

Historically Speaking

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The Pawnee

*Written by Julie Spilinek,
Historical Society Secretary*

I recently learned about a special award being given to the Pawnee Arts Center in Dannebrog. As a result, I decided to use this issue to learn about the life the Pawnee lived when they inhabited this area of Nebraska. A special invitation to the award presentation is also included. (See Page 3).

If you haven't been to the Pawnee Arts Center you need to do so. It features numerous items made in honor of the Pawnee. In addition to Gale Pemberton, who is mentioned on the "announcement", Peggy Lang and Robbie Snyder also volunteer at the Center, which has been open since 2010.



The Pawnee Arts Center is located in downtown Dannebrog, Nebraska.



The Pawnee Arts Center is packed with many authentic native and native-themed items.



Beautiful “dream catchers” are among the items on display and for sale at the Center.



106 South Mill Street
PO Box 14
Dannebrog, NE 68831

The Pawnee Arts Center is proud to announce being selected as one of the 2018 Governor's Arts Awards honorees. The biennial Governor's Arts Awards is Nebraska's premier event in recognizing individuals and organizations that shape our state's artistic landscape. The impact of the arts, and these honorees, is felt in the classroom, the economy, and the community. The Pawnee Arts Center has been selected for the Heritage Arts Category which is awarded to an individual, group, or organization that exemplifies authenticity and excellence within a cultural tradition.

The public is invited to share in the celebration of these honorees at an upcoming dinner and awards presentation, hosted by the Nebraska Arts Council and Nebraskans for the Arts. The ceremony, Cultivating a State of Creativity, will take place Tuesday, May 8, at Embassy Suites La Vista (12520 Westpoint Parkway). The evening will begin with a cash bar at 5:00 p.m., followed by dinner and the awards presentation at 6:00 p.m.

The Pawnee Arts Center is located on 106 South Mill Street in Dannebrog. We feature authentic native and native themed art for all pocketbooks. We also have a Heritage Center with educational and cultural items donated by generous supporters. The Center is a project of the Loup Basin RC&D, and as such donations are tax deductible. We are grateful to all of those whose generous donations allow us to continue to provide quality programs and exhibits. Donations can be made in person, by mail, or online at our website www.thepawneeartscenter.org.

The Center is open year-round at 4 p.m. every Thursday and by appointment.

www.thepawneeartscenter.org

For more information, contact Gale Pemberton

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A Message From the President *Kaye Tomlinson*

Hello! We hope that your spring is going well.

The days are getting longer and our weather is a little nicer and everyone has been busy at the Historical Society's new building. We are trying to get everything settled where it needs to be and trying to get all the other buildings dusted and refreshed for our May opening. It is all looking good and coming together.

We held our election and now have 10 board members. They are Roger Goettsche, Lynn Larson, Jessie Kiser, Kaye Tomlinson, Rose Ross, Marion Bahensky, Donita Anderson, Julie Spilinek, Joyce Ward, and Janet Hruza. From these board members Kaye Tomlinson was elected president, Jessie Kiser vice president, Julie Spilinek secretary, and Lynn Larson and Donita Anderson co-treasurers.

HCHS is hoping to open the buildings on Memorial Day weekend, May 26-27-28. We are serving cookies and coffee on May 27, with a Grand Opening for the new building.

Carl Huebner, Evelyn Dvorak, Roger VanPelt, and Jim Ross went off the board by their choice. They will all be missed. We are now a board of 10, instead of 14.

We are working on a sign for our new building. Also, anyone who donates \$100 or more will be listed on our donators' board. The donation has to be made to our new building.

We are having a grand church area and it is turning out very well; also an Indian area and all the different wars will each have their own space. A book room is also included, with many interesting books.

HCHS is trying its hardest to get everything accomplished. We invite you to come and visit the Historical Village — it is a fun place to be!

Love is such a small word, but has such a terrific meaning. We should all use love in our daily living. Love is contagious!

Until next time,

*Kaye Tomlinson, President
Howard County Historical Society*

Much of the following information is attributed to a book by Stuart A. Kallen entitled, "The Pawnee". Kallen collected much of his information from other sources. "Around AD 1200, the Pawnee became one of the first tribes to settle the Great Plains. They came north from their ancestral home in Mississippi and east Texas near the Gulf of Mexico. These wanderers settled along the banks of the Loup, Platte, and Republican Rivers in present-day Nebraska. The region was well suited to survival with fertile soil, abundant game, and life-giving rivers and lakes.

"The Pawnee of the plains were related to the Caddo, who originally lived in Mexico. The Pawnee name is believed to have come from the Caddoan word *pariki*, which means horn, based on the male Pawnee custom of rubbing buffalo fat and paint in the hair to make it stand erect like an animal's horn. The Pawnee called themselves *Chahiksichahiks*, meaning men of men. During their first centuries in the isolated Nebraska grasslands, the Pawnee had the land mostly to themselves. Without competition for resources or space, their numbers grew to more than 35,000. Gradually, the tribe separated into four bands, each living independent of the others, but sharing a common heritage. The Chaui, or Grand, lived near the Platte in Nebraska and the Arkansas River in Kansas. They were neighbors to the Pitahauerat or Tappage tribe that lived in the same region. The Kitkehahaki, or Republican band, lived on the Republican River in Nebraska, and the Skidi, or Wolf tribe spread out across the flat prairie or northern Nebraska with villages on the north fork of the Loup River.

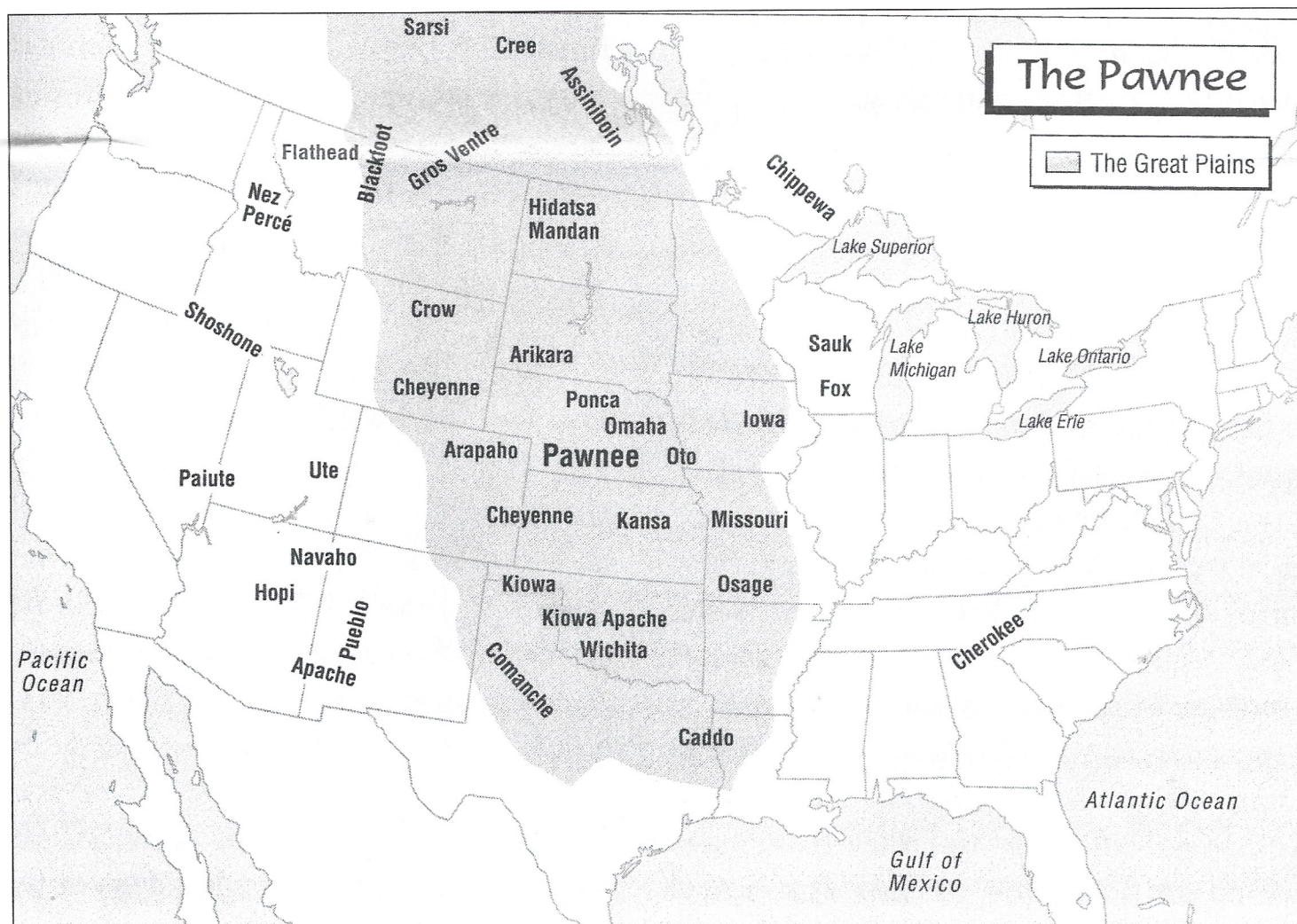
"The tribal bands did not remain isolated for long. The abundance of food and water that attracted the Pawnee to the region also brought nomadic tribes from elsewhere. By the eighteenth century there were more than 32 tribes on the huge expanse of the Great Plains. Although the Pawnee were Plains Indians, their way of life differed significantly from other tribes in the region. While most of the Plains tribes (such as the Cheyenne) were hunters, the Pawnee were an agricultural people. They settled in permanent villages and built lodges from earth, grass, and wood. They organized large-scale buffalo hunts twice a year and grew corn, beans, squash and other crops.

"The deeply spiritual Pawnee developed a rich culture over the centuries that included dozens of rituals and ceremonies based on planting and har-

vesting corn. They believed that their gods had given them the corn and the buffalo, and that the Pawnee themselves had descended directly from the moon, planets, and stars in the night sky. With roots in both the spirit world and the fertile prairie soil, the Pawnee lived in harmony with their natural surroundings. The people of the earth lodges were farmers, healers, warriors, astronomers, artists, storytellers, dancers, and more. Days were spent hunting and tending corn crops in the fields, nights were enlivened by religious rituals and ceremonial performances. The Pawnee pursued their unique way of life for more than 500 years until French and English explorers began to filter into the region in the late eighteenth century. The growing presence of these outsiders brought monumental change to the Pawnee earth lodge villages. For the next 200 years, guns, horses, and European diseases weakened Pawnee power in the region. When their

homeland was finally confiscated by the U.S. government in the 19th century, the ancient Pawnee way of life came to an abrupt end.”

While living in Texas where the climate was warmer, the Pawnee lived in circular lodges made from thatched grass. After moving north, in the 1200's they had to adapt to a new environment; therefore, their permanent dwellings were dome-shaped, made from sod over a framework of log poles, usually cottonwood. The Pawnee lived in these structures half the year and in tipis the other half. The opening was a long tunnel on the eastern side so it faced the sunrise. A sunken room or cellar was constructed where food, dried meat, and corn was stored. Along the wall were rectangular structures made from small tree trunks and covered with buffalo hides. They were used at night for sleeping and as sitting places during the day. A buffalo hide hung between the beds to provide privacy as one



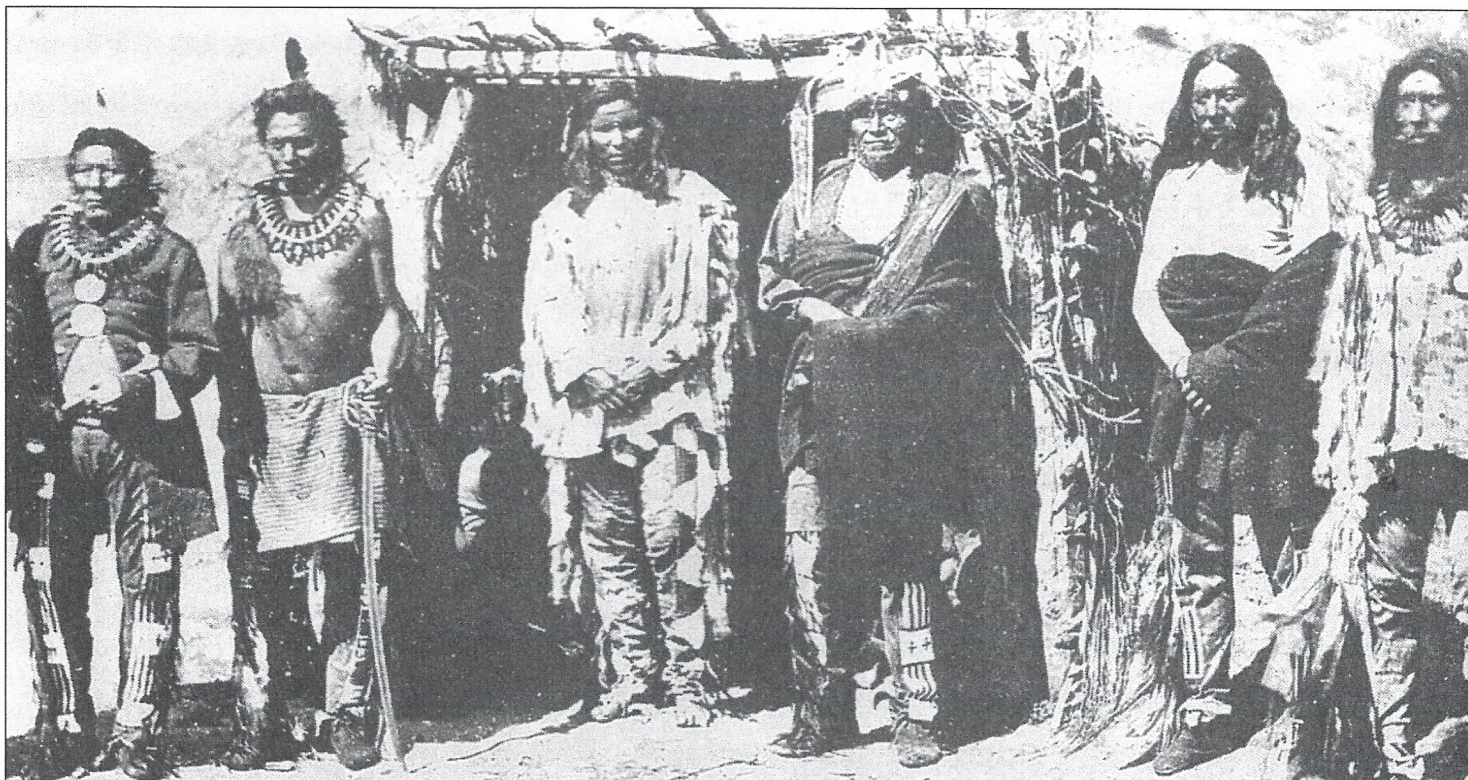
This map shows the area that the Pawnee inhabited. Courtesy of *The Indigenous Peoples of North America - The Pawnee*.”

lodge would house as many as 6 or 8 families. An entire family might share one sleeping area. The western wall of the lodge featured an altar where

sacred ceremonies would be held. A fire pit was constructed in the middle of the lodge where meals were cooked and families gathered to share stories.



In addition to managing all the chores of daily life, Pawnee women were skilled woodworkers and seamstresses. They made all of the tribe's utensils and clothing. — Photo: Smithsonian Institution; *Indigenous Peoples of North America, - The Pawnee* by Stuart A. Kallen.



Pawnee society was built on cooperation. Each person was expected to participate in the community and Pawnee chiefs did not act without consensus of the tribe. — Photo: Smithsonian Institution; *Indigenous Peoples of North America - The Pawnee* by Stuart A. Kallen.

A hole in the ceiling allowed the smoke to rise and go outside.

In addition to the cooking, the women carried water and retrieved the firewood needed for cooking and to provide warmth when needed. Gene Weltfish, who authored “The Lost Universe” wrote, “There were two main meals a day...both serving all. In operation this meant that the woman who cooked the meal had raised all the vegetables in her own gardens, had dried and preserved them and kept them in her storage pit, and that all the meat she served was dried and packed by her on the buffalo hunt, carried back to the village...In the past, the clay pot she cooked in would have been made by her...and the large buffalo horn ladle with which she served, the wooden mortar and pestle in which the mush was pounded and...the wooden bowls in which the food was served, the rush mats on which the people sat and all the clothing they wore.” In addition to the dried meats and garden produce, the Pawnee women were adept at finding a variety of wild vegetation to add to their menus — especially during the warmer months. They collected wild onions, wild cucumbers, an herb known as lamb’s quarters, and the prairie turnip, or Indian potato. Wild plums, persimmons, and chokecherries, which could be dried and preserved for winter use. Sweet thistle plant was peeled and eaten. Milkweed buds, prickly pear cactus, and rose hips were added to stews. Other wild plants were collected, dried and used for weaving mats. The Pawnee that lived near rivers could regularly add fish to their diet.

“The buffalo, however, filled a prominent need in their lives. Buffalo hunts were undertaken twice a year. This required a lot of planning and preparation. Almost all members of the village would move to the hunting site. Matthew W. Sterling, in an article entitled “Indians of Our Western Plains” published in the July 1944 edition of *National Geographic* noted the many uses the Pawnee found for the buffalo. They included the following:

“The thick woolly hair of the buffalo was used to stuff leather-covered balls for ball games and to pad saddles; for weaving bags and ornaments; for making rope; for cushioning bed and backrests...The skin went into tepee covers, clothing, bags and other containers, cooking vessels, shields, saddles, and robes.

“From the ribs were made skin scrapers, arrow points, gaming dice. The shoulder blades were utilized for fleshing tools and axes. They were even

used as an artist’s palette for mixing paint. The leg bones became knives, awls, and hammers. Sinew was used for backing bows to increase their resilience, for sewing, and for making strings. From the scrotum were made rattles and stirrup covers. The bladder became water bags. The intestines were used for string and for bow rapping, the paunch for boiling water.

“All the flesh, the organs, and the marrow in the bones were food. The fat served as a base for mixing paint. Along with the brain and the liver, fat was used for tanning. Hoofs were turned into rattles and glue; gallstones became yellow paint. Blood and intestinal juices were used for a drink. The dried dung, famous buffalo chips of the prairie, was an important fuel.”

The Pawnee tribe in the 21st century is described on their official website: “Pawnees can be found in all areas of the United States, as well as foreign countries within many walks of life. Pawnees take much pride in their ancestral heritage. They are noted in history for their tribal religion rich in myth, symbolism and elaborate rites.”



Today, the Pawnee are working to reclaim their heritage and to educate their children and the world about the history and culture of their people. — Photo: R. W. Jones/Corbis; *Indigenous Peoples of North America - The Pawnee* by Stuart A. Kallen.



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INSIDE: Julie Spilinek has compiled information on the Pawnee Indian.

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