

# About this memorial

This rest site being dedicated to longtime Bluebirds Across Nebraska members Kenneth Barnhill, Bert Hellmer and Sharon Holliday and sits along the Chief Standing Bear Trail. The historical trail spans from his homeland in northern Nebraska, which his Ponca Tribe was forced by federal treaty to leave, through Kansas and into designated Indian territory

in what is now Oklahoma. The hardship of travel, illness and other conditions caused many tribe members to perish, including his son. Chief Standing Bear led 30 people back to their Nebraska home to bury his child. As a result of the trial that ensued upon his return, he became the first Native American to be recognized as a person in federal court.



A portion of the historical trail from Beatrice, Nebraska, to the Nebraska-Kansas border was dedicated in honor of Chief Standing Bear and the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska in 2017. This corridor is used for hiking, biking and as a nature trail for all to enjoy.

Bluebird boxes line the Blue Springs Trailhead corridor, starting north from Riverside Farm — where Sharon Holliday once maintained a trail — in rural Blue Springs to south of Plum Road, 6 miles north of Barneston. The goal is to have bluebird nest boxes eventually placed from Blue Springs to Oketo, Kansas. The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, Nebraska Trails Foundation and Homestead Conservation Trails Association have granted permission to expand the bluebird habitat along the trail.

It is fitting that this rest stop along the former Union Pacific Railroad property be dedicated to our friends. The BAN memorial commemorates the development of our region by featuring a variety of paver bricks, many of them made in the Midwest. We included railroad ties because, as towns around this region grew and prospered, paver bricks were used for sidewalks, streets and railroad platforms. In the late 19th century, nothing said “prosperity”



more than the railroad coming to your town, bringing brick streets and sidewalks, a much-appreciated solution for streets that were dusty in the summer and muddy most of the rest of the year. The pavers were phased out after World War II as asphalt and concrete streets and roadways came into fashion.

BAN is lucky enough to have a member donate part of his collection of antique paver bricks for this project. On the following pages is a short history of some of the pavers used in this project, and the companies that manufactured them.

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# About the pavers

## Buffalo and Buffalo Block, Buffalo, Kansas

— The Buffalo Brick Plant produced its first bricks in 1902, under the direction of H.J. Huiskamp, president and owner. It employed between 75 and 100 men and eventually produced between 100,000 and 125,000 bricks daily, including pavers, face, common and hollow bricks, which were shipped all over the United States. It became Buffalo Brick & Tile Co. in 1939. From 1954-1966, the plant was leased by Acme Brick Co. of Fort Worth, then was demolished in 1972.



**Barr** — The dark brown “Barr” bricks likely were made at the Barr Clay Company, founded in Streator, Illinois, in 1892. Streator was founded on a 40-foot seam of workable shale, which was used in the bricks. The factory closed in 1923.



**Cleveland VIT Brick, Oklahoma City, 1905** — Blessed with an abundance of red clay and shale, Oklahoma has many brick-making operations. A factory in Cleveland, Oklahoma, operated during the first half of the 20th century, and produced this brick.



**Delta Brick & Tile Co., Delta, Colo.** — Located near Montrose on Colorado's Western Slope, the company's peak years were 1905-1950. It was known for its manganese bricks, and its pink and cream-colored bricks. One of its employees was Hyrum Dempsey, the father of heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey.



*Delta Brick & Tile factory, photo courtesy of the Delta County, Colo., Historical Society.*

**Des Moines** — Des Moines, Iowa, boasted at least six brick-making establishments in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but given the inscription on this gray-colored brick, it was likely made by the Des Moines Brick Manufacturing Co., which in 1896 claimed to be “the oldest plant of the kind in the city.” The company, organized in 1889 and built between the Des Moines Union and the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad tracks, made its first paving brick in 1893, employed 100 men and used 10 large kilns, giving it a daily capacity of 120,000 bricks. It produced about 22 million bricks in 1894.



**‘Don’t spit on sidewalk’** — Dr. Samuel Crumbine (1862-1954) of Dodge City, Kansas, was a public health crusader who opposed the shared use of unwashed towels and drinking cups. One of his campaigns, inscribing “Don’t spit on sidewalk” on paving bricks, was an attempt to reduce the spread of tuberculosis. The Coffeyville Vitrified Brick & Tile Co. (and possibly other manufacturers) eventually produced these bricks early in the 20th century.



**Egyptian** — The Murphysboro Paving Brick Co. was launched in 1909 by William Hill and Henry Jenkins. At its height, it produced anywhere from 80,000 to 250,000 bricks a day, using 21 kilns. As many as 185 employees were on the payroll before the Great Depression forced the plant's demise in 1931. According to a 2011 story in The Southern Illinoisian, Murphysboro was among several companies to provide bricks for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the transcontinental Lincoln Highway and the Panama Canal construction site. The “Egyptian” moniker is used throughout southern Illinois, which has long been nicknamed “Little Egypt.”



*The Egyptian Paving Brick Co. is featured on a Murphysboro, Ill., postcard.*



### Humboldt Nebraska —

In 1906, the Humboldt Brick Company was established in the town located in extreme southeast Nebraska. The product soon became recognized for its high quality; consequently, demand increased. Many Humboldt bricks were used and shipped by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad.



*Humboldt Brick Co. employees at work. Photo courtesy of the Kansas Historical Society.*

**Hydraulic** — Shortly before the Civil War, Edward Sterling secured the rights to a hydraulic brick press and a company by that name was founded in 1868 in St. Louis. By using the press and his innovative brick kilns, Sterling produced a heavy, dense, strong brick with twice the crush



*The Hydraulic-Press Brick Co. boasts an output of 300 million per year. Special note: The company's secretary, and later president, was poet T.S. Eliot's father.*

as Chrysler and Manhattan Life buildings in New York.

**Missouri Moberly Mo. Block** — Located in north-central Missouri on a prime site for extracting clay ideal for brickmaking, Moberly had a pair of well-known brick manufacturing plants — Moberly Brick Plant and Star Brick Co. Both made paving brick, but Star Brick also made elegant deep red bricks favored in the construction of homes and businesses.



**Pittsburg** — In the 1890s, Robert Nesch entered the brick business in Pittsburg, Kansas, and used the high-quality clays found in that vicinity to produce pavers, eventually landing a contract to pave much of Broadway Street in Pittsburg. Eventually, two other clay-working establishments emerged to produce hollow blocks and tile for drains and sewers, and bricks for smokestacks.



### Purington Paver, Purington Block, Purington

— The Purington Paving Brick Company launched its business in East Galesburg, Illinois, by producing heavy, solid 4x4x8-inch paving bricks, beginning in 1890. At one point, it was considered the largest brickmaker in the world.



Four of the blocks on display here are from Purington. At its height, Purington employed 800 to transform Knox County's blue shale and yellow silty clay loam into more than 150,000 bricks per day. At the turn of the 20th century, the U.S. government ordered

Purington Pavers to pave the streets of Panama



*Purington Paving Brick Co. employees pose beside a wall of bricks.*

City, Panama, during the construction of the Panama Canal. Purington bricks also have been found in France and India. By 1948, paving blocks were no longer in demand, so Purington produced 2x4x8-inch facing bricks used for buildings.

**Sherbrooke G.&V.B. Co. LeRoy** — Located in the eastern Kansas town of LeRoy, the Sherbrooke Brick Plant produced rose-colored bricks early in the 20th century.





# About the pavers

## Standard, Yoke VIT Brick Co., Coffeyville, Kas. and Coffeyville VIT B&T Co. —

Capitalizing on large deposits of shale, limestone and building stone, Coffeyville, Kansas, had a number of brick plants in the late 1890s and early 1900s - including the Standard Brick Company, the Vittrified Brick Company, and the Yoke Brick Company. At their height, these factories produced more than 750,000 bricks per day, according to the Coffeyville Chamber of Commerce. By 1905, there were 36 blocks of brick streets in Coffeyville.



*Coffeyville Vittrified Brick Co. workmen in Chanute, Kan.*

**TR Clay Co.** — There were at least two brickyards in Table Rock, Nebraska, during the 1890s. One, the Table Rock Clay Co., was managed by George Cotton. A Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics publication for 1899-1900 stated the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad had begun construction on a siding to the plant, which, besides enhancing distribution in eastern Nebraska, would have enabled shipping on the railroad's line to Denver.



**Union B & G Co., Cherryvale, Kas.** — This brick was produced by the Union Brick & Gas Co., one of six plants in Cherryvale that combined to produce half a million bricks a day by 1908. The others were Coffeyville Vittrified Brick and Tile Company, Cherryvale Brick Company, Southwestern Brick Company, Federal Betterment Company and W.H. Crowl Brick and Tile Company. By 1930, they were all closed.



**VVV Neodesha Kan. Brick & Tile** — In 1900, the Verdigris Valley Vittrified brick plant opened in the southeast Kansas town of Neodesha, the home of abundant shale deposits. The shale proved inferior to that mined in Galesburg, Illinois, and the plant was moved to another location before undergoing several temporary shutdowns, but it produced red- and liver-colored bricks throughout its erratic life span before being permanently shuttered in 1953.



**Walsh** — The origin of this light-colored brick is murky. The most plausible theory points to Saratoga Springs, New York, where a brick yard was operated by the Walsh Brothers, according to a 1907 Hudson River telephone directory. Later, the brick yard was taken over by the Empire Brick Company.



## Other pavers used at this site include:



Daisies S-B



Three Stars



Phoenix



Capital



Two Stars



The Ottawa B&T Co.



Flint Co. (Des Moines, Iowa, 1895-1910)



X & O pattern