

THE REGION

This section provides a brief history of the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County within Nebraska and the State's southeastern region, and notes the current status of the city and county within this area.

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

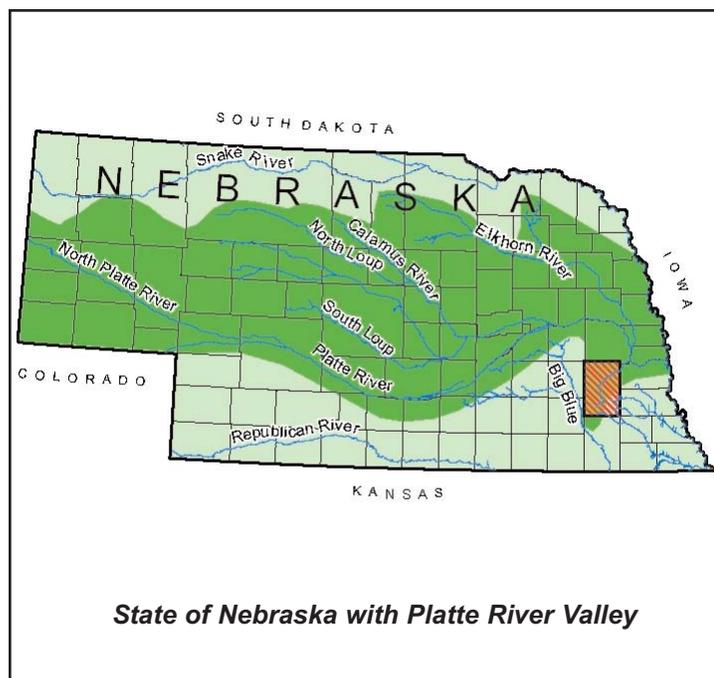
The City of Lincoln and Lancaster County lie within the Platte River Valley in southeastern Nebraska. Little more than 50 miles west of the Missouri River, the county's natural features are characterized by uplands, stream terraces, and bottom lands. The region was historically covered by native tallgrass prairies that served as home to buffalo, antelope, grassland birds, and many other smaller species of plants and animals.

The county's 846 square miles are situated mostly within the Salt Valley Basin. Native Americans and early settlers were attracted to area by the natural forming salt flats. The salt was used as a food preservative and was often difficult to find on the open plains.

One of the region's earliest European settlers was Captain W.T. Donovan. Representing the Crescent Salt Company, he established residence on the western bank of Salt Creek near Oak Creek in 1856. He named the settlement Lancaster after his home in Pennsylvania. "Lancaster" was later used to name both the county and the county seat in 1859.

When Nebraska became a State in 1867, one of the first tasks for the new government was to establish a capital city. The selection of a site for the new capital was hotly contested. After much debate, a three member Capital Commission selected the hamlet of Lancaster as the new Nebraska capital on August 14, 1867.

In a last minute effort to move the capital to a location north of the Platte River, a State Senator from Omaha substituted the name "Lincoln" for "Capital City" in the final legislation. His hope was that by naming the new city after President Abraham Lincoln, post-Civil War bitterness might dissuade some Senators from voting for the site. The gambit failed and the name stuck.



State of Nebraska with Platte River Valley

THE CITY AND COUNTY TODAY

The City of Lincoln today serves as both the capital for the State of Nebraska and the seat of government for Lancaster County. The City and County's 250,000 residents comprise the second largest metropolitan area in the State. The broad southeastern Nebraska region is home to over one million people, including the greater Omaha urban area to the east.

Southeastern Nebraska is experiencing a growing sense of social, cultural, and economic interdependence. The Interstate 80 corridor in particular offers a major link between the State's two largest urban areas and the region as a whole. Strengthening ties between the two cities and the surrounding rural communities will be integral to the region's future success.

