

# GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

## “A Window into the Past”

APRIL 2016

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Roger Heidebrink,  
Pres.
- Milan Franzen, V. Pres.
- Pam Slack, Sec.
- Anne Anderson, Treas.
- Lyle Franzen
- Dick Larson
- Donna McConnell
- Ramona Ollendorf
- Dick Ostergard
- Dick Schwanz
- Bev Titkemeier
- Chuck Titkemeier

### GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

1420 Avenue F  
Gothenburg, NE  
69138

Telephone:  
308-537-4212

www.gothenburghisto  
ry.com

Email: gothenburghis-  
tory@outlook.com

Editor: Anne Anderson

## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION AND TRAINING—TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2016

**You are cordially invited  
to the Annual Volunteer & Membership  
Appreciation & Training.**

*Please be our guest for a special program to  
acquaint you with new items and displays in the museum.  
It will be held at the United Methodist Church beginning at 1:00 p.m.  
Refreshments & a museum tour will follow the presentation.*

### THANK YOU TO THESE 2015 GREETERS & VOLUNTEERS

Dixie Ackerman	Diane Gaudreault	Dick Larson	Dick Schwanz
Cordelia Aden	Jan Gill	Connie Larson	Jane Sheets
Joan Aden	Janice Gonzales	Kathy Nichols	Cathy Simon
Anne Anderson	Cathy Healey	Donna McConnell	Mary Theasmeyer
Rosie Bates	Diane Harm	Charlene Ogier	Bob Theasmeyer
Connie Bihlmaier	Roger Heidebrink	Dick Ostergard	Chuck Titkemeier
Cora Bosch	Tot Holmes	Kayleen Ostergard	Bev Titkemeier
Sandy Brestel	Rhonda Jobman	Bonnie Paulsen	Carol
Denise Brittenham	Dennis Kirkpatrick	Carolyn Peterson	VanOverbeke
Lyle Franzen	Sue Kirkpatrick	Cindy Peyton	Marcy Wahlgren
Arlene Franzen	Joleen Kite	Eldone Rodine	Sandy Widholm
Milan Franzen	Jack Kniss	Arlan Ronnekamp	Judy Williams
Regis Fruit	Jackie Kuxhausen	Tip Ronnekamp	

#### Gothenburg Historical Museum Mission Statement

*The mission of the Historical Museum is:*

- To manage donated and loaned items in a responsible manner
- To encourage and provide opportunities for genealogy research
- To enhance the quality of life for the people of Gothenburg by preserving our history and heritage.

## New Directors Added to the Board of Directors

Welcome to Pam Slack and Dick Ostergard as they begin their service on the Museum Board of Directors. They bring experience and expertise.



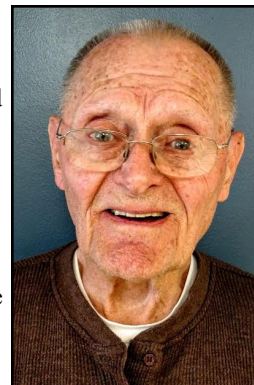
**Pam**, a life-long resident of Gothenburg, is retired from First State Bank but remains busy plan-

ning bus tours for bank customers. She serves on the Gothenburg Public School Foundation as well as on the Pony Express Center Foundation. A past member of Planning & Zoning for the City of Gothenburg, she remains interested in the promotion and well-being of the community.

**Dick** is also a life-long resident, growing up in the hills north of Gothenburg with his parents and siblings, working on the family ranch. A very talented sculpture and artist, he has created many bronze pieces that depict his

ranching background and the western art culture.

We are very



pleased to welcome them to the board.

### LOOKING FOR AREA AUTHORS & ARTISTS

Local authors and artists are invited to contact the Historical Museum and be included in a display of their works.

## FYI

The museum will open for it's 10th season on Tuesday, May 3rd.

Hours will be:

Tuesday—Friday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

*Watch for news of a special celebration being planned.*

## WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

**NOTE:** Volunteers have been busy throughout the winter months creating new displays and rearranging items in the museum. Photographs of each donated piece are being taken and added to the Past Perfect computer program along with pertinent information about the item. Other volunteers continue to catalog and update genealogy records. Help is always needed to work "behind the scenes" or as a greeter. ***Would you consider becoming a volunteer?*** Contact us at the museum or call Roger at 529-2196 or Anne at 529-0906.

### CORRECTION TO THE MEMBERSHIP LIST PRINTED IN THE JANUARY 2016 ISSUE:

The names of Suz Peden, Tracy & Karen Sappingfield and Gary & Donna Glendy were omitted from the membership list. Our apologies. Your donation was greatly appreciated.

### PLAN TO ATTEND GOTHENBURG HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI BANQUET Saturday, May 28, 2016 6:30 p.m.

Speaker—Sen. Matt Williams  
Tickets Now on Sale—\$25  
Available at First State Bank or Gothenburg State Bank  
Ticket includes banquet, Saturday Morning Coffee at 9:30 a.m., school tour and community tour.

# SOUND THE ALARM!! FIRE!!!!!!

**B**uilt in 1892 by the Gothenburg Water Works and Investment Company, the Opera House was a grand three story structure with a cupola on its top. Located on the corner of 10th and Winchell Street (now Lake Avenue), it was home to



stores on the ground floor, business and doctor offices on the second floor and the third floor offered a dance hall, basketball

court and stage area for stage productions. In 1912 businesses located in the building included Hickley's Drug Store, George Back's Jewelry, the Gothenburg Light & Power Company and Pete Edwall's Meat Market. Shortly after midnight on February 25, 1912 a fire started in the base of the cupola above the third story of the Opera House Building. The fireboys were unable to reach the fire from the inside due to dense clouds of smoke. Fighting fire from the outside, it was impossible to raise effective streams of water above the third floor due to low water pressure, and the building was doomed. It burned for two days.

**O**n September 26, 1919 the worst fire in the history of the city occurred late Friday afternoon when the plant of the Platte Valley Milling Company was destroyed. The wind blew strong from the southeast and carried dense smoke and burning embers over the entire business section. The stable at the east end of E.G. West's Lumber

Yard required constant attention, as did Wilkin's Blacksmith Shop across the street and J.E. Norsworthy's Feed Store directly north of the mill. The fire at night could be seen 20 miles away. The mill had a capacity of 140 barrels of flour daily and was the largest buyer of grain in this territory.



**T**he Houston Hotel, opened on May 2, 1891, was a first-class hotel in all its appointments, the rooms large with high ceilings and well-lighted from many large windows. The principle entrance was on the east opening into an office with the dining room directly to the rear. On the second floor there was a parlor with a large bay window and 15 guest rooms. The third floor was almost a duplicate of the second. In all the hotel had 35 guest rooms. It was considered to be "a most elegant hostelry". In January 1979, the proud old building was completely destroyed by fire. A bizarre set of circumstances led to the end of the Houston Hotel. A deranged man from New York was put off the bus in Gothenburg for causing problems. As he wandered around town asking about places to stay, someone suggested the Houston. In the man's sick mind he connected the word Houston with the space program and decided it had to be destroyed. He slipped into the building and started the fire. Gothenburg firemen fought the blaze all night in the sub-zero weather but to no avail. Too badly damaged, it was torn down and hauled away.



**I**n 1895, following the loss of the Opera House in 1894, the village board of trustees proposed forming a hook and ladder company with about 50 leather buckets and 10 axes which could be placed on a wagon. The whole cost from \$200 to \$250. This was Gothenburg's first organized fire protection. Six years later this new fire company was seriously tested.

In 1901, a midnight fire was discovered and the church bell was rung to sound the alarm. The 300 pound fire bell purchased in 1897 refused to ring. The whole town turned out with their buckets. Singers Livery Stable and the Odenrantz Store burned. Things became worse. Flames of 30 feet reached the Carlson Hardware Store and Stacks Restaurant. Oil and shells in the hardware store began to explode. What was needed was water, more than a bucket brigade could supply. On January 15, 1909 a meeting was held and the Gothenburg Volunteer Fire Department was organized. With a fire department and a water supply, good equipment was needed and that same year they acquired two hose trucks, 1000 feet of 2-1/2 inch hose and a hook and ladder truck. Later a new electric fire alarm system was installed operating from the telephone office. It was not long before the firemen were put to the test by a series of disastrous fires. The role of the Volunteer Fire Department continued to expand as it became more involved in the rescue of victims. In 1985 the department would locate in its new home on the corner of 10th and Avenue F. Things have changed since the early days of the bucket brigade and perhaps Albert Patterson said it best: "It used to be hurry up with a whole lot of water. Now you'd have to say it's a bit more scientific." We are proud of the fire department today with its 44 members, the majority being certified EMT's.





# Time for Membership Renewals

## 2016 RENEWALS

**T**hank you to the following who have renewed their membership and contributed to the museum building fund to date.....

- Dick & Connie Larson\*
- Pam Slack\*
- Denise Brittenham\*
- Leonard France\*\*
- Jim & Janice Gonzales
- Robin & Lynnette Stevens
- Robert & Mary Theasmeyer\*
- Norm & Colleen Geiken\*
- Gary & Anne Anderson\*
- Chuck & Bev Titkemeier\*

**Thank You to our newest  
Life-Time members:  
Tot & Pauline Holmes**

### HOW YOUR MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION HELPS THE MUSEUM

- Advertising to promote our museum
- Pays our loan on the purchase of the building
- Pays for insurance
- Sends out the newsletter
- Office & Postage Expenses
- Utilities & Telephone
- Repairs & Maintenance on the building, equipment and grounds
- Supplies & Improvements

### ***SPECIAL THANKS***

- To Judy Vincent for donating four file cabinets to hold the various files chronicling our history of individuals, clubs, businesses, etc.
- To Dick Ostergard, Roger Heidebrink, Donna McConnell, Chuck & Bev Titkemeier, Connie Bihlmaier, Mary Theasmeyer, Jane Sheets and Anne Anderson for organizing and changing displays and for photographing and accessioning items.
- To Kathy Nichols and Marcy Wahlgren for working on the genealogy information.
- To Donna McConnell for donating a new counter-top refrigerator.
- To Milan Franzen & Dick Larson for their handy-man services around the museum.

## ***Form of Payment***

Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Check payable to:**

- ☐ **Gothenburg Historical Museum  
PO Box 204  
Gothenburg, NE 69138.**

- ☐ **Cash**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

## ***2016 Annual Membership***

### **Life Time Membership**

- ☐ **10x Building Fund Contributor ..... \$1,000**

### **Building Fund\***

- ☐ **Building Fund Benefactor\*\* ..... \$500+**

- ☐ **Building Fund Contributor\* ..... \$100+**

\*Contribution to the Building Fund includes an annual membership.

### **Annual Membership**

- ☐ **Supporting Membership ..... \$50**

- ☐ **Contributing or Family  
Membership ..... \$25**

- ☐ **Base Membership ..... \$15**