EXPERIENCE Nebraska history

Scroll down for info in order of building numbers.

Enjoy!
Covered wagons carried pioneers and their belongings westward. Since the wagons were crowded with belongings and food, everyone who could walk had to. The wagons covered an average of 10 miles a day.

**Q:** If the wagons averaged 10 miles a day, how many days would it take you to walk from here back to your school?

**A:** Number of miles to Pioneer Village divided by 10 = # days
When we look at old cars, or tractors, we assume they work pretty much like the ones today. For several decades (into the 1930s), starting the car was terribly dangerous, the most common injuries being badly broken arms, or even chins and jaws. A crank on the outside front of the car had to be cranked hard several times to get the car started; sometimes the crank would fly up and hit the operator.
This car worked really well as long as you were only going a couple of miles or so. It was a good car for people living in a city.

Q: Are you surprised to learn we had electric cars 100 years ago?
A: Yes or No

Q: What do you think is a big difference between the electric cars of 100 years ago and the electric cars of today?
The Curtiss Aeroplane Company Model JN-4 was nicknamed “The Jenny”. It was America’s first War Plane and looked like this, but it wasn’t used for war until 1917 when America became involved in WW I.

Q: Why do you suppose they called it “Jenny”?
A: A corruption of the “JN” in the model number.

Q: How did the Army use the first airplanes?
A: To see what the other army was doing
Do you like to learn about animals, birds, or bugs? Many people do. Before people figured out cameras, they had to read books and look at drawings to learn. This is where an artist could really help. A man named Audubon worked very hard for years to make paintings of birds, plants and animals (1830s).

Q: Do you recognize the bird in this picture?
Do you know what Nebraska State Bird is?
A: Meadowlark
This **log cabin** was built in 1869. Five families lived inside this stockade for 2 years. The (fence) area was larger, so livestock, & equipment could be kept inside at night protected. During the day the families would work outside the stockade taking care of their crops, and putting the animals out to graze in pastures. The families worried about emergencies.

**Q:** If you were in the stockade and an emergency occurred – how would you get help?

**A:** *Ring the big bell by the front door.*
Hitching Posts: Before entering the building, point out the 2 blue posts with silver tops.

Q: What were these posts used for?
A: Hitching Posts to tie their horses to so they wouldn’t run away.

General stores were like the Walmarts back in the rural areas from about 1875 to the 1920s. The stores not only sold much-needed items but also served as a community gathering place. The store might also be the place people picked up their mail and where they voted in elections.
Early settlers sometimes needed fences. Wood was scarce, but some places had limestone rocks. The limestone rocks could be cut for fence posts, or cut into blocks to build buildings. Look closely at these fence posts.

**Do you see any fossils in the posts?**

This United States Land Office was built in 1874. Early settlers were required to come to this office and file their homestead claims. Doing this gave them proof of a legal claim to their land. Look at this old map from 1861.

**Q: Can you find Nebraska on the map?**
This depot was built in 1872; at that time many people were coming to homestead. The train brought new settlers and their animals and belongings, delivered the mail, and shipped out grain, milk, and livestock. Look at the corner where 7 layers of floors are shown.

Q: Why do you think a new floor was put in so many times?

A: There were so many people walking over them that they wore out.
Engine:
Climb aboard the steam engine. The car hooked to the engine was filled with coal used to power the engine.

Caboose:
Walk through the caboose. This was a place for the train conductor to do paperwork, cook meals for the crew, a place for the crew to sleep, and to take care of passengers that might be ill.
Water Tower: Trains like the ones here were powered by steam, so they needed to be filled with water at most train stations. This water tower was filled with water by the big windmill. It holds 5,000 gallons when full.

Q: A gallon of water weighs 8 pounds. How much would all the water in this tower weigh?
   A: 40,000 pounds.

Q: How many 8 oz glasses of water is that?
   A: 80,000
   (hint: 16 oz per pound = 2 glasses per pound)
One teacher would teach all 8 grades in this school. When this school was built, the school terms were different than they are today. They usually were from December through March, and then June through August.

Q: Why do you think the school months are different from today?
A: Most farm children had to work at home when it was planting time (spring) and harvesting time (fall).
Walk around the outside of the house, observing the differences from homes of today. Most homesteaders on the Great Plains built their first house of “Nebraska Marble” – a fun way of saying they built with sod. There were very few trees and having lumber shipped in was too expensive, so they used what they had. The sod could be cut from your land at no cost, and it made a warm home. They also wouldn’t burn when a prairie fire swept through.

**Did you find the bathroom?**
Interior:
There is something on the walls of this church that most people never notice. Look up the side walls to where they start to curve up to the ceiling.

Q: Do you see little heads? What are they?
A: These are angel like creatures called “seraphim and cherubim”.
Steps to nowhere?
See the steps inn front of the church.
Q: Why do you think those steps are there – when they don’t lead to anything?
A: Wagons and buggies would drive up along the backside of the steps. Elderly people, women and girls could step out of the wagon onto the steps; it was much safer to do this since ladies worn long dresses.
This old merry-go-round was run by the big steam engine. It is no longer safe to operate. The weird looking machine in front of the Merry-Go-Round is a “horsepower”. Pioneers used their animals – oxen or horses – to provide the power an engine would today. The horses would be hitched to the long arms and would walk around and around. This would turn a crank that went to a machine to make the machine run.

Q: Are you as strong as a horse? Try grabbing the bar and pushing it around in a circle. Could you do this all day?
The Warp family began to build this big expensive wooden barn while the family still lived in a tiny old sod house.

Q: Why would they build a new barn before building themselves a new wooden house?

A: It was more important to take care of their animals and store their food. Animals provided power to farm, food, milk, transportation. The family couldn’t make a living without their animals.
Building # 13 - Shops and Homes

live demonstrations

weaving and broom making
Building # 13 - Shops and Homes

Period living rooms

Period kitchens
Building # 13 - Shops and Homes

record players

broadcast television
Building # 13 - Shops and Homes

home entertainment systems
Building # 13 - upstairs

government & history

Sen. Carl T Curtis’ Office
Building # 13 - upstairs

President Grover Cleveland’s Desk

past days of desktop data
Building # 13 - upstairs

The comforts of home

Comforts away from home
Direct student’s attention to the first combine in the building:

In areas that had big flat fields, one very large combine could cut much more grain than several small ones. This combine is very big – so big that it took 30 horses to pull it through the field, and 3 men to operate the machine.
Look closely at this car (right inside the entrance). It has something special about it. Some farm families couldn’t afford a tractor, but did have a car. If one of their horses or mules were sick and couldn’t work in the field, the farmer could buy a kit to put on the car to make it work like a tractor. They would hook the plow or harrow onto the back of the car. When they saved up enough money to buy a tractor, they could take the kit off the car.
Livery Stable is a business that stabled horses and rented out horses, buggies and wagons to people. Nearly all towns had at least one of these. Do you think the way the business advertised on the front of the building was good?

UPSTAIRS: When this building was used as a livery stable, part of this area was used to store hay and grain for the horses.
Q: in the entry/office area you will see some ropes. Many cowboys who slept under the stars at night used a rope for a special reason. What does the information say?

A: They believed putting a rope on the ground around their bedding would keep snakes, that were looking for a warm place at night, away from their covers.
Parking meters: (upstairs)

When cars and trucks became popular, they had to park on the street like we do today. Good streets were expensive to build, and some people would take the “best” parking spaces and leave their car there all day. Cities came up with a way to encourage drivers to only park in a space for a little while, plus raise money to help repair the streets.

Their solution was the Parking Meter.
Upstairs:
Big Bicycle Display

Look at the maroon colored lady’s safety bike. Do you see something unusual on its wheels?

Q: Why do you think the strings are on there? (Clue: this is a lady’s bike)
A: The strings kept ladies’ long skirts from getting caught in the chain and wheels.
We all know what a squirt gun is – something fun to play with, right? Most often, inventors try to make things that would fill a need or solve a problem, not just something to have fun with. The same was true for squirt guns. I bet you are thinking “Why talk about squirt guns when we are looking at bicycles”?

Q: Squirt guns were invented to help with a problem bicycle riders had.

What do you think that problem was?

A: It was used to scare off dogs that chased bicycles.
Bull Silver King Tractor; this was the first tractor in Kearney County in 1916. Some farmers here had steam traction engines before the regular tractor. You will see some of these huge monsters in the lean-to section of this building.

Activity: Weather Forecasting Display. Learn what was necessary to make longer range forecasts possible, tell the temperature when there is a cricket around, and more. Encourage the children to take the little handouts at this location.
Ice Machine!
Point out the **large steam traction engines** as you enter this area.

Show students the big blue machine in the middle of this area. This old machine made something we use nearly every day – in things we drink. Modern machines to make this can be quite small.

**Q: What do you think this machine made?**

**A: Ice**
A blacksmith worked with metal – making horseshoes, plow shares, disc blades, shovels, and anything else his customers might need that was made of metal. He also repaired many other things.

Q: Look up at the ceiling where the horseshoes are hung. Can you guess how many are hanging there?

A: Posted on the back side of the beam.
The Pony Express was a fast way to send mail from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California, a distance of about 2,000 miles, in only 10 days.

Relay stations were the little stations where Pony Express Riders switched horses and immediately galloped off on the next section of their ride. The relay station would have one man living there to have horses ready for the riders and to take care of the tired horses.
Q: Can you find the Mochila?  
(mo chee luh) The Spanish word for pouch.  
A: A special saddlebag used to carry the letters.

Q: Do you think being a Pony Express rider would be an exciting job?  
They did hire children as young as 11!  
Look at this advertisement for riders.  
Read the qualifications to see if you could be a rider.  
A: Some will say they could qualify.  
Be sure to tell them that while the advertisement doesn’t say so; no women or girls would be hired.
For Pioneers, doing the laundry was really hard work, and took nearly a whole day each week. (Point out the washtub, washboard, and the posted “How to do Laundry”). People were really excited when a washing machine was invented, even though it still needed to be cranked to slosh the clothes around inside the washer. The best thing was to use the family dog to walk on a treadmill and make the machine crank without someone turning it.
Copper Tub Washing Machine –
New technology;
no longer needed the dog
just to get the laundry done!