

Nebraska History Timeline

Important Dates, Events, and Milestones in Nebraska



Offers a chronological timeline of important dates, events, and milestones in Nebraska history.

The very first were Indians who came here more than 10,000 years ago. They were nomadic hunters who were looking for an area where big game animals were plentiful. Over the centuries there have been other Indian immigrants, such as the Oto tribe which came here about 300 years ago. Nebraska, which was admitted to the union as the 37th state on March 1, 1867, two years after the end of the American Civil War, contains some of the nation's best ranchland and farmland.

16th Century Nebraska History Timeline

1541 - Spanish explorer Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led an expedition across the US Southwest into Kansas. He claimed the entire territory for Spain

17th Century Nebraska History Timeline

1682 - French explorer Rene Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, traveled down the Mississippi River to its mouth. He claimed all the land drained by the Mississippi, as well as its tributaries, for France.

18th Century Nebraska History Timeline

1714 - Étienne Veniard de Bourgmont is the first recorded European in Nebraska.

1720 - Pedro de Villasur was sent to out from Santa Fe on June 16, 1720 to scout enemy positions on the plains. His party included forty-five white soldiers, sixty Pueblo Indians, a priest and an interpreter. He made several

attempts to trade with the Pawnees but was openly rebuffed. Pedro de Villasur paused to regroup and plan his next move. As Pedro de Villasur and his group camped near present day Columbus, Nebraska, they were attacked by the Pawnees. Most of the Pueblos had sensed danger and left before the battle began. Pedro de Villasur was killed before he could reach his weapons and only thirteen Spaniards made it back to Santa Fe.

1739 - While looking for a path to Santa Fe, Pierre and Paul Mallet traveled north along the Missouri River to the mouth of the Niobrara. Here they concluded they were traveling in the wrong direction. They traveled south parallel to the Missouri and crossed the Platte and Republican rivers on their way. Eventually, they found their way to Santa Fe.

1763 - Treaty of Paris, All land west of the Mississippi River became Spanish.

1789 - Juan Munier met the Ponca Indians living near the mouth of the Niobrara River. He was given exclusive trading rights with the Ponca's by the Spanish.

1793 - Jacques D'Eglise began trading with the Mandan Indians and was given exclusive trading rights by the Spanish government for his exploration efforts.

19th Century Nebraska History Timeline

1800 - Treaty of San Ildefonso. The Spanish found it costly to explore this new country and could not see the rewards being worth the investment. They returned the Louisiana to France in 1800.

1803 - The US acquires Nebraska in the Louisiana Purchase

1804 - Lewis and Clark reach the eastern edge of Nebraska

1806 - Explorer Zebulon Pike visits southern Nebraska

1812 - Manuel Lisa builds Fort Lisa on the Missouri River near Omaha.

1819 - US Army established Nebraska's first military post, Fort Atkinson

1820 - Major Stephen H. Long made an expedition to the Rocky Mountains and back. His opinion of the plains was not favorable. This opinion, shared by many, could explain the reluctance of settlers to make the prairie their home. The plains most certainly offered new challenges to the pioneer.

1823 - Bellevue becomes the first permanent settlement in Nebraska.

1830 -

- The Indian Removal Act allows the US government to relocate Native Americans west of the Mississippi River.
- The Oregon Trail. Jedediah Smith, David Jackson, and William Sublette set out from St. Louis. They followed a route up the Missouri River to the Platte River. Instead of following the Missouri north as Lewis and Clark did, they went west on the Platte River. These were the first travelers on what was to become the Oregon Trail. By the 1840s the southern pass of the trail went west from Independence MO to Kansas City, northwest to Ft. Kearney (Nebraska) and then turned west again to Fort Vancouver (Present Vancouver, Washington).
- Traders took the first wagons to the Rocky Mountains

1832 - Steamboat Yellowstone began the first annual fur-trading voyages up the Missouri River

1833 - Rev. Moses Merrill and his wife, Eliza Wilcox Merrill, were the first resident missionaries to the Nebraska Indians. They arrived in Bellevue in 1833

1834 - The Trade and Intercourse Act prohibits whites from trespassing on Native American lands west of the Mississippi River.

1842-44 - The word "Nebraska" first began to appear in publications in 1842 when John Fremont explores the Platte Valley and names Nebraska

1844 - The first bill to organize the new Nebraska Territory, introduced in Congress on Dec. 17, 1844, by Illinois Sen. Stephen Douglas, failed to pass.

1848 - Fort Kearny is established along the Oregon Trail

1854 - Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed by the US Congress on May 30, 1854. It allowed people in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to decide for themselves whether or not to allow slavery within their borders. The Act served to repeal the Missouri Compromise of 1820 which prohibited slavery north of latitude 36°30'.

1860 -

- The territory's population grew from 2,732 in November 1854 to 28,841

- Estimated 82 black people in the state. By 1900 that number had risen to 6,269.

April 3, 1860 - Oct. 24, 1861 - Pony Express riders also followed the Platte River Valley, carrying mail to the west coast.

1862 - The Homestead Act and the Pacific Railroad Act are passed.

1867 -

- Nebraska joined the Union as the 37th state on March 1, 1867.
- The people elected David Butler as the first governor
- Lincoln became the state capital on July 29.

1868 - Lincoln replaces Omaha as the state capital.

1869 -

- Oglala Sioux leader Red Cloud and other Sioux sign the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie.
- The Union Pacific Railroad is completed; terminus is at Omaha.

1870 - Robert Anderson was the first black person to homestead in Box Butte County.

1875 - A new state constitution is adopted.

1877 - Oglala Sioux leader Crazy Horse surrenders in Nebraska.

1892 - The Populist or People's Party holds its first national convention in Omaha.

1895 - Silas Robbins was the first black person to be admitted to the Nebraska State Bar Association

1896 - William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska is nominated as the presidential candidate by both the Democratic and Populist parties.

20th Century Nebraska History Timeline

1902 - Reclamation Act of 1902, which earmarked federal aid for irrigation projects.

1933 - Gov. Charles Bryan imposed a moratorium on farm foreclosures.

1937 - The unicameral state legislature holds its first session.

1939 - Petroleum discovered in southeastern Nebraska

1944 - Congress passed the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Project, which authorized the creation of flood control dams, reservoirs and hydroelectric plants in states drained by the Missouri River, including Nebraska.

1948 - Strategic Air Command establishes headquarters near Omaha

1963 Race riot in Omaha led to the creation of the Omaha Human Rights Commission

1968 & 1969 - Race riots required intervention by the military and the National Guard.

1974 - Gerald Ford of Omaha becomes President of the United States

1982 - Initiative 300 prohibits individual farmers from selling their land to corporations.

1987 - Legislature adopted two measures that authorized tax incentives for businesses intending to create new jobs in Nebraska.

21st Century Nebraska History Timeline

2000 - Train derailment in Scottsbluff spilled 80,000 gallons of chemical benzene, evacuations ordered

2002 -

- Pipe bombs found in six residential mailboxes, domestic terrorism suspected;
- drought devastated crops, caused invasion of grasshopper, losses more than \$1 billion

2005 - Legislature voted to allow convicted felons to vote after completion of sentence and two-year waiting period

2006 - Cuba bought \$30 million in food from Nebraska

2007 - Gunman killed eight, injured five during shooting at Omaha mall

2009 - Legislature voted to change capital punishment from electrocution to lethal injection

2011 -

- Flooding of Fort Calhoun nuclear power plant by Missouri River raised fears that power plants could be vulnerable to weather extremes
- Nebraska legislature voted to reroute controversial TransCanada pipeline to avoid Sandhills and Ogallala aquifer

2012 - Four tornadoes struck around North Platte, injured four, damaged homes, farm buildings, derailed 31 railroad cars