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Review of The Complete Roadside Guide to Nebraska

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Thornton, Rosemary, "Review of The Complete Roadside Guide to Nebraska" (1991). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 606.

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The Complete Roadside Guide to Nebraska. By Alan Boye. St. Johnsbury, Vermont: Saltillo Press, 1989. Illustrations, preface, map, bibliography, index. ix + 370 pp. \$11.95.

Alan Boye's guide is complete in ways that Nebraskans and others who travel in Nebraska would find useful and interesting. I read with a map in one hand and felt a recurring urge to get on the road and verify the existence of these places. Being a native Nebraskan, I have visited, camped upon, canoed down, or hiked across much of Nebraska. Boye describes all the familiar places as I remember them and summarizes their history. The heart of the book is found in the historical trivia, however, the human interest anecdotes about local people from little known places. There is Susan Hill, who died of poisoned water along the Oregon Trail near Kenesaw. Her husband built her coffin from the lumber of his wagon, then walked back to Omaha for a stone marker that he hauled 160 miles to the site in a wheelbarrow. Boye relates story after story involving travelers on the Oregon Trail, always pin-pointing where the ruts are still visible.

Although the book is packed with historical data about Nebraska places and people, its value as a highway guide is evident. The guide is designed "so that a person may start using it from any point on nearly any highway in all of the state's 93 counties." Chapter titles are highway numbers, arranged in east to west, south

to north order, with highway labels repeated at the top of every page. One can find a particular road by either flipping the pages or checking the contents.

Boye's prose is spare and unpolished, but he often achieves eloquence with terse, understated accounts of unusual events, such as the story of the missing Haumann girls in Thedford, or the great prairie fire of 1 April 1893.

One surprise in the book is the large number of museums maintained by local citizens in countless villages, towns, and counties of Nebraska. Also surprising are the numerous accounts of UFO sightings in Nebraska. Although the historical entries tend to become repetitive, the only real monotony is found on the Interstate where Boye repeats a paragraph telling about rest area sculptures nine times.

The book presents a true picture of Nebraska sights as well as correct information on roads and highways even though Boye's partiality to the Cornhusker state is obvious and often noted at the end of a chapter: "your last chance to get off the Interstate and still be in the fine state of Nebraska . . ." The author's impartiality is also notable in his treatment of history involving Indian battles and race riots. The book is "a good guide" as Wright Morris testifies in the Preface, and should encourage more travelers to both well-known and out-of-the-way places in Nebraska.

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