

GOTHENBURG HISTORICAL MUSEUM

JANUARY 2025

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Mission Statement:

*The mission of the
Historical Museum is:*

- *to manage donated and
loaned items in a responsible
manner,*
- *to encourage and provide
opportunities for genealogy
research,*
- *to enhance the quality of life
for the people of Gothen-
burg by preserving our histo-
ry and heritage.*

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NOTABLE Names

Notable names most often refer to famous people including actors, politicians, entrepreneurs, writers, artists, etc. Let me introduce to you to a few of those with "Notable Names" who called Gothenburg home at one time.

Olof Bergstrom was born in 1841 in the small village of Lennsjo in Halsingland region of Sweden. At the age of 16 he was initiated into the very popular Baptist church and became an anointed pastor in Stockholm. In 1869 he was offered a position to preach in Moline, IL becoming very popular. Later, becoming unenamored with the Baptist movement he begins his business activities in the United States becoming employed as a land agent for the Union Pacific Railroad. Through this connection, Bergstrom is recognized as the founder of the City of Gothenburg, Nebraska in 1885. His effort as the Swedish Colony land agent successfully recruited many Swedes to emigrate to this new community.



Although Bergstrom is touted as the founder of Gothenburg, another name is equally important to it's founding and growth..

Reverend William Ehmen graduated from the Lutheran Seminary at Mendota, IL and was sent as a missionary to Bear Creek, NE where he served for two years. He was then sent to a

new place being built along the Union Pacific Railroad in March 1879. On arriving in the new place which didn't even have a name yet, Reverend and Mrs. Ehman at once acted as land agents to settle a German colony. The settlers who Ehmen persuaded to come were mostly from the eastern states. Among them were George and John Aden, Friesenborgs, Junkers and Fickenschers, and other relatives of the family. Reverend Ehman was a Civil War Veteran, so he was entitled to a homestead, a pre-emption and a tree claim. The homestead extended along what is now Lake Avenue and the tree claim was a few miles east along the present highway and the Union Pacific tracks. Today Ehmen is best known for the park located in the middle of town along Lake Avenue and 15th Street. This early settlement consisted of Swedish and German emigrants. Bergstrom claimed that he named the town Gottenborg after Gottenborg, Sweden, but when the Union Pacific called for the spelling, Wm. Ehmen wanted it spelled Gutenberg after Gutenberg, Germany. Between three Swedes and one German a compromise was reached by spelling the name Gothenburg.



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NOTABLE Names

Another name that is quite notable due to the fact there is another local park located at Lake Avenue and 20th Street that bears his name is **Eric Gustaf West**. E.G. Westerberg was born in 1844 in Kristianham, Sweden. He spent his early life in Sweden receiving the usual education and military training, and he also learned the carpenter trade. At the age of 21 he desired to take advantage of opportunities offered in America. He landed in New York in 1866 and shortened his name to West, as it was easier for people to say and spell, and it also avoided some of the prejudicial



feelings harbored by many towards Swedish immigrants. He traveled to Chicago and worked in construction for the municipality of Chicago. In 1882 he came to Dawson County to look over the country with the idea of purchasing property and to settle in the area. At this time, the town of

Gothenburg had just been laid out and platted by Olof Bergstrom and the Union Pacific. Finding the community acceptable, he returned to Chicago and prepared to ship twenty carloads of lumber and one-half carload of hardware to the new town. In 1883 West began construction of a building for use as a hardware store and lumberyard office. This was one of the first business firms established in the community. He eventually had an ice business and electric roller mills in conjunction with his coal and lumber business. E. G. West was active serving on many church and community boards and was a prosperous businessman until his death in 1929.

Another early settler was **Edmond Winchel**. The Winchel family was one of the early pioneers of Dawson County. They were one of the first families to settle in the western part of Dawson County and Lake Avenue in Gothenburg, at one time, was named Winchel Street in their honor. The head of the Winchel family, Edmond Winchel, was born in 1825 near Tobinsport, Perry County, Indiana. Edmund Winchel grew up on his father's farm, married and was the father of twelve children. His wife died and he remarried gaining three stepchildren. In 1874 the family packed up and moved west to Dawson County and

settled on a homestead (S1/2 of the SE ¼ of S. 10. T. 11. R.25) which is a part of Gothenburg today. Edmund, despite the hard times, took part in the affairs of the area.

When District 20 was formed in 1876, he was a member of the first school

board. In the years 1877 to 1879, he served as a County Commissioner. In 1884 he and his stepson, Boon Kelley, opened a general store on the northwest corner of Lake Avenue and 9th Street. In 1890 the store was sold to the Carlson Brothers, who put up a bank on the site of the store where Flatwater Bank stands today.

Other notable names include **John Henry & James E. Norsworthy**. John H. Norsworthy was born in 1861 near Huron Province of Ontario Canada. In 1862 James E. Norsworthy was born. In 1865 they moved with their parents to Wisconsin and eventually to Nebraska in 1872. In 1880 the family moved to central Nebraska about 19 miles northwest of Cozad. John Norsworthy was a very good scholar and taught at the first school established in western Dawson County. John began farming in 1882 and was on the farm for several years before moving into Gothenburg. He devoted a large portion of his time to the town and county, serving on the school board, city council and as mayor. John Nors-

worthy was an extensive dealer in hogs, being, at one time, the largest individual buyer in the state. James moved to Gothenburg in 1889 and went into

business with a large trade in feed, flour, seeds, potatoes and like provisions. John and James built the Norsworthy Feed Store, which at one time was one of the oldest businesses in Gothenburg. Dick Schwanz is one of the last living grandsons of John Norsworthy.



Edmund Winchel surrounded by his family



FEBOLD FEBOLDSON

According to Nebraska folklorist [Louise Pound](#) and Paul Beath himself, Feboldson was inspired by a notable Swedish immigrant, Olof Bergstrom, who helped settle the town

of [Gothenburg, Nebraska](#). Bergstrom recruited a significant number of Swedes to settle the town of Gothenburg. Described as a tall, muscular, and "very handsome gentleman" with a winning personality, Bergstrom cast a large shadow in the growing town. Bergstrom once killed a house guest with a shotgun but was acquitted.

Following the trial, a grateful Bergstrom gave each juror a \$20 bill and was escorted back to his house by a parade led by the Gothenburg Silver Cornet Band. Bergstrom's apparent ability to escape trouble and turn a profit out of bad situations, as well as his role as a founder and community leader in Gothenburg, made him the model for Feboldson.

FEBOLD'S TALL TALE

Because Nebraska was a treeless expanse or prairie, Febold realized that he would have to find trees in another local if he were to build a log cabin. The hardy pioneer started west and walked to the Redwood Forest in California before he found trees which he considered suitable. Febold picked a dozen choice trees, pulled them up by their roots, tied them securely with a huge log chain, and started back to Nebraska. When he got home, he was astounded to discover that the treetops had worn themselves out from being dragged halfway across the continent. Even to this day, one can still see stretches of red soil and sand between California and Nebraska. Febold simply shrugged and said, "Oh, well, live and learn." However, he did regret that he had wasted three days walking to and from California for nothing but a dozen tree stumps.

NOTABLE Names

KOKOMO BELLE: A leggy thoroughbred owned by J.W. Hiles of Gothenburg was the fastest horse in the region, according to local relatives and friends. "Kokomo Bell," as she was named, pounded the race-horse tract said to have existed by Lake Helen and on other tracks in Nebraska and Colorado in the late 1800's. As Kokomo Bell continued to win every race she entered, the horse was outlawed from local and area tracks since no one would bet against her. But that didn't stop Hiles. They painted her white,



Horse race on 10th Street between Lake & Ave. D

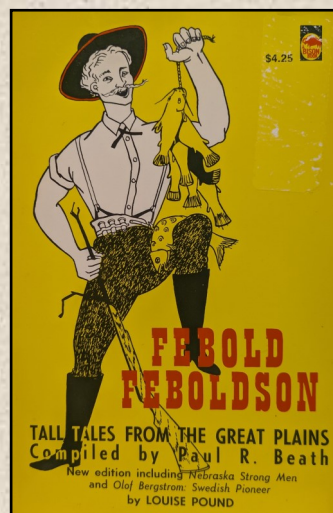
changed her name and won the race. According to his granddaughter, Kay Dalrymple, Hiles traveled to the Gothenburg area with the Union Pacific Railroad. While buying land for the railroad to set up towns along the tracks, Hiles became acquainted with an engineer named Claude Delaney who later jockeyed the fleet-footed horse around the racetracks. Hiles is described as one of the heaviest owners of farms in a January 1899 issue where he was said to own five sections of land- three sections being first-class valley land under cultivation and the balance as Kokomo ranch land.

CREIGHTON, MILAN: Milan "Crate" Creighton was born in 1908 and raised in Gothenburg. He captained the state championship football team in 1926. Following graduation from Gothenburg in 1927 he went to the University of Arkansas for the next four years where he was engaged in football, basketball and track. In 1931 he joined the Cardinals in Chicago in the National Professional Football League, playing with them until 1934. In 1935 he was promoted to head coach of the team, occupying that position until 1939, when he resigned. He returned to Nebraska, settling in Kearney where he and his wife opened a restaurant, the Varsity Huttie. He said he was not through with



football and expected to return to it professionally after he got the restaurant established.

CARROLL, Wayne T: The earliest record of Mr. Carroll in the Gothenburg area is around 1915. His advertisements called "The Two By Four" show up in the paper around 1923 promoting his lumberyard touting his A Type hog houses, along with coal and paint. His motto was "we build happy homes" Carroll was a contractor who built many homes around Gothenburg. He was also prominent in the construction of the club house at the golf course west of Lake Helen. To draw people's attention to his newspaper ads he began writing stories about a great "Swede" named **Febold Feboldson** in 1923 under the name Watt Tell. Febold wrestled with regional adversities which beset the early settlers—tornadoes, hostile Indians, drouths, extreme heat and cold, unsavory politicians and floods. When Carroll moved to California in 1928 the Gothenburg Times newspaper publisher Don P. Holmes continued to write stories of Febold's adventures in his column called "Squirrel Food" until 1956. Others have collected tales about the great "Swede" and published books



such as Paul R. Beath's "*Febold Feboldson: Tall Tales from the Great Plains*". Beath lived in Gothenburg for a short time. Following the sudden death of Don Holmes in 1956 the stories of Febold and his grand-nephew Bergstrom Stromberg continued to be written by Don's son "Tot" Holmes.

PYLE; Dr. Bert (B.W.): Bert W. Pyle M.D. was born in Illinois in 1903. He graduated from the University of NE Medical School in 1928. He arrived in Gothenburg in 1929 with his new bride Florence. After purchasing the practice from Dr. Johnson, he set up his office and six-bed hospital above Potter's Drug Store located on the corner of Lake Avenue and 9th Street. He performed tonsilleotomies, appendectomies, minor surgery and delivered over 2,000 babies. Those were the days of the Great Depression when office calls were \$2.00 and hospital \$4.00 per day. Many patients paid with farm produce. Dr. Pyle retired in 1976 and died in 1979. Many locals can say they were delivered by Dr. Pyle.

NOTABLE Names

Joseph Lewis Buterbaugh, born in 1839, Adams County, PA near Gettysburg volunteered to serve in the Union Army in 1861. In 1882, the Buterbaugh's moved to Dawson County six months before the first dwelling was to be built in Gothenburg. They homesteaded 160 acres (Section 24,

Township 10, Range 25) and obtained a timber claim in the south side hills. He was a Dawson County

Nebraska pioneer, farmer/rancher and civic leader; the first Antelope Precinct Justice of the Peace; the first Platte River bridge tollkeeper; and a director on the board of Decker School District #69. The mile-long Platte River bridge was constructed in 1884-85 connecting the south side of the river with the north side. It was a toll bridge with Buterbaugh as the toll keeper. J.L. was a remarkable long-distance pedestrian, finding little challenge in walking from Gothenburg to Lexington and returning in a day. He and a companion decided to walk to Tennessee. J.L. made the trip, walking 40 miles per day, but his friend became ill and returned to Dawson County.

Credit is given to **Mrs. Catherine. A. Williams** for donating the Pony Express Station that sits in Ehmen Park today. Her son Henry Laurens, Jr. saw the value of the historic building and encouraged his mother to make the gift to the city. The building was constructed in 1854 of red cedar logs cut



in the south hills and hauled to the location along the Oregon Trail four miles east of Fort McPherson. It was used as a fur trading post and ranch house.

Between 1860 and 1861 it was used as a re-mount station for the Pony Express riders and the Wells Fargo Express Company. From 1862 to 1931 it was used as an Overland Trail Stage Station, dwelling, bunk house and storage on the Upper "96" Ranch. In 1931 it was donated by Mrs. Williams to the City of Gothenburg. It was moved from its original site and restored by Gothenburg Post No. 64, American Legion. On October 1, 1931 on the first day of the 1931 Harvest Festival this building with its historical background was dedicated to the spirit of the pioneers and is a lasting memorial to the first means of communication this country knew. Thank you to the Williams family for their foresight in saving the Pony Express Station.

Gary and Marbara Padley, local high school students, approached the City Council to request permission to open the Pony Express Station that sits in Ehmen Park as a tourist attraction. In June 1954, they opened the station filled with interesting relics of the Pony Express days on display along with folders telling the history of the building and the Pony Express. It was listed on most of the maps and tourist publications. The following year Gary Padley put The Times office to work printing a four-page paper to be presented to all visitors during the summer. He expected to give out 10,000 during the tourist season. In 1957 the Padley's turned over the management of the station to Mickie McVay and Dale Morse. At the end of the season, they estimated that at least 25,000 people visited during the three months they were open. During the summer the 10,000 four-page newspapers were again distributed free to the visitors and none of them were left at the end of the season. Each year the number of visitors had risen steadily, and the Station was given as a point of interest in the Highway 30 brochure, many of the travel maps and travel articles. It is a distinct asset to the community. The station has also been operated by the Lloyd Morse family, Merle and Linda Block, the Gothenburg Chamber of Commerce and now the Gothenburg Pony Express Association. What began over 70 years ago continues to attract visitors to our community today.

Watch for more "Notable Names" in the next newsletter.

THANK YOU

A special thank you to Brent Block for the serving as a board member for the Gothenburg Historical Museum since 2018. Your time and talents helped in so many ways.

Welcome to Jan Gill as she assumes a position on the board of directors for the Gothenburg Historical Museum. We look forward to her expertise and enthusiasm as she serves on the board.

HISTORICAL MEMORIES

January 1900 to January 2000

Provided for you by the

Gothenburg Historical Museum.

For more information about the museum, go to www.gothenburghistory.com

January 1900 – Just as predicted, the Burg's 2x4 depot came slowly down the road to Willow and placed alongside the railroad tracks in its new home.

-Gothenburg's new depot is as near up-to date as any along the Union Pacific line. It is lit with 10 electric lights.

-The People's State Bank has just received a new telephone which is the finest we've ever seen. It is imported from Sweden and is the kind used by the government.

January 1910 – A farmer's elevator company was being formed in this vicinity. There had in the past been a good deal of talk about such an enterprise, but this time it looked like a sure go.

January 1925 – Sixty men are at work on the ice at Lake Gothenburg (Helen) and 144 cars of ice have been shipped in the last five days – about 29 cars per day.

January 1940 – New courses were to be offered during the second semester at the high school. Mechanical drawing, retail selling, the gas engine, show card lettering, use of the carpenter's square and principles of radio were offered.

January 1950 – Beginning with the first paycheck in 1950, you will find that your employer is now deducting 1 ½ cents from each dollar earned in work covered by Social Security.

–The American people spend in one year as much money on their automobiles as was spent on everything in 1890 including food, clothing, building, taxes and battleships.

January 1960 – A good start has been made on the

removal of the former Jobman Furniture Store from the lots just south of the First Presbyterian Church. The site is to be used by the church as a location for their proposed Youth Education Building.

-The Interstate Highway in Nebraska will be built north of the Platte River, if the decision of the State Highway Advisory Commission has anything to do with it.

-Gothenburg is to stage a big historical pageant during July as the climax to the Pony Express Centennial and Gothenburg's 75th anniversary celebration.

January 1965 – A new drive-in was nearly completed at Sixth and Lake Streets. Francis Kennicutt and his son, Bob were the owners of Kip's Drive-In.

January 2000 – As it did throughout the state, the City of Gothenburg quietly rolled into the Year 2000 without a bite from the much-touted Y2K bug.

– On a sunny New Year's Day of the year 2000, five Gothenburg couples hiked a winding hill overlooking Jeffrey Lake south of Brady to bury a cache of memories in a wooded box. The group, along with their children and grandchildren, plan to dig up the capsule on January 1, 2025.



This is the first Gothenburg Union Pacific depot that was moved to Willow Island in 1900. Eventually it was moved to the Dawson County Historical Museum location where it currently stands.

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIPS

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Karla Blasé | • Robert & Mary Theasmeyer | • Kim & Bev Anderson |
| • Denise Brittenham | • Mark & Cindy Peyton | • Romaine & Joan Aden |
| • Jan Gill | • Charlie & Connie Bihlmaier | • Steve & Margaret Davis |
| • Flatwater Bank | • Marvin & Jill Franzen | • Kathy Peterson |
| • Terry & Cathy Healey | • Kathy Nichols | • Gary & Deb Mroczek |
| • Dick Larson | • Bev Titkemeier | • Mike & Deb Bacon |
| • Donna McConnell | • Elsie Cyriacks | • Heidebrink Family |
| • Blaine Peterson | • Steve Windrum | • Gary & Anne Anderson* |
| • Jenny Raymond | • Verlin & Charolett Janssen | • Tom & Rhonda Jobman* |
| • Tot & Pauline Holmes | • Cecile Ackerman | • Jay & Sonia Richeson* |
| • Keith & Marcy Aden | • Norm & Colleen Geiken | • Rick & Pat Zarek* |
| • Dennis & Sue Kirkpatrick | • Father Wayne Pavela | |
| • Gerald & Janet Kranau | | |
| • Roger & Carol Wahlgren | | |

* New Life-Time Members

2025 MEMBERSHIP & BUILDING FUND REPORT

Thank you to the following who joined or renewed their membership for 2025 and contributed to the museum building fund*.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| • Robert & Mary Theasmeyer*** | • Nancy Fisher* | • Gater Road Repair (John & Jill Schmeekle)* |
| • Tom & Rhonda Jobman*** | • Wendy Bridges Jerkich* | • Flatwater Bank* |
| • Gary & Anne Anderson*** | • Kathy Nichols* | • Robin & Lynnette Stevens |
| • Rick & Pat Zarek*** | • Gene & Cora Bosch* | • Bart & Angie Nichols |
| • Jay & Sonia Richeson*** | • Roger Heidebrink* | • Edward & Marilyn Uehling |
| • Mark & Cindy Peyton*** | • Carol VanOverbeke* | |

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

BOLD/ITALIC INDICATES NEW MEMBER/CONTRIBUTOR

Form of Payment

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Check payable to:

Gothenburg Historical Museum

PO Box 204

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email Address** _____

****I WISH TO RECEIVE MY NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL**
YES NO

Memberships

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