

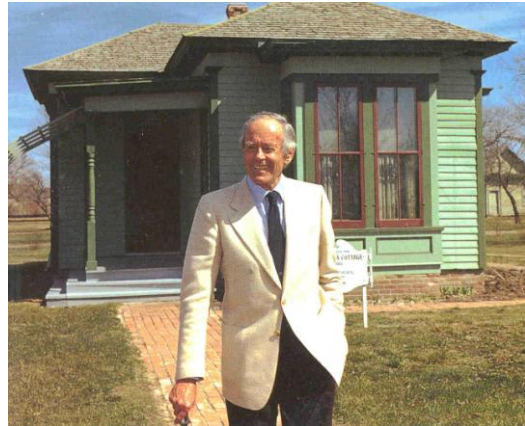
# Famous Sons & Daughters

## Grand Island Personalities & Colorful Characters...

### Henry Fonda (1905-1982)

Academy Award Winning Actor

**Henry Jaynes Fonda was born in Grand Island, Nebraska on May 16, 1905** to William Brace Fonda & Herberta Jaynes Fonda. Henry was delivered at the family home (622 West Division) by Dr. George Roeden. His parents were married in Omaha on June 10, 1903 and moved to Grand Island where William was a salesman for a printing business – most likely his father's (Ten Eyck Fonda) Omaha business, Fonda Brothers and Company. The business sold calendars and high grade advertising novelties. The young Fonda family returned to Omaha before Henry's first birthday. His acting career began at the Omaha Community Playhouse at the urging of Marlon Brando's mother, a friend of Herberta Fonda.



**Henry Fonda in front of his birth Cottage at Stuhr Museum**

Henry's connection with Grand Island continued when his **birth cottage was moved to Stuhr Museum** in 1966 when **he gave \$10,000.00** as well as providing photographs and information to assist in the restoration efforts. The green, one-story frame home includes a parlor, dining room, bedroom, bathroom and kitchen. The house is furnished, as it might have been when the Fonda family lived there. He **returned to Nebraska frequently** to visit family and friends and stopped at the Stuhr Museum in 1978 to see the completed restoration. Henry also added his voice to an introductory slide show which visitors can still see before beginning their tour of Stuhr Museum.

August 15, 1992 was heralded as **Henry Fonda Day** when a stretch of Federal Highway 34 in Grand Island was designated as the **Henry Fonda Memorial Highway**. His son, Peter Fonda, daughter, Jane Fonda (with then husband Ted Turner) and other family members attended the daylong celebration. Henry was honored again with the addition of the **Henry Fonda Rose Garden at Stuhr Museum** on May 16, 1995-in memory of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. A Henry Fonda Rose is a large beautiful yellow rose. The Fonda family was on hand and the *Grand Island Independent* quotes a portion of Peter Fonda's address, "**Most of you knew your fellow Nebraskan, Henry Fonda as a wonderful actor and artist. He was both of those, (but) most of his happiest times were when his hands were in the soil.**"

Henry's relationship with his home state is summed up in a 1977 quote from Nebraska Now, "**I'm a Mid-western boy ... and I've never been ashamed of it. I had a great life in Nebraska while growing up and my roots run very deep there.**" *Source – Stuhr Museum Research Department, photo Stuhr Museum*

**Group Special** – Tour the Fonda birth cottage and Henry Fonda Rose Garden. Receive copies of Henry's favorite cookie recipe, "Bessie's Sugar Cookies" along with a brief story regarding the recipe.

### Grace & Edith Abbott – Sisters of Social Justice



**Edith Abbott,  
1876 - 1957**



**Grace Abbott,  
1878 - 1939**

### **Edith Abbott (1876-1957)**

**Edith Abbott helped to create a new profession** akin to those of law, medicine and theology: social work. As the **first woman to become the dean** of an American University graduate school (the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration) she prepared generations of social servants. She was the **author** of influential books on the problems of women and struggles for human rights. She worked with her sister, Grace, to combat a wide array of social ills from the mistreatment of immigrants to the abuses of child labor.

### **Grace Abbott (1878-1939)**

Grace Abbott was the **highest-ranking woman in the United States government** for over a decade and was the only trained social worker at the head of a major federal bureau at the time of the Great Depression – Chief of the **U.S. Children’s Bureau (1921-1934)**. Her trailblazing Social work has been credited with **leading the way** for the **Social Security Act and the United Nations’ UNICEF program**. She was the **first woman in American history** to be nominated for a Cabinet post (Herbert Hoover) and she was also the **first American to serve** on a committee of the League of Nations. Grace was one of the first female broadcasters in the 1920’s with an **NBC radio show** “Your Child” and was nicknamed “The Mother of America’s 43 million children.” She was a trusted associate of Nobel Prize winner Jane Addams and served for a time as director of Chicago’s Immigrants’ Protective League. A U.S. Liberty Ship during WWII was named in Grace Abbott’s honor.

**Burial Site** - Edith and Grace are buried in the family plot at the Grand Island Cemetery. Edith once wrote, “Grace and I always agreed that our most cherished memories were those of our prairie childhood...even when we lived in Chicago or Washington, this western town and state were always home.”

**Note:** The Abbott Sister’s father **O.A. Abbott** (1842-1935) arrived in Grand Island in 1867 as a Civil War Veteran (1861-1865, Ninth Illinois Cavalry) in search of a new home. He was the first lawyer in Hall County, the first lieutenant governor of Nebraska and a signer of the petition to incorporate the City of Grand Island in 1872. Their mother **Elizabeth ‘Lizzie’ Griffin-Abbott** was from an abolitionist family and these interests led her to become an active supporter of the women’s suffrage movement. She was a good friend of Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone (both visited the Abbott home in Grand Island). She worked to establish the first library in Grand Island and stood with President Teddy Roosevelt for the groundbreaking in 1903. Other causes included the first State Soldier’s Home, the first public park in the city and the first Woman’s Club.

*Sources - John Sorensen – The Abbott Sisters Project, Hall County Historical Society and Stuhr Museum. Photos – Stuhr Museum*

**For Groups** – special driving tour of existing and past sites relevant to the Abbott Family, bronze bust at Edith Abbott Memorial Library, Abbott Family items at Stuhr Museum as well as programs regarding the lives of the Abbott Sisters.

### **Grant Reynard (1887-1968)**

Successful career as **one of America’s outstanding illustrator and painter**

“I was provided with a measure and portion of talent which I believe is a God-given desire put into a man. Since my parents were musicians, I studied piano as a boy, but soon got a notion, out there in Grand Island, Nebraska, to have a try at putting down (with an either grade pencil and any paper handy) my interest in the world around me. I would invade the business section of town and being a shy boy, hide behind posts or crates to draw the merchants and town characters. As I look now at those early drawings, I am amazed at how they bring the characters of the little prairie town to life, right into the here and now.”

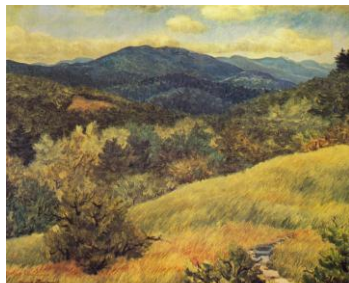


PLATE 59 — WELL AND MOUNTAINS, WOODSTOCK, VERMONT, oil

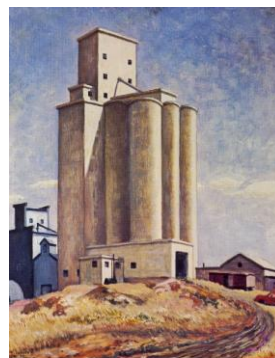
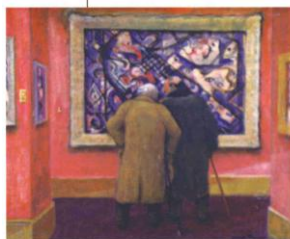


PLATE 27 — GRAIN ELEVATOR, oil

**Grant Reynard** was born October 20, 1887 in Grand Island, Nebraska to Stephen Blackstone Reynard and Jennie Lynd Bacon Reynard. He was raised in Grand Island, his father owned a music store and also worked for the Bartenbach Opera House. He attended the **Chicago Art Institute Academy** in 1906 and returned to Grand Island for two years to raise additional money (worked at his father's music store and played piano in dance halls) so that he could continue his art studies. Reynard returned to Chicago in 1909 and completed his education, in 1914 he moved to Leonia, New Jersey where he pursued a career as a **free-lance illustrator** and continued his education at the Harvey Dunn School. 1915-1924 Grant was the **Art editor for Redbook Magazine**, 1924-1929 he **illustrated 150 pieces for the Saturday Evening Post, Country Gentleman, Ladies' Home Journal, Cosmopolitan, Harper's Bazaar, Hearst's International Magazine, Collier's, Woman's Home Companion, Liberty and Scribner's**. Reynard, spoke of meeting fellow Nebraskan, **Willa Cather in A Measure of Vision**, 1966 recalling "She gave me some advice I never forgot." Cather shared that in her early career she had written stories based on imagination, but that it was not until she returned in retrospect to the scenes of her childhood in Nebraska that she found herself as a novelist. Reynard said, "It was a turning event in my career. I made the break from illustration and editors to the free world of drawing, painting and printmaking."

1941 Reynard wrote, illustrated and published a book of poetry, *Rattling Home for Christmas*, also from 1927-1972 he had thirteen articles published including for the Ford Motor Company, West Kentucky Coal Company and **illustrations for Theodore Dreiser's An American Tragedy**. He became active in creating war propaganda materials for **Artists for Victory** and continued to create images until the end of the war. He painted and drew Americans in a variety of activities with some of his best works capturing World War II from the home front. Mid-1950's, Reynard spent more time on his own creative work, he traveled, lectured and taught across the U.S. Nebraska remained dear to him as he returned most summers for lectures and art classes across Nebraska including Grand Island. **"...I would like to be identified as a Nebraskan. I hope to come back here every year, for subjects, for paintings and etching."**—Grant Reynard interview for the Omaha World Herald, August 31, 1936.

Source – Museum of Nebraska Art & Stuhr Museum

**Group Special** - The Grant Reynard Collection is housed at the Museum of Nebraska Art (MONA) which periodically displays. MONA can also prepare special programs for groups. Wonderful examples of his work are also at the Grand Island City Hall and Stuhr Museum (by special arrangement).

## David Kaufmann

### **Mr. Grand Island, Philanthropist & Quiet Hero**

David Kaufmann stands apart from the many great community leaders that helped to build, grow and strengthen Grand Island... for his leadership, generosity and faith stretched past the boundaries of a thriving prairie town to reach around the world.



Kaufman was born in Munstereifel, Germany in 1875, immigrating in 1903 to New York City and then to Grand Island in 1904 to work at the Wolbach Store – this last move brought **quite a dose of culture shock** but he soon found "there was something about the old town that made me like it... **the business men and the people of Grand Island – their willingness to cooperate in all worthwhile undertakings...**"

In 1906 he opened Kaufmann's (only the third 'five and dime store' in Nebraska) and expanded his operations in 1924. The latter site at 308-312 West Third Street is currently owned by JEO Consulting Group, which did a two year award winning facade renovation to bring the building back to the David Kaufmann era.

The distinguished title of **'Mr. Grand Island'** was a result of his positive attitude and influence, numerous civic endeavors and his generous contributions of time and money to a variety of worthy causes. **Out of the community spotlight his quiet giving** during and following the Great Depression included leaving food and clothing on the loading docks of his store, feeding the needy on Thanksgiving Day and establishing a **Self-Help Society** that provided an opportunity to work in exchange for food and clothing. The **quiet hero stepped forward in** 1936 until the start of WW II to **personally sponsor 80 families** (over 200 people) enabling them to escape Nazi Germany to the safety and possibilities of the United States.

**Holocaust researcher Ben Nachman** says that “After having learned of the rescue of a family by David Kaufmann I began a search in an attempt to learn of any other American had done anything near what Kaufmann had done.” “I was unable to find anyone who had (brought) as many families out of Germany...Additionally, I could not find anyone who had brought this many people out and assumed total responsibility for them. All of this done quietly with no publicity for his actions.”

David Kaufmann's incredible story of success, philanthropy and quiet heroism are told in the 2008 book, “*Doorway to Freedom, The story of David Kaufmann, Merchant-Benefactor-Rescuer*” by William E. Ramsey and Betty Dineen Shrier. Sources- Stuhr Museum Research Department, *Grand Island Independent*, “*Doorway To Freedom and Nebraska Life Magazine* (Nov/Dec 2006).

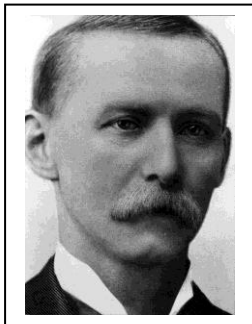
**Roy Brewer – Hollywood Union Leader & Anti Communist Crusader** – Born and raised in the Hall County community of Cairo.

**General Theodore Buechler (1893-1980)** – Served 36 years in the United States Army – a 1917 graduate of West Point, Buechler served under General Douglas McArthur in the Philippines and with General Eisenhower during WWII. In 1942 he was promoted to Brigadier General for his illustrious service. After his retirement in 1953 he organized the civil defense planning for the Grand Island area.

Source – *Grand Island Independent* article, “*Grand Island's distinctive dozen*”

**Joe Feeney**- Irish Tenor on the Lawrence Welk Show (1957-1982). Feeney sang for five presidents, Pope Paul VI at the Vatican ceremony canonizing America's only saint Mother Seton and performed at Carnegie Hall three times.

Source – *Gene Budde, Hall County Historian*



**Henry Glade and Sons** (August A., Fred M., Filbert A., and Arthur W.) -- Founded flour mill in Grand Island, 1884, a family business that **evolved into today's ConAgra**, an international multi-conglomerate corporation and world leader in grain processing and diversified agricultural products. His sons were also active in business. A replica of the early mill can be seen at Stuhr Museum.



**Fred W. Glade**, son of Henry Glade became a **major league baseball** pitcher, St. Louis Browns and New York Yankees, 1904-1908. Even though his career was short lived due to illness/injury, Ty Cobb called him the greatest pitcher of their time. Source – *Stuhr Museum & Gene Budde, Hall County Historian. Photos – Stuhr Museum*

**Bayard H. Paine (1872-1955)** - Served 18 years on the Nebraska State Supreme Court and retiring from his distinguished career in 1949 as the Senior Ranking Justice. 34 of his opinions were chosen for publication in the American Law reports. Source – *Grand Island Independent* article, “*Grand Island's distinctive dozen*”

**Bobby Reynolds** – Outstanding young athlete. While in Grand Island Senior High School he was a dominant member of the 1947 and 1948 state Class A football champions. Reynolds's basketball performance helped the Islanders to capture the 1947 and the 1948 Class A State Basketball Championships. The back-to-back combination football and basketball championships set a record that has never been duplicated. The exceptional football performance of Reynolds during his sophomore year at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln earned him, “**All American honors**” and the unofficial title of “**Mr. Touchdown USA**” – scoring 156 points in one season, an NCAA record. Also, an excellent baseball player at the University, it was an injury suffered in that sport that limited his future in athletics. Source – *Gene Budde, Hall County Historian*

**Sharon Kay Ritchie** – Daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Forrest Richie of Grand Island and graduate of Grand Island Senior High was selected as **Miss America of 1956**. At the time of entering the competition, Sharon Kay was a student at Colorado Women's College and therefore represented the state of Colorado. Sharon Kay shared the spotlight that year with her hometown, Grand Island was named the 1956 All American City by Look Magazine and the National Municipal League, the first of three such honors. **Donna Strever, Sharon's older sister was second runner up for Miss USA, 1955.** Source – *Gene Budde, Hall County Historian and Grand Island Independent*

**Dr. S. Burt Wolbach** – 1880 – 1939. A faculty member of Harvard Medical School and Shattuck professor of pathological anatomy. He discovered the means of transmission for Rocky Mountain spotted fever and awards for his research into the cause and transmission of typhus fever. *Source –Grand Island Independent article, “Grand Island’s distinctive dozen”.*

**Tommy Goodchild** – Highly regarded black man, barber by trade, volunteer fireman and he spoke German fluently. As a joke on newly arriving relatives from Germany, resident Germans would ask Goodchild to meet the train and offer the welcome. Naturally, the Europeans were surprised to hear a black man speaking their language to which Goodchild would reply; "When I first arrived here I was also white but, Nebraska’s bright sunshine and hot, dry winds turned my skin black." *Source – Gene Budde, Hall County Historian*



**Maggie Mobley** (1846–1907) –A fiery Irish born redheaded lass known for her spirit, determination and ‘unlady like’ conduct...she had an occasional appreciation for alcoholic beverages, a conviction for the truth or good story and the will to make it in a “man’s” world. Maggie and her husband, Seth, were early **newspaper publishers** in Grand Island, moving it here from North Platte. On July 2, 1870 the first issue of the weekly Platte Valley Independent was printed - Seth tended to the mechanical duties while Maggie gathered the news and sometimes stirred things up in the process. Local legend has it that she could set the pen aside for a whip ... taking a bullwhip to an adversary at a Grange Meeting. Upon the loss of a child, Maggie and Seth split up, the paper was sold to Mr. Hedde. Maggie was committed to a mental hospital where she witnessed appalling treatment and abuse. The

system allowed for commitment based upon little evidence and men could easily place wives, daughters and even their mothers with little more than their word. Following her release, she campaigned for the reform of mental institutions and told the story that most did not want to hear. It would be nearly a half-century after her death before actual reform began to take place. *Source – Gene Budde, Hall County Historian. Photo – Stuhr Museum*

**Jake Eaton** - Champion gum chewer of the world. Said to be capable of chewing 300 sticks at a time. *Source Nebraska A Guide to the Cornhusker State*

**Venus Webber** – Perhaps Grand Island’s best known **early “madam” Venus** was arrested more times than any other madam or prostitute. She owned a 20 room combination house and business in the far eastern part of town. The “inmates” of her house, as the newspaper referred to them, were frequently in violation of Grand Island’s law prohibiting prostitutes to enter bars and saloons. Mae or Marie Wilson and Eva Marquette were “Webber girls” who violated the law. Other colorful inmates of the Webber resort were “Light Jerome” and Maggie Mustard. Venus was so tough that she served as her own bouncer. Few records and facts are available on her with the exception of legal matters and a funeral for Marie Wilson. In August 1913, Marie committed suicide and Webber spent over \$270 ( twice the cost of the common funeral) with flowers, carriages, plot, vault, casket and embalming. When the house caught fire in March of 1915, all was lost with the exception of the grand piano and parlor furniture, as the house was beyond city water service. Venus and her partner or possible husband, William Frick, left town not long after the fire as no further records or news articles concerning their activities have been found. *Source – Gene Budde, Hall County Historian and Grand Island Independent.*

**Tom Mazour** – **International Energy Agency the recipient of the 2005 Nobel Prize** for “their efforts to prevent nuclear energy from being used for military purposes and to ensure that nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is used in the safest possible way.” As part of the winning team Mazour said “One of the main reasons that I chose to come to IAEA 10 years ago was the feeling that I had a chance to make a difference in the world.” *Source – Grand Island Independent*

**George Marrett** – **Test Pilot for Huges Aircraft Company and author of “Howard Hughes: Aviator.**

Marrett worked as a test pilot from 1969-1989 for the Hughes Aircraft Company in Woodland Hills, California where firsthand accounts of Howard Hughes were shared by mechanics who worked for the eccentric billionaire. Marrett’s book depicts the life of Hughes from 1930 to 1947, the hay day period of Hughes’ involvement in aviation and films. His book was not used as the script but he acted as a consultant for accuracy and technical information. “The Aviator” went on to be nominated for six Golden Globes including best dramatic picture. Marret also has a book “Howard Hughes Test Pilot” near completion as well as stories and books on his Vietnam experience and Grand Island during World War II. *Source Grand Island Independent.*

**C. Dean McGrath Jr – Public Servant.** U.S. Department of the Treasury, associate counsel to President Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush (1986-1989), special counsel to the Department of Defense, associate general counsel to the U.S. Department of Transportation (1989-1991), general counsel for the Peace Corps (1991-1992). In 1992 George W. Bush appointed McGrath as deputy assistant to the President and deputy staff secretary. He returned to the White House in 2001 as deputy chief of staff to Vice President Cheney. McGrath is also adjunct professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center and serves on the Georgetown Journal of Law and Politics. *Source Grand Island Independent*

**Matthew Placzek – Artist.** The million dollar 30 foot tall “Labor” is the second largest monument of its kind in the U.S. and was created by this Grand Island native. The commissioned work stands in the revitalized riverfront area of Omaha near the Qwest Center where the Asarco Refinery once stood and depicts five labors – a foundry worker, iron worker, railroad worker, blacksmith and a female factory worker – each 8 foot tall and weighing 800 pounds. The monument is made with 39,000 pounds of steel, 500,000 pounds of cement and includes three original Asarco ladles with water cascading from the top of the structure through the ladles to simulate molten steel. Assisting Placzek in the construction were Omaha union cement masons, electricians, plumbers, steamfitters, laborers, carpenters, ironworkers and operating engineers. His works are featured in collections around the world such as Guinness Book corporate collection in London, Presidential Palace collection in Vienna, Takao building development collection in Tokyo and Ronald Reagan Library collection. *Source Grand Island Independent.*

**Scott Usher – Olympian.** Ranked fourth in the world in the 200 meter breaststroke in 2004 and finished his Olympic swim in the world’s best eight. Bronze medalist in the 200 breast stroke at the 2008 USA Olympic Trials in Omaha. Usher distinguished himself first in his landlocked home state of Nebraska and then at the University of Wyoming where he won an incredible 35 of 36 dual meet breaststroke events. OTHER CAREER ACHIEVEMENTS: 2007 World Championship Team Member, 2006 U.S. Open Silver Medalist – 200m Breaststroke, 2006 U.S. National Championship Silver Medalist –100m Breaststroke, 5-Time NCAA All-American, 3-Time U.S. National Team Member and 4-Time U.S. Open Silver Medalist . *Source Grand Island Independent and TYR.com.*

**George Baird – Olympic Gold Medalist.** As part of the 1928 4x400 meter world record setting relay team, Bill also witnessed the first-ever Olympic flame lighting (now a tradition) and the inclusion of women (limited to five track and field events). Though Grand Island was Baird’s birthplace (1907) his family moved before he turned two when his father left his job as superintendent of the sugar beet factory but there were many pleasant summer visits throughout his youth. *Source Grand Island Independent.*

**William (Bill) Baird – Puppeteer.** Older brother to George, Bill was born in Grand Island in 1907. He in partnership with his wife Cora (Eisenberg) created 3,000 puppets – many became TV performers. Bill was an Emmy Award nominee and a mentor to Jim Henson, the beloved creator of “The Muppets.” *Source Grand Island Independent.*

**Arthur Bentley – Writer.** Bentley moved to Grand Island at age of nine and was educated in the community, graduating High School at 14, after which earning a bachelor of arts degree from John Hopkins in only two years while studying economics. During his under graduate degree he wrote a landmark paper “*The Condition of the Western Farmer as Illustrated by the Economic History of a Nebraska Township*” – considered for its time as one of the most significant works in the history of Western agriculture. He authored “The Process of Government” as well as six major books and 30 scholarly articles. *Source Grand Island Independent.*

**Robert Taylor – Sheep Rancher.** During the 1880’s – 1920’s, Taylor was one of the nation’s largest and most successful sheep ranchers with nearly 200,000 sheep and 10,000 acres in Hall County (as well as 40,000 acres in two other Nebraska counties and 22,000 acres in Wyoming) . His ranch became its own town called Ovina (Latin for sheep) with a Burlington short rail line, grain elevator, store, ice house, ice pond, general store and post office plus other buildings. President Theodore Roosevelt was a visitor to the ranch. Sadly little remains of the Taylor Ranch at its original location Northwest of Grand Island but Stuhr Museum has the house, store and some rail line. *Source Grand Island Independent.*