Nebraska Hall of Fame

The Nebraska Hall of Fame was established in 1961 to officially recognize prominent Nebraskans. The Hall of Fame honors people (1) who were born in Nebraska, (2) who gained prominence while living in Nebraska, or (3) who lived in Nebraska and whose residence in Nebraska was an important influence on their lives and contributed to their greatness.

The Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission, which has members appointed by the governor, names people to the Hall of Fame. Until 1996, the commission named one person every two years, except when two people were named in the first two years of the Hall of Fame’s existence, and four people were selected in 1976 in honor of the nation’s bicentennial. Legislation passed in 1998 provides that no more than one person can be added to the Hall of Fame every five years. The 1998 legislation also provides that no person can be considered for the Hall of Fame until at least 35 years after his or her death. Busts of Hall of Fame members are displayed in the State Capitol and in other commission-approved locations.


Willa Cather (1873-1947), Pulitzer Prize-winning author. “The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman” (from Cather’s book O Pioneers!). Lived in Red Cloud. Inducted into Hall of Fame 1962.

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48 Source: History Nebraska.

49 See Page 712 for more details on the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission.

Edward J. Flanagan (1886-1948), founder of Father Flanagan’s Boys Home, Boys Town. “I have never found a boy who really wanted to be bad.” Lived in Omaha and Boys Town. Inducted into Hall of Fame 1965-66.


Bess Streeter Aldrich (1881-1954), author. Aldrich, narrator of Nebraska, gave literary life to Nebraska pioneer memories and honored the trials and dreams of settlers, that all may realize and cherish their heritage. One Aldrich novel, *A Lantern in her Hand*, was translated into many languages. Lived in Elmwood and Lincoln. Inducted into Hall of Fame 1971-72.

John Gneisenau Neihardt (1881-1973), named Nebraska Poet Laureate in 1921. Epic poet of the West, historian, philosopher and friend of the American Indian. “My God and I shall interknit as rain and ocean, breath and air; and O, the luring thought of it is prayer” (from Neihardt’s poem *L’Envoi*). Lived in Wayne and Bancroft. Inducted into Hall of Fame 1973-74.

Grace Abbott (1873-1939), social reformer and social worker. A native Nebraskan internationally honored for her courageous and effective championship of children and mothers and for her promotion of pioneer social legislation of enduring benefit to U.S. citizens. Born and raised in Grand Island. Inducted into Hall of Fame 1975-76.


Standing Bear (1829-1908), Ponca Indian chief; symbol for Indian rights. “I have found a better way” (Standing Bear). “An Indian is a person within the meaning of the law” (Judge Elmer Dundy). Probably born in northeast Nebraska; lived near the mouth of the Niobrara River in present Knox County at the time of his death. Inducted into Hall of Fame 1977-78.

Edward Creighton (1820-74), telegraph pioneer and banker. Lived in Omaha. Inducted into Hall of Fame 1981-82.

Susette LaFlesche Tibbles (1854-1903), Omaha Indian, a.k.a. “Inshata Theumba” or “Bright Eyes,” speaker and writer for Indian rights. Born in Bellevue; raised on Omaha reservation in Thurston County near Macy; lived in Lincoln; died in Bancroft. Inducted into Hall of Fame 1983-84.

**Loren Eiseley (1907-77),** anthropologist, poet and philosopher of science. Born in Lincoln; lived in Lincoln. Inducted into Hall of Fame 1987-88.


Red Cloud (1822-1909), statesman, war leader of the Oglala Sioux. Born in what became Garden County, he rose to leadership in the early 1860s. Red Cloud opposed westward expansion and in 1868 forced the government to abandon the Bozeman Trail in Wyoming. From 1873-77 the Red Cloud Agency was located on the White River in northwest Nebraska. He sought to ease his peoples’ painful transition to reservation life. Inducted into Hall of Fame 2000-01.
Charles E. Bessey (1845-1915), nationally known University of Nebraska professor of botany and horticulture, 1884-1915, and author of federal legislation establishing agricultural experimentation stations at land-grant universities. Bessey’s experiments with tree planting in the Nebraska Sandhills, and his tireless promotion of the idea, led to the establishment of the man-made Nebraska National Forest by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1902. Inducted into Hall of Fame 2007.

Alvin Saunders Johnson (1874-1971), internationally recognized economist, educator, humanitarian, author and social activist. Johnson was editor of The New Republic and founded the New School for Social Research in New York City — the model for American adult education — which he led for 22 years. Born near Homer; educated at the University of Nebraska. Inducted into Hall of Fame 2014.

Thomas Rogers Kimball (1862-1934), nationally known architect. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, he moved to Omaha with his family in 1871. Kimball worked on the 1898 Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha. He designed numerous landmark buildings, including Cecilia’s Cathedral in Omaha, the Hall County Courthouse in Grand Island, Burlington Station in Hastings and the old Omaha Public Library. Inducted into Hall of Fame 2019.