

# HISTORY AT OUR DOORSTEP

## WELCOME TO RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA



WELCOME TO RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA. The city was named for Oglala Lakota chief Red Cloud (1822-1909) who was best known for his success in confrontations with the U.S. government. It is believed that he never passed through the area that was named for him. Our city is home to the National Willa Cather Center. Willa Cather (1873-1947) was one of our nation's greatest twentieth century writers who wrote movingly of her Nebraska roots and the immigrant and pioneering experience. South-central Nebraska has been the scene of a number of notable historical events including a visit by Captain Zebulon Pike on his *Southwest Expedition* of 1806. The Oregon and California Trails passed nearby and we are near a geographical landmark, the center of the lower forty-eight United States. We invite you to stay for a day or two and explore Willa Cather country.

### HOW TO BEST SPEND A DAY IN RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

- 1.) Take a long ride in the country to enjoy the peace and quiet and flora and fauna of our area. Get a copy of the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie brochure at the Willa Cather Foundation so you can identify some of the flowers and grasses you will see. You may also want to take a bird identification book too as the ride will provide you with birding opportunities. Take US Highway 281 south to the Republican River bridge, turn right (west) onto River Road, follow it until you get to 44 Road and then turn north until you come to US Highway 136. Turn right (east) onto US Highway 136 and follow back into Red Cloud. Then grab a lawn chair and go to the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie (GPS Coordinates - 40.0039° N, 98.5229° W) and watch a sunset. There is nothing like a Nebraska sunset. Take a picnic dinner and a Willa Cather book or short story with you (We take *The Bohemian Girl* when we go.) and imagine what the Great Plains looked like with its various mixed grass prairies, some of which were six feet in height. On the way stop at Princess Hill (GPS Coordinates - 40.05915° N, 98.5228° W) and take in a wonderful view of the region. Tradition long stated that Red Cloud's daughter was buried here but that has been proven to be incorrect and it is actually the burial site of Polygrandaha, the daughter of Medicine Horse, the great chief of the Otoe Indians.
- 2.) Go for a lovely walk through Red Cloud using the web site *Walk Red Cloud* ([www.walkredcloud.com](http://www.walkredcloud.com)) for your tour. Or, go out in front of our store, and scan the QR code at the bottom of the street light into your phone. You will then have a chance to enjoy the rich history of our proud past and immerse yourself in the restoration efforts associated with our promising future. Pick up a copy of the *Town Tour* from the Willa Cather Center for sites related to the author's time here in Red Cloud. After that, head to On The Brix and have some libations, a meat and cheese platter and good conversation. They are open in the late afternoons and evenings on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.
- 3.) Red Cloud is also a great place to enjoy sports of all kinds. It has its own nine hole golf course that was designed by Harry Obitz, a well-known PGA golfer. It is located two miles east of the city on US Highway 136. So take your clubs out and try playing this beautiful course. If you are a fisherman, there is trout fishing in the Elm Creek Wildlife Management Area to the north and east of Red Cloud and bass and catfish at the Indian Creek Pond Wildlife Management Area just south of Red Cloud on US Highway 281. After partaking in those activities take in one of Red Cloud's great eateries including The Palace, Fat Fox's Pizzeria and Kitchen, The South 40 Bar and Grill or Subway for a quick bite to eat.
- 4.) Finally, you need to come and visit our bookstore, have a cup of coffee or tea, a Beardslee kolache, (a Czech dessert roll that is our specialty) and some good conversation. We have a great used book collection with fiction and non-fiction sections including a growing collection of Nebraska-themed books by Nebraska authors and the Sunday *New York Times*. There are also a number of retail stores here in town to fill your needs including Village Pharmacy, Hometown Market, Shades West (a western apparel store) and Prairie Plum Coffee which serves coffee several mornings a week at On The Brix.

### THINGS TO SEE WHILE YOU ARE IN THE GREATER RED CLOUD REGION

The following choices are our best picks to see while you are in the area. Many of these places are nearby and different combinations provide for great day trips for those interested in literature, the outdoors, history and picnicking. Many of the sites have things of interest for children and young adults.

### NATIONAL WILLA CATHER CENTER - RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

Visit the National Willa Cather Center and see exhibits about her life and literary legacy. First, go to the Center on Webster Street, just a block north of the Moonstone Bookstore, visit the museum, take one of the walking tours, and then get a copy of the *Country Tour*. Travel out to the sites that played a significant role in Willa Cather's stories and enjoy the beautiful countryside. Come back to Red Cloud and visit the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie just south of Red Cloud on US Highway 281. There is a short loop trail that you can walk to get a feel for the endless prairies that once covered the Great Plains.

Go to [www.visitredcloud.com](http://www.visitredcloud.com) for more information about Red Cloud and things to do in the area.

## A RICH ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Red Cloud is home to a number of remarkable architectural gems. One such place is the Webster County Historical Museum located at 721 West 4th Avenue. A remarkable 1909 Classical Revival styled building, it is home to a wonderful collection of Webster County artifacts and history. For hours of operation call 402-746-2444. The Red Cloud Bed & Breakfast at The Kaley House is a beautifully restored residence located at 909 North Seward Street. While privately owned and operated, the result of the restoration efforts are magnificent and can be viewed from the street. For information call 402-746-8300. Plus, it is a great place to stay while in Red Cloud. Near 11th and Franklin Streets there is the Yost Farm School, an 1888 restored rural school house. Call 402-746-4065 to schedule a tour. There is also the Starke Round Barn, the largest circular barn in North America which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The barn site has been host to a variety of events and group tours are available by calling 402-746-4165 two weeks in advance. It is located four and a half miles east of Red Cloud on US Highway 136 (GPS Coordinates - 40.0858° N, 98.4368° W). Before turning off of US Highway 136 to visit the barn look to the north and see the old Amboy Mill, one of few remaining mills in the state. A unique engineering landmark is the Republican River highway bridge just to the south of town on US Highway 281. Built in 1935 after a terrible flood this three-span cantilevered Warren through truss was built by the Omaha Steel Works and the Nebraska Highway Department, and is the only one of its kind in the state.

### ZEBULON PIKE'S SOUTHWESTERN JOURNEY - GUIDE ROCK, NEBRASKA

Zebulon Pike, an explorer and American war hero passed here in 1806 to meet with the Pawnee Indians and to proceed westward to find the sources of the Red and Arkansas Rivers. Undertaken at the same time as the Lewis and Clark expedition was arriving back in St. Louis, the meeting of the Pawnees and the raising of the American flag and lowering of the Spanish flag at this gathering of Pike with these native peoples was one of the most dramatic moments of Pike's trip. While the village site is now privately owned, you can see the National Historic Landmark monument there (GPS Coordinates - 40.05305° N, 98.2376° W) and get a view of the village site where hundreds and hundreds of Pawnees lived near the Republican River. The site is about fifteen miles from Red Cloud. The rifle pits, where Pike's men created a defensive perimeter around their camp, are located on the bluffs that can be seen about two miles to the north from the NHL marker. They are on private property and inaccessible. There is also a historic marker that describes Pike's stay near Guide Rock at the corner of State Street and Highway 78. (GPS Coordinates - 40.074929° N, 98.33088° W)

### THE OREGON AND CALIFORNIA TRAILS - AYR, HASTINGS & KEARNEY, NEBRASKA

From 1840 to 1869 thousands passed through our area on their way westward on the Oregon and California Trails and the Mormon Trail which ran along the Platte River to the north. A short section of trail rut swales can still be seen north of Ayr, just beyond the power substation fence on the east side of US Highway 281 (GPS Coordinates - 40.481707° N, 98.40173° W). (This is private property.) Here, at the junction of Saddlehorn Road, the Oregon Trail crossed the present highway and proceeded to the northwest. Nearby is a site where a skirmish took place (GPS Coordinates - 40.28.855° N, 98.23.685° W) which is on private land and not accessible but is marked by a small roadside sign on East Saddlehorn Road. For the most part, the remaining visible trail rut swales are inaccessible to the public. The Oregon Trail's landmarks in our area are listed on the Adams County Historical Society's web page under the Historical Tours section ([www.adamshistory.org](http://www.adamshistory.org)). There is an auto tour that approximates the route of those hardy pioneers ([www.nps.gov/oreg](http://www.nps.gov/oreg)) and signs can be found on US Highway 281 going north from Red Cloud. One of the travelers who perished along the way, Tamsen Donner, is memorialized at the Hastings Highland Park Arboretum on Burlington Avenue with a beautiful monument. The bronze plaque includes a quote from a letter that she sent back East after she passed along the Little Blue River. There is also a beautiful interpretive display telling the story of those traveling pioneers at The Archway in Kearney, Nebraska.

### HASTINGS MUSEUM - HASTINGS, NEBRASKA

One of the region's great treasures is the Hastings Museum located at 1330 North Burlington Avenue in Hastings. There are fascinating exhibits on the pioneer experience, natural environment and the Pawnee Indians.

### U.S. HIGHWAY 136 - A NEBRASKA HERITAGE HIGHWAY

If you are returning to Lincoln or Omaha take a scenic byway instead of driving on Interstate 80. US Highway 136 is beautiful ride taking you through rolling prairies, cornfields, wheat fields and small towns. Take the highway east from Red Cloud until you get to Beatrice and then turn north on US Highway 77 to go to Lincoln.

### THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE HOMESTEAD NATIONAL MONUMENT - BEATRICE, NEBRASKA

We are a nation of immigrants and you can experience the travails and troubles of those early pioneer immigrants who came across the Great Plains by going to the Homestead National Monument west of Beatrice. See how those early pioneers lived and an early homesteading cabin on one of the first homestead sites in the United States, a result of the Homestead Act of 1863. Travel east on US Highway 136 to Nebraska Route 4 West and continue onto the National Park Service site. (GPS Coordinates - 40.2914° N, 96.8358° W)

### GEOGRAPHIC CENTER OF THE UNITED STATES (LOWER 48 STATES) - LEBANON, KANSAS

This is a great place to go for those seeking a unique kind of tourist experience. Until 1959, this location was designated as the center of the lower forty-eight states. But when Hawaii and Alaska came into the Union the center moved north and west. It is just fifteen miles south of Red Cloud on U.S. Highway 281, with historical information, a chapel and picnic facilities. (GPS Coordinates - 39.8283° N, 98.5795° W)

### HOME ON THE RANGE CABIN - SMITH CENTER, KANSAS

Did you know that the song *Home on the Range* was written south of Red Cloud in Kansas? It was a favorite of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and millions of others. Written by Dr. Brewster Higley, it is the official song of Kansas, and you can visit the cabin where the beloved song was written. From Red Cloud head towards Franklin and travel sixteen miles south on Nebraska Highway 10, to Kansas Highway 8, and follow the signs to the site. (GPS Coordinates 39.8894° N, 98.9472° W)

Courtesy of The Moonstone Bookstore & Emporium, 345 Webster Street, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

Phone: (845) 551-0417 E-mail: [info@themoonstonebookstore.com](mailto:info@themoonstonebookstore.com) Web: [www.themoonstonebookstore.com](http://www.themoonstonebookstore.com)

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