

# GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

## "A Window into the Past"

APR-2018 - 2nd QTR.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

## NORTH MEETS SOUTH ACROSS THE RIVER

Ten years had passed since Plum Creek (Lexington) dedicated her county-financed bridge while Overton, Gould (now Cozad), Willow Island and Gothenburg continued to struggle. However, new blood and fresh ideas took a new approach and on March 19, 1884 articles of incorporation had been filed with the County Clerk for a company to build a toll bridge across the Platte, one mile south of Gothenburg. For those south of Gothenburg wanting to go to their "nearest" town, "a long way around" amounted to a 50-mile trip, one way, a disheartening trip with a team and wagon.

Once the idea was conceived, those west-end settlers didn't waste time. On April 12, 1884 a meeting of the stockholders of the Platte River Bridge Company met to discuss plans for building a toll bridge one mile south of town. By October plans

were in place and a sum of \$920 was needed before the contract could be let, and in less than twenty minutes it was raised.

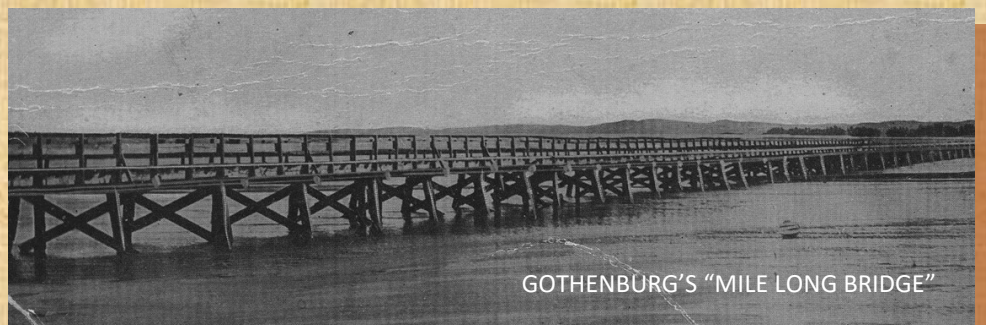
Having been shown the way, a group at Cozad also began promoting a toll bridge too. A race developed to see who would

finish their bridge first.

By November 1884 the Gothenburg bridge was progressing nicely. The workmen were over 800 hundred feet in the main channel and were averaging over one hundred and fifty feet each day. The construction of the Cozad bridge didn't start until December 15, 1884.

Gothenburg finished first. The bridge of 3,736 feet, being commenced on the 5th day of November 1884, was completed on the 13th day of January 1885 for a total cost of \$14,546.40.

The 1885 bridge was always known as the "Mile Long Bridge." It was 8 feet wide and had three turnouts for passing. The pilings were solid oak. Today there are still some of the pilings that can be found in their original location on the south bank.



GOTHENBURG'S "MILE LONG BRIDGE"

J. I. Buterbaugh was the first toll keeper at the Gothenburg bridge. Pedestrians crossing on foot were assessed five cents; people crossing on horseback were charged ten cents; twenty-five cents was the toll exacted from a team and driver.

### 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

# GOTHENBURG POWER and IRRIGATION CANAL COMPANY

Information for the articles in this publication have been taken from the book titled "Battle of the Bridges" written by Rex German and Russ Czaplowski published by the Dawson County Historical Society.

Gothenburg seemed involved in matters of an entrepreneurial nature when a meeting was held in August 1888 to discuss the possibility of constructing a canal and reservoir to furnish water power to the city. Preliminary surveys were conducted and on September 18, 1888 the Gothenburg Power and Irrigation Canal Company was incorporated.

Lexington, not to be outdone, scrambled for a similar water-power canal. This flurry of activity occurred during the spring of 1889 but their plans never got beyond the initial surveys. This failure puts an

odd twist to the Plum Creek Gazette's July 21, 1891 item stating "Irrigation may be all right, but there's lots of farmers

in Dawson County who don't want it. They prefer to trust in God and well directed energy for crops, than to mortgage their farms for water".

The citizens of Gothenburg began to think about harnessing the water of the Platte River to furnish cheap power and irrigation. A number of townsmen went to Kearney and observed the benefits of irrigation and brought back glowing reports of the boom Kearney was enjoying because of the new canal there.

C. A. Edwards, a civil engineer, took charge of plans to form an artificial lake north of the town in a natural valley. Pilings were driven to the hard pan as the base for the dike to be thrown up along the south end of the natural valley to form a lake site.

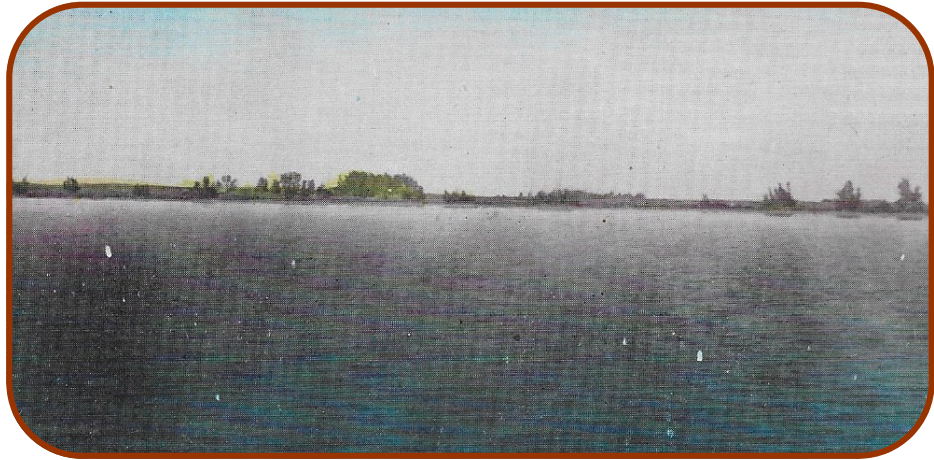
The canal connecting the river and the lake was ten miles long and took one year to complete, 1890-91. Workers received from 10 cents to 15 cents per hour, according to the nature of the labor.

The first water came into the lake in 1891, but the entire project was not completed until four years later. It

The cheap power began to attract new industries to the vicinity. A pickle and vinegar factory built brick buildings from a local brick kiln. An overall factory began operations to the west of the city. Businessmen began to fear that the main part of town would move to the west of the town site as new lots were laid out. A horse-drawn surrey provided transportation to and from the town proper and the factories.

Another source of income to the town was the shipment of ice which was cut from the surface of the lake and shipped to North Platte, Grand Island, and other points, to ice

refrigerator cars on the main line of the Union Pacific Railroad. Platte Valley Farm and Cattle Company had secured a five



year contract for this ice and shipped as high as 2,000 cars of ice in a single season. Putting up ice furnished employment to many men during the season when there was not much work to be found. The ice was cut in 100-pound blocks and floated down a channel which had to be kept open so the ice could be loaded on the Union Pacific cars or moved to the ice houses on the south side of the lake.

carried water for 16,800 acres of land and the lake at one time was the second largest artificial lake in the state. The water power furnished cheap electrical power for many surrounding towns. When the project was completed in 1895, street lights were installed on Gothenburg streets and the people began to know a new era of progress. The entire project, lake and canal, was built at a cost of \$40,000.

-year contract for this ice and shipped as high as 2,000 cars of ice in a single season. Putting up ice furnished employment to many men during the season when there was not much work to be found.

The ice was cut in 100-pound blocks and floated down a channel which had to be kept open so the ice could be loaded on the Union Pacific cars or moved to the ice houses on the south side of the lake.

## GOTHENBURG HAD “WORLD CLASS PROMOTORS” - 1890

Considering the scope of Gothenburg’s early industries—enviable by any of Dawson County’s cities even today—these men were “World-Class” promoters. This is evidenced by a pamphlet published in Gothenburg by the News Publishing Company—1890. The pamphlet includes “The Gothenburg Water Works and Investment Company is now engaged in improving the city by the erection of brick business blocks and the location of manufacturing industries to take advantage of its water power. Gothenburg now has a population exceeding six hundred people, and is recognized as one of the most progressive towns in Western Nebraska, possessing

natural advantages which make it the envy of the more pretentious cities.”

The pamphlet went on to say: “It must be considered that Gothenburg:

- Commands the **trade of the country for 40 miles**
- Has a **climate unsurpassed**
- Has a never failing supply of **excellent pure water**
- Has as **fine soil** as can be found in the state
- Has good **public schools**
- Has two **newspapers**
- Has **three banks**, one **flour mill** in operation, one **flour mill**

**corn, wheat, oats, barley, millet, alfalfa, flax, broom-corn** and all varieties of vegetables, melons, etc.”

The brochure goes on with descriptions under the following headings:

- “Gothenburg as a railroad center
- Why a city in central Nebraska will become a pork packing, cattle raising and beef packing center
- Why Gothenburg will become a milling center
- Why Gothenburg will become a large manufacturing center.”

Gothenburg may not have become the “*little Chicago of Nebraska*” as was predicted, but we continue to promote our assets and are aggressive with our economic development. That is evidenced by the recruitment of the likes of Frito Lay, Parker Tech Seals, Monsanto, and many others. We are still a proud community providing quality schools, healthcare, recreation and an excellent business community.

It’s soil products are



## —EARLY POSTAL SERVICE—

**O LOF BERGSTROM’S SWEDISH SETTLERS** and their neighbors, most of them German, had formed an industrious and energetic community.

In 1885 Mr. Bergstrom got up a petition for a Post Office. The petition was accepted and Bergstrom was appointed Postmaster. Mail was brought to his house located just north town and anyone who wanted his mail called for it there. The mail would come in by train and would remain there for days before someone from the Bergstrom’s would walk down to get it. When the sack was brought back, there was a general stampede for the key which hung on a nail,

and the one getting the key was privileged to open the sack and dump it on the floor. The letters were then gathered and placed on a table. When people called for their mail they were invited to look through the mail on the table.

When Dr. Vollrad Karlson started his drug-store located on Front Street, the Post Office was moved there, and he served as mail clerk. Dr. Karlson conducted the Post Office in a more dignified manner. He went after the mail himself and tucked it away in a cigar box under the counter of the store. He sorted the mail and told the settlers if they had any mail.

We are working on a display featuring early Gothenburg picture postcards. Do you have any you can share?

# HELP US WRITE OUR HISTORY!

## WANTED: *Your Stories*

For more information about the Gothenburg History Book II or to assist with this project, please contact the museum at 308-537-4212 or Anne Anderson at 308-529-0906.

The Gothenburg Historical Museum is gathering material for a second book on the history of Gothenburg; it's business community, organization activities, churches, as well as individual and family stories. In 1992 the first Gothenburg Area History book was published which has provided a wealth of information as far back as 1885 when Gothenburg was founded. A lot has changed in the past 25 years since it was published and it's time to begin the second chapter.

I'm sure you have a story that belongs in this book. They are an important part of your history and heritage and that's why we are compiling this book. We want to save them before they are lost forever. There are a few simple suggestions that we would ask you to follow:

1. Include the submission form found at the bottom of the page along with your story.
2. Write your name and address on each page.
3. Your story can be handwritten, typed or emailed. Please consider legibility if your story is handwritten. Write on ONE side of the page only.
4. We encourage you to send photographs and ask that you please scan them and email them to [gothenburghistory@outlook.com](mailto:gothenburghistory@outlook.com). All individuals, etc. should be identified that are portrayed in the picture. If necessary pictures can be scanned by personnel at the museum and returned.
5. You accept full responsibility for what you write and give us permission to edit and publish your story and to shorten it if necessary.
6. We will mail your edited material to you so that you may check for errors before it appears in the book.
7. You are not required to purchase or pay to have your story published.

### SUBMISSION FORM

**This form must be completed and returned with your story.**

Mail to: Gothenburg Historical Museum, PO Box 204, Gothenburg, NE 69138

Email to: [gothenburghistory@outlook.com](mailto:gothenburghistory@outlook.com)

I submit this material to be included in the Gothenburg Area History Book II. I understand that I am not obligated in any way, that I own the rights to the material I submit, but I allow Gothenburg Historical Museum to publish it in any of their publications.

PLEASE PRINT: circle one Mr. Mrs. Ms.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

*If you need help writing the history of your business, family or organization, forms are available to assist you. To request one or all of these forms please email [gothenburghistory@outlook.com](mailto:gothenburghistory@outlook.com) or [anneanderson801@gmail.com](mailto:anneanderson801@gmail.com)*

# 2018 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

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

- Gothenburg State Bank\*\*\*
- Charlie & Connie Bihlmaier\*\*\*
- Chuck & Bev Titkemeier\*\*
- Jack & Mary Ostergard\*\*
- Loren & Mary Koch\*
- Marcia Welch\*
- Jan Gill\*
- Mike & Deb Bacon\*

- Stone Hearth Estates\*
- Roy & Lavawn Farnstrom\*
- Gene & Cora Bosch\*
- Ron & Kayleen Ostergard\*
- Dave & Linda Loostrom\*
- Dan Tinlin\*
- Connie Ostergard\*
- Paul Swan\*
- Pam Slack\*
- Henry & Patricia Potter\*
- Milan & Barb Franzen\*
- Dick & Jackie Schwanz\*

- Dick & Connie Larson\*
- Tom & Rhonda Jobman\*
- First State Bank\*
- Robert Ronnekamp
- Sus Peden
- Robin & Lynnette Stevens
- Monty & Sheri Schriver
- Mid Nebraska Realty
- Dawson County Museum

\*\*\***Life-Time Member**  
**\*\*Building Fund Benefactor**  
**\*Building Fund Contributor**

## LIFETIME MEMBERSHIPS

- Karla Blasé
- Denise Brittenham
- Jan Gill
- Gothenburg State Bank
- Terry & Cathy Healey
- Ronald Klein
- Dick & Connie Larson
- Donna McConnell
- Ramona Ollendorf
- Blaine Peterson
- Jenny Raymond
- Tot & Pauline Holmes
- Marcy & Keith Aden
- Jack & Mary Ostergard
- Pam Slack
- Marcia Welch
- Dennis & Sue Kirkpatrick
- Gerald & Janet Kranau
- Roger & Carol Wahlgren
- Robert & Mary Theasmeyer
- **Charlie & Connie Bihlmaier\***

*\*New 2018 Lifetime Memberships*

### Form of Payment

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

**Check payable to:**

**Gothenburg Historical Museum**

**PO Box 204**

**Gothenburg, NE 69138**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

### 2018 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