

Questers

Prairie Tales

Nebraska

FALL 2023 VOLUME 43



Inside this issue:

List of Officers, Committee Chairs & Chapter Presidents	2
State Executive Board News	3-4
Committee Members' News	5
Chapters' News	6-8
State Day 2023 Activities	9
Dedication of Future Site of New Sarpy Co Museum	10
Quester History	11-12
Int'l Convention Information	13
Calendar of events	14

Greetings Questers Questing!

What an honor and a privilege it is to serve as your State President once again!

I LOVE THE QUESTERS-----

*Its members-----*those that collect antiques and those that enjoy history; those that are leaders and those who enjoy the programs; those members in Nebraska and those in the other 33 States and 2 Canadian Provinces; and those that seek to “Preserve Our History for Future Generations.”

*Its purposes-----*educating members and the public in respect to historical objects, places, or events; supporting a scholarship and a fellowship in the field of historic preservation; fundraising for the preservation & restoration of artifacts, memorials, historical buildings.

*Its History-----*an amazing story over the past 79 years. In 1944, Bess Bardens shared an antique blue syrup pitcher with a group of Red Cross women which was the beginning of THE QUESTERS; in 1953 it was incorporated as a non-profit organization; in 1991 it became an International organization with chapters in Canada; at its peak in there were over 15,000 members.

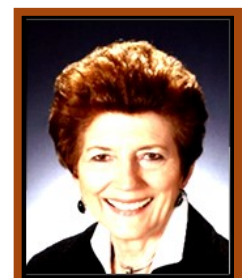
*Its Headquarters-----*a three-story red brick residence c.1802 acquired by THE QUESTERS in 1967 as headquarters, furnished with donated antiques including Bess Bardens’ tea caddies and a historic chair purported to be from Independence Hall.

I am hoping that you love THE QUESTERS as I do and will help to keep our members involved and attract new ones. Chapters benefit from new members that provide the energy, enthusiasm and fresh material which enhance chapter meetings; and they ensure the future of a chapter and the sustainability of the State’s organization. Do you have an answer when asked, “What’s a Quester?” or “Why would I become a Quester?” Answers will flow when you think back to how Questers has enriched your life through lifelong friendships, expanding your knowledge, fellowship with people of similar interests and opportunities for community service.

Many Questers are collectors just as Bess Bardens collected her tea caddies. It has been reported that “If you saw that twinkle in Bess’ bright eyes, you knew she had collected another Quester.” New members will put a twinkle in many an eye! Besides the benefit of adding to your chapter membership, remember that our State’s annual Membership Contest rewards \$100 for P&R to the chapter with the largest number of new members as reported on their International’s Membership and Dues Report.

I challenge you to follow Bess Bardens example and “collect Questers.” Do that by sharing your Love for THE QUESTERS!

Preserving our History for Future Generations!
Nebraska State President
Lorraine Jeffus
2023-2025



Prairie Tales newsletter is published twice a year by the Nebraska Questers. Receipt of this newsletter is a privilege of membership in The Questers of Nebraska. The Questers is a private, non-profit international organization incorporated in the state of Pennsylvania. The purposes of The Questers are to educate by research and study of antiques and to donate funds to the preservation and restoration of existing memorials, historical buildings and landmarks. The Editor reserves the right to edit all copy. Due to limited space; occasionally submissions must be shortened.

2023-2024 NE CHAPTER PRESIDENTS

- Corps of Discovery #1504** - Nancy Utman
Bellevue, NE
- Dome Rockers #1487** - Patricia Lind
Bayard, NE
- Forget-Me-Nots #620** - Nicolas Newman
Omaha, NE
- La Belle Vue #933** - Laurel Zielenski
Papillion, NE
- North Fork #902** - Carol Waggoner
Norfolk, NE
- Prairie Treasures #1018** - Sharon Martens
North Platte, NE
- River City Seekers #1331** - Patrice Pirsch
Omaha, NE
- Scott's Bluff #1346** - Betty Kenyon
Mitchell, NE

NEBRASKA STATE QUESTERS

2023-2024 STATE EXECUTIVE BOARD

- President** - Lorraine Jeffus
- First Vice President** -
- Second Vice President** - Vicki Schmidt
- Recording Secretary** -
- Treasurer** - Carol Waggoner
- Immediate Past President** - Doris Rush

2023-2024 STATE STANDING COMMITTEE

- Historian** - Judith Widmaier
- Newsletter Editor** - Barbara Gibbs
- Website Manager** - Barbara Gibbs
- Parliamentarian** - Gretchen Deter
- P & R** - Jared Schademann
- State Day Chair 2023** - Carol Waggoner

Questers Business Headquarters

Email:
questers210@questers1944.org

The Questers Website

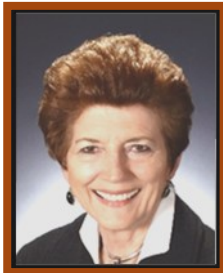
www.questers1944.org

Nebraska Questers Website

www.nebraskaquesters.org

State Executive Board News

State President
LORRAINE JEFFUS



Our Spring Council included the installation of new officers on the Board for a two-year term in fiscal years 2023-25. Installed were President Lorraine Jeffus of La Belle Vue #933, Treasurer Carol Waggoner of North Fork #902, Corresponding Secretary Gretchen Deter of Scotts Bluff #1346. 2nd Vice President Vicki Schmidt of Dome Rockers #1487 has one more year to serve. This is a list of our elected officers. Currently, our State Board is missing a Recording Secretary and a Vice-President. As in many organizations, the NE State Questers needs members who volunteer to serve. A position on the Board does not require a significant time or travel commitment. Two board meetings, plus our Spring Council meeting, have been conducted via ZOOM or conference call. The annual State Day held in the Fall is educational and fun. It is one meeting that is important to be in person. Thank you to Doris Rush, our dedicated retiring President. I appreciate your valued advice and participation as you are able. Thanks also to retiring expert writer and Past President Laurel Zielinski and dedicated P&R chair Jan Van Newkirk. Our remaining chairs are the fantastic Prairie Tales editor and Webmaster Barb Gibbs, Historian Judi Widmaier, conscientious Parliamentarian Gretchen Deter, and 2023 State Day Chair Carol Waggoner holding two positions. The new P&R Chair is Jared Schademann of Forget-Me-Nots #620. He is the one new individual on the State Board. You may remember him as one of the historic newspaper carriers in the invitation to the 2019 State Day. We have a dedicated board and would like you to consider joining us. For more information, please call me (402) 733-2642.

State
Second Vice President
VICKI SCHMIDT



By the time you read this Fall will be here and as I think back to last Fall and the beautiful days that came with it reminds me to count my blessings. Right now, I think in terms of "before cancer" and "after cancer." For those who have gone through cancer maybe you understand what I am referring to. I just finished my last chemo treatment

and will now be on an immunotherapy drug for the next two years. One of the blessings I can count on is my Quester friends who have kept me in their thoughts and prayers. I hope to be able to get back to all the fun and interesting things we Questers love.

Please send your chapter yearbooks to me or give them to someone in the Dome Rockers chapter on State Day if I am unable to attend.

As you walk through the falling leaves remember each leaf is waving goodbye to summer.

State Day Chair
CAROL WAGGONER

Chapter presidents, we are assuming you will be attending along with members from your Chapter. Everything is on one level. To break even with costs, we must have thirty-five registrations. We have eleven in our chapter. Other than that, we have found some people who want to attend the event. It would be ridiculous for our chapter to organize this event for just our chapter and area people who are interested in attending. Please promote this event, promote membership. That is the **ONLY WAY** we will increase our attendance and solve our officer problem. We must have money and attendance count by **September 26th**. Many of you will have only one meeting before October 14.

Mail registrations on enclosed form to: Carol Waggoner, 1606 Bel Air Rd., Norfolk, NE 68701

North Fork sent all Chapter Presidents invitations via US Mail on August 4. Each invitation had two inserts to share with your members. One insert listed details of the plans for State Day and the Friday evening reception at the Elkhorn Valley Museum. The other insert was for your Treasurer to return the names of attendees and the money for the registration of each person attending.

Questions? Call -Carol – 402-371-7642 or 402-640-2014 Email - crwaggoner@icloud.com

To date, we have heard nothing from any chapter as to attendance. We must have responses back on or preferably before September 26th. As a host chapter we have everything planned and ready to move forward. We have spent only money on the mailings. If people are not attending, we will not move forward. We are literally going to "put State Day together" in 2 1/2 weeks. We also must have a minimum of thirty-five registrations. **PLEASE help us** by being prompt, or early. Call each member if necessary. It will be an awesome State Day!

NEBRASKA STATE QUESTERS FINANCIAL STATEMENT

June 1, 2022, through May 31, 2023

BEGINNING BANK BALANCE – June 1, 2022.....\$ 9,507.54

Income: P & R Donations

7/27/2022 – Corps of Discovery #1504(memorials)	\$ 200.00
9/26/2022 – Scotts Bluff #1346-\$250.00, Memorial-Jean Bradshaw-\$50.00	300.00
*10/18/2022 – State Day fundraiser, Corps of Discovery #1504	540.00
10/27/2022 – Corps of Discovery #1504 -excess funds from State Day	256.15
2/24/2023 – River City Seekers #1331	80.00
3/30/2023 – Corps of Discovery #1504	100.00
4/6/2023 – La Belle Vue #933	<u>170.00</u>

Income for P & R **\$1,646.15**

Income: President’s Travel Fund donations

2/24/2023 – Pres. Travel Fund – River City Seekers #1331	8.00
3/30/2023 – Pres. Travel Fund – Corps of Discover #1504	9.00
4/6/2023 – La Belle Vue #933	<u>14.00</u>

Income for Pres. Travel **31.00**

Income: General Fund

3/30/2023 – Int'l Dues received from chapters 36 members X \$45	1,620.00
4/6/2023 – Int'l Dues received from chapters 65 members X \$45	<u>2,925.00</u>

Total Dues Received **4,545.00**

*10/18/2022 – Corps’s \$640 check included returned State Day seed 100.00 **100.00**

Income Total for General Fund **\$6,322.15**

Expenses: General Fund

6/2/2022 – Website-Weebly two-year renewal	\$ 216.00
10/8/2022 – La Belle Vue 933 – Membership contest	100.00
11/1/2022 – North Fork 902 – 2023 State Day seed money for host	200.00
4/6/2023 -- THE QUESTERS-Dues paid for 101 members X \$35	3,535.00
4/25/2023 -- THE QUESTERS: P&R Fund \$50, Scholarship Fund \$50, Fellowship Fund \$50, Educatioial Resources Fund \$50	<u>200.00</u>

General Fund Expenses **4,251.00**

Expenses: P & R Fund Grant awards

4/22/2023 – Scotts Bluff \$1,200; La Belle Vue \$1,800;
Forget-Me-Nots \$2,000

P & R Expenses **5,000.00**

Expenses: President’s Travel Fund

7/27/2022 – President Rush-Int’l Conv.

President’s Travel Expense **330.00**

Total Expenses for General Fund **9,581.00**

ENDING BANK ACCOUNT BALANCE – May 31, 2023.....\$6,248.69

BALANCES in Funds as of May 31, 2023

General Fund	\$ 5,792.50
P & R Fund (restricted).....	364.39
President’s Travel Fund (restricted).....	<u>91.80</u>

TOTAL of FUNDS **\$ 6,248.69**

Lorraine Jeffus
NE State Questers Treasurer

Committee Members News

State Historian
JUDITH WIDMAIER



The Executive Board and the Committee Members have spent considerable time discussing possible options for storing the scrapbook files that we all have created and displayed at State Day Conventions. We have several large Rubber Maid type tubs full of scrapbooks. Each time we welcome a new State Historian to the Committee, all those boxes of records need moved and stored in a convenient place for him/her. We now have a stack of boxes big enough to fill a good-sized room. Not only is the storage unreasonable, but transporting all of it is nearly impossible in an average car.

Please put on your thinking caps and help us find a way to reduce these files to a size we don't need Superman's help to move.

Nebraska Webmaster/
Prairie Tales Editor
BARBARA GIBBS



Our website, nebraskaquesters.org continues to operate seamlessly. I have updated the website for all item changes I have received to date. Please review items about yourself or your officers and chapter members. If you want to make further changes, Please let me know by email.

The Spring Prairie Tales was very well received. I appreciate your compliments, one and all. Prairie Tales belongs to all Nebraska Questers and I invite your participation. It is always fun to learn about the activities of other chapters. Please report changes in your chapter membership. I like to add a welcome message in Prairie Tales for all new members. Likewise it is important to acknowledge members who have passed. Try to send a copy of the obituary and a picture with the notice of those members who have passed.

Remember, due dates for contributing articles and pictures for publication are March 1 for the Spring edition that is published on April 1 and September 1 for the Autumn edition that is published on October 1.

State Parliamentarian
GRETCHEN DETER



“An aging group of rule followers”

As I look over our list of members in our chapter and around the state, I find that most of us want some semblance of order in our lives. That proves true with the groups we belong to. The problem is, as I see it, that when the words *By-Laws* or *Policies* come up our eyes glaze over and our minds shut down. Yes, we want structure but not too much structure and if we must have structure then we hope someone else will be our leader. I have been in Questers for 23 years and I am one of those gals that is getting old. I do not always want to work but I see no other way to keep Questers going and growing.

When we were all younger, we were willing to make the guidelines and take charge of seeing that Questers stayed intact. Now, many of us are old and tired. The good news is that we are all still Questers. Please, do not give up or give in. Just give of yourself what you can. We are all worth it.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR STATE P&R GRANT WINNERS

Congratulations to all three chapters completing 2023 State P&R Grant applications because \$5,000 of our State P&R Grant Fund permitted the awarding of the following grants that were announced during the Spring Council meeting on April 22, 2023:

----Scotts Bluff #1346 - \$1,200 grant for the “Preservation of Historical Documents and Textiles” project at the Legacy of the Plains Museum.

----La Belle Vue #933 - \$1,800 grant for the “History Matters: 1869 Railroad Depot” project at the Sarpy County Historical Museum.

----Forget-Me-Knots #620 - \$2,000 of the grant amount requested for the Bess Streeter Aldrich House Awning project.

Thank you, chapters and individuals who donated directly to the State P&R Fund and those donating items, for our fundraisers (antique sales and the basket raffles) which took place during State Day. Your donations have provided for wonderful projects within your communities.

Chapters' News

La Belle Vue #933 BELLEVUE

La Belle Vue #933 toured the "Mystical Mansion", a restored Historical Landmark in the Joslyn Castle district of Omaha. The tour of the 1910-built American Tudor styled house began on the comfortable front porch where the home's present owner, Kim Isherwood welcomed us. Kim did a wonderful job of taking our group



on a tour of the lovely home. During the tour, she discussed the ongoing restoration process and the journey she and her husband Ryan have been on to preserve the beauty and integrity of the



structure. The home was built by Ephraim Dixon who was the President of Orchard and Wilhelm. Orchard and Wilhelm was a high-end furniture and appliance store for decades on South 16th Street between Harney and Howard where the present OPPD headquarters is housed. The home is called the Mystical Mansion for as the fifth owners of the Gold Coast Mansion, Kim and Ryan have been uncovering its secrets. The Isherwoods have done most of the restoration themselves, while remaining faithful as possible to the original design by John L. Latenser, an early 20th century architect who did such Omaha projects as the Douglas County Courthouse and the Brandeis Building.

There are so many wonderful aspects of the house and its designs to notice, but a few outstanding ones will be mentioned. The grand foyer is so welcoming with its three-story winding stairway, high walnut-coffered ceilings, double-wide original lead-glass pocket doors, and perfectly preserved black and white mosaic floors. Kim told us that the floors were one of the secrets that they found while removing wool carpet circa 1938 from the floors. The second floor has an enclosed small porch. The master bedroom dressing room has a floor-to-ceiling built in wardrobe with several built-in cabinets. As this writer walked into the linen closet, I discovered a lost list of pencil markings logging the



heights and dates of the children who have grown up in the home. We were able to see all floors including the servant's quarters and all the six bathrooms of which many retain their original porcelain tiles and pedestal sinks. It was clear to all the Questers and their guests as we toured this remarkable home that the Isherwoods have not just restored this house, they have restored a treasure and this treasure is the place they call home. Kim says she and Ryan are "stewards" for this remarkable piece of history. Kim opens her home for special events, and we are so thankful she opened her home to La Belle Vue so that we could discover this Omaha treasure.

After touring the home, the group celebrated being together during the summer at a luncheon at La Mesa in Bellevue. The pictures show the group on the porch of the mansion, owner Kim Isherwood



standing by the Historic marker of the house, group standing on the staircase, and the dining room "safe," one of the treasures the Isherwoods discovered near the built-in buffet.

Submitted by
Laurel Zielinski



**Happy Autumn
Happy Questing !**

Dome Rockers #1427 GERING/SCOTTSSLUFF

In our own way each Quester member has a love for the history of people, places, and items all pertaining to our past.

In February, our State President Doris Rush held the meeting at her home. Her presentation on the history of bean pots was very special with the bean soup and homemade cornbread that she and her daughter Cindy Duncan made for us.

One of Dome Rocker's members, Vicki Schmidt, gave



this chapter the most moving program in March 2023 on the life of an ex-slave, Robert Anderson, who became one of the largest landowners in Box Butte County Nebraska. Vicki's love of history was a big part of why the program was so moving.



A friend of our chapter, Julie Morrow, held our April meeting at her Antique shop, Julie's Antiques, in Gering Nebraska. Julie has shown a love of history throughout our

acquaintances, but this meeting she shared the lady head vases in her program.

Dome Rockers finished out the year in May with a trip to Cheyenne, Wyoming. We viewed some of the older mansions and architecture, art shops, and of course, antique shops. Donna spied a head vase of Jacqueline Kennedy in one of the display cases that we all admired after listening to Julie's program in April.

This was another wonderful season of history of people, places, and items. I am so grateful for all the education, friendships and fun.

Submitted by
Virginia Clark

Memorials

Joan Cromer passed away on August 8, 2023. She was a member of Scotts Bluff #1346.

Joan O'Keefe passed away on August 31, 2023. She was a member of River City Seekers #1331 and she previously served as a Nebraska State President.

How the Landlocked State of Nebraska got its own Navy

In 1930, Nebraska Gov. Charles Bryan decided to take a little vacation, and while he was gone, he left Lt. Gov. T.W. Metcalfe in charge of the state. The power went straight to his head, and thus the Great Navy of the State of Nebraska was founded as a way for Metcalfe to appoint his friends as admirals. He did this even though — you might notice through the simple act of glancing at a map — Nebraska has absolutely no ocean access.

Despite the lack of necessity for standing maritime security forces, the Great Navy of the State of Nebraska continues. Those who have the title of admiral in the Nebraska Navy conferred upon them have absolutely no military authority whatsoever. The title is purely symbolic, like the Kentucky Colonels and the Rhode Island Commodores.

When appointed, admirals are given a certificate from the governor that reads, "And I do strictly charge and require all officers, seamen, tadpoles and goldfish under your command to be obedient to your orders as Admiral — and you are to observe and follow, from time to time, such directions as you shall receive, according to the rules and discipline of the Great Navy of the State of Nebraska."

"Many Nebraskans and visitors to our state have not heard of our Navy," the Nebraska Admirals Association wrote. "They have not heard of the waves of prairie schooners that at one time plied our plains under which lies our real wealth — Nebraska's under-ground sea."

Sounds corny, but what do you expect? It's Nebraska!

From an article by Sarah Sicard
Military Times



Welcome Back!!

**Lois Grasz
Prairie Treasures #1018
North Platte**

River City Seekers #1331

OMAHA

River City Seekers is looking forward to celebrating its 25th anniversary this year as a Chapter of Questers - so big doings are being planned. We are fortunate in that two founding members, Brenda Summerside and Mary Focht, are active in our Chapter along with a former State President, Joan O'Keefe, who just passed away on August 31, 2023. We are indebted to them for their leadership and guidance.

We had varied programs this year, including presentations on postcards, teapots from different countries, antique buttons, pyrography boxes and rhinestone Christmas trees. Our next meeting will be just as absorbing in that we will be learning about photographic union cases. You never know what will arise to pique our interest. We are also looking forward to State Day; and getting a group together to attend.

Submitted by
Patrice Pirsch

Corps of Discovery #1504

OMAHA

In May, Nancy and Roger Utman hosted a walking tour of the Prospect Hill Cemetery located at 3202 Parker Street in the Prospect Hill



neighborhood of North Omaha. Shannon Justice of History Walks LLC led the tour. Shannon did an excellent and entertaining tour. This cemetery is believed to be the oldest pioneer

cemetery in Omaha. This public cemetery was established in 1856 and is presently owned by the Prospect Hill Cemetery Historical Site Development Foundation. It is 13.84 acres of land and is the resting place for over 15,000 citizens. Its founder was Byron Reed, an early Omaha real estate developer and financier. Among the many prominent pioneer families, interred at Prospect Hill, there are also monuments to Spanish-American War veterans and the gravesite of at least one Buffalo Soldier, Sergeant Allen Mc Clare.



Ms. Justice imparted many interesting stories about such notable internments as Dan Allen gambler and businessman, and the many Mayors of Omaha and other Nebraska Statesmen whose

gravesites are in Prospect Hills. Among the many things she pointed out was a special section of soldiers from Fort Omaha and the graves for at least 360 early African American Omahans. The cemetery was designated as a local landmark in 1979. After the tour, the members enjoyed food and fellowship at a local restaurant in the area.

In June, Bob and Lorraine Jeffus welcomed fellow members and guests to their lovely Georgian Revival Style home, Oakleigh, in Bellevue. Lorraine presented an interesting program on the restoration and preservation process of the home. The house was originally built by the Wilkerson family in 1920 and the two hundred acres of land was used as a sheep farm. In 1970, the home and seven acres of land were sold to the Wolfe family; in 1995, Bob and Lorraine purchased the home and 2 1/2 acres. Bob Perrin was the architect for the project which included a large addition of a kitchen and master bedroom suite. Lorraine explained the restoration process, some of which was the removing of the 1960's wallpaper, stripping oak fixtures such as crown moldings, baseboards, and doors. The removal of carpet and linoleum as well as ceramic tile uncovered beautiful oak floors. Many Georgian Revival design elements were utilized when the structure was built such as two stories, an all-brick structure in a rectangular shape and façade. The Corps enjoyed our tour and learned a great deal about what it took to make Oakleigh a home that is welcoming but also touches the past with grace.

In July, Chalice and Ben Harvey hosted. Ben gave a presentation of his recent trip to Norway. Ben presented photographs taken on his journey and concentrated his program on Operation Gunnerside: The Norwegian Attack on Heavy Water that deprived the Nazis of the Atomic Bomb. This heavy water production was taking place in a remote Vermork, Telemark in Rjukan Norway. Norsk Hydro began producing heavy water in 1934, and Norway became the first country with a commercial heavy-water plant.

The Nazi invasion of Norway in 1940 transferred control of the plant –and most of the world's heavy water to Germany. Ben gave a glimpse into Operation Gunnerside and the brave Norwegian Commandos who conducted with success, one of the most dramatic and important military missions of World II. An earlier attempt at the same mission by British soldiers had been a complete failure with the survivors being captured, tortured, and executed. The successful mission put the German nuclear science months behind and allowed the United States to overtake the German quests to produce the Atomic Bomb.

Submitted by
Laurel Zielinski

October 14, 2023

For What:

Nebraska Questers State Day



Where: St. John's Lutheran Church

1300 W. Benjamin, Norfolk, NE

Building is one level and has handicap and senior parking

Host: North Fork Questers #902

Cost: \$35.00 non refundable, Paid by Sep. 26th

Theme: "Pieces of the Past"

Time: 8:30am-2:30pm

There will be a variety of presentations with examples and Handouts – example – whisk brooms, mourning jewelry, music, P&R fundraiser, etc.

Something for everyone.

Friday evening, October 13, a reception at

Elkhorn Valley Museum

Time 7pm-8:30pm



We will have a wonderful time, learn some, eat well, and just ENJOY!!!!

Inquiries call Carol Waggoner 402-371-7642 or 402-640-2014

Chapter presidents: North Fork is needing a count of how many will be coming from your chapter. PLEASE send that to me ASAP. I know it is early but money is tight for this event. We are needing to plan.

Carol Waggoner- email number to crwaggoner@icloud.com



Combined Corps and La Belle Vue Questers Chapters Left to right Bob and Lorraine Jeffus, Millie Miller, Laurel Zielinski, Nancy Utman, back Ann Moore, Bob Zielinski, Roger Utman, Friz Miller

Dedication of the Future Site of the Sarpy County Museum

Corps of Discovery #1504 and La Belle Vue #933 Questers Chapter's members were present at the Sarpy County Museum Site Dedication on June 27th, 2023 at 4PM. This dedication celebrated the acquisition of land located at the Southwest corner of Hwy 370 and 90th Street in Papillion, NE. This land will serve as the future site of the museum. In addition to addressing the issue of vastly outgrowing the current museum located in Bellevue, NE., the new building will house the nationally renowned Wimmer Railroad Collection. The preeminent private railroad collection acquired by Bill and Judy Wimmer during Bill's 50-year career in the railroad industry is comprised of more than 10,000 unique



Rendering of Sarpy County Museum site plan

pieces of railroad history.

Community members and leaders gathered at the nearby Trinity Lutheran Church. Due to the windy conditions that prohibited meeting outside. Sarpy County Museum Executive Director Ben Justman (*Corps of Discovery #1504 Member) said: "I'm excited about what the future holds", It's a very important and special objective in the fastest growing county in Nebraska that we can set aside a parcel of land here to continue to tell the past and continue to tell the stories of the history being made, even today." Representatives from all five Sarpy County cities, as well as the county government, gave remarks and shared their excitement for the museum. Scott Wimmer, whose parents donated the Wimmer Railroad Collection, was among those who spoke. Wimmer stated that preserving the traditions and heritages that developed the county such as the impact of the railroad is important. Many thanks went out to the Wimmer family for the donation of this generous addition to the museum.

At the new site, the museum plans historical information and artifacts in five broad areas: the history of early residents, agriculture, transportation, the military, local communities, and as stated before, The Wimmer Railroad collection. The Questers and the museum have a long history of cooperation as La Belle Vue and Corps of Discovery have worked to get grants for the restoration of many artifacts.

Early on, La Belle Vue #933 helped to restore the Log Cabin built in the 1830's which hosted the first twins born in Nebraska Territory. Most recently the two Chapters have cooperated in obtaining a grant from the Nebraska State Questers for the restoration of the 1869 Omaha and Southern Railroad depot windows. The Depot is housed at the museum.

Submitted by Laurel Zielinski



La Belle Vue Sec/Treasurer Ann Moore, La Belle Vue President Laurel Zielinski, Ben Justman Director of the Sarpy County Museum, Corps of Discovery President Nancy Utman, Nebraska Questers State President Lorraine Jeffus present grant money to Ben Justman to pay for repairs to windows and doors of the oldest Depot in Nebraska. The Depot will remain on the museum property.

WHAT IS A QUESTER?



The year 1944 was full of misery for many people. Everyone was so weary of the War, and many had lost loved ones. Morale was slipping, and anything that would give it a boost was needed. This is what Jessie Elizabeth Bardens, who was a Red Cross production chairman living in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, had in mind when she asked a group of her co-workers to come to her home. They were to “bring an antique and a sandwich.” She had purchased a little blue syrup pitcher from a shop near work in October 1943. On her way to and from work, what would be more natural than to stop at an antique shop if you were passing by?

After showing this pitcher to her co-workers and discussing it, others stopped by her desk and more questions were asked with still more discussion following. This started a whole stream of small antiques being brought to work by her co-workers, just so Mrs. Bardens could give her opinion on them. This convinced her something was needed. So on April 6, 1944, she invited fourteen people to come to her home for more discussion and study. By the end of that year, there were 35 people meeting to learn more about antiques. At this time, most homes could not accommodate this many people, so Mrs. Bardens encouraged all those wanting to join to form their own study groups. Before long, there were five more groups. In March 1950, Mrs. Bardens organized these six groups into a national organization and in 1953 incorporated it under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a non-profit corporation. Mrs. Bardens was the first National Quester President, serving from 1950-1956.

The word soon spread, and inquiries came from all over the country about forming chapters, as well as how to affiliate existing antique clubs with this national organization. Mrs. Bardens personally went where she could to organize these groups, the rest she did by mail. She always made it a point to answer all questions. In 1954, she and her husband drove as far west as Iowa, organizing chapters as they went.

Mrs. Bardens had a large and choice collection of tea caddies that she was frequently asked to talk about. She gave a friend, the National President from 1964-1966, a sterling silver tea caddy. Years later, it was given to the Quester Headquarters in Philadelphia. The sterling tea caddy is part of Bess's tea caddy collection that is on display at headquarters.

Before Mrs. Bardens passed away on Christmas Day, 1963, she was able to attend the first National Quester Convention and see the Questers organization grow to 149 chapters located in 22 states. Now, there are around 500 chapters in 36 states and 2 Canadian provinces. With the addition of the Canadian chapters the questers earned the right to add “International” to their name in 1991. The organization promotes preservation and restoration of memorials, historical buildings and landmarks, and any money earned must be used for these purposes. The Questers is a non-profit organization.

International Bylaws and Policies along with State and Chapter policies govern The Questers. There are International, State/Provincial, and Chapter Officers who are elected by the membership. Any Quester who meets prescribed criteria can become an officer - individuals may be nominated for office from their credentials but primarily due to work done in their chapter and state/province.

The size of each chapter is governed by Chapter Policies, with a minimum of six members needed for a chapter to be chartered per International Bylaws. The number of members is often limited by the size of the members homes where meetings regularly occur. The Questers Bylaws and Policies do not require a minimum number of members to continue as a chapter.

When Mrs. Bardens was asked, “What is a Quester?” she gave this answer: “A Quester is a socially well-adjusted intelligent person who has curiosity, enthusiasm, imagination and a good memory. For the powers of the mind are memory and imagination, for without memory we have no past, without imagination, no future.” She also said, “A Quester spends time constructively, does research about the history of antiques and collects knowledge. Sooner or later the ‘Bug Bites’ and they have acquired a hobby and are a collector.”

ADDITIONAL HISTORY OF BESS BARDENS AND HER QUESTERS ORGANIZATION

1. Bess Bardens, founder of THE QUESTERS, invited 14 ladies to her home on April 6, 1944. That was the date of the first meeting.
2. In March 1950, she organized several Questers clubs into a National Organization.
3. The first Newsletter was printed in October 1951.
4. First Convention was at the William Penn Inn in Gwynedd, PA, in April 1952.
5. In February 1953, THE QUESTERS was incorporated as a non-profit organization.
6. Bess died Christmas day, 1963.
7. The first Canadian chapter was chartered on October 23, 1967.
8. Our HQ house was purchased on October 27, 1967.
9. Our Scholarship program started in 1973.
10. We finally started calling ourselves an International organization in 1990. (We had had several Canadian chapters starting in 1967!)
11. Our Fellowship program started in 1997.
12. Michigan was the first state to sign a charter as a State Organization.

Bess Bardens, our Founder, had started about 6 “clubs” when she got the idea of forming a national organization. The first one she formed in April 1944 was called Countryside, and Heritage was the 6th. She was a very organized person, and she had all her ducks in a row before going out to present her idea to the various clubs. She was so excited to “inform” everyone that they were now going to be a national organization and have a convention every year in a different state and the officers would be “required” to attend. She had done all the work. All they had to do was vote “yes.” It was shortly after the war, and many of them had young children and could not afford to travel to other states. She came across as a bull charging through a china shop and they were overwhelmed. When the vote came, they all voted NO. She was stunned. This was her own club, Countryside. She marched out, and they did not speak for ten years.

She went to club after club after club and they all voted NO until she reached the last one: Heritage. They voted to go with her, and that is how Heritage became Chapter #1 of THE QUESTERS. She quickly organized Chapter #2, Wissahickon as her own new chapter, followed by Tredyffrin #3. Heritage is still an active chapter, Wissahickon disbanded years ago, and Tredyffrin, unfortunately, disbanded in 2020 after celebrating 70 years.

Interestingly, Countryside Questers continued to meet on their own---not as part of Bess’s new Questers---until sometime after 2000. I interviewed Peg Dando who was one of the 14 original invitees. She had missed that first meeting because her daughter was sick. That daughter eventually joined Questers too. Peg went to live at a retirement home, and after Countryside quit meeting because there were only 2 left and the other lady either died or became too ill to continue, she finally joined Bess’s “new Questers” (a chapter that met at her retirement home). Three other original clubs eventually disbanded because I could not find a trace of the other original clubs except for one: Heirloom. They were still meeting (all by themselves) in 2009. I have not inquired to see if they are still meeting.

Little did Bess know that her little antiques club would eventually extend to 48 states and 2 Canadian provinces. The only states that have never had a Questers chapter are Vermont and Hawaii. We are now an International organization and we have donated over a million dollars for preserving and restoring historic homes and sites and artifacts in museums across two countries. We have helped students with scholarships and fellowships, and they have gone out in the world and accomplished so much in the field of preservation.

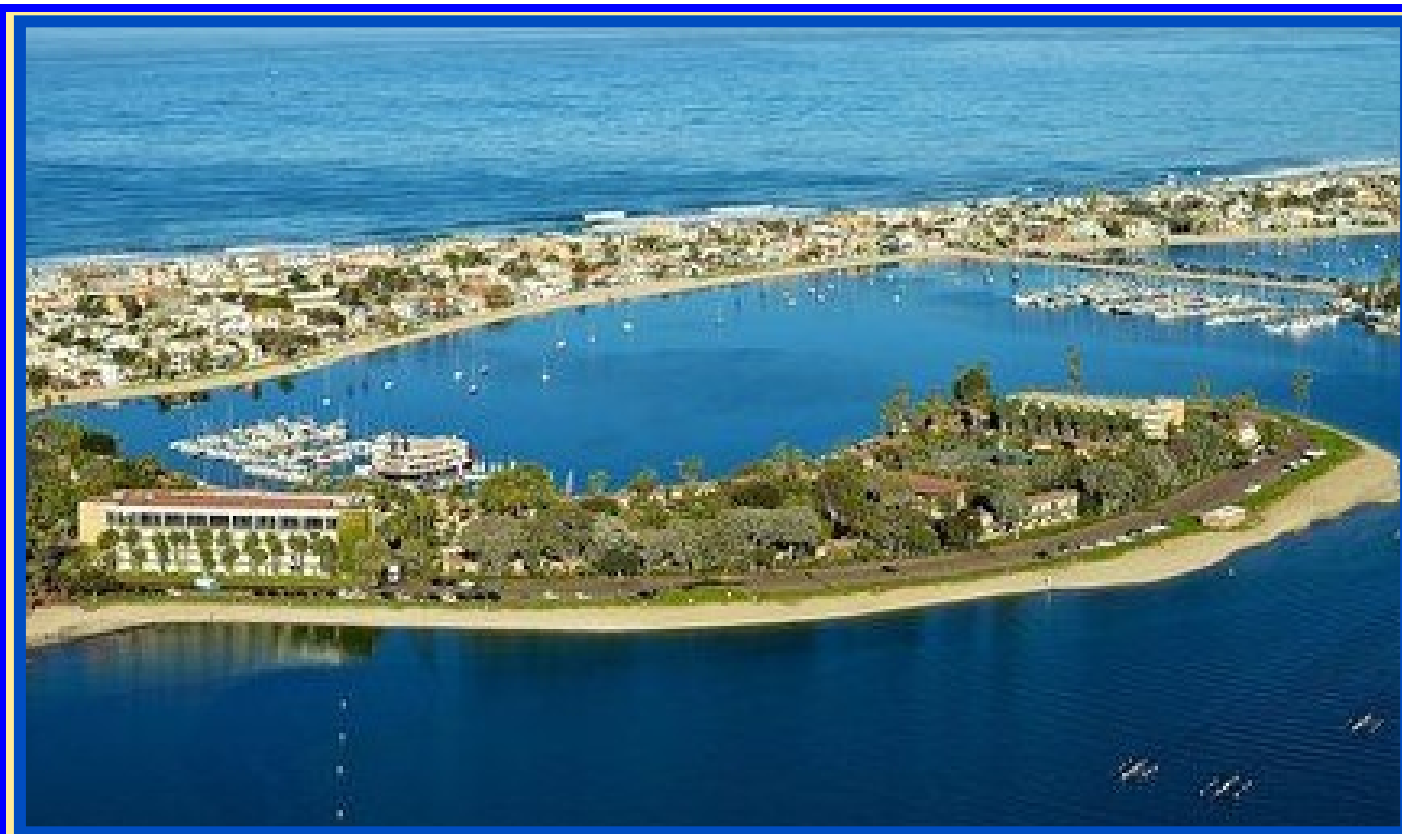
I think Bess’s dream has been realized and then some!!! I think she would be proud.

Pamela Todd
International President
2020-2021

See editor’s note page 13

Editor's note: The previous two articles on pages 11, and 12 are from Questers International History files and, they are relating items that every Quester should know. This knowledge will equip all of us with the information we need to present to all potential new members.

There are two more reports about Bess Bartens that will further round out our knowledge of The Questers and our esteemed founder. I have added links for those reports at the beginning of the list of links to Prairie Tales Newsletters on our website, www.nebraska.org. Select the Members Only page, then Newsletters, enter the password, then select Download, then save, print, and keep them handy for when you need to use them to encourage new membership.



2024 Questers International Convention

May 5-9, 2024 San Diego, CA

Plans are well underway for the 2024 Questers International Convention. We will be staying at the Bahia Resort Hotel, a family-owned bungalow style hotel built in the 1950s, located on Mission Bay. The hotel has many unique features including a sea lion pond, a stream that winds through the property, lots of white sand beach and landscaped outdoor spaces. The schedule will include many interesting tours and seminars highlighting the diverse culture and history of the area including a tour of the Hotel Del Coronado and Coronado Island, Old Town, Maritime Museum and USS Midway tour with lunch at Seaport Village, a Harbor Cruise, Historic and possibly haunted homes, Balboa Park National Historic Site and Cabrillo National Monument. And no visit would be complete without a tour of the First Spanish Mission built in America in 1769. Guest presenters will discuss the Native American, Spanish, Mexican and European heritage of the area during the convention too. Our Convention Theme is: "Making California Memories." Our Founder's Award topic this year will be: "The Legends of California." Good luck, hope someone from your state/province wins.

Nebraska Questers Calendar of Events 2023-2024

June 2023		July 2023		August 2023	
1	Questers fiscal year starts	15	Summer issue of <i>The Quester Quarterly</i> on Quester website, mailed, and mailed thru Mailchimp.	1	Information for Fall issue of The Quester Quarterly due
		15	Phone Conference 10:00 a.m. Central time Executive Board/ Committee Chairs Meeting	28	Chapters report to Carol Waggoner the names of those attending Oct.14th State Day.
September 2023		October 2023		November 2023	
1	Fall Prairie Tales info due to barbaralg2018@gmail.com	1	Fall Prairie Tales emailed and on NE Questers website	1	Deadline for recommendations for Int'l officers mailed to Int'l Nominating Chair
1	Due: 2 Chapter Yearbooks Mail to: Vicki Schmidt, 2421 3 rd Ave, Scottsbluff, NE 69361	1	Info due for Winter issue of The Questers Quarterly	1	Letter to Chapters inviting Nomination for NE State Board Offices will be sent
1	Fall issue of <i>The Quester Quarterly</i> , mailed, emailed, and on THE QUESTER website	13	NE Quester State Day reception Elkhorn Valley Museum, Norfolk, NE Time: 7pm-8:30 pm	15	Int'l P&R Grant 2024 Applications are due.
		14	State Day /Fall Council Meeting St. John's Lutheran Church 1300 W. Benjamin, Norfolk, NE 8:30 am-2:30 pm		
December 2023		January 2024		February 2024	
1	Winter issue of The Quester Quarterly mailed, emailed, and on THE QUESTER website. Issue has information about and registration forms for the 2024 Int'l Convention in San Diego, California	10	Nominations for State Officers due to Nominating Committee (Chapter endorsements required)	1-28	Chapters collect dues
		15	International Election Ballot mailed to Council Members	1	Voluntary donations for NE P&R fund & President's Travel fund due to NE State Treasurer
		15	Quester Headquarters mails Membership and Dues form to chapter treasurers	1	Ballot for election of State Officers mailed to NE Q Council members
				1	Articles due for Spring issue of The Quester Quarterly
				10	Executive Board/ Committee Chairs meet at 10 am CST on call
March 2024		April 2024		May 2024	
1-31	Chapters continue to collect dues	1	Spring Prairie Tales emailed & on NE Questers website	1	State Treasurer's deadline for Dues, 990's, etc. to Quester Headquarters
1	Spring Prairie Tales info due barbaralg2018@gmail.com	1	Chapter Treasurers send all dues to State Treasurer, Carol Waggoner, 1606 Bel Air Rd., Norfolk, NE 68701	1	2024 International Convention in San Diego, California
1	Postmark deadline for r "Founders Award" entries due to Headquarters			31	End of fiscal year!
10	Return of the State Election Ballot	20	NE State Questers Council meeting. Details TBA		
15	Postmark deadline for International Election Ballot				
15	Spring issue of The Quester Quarterly mailed, emailed, online				