

GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

"A Window into the Past"

AUG 2021 8th QTR.

FARMING - THEN AND NOW

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Roger Heidebrink, Pres.
- Pam Slack, V. Pres.
- Connie Bihlmaier, Sec.
- Anne Anderson, Treas.
- Cordella Aden
- Marcy Aden
- Brent Block
- Lyle Franzen
- Dick Larson
- Donna McConnell
- Dick Schwanz
- Bev Titkemeier
- Chuck Titkemeier

GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

1420 Avenue F

PO Box 204

Gothenburg, NE 69138

Telephone: 308-537-4212

www.gothenburghistory.com

Email: gothenburghistory@outlook.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Anne Anderson

Contact info: 308-529-0906 or
anneanderson801@gmail.com

The pioneer farmers who settled in the Gothenburg area were fortunate as the 1880's were, for the most part, good years with abundant rainfall and few insect problems; and add this to the fact, federal and railroad land was available at reasonable prices.

Farming was not a uniform practice in the Gothenburg area and the most dramatic example of this was the farmers on the south side. Here there was a great deal of specialization due to the presence of many large and small cattle herds resulting in the need for hay and large quantities were produced. There was also a great deal of dairy production on the south side.

Agriculture on the north side was somewhat different. Here was to be found the more typical farmer with his fields of corn, wheat, oats, barley and a potato patch. The north was more diversified. Lacking were the cattle herds. The north side also had crops not common on the south side, namely sorghum and dry beans. There were even some crops that seemed to follow ethnic lines. Broom corn among the Swedes and buckwheat among the Germans.

During the 1890's agriculture was increasingly involved with the boom period Gothenburg was having. E. G. West and Jonas Adling put up the first elevator. Swedish stockholders built the Gothenburg Milling Company to process wheat into flour. Following a fire which destroyed the mill, it was rebuilt and another

mill was built by the Star Mills. By 1890 Gothenburg had two mills and one elevator.



The boom was cut short due to the money panic and drought in 1893 and for the remainder of the decade

what was produced found almost no market. It was common for corn to sell at .10 cents a bushel. Because of this, corn was stored in every available shed and building. Even some of the empty houses were used as corn cribs.

The best thing to come out of this decade was that irrigation was developed. In 1894 and '95, the Gothenburg Canal was extended seventeen miles eastward of Lake Helen and would irrigate 20,000 acres. Also in 1894, the South Side Irrigation Canal was formed and a fifteen mile canal was constructed to irrigate 25,000 acres of south side farms.

Agriculture had a golden period between 1902 and 1920. Rainfall was good, crop prices were good, a new crop was introduced and Gothenburg continued to strengthen itself as an agricultural center.

Continued on Page 2

DID YOU KNOW?

The Lincoln Highway Camp on the west edge of town was Gothenburg's first early-day motel complete with individual cabins and a swimming pool. The business was located where Country Partners Cooperative headquarters is located today. There was lots of traffic along the Lincoln Highway, what is now know as Hwy. 30, as it was the only highway between New York & San Francisco back as early as 1913.

FARMING - THEN AND NOW

Continued from Page 1

The farmers themselves formed a Co-operative Association in 1905 and put up an elevator. Another development was the establishment of alfalfa as a major crop in the area. The first alfalfa mill was put in one of the old factory buildings that was built during the boom.

The United States entered World War I and many marched off to war leaving the farmers hit hard with corn harvest seemingly never ending. To help, people of Gothenburg organized work gangs and went out into the country to work in the corn fields.

During the 1920's machinery became increasingly important on the farm. Gothenburg had Patterson Machine Shop operated by W. A. Patterson and machinery such as the Fordson Sweep, Patterson Listed Corn Harrow and

crops in the fall. It's a long ways from planting a single row of corn with horses pulling the machine and picking corn by hand and pitching it into a wagon. The work these days is done with 16 to 32-row planters pulled by a tractor listing upwards of \$800,000 for the pair.

The average size farm back then was 80-120 acres and now a farm will range in size from 1,800 to 8,000 acres.

Crops grown include field corn used to feed livestock, white and yellow food-grade corn, popcorn, organic blue and yellow corn, soybeans, alfalfa, cane and grass along



Carl Wahlgren farming with a team of horses.



Ross Wahlgren, Carl Wahlgren's great grandson, plants with a 32-row planter. Photo by Suzie Wahlgren

with some other small grains.

Combines with a corn head list at about \$900,000 and can harvest 4,000 to 5,200 bushels of corn an hour and unload 400 bushels into trucks in less than two minutes.

Crops are delivered to Country Partners Cooperative, area feedlots and food-grade corn is delivered to Frito Lay to be made into corn and tortilla chips. The alfalfa goes to Gothenburg Feed Products and is made into pellets or meal and shipped nationally throughout the United States.

Livestock also continues to be a profitable business with cattle and hogs raised by many local farmers/ranchers.

Thank you to Shane Maxwell, manager of the local Landmark John Deere dealership for information about today's farm implements.



Circa 1922: Patterson Machine Shop

Pictured l-r: Harm Junker, Elmer Axthelm, Gladys Patterson, Worn Patterson

Patterson Pump were made not only for local use but for across the country.

FAST FORWARD TO TODAY: Large machines work the fields in the spring and harvest the

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1922 a meeting was held to find a suitable site for a golf course. A 58 acre tract of land, owned by the City Investment Association, west of Lake Helen and adjacent to the Gothenburg Canal seemed to be perfect with it's rolling terrain with some hills and valleys. Like many projects, volunteer work was the only way a golf course could be constructed. By 1923, the name "The Gothenburg Country Club" had been selected as the name for the new golf course and "interest was keen"!

Fighting the Hoppers

In July 1874, the sky was black with millions of grasshoppers. Growing crops disappeared in a single day. Trees were stripped of their leaves. Clothing and harness was damaged if left exposed to the hoppers. The years 1875 and 1876 were about the same and in 1877, there was a scourge of chinch bugs. This country girl doesn't know what a "chinch" bug is; Google defines them as small in size, but they can do massive damage to grass. These miniscule bugs—adults are only about 1/6 of an inch long—feed on the stems of grass. Not only do they suck the blades dry, but then they inject it with toxins. Chinch bugs thrive on dryness.

On the heels of the money panic of 1894 came more dry years and grasshoppers. They came overnight and ate every blade of vegetation. An early settler is said to have left his coat and pitchfork in the field and the ravenous hoppers ate the coat and left scars on the fork handle. Trains on the railroad were stopped in localities where the hoppers had been mashed in such numbers on the rails, they were too slick to form traction for the engine and coach wheels.

Another bad year for grasshoppers was 1931. The scourge of grasshoppers seemed to appear in dry years and this was the beginning of the "Dirty Thirties" as they were referred to. Farmers contended with them in different ways. Some resorted to concocting their own poison "recipe", a mixture of six pounds of white arsenic, two gallons of molasses and 190 pounds of bran. That mixture was moistened and scattered over infested fields to ward off the destructive pests

1936 Harvest of Grasshoppers on the 96 Ranch



The August 12, 1936 edition of the "Times" records that one of the most successful hopper catchers put to use in this section of the country had been working at the 96 Ranch. H.L. Williams took a car and attached a catcher on the front bumper. The grasshopper dozer, as it was called, was driven across the field stirring up the pests. When they tried to leap over it, they hit the backboard and dropped into a tray of oil. Mr. Williams reported a total catch of over 300 bushes of hoppers.



Today the infestation of grasshoppers is controlled by insecticides and perhaps we will never see another scourge of those hoppers. **Photos courtesy of Jan Gill.**

GOTHENBURG ROPING CLUB

Founded 1936 - First in Nebraska

According to Kenneth Tetro, as reported in the August 14, 1996 issue of the Gothenburg Times, roping clubs did not exist in Nebraska back in the mid 1930's. Most people probably didn't even know what a roping club was.

Tetro, along with Glen Hampton, organized the roping club in Gothenburg in 1936. Hampton, who was studying to be a veterinarian at Texas A&M, came back and told about the roping clubs they had in Texas. Hampton would eventually become a banker. Tetro said "I called a bunch of guys and the idea really took off.

The first group of about a dozen were all horsemen who liked to rope. Some of the original group were Ray & Roy Stickelman, George, Ralph & Milton Mann, Harry, William and Albert Soller, Frank Ballmer, Jim Engleman, Henry Voss, Roger Clark, Hampton and Tetro. According to 92 year old Don Soller, who joined the club when he was 13, "they charged \$10 for a life-time membership using the membership money to purchase some cows and build an arena." The club was in three different locations before moving to the present site north of the lake. The first was between the river and where the Frito-Lay facility is now. Every Sunday they would get together and rope.

Tetro said he had bought the land where the rodeo grounds is now located to build a home on. He started to dig for the new house and came upon a grave site. When Lake Helen was dug, which was once the Holcombe cemetery, the graves were moved by fami-

lies to new sites. Those that weren't moved were relocated to the area north of the lake. Mrs. Tetro said she wasn't going to live in a graveyard, so the story goes. He ended up selling it to the roping club and

they built the rodeo grounds around 1950. Material for the first chutes and fences came from the Dawson County Fairgrounds.

Others involved in the early days were Charles Burson, Don Soller, Frank & Hank Ballmer, Walt Hecox, Martin Gengenbach, Arch Trimble, Clarence Maack, Buzz Stebbins, Jim Clark, Otto & Herman Witte and Doc Pyle.

Today, 85 years later, the July 4th Rodeo has become as much of a tradition in Gothenburg as fire-

works. Each year rodeo competitors come from all over Nebraska and many neighboring states to take a shot at a few seconds of riding, roping and bucking in an attempt to win some cash. Over 400 contestants challenge each other in Bareback and Saddle Bronc riding, Barrel Racing, Tie-Down Roping, Team Roping and Bull Riding.

The sign for the Gothenburg Roping Club, built and erected by Gary Garner, tells the year the group was established, but it doesn't tell about the dedication of all the volunteers who have worked the past 85 years to make it continue to be a successful event site for all to enjoy.

Thanks to Don Soller, one of the "old timers" left to tell the stories about the Gothenburg Roping Club and it's colorful history.



DID YOU KNOW?

*The
Gothenburg
Chamber of
Commerce
became a
corporation
on May 24,
1940.
Business to
be transacted
was:
Advertise the
City of
Gothenburg;
Promote its
growth and
welfare;
Promote
shows,
concerts,
fairs, etc.;
Promote and
encourage
agriculture
and stock
raising
pursuits;
Organize
merchants
and
businesses.
They
continue
doing all
those things
and more
today.
Hats Off!*

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIPS

- Karla Blasé
- Denise Brittenham
- Jan Gill
- Flatwater Bank
- Terry & Cathy Healey
- Ronald Klein
- Dick & Connie Larson
- Donna McConnell
- Ramona Ollendorf
- Blaine Peterson
- Jenny Raymond
- Tot & Pauline Holmes
- Keith & Marcy Aden
- Pam Slack
- Marcia Welch
- Dennis & Sue Kirkpatrick
- Gerald & Janet Kranau
- Roger & Carol Wahlgren
- Robert & Mary Theasmeyer
- Mark & Cindy Peyton
- Charlie & Connie Bihlmaier
- Marvin & Jill Franzen
- Kathy Nichols
- Chuck & Bev Titkemeier
- Elsie Cyriacks
- Steve Windrum
- Verlin & Charolett Janssen
- Cecile Ackerman
- **Norm & Colleen Geiken***
- **Father Wayne Pavela***
- **Kim Anderson ***
- **Bev Anderson***

***New 2021 Lifetime Membership**

2021 MEMBERSHIP & BUILDING FUND REPORT

Thank you to the following who joined or renewed their membership for 2021 and contributed to the museum building fund*.

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Bob & Mary Theasmeyer*** | • Wendy Bridges Jerkich* | • Robert Ronnekamp |
| • Chuck & Bev Titkemeier*** | • Eugene & Lettie Morse* | • Sus Peden |
| • Gothenburg Feed Products/
Terry & Cathy Healey*** | • Glenn Vieselmeyer* | • Robert & LoyAnn Rossell |
| • Elsie Cyriacks*** | • Roger Heidebrink* | • Cheryl Alberts |
| • Dick & Connie Larson*** | • Tom & Rhonda Jobman* | • First State Bank |
| • Steve Windrum*** | • Jane Sheets* | • Tim & Cordelia Aden |
| • Leonard France** | • LaVawn Farnstrom* | |
| • Gordon Peden** | • Luke & Julie Rickertsen* | |
| • Sandy Brestel** | • Dave & Linda Loostrum* | |
| • Loren & Mary Koch* | • Jerry & Sherri Peterson* | |
| • Jack & Faye Kniss* | • Ed & Marilyn Uehling | |
| • Mike & Deb Bacon* | • First State Bank | |
| • Dan Tinlin* | • Jack Soller | |
| • Diane Harm* | • Karen Oliver | |
| • Dean Kugler* | • Mid Nebraska Realty | |
| • Arlan & Tip Ronnekamp* | • Paul Swan | |
| • Thomas Hodson* | • Robin & Lynnette Stevens | |

*****Life-Time Member**

****Building Fund Benefactor**

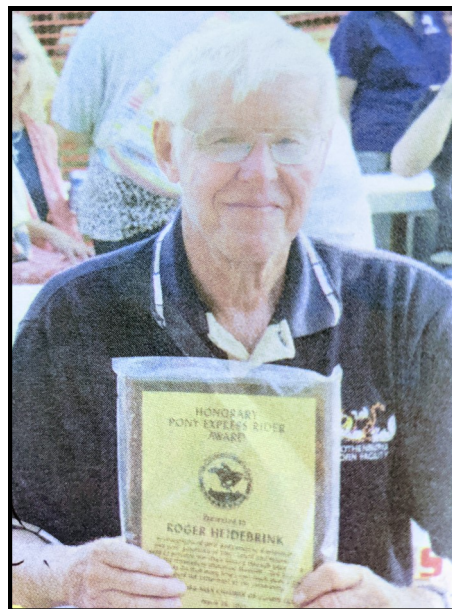
***Building Fund Contributor**

**BOLD/ITALIC INDICATES NEW
MEMBER/CONTRIBUTOR**

AWARDS



The Nebraska Historical Society Foundation representatives Leslie Fattig and Lori Heaton presented the Museum Board with a \$1,000 grant which will help provide new interactive display equipment for the museum. The funds will be used to purchase floor-standing kiosks and iPads providing videos detailing our history for our visitors.



The Gothenburg Chamber of Commerce recently recognized Roger Heidebrink with the Pony Express Rider Award for his dedica-

tion and hard work improving the museum as well as his many other volunteer activities with the Lions Club and Senior Center. We are very proud to have him serve as president of the Historical Museum Board of Directors.

Picture by Ellen Mortensen, Gothenburg Leader.

SPECIAL THANKS!

Special Thanks to Nanette Bates for donating paper supplies to the museum. Also thanks goes to Verlin Janssen and Roger Kennicutt for mowing. You make our museum look great.

Form of Payment

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Check payable to:

Gothenburg Historical Museum

PO Box 204

Gothenburg, NE 69138

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email Address _____

2021 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