

“Librarian’s Shelf” by Melodee Pedersen

Joint program coming, “The Grapes of Wrath”

The last of the pre-Chautauqua events sponsored by the Friends of the Columbus Public Library will take place on Sunday, May 23rd at 2:00 p.m at the Platte County Historical Society Museum. The film "The Grapes of Wrath", starring Henry Fonda and John Carradine will be shown and then discussed, moderated by University of Nebraska-Kearney Professor Kathryn Benzel. This black and white film is based on the Pulitzer Prize winning novel by John Steinbeck, published in 1939. Based on real events in the latter part of the 1930s, it chronicles the lives of the Joad family as they struggle on their Oklahoma farm during the Dust Bowl, their journey to California in search of a better life, and their disillusionment after they arrive and discover how migrant laborers were being exploited. President Roosevelt said after he read the book, "There are 500,000 Americans that live in the covers of that book." It was made almost immediately into a movie, released in 1940. Directed by the iconic John Ford, the film received 7 Oscar nominations, including Henry Fonda for Best Actor, and won for Best Director and Best Actress (Jane Darwell). The American Film Institute lists it at number 21 on the list of 100 greatest American films. Although John Ford’s production stays largely true to the novel, there is a more optimistic feel to the film, in part because of toning down John Steinbeck’s political references, and also due to more emphasis on Ma Joad’s forward-looking, practical way of dealing with their circumstances. Although the film takes place in a specific time and place, what it has to say about the human spirit is timeless. It has been suggested that all pre-teen and teenaged children should be required to watch this film, to see what it really means to struggle for something and persevere. The scholar-moderator for the film, Professor Kathryn is a Martin Distinguished Professor in English at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. She teaches literary criticism, 20th century literature, American and British fiction, interdisciplinary studies and women's studies. Benzel received her B.A. and M.A. from the University of Toledo in Ohio and her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is also a Nebraska Humanities Scholar, with a program about Woody Guthrie and the 1930s. This event is also sponsored by the Platte Valley Historical Society Museum and the Nebraska Humanities Council. One additional Chautauqua event sponsored by the Friends of the Columbus Public Library will be a showing of "Kit Kittredge" the movie, on June 19 at 2:00 p.m. in the Art Gallery, lower level of the Columbus Public Library. Free popcorn will be available and a Kit Kittredge doll and book will be raffled off. Raffle tickets will be available at the library for \$1 each, beginning the end of May. The doll and book have a value of over \$100. Other upcoming events sponsored by the Friends of the Columbus Public Library will be two "Summer Sundays of Mystery" on July 25 and August 29. July's presenter will be forensic entomologist Tim Huntington and August's speaker will be author Sean Doolittle. These events will be co-sponsored by Central Community College-Columbus. Check at the library in June for more information.