

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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The Branding Tradition A Rancher's Way of Life

By Renee Bubak
for The Arnold Sentinel

With spring comes track and golf season for our athletes, planting season for our farmers, and the time to brand for our ranchers. Starting as early as late January, our local cattle operators have been working long hours to ensure a successful calving season. Besides the daily care of their cattle, the ranchers have weathered storms, fought illnesses, dealt with a few more-than-protective mamas, drafted calves, sorted and moved pairs, and done whatever it takes to attempt to keep all their calves alive and healthy. So, in many ways, branding is like a grand celebration of a job well done, of the passing on of a legacy, and of a tradition that finds its roots not only in the American West, but as far back as the time before Christ as documented in the hieroglyphics in Egyptian tombs.

Today, in many parts of Nebraska, branding is more than just a tradition. Branding of livestock is part of Nebraska law, and in 1941 our legislature created the Nebraska Brand Committee to inspect cattle and investigate missing and/or stolen cattle. Each brand is as unique as the ranch it represents. Brands are often passed down through the generations as well as the traditions that accompany each ranch's branding.

A little over two weeks ago, the Watkins Ranch had their first branding of the season. As their operation has grown and changed through the years, so has their branding. When they first started out, they had less cattle and the branding day crew was comprised of mostly family and neighbors. It was common



Bill Watkins is giving first-time brander Rob McCarthy of Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, tips for a successful brand. Also pictured wrestling calves is Mike Hough of Minnesota, Blake Schwarz and Grant Jones. Kisha Zieffle is the roper in behind. (Courtesy photos)

for neighbors to trade help and everyone would plan to spend a day at each of the neighbors for their branding. Denny Beatty was a regular part of all their early brandings, as well as the Raoul Johnson family. They still do some trading with other ranches, but now it is much more common to hire help for the day, making branding more expensive for the ranch and a great source of income for the local youth who seem to make the branding circuit in the area.

Their style of branding has also changed. The cattle used to always be brought to the main corrals at the house where the calves were put in a pen and caught by hand—farmer brand style. Anyone wrestling calves that way expected to come home with a bruise or two. Later they moved to running the calves through a chute into a calf cradle. This worked effectively for a smaller bunch as you were only doing one calf at a time and your crew was much smaller. Now, with a

larger herd and the use of portable panels, branding looks a whole lot different.

Pairs are gathered into a portable panel corral in the pasture they are located. Usually the Bubak family and whoever is roping that day ride out on horses, along with Brandon Nansel on a ranger or 4-wheeler, to gather the cattle into this portable pen. The panels are quickly pulled shut, a good share of the cows are sorted out of the pen, and the branding is ready to begin.

The method of branding on the Watkins operation has changed as well. Gone are the days of digging a hole and making a fire pit for hot irons. Gone are the days of burying a bucket in the sand and using a propane torch to heat the hot irons. Gone are the days of the fire pots—round tubes with the torch to heat the rod iron brands. The Watkins have gone electric. While many ranchers still use the hot irons, the

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School Board Votes to Remodel Building

Last week's school board meeting ran a little later than usual due to a lengthy discussion over a proposed remodeling project that will reconfigure four areas of the school. The project will fix the current plumbing issues in the kitchen and re-configure the room for flow purposes, convert the current music room into a lunchroom, move the music room to the wrestling/weight room and convert the old gym into two rooms where the wrestling and weight room will be located.

Clay Mohr was present to discuss some cost saving measures for converting the music room into a lunchroom.

Board members were given time to bring up their concerns about the cost of the project and possible future needs of the school, but the majority came to an agreement that now would be a good time to make the changes. It was mentioned that a concession area is needed, and it will be good to give the old gym a purpose again.

At the close of discussion, board members voted 5-1 to approve the project at a cost of \$98,584.31.

Purchase of Computers

In other business, the board discussed the purchase of 20 MacBook Air computers. The school is currently at the end of a three-year lease with the current Apple laptops. The school usually renews the contract and turns in the computers to be recycled and replaced; however, Mr. Jageler has been very impressed with how well the computers are lasting. It was proposed to order just 20 more due to the growing amount of students. This will save money this year, and next year, when the lease is renewed, the school can get on a four-year lease cycle.

Hot Lunch Prices

Hot lunch and breakfast prices will increase by ten cents next school year. Dr. Lewis said that the prices should have been increased last year, but were not. Arnold school is still very low compared to other schools in the state, but is required to charge a certain amount to keep state funding for the free lunch program.

Short Bus

The transportation committee met to discuss issues with the current short bus, and it was decided that the bus will not be able to last another year on the route roads. Dr. Lewis presented a bid for a new 30 passenger bus. Members voted unanimously to table the decision until more bids are presented.

Donation

It was voted to dispose of the kitchen's old convection oven by donating it to Cole Leach to be used at the Homeward Trails camp that he runs. Leach believes he can get it working again.

Principal's Report

Mr. Morgan reported that 14 children attended kindergarten round-up on April 5.

Village Board Approves LB840 Business Loan and Grant, Discusses Webcams

Village board members approved an LB840 business loan and grant at their meeting held last week. Arnold Economic Director Cheryl Carson presented the request for a \$6,000.00 loan and accompanying grant of \$2,000.00 for roof repairs for the Flour Girls/Brew Bakers, LLC, building (former Nebraska Farmhouse Antiques) - which is another step in the right direction of saving historic buildings on Main Street.

In her update, Carson said the AEDC has filed for a grant on behalf of Finch Memorial Library. Marcy Lucas, Rose Bierman and library board members compiled information and gathered all the estimates for the needed improvement project for Finch Memorial Library. Once this was done, the AEDC and library were able to work together to apply for a grant from the Nebraska Junk Jaunt.

The library's restoration project has grown from tuck point to save the exterior brick of the building, to repairing the front steps—which are showing signs of deterioration—to repairs to the sidewalk for safety concerns, to adding downspouts to prevent further water damage to the exterior of the building. Lastly, board members want to remove the

drop ceiling gridding to expose the original interior ceiling and beautiful woodwork inside the library. They would appreciate any donations people might consider.

AEDC will be applying for another grant on behalf of the library in the month of April.

Arnold has been added to Broken Bow Chamber directory listings for community events in Custer County for the summer of 2017.

Carson met with representatives from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development on March 23. They will begin working on requirements which need to be met to qualify as a leadership community in late May or early June. Carson said this will be a somewhat lengthy process, but well worth it for Arnold to be considered a leadership community.

On March 28, Carson attended a CDBG workshop for updates in North Platte. She received great information, and this is an additional source to consider for possible avenues in the areas of tourism, economic development and downtown revitalization for Arnold projects.

Carson reported that the AEDC has added a new feature when advertising housing in Arnold. This new idea is intended to catch the eye

of those who might be looking for a new home. Viewers will be treated to a quick video featuring a selected home, and in order to gather more information on the home, or view other listings Arnold may have, they are directed to the Arnold website.

Carson said that recently, when new home buyers from out of the area were asked how they found their home and why they moved to Arnold, they replied “The Arnold website.”

Carson continues updating the website and Facebook, Visit Nebraska, and advertising of events through radio, T.V. and print ads.

Web Cams

Discussion was held on installing webcams for live streaming of events. R.T. Green, who proposed the project, recommends that a webcam be placed on the siren by the AEDC office. Cheryl Carson said the clarity of one of the webcams she looked at was good, and there can be a YouTube link on both the SORC and Arnold websites. R.T. has pledged \$750.00 to \$850.00 and SORC has pledged up to \$5,000.00 for the purchase. Board members tabled discussion to give them time to go over the numbers.

Basketball Court

A resident requested that

the fence at the basketball court on North Carroll Street be removed or fixed. It was mentioned that more kids are using the court to play basketball and to skate on, and because balls roll out onto the street, it is becoming a safety issue. Another resident suggested that more kids might use the court if it were more attractive. Village employee Doug De Laune will look into what can be done.

In other business, the board:

- Accepted Don Brosius' sealed bid for \$150.01 for village hay at the Arnold Recreation Area. It was the only bid received.

- Approved renting Arnold Township's motor grader at \$75.00 per hour without an operator and \$100.00 per hour with an operator. The grader will be rented only a few hours a month, allowing the village to pursue purchasing a replacement grader and including it in next year's budget.

- Heard a report from Doug De Laune that the pool heater is in and ready to install for the upcoming season.

- Approved an agreement with NMPP for a cost of service/rate design study that will help in understanding system costs and determining rates.

Change in K-12 Spring Concert

Arnold Public School is announcing a change in the K-12 spring concert scheduled for Tuesday, May 2, at 7:00 p.m. There will be two concerts instead of one.

On Monday, May 1, at 7:00 p.m., secondary school students in grades 6-12 will present their spring concert. Performers will include the 6th grade students, the 7-12 band, 7-8 choir, 9-12 choir and all events that participated in the District IV Music Contest at Burwell.

On Tuesday, May 2, at 7:00 p.m., the Arnold elementary school students in grades K-5 will present their spring program, entitled “We're Making Music.” This is the original date of the former single concert.

Presentation on Medicare Changes May 11 at Arnold

Riverview Apartments and Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) will present “Medicare Changes in 2017 - 10 Changes You Need to Know” at Riverview Apartments on Thursday, May 11, at 3:00 p.m.

For more detailed information about the free presentation, please see the advertisement on page 4 or call Sheila Kennedy, SHIIP Regional Representative, at 1-800-234-7119.