

GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

"A Window into the Past"

JULY 2017 - 2nd Qtr.

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GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Anne Anderson

BARN QUILT TRAIL THROUGH DAWSON COUNTY

The history of the hex that decorated many of the early barns originated from the Pennsylvania Dutch settlers from the 17th and 18th centuries. At that time the cost of paint prohibited the painting of barns and out-buildings. By the 1830s the cost of paint decreased and farmers began painting their barns the way they decorated their homes, using imagery reminiscent of quilts and wall stencils.

The "Hex" of today draws people to the beauty of design and color. The modern day story begins with one woman's love for her mother and how it turned into one of the fastest growing grassroots art movements in the US and Canada.

It all started over ten years ago with a simple idea by Donna Sue Groves of Adams County, Ohio: pretty up an old barn for her mother, a celebrated quilter, by hanging a wooden square painted to look like a traditional quilt block. But why stop with just one square? Donna Sue got together with her neighbors and created a driving trail of squares hung on barns thinking it would attract tourists looking for a day trip who might then stop and spend money on gas or food or crafts made by local artists. The idea sparked a grassroots phenomenon and a new form of American folk art.



The Tourism Committee of Gothenburg plans to bring a Barn Quilt Trail to Dawson County by working with the committees of Cozad and Lexington to make this a county-wide attraction. A Barn Quilt is painted on plywood or signboard to represent a quilt design. The blocks often tell a story unique to the maker or location. This outdoor art form is a way for art to be accessible to all, and a way to beautify the community.

The Historical Museum has a wonderful Pony Express Quilt which tells the story of stations, the riders and the trail. To be a part of this project to bring art and history to our local citizens as well as the many travelers that visit the Pony Express Station, four patterns from blocks on the quilt were selected, painted and placed on the north exterior wall of the museum. Each represents a station prominent in the Pony Express story.

FORT KEARNY:

The first division of the Pony Express ran from St. Joseph, Missouri on the Missouri River to Marysville, KS, then turned northwest following the Little Blue River to Fort Kearny in Nebraska Territory. There were 26 stations along the way. Fort Kearny was a US military fort and also a stage stop, so it was natural that the Pony Express riders would stop there to deliver mail to the military personnel.



SACRAMENTO:

Division 5 of the Pony Express Trail ran from Roberts Creek, NV to Sacramento, CA and involved 48 stations along the way. Along this journey were some of the most treacherous trails. This ride included crossing the Great Basin, the Utah-Nevada Desert and the Sierra Nevada Mountains near Lake Tahoe, before arriving in Sacramento.

Sacramento became the western end of the trail for the Pony Express in 1860. On the first trip eastward, the mail was carried from San Francisco up the Sacramento River. The first Pony Express rider left the Sacramento station at 2:45 a.m. on April 4, 1860 on the first leg of the 1,966 mile trip, riding into a rainstorm.

A special thanks to (l-r): Roger Heidebrink, Dick Larson, Milan Franzen and Dick Schwanz for placing the barn quilts for all to enjoy.

The mail reached its final destination in St. Joseph some 10 days later.

GREAT SALT LAKE: Division 4 of the Pony Express ran between Salt Lake City, UT and Robert's Creek, NV, having 29 stations along its route. Salt Lake City served as a home station for both the stage lines and the Pony Express riders.



Robert's Creek Station has the distinction, not only of being one of the original Pony Express Stations (built in 1860) but it was also the first station to be attacked by Indians.

An interesting piece of history concerning the Salt Lake Station states that on November 7th, a rider left the western end of the telegraph line at Fort Kearny with news of the election of Abraham Lincoln. Despite heavy snow, the mail and the election results reached Salt Lake in three days and four hours.

SWEETWATER: From Fort Laramie in Wyoming, the Pony Express Riders followed the Sweetwater River, a tributary of the North Platte River, flowing about 150 miles through Wyoming.

This station provided access to the South Pass from the plateau area of southeastern Wyoming.



GOTHENBURG CEMETERY AND THE HISTORY IT TELLS

Information about the Gothenburg Cemetery and other local cemeteries can be found in the Gothenburg Area History Book and in the genealogy section at the museum.

Thank you to Curt Carskadon for sharing his research on the history of the cemetery.

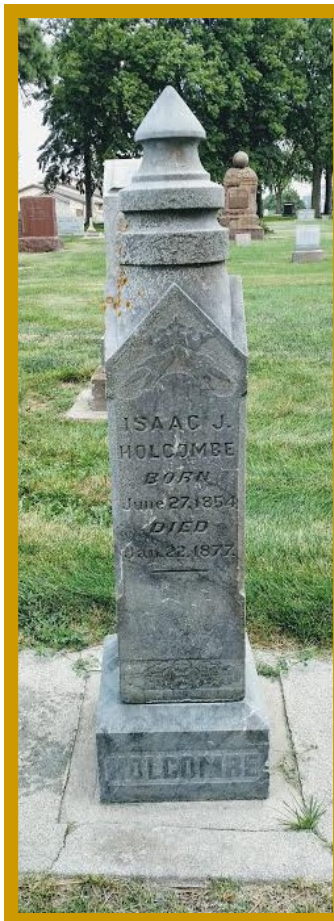
As the early travelers made their way from the east headed west, they were exposed to weather, Indian attacks and sickness. As the harsh elements took their lives, many were buried beside the trail with no markers for future generations to find.

As communities were established, small plots were laid out for a cemetery. Many of these were for the whole community, others for a family and some were associated with a church. In our own local cemetery a piece of Gothenburg's history is written on the stones which stand like sentries forever on duty guarding our loved ones. Each stone has a story to tell.

The story of our cemetery doesn't start here, but in Georgia to an extended Civil War family centered around Isaac Abercrombe and his nephew Robert Holcombe. Mr. Abercrombe was a Civil War veteran who was with Lee at Appomattox. After the war, Abercrombe and Holcombe chose to homestead in Gothenburg in the 1870's. At that time the Gothenburg area only had four houses between Willow Island and Vroman.

Mr. Holcombe homesteaded on the property where Lake Helen and Lafayette Park are now located. Mr. Abercrombe homesteaded a tree claim on the area where the rodeo grounds is located as well as some property to the north. Together they built a house and

then sent for their extended families to join them here in Gothenburg. The family consisted of Robert Holcombe's mother, Sara, who was a widow, a son Martin, a daughter Mary and another son Isaac and his wife and baby. In 1877 Isaac Holcombe died at the age of twenty-three as well as his mother-in-law, Mary Adams. They were buried in a small cem-



etry just north of the sod-house school located on the corner of 20th and Avenue F. Before long the graves were being farmed over and Sara Holcombe realized a new resting place for her loved ones was needed. She donated

an area in the northwest part of what is now Lake Helen and the western part of Lafayette Park to be designated as the Holcombe Cemetery and moved the graves to this location. For a few years it was used by the whole community for other interments.

In the early 1890's Holcombe's son sold his interest in the Lake Helen area to the Platte Valley Farm & Cattle Company, an investment firm from the eastern states, which had plans to make Gothenburg into an industrial city. They needed this land to create a lake to provide for the electrical power system. By selling his interest in this area, the Holcombe cemetery had to be moved to make way for the construction of Lake Helen. Holcombe then purchased 10 acres from Rev. William Ehmen two miles east of town and presented it to the City for a new cemetery site. The graves were again moved to the new cemetery site what is now Gothenburg Cemetery. The 1889 Gothenburg Independent News reported that it was a sad day for the descendants when the graves of their loved ones had to be moved. The fee for relocating these graves was \$25 and many could not afford the exorbitant price. They either moved them to a family plot on their own property or they were moved to a mass grave site north and west of the excavation site. Grave markers with a death date earlier than 1890 have been moved, with a few individuals having been moved twice before. *(Continued on pg. 3)*

GOTHENBURG CEMETERY HISTORY—Continued

The family stone of E. G. West, a prominent Gothenburg family in the early settlement days, is for Eric's son Albert who died at the age of 14 years, 7 months and 14 days in 1888 and baby West who died in 1886. They were moved from the Holcomb Cemetery to the Gothenburg Cemetery and now lay along side their other ancestors. The grave of Mary Adams, Mr. Holcombe's mother-in-law, has also been moved twice. Scattered throughout the ceme-



tery are other family names that have had ancestors moved; the Andersons, Karlsons and the Roten families are just three of many.

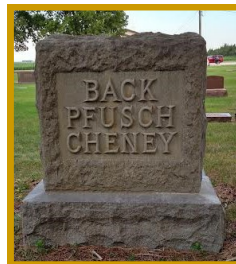
The story behind these family grave markers is Gothenburg's history and this cemetery's beginnings. Among the other stone markers within our cemetery are interesting facts and stories all waiting to be discovered.

There are five or six Civil War veterans buried here. The headstones are simply inscribed with the state regiment they served with. Three women veterans are also buried here. Ester Westover and Josephine Pfusch Back were WW I nurses sta-



tioned overseas. What fantastic and possibly horrifying tales they could tell. Of the 120,000 American casualties from World War I, Gothenburg was home to eighteen brave young men. Eleven white crosses stand to represent the eleven veterans who are interned overseas; six WW I veterans along with five WW II veterans.

Winter winds blow over this lovely cemetery and the hush of the trees and songs of the birds remind us that our cemetery holds loved ones, many who gave their lives taming this wild country and others who fought in battles on foreign fields. They all have a story to tell. Take some time to pass down the rows of markers and read the stones of those families that were a part of Gothenburg's early history.



GOTHENBURG HONOR GUARD

Shortly after World War II (1947) the Gothenburg Firing Squad was formed to conduct military services and honor our deceased veterans, furnish color guards for parades and raise and post colors for events in our community. Recently our military section has added a display to recognize those who have served and currently serve in the



honor guard. Commanded by Clifford Geiken for more than 50 years and currently by Roger Wahlgren, the guard has been on hand to pay final respect to those buried at Fort McPherson and other area cemeteries. Thank you to Dick Larson and Family Tree Photography Studio for their help with this display



**WE
NEED
YOUR
HELP!**

This past month we had to replace the heat pump in the museum at a cost of \$8,000.

PLEASE help us cover the expense by making a donation or renewing your membership. We rely on your generous support to pay our expenses and continue to serve the public.

**THANK YOU
FOR ALL YOU
DO!**

2017 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Thank you to the following who have renewed their membership and contributed to the museum building fund to date

- Dennis & Sue Kirkpatrick***
- Marcia Welch***
- Gerald & Janet Kranau***
- Pam Slack***
- Terry & Cathy Healey**
- Gothenburg Feed Products**
- Leonard France**
- Loren & Mary Koch*
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**New 2017 Lifetime*

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Form of Payment

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

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Life Time Membership

10x Building Fund Contributor \$1,000

Building Fund*

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*Contribution to the Building Fund includes an annual membership.

Annual Membership

Supporting Membership \$50

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