rd brought several passengers to town, who, upon exit, made a line “that extended for two blocks up the street.” In fact, so many people eventually came to the area that The Long Pine Journal writers estimated that the visitors made up “the largest gathering ever assembled in Long Pine.” Friday through Monday, the usual events—parades, contests, games, band music, and patriotic addresses—were held.593

Because so many people were camping down at the Park, a local church began a new practice. Since the 4th was on a Sunday, the Long Pine Episcopal Church decided to hold Sunday School and morning worship services, with a patriotic flair, at the Pavilion. The Bassett Band and the vocalist Marie Connon would provide appropriate music at the regular service. The events were so well attended that the Park Company and the Episcopal Church decided to continue to hold Sunday School and worship services at the Park for the rest of the season.594 Soon, the “Sunday morning church services…[grew] in attendance far beyond all expectations.”595 Rather than having their Sunday schedule at the church building uptown, the Episcopal Church would simply hold their morning activities down at the Park. On August 1st, for example, Sunday School began at 9:30 am, and the morning service with sermon started at 10:30 am. Reverend Claude R. Parkerson welcomed people of all faiths to attend.596 But Sunday was not the only day that you could find Reverend Parkerson at the Long Pine Amusement Park. He spent much time there, often hosting friends. When M.C. Smith, the Methodist reverend from Bassett, came to visit Reverend Parkerson, Smith was so impressed with the Park’s
environment that he planned on returning the following week, bringing his troop of Boy Scouts with him.597

Unexpected happenings over the weekend of the 4th gave reason for excitement. With so many people assembled, accidents were likely. On the evening of Monday the 5th, two automobiles transporting passengers crashed at the entrance on the top of the hill. Though the passengers were shaken physically and emotionally, no one was injured. Campers involved in another incident, however, were not as fortunate. A slight chill had motivated a camper to refill her cabin’s alcohol stove. But something went wrong and the stove exploded, spewing flame and cinders outward. The episode caused the clothes of Mrs. Lindquist and Claudia Remy, a little girl, who were standing nearby, to catch on fire. Claudia’s father, Dr. Remy, and another camper, Mrs. Bailey, saw the commotion and quickly came to the victims’ aid. Claudia was quickly saved; but Mrs. Lindquist’s clothes were so engulfed in flares that she had to be dropped into Pine Creek to staunch the flames. Claudia Remy suffered numerous burns. In their heroic efforts, Dr. Remy and Mrs. Bailey badly burned their hands. Mrs. Lindquist’s body suffered the most damage. For a few days, people thought that she might not make it, but the week later found her, though “suffering terribly,” still living.598

The Northwestern Nebraska Medical Society, which had been created at a meeting at the Park a year before, held their annual meeting at the Amusement Park on Tuesday July 20th. The Society was rapidly growing, with representatives coming from as far away as Hot Springs, South Dakota and Omaha, Nebraska. The morning schedule was busy. Citizens chauffeured doctors of the Society around the area, proudly showing them their locale. The members also held their business meeting and elected new
officers. At the business meeting, George Miles, the president of the Elkhorn Valley Editorial Association, suggested that the two organizations should construct and share a building that would serve as a convention site. The members received the proposal favorably and established a committee to further look into the matter. In the afternoon, the Society members gave and discussed papers. To relax themselves after the day’s conference, the men assembled two teams, made up of business men and doctors, to play a pick-up game of baseball. After twelve innings of the “battle of the bats” the doctors came out victorious, 4 to 3. Following the sports break, the men cleaned themselves up and gathered for the banquet served by and at the Park Café.599

Nearly ninety people enjoyed the meal. Many of the Society members had brought their families and friends with them to the Amusement Park. While the men attended the conference, many leading women of Long Pine entertained the wives, daughters, and other female relatives of the Society members. In the afternoon, the socialites hosted a lawn party on the Northwestern Hotel’s grounds for the visiting women.600

Baseball continued to be a highlight of the 1915 Long Pine Amusement Park season. The Park Team impressed nearly everyone with their victories, inspiring some loyalists to contend that the Team’s caliber was nearly equal to that of any league team.601 The Bassett Band was busy playing not only for the Sunday morning church services at the Pavilion, but also at Sunday afternoon and evening ball games. On Sunday August 1st and Monday August 2nd, the Chadron baseball team was in town to take on the Park Team. With a winning record of 16 and 2, Chadron was solid competition for the local boys. Baseball was proving profitable for the Park Company.
The administrators must have been delighted when the Chadron team manager wired, requesting accommodations for thirty-two, most likely a mix of ball players and avid fans. The Chadron team stayed and played games the entire week. They rested in the Park on Saturday August 7th before their final game on Sunday the 8th against Bassett.

Society had high expectations of what they deemed to be the appropriate masculine identity. Even though the Chadron ball players were great specimens of masculine ability and strength, they were also expected to be respectable members of society. People expected the ball players not only to be great at their sport, but also to be refined, polite gentlemen. The Long Pine citizens and Journal writers must have been satisfied with the behavior of the Chadron ball players. In the August 6th edition of The Long Pine Journal, a writer noted that even though “the members of the Chadron team…played in hard luck all week… [they were] a splendid aggregation of young men and [were] gentlemen in every sense of the word.”

One of the last major events of the Park’s 1915 season was a Company-sponsored baseball tournament held from Thursday August 19th through Sunday the 22nd (Figure 29). Each day would see special activities, with events taking place both uptown and at the Amusement Park. Because they expected numerous visitors, the Company encouraged those who wished to stay overnight to get their hotel and cottage reservations by sending requests via mail, phone, or wiring “at least one day ahead.”
4 BIG DAYS 4
BASE BALL
TOURNAMENT
AT LONG PINE AND AMUSEMENT PARK
THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, AUG. 19-20-21-22

Programme

HOLT COUNTY DAY - THURSDAY, AUGUST 19

Special train leaving Norfolk at 7:00 A. M. on Thursday, August 19, making all stops between Norfolk and Long Pine, arriving at Long Pine about 11:00 A. M.

On this, the opening day of the tournament, there will be a specially prepared programme for Holt County People. The Atkinson band will be in attendance, as well as several other Holt County bands, and enliven the day’s outing with plenty of good music.

BALL GAME 2:30 Atkinson vs O’Neill
After the ball game a good programme of small sports at the Park. Band Concert at the Park at 7:00 P. M.

Dance in Evening at Pavilion

FRIDAY, AUGUST 20
2:30 P. M. Ball Game Bassett vs Amusement Park Team
Concert at Pavilion after the game. DANCE IN EVENING AT PAVILION

Saturday, Aug. 21
2:30 P. M. Ball Game Newfoundland vs Amusement Park Team
Dance at Pavilion in Evening

PRIZE WALTZ $5.00 CASH

Sunday, Aug. 22
9:30 A. M. Sunday School
11:30 A. M. Church Services

At the Pavilion
2:30 P. M. 2 BALL GAMES 2
Bassett vs Amusement Park Team
Springview vs Winner of First Game

The Plunge Bath Will be Open to the Public all 4 Days
Reservations for rooms, either at the hotels up town or at the Park, should be made by mail, phone or wire at least one day ahead.

For Any Further Information Address

AMUSEMENT PARK CO.
Long Pine, Nebraska.

Figure 131. Source: The Long Pine Journal, August 13, 1915, pg. 5.
As with the 4th of July, there was a special Chicago and Northwestern train, in addition to the regular trains, scheduled to arrive in Long Pine on the opening day of the baseball tournament. It left Norfolk around 7:00 am, picked up passengers all along the line, reaching Long Pine around 11:00 am. With such a train coming from the east, it was fitting that the Amusement Park Company had designated the opening day as Holt County Day, the county two counties to the east. Many exceptional events were planned. The day would be filled with music and sports. The Company had invited numerous Holt County bands to play.

The four big days of baseball kicked off at 2:30 pm on Thursday with a game pitting Atkinson against O’Neill. After enjoying the game, visitors traveled down to the Park, where there were sport contests, a band concert, dancing at the Pavilion, and swimming at the Plunge. On each day, in fact, you could watch baseball games, swim at the Plunge, and dance at the Pavilion. Saturday night was typically a popular dance night, and there was a special competition with a reward of $5 cash going to the couple who could perform the best waltz. On Sunday morning, if Protestant Christians visiting the area were worried about missing church, they were welcome to attend the Episcopal Church services at the Pavilion. Each day’s game of the baseball tournament was scheduled for 2:30 in the afternoon. Friday, the Amusement Park Team played Bassett. On Saturday, the Park Team was once more up to bat, this time against Newport. As the last day of the tournament, Sunday was a special day and, therefore, there were two games scheduled—the first pitting the Park Team against Bassett again and the second having Springview playing the winner of the first competition.
In 1916, though the Park was not scheduled to officially open to the public until Thursday May 25th, the Company went ahead and sponsored preseason events. Under the direction of the Park, the first baseball game of the year, with Long Pine hosting Bassett, was to be held on Wednesday May 3rd.

The Park management planned to turn the entire afternoon of May 3rd into a special event. In addition to some Long Pine citizens, numerous people from Ainsworth and Bassett came to join in on what was described as a “gala day.” Manager Culbertson had even invited the staff and children of the Long Pine schools to the games, who accepted the invitation and attended the games en masse. At 2:00 pm, before the game, the town’s new music ensemble, The Long Pine Coronet Band, played for people on the streets downtown. They then traveled to the ball fields on the western side of town to provide pre-game entertainment. You could tell that the Amusement Park’s Baseball Diamond was still fairly new, only being established in late July of 1914. Work still needed to be done on the grandstand and the high board fence, but many predicted that such work would be completed by the time of the next ball game.

The ball game officially began with Mayor Bucklin making some remarks. The opening pitch was thrown at 2:45 pm. In the end, Long Pine came out victorious over Bassett with a score of 12 to 6. Nevertheless, many recognized that Bassett had some strong players, who would most likely make them a challenging adversary the entire season. Plans were made to hold baseball games twice a week, during midweek and on the weekends, with the midweek games to be held on Wednesdays.
In early May, though the Park had not yet officially opened, people were already busy there. Some had moved into their cabins.610 One group built a cottage near the Plunge. The Elkhorn Valley Editorial and the Northwest Nebraska Medical associations had recently constructed a convention hall.611 Others were preparing for their vacations later in the season. A.L. Sutton, a Republican nominee for governor, made reservations for a cottage for two weeks in July.612

Manager Harry M. Culbertson was also busy, but not with the usual preparations that came with the few weeks prior to a season opening. Apparently some people had been spreading information, whether true or not, that the Long Pine Amusement Park Company was soon going to be serving alcohol. Though the selling and consumption of alcohol was not yet illegal within the state, it had recently been outlawed in the town of Long Pine. Someone recently had even started a fund at the American State Bank, that would supply rewards in $50 increments to those people who came forward to report “anyone engaged in bootlegging… or furnishing intoxicants” within the village’s limits.613

Because he knew that it would hamper many from coming to the Park if it was wet, Culbertson wrote a letter to “The People of Long Pine and Vicinity” vehemently denying that he was seeking a saloon license for the Park’s 1916 season. The manager’s frustration clearly came through his writing. In an angered tone, he noted that such a rumor could only have come “from some one who willfully lied.” He reminded readers that, “[e]ven when Long Pine was wet” he had taken numerous measures to ensure that the Park was dry, even to the extent of “hiring special officers to fight booze.” He also
guaranteed everyone that as long as he was in charge of the Company he would do as much as he could to keep the Park alcohol free.\textsuperscript{614}

In his letter Culbertson also addressed to those who challenged his position. Some people were determined to get their liquor into the area; a few of them even point-blankly told the manager so. The manager spoke directly to the potential bootleggers by saying that “you may get by with a little of it, but if I can get the evidence every such offense will be vigorously prosecuted.” He reminded people that even though many people visited the Park, it still was a privately-owned business. He finished his letter, by emphasizing that “[i]t is my chief ambition to keep the surroundings absolutely clean and those who take offense at the stand I take are welcome to stay away.”\textsuperscript{615}

It is not surprising that the idea of the Park serving alcohol was controversial. In 1916 Nebraska voters passed an amendment, three years before the rest of the nation, which, when it went into effect in 1917, would prohibit the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages within the state.\textsuperscript{616} Since nearly the turn of the century, many Nebraskans had fought to pass legislation to ensure that the state was officially dry. For instance, practically every year between 1900 and 1916, articles written by individuals or organizations that were in support of the temperance movement could be found in The Long Pine Journal.

In the eyes of the prohibitionists, intoxicating beverages were responsible for a number of problems that plagued society. They blamed alcohol for crime, poverty, wasting time and resources, and ruining the emotional and financial ties of families. It impeded progress. Some, who believed in the principles of social Darwinism, felt that
intoxicating beverages weakened the human body and negatively affected the evolution of a race.⁶¹⁷

Though much about the Long Pine Amusement Park stayed the same, several modifications were made in early June 1916. During the 1914 and 1915 seasons, Willard Putnam had served as the Park cashier. Since he moved up the career ladder to serve as an assistant manager in 1916, Genevieve Morgan would be taking his place.⁶¹⁸ Later in the season, new people, Mr. and Mrs. Dan W. Lonerger, took over the responsibility of cooking at the Park Café.⁶¹⁹ Meanwhile, the people in charge of transporting passengers were changed and restrictions were loosened. Ed Hilborn, the owner of Hilborn Garage and seller of automobile lines like Ford and makes such as the Oakland Six, signed the contract to move the campers. He added three car schedules daily, and allowed anyone who wanted to transport themselves, such as by means of their own automobile, to do so. He would charge people traveling between the Park and town 25¢ roundtrip. If you wanted to go to the baseball field, he would take you there, too, for a fee of 5¢ one way.⁶²⁰

The baseball field looked good. Workers had diligently been working on it, constructing a new fence. Ben and Floyd Hull had been busy painting advertisements. It took them so much time to “represent” nearly every local business man in town on the fence that they seized the opportunity to lodge at an exceptional place. Since they were from out of town, when they weren’t working, the painters, along with their wives, spent their time camping at the Park.⁶²¹

A different kind of advertisement, using new technology, was also going to be used to promote the Park. Indeed, perhaps the most exciting part of the 1916 season for
the Park management was the fact that a short moving picture was to be filmed there. Administrators had scheduled a “representative of a film company” to visit on July 3rd and 4th, to take footage of the Park and its scenery, the town, and the people. The film maker would shoot two reels. Even the mayor of Omaha, James C. Dahlman, would be there to “assist” in the project! The plans were to show the reels later at one of the local theatres uptown, The Palace. There people could view the footage for three nights in the early fall. During the winter, the show would be presented at moving picture houses near and far. The Park was already a popular place, but, with such sophisticated advertising, the management hoped to attract even more visitors.

**Elkhorn Valley Editorial Association Meeting Program**
**Saturday June 17, 1916**

9:30 am
- Music- Amusement Park Orchestra
- Invocation- Reverend C.L. Shull
- Address of Welcome- Harry M. Culbertson

**Business Session**
- Short Talk- J.O. Goodwin, W.N.U., Omaha
- Other Short Talks

**Dinner**

2:00 pm
- Annual Address- President George A. Miles
- "Keeping the Subscription List Paid Up"- C.L. Mayes, *The Rushville Standard*
- "Back in the Game"- Luke M. Bates, *The Valentine Republican*
- "The Home Merchant and His Relation to the Home Newspaper"- A.H. Bachaus, *The Pierce County Leader*
- "What a Country Newspaper Should Be and Do"- R.C. McCulley, *The Springview Herald*
- Round Table Discussion- Moderator G.M. Cooper, *The Rushville Reporter*

6:00 pm
- Dinner at the Park Café
- "Publicity"- E. V. Parrish, Omaha Commercial Club
- "A Talk"- Edgar Howard, *The Columbus Telegram*


Table 7.
While preparations were being made for the moving picture, the Elkhorn Valley Editorial Association held its first meeting in the new convention building (Table 2). The day began at 9:30 am with formal events—music, a prayer, and welcoming statements—before the business meeting. After breaking for a noon meal, several editors gave speeches on practical topics, like C.L. Mayes of the *The Rushville Standard* on "Keeping the Subscription List Paid Up." A roundtable discussion finished off the afternoon’s events. The members broke for dinner at the Park Café, where they heard talks by E.V. Parrish of the Omaha Commercial Club and Edgar Howard of *The Columbus Telegraph*. After deciding that the day and location were a success, the members decided to again hold next year’s Elkhorn Valley Editorial Association at the Amusement Park. After the conference, the members and their families could relax. Manager Culbertson invited the members and their families to attend a ball game. The Walter Savidge Amusement Company carnival was in town, and Savidge switched the day’s scheduling around a bit so that the members and their families could take in the play, “That Printer of Udell’s.”

PROGRAMME
At The Amusement Park, July 3rd and 4th

Monday, July 3rd
10:00 A. M. Music by Ainsworth Military Band on the streets of Long Pine.
11:00 A. M. Band music at the Park.
11:30 A. M. The Hon. James C. Dahman will address the people from the pavilion at the Park.

12:00 to 1:30 P. M. Dinner
1:30 P. M. Band music at the pavilion by the Ainsworth Military Band.
2:15 P. M. Sharp The Hon. James C. Dahman will make a 25 minute talk to the people at the baseball park.
2:45 P. M. Ball Game—Bassett vs Long Pine.
4:30 P. M. Races, Athletic Contests, Etc., at the Park.
7:00 P. M. A concert will be given at the Park by the Ainsworth Military Band. Special music will be played at this concert.
8:00 P. M. Dancing at pavilion.
10:30 P. M. A splendid display of fireworks in front of the pavilion.

Tuesday, July 4th
9:30 A. M. Band music on streets by Long Pine Cornet Band.
10:00 A. M. March to ball park.
10:15 A. M. Ball Game—Ainsworth vs Park team.

12:00 to 1:30 P. M. Dinner
1:30 P. M. Band Music at Pavilion.
2:30 P. M. Sharp Ball Game—Valentine vs Park team.
4:30 P. M. Sports and Races at the Park.
7:30 P. M. A splendid 30 minute band concert by the Long Pine band.
8:00 P. M. Dancing at the pavilion.
10:30 P. M. The most gorgeous display of fireworks we have ever shown will be exhibited in front of the pavilion.

The moving picture camera will be working all of both days. Watch for him and get in front of the camera and help make these reels complete with familiar faces.

Figure 133. Source: The Long Pine Journal, June 30, 1916, pg. 1.
Meanwhile, the management continued making preparations for the annual 4th of July celebration at the Park. They placed advertisements in *The Long Pine Journal* (Figures 30 and 31). Nearly all activities would be at the Park. The schedule for the Monday the 3rd was just as jam packed with events and festivities as was that for the Tuesday the 4th. The Ainsworth Military Band would inaugurate the celebration by playing on the streets uptown at 10:00 am Monday morning. An hour later there would be music at the Park, followed by Omaha mayor James C. Dahlman giving a speech at the Pavilion. More band music and speeches would follow the noon meal in the early afternoon. Following the 2:45 pm ball game between Bassett and Long Pine, there would be the traditional races and contests down at the Park. In the evening, before a fireworks display, the Ainsworth Military Band would give a special concert, and the Pavilion would be open for dancing.628

Familiar activities—baseball games, athletic competitions, dancing, and fireworks—would fill the day of the 4th. The Long Pine Cornet Band would be the featured ensemble on Tuesday. Though it may have seemed like it would be just another normal Independence Day celebration in the Long Pine area, residents were reminded that indeed it was not. Through their newspaper ads, the management reminded locals that the person filming a moving picture would be in the area both days. Thus, the promoters encouraged people to “[w]atch for him and get in front of the camera and help make these reels complete with familiar faces.”629

New technologies were also in evidence at the Park. Personal cameras were still fairly new, and some campers enjoyed taking photographs of the landscapes of the area.
In fact, a group of pictures of the Park was assembled and put on display at The Palace on July 20th. 630

As usual, the hot months of July and August were times when you could find people camping en masse at the Park. It was so busy that someone took an informal census on Wednesday August 11th. There were a total of roughly 300 campers at the Park (Table 3). The vacationers were from a variety of Nebraskan towns and cities. Most families, around twenty-five, were from Norfolk, about 135 miles away. Eleven families from Nebraska’s largest city, Omaha, traveled 250 miles to experience rest and relaxation. Sioux City, 183 miles to the northeast, provided the Park with seven families. Five families came from nearby O’Neill, fifty-eight miles to the east. Six families from Lincoln made the farthest trek, 290 miles, simply to holiday at the Park. The place was so busy that a Long Pine Journal writer assessed that “[n]ever, since the Park was started[,] has there been such a demand for camping quarters.” 631

### Population at the Long Pine Amusement Park, Wednesday August 9th, 1916

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Families</th>
<th>Home Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Omaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sioux City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>O’Neill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Various communities &quot;between Omaha and Chadron.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A total of 300 campers.

**Not a systematically taken census.


Table 8.
But, if the newspaper writer thought that there were a lot of people at the Park the week before, he was yet to be surprised. Someone took another count the following week, finding that they were “386 people camped at the Park, 90 of whom [were] children under 12 years old.” Vacationers came from the usual places, but this week there were also campers who hailed from Randolph, Wilbur, Hastings, Elgin, and Fremont. One group of eleven campers had come from Neligh and they stayed for two weeks.\(^{632}\)

The Park was so full that the cottages were overflowing, with too many lodgers and not enough beds. The management was forced to set up thirty-two cots in the newly built convention hall, where Northeast Nebraska Medical and the Elkhorn Valley Editorial associations held their meetings, to provide enough sleeping accommodations on Saturday the 12\(^{th}\) and Sunday the 13\(^{th}\). The management must have felt fortunate, however, that one couple of vacationers decided to help out. Taking time away from their jobs of cooking at an Omaha restaurant, Dan W. Lonerger and wife decided to help out the resort by running the kitchen at the Park Café for the rest of the 1917 season. According to reports, the campers enjoyed the delicious meals created by the Omaha chefs.\(^{633}\)

Despite the low attendance at previous games, the management continued to hold baseball contests uptown. The Company even spent money on bringing in teams from significant distances. For the afternoon of Sunday August 20\(^{th}\), for example, they had scheduled the Mitchell-North Platte team to play Ainsworth. But a writer at *The Long Pine Journal* was concerned about recent problems associated with waging and the sport. Apparently the Lincoln *Journal Star* had recently carried an article on baseball gambling.
In his comments to the local citizenry, *The Long Pine Journal* writer said that the practice was also present at local games. However, he assured readers that “that 95 percent of the betting [was] done by people who [did] not live in Long Pine.” He also noted that whenever games did have a high attendance it was because many gambling men, not the local citizens, were there. He continued, in a chastising tone, by writing that people who did not attend the games could not know what they were talking about and, therefore, should not speculate and gossip about the supposed “evils” of gambling that ostensibly happened there. He argued that if the locals did not get out, attend the games, and support their local boys, they had no business gossiping about what did or did not go on at the games.634

The last big shindig that the Park sponsored during the 1916 season was the town’s celebration of Frontier Days from August 30th through September 2nd. Not only did the Park host, but they provided access, at a reduced price, to a variety of attractions. As in previous years, Frontier Days would include rodeo style shows. The community’s celebration would feature the horsemanship skills of “Indians, Cowboys[,] and Cowgirls.” Possibly the biggest draw of spectators, though, was the “World’s Championship [of] Rough Riding and Roping.”635

1917 Season: The Initial Ripples of the Great War

Though few outside national influences had previously affected the Long Pine Amusement Park, 1917 would be different. On April 6th, 1917, only a month or two before the Park would normally open for a season, President Woodrow Wilson and the United States government, no longer able to remain neutral, had declared war on
Germany and the Central Powers, entering the Great War. Few things changed for the Long Pine Amusement Park during the beginning of the 1917 season. Soon the ripples of the Great War would arrive. As the summer progressed, the waves created by the Great War increasingly affected the community and its Park.

At the beginning of the 1917 season, events proceeded as normal in the Long Pine Amusement Park. On Saturday June 2nd, the Elkhorn Valley Editorial Association held another meeting at its convention center at the Park. Similar to the program of the previous year, there was music by the Park Orchestra, addresses and welcomes by Park management and local editors, papers, roundtable discussions, and a banquet at the Park Café. On the following day, Sunday the 3rd, the Park sponsored two big events. For the evening’s entertainment, they had hired the Cebbildon Trio, a “high class string music” group whose specialty was Hawai’ian music, to play a concert and a dance (Figure 32). The ensemble not only entertained crowds with their banjos, guitars, mandolins, steel guitars, and ukuleles, but also their comedic acts.636

![Big Dance and Concert Entire Evening](image)

Figure 134. Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, June 1, 1917, pg. 1.
Sunday’s afternoon entertainment, however, was different. At 4:00 pm, the McMinn Orchestra played a free concert. Though on the surface the concert looked like an average selection of pieces, many of the pieces had a nationalistic slant to them, something you probably would not have heard in a regular year unless it was the 4th of July celebration. Among other selections like “Must We Meet as Strangers,” the McMinn Orchestra performed “Old Glory” and R.B. Hall’s “Independentia March.”

Throughout the year, very few articles on events on the Park or the regular section of the “Amusement Park News” appeared in the pages of *The Long Pine Journal*. Dances and concerts were held at the Park, but people’s focus had changed. With a war going on and many of the local “boys” enlisting, it seemed frivolous to spend free time engaged in entertainment. The district administration of the Methodist Evangelical Church expressed this sentiment in a statement from their second annual district conference.

We seriously recommend that all our churches refrain from needless banquets and merriments during the days our young men are going forth upon a journey from which some may never return. It will be more fitting that we be often in prayer for them and for us all. In an attempt to demonstrate how citizens could be patriotic while still enjoying themselves, the Amusement Park hosted several benefits. On June 27th, for instance, the proceeds from the regular Wednesday night dance would go to the Red Cross.
The pages of *The Long Pine Journal* were increasingly filled with advertisements and articles concerning the war. Though the advertisement in the June 1st paper for American Bankers Association (ABA)’s travel money cheques available at the Brown County Bank said nothing about the war, it implied-- with an image of a soldier in full uniform with a gun standing in front of infantry tents--that the cheques would aid both American soldiers and the war (Figure 33). A notice entitled “War Reasons” by the Bucklin & Eaton store cited the war, and resulting high prices, as the reason why were obliged to change their policies. From then on, the store would only accept charges on accounts for a period of sixty days. If customers had not paid their balance after sixty days, Bucklin & Eaton would be forced to close the account.640
Photograph companies capitalized on the situation. For some time, the O’Neill Photo Company had traveled to nearby communities to do business. Now their marketing took on a different tone. On an advertisement showing an image of a young male soldier in uniform (Figure 34), the Company urged that…

[y]our friends can buy anything you can give them except your photograph.

These are times that any family is liable to be broken up. Have your photograph taken while you have the chance. Our photograph tent will be in Long Pine June 28 to July 5.641

The Photo Company also geared their marketing towards the families and friends of the soldiers. In another advertisement, with an image of a lovely young woman (Figure 35), the Company argued that “your daughter, mother, father, brother, and baby should have
photos as a future reference of the present time.” Then, though hundreds if not thousands of miles apart, the soldier could see his friends and family.642

Despite the hard times, one mainstay of the Long Pine Amusement Park did not change in 1917. The Park had always hosted a fine 4th of July celebration and this year would be no different. In fact, given the circumstances, many probably thought that Independence Day should be celebrated even more fervently than in year’s past. The “monster patriotic demonstration” would include all the classic Long Pine Amusement Park Independence Day activities, including band concerts, patriotic speeches, picnics, baseball games, athletic contests, dances, swimming at the Plunge, and fireworks (Figure 36).643

If you wanted to celebrate the nation’s birthday with a bang, you could buy all 4th of July related goods, including fire crackers, at the Variety Store uptown.644 This year, however, you would have to wait until the holiday before lighting off your fireworks. On June 20th the City Council passed a war proclamation ordinance that stated that it was “unlawful for any person, except on the Fourth of July, to discharge any firecracker, torpedo, rocket or other explosive on any of the streets or sidewalks within the City limits.” The mayor, C.P. Nelson emphasized that the ordinance would stand until the end of the Great War.645 In times of conflict, you could never be too careful with shooting off explosives.

People did come to the Park to celebrate the nation’s birthday. Some enjoyed themselves so much that misplaced their valuables. On the 4th, Mrs. Garland, from Bassett, lost her “black coin purse containing two rings with sets and one band ring.” Hopefully she read the same The Long Pine Journal “Lost, Wanted, For Sale, Etc.”
Program for

July 4, 1917
At Long Pine and Amusement Park

Band Concert on Streets  9:30 A.M.
Long Pine Cornet Band

Declaration of Independence  11:00 A.M.
Miss Gladys Duncan
At Pavilion

Patriotic Address  11:30 A.M.
Hon. A. W. Scattergood

Band Music  12:00 M.

BALL GAME--Long Pine vs Ainsworth  2:00 P.M.

Athletic Sports (eight events)  4:00 P.M.

Band Music  6:30 P.M.

Fire Works  9:30 P.M.

Dance Afternoon and Evening

Plunge Bath  Picnic Grounds

Come and Join Us in This Monster
Patriotic Demonstration

The Ball Game will be a revival of the National Sport
between two teams who have had many battles for supremacy the past three years and both teams will be heavily supported by their home following.

Figure 138. Source: *The Long Pine Journal*, June 29, 1917, pg. 5.
column that her “lost ad” was in on July 20\textsuperscript{th}, for two entries above hers was a notice that someone from O’Neill had found “a purse containing a sum of money” at the Park.\textsuperscript{646} She must not have, though, since the next week the same two ads appeared, this time right next to one another.\textsuperscript{647}

In the somber atmosphere of a country at war, fewer people vacationed at the Park in the 1917 season. In late July, the Northwestern Nebraska Medical Society Association held their annual meeting at the convention hall, but attendance was down. A small number of members came for the day’s business meeting, papers, discussions, and only about thirty people attended the evening banquet.\textsuperscript{648}

A few weeks later, in their shared convention hall, the Elkhorn Valley Editorial Association also held another one of their yearly meetings. Though far removed in distance, like nearly every aspect of life at the time, the Great War even affected meetings of newspaper men in the American Great Plains. As with the Medical Association, the Editorial Association meetings suffered from low attendance in 1917. The editors’ Friday August 3\textsuperscript{rd} meeting started at 10:00 am. The Amusement Park Orchestra opened the proceedings, Harry M. Culbertson gave a welcome address, and a leading editor—F.R. Galbraith from \textit{The Ainsworth Star Journal}—provided a response. The day continued with a business meeting and members giving short talks. On Saturday the 4\textsuperscript{th}, before the regular open discussion, several members gave papers. Among these, \textit{The Rushville Recorder}’s G.M. Cooper presented “The Country Newspaper and its Part in the Present War” and Omaha’s E.V. Parrish, from the Publicity Bureau, gave “The Country Newspaper and its Relation to the State.”\textsuperscript{649}
Despite the war, some things didn’t change. In August, visitors camped, fished, and ate at the Park Café. Campers filled nearly every cabin. Gatha Smith, a new member of the Park Orchestra, stayed in Cabin 49. Jude Overbolt, a former Rock County rancher, now an Omaha real estate agent, stayed in East House with his wife. From Gordon, George Saddaly and his family spent several weeks in Seven Oaks, Cabin Number 32. Pettijohn rented his house out to a man from Ord and five people from St. Paul. W.J. McNamee, from Norfolk, who vacationed in Cabin 58, spent much of his time trout fishing, taking the prize, according to the staff of *The Journal*, as best fisherman. Serious vacationers who loved the place continued to build or purchase structures of their own. In late July or early August, Culbertson sold Cottage Number 27 to Lyman Cox and his family. On the evening of Sunday August 12th, the management sponsored a free band concert (Figure 37).

![Free Band Concert at The Park Sunday Evening 7:00 to 8:00 P.M.](image)

*Figure 139. Source: The Long Pine Journal, August 10, 1917, pg. 1.*

With so many visitors to the Park, accidents were bound to happen. On Thursday August 9th, while Jack Schoen, Ed Kesselhuth, and a youngster were driving down the Park hill, Schoen lost control and the automobile overturned. The accident was fairly severe. The quick movement crushed the car’s top and windshield. More significantly,
though, it caused the automobile to pin the two men underneath it. The boy was unharmed and strong enough to lift up the vehicle, allowing one of the men to move out from underneath. That man was then able to pull the other out. No one was seriously injured. Nonetheless, Kesselhuth must have been fairly upset with Schoen and his lack of driving skills because he suffered so many cuts and bruises on his lower legs that the local doctor, Dr. Lawson, had to stitch him up.652

1918 Season: The Impact of the Great War

By May 1918, the Great War had so permeated the lives of residents who lived in and near Long Pine that they had little time, money, or energy to spend on extravagancies like entertainment. Consequently the Long Pine Amusement Park advertised very little and sponsored few events from May to September during the 1918 season.

The only advertisements for the Park in The Long Pine Journal were an ad for the 4th of July celebration (Figure 38) and a write-up about an Elkhorn Valley Editors Association meeting. Entertainment at the Park was justified if it blended patriotic elements. An Independence Day celebration did just that. The 1918 4th of July festivities at the Park—including picnics, a patriotic address given by a judge, small amusements, band music, sport contests, swimming at the Plunge, dancing at the Pavilion were similar to years’ past. A few things, though, were different in 1918. Most significantly, the 1918 4th of July celebration was unique in that it was, by the federal government’s order, firework free.653
Though few people attended the Elkhorn Valley Editors Association meeting in late August, it, too, had a patriotic flair. Reportedly, many of the members exhibited a nationalistic spirit through their brotherly cooperation. Though it was not reported exactly why the writers of *The Long Pine Journal* characterized Clark Perkins, the
Association’s Field Secretary from Aurora, as exuding the most “Vive La Republique” sentiment of any of the members present.654

Following its two inaugural years, the Long Pine Amusement Park, located near a flourishing railroad town, boomed from 1912 to 1917. The Park Company, or management, made numerous improvements. It worked on roads, bettered the Plunge Bath, enclosed the Pavilion, built a hotel, café, and pool hall, hired locals to taxi visitors, and constructed countless cabins. With live music so popular, the management sponsored numerous bands and entertaining groups that played concerts and dances. It built a baseball field uptown where it hosted large tournaments. Everyone knew that the only real place in the area to celebrate the 4th of July was the Long Pine Amusement Park. For one year, the Park even served as the setting for the Long Pine chautauqua. Many enjoyed the Park’s setting so much that they built their own structures there. The Northeast Nebraska Medical Society and the Elkhorn Valley Editors Association together constructed a convention hall that would serve as the meeting headquarters for both of the organizations.

The shade provided by the bur oaks and ponderosa pines and the invigorating Pine Creek waters mixed to create a cool setting where visitors could relax. Hundreds, if not thousands of visitors, came to enjoy the Park’s attractions, whether natural or manmade, during the summer season of May through early September. Over the few days during an Independence Day celebration, as well as during August, it was not uncommon to find all the rental cabins filled with campers.
But the Great War took a great toll on local citizens’ time, money, and attention. The Long Pine Amusement Park hosted fewer events in 1918 and drew fewer visitors than in years’ past. The Park’s management, though concerned about supporting the war effort, must have suffered from decreased profits. The profits from 1912 through 1917 might not be enough to sustain the Company through the financial downturn of 1918. The management must have been worried that, if the Great War lasted much longer, it might have to close the Park.

Despite the economic downturn, the Long Pine Amusement Park endured. The prosperity of the 1920s gave new life to the Park. It was then, during the Roaring Twenties, that people returned en masse and the locale was renamed Hidden Paradise Resort. During some summers from the 1920s through the 1960s, the dance pavilion hosted live bands, sometimes every night. Lawrence Welk and Lee Williams were among a few of the more popular big bands that played at the resort.655

From the late 1910s until 2009, Hidden Paradise changed. The Park—including the motel, Pavilion, and restaurant-- changed hands several times. The area slowly became privatized, with cabins being privately owned. Decreased patronage and one hundred years have taken a toll on the original business. In 2009, the Plunge is long gone. The motel, Pavilion, and restaurant still stand. The structures are the only components of the original business known as the Park which still collectively constitute an entrepreneurial property. The Park property is valued at a measly $30,000. The main doors to the restaurant/Pavilion are closed. They protect the public from a building whose roof is decaying, caving in from a century of rains and economic neglect.
But, that’s not the whole picture. Turn around from the Pavilion’s doors. Look to your left, your right, and across the sandy parking lot towards the creek and cabins. Take it all in. Breathe in the perfume of the ponderosas. Feel the coolness of the breeze. Smell the hotdogs, bratwurst, and t-bones searing on the grill. Hear the pounding of nails and see the place-loving man—beer in one hand, hammer in the other—working on his cabin. Hear the scared, yet excited, shrills of children as they—tubing down the creek—vainly attempt to stay away from the grassy, reinforced banks. See the flickering sparkle in the smiling eyes of friends and families, encircled around the campfire. This is the Long Pine Amusement Park of today… especially if it’s the 4th of July.
Entertainment available to people living in and visiting rural Nebraska from the beginning of European American settlement in the late 19th century to the end of the Great Depression reflected aspects of time and place. The activities also manifested local, state, and national trends of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, nationality, and religion.

RACE & ETHNICITY

Traveling shows gave minority races—such as African and Native Americans—the opportunity for a profitable career. At the time, most people in rural Nebraska were Caucasian. Nearly the only time that a Caucasian rural Nebraskan might see an African American, without leaving home, was when the minority visited the area as part of a traveling show. Because African Americans and Native Americans were minority populations that came only as entertainers and did not threaten the area’s social and racial status quo, the dominant Caucasian population was able to view the different races dispassionately.

Though the minority races had relatively steady jobs via travel shows, they were still subjugated and commodified. The roles that they filled and played often perpetuated hegemonic stereotypes of the peoples. Common in the early 20th century, railway circus shows with Wild West shows, like Robbins Brothers Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus united with Ponca Bill’s Wild West, were full of heroic cowboys and savage, wagon-attacking Lakotas.
Occasionally minorities, such as local indigenous peoples, visited The Walter Savidge Amusement Company when it was in town. Overall, though, Caucasian Americans of European descent were the most common patrons of the Walter Savidge Amusement Company.

Sometimes local indigenous people not part of a traveling show provided entertainment to rural Nebraskans. Near Long Pine, occasionally Lakotas from Pine Ridge Reservation came to compete in horse races. They also would camp west of town near Hidden Paradise to cater to the tourists by providing “authentic” goods and entertainment.

African American entertainers came to the area as vaudeville performers and musical acts. Locals weren’t used to having African Americans around and were under the misconception that few lived within the state. Since much of the dominant culture viewed African Americans as novel quality entertainers, it often was a profitable move for a traveling show with African Americans to advertise itself as such when coming to a rural area. Before The Old Reliable Virginia Minstrels show came to Long Pine in May 1915, for example, it advertised itself as a musical treat featuring “40 real Negro[s].” Moreover, it often behooved a traveling show that included African Americans to give the impression that the entertainers were from the South. Though the Cotton Club Boys was a jazz group made up of twelve African American men from Omaha, in 1936 when it toured with director Anna Mae Winburn, also an African American, the group advertised itself as being from The South. This geographic deception apparently added to the exotic image of the performers.
Issues of race did not often directly manifest themselves in the historical record of the German Russian Mennonites of the Henderson area. Due to their strong adherence to their own Anabaptist version of Christianity, race was not supposed to matter, for all humans were considered to be children of God. Nevertheless, with a community predominantly made up of people with European ancestry of the Caucasian race, it is probable that stereotypical attitudes towards race did exist and most likely reflected opinions of other rural Nebraskans at the time.

The ethnicity of the German Russian Mennonites of the Henderson area is difficult to pull out from their identity, since it is so tightly interwoven with their nationality and religion. Like their nationality and religion, the Mennonite’s ethnicity permeated all aspects of their lives. Being a communal minded group of Caucasian German Russian Anabaptist Christians who frequently engaged in agriculture, in all types of fellowship and social get-togethers conversation frequently turned to talk of the farm, harvest, recipes, church life, family and friends, health, and memories.

The communal society structure of the Mennonites is apparent in many of their actions and behavior. Their community-minded spirit was reflected in the fact that the original 35 families who came to the York County area spent their first winter, in 1874, housed together in an immigrant house 20 by 80 feet. It was also apparent in the fact that they peacefully consulted one another as a group when dividing up and divvying out parcels of land that first spring. The community did nearly every thing together. When it came to a couple’s engagement, for example, since the man and woman are members of the community, it was expected that they would make a formal statement to the community. The couple did so by announcing their engagement in church, or at a church
function, numerous times. Almost all types of entertainment—whether it be visiting, holidays, Sundays, or weddings—were celebrated together as a community.

The fact that racial relations were significant to residents of north-central Nebraska was evident during 1910, the first year of the Long Pine Amusement Park’s existence. Many events were held at fraternal picnic in 1910. One of these competitions was a baby contest. Baby contests the nation over often revealed the dominant society’s values and expectations of race. At the Amusement Park fraternal picnic’s baby contests, for instance, only blonde and brunette babies were eligible to win top prizes. Also, at the 4th of July celebration, the first major event at the Park, visitors were kept up-to-date with the progress of the Johnson-Jeffries fight taking place in Reno, Nevada. The boxing match pitted the first black man allowed to compete for a prize, African American Jack Johnson, against the Caucasian American Jim Jeffries. After three in the afternoon the scores following each round would be written on a large, publicly displayed blackboard at the Amusement Park. Even visitors to north-central Nebraska were interested in this Prize Fight of the Century, the turning point between black America and white America in which black America came out victorious.

Although documentation of the Long Pine Amusement Park from 1912 to 1918 did not usually mention the subject, if you look closely, issues of race were frequently present. Nearly everyone involved with the Park was Caucasian, including the owners, visitors, and local residents. About the only time that people of other races came to the area was when they were part of a traveling entertainment act. For example, in 1913 as part of Long Pine’s celebration of Frontier Day, the Park also hosted exhibition dances of Brulé Sioux and Crow from the nearby Rosebud Reservation. For the 1916 Frontier Day
celebration, the Park hosted, in addition to cowboys and cowgirls, Indians who displayed their horsemanship skills. Whether or not these dances and exhibitions were authentically traditional or simply showcases put on to entertain Caucasian spectators is unknown.

Race quite possibly was in the picture, too, when it came to the temperance movement. Perhaps some local prohibitionists who were against the consumption of alcohol accepted some of the tenets of Social Darwinism and believed that intoxicating beverages impeded the evolution of the American Caucasian race. Despite his 1916 statements regarding his adamancy about keeping the Park alcohol free, it is unclear whether or not Manager Harry M. Culbertson believed in such a concept of beverage-induced racial degradation.

GENDER

Compared to most other industries, traveling shows offered women many more job opportunities than they might otherwise find. As entertainers in traveling shows, women even took on leadership roles. In the early 1910s, Wanda Revere led a Broadway cast that traveled to communities, performing plays and comedic dramas. Women of color, too, found an increased number of prospects in show business. Anna Mae Winburn—a talented African American singer, dancer, and director in her early twenties—traveled rural Nebraska in the 1930s doing her own performances and conducting the Cotton Boys Club jazz band.

Though society often taught them to be quiet, reserved, and fairly immobile, focusing on the domestic home, some women were ambitious in their education,
mobility, and jobs. Mabel Griffith performed in public—playing the piano and enacting horse tricks-- as a young girl, earned a college degree, attended a prestigious music school far away from home, and taught college courses as a young woman. Though many of her actions were slightly away from the norm for society’s expectations of a young female, when she married, Mabel’s behaviors soon reflected more of the societal standard. She gave up her career in 1911 when she married Walter Savidge and focused her efforts on nurturing her husband and his career. As part of the Walter Savidge Amusement Company, Mabel kept the financial books and played piano for acts. Despite the fact that Mabel was essential to the success of The Company, she did not feel as if she was a major part of it. Typical of the mentality of gender roles for American men and women during the early and mid 20th century, Mabel viewed the business as her husband’s.

Facets of gender—identities, expectations, and roles—permeated nearly every aspect of life for the German Russian Mennonites in the Henderson area. Women dominated the private sphere and were viewed as caretakers, nurturers, wives, mothers, and homemakers. They were to be respectful and subservient to their elders and males. Males, in turn, were meant to be protectors, providers, and leaders both in the private and public spheres, taking care of the well-being of their families and the community as a whole.

In Mennonite society, gender was apparent in every day life, even determining what entertainments you took part in. Females frequently gathered together not only to help one another with their work, but also to socialize. It was easy to visit and share
fellowship when working on church service projects, baking, cleaning, cooking, washing dishes, knitting, sewing, quilting, tying comforters, cleaning fowl, and making bedding.

On special occasions—such as on Sundays or the celebration of a family member’s birthday, Easter, or Christmas—when family and friends would gather at someone’s home, Mennonite women cleaned, prepared the food and the table, ate after the men and children, cleaned up, all while visiting. On evenings, Sundays, and days when labor in the fields was unable to be done, neighbors often hosted friends and family, with women preparing food and serving *faspa*. When preparing for a wedding, women baked, cooked, cleaned the inside of the home, and helped the bride prepare for the upcoming day. Previously, long before the wedding day, many women had helped the bride build her hope chest by giving her gifts of household goods.

Mennonite men also visited while performing their everyday chores and work in the fields and businesses. Though it was viewed as taboo, some males played cards or frequented the billiard hall. On evenings and days when the work was either done, or was unable to be completed, males frequently would go with their family to a neighbor’s home to visit. Women and men often visited separately, with men commonly conversing about *wirstchaft* (business), land, crops, animals, and mechanics. They might walk around the farmyard to see new construction, implements, and work projects. They might even play dominoes.

On occasions when family and friends came over, Mennonite men frequently able to take a break from their labor, taking the opportunity to relax and visit with one another. If fresh meat was needed for a special feast, men might butcher an animal a few days before company came over. When preparing for a wedding, men and women performed
different tasks. If a daughter was to be the bride, weeks, if not months, before the wedding day, the bride’s father would make and send out the invitations. Since weddings frequently took place at the bride’s parent’s home, men got together days before the wedding to help tidy up the farmyard and construct any special structures—such as hitching posts, tents, and temporary lean-tos—that might be needed. Finally, with women and men separated, your gender even determined where you sat at some special functions, like wedding receptions and church services.

Aspects of accepted gender norms and expectations permeated the early years of the Long Pine Amusement Park. Before the Park even opened, promoters advertised the Park as a positive environment. Men could bring their mothers, sisters, wives, and sweethearts—representatives of moral standards—without the fear of the “delicate” females being hurt or offended. When the Park opened, the Plunge Bath house provided separate dressing rooms for men and for women. Like men, women also traveled distances to visit the Park. R.A. Hunt’s sisters, Anne Hunt and Gertrude Savage, for example, traveled from Aurora in southwestern Nebraska to bathe, camp, fish, and visit, vacationing at the Park for two weeks in 1911.

Male attitudes towards women were sometimes manifested through the writings of employees at *The Long Pine Journal*. In attempting to encourage all to attend the fraternal picnic to be held on Tuesday September 13th, 1910, a journalist pushed married men to bring their “mother-in-law and her knitted and give her a chance to talk herself hoarse and lengthen the lives of the whole family.” Young men, enjoying an opportunity to be with their sweetheart, were meant to buck up and let the sweetheart’s (seemingly unattractive) “red-headed sister” tag along. The writer even disclosed distaste for modern
women’s fashions by advertising that a prize at the picnic would go to the “prettiest girl wearing real hair.”

Contests at the September 1910 fraternal picnic at the Long Pine Amusement Park involved gender distinctions. Large scale agricultural goods like spring wheat, traditionally produced by males, and smaller scale garden goods such as onions, traditionally produced by females, were highly valued. In fact, the highest value prize—$2.50 cash and 250 envelopes—went to the largest head of cabbage, a crop conventionally produced in a woman’s house garden. Prizes in other competitions often reflected societal values of gender identities regarding the demographic participating in an event. Boys’ competitions had cash, sporting, and shaving prizes. Girls’ competitions had clothing and food prizes. Women could earn a skirt, petticoat, or flour. Gender distinctions were sometimes blurred. Women’s competitions also involved contests—such as nail driving, wood sawing, and ball throwing— that required skills that were atypical of the Victorian female, creating a spectacle with women engaging in activities that society viewed as men’s work.

In the early years of the Long Pine Amusement Park, the Park’s management arranged a spectacle that forced the Park’s baseball team to transgress their gender and ethnicity norms. The all male Park baseball team would have to play the all female Hopkins team. As if this wasn’t enough, the Amusement Park’s Team’s players that weighted 160 pounds or less then wrestled world famous Greek champion wrestler Gus Pappas.

Gender was perhaps one of the most visible of attributes and dominant of themes that intersected with The Long Pine Amusement Park in the 1910s. Representative of the
times and culture, men were the ones most often in public leadership positions. Though it changed hands, all of the people who were ever part of the Park Management were male. All politicians who visited were men. All the members of the Northwest Nebraska Medical Association and the Elkhorn Valley Editors Association who came to the Park for their conferences were male. The females who did come to the Park that were linked to the organizations were often the relatives and close friends of the association members. These beings of the “weaker” sex took part in refined activities. While the men attended the conference, many prominent women of Long Pine entertained the wives, daughters, and other female relatives of the Society members, such as by throwing a lawn party on the Northwestern Hotel’s grounds.

Nearly the only time that females were in leadership positions at the Long Pine Amusement Park was when they were part of an entertainment act or leading an organizational get-together. Since they played for numerous dances at the Pavilion in the early 1910s, the three Cotterrill sisters were practically fixtures at the Park. Because the management booked the Orchestra for the entire season in 1913, the sisters’ mother even stayed much of the summer uptown and at the Park. Due to the popularity of dancing, a camper from Council Bluffs, Mary Aid, organized a temporary dance class that same year.

When women gathered at the Park, it usually was for a social occasion. Groups of young, single women frequently had get-togethers, like “picnic parties,” to enjoy one another’s company. On a Tuesday night in July 1912, for example, a group of young ladies staying at Seven Oaks had friends over for an evening of cards, light refreshments, and visiting on Evans Flat. While camping, young Jesse Brady received a postcard
shower from her many gentlemen friends at Atkinson. Many women hosted club meetings at the Park. In 1914 Mins VanMeter hosted the local chapter of the women’s Kensington Klatter Klub (KKK). Gathered under the shade of the trees, the women enjoyed visiting, listening to music, doing their needle work, and drinking refreshments. Later that summer, in September, the wife of one of the Park managers, Mrs. Carl Petijohn, hosted the Friends in Council club at her Park home before taking them to eat out at the Park Café.

When the issue of serving alcohol at the Park arose, many fought against the possibility, using common temperance arguments. They blamed intoxicating spirits for ruined the emotional and financial ties of families. Women were frequently strong proponents of prohibition. They argued that their families were negatively affected by the time that their male relatives spent away from home. The family’s financial resources and the community’s status were threatened by men squandering their money away on alcohol, funds that would never benefit the family or community.

Indeed the activities of women and men at the Long Pine Amusement Park in the 1910s reflect the dominant Victorian culture expectations of gender behavior and roles. Women strove to be and maintain their status as ladies; they engaged in refined activities that promoted social, cultural, religious, and class betterment. Females took on domestic, private roles. Even the expectations and behavior of older children were dictated by social gender regulations. Preteen, adolescent, and young adult females could usually be found indoors, where they entertained and were entertained. If women were outside, they were most frequently just relaxing in the shade.
Males were more often in the public limelight and were expected to be engaged in rambunctious outdoor recreation. The Park’s natural environment was deemed by many as a nearly perfect location for fostering the rugged development of masculinity. The Methodist Reverend from Bassett, M.C. Smith, brought his troop of Boy Scouts to the Park in the late summer of 1915. Engaging in outdoor sports such as fishing and baseball strengthened the masculine identity.

Society had high expectations of what it deemed to be appropriate masculine identity. To be a man, one had to possess and exhibit an intricate combination of outstanding characteristics. You not only had to be a rugged, athletically skilled, strong, loyal, and protective brute, but you also must be a refined, polite gentleman. For example, when the Chadron baseball team visited the Park in 1915, people expected the players to be great specimens of masculine ability and strength as well as respectable members of society. And they were not disappointed.

CLASS

When it came to traveling shows, only rural Nebraskans of a certain class could patronize a production. You had to have enough free time and money to attend a performance. But some entertainers attempted to increase their appeal by advertising its entourage as one that only high social classes could and did attend. The Old Reliable Virginia Minstrels, with real “Negroes,” not blackface, performing vaudeville, advertised itself as high class entertainment.

Walter and Mabel of the Walter Savidge Amusement Company certainly must have been of certain means in order to be able to eventually produce their profitable
company. Though he may not have been a rich farmer growing up, Walter could accumulate finances. At least since he was sixteen, he had been making money on his own as a performer and had enough to go into business with his brother by the time he was twenty. In his early twenties, he’d saved enough to attend college.

Though she too probably had belonged to a rich, high class family growing up, Mabel’s family might have been better off than Walter’s. Mabel’s parents had enough resources to farm, raise six children, own several horses, and provide her with piano classes. They could give Mabel the schooling that was befitting a young, cultured Victorian lady. After high school, Mabel took a teaching course at the Nebraska Normal College in Wayne and trained in piano instruction. With such resources, Mabel was then able to maintain a relatively significant class level on her own. Her education, skill, marital status, and money enabled her to attend and teach at the Boston’s New England Conservatory of Music, create and sell oil landscape paintings, and teach at the Nebraska Normal School.

In the 1910s, people’s class was inextricably intertwined with their presence at the Long Pine Amusement Park. Unless you lived nearby and walked, rode your horse, or took your buggy to the Park, you had to have a certain amount of money to come to the Park. People who traveled by train were of a certain class. Undoubtedly, those who came to the area by way of their own automobile were of the middle or upper class. The working class generally did not have the luxury of extra time and money to spend numerous days, weeks, or months renting a cabin and/or vacationing at the Park. Neither did they have the resources to build a summer cottage there.
But the Park was not only for the middle and upper classes. Chautauquas, dances, and regular attractions were fairly inexpensive to get into. Fishing and swimming in the creek cost near to nothing. Concerts were sometimes free, as well as were most 4th of July festivities.

Nevertheless, the Park was most often frequented by people in the middle and upper classes. Because it meant more visitors and more money, the Park management frequently tried to build up an area and hold events that would attract people who were well off. The Company got Governor John Morehead to come in 1914. In 1916, A.L. Sutton, a republican nominee for governor, made reservations for a cottage for two weeks in July. At the 1916 July 4th festivities, the Company was able to persuade the mayor of Omaha, James C. Dahlman, to celebrate Independence Day with them. In 1917 they brought in the Cecbildon Trio, a high class string music group whose specialty was Hawai’ian music. Furthermore, organizations, associations, and clubs frequently met at the Park. A group of doctors was so impressed with the place that, in 1914, they created the Northwest Nebraska Medical Society Association. They liked the location so much that, along with the Elkhorn Valley Editors Association, the Medical Society built a convention hall there to house their regular meetings.

AGE

Because there were different kinds of traveling shows, the entertainment appealed to all ages. Though some shows, such as theatrical plays, were meant for adult audiences, they often still kept their material fairly g-rated. Because Walter Savidge kept his business family friendly, people of all ages could enjoy the various entertainments of
the Walter Savidge Amusement Company. Some traveling shows catered directly to children and teenagers. The Children’s Chautauqua, for instance, focused on developing youth’s moral, spiritual, mental, and physical health.

Likewise, people of all ages could be found as entertainers in traveling shows. The Ed Plunkett family, children and all, of Dickens, had a small orchestra that showed in numerous places, playing, singing, and performing in dramas. The White Horse Ranch of rural Naper sent its White Horse Troupe, made up of skilled teenagers and trained horses, all over the U.S. and southern Canada. Employees of the Walter Savidge Amusement Company frequently allowed their children to be performers with the business.

Some children found a few types of traveling shows especially alluring. Enticed by the adventure, excitement, and romanticism of traveling shows, youngsters dreamed about running away with the circus. Some even did. Walter Savidge’s love for the traveling show business began when, at the age of twelve, he went to a Ringling Brothers Circus in Humphrey. At sixteen, he left home and worked as a hired-out tight rope walker. Occasionally, teenagers asked their parents permission to join a traveling show like the Walter Savidge Amusement Company. Occasionally one parent, or both, would give his or her permission for his or her child to join. We don’t know, however, if Walter ever did hire such children.

Although it was not always evident, factors of people’s age were manifested in the Long Pine Amusement Park. At sport contests open to public participation, such as those at the Park’s 4th of July celebrations, there often were competitions designated for
certain ages. At the 1912 events, for instance, among others, there was a racing contest for men as well as one for girls aged twelve years and younger.

If your age or physical condition caused you to be tired, you could simply enjoy the peace, coolness, and relaxation that the nature of the Park offered. In fact, when the Long Pine Amusement Park was started in 1910, one of its major selling points was that it was a natural, peaceful spot that improved health. The abundant sunshine as well as the shade, pure air, and fresh spring waters might benefit anyone. By 1914, for example, many visitors spent time at the Park recuperating after a surgery. A visiting doctor was so impressed with the physical environment’s potential to improve the health of all ages that he looked into the possibility of building a sanitarium to open for the 1915 season. Records do not exist, however, to prove whether or not the health resort was ever constructed.

NATIONALITY

A product of its time, The Walter Savidge Amusement Company upheld and championed the ideals of Victorian America. The traveling show contained entertainments that especially appealed to working and middle class Christian European Americans. The Company strove to be family friendly. Walter employed only married heterosexual employees who lived clean moral lives, both in private and in public. He encouraged couples to bring their children on the road along and even employed some of the kids as young entertainers. To demonstrate how family friendly the Company was, Mabel and Walter brought their own child, Walter Jr., along with them while traveling the circuit, introducing him to show business when he was merely three weeks old.
Aspects of nationality likewise intersected with the Long Pine Amusement Park. Chautauquas were characteristically pro-American. At the 1912 chautauqua, for instance, J. Eversist Catchell gave a talk on the attributes of Abraham Lincoln. The Park’s celebration of the nation’s birthday was quite possibly the biggest event drawing the most people in any given year. Activities often had a patriotic flair. Fireworks were displayed, prominent citizens and judges gave nationalistic speeches, and eloquent locals gave oratorical readings of patriotic documents such as the Declaration of Independence. The Park’s management recognized that baseball was quickly becoming the nation’s favorite pastime. They organized a Park Team, built a baseball diamond, brought in teams, and sponsored competitions, some of which were days-long championship extravaganzas. When it came to the temperance movement, nationality and ethnicity were deeply connected with alcohol. Drinking grain-fermented beverages had long been an inseparable part of ethnic cultures of some nationalities, like German-Americans, that lived in rural Nebraska.

Nationalism took center stage in 1917 and 1918. During the buildup to the U.S.’s entrance into the Great War, nearly anything that was not part of the hegemonic American culture was deemed unpatriotic. Since alcohol was characteristically part of the German culture, it seemed almost anti-American to consume fermented beverages. In 1917, when the U.S. entered the war, temperance proponents could even more strongly argue that using grain for alcohol, instead of for feeding the nation’s soldiers, was a despicable waste of resources.

The tone quickly changed in Long Pine and at the Park. The pages of *The Long Pine Journal* were filled with advertisements and articles concerning the war. Dances
and concerts were held at the Park, but people’s focus had changed. With a war going on and many of the local “boys” enlisting, it almost seemed wickedly frivolous to spend your leisure time engaged in entertainment. Attendance at the Elkhorn Valley Editorial and Northwestern Nebraska Medical Society associations meetings was down. The Park attempted to demonstrate how citizens could be patriotic while still enjoying themselves at the Park. The management hosted concerts featuring patriotic songs and dances with proceeds that went to the Red Cross.

Despite the hard times, one mainstay of the Long Pine Amusement Park did not change. The 1917 July 4th celebration was perhaps the most extravagant and well attended one that the Park had ever hosted. The festivities included all the classic Long Pine Amusement Park Independence Day activities, including band concerts, patriotic speeches, picnics, baseball games, athletic contests, dances, swimming at the Plunge, and fireworks. By 1918, the Great War had taken a toll on local citizens’ time, money, and attention. The Long Pine Amusement Park hosted fewer events and realized a smaller number of visitors than in years’ past.

RELIGION

Traveling show groups often took pains to advertise their shows as morally pure and family friendly, promoting conservative, rural, Christian values. The Brown’s Tennessee Minstrels advertised itself as “the show that is free from anything unclean.” Wanda Revere and her Broadway cast that performed “Lena Rivers” was considered to be a show “without a prurient or suggestive line” and was hailed by The Chicago Tribune as “a pure play that [would] live forever.”
The chautauqua was one of the main traveling shows that addressed people’s fears of a declining moral Christian culture. Starting in Chautauqua, New York in the late 19th century, the chautauqua movement focused on strengthening rural people’s Christian moral and spiritual improvement. Made up of a wide variety of entertainers, often from the east, chautauquas were a group of entertainers who traveled to rural areas throughout the country promoting Americanization, Victorian American style. The several-days-long event featured a variety of events, including Christian sermons.

Possibly one of the reasons for the success of the Walter Savidge Amusement Company was that Walter kept his scruples, holding his employees to his high standards. The Company strove to keep its business morally pure for a general audience. Supposedly Walter immediately fined and fired any workers who gambled, swore, or smoked. In the area that it frequented, the business earned the reputation of being “the cleanest show in America,” with people calling it “The Sunday School Amusement Company.”

Without a doubt, Christianity was the dominant religion practiced by people living near and visiting the Long Pine Amusement Park. Although there was a significant component of the area’s population who were Catholic, most religious activities and events that took place at the Park were associated with various Protestant denominations. In 1915, Protestant Christians visiting the area could attend the Sunday morning Episcopal Church service at the Pavilion. Area Sunday School teachers frequently brought their classes for picnics and recreation. On a Thursday in early August of 1911, nearly 200 people attended Ainsworth’s Congregational and Methodist Sunday School annual picnic at the Park. Most traveled the nine miles to the east by the
morning train; others came by buggy and automobile. The day was spent enjoying a basket lunch, friends, and all the attractions that the place had to offer. Two years later, in 1913, the Sunday School classes of the Ainsworth Congregational Church again held their annual picnic at the Park.

Characteristically Christian, chautauquas were often held, beginning in 1912, at the Park. Many of the lectures and activities focused on religious themes and spiritual improvement. Since chautauquas often occurred over the weekends, Long Pine churches, like the Congregational Church, frequently organized joint Sunday morning services at the Park. If you were coming to the Park for the worship service, you didn’t have to pay the traditional chautauqua entrance fee. Sunday afternoon and evenings during the chautauqua were filled with Christian themed-events, such as sermons, vesper services, and concerts featuring songs with religious lyrics.

When the Great War began, it became nearly unchristian to engage in entertainment. Instead, all true Christians should be deeply engaged in prayer and devoted to the war effort. The district administration of Long Pine’s Methodist Evangelical Church, for instance, implored all the district’s churches to cease all unnecessary festivities and instead pray.

People living in and visiting rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had a variety of ways to spend their free time. You could participate in any number of everyday leisure activities. You might enjoy all the attractions that traveling shows had to offer. Maybe you were a German Russian Mennonite living near Henderson who,
therefore, had a unique combination of entertainment options. Perhaps you took pleasure in the many recreations that amusement parks had to offer.

Some of the modes of entertainment that were prominent in rural Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as The Walter Savidge Amusement Company, have long since disappeared. Yet many remain. People living in and visiting rural areas still, for instance, visit, attend fairs, and go to the movies and traveling carnivals. German Russian Mennonite descendents frequently perpetuate their culture’s entertaining customs. The former Long Pine Amusement Park, now known as Hidden Paradise, remains a popular summer recreation area. What the future holds for entertainment options for people in rural Nebraska depends upon a variety of factors, such as economic situations, population demands, and technological changes. No doubt some leisure activities will endure, while others will fade. The future is always uncertain. Yet, what does seem clear is that, no matter what the place or time, entertainment activities will mirror broader contexts of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, nationality, and religion.
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