Nebraska: The Cornhusker State

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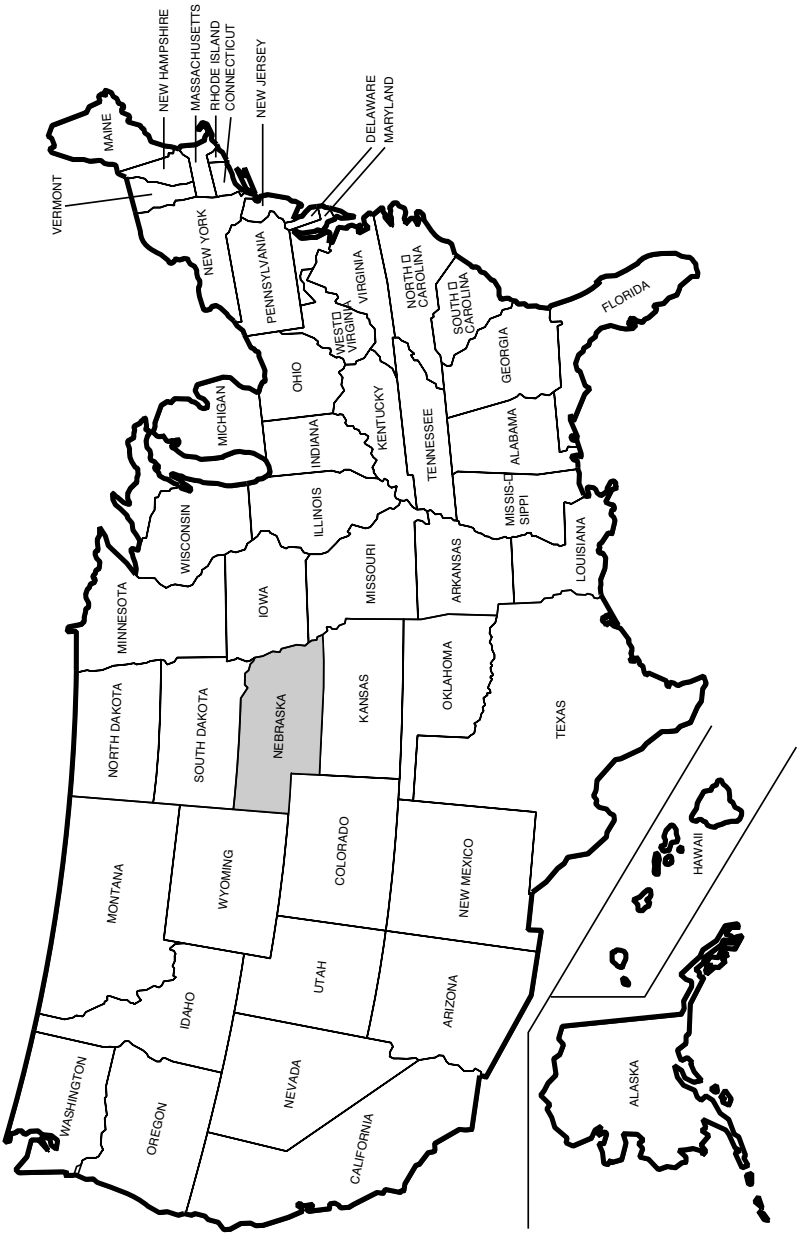

NEBRASKA

The Cornhusker State

Early explorers once described Nebraska and the surrounding area as a "Great Desert." Little did they realize that the state would later become a breadbasket for the nation and much of the world.

The pioneers who settled Nebraska in the late 1800s deserve much of the credit for transforming the state from a land considered unfit for cultivation to an agricultural oasis. Promised free land by the federal government under the 1862 Homestead Act, farmers stubbornly fought economic hardships, droughts and insects. In later years, scientific farming methods and irrigation dramatically increased farmers' yields and brought prosperity to the state. Today, Nebraska ranks among the leading states in many agricultural production categories.[1]

[1] See table of Nebraska agricultural rankings on Page 458.

Nebraska At A Glance[2]

Location: North-central United States. Bordered by South Dakota on the north, Iowa and Missouri on the east, Kansas on the south, and Colorado and Wyoming on the west
Elevation: Highest point, 5,424 feet (1,654 meters), in Kimball County. Lowest point, 840 feet (256 meters), in Richardson County
Area (Land and Water): 77,358 square miles (200,358 square kilometers); 16th largest state
Population: 1,929,268 (2018 estimate); 37th largest state
Attained Statehood: March 1, 1867 (37th state)
Origin of Name: From Oto Indian word "Nebrathka," meaning "flat water" (the tribe's name for the Platte River, which crosses the state)
Nickname: Cornhusker State (from the method of harvesting or "husking" corn by hand)
Motto: "Equality Before the Law"
Capital: Lincoln
Largest City: Omaha

Notable facts about Nebraska include:

The American Institute of Architects declared Nebraska's State Capitol to be one of the modern architectural wonders of the world.

• The U.S. Strategic Command, which manages the nation's nuclear forces in order to deter military attacks on the United States, has its headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base near Bellevue.

• Nebraska has the western hemisphere's largest area of sandhill grasslands, one of the most productive cattle-raising areas in the United States.

• Nebraska was the home or birthplace of Fred Astaire, Marlon Brando, William Jennings Bryan, Warren Buffett, Johnny Carson, Willa Cather, Dick Cavett, William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Edward J. Flanagan, Henry Fonda, Gerald Ford, John Neihardt, George Norris, Alexander Payne, John J. Pershing, Mari Sandoz, Malcolm X and Darryl F. Zanuck.

• Many pioneer and cattle trails crossed Nebraska, with people using such landmarks as Scotts Bluff (now a national monument) and Chimney Rock, both in western Nebraska. Chimney Rock was the landmark mentioned most frequently in journal entries by travelers on the Oregon Trail.

[2] Sources: *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce; *The Nebraska Databook*, Nebraska Department of Economic Development; *"Nebraska: The Good Life, and More,"* The NEBRASKAland Foundation Inc., 1998; University of Nebraska State Museum; Nebraska State Historical Society; *Lincoln Journal Star*.