



Homestead National Monument welcomes visiting artists.

A Homestead Diary

Artists find inspiration on the prairie.

Homestead National Monument of America recently joined the new National Park Service initiative offering creative artists the opportunity to live and work in the parks. The park in Beatrice, created as a memorial to those who took advantage of the Homestead Act of 1862, welcomed writer Penny Musco as its first Artist-in-Residence (AIR).

Musco, a writer from New Jersey, spent three weeks writing, researching, demonstrating the art of candle making to grade

schoolers and performing the monologue she wrote as part of the artist residency.

The AIR program continues this year through September. For the first two weeks, Nebraska photographers Mel Mann and Jason Jilg showcased their work, exploring the cultural and environmental changes the Homestead Act has wrought over time. Painter Melanie Terry of St. Louis focuses on the human/nature interaction in the latter half of the month.

Iowa's Super Fruit

MISSOURI VALLEY—It's easy to get lost in the Loess Hills—unless it's berry season.

Sept. 18–19, the road north from Missouri Valley, Iowa, is dotted with signs touting **Sawmill Hollow Family Farm's** annual Aronia Berry Festival. Thousands of aronia berry bushes bear fruit on 149 acres surrounding Sawmill Hollow Lake.

The aronia berry, called black chokeberry in the old days, is rich in antioxidants. According to Mayo Clinic, such foods may play a role in helping prevent diseases such as cancer. Years ago, the berry thrived in Iowa, but was phased out as other food crops became prevalent.

Visitors come for the seasonal foods and to hear lectures on the topics of health and organic agriculture. They also come because they're curious about the tart, tannic berries available during the festival.

