

GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

“A Window into the Past”

MAY 2021 2nd QTR.

Scraps of the Past

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GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

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Over the past year and a half the Gothenburg Historical Museum has been closed, due in part to Covid, but we also worked to patch the pieces of the museum back together to tell a better story of our area history for all to enjoy. Our mantra became *“each display tells a story of our past.”* Each display is a part of history patched together and makes us what we are today. Whether it happened back in the 1880’s, 1980’s or 2020-21, it’s all our history.

In my last newsletter I said *“We’ve Been Closed but We’ve Been Busy”*. With volunteers logging in hundreds of hours during that time piecing each scrap of our quilted and sometimes very colorful history back together, we stand back with pride so all can share in what has been accomplished.

Our “story” begins with the construction of the railroad in the

1860’s as it came through Nebraska settling many towns along it’s path. It followed other trails along the Platte River, i.e. the Oregon Trail, Mormon Trail and the Pony Express Route.

Olof Bergstrom, an employee of the Union Pacific Railroad and the man credited with founding Gothenburg, conceived a plan that a Swedish town was

needed where immigrants from Sweden wouldn’t

have to learn a new language. Bergstrom’s dreams of an all Swedish community were dashed when German Americans looking for home-sites were impressed by the fertile Platte River Val-

ley and along with Rev. William Ehmen encouraged other Germans to file their homestead claims and settle in this soon to be bustling community.

Settled by industrious and entrepreneurial individuals, by 1888 there was talk of constructing a 10 mile canal from the Platte River to



DID YOU KNOW?

E.G. WEST PARK

In 1921 the E.G. West family donated land on the north edge of Gothenburg to become one of the most beautiful parks around. It was designed with curving walks, concrete benches, terraces and a gold fish pond. Trees, bushes and a trellis arbor were added and Gothenburg would receive the distinction of "City Beautiful".

Scraps of the Past - cont.

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feed water into a 67-acre lake on the north edge of town. By 1891 the first water flowed into the lake, a power house constructed and electricity was produced by 1894. Gothenburg was touted to be the leading city in western Nebraska, to be-

lake not only furnished lights and power but ice during the winter months. In 1901 the Power Company was shipping 52 carloads of ice each day for the Union Pacific.

Settlers soon began arriving and businesses knew this was to become a thriving community. Soon there were banks,

newspapers, general mercantile and hardware stores, lumberyards and many other stores that people needed to settle and make a life for their families.

Our gallery wall displays many of the early businesses, some of which are still in business today. Read about their history and place in the growth of Gothenburg. Today we continue to grow, thrive and dream as our founders did in the 1880's.



come the "little Chicago of Nebraska". Electric power capabilities attracted many companies from the east bringing manufacturers such as the Holton Brass & Copper Works, Platte Valley Flour Mills, Shirt & Overall Factory, Pickle & Vinegar Factory, Steam Brick Yards, bathtub factories, F.J. Howe barbed wire manufacturer and many others. With the installation of electricity in nearly every home in the community, a year later streetlights followed. The



Scraps of the Past - cont.



John Wayne joins the boys in the bunkhouse

Marilyn Monroe's first film after studying at the [Actors Studio](#) in New York was in *Bus Stop* shown at the Sun Theatre in 1956. She sang one song: "[That Old Black Magic](#)".



The Fire department battled many big blazes including the Opera House & the Houston Hotel and continues to be essential to Gothenburg.



Kitchen complete with a pitcher pump, a corn cob cook stove and a Hoosier cupboard.



Doctors & Hospitals from the 1926 to 2021.



Ag Industry: Farming with horses and picking corn by hand to 32-row planters and sprayers and carts hauling grain.

DID YOU KNOW?

The first big school building was completed in November of 1886. It was located between 14th & 15th Streets on the west side of the street facing east. The building was two stories high with a tower on one end. The building was later cut in half and moved with one half being used as a city hall and fire station and the other half as the Post Office and a business building.

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
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- Marvin & Jill Franzen
- Kathy Nichols
- Chuck & Bev Titkemeier
- Elsie Cyriacks
- Steve Windrum
- Verlin & Charolett Janssen
- Cecile Ackerman
- ***Norm & Colleen Geiken****
- ***Father Wayne Pavela****

****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***
- Chuck & Bev Titkemeier***
- Gothenburg Feed Products/Terry & Cathy Healey***
- Elsie Cyriacks***
- Dick & Connie Larson***
- Steve Windrum***
- Leonard France**
- Loren & Mary Koch*
- Jack & Faye Kniss*
- Mike & Deb Bacon*
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- First State Bank
- Jack Soller
- Karen Oliver
- ***Kim & Bev Anderson***
- Mid Nebraska Realty
- Paul Swan
- Robin & Lynnette Stevens
- Robert Ronnekamp

***Life-Time Member

**Building Fund Benefactor

*Building Fund Contributor

BOLD/ITALIC INDICATES NEW MEMBER/CONTRIBUTOR

Scraps of the Past - cont.

We have taken scraps of our history and pieced them together to “tell our story.” What you see in this newsletter is just a snippet of what we’d like to share with you. It is all housed in the Gothenburg Historical Museum and you are invited to visit and learn about the hardships and successes we’ve had as a community. We’ve faced fires, tornadoes, financial crisis, depression and the



“dirty 30’s”, wars and tragic deaths. But we’ve all persevered to create a growing, enthusiastic community that doesn’t take “NO” for an answer. We

find a way to connect even during isolation of a pandemic. Our business community keeps growing along with our school, hospital, farmers and ranchers and families. We have something that we’re extremely proud of and hope that you will share our excitement and stop by for a visit.

SPECIAL THANKS!

A special thanks goes to those who spent hours and hours of their time creating and changing displays. Some were carpenters and some were visionaries and creators. There were painters and floor scrubbers making everything sparkle & shine. We couldn’t have done it without all of your help. Thanks to Roger Heidebrink, Charlie & Connie Bihlmaier, Jay Richeson, Marcy Aden, Dick Larson, Anne Anderson, Pam Slack, Cordelia Aden, Suzie Wahlgren, Becky

Jobman, Lori Artz, Cecile Ackerman, Michelle Olmstead-Chew and the Gothenburg Tourism Committee for their support. Also to all those who contribute monetarily to make these changes possible, thank you. We appreciate your confidence in what we are doing to keep our history alive. Thank you to the Gothenburg Times and The Leader for their articles promoting our “story”. I apologize if I missed any-

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

DID YOU KNOW?

NOVAK'S CLOTHING STORE

Anton Novak learned his tailor trade at the age of 11 in Vienna Austria. Originally from Czechoslovakia, he immigrated to the United States at the age of 21, entering through Ellis Island. He began his business in Gothenburg in 1909 providing fine clothing and shoes for men and boys. His business came to a tragic end when he was struck by a drunk driver in 1941.

Scraps of the Past - cont.

Do you enjoy the smell of a new car or the whiff of freshly ground coffee beans. A quilter has the same thrill when they unfold yardage for a new project. I'm sure that the early settlers were just as thrilled when they got a new flour sack with it's brightly colored print that would be used to make a new quilt. A non-quilter might think it to be an exercise in futility for someone to take a perfectly good piece of fabric and cut it into squares, triangles and shapes only to sew it all back together.

The early quilts were made with a purpose in mind to either layer a bed or serve a decorative purpose. A patchwork quilt had a top layer consisting of multiple scraps of fabric sewn together by hand to form a design. Many times these quilts were "friendship" quilts given to the woman leaving for westward lands as a remembrance. They sometimes provided an emotional sustenance as something of beauty in a very much barren existence of log cabins, sod houses or possibly dugouts. Many women wanted quilts that reminded them of their heritage. As times changed quilting came to be seen as an art rather than a utilitarian craft.

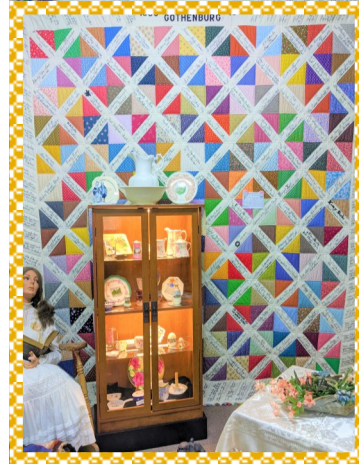
Imagine you are a wife isolated by both distance and long hours of work, nothing could be more fun than to visit a neighbor and chat over quilting with friends.



Local area women were no different and formed quilting groups; one being The Sunny Southside Club organized in the early 1900's.

A beautiful Sunbonnet Quilt was made in the 1930's by Gothenburg

Women for Mrs. Audrey Brooks, mother of Jane, Judi, Marilyn, Bill and Stanley Brooks. This is just one of the quilts to see at the museum.



To commemorate the Gothenburg Centennial in 1985 a large quilt was made featuring blocks with names and dates of local businesses past and present and is proudly displayed to remember the 100 years, 1885 to 1985, of Gothenburg's existence. The work

done by many hands tell a story of the people and businesses of our community.

Another distinctive quilt that adorns the walls of the museum is a Pony Express quilt designed by a nationally recognized quilt designer Jodi Barrows and made by Kathy LeFleur of Port Barre, LA. It was donated to the museum and proudly graces the wall along with other Pony Express memorabilia.



Other quilts at the museum include one that each square was embroidered by a different person, then pieced together. Another is adorned with multi-colored butterflies and was a gift to Donna Keiser.

All of these quilts tell a story about the person who stitched it, quilted it, maybe received it as a gift and loved it enough to share it with our museum visitors. I hope you will stop by to see these patches of history