

PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK



Sarah Bailey

The Platte at Gjerloff Landing (on the right).



Charles L. Whitney Education Center east side at year's end. The construction phase that began in October, including siding, northeast corner porch enclosure and concrete pour for patio on north and east sides has been completed. See back of this page for more details.

The seed mixes are ready to go. The first batch is destined for three Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) sites near Giltner totaling 60 acres. So far we have 500 acres on the 2013 slate, with a possibility of 500 more. The majority are WRP plantings.



The Last Days of 2012 were lively at Griffith Prairie and Farm: In the greenhouse, benches were weatherized and 88 species of grasses and forbs were planted; on the prairie, removal of old fencing and weed trees continued; in the Blue Barn, all the high-diversity seed mixes destined for 2013 wetland and prairie restoration plantings were prepared; and progress continued on the Education Center.



NEWSLETTER
December, 2012



Alfred-Wilson Memorial Place - in memory of Norris Alfred and Jim & Alice Wilson - was recently created on Prairie Island along what the late *Polk Progress* editor dubbed "Birding Road." Former Polk area resident Dan Tyler came up with the idea, setting aside a corner of his pasture and arranging for a large plaque paying tribute to the esteemed three from Polk. Continued ⇨



Center Update: As reported in the November *Link*, Willis Contracting poured concrete for the spacious patio, which wraps around the east and north side of the Center. It has a pleasing stamped stone-like surface, appropriately resembling the sediment deposition one might find on the Platte's sandbars. The patio accentuates what will be an alluring fair weather space – the screened porch on the building's northeast corner (photo, left). The storm windows allow for great winter scenery viewing from a sheltered location; in the summer the screens will keep the mosquitoes out as visitors enjoy the breeze and summer night sounds of the prairie.

Memorial continued: A beautiful cedar bench was also installed, in memory of Wayne and Lucile Tyler (Dan's parents). It is a wonderful place to just sit and enjoy the sights and sounds of Prairie Island - and for those of us who held those memorialized dear, to remember.

The 1995 *Prairie Plains Journal* also included tributes to Norris and to Jim and Alice Wilson. We plan to scan and post the older journal issues to the website soon.

Excerpt from the memorial plaque:

Norris Alfred (1913-1995): Writer, painter, philosopher, editor of the Polk Progress, Pulitzer Prize nominee and visionary well ahead of his time, preserving values and lifestyles found in rural communities across Nebraska, he urged his readers to pause and appreciate the beauty of the "Grand Plan." Norris frequently drove north from Polk to Havens Bridge, then jogged south and west along county roads roughly paralleling the Platte River (past this place) until he reached Highway 66 south of Central City. Along the way, he observed the bird life, absorbed the passage of seasons, and reflected upon humankind's responsibilities in the Grand Plan - reflections he conveyed with simple elegance in his weekly editorial, "Polking Around." Norris was a gentle man with dry wit and astonishing wisdom. He held a doctorate of letters and was posthumously inducted into the Nebraska Press Association's Hall of Fame.

James C. (1900-1995) and Alice O. Wilson (1906-1991) lived on a farm east of Polk where they propagated native grass in order to preserve the flora unique to Nebraska's tallgrass prairies. Before widespread public awareness of biodiversity as a critical element of sustainable development, the Wilsons identified the species comprising those ecological communities, collected the seed, and multiplied the seed stock to ensure that humankind would have the means to rehabilitate at least some of what had been compromised in our push for greater production. Jim and Alice had traveled the world and achieved success in commerce, academia, and the arts. They came to Nebraska in the mid-1960s because (like their close friend Norris Alfred) they loved the rural values and lifestyle, and they loved the prairie. Alice's touching poetry often graced the pages of the "Polk Progress." Jim and Alice Wilson's work and presence enriched our community greatly.

A bluebird house thought to have been built by Norris Alfred sits in the corner of the Alfred-Wilson Memorial.



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The youngest of 13 hikers checking out the winter bird life at Bader Park on December 15th. That wrapped up the park tours for 2012, a record year for participation! Please note the 2013 schedule (and other events) at prairieplains.org.

2013 Annual Meeting of Members
Saturday, Jan. 19th
Bremer Center, Aurora
8:30 Social
9:00 Meeting
RSVP for lunch to amyppri@hamilton.net
Afternoon tour of the Education Center!

THANK YOU to volunteer Alex Briner for winterizing work on greenhouse benches.

Extra thanks to everyone who sent in year-end contributions.