

DAWSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

BANNER

Vol.40 No.2

A Fresh Look at Our History

MAY 2018



DCHS Museum Mid-1980s

Dawson County Historical Society
hosts an exhibit from

COZAD ART CLUB

April 20th
through
June 2nd

Art Gallery
DCHS Museum

SPRING ART EXHIBIT

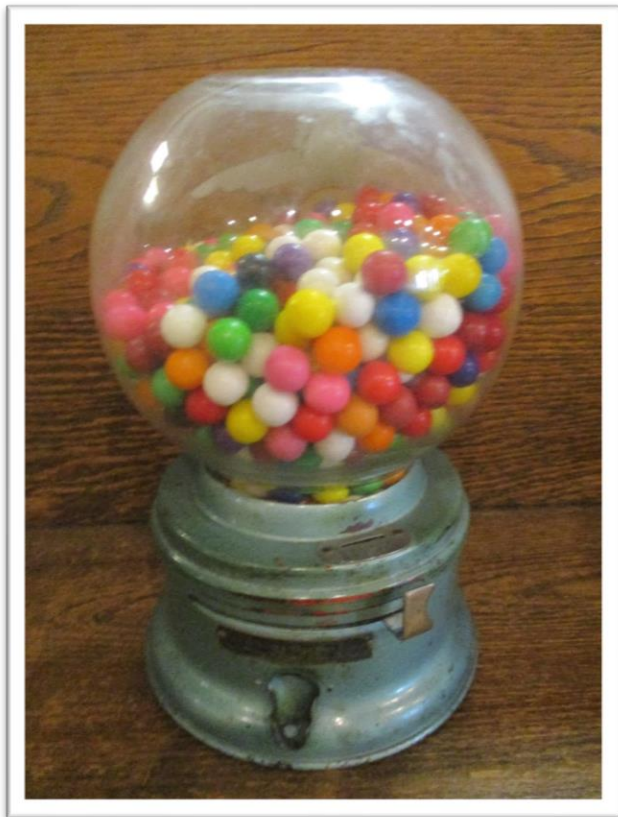
Work from the Cozad Art Club is featured in our Art Gallery this spring. The show includes works in various media. There are paintings in watercolor and acrylic, and drawings in pencil and ink. Artists have also displayed jewelry, tiles, textiles and barn quilt blocks.

Featured artists are Jan Anderson, Lyman Anderson, Della Hendricks, Kay Lhotak, Kim Lhotak, Rose Mapel, Betty McKeone, Michael Miller, and Lona Rowland. Stop in and see their creations!

The Cozad Art Club meets the 1st, 3rd and 5th Monday mornings of the month at the Church of Christ. They welcome new members. If you'd like a friendly place to work on your projects, and share with, encourage and learn from other artists, drop in sometime.

www.facebook.com/groups/391633431283558/about/

www.facebook.com/pg/DCHSociety/photos/?tab=album&album_id=454114865041616



Mom, can I have a penny?

Remember gumball machines?

Put your penny in the slot.

Slide the handle across.

Wait for it. Wait for it.

Yep, a black one again. Yuck!

I don't like licorice. There are so many other colors in that globe! The odds are against getting black. I really believed I could get a good one. But somehow Mom always got the licorice one first and we had to dig for another penny for me.

You may have used this machine. Its home was Ayers Clothing Store in Lexington. Lee and Delphine (Ayers) Sanks dropped it off at the museum a while back. The machine still works, but the gumballs are "vintage", so I'm not going to waste my penny. I'd just get a black one anyway.

--Cheri Bergman

The Reflection Wall

Our May/June tribute exhibit to DCHS Charter Members focuses on Roy & Beulah (Ward) Batie and Wylie & Helen (Plumb) Ward.

Beulah and Wylie were sister and brother, so most pieces are from the Ward family. We have furniture and quilts from their childhood home. You can see hand-painted china from one of their aunts and read a proposal letter from another. There's Wylie's box camera and UNL Cadet Uniform and Beulah's jewelry.

From the Batie side we set out tools that belonged to Roy's grandfather from 1850 and the sea bag Roy's son carried in WWII.

Helen's father was a doctor in York and her uncle was Dr. Plumb in Gothenburg. We have a doctor's bag that may have been carried by both. There is also a velvet keepsake box that was given to Helen by her father.

Come see these and other items that tell many stories about these families!





DCHS CHARTER MEMBERS:

Beulah (Ward) Batie
Roy Batie

In August of 1958 Roy and Beulah Batie met with a group of people in their home to discuss the creation of a county historical society. A month later the Dawson County Historical Society had its first "official" meeting at the Cornland Hotel in Lexington, Nebraska. Two years later the Historical Society became a non-profit organization. Three years after that the Society signed Articles of Incorporation, and 4 years after that they broke ground to build a museum . . . all because two people welcomed a group of other like-minded people into their home on a warm summer evening.

We owe a lot to this small group of people who felt it was important to preserve the history of Dawson County. This year space in the main gallery is dedicated to honor charter members of the Dawson County Historical Society beginning with Roy and Beulah Batie. Items on display give insight into their families. What follows is their story in short form.

LeRoy Milton Batie was born January 15, 1884 in Orient, Iowa. When he was fourteen months old his father, Bill, left for Nebraska with three friends to find new land and establish new homes for their families. Once Bill was able to purchase land with a one-room sod house and barn near Overton on the south side of the Platte River, he sent word to his wife Kate and baby Roy to join him. The first year in Nebraska Bill hired out and worked cutting grain and threshing. He also raised 5 pigs that first year. Even though they were so close to Overton they could see the buildings, they still had to take their wagon to Holdrege, Bertrand, or Plum Creek to get groceries because Overton didn't yet have a bridge across the river. By spring of 1887 there was a bridge at Overton and life changed for the Batie family.

Roy and his parents lived in the sod house for 15 years and 4 more children were born before a frame house was built. Roy's mother, Kate, lived in the new home only one year before she passed away. Roy's parents were known in their community as caregivers who would help out whenever and however they were needed. Bill oftentimes acted as undertaker and community dentist. Kate, in times of sickness, went to many a neighbor's home to help. On one occasion it was said they housed 14 people in their sod house overnight. After Kate's death, Bill married her sister, Evelyn, who also brought into the family her daughter, Corinne Orchard.

Roy grew up helping his parents on the farm then in 1920 his life changed forever. He married Beulah Ward, a girl who also grew up near Overton, but on the north side of the river.

On Beulah's side of the family, in 1883, William Eddy Ward caught the same fever William Batie had and headed to Nebraska from Illinois with several friends to find land and make a new home. In 1885 he went back to Illinois to marry his sweetheart, Martha Alice, and then brought her home to Overton, where they made a life for over 60 years. They farmed for 30 of those years after which they retired to the town of Overton. They were instrumental in organizing the Overton Methodist Church and were faithful members. Eddy was very musically talented and was involved in many singing groups throughout his life. He also served as County Commissioner in the early 1890's and was involved in laying out the routes for Dawson County roads and their construction. Eddy and Alice were blessed with two children, Beulah and Wylie.

Beulah Ward was born August 25, 1889 on the family farm near Overton. Her parents were strong supporters of the Public School system, so it's no wonder their daughter, Beulah, did so well in school! After she graduated from Overton High School she went to Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She later graduated from the two-year course at Kearney Normal College and then received her Bachelor's Degree from Nebraska Wesleyan in Lincoln in 1913. After that she did some teaching at Silver Creek and North Platte. During World War I she was a YWCA secretary at Des Moines and later at Minot, North Dakota and Minneapolis, Minnesota. By the time she moved back home to Overton and married Roy Batie she had lived a very full life. But even more was yet to come!



Beulah Ward 1909

They became a family in 1922, with the birth of a son, LeRoy Ward Batie. Together the three of them ran the farm. During WWII Ward served in the US Navy. He married and had two daughters, then died young from polio.

Following in their parents' footsteps Roy and Beulah were active in their community. They were loyal members of the Overton Methodist Church. Roy was a member of the Odd Fellows, and both he and Beulah were members of Farm Bureau. Beulah belonged to the Eastern Star Chapter 278 of Overton and was Chairperson of the Dawson County Home Extension Council in 1939. She helped start the Overton Library. They strove to make their community better in everything they did and in the way they lived. The Dawson County Historical Society would not be here if not for their love of community and the preservation of its history!

Roy and Beulah initiated the formation of the Historical Society. They housed items for future placement in a museum. Beulah served as the first President of the Society's Museum. The Baties, along with her brother and sister-in-law, Wylie & Helen (Plumb) Ward, donated a substantial number of items in early years and remain the top contributors of artifacts to our museum.

In 1971, Beulah was laid to rest in the Overton Cemetery. In 1975, Roy was laid next to her. They left a legacy not only in what they did but also in their granddaughters, Sue and Patricia, daughters of their son and his wife Carol. Sue and Trish are active members of the Dawson County Historical Society, and even though they are far away in California they help in so many ways and visit often.

I wish I could have known Roy and Beulah. I know I would have liked them. I want to thank them for opening their home that night 60 years ago. I want to tell them that I love Dawson County history just as much as they did. I think they would be pleased with what the Society has accomplished over the years, and I'm sure they would love what we've done with this place!

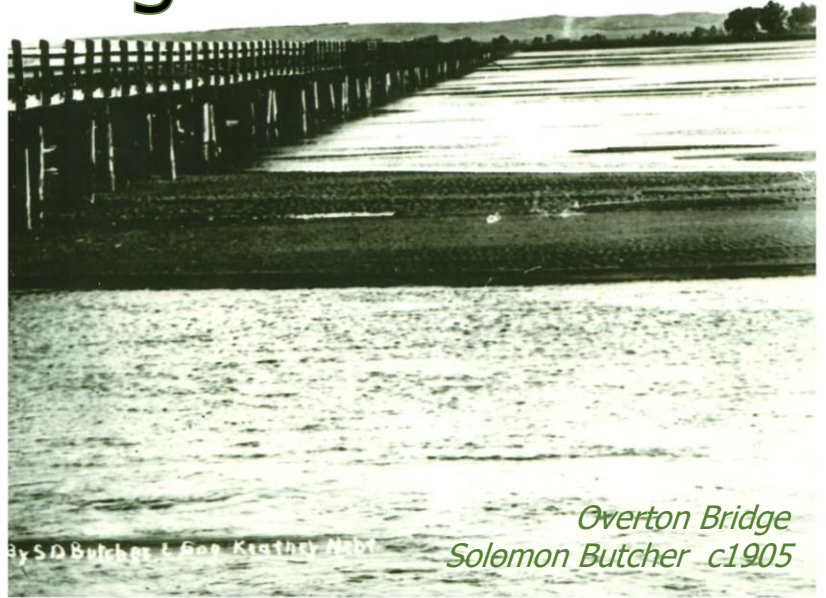
--- Crystal Werger

Platte River Bridge at Overton

(source: the life story of Wm J. Batie in 1935, written later in several articles by Beulah Batie)

Bill and Kate Batie lived in a soddy in the Platte valley, just south of the river. He was proud that the Oregon Trail had run through his land. In this area the Freemans originally built their store, so it was right along the main travel and trade routes. . . until the railroad came through.

By the time Bill Batie purchased his land in 1885, rail lines and subsequent roads ran through Holdrege, 15 miles south, or Overton, across the river and 4 miles north. But there was no bridge across the river.



Since the river valley and surrounding land was still mostly treeless, the “south siders” could see Overton, but unless they forded the river, they could not get there. The Platte was a mile wide at times, full of potholes, quicksand, and unexpected deep spots. Collecting supplies involved a long trip south to Bertrand or Holdrege, or east/west trip to a bridge to get to Kearney or Plum Creek (Lexington) to go shopping. The neighborhood needed a bridge across the Platte to Overton. It would save Bill countless miles on foot—he waded or crossed on ice since it was risky to take a team.

Overton businessmen were interested, as were Union Pacific representatives. Bertrand and Holdrege did not want it; they did not want to lose those customers. Phelps County would not help pay for it. They threatened to redraw township lines to lessen the number of signers to fund it by bonds. The opposition seemed to fuel the Dawson County “north siders”. They got permission to build a road north of the river and decided on a spot to build the bridge. (It was actually a mile east of the present-day bridge.) Funding came through by collecting \$100 notes from farmers, with a promise from the businessmen and UP that the bridge would go in and be completed by a designated date. Overton precinct and two Phelps County townships voted to make it legal, and the work began.

Pile drivers operated by pop-bottle engines started at the north end and worked their way across on the ice. Since the southern strip of the river was deeper and swifter, the ice was not as thick, and the machines fell through. It was quite a process to get them out. But the bridge was finished on time in early spring 1887. The “south siders” finished the grade to the bridge using raw sod and making two bridges over sloughs. Imagine how excited Bill and Kate were once a supply run was only a 6-mile jaunt and could be made with a wagon!

At first it was a toll bridge—those with notes were exempt—and it soon paid for itself. A family at the north end collected the tolls. There was a log chain extending across the bridge. The collector would get the fee, unlock the padlock, let people across, then close it back up. The bridge was a mile long. It was one lane with three turnouts; there was no way to pass. At night, buggies would have to stop at each turnout and listen for someone coming. If they met between turnouts, one or the other would have to back up.

To read more about bridges in Dawson County get [The Battle of the Bridges](#) from our bookshop.

DAWSON COUNTY MUSEUM

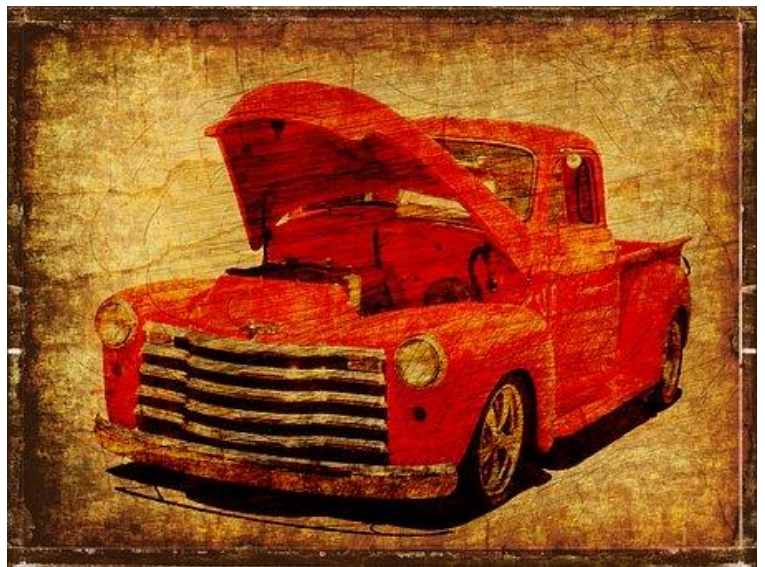
Car Show

NO Registration Fee
Prize Drawings - Dash Plaques

9am to 3pm

SATURDAY MAY 26th

Sponsored by
Platte Valley Auto
Black Diamond Auto



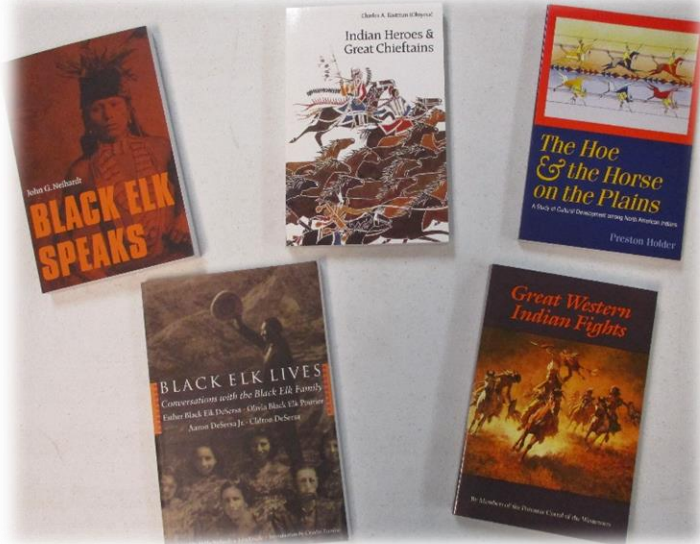
Lunch Available from The BBQ Co

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