

The Intentional Tourist
by Jarrod McCartney
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I am writing this column the day before Street Car Days kicks off but you're likely reading it a few days later. I'm certain it was a success, but I want to make sure I thank members of the Red Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce for pulling off this event. I want to especially thank Adam Vetter for all his work this year getting it organized, and Ana and Justin Armstrong for all the work they've done over the years. I know some people lament the lack of crowds compared to the 1980s and 1990s. As someone who participated in those events as a kid, I get nostalgic too. But you have to think—there are 350 less people who live in the community than in 1986. Getting back to those numbers will take years of patience and community development. If you see Adam, Ana, Bridget Daehling, Mark Van Beber, Kyle Klein or anyone involved with the Chamber, please take a moment to thank them.

This year's event added a number of things to do, like Turtle Races, a Dollar Dig event hosted by Wade Maudlin and Hastings Ford, and the Red Cloud Athletic Association's Road Rally. I am hoping that moving the Saturday night concert to the gazebo in the park was also a success—even if it wasn't I want to applaud the Chamber for trying something new and moving it out of the tennis court—a location that is simply uninspiring. If it were up to me, we would close down 3rd Avenue between Webster and Cedar, setup a stage near 3rd & Cedar, and have a Street Car Days Street Dance. I'd encourage you to attend Blue Hill's 4th of July festivities or Wurst Tag in Eustis if you want to see how well this setup works. Take a moment and imagine the Post Office or the Willa Cather Childhood Home as the backdrop instead of an old basketball hoop and a chain link fence.

Speaking of the Cather Childhood Home, it will be closed starting August 15th. This will be a temporary blow to tourism as our #1 attraction will not be accessible. Long-term, however, it will result in the preservation of the building, ADA accessibility, and numerous other improvements. Act now if you or someone you know wants to see the home. I'd expect it to be closed to the public for a year. The National Willa Cather Center and its related historic sites will remain open. In fact, the Fall/Winter Red Cloud Opera House schedule is particularly strong this year with performances from Ballet Folklorico de Topeka (Sept. 10), Indigenous (Blues, Rock, etc on Nov. 5th), and Paramount (80s Rock Tribute Band on Dec. 9th). The Red Cloud Golf Course schedule is also wrapping up—you won't want to miss the Hometown Market 4 Person Scramble on Sept. 24th and should consider sticking around for Homecoming Week festivities at Red Cloud Community Schools, Sept. 25-Oct. 1st!