

Old Fashioned Christmas In Thedford



KAYCEE ORR-HOFFMAN

The Old Fashioned Christmas in Thedford event stayed true to its name as visitors from all over made purchases and visited in the shops around town. Pictured above is a view through the window at With Love Co. Design.

It was a scene out of a Christmas movie in downtown Thedford on Thursday, November 30. Barrels of firewood lined the street and were lit to give those walking around shopping, a place to stop and warm their

hands. Children were running up and down the streets, playing games and waiting in anticipation for Santa's arrival. Music played from the south end of the street on a refurbished stock truck from Hoffman Ranch.

Everywhere you looked there was an Old Fashioned Christmas scene. Shoppers strolling the streets going from craft sales in the Masonic Lodge, Sargent Insurance, Thomas County Library, With Love Co.

Design and Anthem Coffee. Santa's reindeer making an appearance with the assistance of Stable Productions Ranch, Flip Licking. Children were able to pet the deer and sit in Santa's Sleigh.

While waiting for Santa the children were entertained with a movie and popcorn at Amazing Grace Church. Following that they could scamper down to the Legion hall and spend time with the Thedford FCCLA and SkillsUSA students making Christmas Magic Trail Mix and doing other crafts. Precisely at 5:00 p.m. Santa was escorted into town by the Thomas County Sheriff and rode on the Thedford Rural Fire District truck. Santa

and Mrs. Claus visited with children at the Masonic Hall and gave them each a treat bag. The Thedford Public Schools Music Department performed around the Christmas Tree and a Light Stick Show was presented by the Thedford Bethel Assembly of God Youth Group. New events were added this year. The Sandhills Corral sponsored the Ugly Sweater Contest and

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KENDRA CUTLER - THOMAS COUNTY HERALD

Braxton Porter, son of Kaylin and Bailey Porter of Thedford, got to have his first visit with the Clauses in Thedford.

Who's Buying Nebraska?

After shopping spree, Mormon church is top land purchaser



Ranch hand Mike Goodman, left, and ranch manager Frank Thompson ride through the prairie grass on a ranch located north of Keystone, Nebraska. The ranch is owned by a Wyoming-based ranching operation run by Jeff Burnett, which recently paid \$20 million for nearly 28,000 acres of ground on the Sandhills' southern edge. A Flatwater Free Press analysis of five years of land sales shows that four of the top five buyers of land by acre are headquartered outside Nebraska.

Photo by Ryan Soderlin for the Flatwater Free Press

In the past five years, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bought twice as much Nebraska land as the second biggest buyer. If they keep it up, they'll soon own more than anyone.

By Destiny Herbers
Flatwater Free Press

Early in the summer of 2018, a nonprofit few Nebraskans have heard of bought a 22,615-acre chunk of land in Garden County.

The next year, the nonprofit, tied to a P.O. Box in Salt Lake City, picked

up another 3,331 acres of county land, buying it from a Colorado investment company.

The unknown nonprofit grabbed two more pieces of county land on the same day in March 2020, adding 10,278 acres to its mushrooming total. Then, two years later, it added still more land in this rural Nebraska

county tucked between Chimney Rock and Lake McConaughy.

Before anyone really knew it, the nonprofit owned most of northern Garden County.

Not even the assessor could calculate the nonprofit's total acres, an employee in the Garden County Assessor's Office said. The organization

simply owns too many parcels, through too many sales, for county officials to comb through the records.

"You'll have to ask Farmland Reserve Inc.," she said politely before hanging up the phone.

Farmland Reserve Inc., a nonprofit owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, com-

monly known as the Mormon church, has been quietly buying up ranch land in Nebraska's Sandhills for the past three decades.

The Garden County shopping spree, coupled with more buys in four neighboring counties, made the church Nebraska's top single buyer of land in the past five

years.

The church bought a whopping 57,500 acres - double the amount of the second largest buyer- between 2018 and 2022, according to a Flatwater Free Press analysis of data gathered by a University of Nebraska-Lincoln Col-

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