

the Loren Eiseley walking-driving tour

Lincoln City Center

Prepared by Lincoln City Libraries, Lincoln, Nebraska and the Junior League of Lincoln.

1. 1811 South Street (1912-1916)

This is the home where Eiseley lived as a young child. It was in the living room here that he remembered speaking with his father about the prison break in 1912—"There are also bad prisons and bad wardens." (*All the Strange Hours*, p. 174)

2. 2116 South 22nd Street (c.1919-1928)

This is the home from which Eiseley trekked to the "pond" (now part of the Lincoln Country Club) to collect specimens for his aquariums. His family lived here until his father's death.

3. 1910 South 23rd Street

After his father's death in 1928, Eiseley and his mother lived with William Buchanan and Grace (Corey) Price, his uncle and aunt, in this home. When Eiseley contracted tuberculosis, his uncle's financial help enabled him to rest and recuperate in Colorado. "In that day I had one bit of fortune which I will never forget. My uncle and aunt were childless...I was welcome in their home." (*All the Strange Hours*, p. 21) Later it was his "Uncle Buck" who made it possible for Eiseley to attend graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania.

4. Prescott School, 1930 South 20th Street

This is the site of the grade school Eiseley attended with his friend Jimmy Dawes, "the closest of all my boy hood friends." After leaving grade school, Eiseley first became aware of the differences of economic classes.

5. Lincoln High School, 2229 'J' Street

After eighth grade graduation, Eiseley attended Lincoln

High School from 1920 to 1921, when he dropped out. He recalls in *All the Strange Hours*, (p. 79) "Once when I had rebelliously dropped out of Lincoln High School and found a job, I had difficulty eluding the truant officer."

spent several days in the periodicals room of the new library researching on microfilm the 1912 prison break. (pp. 260-264)

7. Teachers College High School, Temple Building, 12th & 'R'

After dropping out of Lincoln High School, Eiseley entered University of Nebraska Teachers College High School or "Temple High." There he was a student of Letta May Clark, Supervisor of English at that time. He dedicated *The Mind as Nature* to her "In gratitude for counsel and encouragement in my youth."

8. University Museum – Morrill Hall

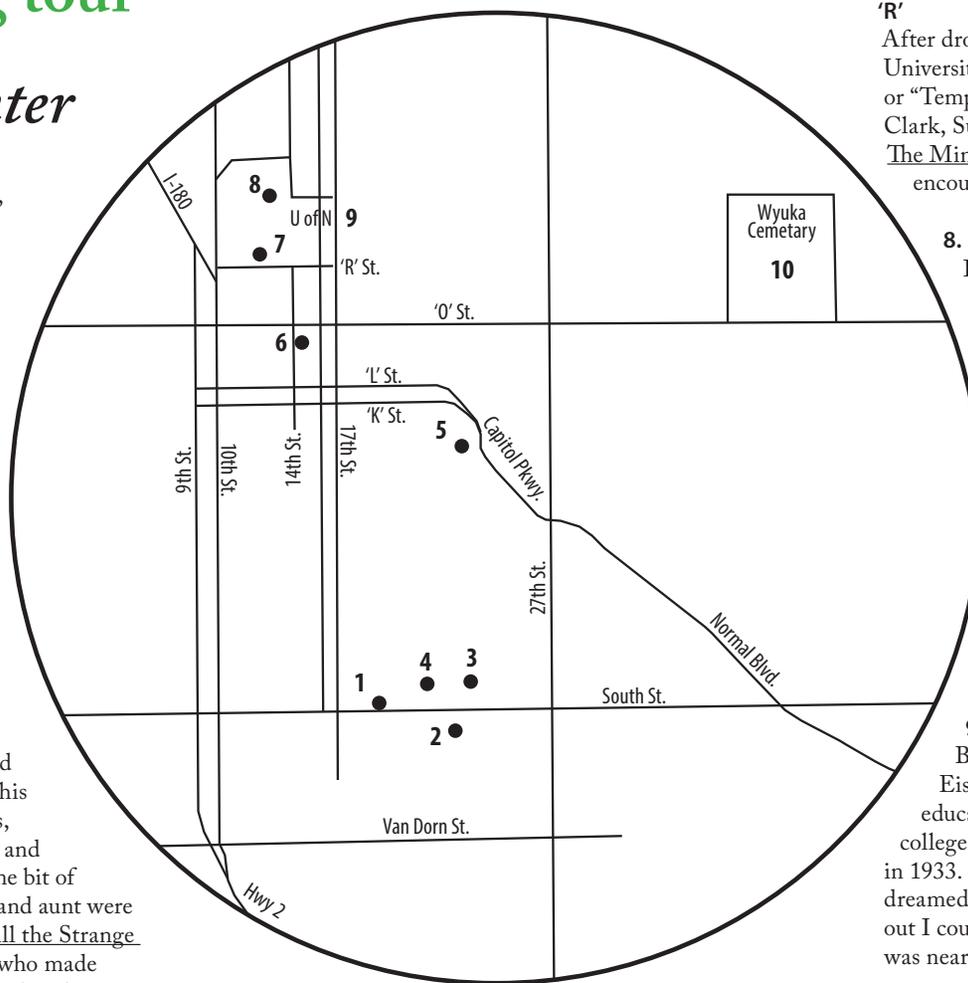
It was his uncle William Buchanan Price who first brought Eiseley at age 12 to visit the fossil collection at the old red brick University Museum. The young boy often returned on his own to "Elephant Hall" to puzzle over the finds of the bone hunting men. It is easy to see why Eiseley dedicated his autobiography in part to Price "without whose help my file would have been different beyond imagining." The mounted bison skeleton displayed on the main floor of the museum, and the saber-toothed cat skull with a bone protruding from its fang (in the display opposite the bison) are among the exhibits Eiseley helped unearth and prepare for museum display.

9. University of Nebraska

Both tuberculosis and restless rail-riding cause Eiseley to interrupt his University of Nebraska education several times through the years. He began college in 1925 and finally received his bachelor's degree in 1933. As he told one friend, Edward Stanley, "I never dreamed I could be more than my father was, until I found out I could go to the University of Nebraska for free." This was nearly true, as matriculation fees at that time were \$5.

10. Wyuka Cemetery 36th & 'O'

Eiseley's mother and the Prices are buried here. Late in life, Eiseley revisited his mother's grave, "I murmured to myself and tried to tell her belatedly: Nothing, mama, nothing. Rest. You could never rest. That was your burden. But now, sleep. Soon I will join you, although, forgive me, not here. Neither of us then would rest. I will go far to lie down; the time draws on; it is unlikely that I will return." (*All the Strange Hours*, p. 25)

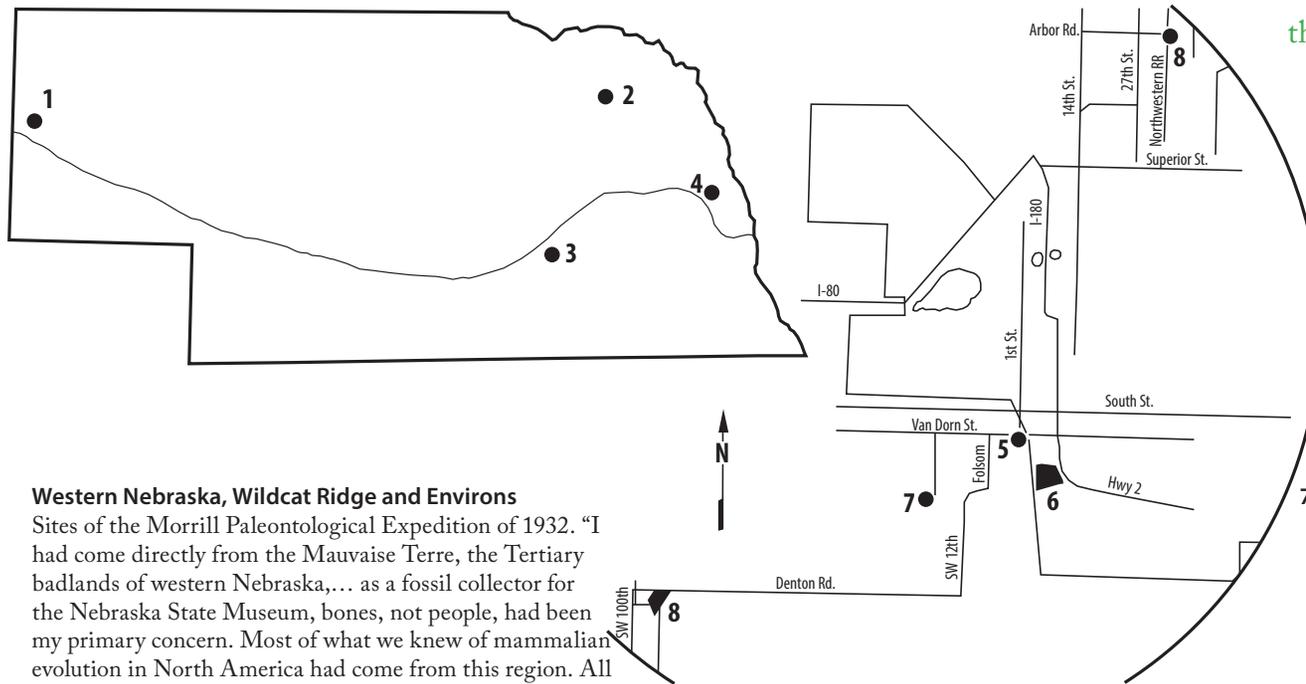


6. Lincoln City Library, 14th & 'N' Streets

Eiseley attributed his love for books to the Lincoln City Library, "the local Carnegie library to which I used to pedal in my coaster wagon." (*All the Strange Hours*, p. 79) The present library was built on the site of the original Carnegie library to which Eiseley referred. It was at this library that Eiseley checked out *The Home Aquarium: How to Care for It* by Eugene Smith, a book that strongly influenced him. (p. 167) Late in life, Eiseley

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The Panoramic View



1. Western Nebraska, Wildcat Ridge and Environs

Sites of the Morrill Paleontological Expedition of 1932. "I had come directly from the Mauvaise Terre, the Tertiary badlands of western Nebraska, ... as a fossil collector for the Nebraska State Museum, bones, not people, had been my primary concern. Most of what we knew of mammalian evolution in North America had come from this region. All the great paleontologists had worked here." (*All the Strange Hours*, pp. 86-87) Land forms of the type Eiseley mentions can be seen near the Scottsbluff monument area, and on Wildcat Ridge.

2. Norfolk, Nebraska

Eiseley's grandparents homesteaded near Norfolk. For that reason Eiseley spoke of himself as "A creature molded of plain's dust and the seed of those who came west with the wagons." (*All the Strange Hours*, p. 25) Eiseley's father, Clyde Edwin Eiseley, a traveling hardware salesman, died of cancer in 1928 and is buried in Prospect Hill Cemetery there. "He left a single thumbed copy of Shakespeare inscribed with his name." Of Loren, he had once written, "Remember, the boy is a genius, but moody." It was twenty years before Eiseley could afford to purchase and place upon his father's grave the headstone now there. (*The Night Country*, p. 199)

3. Aurora, Nebraska

"We moved one fall to Aurora, Nebraska, a sleepy country town near the Platte. I do not remember a single teacher from that school, a single thing I learned there. Men were drilling in a lot close to our house. I watched them every day. Finally they marched off. It was 1917. I was ten years old." (*All the Strange Hours*, p. 34)

4. Fremont, Nebraska

The Eiseley family lived in Fremont briefly when Loren was a small child of three. Eiseley headed toward Fremont again late in life when he retraced the route the three prisoners took in their 1912 escape from the Nebraska State Penitentiary. (*All the Strange Hours*, p. 262)

5. Wilderness Park, 1st & Van Dorn

Eiseley and his wife-to-be, Mabel Langdon, often walked through "the woods" near Lincoln, especially enjoying the colors of autumn trees and the serene blue skies typical of Nebraska in that season. It may have been in the woods now known as "Wilderness Park" that these strolls took place.

6. Nebraska State Penitentiary, 14th & Pioneers Blvd.

Eiseley's earliest memory at age 5 was of a March 10, 1912, prison escape. "I was already old enough to know one should flee from the universe but I did not know where to run." (*All the Strange Hours*, p. 28)

7. "The Quarry" and Yankee Hill Brick Mfg. Co.

In his poem, "The Blue Eye" (*Another Kind of Autumn*, p. 65), Eiseley recalls his fear of drowning in the deep water of the Quarry. "The rock quarry by the gray walls of the state penitentiary/ was abandoned, and the older youths swam there/ on hot days."

8. Salt Flats & "Moors"

From his youth through his college years at the University of Nebraska, Eiseley enjoyed long walks on the outskirts of town. A college friend of Eiseley's, Wilbur Gaffney, recalls two favorite excursions: "one...was from Belmont to Arbor, then back into town on the Northwestern tracks, between blue ponds sparkling in the sun and ringed with gleaming white salt...Another...was from what was then called the Asylum to some hills south of Denton. Just south of Denton, a mile or two, were two or three square miles of unfenced land, high and windswept, which we fancied were perhaps the nearest things to moors we might see."

To Arbor: Follow 14th Street north from Superior to Arbor Road (1½ mi.). Turn right on Arbor Road (east). Watch for old "Northwestern" tracks. The village of Arbor was once where the I-80 underpass is now. (½ mi. past N. 27th Street)

To Denton: From 1st and Van Dorn, follow Van Dorn west to S. Folsom. Turn left at the Lincoln Regional Center ("Asylum"), turn right onto Pioneers Blvd. and follow the curve onto S.W. 12th. Follow S.W. 12th to W. Denton Rd., west into the town of Denton. From Denton, turn left on S.W. 100th and follow south for 2-3 mi. Note rolling hills.