the 50s in focus
NEBRASKA CHAUTAUQUA
AUGUST 2 & 3
Kearney, Neb. 2019
The 1950s are often looked at with a sense of nostalgia and romanticism. However, this decade was also a time of sweeping change that can now be revisited with a critical, more objective eye.

This weekend’s Nebraska Chautauqua will explore various social, economic, international, and political changes during the ’50s. Multiple scholars from around the state and across the nation are gathering in Kearney to share their insight and lead discussions for an enjoyable, unique experience that will be as fun as it is educational. Just as important, personal memories will be collected for future generations.

Nebraska Chautauqua is also an opportunity for the community to come together to discuss these complex historical events and explore how the 1950s still connect with current events. As you enjoy the events, presentations, discussions, and interactive Q&A sessions, we hope you will draw connections from the 1950s to today.

Thank you for joining us. It is time to put “the Fifties in Focus”.
Friday • August 2, 2019

5:00 - 7:00 p.m. Food Trucks, Merryman Performing Arts Center parking lot
5:45 p.m. “A Century of Fashion: The 1950s” with Sue McLain, Merryman Performing Arts Center
7:00 p.m. Keynote: “Liking Ike: How Dwight Eisenhower Defined the 1950s,” by Dr. William I. Hitchcock, Merryman Performing Arts Center

Saturday • August 3, 2019

9:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Rock Around the Clock Breakout Sessions, Kearney Public Library
(See following pages for specific times, descriptions and speaker information.)
4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Show & Shine 1950s Car Display and Children’s Activities by Kearney Area Children’s Museum, Museum of Nebraska Art (MONA) parking lot
4:00 - 6:30 p.m. Food Trucks, MONA parking lot
6:30 p.m. Rosa Parks, as portrayed by Becky Stone, World Theatre
7:30 p.m. Thurgood Marshall, as portrayed by Dr. Lenneal Henderson, World Theatre
8:30 p.m. Q&A with Chautauqua Scholars,
followed by closing remarks, World Theatre
9:15 a.m.  The Fight for Civil Rights
       Dr. Lenneal Henderson and Becky Stone
Join our Chautauqua scholars in exploring significant developments in the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and how the different events are tied to issues of politics, faith, and mass media. They will focus on how some of the major players in the Civil Rights movement at that time (including Rosa Parks and Thurgood Marshall) found their way into turning points in history.

9:15 a.m.  Let’s Play Ball! Sports in American Life
       Dr. Catherine Biba, Hastings College
Playing and watching athletic competitions have been popular in the United States for a long time, but the 1950s marked an important decade for the growing importance of sports in Americans’ recreational life. Professional leagues expanded, colleges began concerted efforts to grow football programs into well-attended spectacles, and TV provided a new opportunity to enlarge fanbases. Sports now consume many American leisure hours.

10:15 a.m.  Almost 70 Years of Agricultural Advances from the 1950s
       Bob Klein, Emeritus Professor, UNL Extension Service
In 1950 the average farmer fed just 15.5 people as compared to feeding 10 times as many today, using less land, energy, and water, reducing soil erosion from wind and water, and improving soil quality. U.S. farmers produce about 40% of the world’s corn, using only 20% of the total area harvested in the world. Learn about the advancements that have led to farmers shipping more than $100 billion of their crops and products worldwide.
A President’s Big Plans: Eisenhower, the Interstate Highway System and the Space Race  
*Dr. David Nichols, Southwestern (KS) College*

President Eisenhower’s Interstate Highway System has grown into one the great public works programs of human history, and profoundly impacts American life to this day. When the Soviets launched Sputnik I in 1957, a political and media panic resulted that haunted the remainder of Eisenhower’s presidency. John F. Kennedy was elected campaigning about “a missile gap.” Find out what really happened.

What’s Up with Ward & June? The ’50s American Family in Myth, Memory, & Reality  
*Dr. Catherine Biba, Hastings College*

One of the enduring images of 1950s in the United States is that of the nuclear family. Indeed, there is much truth to the idea that the 1950s were an intensely family-focused time period, with the domestic sphere forming a real preoccupation in American society. Explore the reasons for this family-centered cultural moment and the limitations and realities of family life in 1950s America.

Crises of the 1950s Cold War  
*Dr. William Hitchcock, University of Virginia*

The tension in the post-World War II era between the United States and the Soviet Union was a new normal that had impacts all over the world. What were some of the flashpoints in the Cold War in the 1950s, and how did the superpowers and their allies maintain and resolve the tension without events progressing into a “hot war”?

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Rock Around the Clock Breakout Sessions

Two sessions are scheduled for each timeslot.

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10:15 a.m.

A President’s Big Plans: Eisenhower, the Interstate Highway System and the Space Race

11:15 a.m.

What’s Up with Ward & June? The ’50s American Family in Myth, Memory, & Reality

11:15 a.m.

Crises of the 1950s Cold War
12:45 p.m.  SAC, Deterrence, and Nebraska in the Early Cold War

Dr. Jerry Martin, retired Offutt AFB Historian
Nebraska was far away from many crisis points early in the Cold War, but with the establishment of Strategic Air Command at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska played a central role in world crises throughout the 1950s and beyond. Explore the role of the Strategic Air Command and Offutt Air Force Base in the efforts of containment and deterrence during this tumultuous time.

12:45 p.m.  Setting the Record Straight: Dwight Eisenhower’s actions on Civil Rights and Joe McCarthy

Dr. David Nichols, Southwestern (KS) College
Until the turn of the twenty-first century, historians denigrated Dwight Eisenhower’s presidency, especially for his alleged failure to champion civil rights and to effectively oppose the demagoguery of Senator Joseph McCarthy. With Dr. Nichols’ extensive research, discover Eisenhower’s actual policies and achievements that recently earned him a fifth-place rating among presidents in a recent survey of historians.

1:45 p.m.  Invasion of the Body Snatchers: Popular Culture in a Decade of Consensus

Dr. Simon Appleford, Creighton University
Explore how various forms of 1950s popular culture — including cinema, television, and comics — created an idealized version of American society that continues to shape how we understand the experiences of that decade today.
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| 1:45  | Whom We Shall Welcome: Immigration and the Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Postwar America  
*Dr. Danielle Battisti, University of Nebraska-Omaha*  
Immigration was a vital social and political issue after World War II. Even though immigration rates were at historic lows in the 50s, there was a dynamic movement to overhaul the nation’s immigration policies. Along with exploring the roots, tactics, and outcomes of this movement, Dr. Battisti will place the discussion in the context of other major events of the period, including the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement. |
| 2:45  | History of Rock N’ Roll  
*Randall Snyder, Humanities Nebraska Speakers Bureau*  
What would the 50s have been without rock & roll? This presentation takes a look at rock music’s interaction with social history, with topics ranging from the origins of rock to Elvis Presley. |
| 2:45  | The Korean War: Unchartered Waters in the Cold War  
*Dr. Thomas Berg, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*  
After resplendent victories in WWI and WWII, the U.S. expected a similar victory in Korea. With no comprehensive defense plan, inadequate forces, few allies with military power, changing political objectives, and a fight between the president of and one of the nation’s most celebrated generals, we were woefully disappointed. However, less than five years after the world had experienced the most terrific war in history, the Cold War was now boiling and could become even worse. |
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<td>3:45 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>A Lost Consensus? Politics and Culture in the 1950s</strong></td>
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<td><em>Dr. Danielle Battisti, University of Nebraska-Omaha</em></td>
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<td>After WWII, Americans exhibited a remarkable degree of agreement on a</td>
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<td>number of political and cultural issues. Or at least, that seemed to</td>
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<td>be the case. This talk will discuss the shared values of the postwar</td>
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<td>era and explore the tensions simmering just beneath the surface that</td>
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<td>contributed to diverging political and social views as the 1960s got</td>
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<td>3:45 p.m.</td>
<td>**Buying the Good Life: How the Rise of Suburbia and Consumer Culture</td>
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<td>Changed America**</td>
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<td><em>Dr. Simon Appleford, Creighton University</em></td>
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<td>In the economic boom that followed the Second World War Americans</td>
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<td>found themselves with more spending power than ever before. In this</td>
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<td>presentation, Dr. Simon Appleford of Creighton University will explore</td>
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<td>how different groups of Americans experienced the growth of suburbia</td>
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<td>and the culture of consumerism. We will also uncover how consumerism</td>
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<td>was encouraged as a form of patriotism that was used to propagandize</td>
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<td>the benefits of the American way of life during the Cold War.</td>
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Dr. William I. Hitchcock

Dr. William I. Hitchcock is the William W. Corcoran Professor of History at the University of Virginia. He has written and edited numerous books on the international, diplomatic and military history of the 20th Century. He received his B.A. degree from Kenyon College in 1986, and his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1994. He has been a Fulbright scholar, a fellow of the Nobel Institute in Oslo, Norway, and the holder of the Henry Kissinger Chair at the Library of Congress.

Becky Stone

Becky Stone was born and raised in Philadelphia. She earned her undergraduate degree at Vassar College in Drama with a minor in French. Her M.A. is in Elementary Educational Counseling from Villanova University. She worked for seven years for the Philadelphia School System and taught theater for 10 years at a classical Christian school in Fletcher, NC.

Becky has been a Chautauqua scholar since 2003 when she first researched and presented Pauli Murray. Her other characters are Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Maya Angelou. Becky continues to act in theater. More often she is on stage as a storyteller at festivals, libraries, and schools.

Dr. Lenneal Henderson

Dr. Lenneal Henderson was born in New Orleans and raised in the housing projects of San Francisco, California. He received his A.B., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of California, Berkeley.

Currently a professor at the Fielding Graduate University and visiting instructor at the College of William and Mary among other key roles in acadamia, Dr. Henderson has produced four books and more than 60 articles and editorials for various publications. He is an international lecturer/presenter, a Fulbright Senior Specialist, an actor, and the playwright of Thurgood is Coming, a one-man play commemorating the 50th anniversary of Brown v. the Board of Education, in which he performed the role of Thurgood Marshall.
**Meet the Speakers**

**Dr. Simon Appleford** is an assistant professor of history at Creighton University and associate director of Creighton’s Digital Humanities Initiative. His research focuses on the intersections of digital humanities, visual culture, and 19th- and 20th-century U.S. cultural and intellectual history. His current research project focuses on political cartoonist Herbert Block and postwar liberalism.

**Dr. Danielle Battisti** is an assistant professor of History at the University of Nebraska at Omaha where she specializes in immigration and ethnic history. Her new book, “Whom We Shall Welcome: Italian Americans and Immigration Reform” examines both liberal and conservative elements of Italian American efforts to influence American immigration policies in the 1950s and 1960s.

**Dr. Catherine Biba** is a Nebraska native, born and raised in Geneva, Nebraska. She earned B.A. degrees in English and History from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and her M.A. and Ph.D. in History from Cornell University. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor of History at Hastings College where she teaches a wide array of courses in U.S. History.

**Dr. Thomas Berg** received his M.A. and Ph.D. in US military history from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He has taught courses in American history, European military history, US military history, and the Second World War. Dr. Berg has received a high number of teaching awards at UNL and is one of the most popular instructors for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

**Bob Klein** is emeritus professor and Western Nebraska crops specialist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His interest in soil conservation, improving dryland crop yields, and reducing irrigation water use led to him becoming one of the leaders in ecofarming and no-till research and extension crop production. His work has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**Dr. Jerry Martin** retired as the Command Historian for U.S. Strategic Command. His background includes intelligence work for the United States Air Force Academy, serving as vice president for academic affairs at Peru State College, and adjunct instructor at Creighton University. Dr. Martin has authored numerous articles for encyclopedias and other publications.

**Dr. David Nichols** is a leading expert on the Eisenhower presidency. He holds a Ph.D. in history from the College of William and Mary. He is the author of “Eisenhower 1956: The President’s Year of Crisis,” “Ike and McCarthy: Dwight Eisenhower’s Secret Campaign against Joseph McCarthy,” and other books. A retired Southwestern College professor, he lives in Kansas.

**Randall Snyder** is a composer and jazz musician who lives in Lincoln and teaches at Peru State College. He was born in Chicago, where he studied saxophone with his father, a professional jazz musician. He earned his Ph.D. degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1973. While simultaneously publishing original compositions, Snyder has taught courses in jazz, ethnomusicology and rock and roll.
Humanities Nebraska is a statewide non-profit organization supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, the State of Nebraska, and many generous donors throughout the state.

For more than 45 years, Humanities Nebraska has inspired and enriched personal and public life by offering opportunities for residents of all ages to engage thoughtfully with history and culture. These opportunities include:

- Grants to non-profit organizations for public programs
- Speakers Bureau available to communities throughout the state
- Reading and discussion programs
- History events and traveling exhibits

This well-rounded selection of programs enriches Nebraskans with the knowledge and values that are needed to become enlightened citizens of the 21st century through reading, learning, thinking, questioning, and discussing.

For more information, please visit HumanitiesNebraska.org.

Humanities Nebraska funded programs in more than 150 communities last year, thanks to generous contributions from citizens like you. Please consider joining them in supporting HN’s many programs that enrich personal and public life by offering opportunities to thoughtfully engage with history and culture. To make a gift that will support HN programming, visit our website, www.HumanitiesNebraska.org, or pick up an envelope at our Chautauqua information table.

The Nebraska Cultural Endowment is pleased to be a partner with Humanities Nebraska and the Nebraska Arts Council in ensuring a lasting legacy of arts and humanities programs for all Nebraskans. Congratulations to HN for its 2019 Chautauqua season and best wishes to volunteers in Kearney for making it possible. To become a partner in Nebraska’s cultural future, contact Kyle Cartwright, executive director of NCE at 402-595-2722 or by sending email to info@nebraskaculturalendowment.org.
Capitol Forum on America’s Future
Using a curriculum from Brown University, Capitol Forum encourages high school students to develop better understanding of U.S. democratic principles as they discuss global issues with their peers and elected officials.

Chautauqua
Chautauqua immerses audiences in exploring our history through educational entertainment for children and adults in workshops, evening presentations, and performances.

Community Conversations
Humanities Nebraska supports community conversation programs that bring Nebraskans together to explore important topics from different perspectives. In 2020, HN will host a series of programs continuing “Democracy and the Informed Citizen.” Details will be available soon.

Governor’s Lecture in the Humanities
The annual Governor’s Lecture brings an outstanding national speaker to Nebraska for a free public lecture on the humanities. A benefit dinner preceding the lecture raises critical funding for statewide programs. Dwight David Eisenhower II will speak about “D-Day +75” on October 24 at the Holland Center in Omaha.

Grants
Humanities Nebraska grants are available to non-profit organizations, government entities, and schools in support of humanities-related programs that are accessible to the public.

Museum on Main Street
Collaborating with the Smithsonian, Humanities Nebraska brings traveling exhibits to small Nebraska museums, building interest in exploring American history and culture. “Crossroads” will tour Nebraska in 2020-2021.

Prime Time Family Reading Time
Underserved families gather in libraries or schools to read and discuss award-winning children’s books with storytellers and discussion leaders. Prime Time fosters high academic expectations for children and encourages family literacy to help break the poverty cycle.

Speakers Bureau
Urban and rural communities have easy access to more than 300 humanities programs by 150 speakers. This includes a wide variety of topics, presented statewide each year at schools, libraries, and other venues.

Partnerships
Humanities Nebraska collaborates with other organizations on a variety of programs across the state, including National History Day: Nebraska, Nebraska Literary Tour, Nebraska State Poet, Nebraska Warrior Writers, One Book One Nebraska and others that enrich our appreciation for history, culture, and literature.
Traveling Chautauquas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries brought the world to rural communities in Nebraska. Chautauqua combined programs of political oratory and lectures about health, science, and the humanities with entertainment, such as opera singers and stage performances of Shakespeare. Audiences heard about national issues and discussed their views with their neighbors. For many rural Nebraskans, Chautauqua was the most important week of the year.

On June 26, 1883, the first Chautauqua program in Nebraska opened in Crete. In 1884 the Crete Chautauqua Association acquired 109 acres along the Blue River for two lecture halls, a dining hall, and 700 trees on site. Trains brought culture-hungry participants from Wymore, Lincoln, and Hastings. One delegation traveled all the way from Chadron to live in the tent city and hear the 10-day series of inspirational lectures, lantern-slide illustrated travelogues, and musical concerts. One day in 1888, 16,000 people attended the Crete Chautauqua, giving it the reputation of the greatest in the Missouri Valley.

The success of the Crete Chautauquas encouraged businessmen in Beatrice to start a similar enterprise in 1889. Other Chautauqua programs sprang up across the state. Tent cities blossomed for week-long periods at Chautauqua. Some people camped while hundreds drove in, returning home to farm chores by night.

At the turn of the 20th century, Chautauqua circuits were created. National Chautauqua promoters would roll into town, put up a big canvas tent, and overnight, towns would be transformed into bustling cultural centers. Tent cities still appeared, but the Chautauqua circuits emphasized entertainment more than serious lectures or political debates.

In 1907, Kearney had its first Chautauqua circuit. According to Edna Luce’s “Chautauqua,” the 1907 circuit brought campers to Kearney who would “enjoy the week living the simple life mid the cool breezes and delightful shade of the park.” Locals gathered at Third Ward City Park to hear orators and such musical performances as the Williams’ Original Dixie Jubilee Singers.

Chautauquas were so popular that it was not uncommon for Lexington’s Charles F. Horner, co-founder of the Redpath-Horner Chautauqua Circuit, to book more than 60 shows in one season. Chautauqua speakers included Teddy Roosevelt, Helen Keller, Mark Twain, Clarence Darrow, Carrie Nation, George Norris, and perhaps the most famous Chautauquan, William Jennings Bryan, who presented his speech “Prince of Peace” more than 3,000 times.

Several factors led to the decline of traveling Chautauquas: greater mobility, radio and film entertainment, economic decline, and a change in national attitude. Perhaps most significant was the radio, where news was quickly and directly broadcasted to the general public, making it possible to hear FDR’s “fireside chats,” opera, and radio shows like “Amos and Andy” from the comfort of living rooms.

Humanities Nebraska (HN) rekindled the tradition in 1984 with modern Chautauquas that use public forum and discussion to focus on a particular historical era or theme. For 35 years, HN has brought humanities-based Chautauqua programs to communities all across this great state. Humanities Nebraska is honored to continue its Chautauqua tradition by partnering with the community of Kearney to present “The Fifties in Focus” in 2019.
2019 Chautauqua Committee

Denise Christensen  Bryce Jensen  Dr. Will Stoutamire
Sarah Focke  Bridgett Lavene  Christine Walsh
Jennifer Murrish  Dr. Chris Steinke  Joshua Young
Please help us thank these generous contributors:

Merryman Performing Arts Center
Buffalo County Historical Society/Trails and Rails Museum
Kearney Public Library
World Theatre

University of Nebraska-Kearney
History Department
Downtown Kearney Business Association
Classic Car Collection

Kearney Cultural Partners
Kearney Area Children’s Museum
Senior College of Central Nebraska
City of Kearney

Thanks also go to the many generous donors and volunteers whose names were not available at press time. Without your help, this wonderful event could not have happened.

PRESENTED BY:

HUMANITIES NEBRASKA
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