

Bargain hunters lured to Nebraska City

By Tracy Mueller
Staff Reporter

Nebraska City, east of Lincoln on Nebraska Highway 2, is home to Arbor Lodge, John Brown's Cave and other historical attractions. It also happens to be home to a dozen or so factory outlet and off-price stores carrying name-brand goods.

The stores sell everything from quality woolens, clothing, perfumes, cosmetics and luggage to children's goods, shoes and paper products. And most are priced at a hefty discount from 20 to 60 percent off retail prices. Sound good? Read on.

The Vanity Fair Outlet Mall is south of Nebraska City near the intersection of Nebraska Highway 2 and U.S. Highway 75, 47 miles

east of Lincoln. Its stores include:

— VF Factory Outlet sells apparel, including Lee jeans, Jantzen and Jansport adult clothing and Lollipop's children's wear.

— Van Heusen Factory Store sells men's and women's sportswear and dress shirts.

— Prestige Fragrance & Cosmetics, Inc. sells men's and women's perfumes, cosmetics, creams and lotions, including Charles of the Ritz, Max Factor, Revlon, Ultima II, Germaine Monteil and other toiletry items.

— Banister Shoe sells 40 name brands, including Cobbies and Capzio.

Other stores are in Nebraska City, centered on the Seventh Street and First Corso area:

— Full Size Fashion is a cloth-

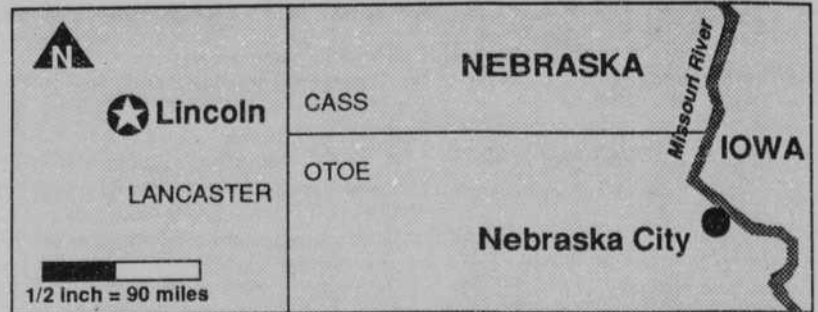
ing outlet that sells DK Gold, Donn Kinney, Shaker Sport, Levi Ben-dovers; Samsonite and Jordache luggage; Nomine socks; yearlong swimwear and accessories.

— 1/2 Price Party & Gift sells paper goods, invitations, stationery, streamers, wrappings and bows.

— NY Fashions sells clothing including Guess? and Outback Red.

— A name-brand woolens manufacturer with a plant in Nebraska City sells men's and women's apparel, blankets and piece goods.

Kathy Nigro, Prestige manager, said retail traffic is good, especially on weekends. She estimated that 65 percent of her customers are from out of town (outside a 50-mile radius). Prices range from \$4 for a \$10 Charles of the Ritz lip color, and up, including \$27 for a



Amie DeFrain/Daily Nebraskan

4-ounce bottle of Boss cologne that normally retails for \$49.

Carol Byers, a saleswoman at Full Size Fashion, said her store draws people from Omaha, Lincoln, St. Joseph, Mo., and Kansas City.

Customers have come from as far as Hawaii, with one woman making an annual trip from Florida to shop in Nebraska City.

Prices at Full Size Fashion include \$73 for a dress normally priced at \$99 and \$60 for a garment bag normally retailed at \$100.



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Savings, size and creativity reasons for students to sew their own originals

By Pat Dinslage
Senior Editor

Designer originals — the words stir up visions of Paris, Rome, maybe New York, and a price tag running into three or four figures.

But there is a way to have an original outfit, without the massive price tag: You make your own.

"It's something different than anybody else's," said Diane Hohnstein, manager of So-Fro Fabrics, 5635 O St. "You can pick out the fabric and pattern you want. When you make (an outfit), it fits better. You can make it higher quality than what you can buy."

Despite the above advantages of sewing your own designer outfit, Hohnstein said there is one main disadvantage: The time involved in selecting the pattern and fabric and in making the item.

Despite the extra time, more people are sewing these days, according to Hohnstein and Wendy Elston, supervisor at Northwest Fabrics, Gateway Shopping Center. In the last five years, the number of customers and sales at both stores have increased.

Hohnstein attributes much of the increase in the popularity of sewing to the development of the serger sewing machine. A serger is an overlock sewing machine that gives clothes made at home a more professional look by sewing more stitches per inch faster and cutting off the seam at the same time. It retails for \$300 to \$800, she said.

Elston said the recession also has

helped increase sales because people are more likely to sew their own outfits to save money.

But making your own clothes is not necessarily less expensive than buying them at a retail store.

"It can be cheaper," Hohnstein said, "but you have to watch for sales. If you buy at regular prices, . . . it's not that much cheaper than clothes at Target or ShopKo."

But sales on patterns and fabrics are easy to find. If someone is interested in making an outfit, he or she probably could find everything on sale, according to Hohnstein and Elston.

"Very rarely do our regular customers have to pay full price for patterns," Elston said.

So-Fro also has sales on a regular basis, "some right after another," Hohnstein said.

Half-price discount coupons on patterns and 20 percent to 50 percent sales on fabrics are common at So-Fro, Hohnstein said.

Elston said that \$6.95 regularly priced patterns are often on sale for 99 cents to \$2.

For a customer to sew a sweat shirt, it would cost \$12 to \$13 at regular prices, she said. With the discounts and sales, the same sweat shirt could be made for about \$8.

Competing with the cheaper cost of making your own clothes and the time involved are the discount retail stores, consignment stores and thrift shops.

The regular cost of making a dress

or sweat shirt is similar to what a customer usually pays at a discount store such as T.J. Maxx, which sells sweat shirts for \$10 to \$13, according to a Maxx employee.

At consignment stores such as Fashion II Consignment Boutique, clothing prices are about 1/4 to 1/3 of the original retail price, said Kathy Herr, Fashion II owner.

"Resale shops have become popular with all income levels. They're not just for those with tight budgets. They're for anyone who wants a good buy . . . and you don't have to take the time to make things," Herr said.

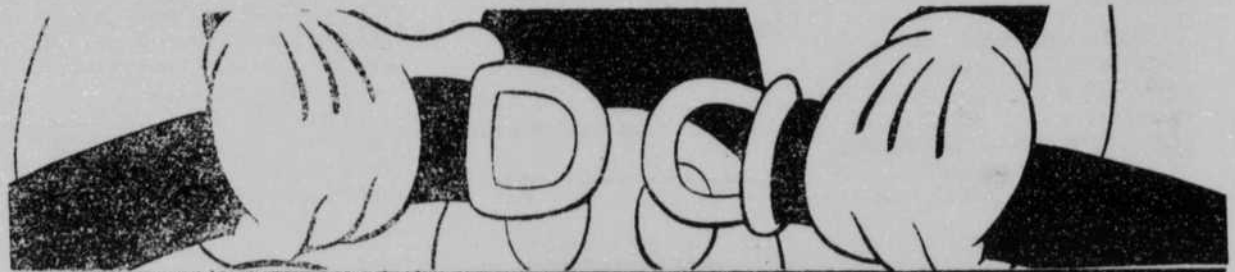
Thrift stores are probably the least expensive places to find clothes. Stores like the Salvation Army sell women's sweat shirts for \$3.50 to \$12.50.

Despite the popularity of discount and thrift stores, Elston said she thinks the trend toward making your own clothes is up even among students.

Although the largest group of customers at both So-Fro and Northwest consists of women and senior citizens, college students comprise about 20 percent of Northwest's customers and a smaller percentage at So-Fro, according to Hohnstein and Elston.

But if a student, or anyone else, has the time, desires a unique outfit and wants to save some money, Elston said, sewing has its advantages.

"You can design whatever you want. You have a wide selection of colors and fabrics," she said, "whereas when you're buying (at a store), they may have only one color or one style from which to choose."



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