

# The Sower

Nebraska's small towns make up more than 90 percent of Nebraska's urban population. This issue of *The Sower* attempts to examine the fascinating histories of Nebraska's small towns and the various issues confronting them.

Joel Sartore takes a nostalgic, almost melancholy look at the German-Russian community in Lincoln, story and photos beginning this page.

Two stories examine business problems small towns experience, beginning on Page 2.

One-room schoolhouses may be passe in most of the country, but Gah Y. Huey and Joel

Sartore found one just minutes away from Lincoln, story on Page 3.

White settlers uprooted the Omaha Indian from his peaceful pastoral life more than a century ago. Today, the Omaha is trying to revive a still-proud heritage. Matthew Okerlund and David Creamer spent a week with the Omaha, story and photos beginning on Page 6.

Finally, Jim Rasmussen reminisces about some of the Old West's more colorful characters and their roles in Nebraska's towns, story on Page 8.

## Nebraska in depth



Pauline Strauch, 99, at Alma's Beauty Shop.

Joel Sartore/The Sower

## The American Dream

Pauline Strauch looks out the porch window of her immaculate little house and wonders why the Lord hasn't taken her home yet.

She sits alone in tidiness. Fifteen family portraits surround her, keep her company. The Kleenex twisted in her 99-year-old hand gets increasingly ragged as she talks.

"I raised five children and kept them clean. I worked and lived and went to church," she said. "But the younger generation are all different. They don't want to work, not like we did anyway."

"I worked until I was 82. And now my children tell me I'm going to live to be 100," she said. "But I don't want to.

I'm getting tired of living. There's nothing for me in this life anymore. I did register as a Democrat though."

They are the last of their kind, and they are leaving us.

Slowly, quietly, but certainly leaving us. It's as simple — and final — as dying in your sleep.

Few notice their passage. And that's a shame. For those people compose a living history of America.

They are the immigrants. Millions of them, from every nation, poured into this country at the turn of the century, looking for the American Dream, and finding it. Here they stayed and worked and lived and created a foundation of

values and traditions upon which this country stands today.

But these originals are almost gone now, the simple victims of time. If you look hard enough though, you'll find a few. Take the Germans from Russia, for example. There are a handful of them still living in Lincoln. And if you ask, and have the time to sit through a few scrapbooks, they'll remember for you.

The German-Russian story had a simple beginning. In 1763, Russia promised free land along the Volga River to those who would farm it. Many Germans left their homeland and immigrated to Russia.

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