




BANNER

Gothenburgers? Gothenburgites? Gothenburgonians? Whichever, They're Proud of It!

When we are researching residents from Dawson County, we occasionally find families who disappear off the Nebraska grid. Such was the case with the Hamilton Cadets we featured in the last newsletter. We were surprised how many of those girls we could track to southern California. This issue's feature story is about a Gothenburg girl who grew up to travel, live overseas, eventually settle in California, but always valued her Dawson County roots. In 1947 Bertha (Janssen) Andrews gathered together her California neighbors with Gothenburg connections for a tea. Twelve years later that group had grown and developed its own identity—California Swedes, but not necessarily Swedish. The article here records their 1959 luncheon. Recognize any of these names? 

Many Folks Attend Annual Luncheon

The following persons attended the annual Gothenburg Luncheon held Sunday, Oct. 25th, at Henry's Santa Anita Restaurant, Arcadia, Calif.

Mr. and Mrs. Wayne T. Carroll, Mrs. Tillie Farrell, Mrs. Edith G. Powell, Frank L. Hannum, Mrs. Gail H. Lindberg, Mrs. Elaine M. Dodd, Mrs. Bonnie Hudson, Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Trimble, Ed Witte, Mrs. Bess Barnes Kidwell, Harold Barnes, Mrs. Mildred Barnes Wickstrom, Mrs. Blanche Barnes Clark, Mrs. Erma Marcott Clark, W. B. Swancutt, Aulie M. Freestone, Alvin and Marjorie Cowell, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar S. Malm, Mr. and Mrs. Delmar Sturgeon, Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Lindberg, Mr. and Mrs. Horace H. Caswell, Gus Dahlquist, Mrs. Wendell Turner, Mrs. Ada Willcock, Mrs. Fred Nielson, Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Cuning, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Blankman, Mrs. Bertha Andrews, Mary Louise Andrews, Mrs. Emma B. Sturtevant, Ethelyn May Henderson, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur A. May, Lee Joneson Williams, and Ralph Barnes.

Mr. and Mrs. Pete Swancutt and Mr. and Mrs. Tom Norsworthy were in charge. Alice Joneson Williams was Master of Ceremonies. Mrs. Erma Clark showed her pictures that she had taken of the Holy Land, which were very interesting and enjoyed by everyone.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Blankman, Mary Louise Andrews and Alice Joneson Williams will be in charge of the Luncheon next year.

DCHS MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS



Thank you to our museum volunteers!
Mary White, Linda Mins, Steve Wolff, Chris Johnson
We appreciate you showing up with smiles and using your time and talents to make our museum a better place.

OVERTON AREA HISTORY BOOK

Overton will celebrate its Sesquicentennial next year. In preparation for the celebration there is an ambitious group of people working on publishing a book to tell the story of Overton and its people. Their goal is to have information collected by November.

Do you consider the Overton area home? Did you have relatives who helped build or prosper the community? Is your home church in Overton? Do you have family stories from the area? Did your family have a business in town? Do you have photos or maps of houses in town or photos of homesteads or updated farms from the area? Were you an Overton Eagle? Were your ancestors *Southsiders* who did all their business in the town? Do you have stories, photos or memorabilia from Overton or its families from the past 150 years?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, we need your help!

If you have photos or documents to donate to the cause, send or take them to Overton Library or to the Dawson County History Museum.

If you have digital copies of photos or documents to share, email them to dchsociety@gmail.com with the subject title: Overton Area History Book.

If you have photos or documents to share, but you want to keep the originals, bring them into the museum for us to scan, then you can have them back.

If you have stories or information to share, but you need someone to record it and type it up, contact one of these individuals.

Cindy Hasty: 308-325-9443 richardhasty27@gmail.com

Deb Weiland: 308-530-5549 debw494@gmail.com

Jennifer Shubert: 308-293-0951 jshubert@outlook.com



WWII Japanese POW: Gothenburg's Bertha Janssen Andrews

by Steve Wolff

Bertha was born in Sterling, Nebraska June 27, 1889, the daughter of early settler and Gothenburg businessman, Habbe H. Janssen. Her mother was Louise nee Geistfeld. Bertha's siblings included three brothers; Richard, Otto, Carl, and three sisters; Nora Janssen, Margaret Janssen Hecox, and Regina Janssen Rooker. In 1914 Bertha attended the University of Nebraska and in addition to her teaching degree, majored in history and English. She returned to Dawson County to teach at Lexington High School and served as the 1917-18 senior class sponsor. In 1920 she was High School Principal in Scottsbluff and later in Dodge, Nebraska.

In 1925, Bertha accepted a teaching position at Ilocos Sur Normal School at Vigan, a tropical Spanish town on the main island of Luzon, Philippine Islands. Two years later on June 4th she married Harold Ray Andrews of Buchtel, Ohio also teaching at Ilocos. Their daughter and only child, Mary Louise was born on March 5, 1930 at Cebu, Philippine Islands. Life in the semi-tropical Philippines was idyllic with exotics fruits, plants, fresh ocean breezes and colorful birds common to the tropics. Bertha's life would be upended with the Japanese invasion of the Philippine Islands.

By late 1941, due to increased tensions between the United States and Japan most of the military dependents were sent home. The U.S. State Department told the U.S. High Commissioner to the Philippines Islands not to give official notice to the several thousand American civilians living in the Philippines to leave. This statement was to buttress the U.S. foreign policy: A mass exodus of American expatriates would alarm the Filipino populace by giving the impression that the U.S. was going to abandon the Philippines to the Japanese.

In mid-December of 1941, Bertha managed to send a cablegram to her family in Gothenburg stating that they were safe. This would be the last direct communication from her for the next 24 months. The expatriates from various cities throughout the Philippines were held in internment camps. Bertha and Mary Louise were held in the Santo Tomas University in Manila. Husbands, wives and children were separated. Eleven-year-old Mary Louise was sent to the Holy Ghost Convent and Bertha initially remained at Santo Tomas. Ray had returned earlier to the States for medical reasons and could not go back, so he spent the war in Los Angeles at The National Military Home.

The campus within the fenced enclosure comprised 48 acres and allowed each internee 16-22 square feet. Roll was called every night at 7:30. In the beginning, inmates were allowed to govern themselves with little interference from the Japanese authorities. Internees formed committees to manage the internal affairs which included the oversight of camp police, hospital, and mess facilities. Ultimately, some 4200 internees (3200 Americans) would be interned at Santo Tomas.

Internees were allowed communication with relatives by radio broadcast from Radio Tokyo. Message cards were filled out and drawn by lot. U.S. citizens stateside with powerful shortwave radios, monitored Radio Tokyo every day, and R.P. Read of Hopkins, Minnesota picked up the following broadcast: *Mrs. Andrews and her daughter doing well. Mary Louise has been in the Holy Ghost Convent five minutes away by bus along with 100 children 12 years and under. Mrs. Andrews was allowed to see her every two*



Ray & Bertha with Mary Louise 1931

Photo courtesy of Jane Hudak & Donna Andrews Jurgens

weeks from 10:30 am to 3:15 pm. The children are allowed occasionally to also visit their parents. They are given breakfast and supper and each one must do some kind of work. Mrs. Andrews washes dishes at the hospital each morning from 6:30 to 9:30. This message was received at 11:50 am on May 8, 1943. It is evident that these broadcasts were closely followed. The Janssens received reports of this message from eight separate listeners in different states.

In December 1943 the Janssens received their only letter from Bertha. It had been written in August. At that time she and thirty other women had been moved to the Holy Ghost Convent to take over the work caring for the 100 children (including Mary Louise) who were held there. Bertha reports: *We are living as normal life as possible. We are very tired at night. My feet bother me. The food is fairly good, but we get tired of the sameness. We've been having lots of rain. . . We haven't heard one word from you since war started, although I'm sure you've written. Many folks have had letters.*

Internees had to purchase food from the local market with their own funds. Those without monetary means had to rely on the largess of friends or Red Cross *loans* given to internees. Many Filipinos and personnel from non-interned neutral countries sold food thru the campus fence with money, letters, and other goods passing freely between individuals on both sides of the fence. The Japanese then erected a bamboo mat shield along the perimeter of the campus fence to discourage the free exchange of goods but did allow parcels to be received in the compound main gate after being searched.



Initially sanitation and disease control were the two biggest issues facing internees. Four thousand prisoners had to share 70 showers, 80 toilets and 45 washbasins. There were only two bathtubs in the entire camp, one for the children's hospital and one for women's hair washing. Dysentery, beriberi, pellagra and fungus infections were common. Simple cuts could develop into serious infections. In January of 1944 the Japanese military took over the camp administration and food rationing. Money was confiscated. Internees had to subsist on the same diet as Japanese infantrymen. January 1944 daily food allotment per person was: rice 14oz, vegetables 7oz, meat 3.5oz, sugar .7oz, salt .9oz, lard 7oz, tea .03oz. By December this was cut by 50%. Some internees were reduced to

eating pigweed and insects. Children fared the best as parents went without to insure children had an adequate diet. Average weight loss was 53 pounds during captivity. Internees suffered permanent physical and some, mental disabilities.

Bertha and Mary Louise were liberated in February of 1945 after 37 months of confinement. Gothenburg's Sgt. Floyd Aden of the First Cavalry Flying Column was one of the first U.S. soldiers to enter Santo Tomas and immediately sought out Bertha and her daughter. Aden wrote home on February 6th saying that "both are well, but thin." Bertha and Mary Louise docked back in the United States on May 3rd. They came to Gothenburg the next week to see family. On Sunday evening, May 27th, Bertha gave an account of their internment to a capacity crowd at the Gothenburg High School.

The Andrews made their home in the Los Angeles area. Mary Louise graduated from high school in 1948, then attended Santa Monica City College. Ray passed away in 1956 after a prolonged illness, and Bertha followed on June 15, 1971. They are buried in Los Angeles National Cemetery.

CEMETERY CARE

– Crystal Werger

Since we've had some warm sunny days lately, I've been taking advantage of them by visiting cemeteries. I have to admit that I haven't been going to the ones I should be going to...like the ones I haven't been to yet. Instead, I found myself back at Evergreen, which is three miles east of Lexington and Plum Creek's original cemetery.

There was a certain stone I wanted to look at while there wasn't any foliage to deal with. Last fall while I was traipsing around cemeteries getting ready for my Tombstone Talk, I came across a big old stone at Evergreen Cemetery that was surrounded by a beautiful old wrought iron fence. I was curious about who

was buried there but I couldn't read the stone because of overgrown bushes around it. When I tried to push the bushes away, I got scratched by really nasty thorns. I'm still not sure what kind of bush that was, but it's a really good deterrent. At this time of year, the thorns are still there but the leaves are not, so I was finally able to see the stone and get a fairly good reading.



My thoughts started down two different tracks. First: why is this gravesite so overgrown? I was under the impression that the cemetery was owned by the city therefore the City of Lexington took care of it. I put a call in to the City of Lexington Service Building and found out that each burial site is to be cared for by the family. So, what happens when family is all gone? Obviously, by the look of the Welch family plot, there is no family left in the area to take care of it. As I stood there staring at the once beautiful Welch family gravesite, I knew I needed to do something.

Sadly, there are a lot of graves and headstones in our surrounding cemeteries that have been forgotten by time. Not everyone appreciates cemeteries or those who lived before us like I do, but for those who do, I think it is up to us to take care of graves that don't have anyone else to care for them. This one became personal to me. With a little bit of planning and a lot of elbow grease I know I can get the Welch family plot looking better. Maybe if I'm really lucky I can find a cemetery conservationist to teach us how to clean and better preserve the headstones. It's amazing what you can accomplish when something really tugs at your heart.

The second track my "thought train" took was: I wish I knew who these people were. There were three graves, but I could only make out one name: William Welch, a Civil War veteran. I left the cemetery and headed straight for the museum archives. First, I looked in the Evergreen Cemetery book and found William's name. I had to dig a little bit more to find the others, but with the help of Cheri and her amazing research skills we were able to find out that William Welch (1830-1883) and his wife, Alice (1832-1909), and their daughter, Mary (1870-1901), are all buried in the gated area. They were a farm family who came to Platte Precinct in the 1870s. We also found that there were three other daughters born to William and Alice. Daughter Johanna married John Heron and is also buried in Evergreen Cemetery. Daughter Alice married James Delahunty and is buried in Saint Ann's Cemetery. Daughter Maggie never married and is buried in Hastings at Ingelside, but that's another story for another newsletter.

There is another Tombstone Talk in the works. If you have some questions about or fascinating stories from any of our rural Dawson County cemeteries, please contact Crystal.

annual MEETING and PROGRAM

The Dawson County Historical Society held their Annual Meeting on Sunday afternoon, February 27th at the Dawson County History Museum. President Scott Foster introduced the Board of Directors and Staff. Treasurer Don Batie reported that 2021 was a good year for the museum financially. Directors Nanette Beattie, Donn Newquist and Shail Kumar were re-elected to the board.

DCHS Board of Directors and Staff & Volunteers

Scott Foster, Gothenburg, President
Darren Hanson, Lexington, Vice President
Jan Wightman, Lexington, Secretary
Don Batie, Lexington, Treasurer
Nanette Beattie, Sumner
Keith Allen, Lexington
Courtney Litzenberger, Lexington
Donn Newquist, Sumner
Wayne Howard, Cozad
Jennifer Schubert, Overton
Shail Kumar, Lexington
Pat Gaudreault, Cozad

Crystal Werger, Director
Carol Nelson, Staff Assistant
Cheri Bergman, Exhibit Design & Research

Steve Wolff, Conservation Volunteer
and Contributing Writer

Mary White, Archives Volunteer
Linda Mins, Genealogy Volunteer
Chris Johnson, *Past Perfect* Volunteer
Janet Quitmeyer, Research Volunteer



Storyteller Mark Peyton gave a program about his motivation for writing and previewed his three books. His insight into historic, psychological and scientific aspects of vaccine development was educational and entertaining. Mark's new book *More Than a Reference* tells stories of how human experience impacted research and acceptance of scientific discoveries. *It Won't Go Through Skin* was inspired by Mark's experiences in his hometown Chadron, Nebraska. Mark sold out of his books that afternoon, but if you are interested in purchasing one or more of them, contact the museum and we will see that you get one.

Dawson County History Museum

805 N Taft Street
Lexington, Nebraska 68850
Tuesday - Saturday 10-4

PO Box 369
308-324-5340

dchsmuseum.com
dchsociety@gmail.com
facebook.com/DCHSociety

Home of the Dawson County Historical Society Collection and Archives