

GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

"A Window into the Past"

JAN-2018 - 1st QTR.

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RAILROADS SETTLE THE WEST

The railroad and the depots that served it were probably the most important features of Gothenburg, for without them, the town would have died before it even got a start as so many villages did. Just a dream of what could have been.

People didn't have the fine roads and speedy vehicles they do now, only a horse and buggy or a team of horses and wagon to haul freight. All the materials needed to survive on the plains came in by train, and all the products produced on this fertile land went out the same way. Many of the people who settled here also arrived by train along with all their worldly possessions. It was the lifeline of the community.

According to the Union Pacific records, the section of railroad which included the area of Gothenburg was inspected and accepted November 1866 with rail probably laid sometime that year.

Gothenburg was platted by UP surveyors in 1882, 4 blocks long and 2 blocks wide. The first depot was built on Avenue G in 1884-85. It was used until January 1900 when a new and larger depot was put into use on the north side of the tracks two blocks further west looking straight down what is now Lake Avenue, then called Winchell Street. It was said that it was a grand and imposing building with fine amenities. The Avenue G depot was subsequently moved to Willow Island and used for many years. It was

eventually moved to the Dawson County Historical Museum in Lexington.

The September 9, 1899 Gothenburg Independent reported special rates to Omaha September 12, 13 and 14 of \$6.00 for the round trip, limited to five days from date of sale. Also reported by the Independent was "If it were not for the favoritism of the Union Pacific and Gothenburg's location, at a point midway between Lexington and North Platte, making it a convenient place for trainmen to receive orders, Gothenburg would soon sink to a point comparable with Willow Island."

The main crossing was eventually moved to



Lake Avenue in 1940 causing the need to move the depot to the west a little more than the length of the building.

To accommodate the many people coming and going, a passenger shed and waiting room were built in 1912 south of the tracks. There were also the coal chutes and water tanks to handle refueling of the big engines. By 1960 diesel engines had taken over and the coal powered engines were being retired.

(Cont. pg. 3)

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A portion of the information for this article was taken from the Gothenburg Area History Book published in 1992. More information about Eagle Scouts and their projects would be appreciated. Photos would also be an asset to our files. Please send any information to the address on page one of this newsletter.

BOY SCOUTS

“To do all that we can.....”

The Boy Scouts of America is one of the largest Scouting organizations in the United States and one of the largest youth organizations in the United States, with more than 2.4 million youth participants and nearly one million adult volunteers. The BSA was founded in 1910, and since then, more than 110 million Americans have been participants in the programs at some time.

The Boy Scouts of Gothenburg began ninety years ago in February 1928 being sponsored by the Kiwanis Club. Contests were a favorite part of Scouting (such as fire-making, flint and steel, fire-by-friction) as well as swimming contests. Gothenburg Scouts also had a band at one time.

The following were listed as members of Troop One in 1931: Eddie Duis, Delevon Patterson, Virgil Iler, Paul Potter, Wayne Kirkpatrick, LaVern Wickstrom, Ernie VanWey, Hugh Ralston, Sam Atkinson, Don Holmes, Rynol Dahlman, John Dahlquist, Ralph Barnes, Homer Loutzenheiser, Frederick Karlson, Edgar Burtchard, Otto Krekeler, Arthur Stevenson, Arthur Miller, Frank Ralston, John Ralston, Heye Lambertus, Paul Aden, Melvin Trimble, Don Baker, Dorace Harberts, Edgar Sholund and Howard Clark.

A second troop of Boy Scouts was formed in July 1929 with the American Legion as the sponsoring body. The first summer camp they attended was in Central City at Camp Hord with seven boys attending: Bobby Williams, Junior Loutzenheiser, Jack Dodd, Jiggs Axthelm, Reginald Putnam, Clayton Axthelm, Alfred Krekeler and Richard Gronewold.

In 1935 two District Boy Scout



Camps were held at Lafayette Park in Gothenburg with approximately 192 boys and leaders attending.

By 1944, the Boy Scouts were known as Troop 177, the same as they are today. At that time there were at least 40 scouts in the troop.

Since the first Eagle Scout was named in 1912, the rank has represented a milestone of accomplishment—perhaps without equal—that is recognized across the country and even the world. Men who have earned the Eagle Scout rank count it among their most treasured possessions.

“Eagle Scout” is not just an award; it is a state of being. Those who earned it as boys continue to earn it every day as men. That is why an Eagle Scout *IS* an Eagle Scout—not *was*.

Edgar Burtchard was the first Eagle Scout from Gothenburg receiving this honor in March 1930.

In the 1980-90’s several scouts received the coveted Eagle Scout honor. Led by Ron Bon-sak, they included Aaron Kite, John Frerichs, Joe Richeson, Chris Beran, Charlie Burson, Chris Healey, Jory Flesch, Larry Simants and Scott Simants. Others receiving the honor include: John Larson, Todd Larson, Cody Larson, Anthony Reinhard, Noah Larson, Noah Gugelman, Will Healey, Caden Geiken, Max Jinks and others

Thanks to the Eagle Scouts many of their projects continue to be enjoyed in our community today. Such projects include: trees along Lake Avenue up toward Lake Helen, playground equipment for the school and the Methodist Church, the sidewalk in front of the historical museum, the exercise trail and picnic shelters at the Lake Helen Recreation Area, the flag pole at the Fire Department and another at the Methodist Church and improvements to the Sun Theatre, just to name a few..

—Railroads Continued from Page 1

As with everything, time changes all things and the depot was no longer a necessity. Union Pacific gave Gothenburg the option of moving the depot or they would demolish it. In 1976 a group, spearheaded by Jerry Aden, raised the money needed to move the depot to its new location just east of Lafayette Park. Local folks were determined to save a piece of history that held so many memories.

Stories have been told of kids who lived on the south side of the railroad tracks would walk as far as the depot on cold winter days and stop in to warm up on their way to and from school. How many sweethearts said their goodbye's in the depot as their loved ones went off to war? They say that when the wind blows you can hear the whistles of long-ago trains. What are

some of the stories you recall?

Unfortunately, all the hard work of individuals to save the depot were for naught. It would sit empty from 1976 until 1984 when two enterprising women opened a gift/craft shop called The Country Depot. After 13 years it closed in 1997. Later it would be home to a pre-school and is currently housing a co-op run by the Brethern Fellowship.

Falling into disrepair, the City Council is contemplating the future of the old building; should it be improved to be ADA compliant with a costly price tag or should it be removed. It would be sad to see it go, but it is also sad to see it continue to suffer from neglect. It's a hard question to answer.

BLIZZARD CAUSES TRAIN WRECK CLAIMING LIVES

Four persons were killed and twenty-two injured when an eastbound train collided with a second train that had stopped for passengers, water and coal at the Gothenburg depot during a raging snow storm. At 3:37 a.m. on March 14, 1913 the collision occurred during one of the worst storms in 25 years with high winds at 50-mile-per-hour, blowing snow and very poor visibility.

The first train, Number 4, had just taken on passengers and water and was being backed up a few feet to take on coal, when Number 12 smashed into the last cars, killing four passengers. Number 12 plowed through the rear Pullman car reducing the car to splinters and breaking it in half. The fire bell and whistles brought a number of firemen and others to the scene within minutes.

Fourteen passengers, the conductor and porter, were in the rear Pullman and all were either injured or killed. Killed were a traveling salesman from New York, a husband and wife from Iowa and a woman from Cheyenne, Wyoming.

A relief train was sent from North Platte and arrived at daylight. With a few exceptions, the injuries were not serious

and all were reported improving when they left. One of the injured was cared for at the home of Dr. Bartholomew until the relief train arrived.

The coroner and County Attorney concluded that an extra-ordinary blizzard was prevailing and that all the safety appliances were operating perfectly at the time of the collision. An investigation placed the blame on the engineer of Number 12 who failed to heed the block signals and place his train under control after passing the second block signal west of the Gothenburg depot. The engineer testified that he saw the second block signal west of the station, but did not see the first one at all. Not seeing the first signal, he maintained his usual running speed of twenty-miles-per-hour when he hit the stopped train.



GOTHENBURG NORTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY INCORPORATED

The Gothenburg Independent of Sept. 7, 1905 reported Articles of Incorporation of the Gothenburg Northern Railway Company to be filed with the secretary of state at Lincoln. Incorporators were W. D. Griffin, H. L. Williams, E. G. West, W. M. Stebbins and J. H. Kelly. The route was to be from Gothenburg east for 2.5 miles, thence north along Cottonwood Valley, past Etna to the Talin Table and from there to Gandy. The distance to be covered was about 50 miles. They anticipated completion of 20-30 miles by the first of January 1906.

2017 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

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

- Dennis & Sue Kirkpatrick***
- Marcia Welch***
- Gerald & Janet Kranau***
- Pam Slack***
- Roger & Carol Wahlgren***
- Robert & Mary Theasmeyer***
- Terry & Cathy Healey**
- Gothenburg Feed Products**
- Leonard France**
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- **Gerald & Janet Kranau***
- **Roger & Carol Wahlgren***
- **Robert & Mary Theasmeyer***

**New 2017 Lifetime Memberships*

You Are Invited

**Gothenburg
Historical Museum
Hosting a 2018 Planning
Retreat**

RSVP to Roger at 308-529-2196 or Anne at 308-529-0906

- **Saturday, February 3, 2018**
- **Hillcrest Meeting Room at
the Gothenburg Housing
Authority Offices**
- **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**
- **Lunch and snacks are
provided**



2018 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Form of Payment

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Checks 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