

Madison County Remembers...

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*The Way
We Were*

The Way We Were-----

The photo on the front page – Norfolk Avenue in the 1950s through 1960s—it's all there as I visit again every store and office on that block...the essence of my life as a secretary at the Durland Trust Company just across the street (312 Norfolk Ave.) where I worked and virtually lived those twenty years. The shops and offices in reality were a historic block between 3rd and 4th Street on the south side of the Avenue, its center developed and known as the Mast Block.

The J. M. McDonald department store anchored the corner of 3rd with its complete line of clothes for the entire family, where I shopped regularly and found my favorite green and white swimsuit, mainstay of my pool life for years.

Woolworth's of course, was my old standby for household 'fix it' items I needed --glue, tapes, needles, utensils and even small hand tools.

Next door Hested's was the premier place I loved to shop, all the personal things like toothbrushes, hairpins and combs; Max Factor of Hollywood movie star makeup, that could not be passed up. But what an eye opener as you walked into Hested's --the dozens of candy counters in front so you couldn't miss the huge glass bins of chocolates of every kind, plus such variety of candy the kids had a hard time picking out what to buy. Earlier my sister and high school friends had delighted in their part time jobs after school and on Saturdays --naturally, the choicest job was behind the candy counters. On Saturday nights most stores were open and the Avenue in front was filled with cars waiting for the 9 o'clock closing time, to pick up the girls. And what a thrill that little pay envelope was for the girls. (Hested's in MCGS newsletter M/June 2018). My favorite memory of Hested's is still its Holland House coffee bar, opened in later years. I and other secretaries took 'breaks' just to indulge on the Holland House German chocolate cake, delicious and irresistible, which had become the hottest new menu hit with its coffee drinkers. (I've since read that 'German' was only the name of the chocolate-- the cake itself was not German).

My office routines included daily errands to banks and post office which I thoroughly enjoyed, strolling through the shops en route. Hutchinson's Dept. held the corner on 4th (old Killians), with its ladies hat department the most stylish in town (women's hats were still a 'must have'), and I can see the money shuttle skimming overhead to the cashier up in the office loft. My side of the street held the incomparable Style Shop where I hurried in after 5 o'clock to buy the clothes I saw in window displays. In fact, after years of 'shopping on company time' it was hard to switch to my own time in retirement! In the banks I made deposits and 'clipped bond coupons' for the boss. The post office (now the McMill bldg.) intrigue involved buying stamps, and carrying large manila envelopes of high value bearer securities, without insurance or a (security) backup, but I never had a 'risky' thought as I walked--- after all, who knew? Back on the south side next to the National Bank of Norfolk were three flights of wood stairs up the Mast Block (no elevators) and I made the rounds of the Donald and Andrew Mapes Law Offices, Madison County Abstract Office and Watson Architect. Second and third floors held insurance agents and other lawyers, as well as dentists, a barber, and Walt Gutzman had his real estate office up there.

You can see the Star Clothing sign, and next to it was another shop –Bucks Booterie--where I bought genuine leather loafers for only a few dollars, which lasted forever so that I even had some resoled they were such good quality-- a 'good luck' coin never left the leather inset. My next historic memory is the Geist Drugstore –the soda fountain created the original ice cream sundae –the "Clown"-- concocted in a tall tulip glass 4 dips--each a different flavor ice cream--each dip crowned with a different topping: strawberry, chocolate, caramel and marshmallow, nuts & maraschino cherry on top—unbelievable. For me that beat out any banana split.

Above the Hutchinson's store, upper floors held a beauty shop and beauty college, and the Norfolk Business College where I had earlier studied office procedure and shorthand. I still have the pins for 140+ words per minute and shorthand was my second language—phone messages were jotted down in shorthand, of course, meaningless to others.

Altogether those working years provided me with a priceless education in business matters--the kind you don't learn in books--from those seniors who survived the 1920s and the Great Depression; what they learned so applicable by them in post war years when ordinary western farmland burst its complacency bubble with Nebraska's oil wells. My thrill with that was enhanced by my first IBM electric typewriter with which I typed up many oil and gas leases with the original Stanolind Oil and Gas Company...more stimulating memories of those exciting and challenging days. I should write that book.

Bernice Walters

History of the Norfolk Fire Department



The Norfolk Volunteer Fire Department before 1910. This was the fire barn and bell tower before 1910. This was the west side of Fourth Street about where the Centrum and its parking lot are today (2018). Herman Broeker is in the black suit standing in the middle.

Norfolk Fire Department

Fire was not a major concern of Norfolk citizens in the earliest settlement of the town in 1866. Often a fire was an isolated disaster and handled by the homeowner and any neighbors nearby, and consisted of hauling buckets of creek water to put out the fire. Most times it was too little, too late to quench the flames and save the building. The only consolation then was that most early buildings were not permanent structures, and soon the owner would figure his loss and rebuild.

Not until the hot, dry summer of 1873 did the Norfolk pioneers feel the need for fire control. Mrs. Pangle wrote in 1929 that "The flames reached as far as the Pasewalk home near the present city park (Central Park). The women worked shoulder to shoulder with the men, pumping tubs full of water and fighting with water-soaked gunny sacks. On the farms the fire brought its usual destruction. In a few moments the flames leaped across the fields and yards—hogs were burned in the pens, stacks of hay disappeared. It took fast work to save homes and the precious threshing machine. It almost meant death at the Machmueller place as Mrs. Machmueller had placed her baby girl on a pile of hay dropped on the road from someone's wagon, while she helped her husband fight the onrushing fire...with a burst of flame the monster leaped at the baby, completely consuming the hay bed and severely burning the child."

Of course there was talk of organizing a fire department after the disaster, but it would be eleven years before the plan reached fruition. While the prairie fire was the first major disaster, with relatively few fires in the following years fire protection became the concern of merchants and residents.

Finally, on October 27, 1884, the Norfolk Fire Department was organized at the Widaman hall, Herman Gerecke being an early spokesman for the organization. Elected as President was J. L. Pierce; H. L. Kennedy, Vice President; P. F. Sprecher, Secretary; P. F. Bell, Treasurer; W. H. Widaman, Chief Engineer; D. W. Mitchell, Assistant Chief Engineer; and B. W. Jones, H. L. Spaulding, F. H. Lane, C. P. Mathewson and Albert Degner as Board of Trustees. Entrepreneur W. (William) H. Widaman was chief engineer, and became the first Fire Chief.

Morris Mayer, Howe Egbert and Harry Hardy were the committee to solicit subscriptions. J. F. Flynn, H. L. Spaulding and P. F. Bell arranged means for a temporary fire alarm. A benefit dance at the skating rink raised money to buy equipment: two ladders, two axes, and three dozen wooden buckets were purchased and stored at the Gerecke Lumber Yard. The Hook and Ladder Company was officially organized November 1, 1884.

Water was the most necessary part of the fire fighting team of volunteers. The village board recognized the need and November 17, 1884 created water wells on Main street, specifically for fire fighting purposes. Four wells were dug, circular and eight feet in diameter, curbed with plank, and deep enough to hold eight feet of water. The wells were all located on Norfolk Avenue, at the corner of each street: Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Street.

On August 12, 1886 the new Fire Department bell arrived, needed to call the firemen into action. It weighed 832 pounds, had a loud and clear tone according to the Norfolk Daily News,

and was manufactured at the Meneely Bell Foundry in Troy, New York. The site for the bell tower was C. B. Burrows lots on the southwest corner of Fourth Street and Braasch Avenue.

The tower was 60 feet high with its base a 16 by 16 foot meeting room for the fire fighters. Originally to be built of 2x8s with open frame work, the weakness of the structure became apparent, especially to Herman Gerecke, who then furnished plans and lumber to reinforce and enclose the structure. The bell was later replaced by steam whistles located at the C. W. roundhouse, and the electric light plant on Seventh Street and Madison Avenue. This historic bell is now located at the Liberty Bell Park on Georgia Avenue.

The Fourth Street-Braasch Avenue corner was well known by local citizens as a favorite site for socializing as south of the fire station and in front of the Justice of the Peace office were several monkey cages. On Saturday nights stores were open and while women shopped the husbands and children were entertained by feeding the monkeys.



This is the original Hook and Ladder Co. with Stub Turlock, the driver and Roy Carter at the rear of the wagon and John Bland on the side runner. Photo is about 1890-1900.

In September, 1886, a fully equipped hook and ladder wagon was purchased for \$600, known as Hose Company No. One, the first Hook and Ladder, plus additional hose companies: Deluge Hose, Queen City Hose, West Side Hose, Mast Hose, and F.E. & M. V. Hose Company. By 1908 they were consolidated into four companies. The original Hook and Ladder Company had "Stub" Turlock as driver who became the first paid driver in 1910, and later succeeded in achieving a 12-hour workday, through a strike by the Fire Department (*probably a 'first' for the Norfolk Fire Department.*)

On March 11, 1887, a Harden Star Chemical cart was purchased, along with a steel crowbar, fire axe, two leather buckets, a funnel, gong, reel, two brass lanterns and extinguishers, two dozen one quart grenades, one twenty-five foot hose, one six foot hose, and extra cans of liquid, all for \$225.

The Harden Star Chemical Fire Engine worked on the same principle as the soda and acid fire extinguisher. The fire fighters would mix two liquids together. The liquids would react with one another forming a gas which would push the liquid out of the tank through the hose and the fire fighter would spray it on the fire.

On July 12, 1887, A. L. Strang of Omaha constructed a system of waterworks which included five water hydrants platted by the city, and a stand pipe located at 10th and Elm Streets, to supply pressure. It was a major turning point in the methods used in fire fighting. The Daily News reported the city water works were highly satisfactory, following news that the water pressure fighting the Rainbolt building fire had been so strong that it knocked out the windows of the Eiseley building next door, actually out of reach of the main stream of water.

The successful vote of 225 to 11 for the bond issue of \$7,000 dollars, provided for a building to house fire equipment, and additional fire apparatus purchased in 1888 including three new hose carts, and 1500 feet of hose with capacity of 600 pounds pressure per square inch. The carts were housed in hose buildings in the 1200 block of South First Street, the 200 block of South Ninth Street, and in the 200 block of North Eighth Street. Two new fire companies were organized.

This later photo shows firemen in uniform lined up in 1900 in front of the newly built (1899) Opera House/Auditorium on 118 North 4th Street (East side of the street, opposite the existing firebarn and bell tower), with Millard Green as driver of that hook and ladder fire wagon.



Millard Green, driver, furnished the horse power for the fire wagon. When the alarm sounded, Green would unhitch his dray team, race to the fire station, hitch the horses onto the wagon and then dash to the fire. Left to right the members follow; standing on the ground, Julius Haase, unidentified, P. J. Fuesler, William Ahlman, Harry Watt, Theodore Wille, unidentified, Charles Pilger, Venus Nenow, Max Romig and William Kern; Second row; Jim Johnson, unidentified and Fred Hellerman; Back Row (on wagon), Gus Bley, Carl Schulz, John Michaelson, Charles Wehrer, Ed Vaile, unidentified, Millard Green, Charles Ahlman. The small boy is not identified. Standing by the telephone pole is Fritz Frohloff.

The success of fire fighting was due to the skilled individuals, all volunteers,--the synchronized teams of men and horses, as horse drawn vehicles replaced firemen running on foot with hand drawn carts. In the early days they would use any team of horses in the vicinity to pull the ladder wagon when the alarm sounded. One of the most famous horse teams in Norfolk, was the two horse team known as "Mack" and "Prince". Millard Green was in charge of the team to pull the fire wagons. Former volunteer fireman R. W. (Pop) Boyd recalled with pleasure the days of the horse teams: "It was with deep regret from the firemen that the horses were replaced by motorized equipment. When the alarm sounded, the horses, whether in the barn or pasture adjoining the station, would automatically return to their stalls where a special type of collar was dropped on them. With one fastener at the bottom, they were ready to roll."



Mack and
Prince



And Boyd recalled several hilarious episodes after the sale of the horse team to Blakeman Transfer:

"When an alarm was sounded the horses would take off at a dead run to the fire, scattering various articles all over town."

By 1913 motorized equipment had entered the fire fighting scene in Norfolk. The first piece of mechanized equipment was a chemical fire truck equipped with a hose body, and was dubbed the "Indiana". The cause for mechanization was not furthered, however, when a horse drawn fire wagon driven by Louie Novak, bested the new motorized truck driven by Everett Ferris, in a race from the old fire station at Fourth and Braasch to the new Seventh Street station. The margin was reported as "comfortable".

Eighteen members enthusiastically organized the Norfolk Volunteer Firemen's Band in city hall with anticipated total enrollment of twenty-five members, on April 24, 1915. And over the years any good excuse was sufficient for the band to strike up.

On October 7, 1920, Governor Samuel R. McKelvie issued the Proclamation that the first Friday in November be observed as the Nebraska State Fire Day, and November 5, 1920 was observed as such by all public and private schools.



Rudolph Dreesen, William McCune, John Schelly and other members of the firemen's fife and drum corps held a meeting at the firemen's quarters Sunday afternoon. A short rehearsal was enjoyed. The drum corps will accompany Norfolk delegates to the Columbus convention, 1914.

The Fire Department continued with modernization as new equipment and fire fighting procedures were introduced. A siren system eventually replaced the steam whistles, alerting the public, and calling the firemen into action. Modernization still later brought the telephone system, set up to ring the telephone in each of the paid fireman's residence to notify them. Early in the 1980s compact radio receivers and a paging system were adopted by the city. Each fireman then carried a pager on his person and could be reached anytime within a 12 mile radius.

In 1919 the city had purchased an old ladder truck, which was in service until 1950. The Norfolk Fire Department then bought a bare Diamond T chassis and designed and built a ladder truck to its own 'specs', which was used for many years. The original rotary gear pumper was replaced in 1961 with a new 1,000 gallon per minute pumper. Purchasing and updating pumps was the norm in ensuing years.



In the 1950s the Norfolk Fire Department moved to the new building constructed by the WPA in the 100 block of East Norfolk Avenue, and with its modernized equipment, extended its service to the entire Norfolk area and beyond.

Responding to the need the Norfolk Rural Fire Protection District was organized in 1950; organized in 1961 was the Norfolk Rural Call Man Company for rural fire protection. Norfolk is also a member of the Elkhorn Valley Mutual Aid District, composed of 10 communities. A modern rescue unit was secured in 1964.

Right from the beginning, volunteering for fire fighting was an important job that the men who stepped up to do that work, and take that risk, felt compelled and proud to do. Not everyone can do that kind of work, and it was and still is a continuous learning process. Firemen became family and they bonded like any good family, helping not only one another, but many times assisting throughout the community wherever any need arose. Giving a helping hand without question established them as an integral part of the community-- taking care of each other, and the people of Norfolk who reciprocated. They are still a tough bunch and inseparably close...the coworkers are like brothers. Some firefighters were third generation such as the Ferris families, having grown up in the spirit and belief in doing their best for this community as fire fighters. Ernie Orr's dog 'King' became the Norfolk Fire Department's mascot, bonding with the men and horses. Though King was not a Dalmatian it was in the 1800s when Dalmatians became the official 'watchdog' of the fire stations, quickly bonding with horses, and frustrating thievery of horses and equipment. Their protective mission, asserted even on stagecoaches of the day, secured their guardian reputation immortalized in icons at fire stations throughout the land. And in today's fast paced world there is no let up--- firefighters thoughts are on how to do their jobs more efficiently for the good of everyone, especially the victims of any fire.



"KING", who belonged to Ernie Orr, was the firefighter's mascot.



It was 1965 when firemen moved into their new home at 111 North 7th Street and Koenigstein Avenue, (701 Koenigstein Ave.) with Fred J. Bussey as Fire Chief. There were 11 paid firemen and over 100 volunteers represented by 4 companies. This was probably the most progressive of the Fire Department in its mission of protecting the Norfolk settlement.

The Police Department moved into the East Norfolk Avenue building until construction completed its new facility also on North Seventh Street.

In that spirit the Norfolk Fire Department continues to pursue improvement in its community service, such as in 1983 establishing the Northeast Nebraska Public Safety Training Facility, 302 East Benjamin Avenue, which is also used by the Norfolk Police Division, Nebraska State

Patrol and Nebraska Fire Marshall.

The Norfolk Fire and Rescue Division is on call day and night. The existing fire station at 701 Koenigstein was remodeled and added on to several times, growing from 4 truck bays to 9 bays today with new and enlarged offices and training facilities, sleeping/living quarters for the on-duty crew and storage for all of the necessary equipment.



In early 2000 it became obvious the northwestern section of the growing city required adequate and speedy fire protection. The completion of the second Norfolk Fire Department station at 2920 West Benjamin Avenue in June of 2004, was one week ahead of schedule, and below budget.



This allowed for the historic moment of raising the United States flag to half staff June 5, 2004, for the first time at the second station, in tribute to President Ronald Reagan who died on June 5, 2004.



Successful community drives spearheaded purchases of equipment as technology brought knowledge and better equipment, as well as a chance to compete in national and world events such as the Firefighter Combat Challenge in Iowa in 2008, in which the Norfolk Fire Division performed well against experienced teams. The invaluable competition proved that experience and training is everything.

And, as in every successful organization, personnel is the deciding factor and the Norfolk Fire Division is complemented with the best available in every department from bureau managers, shift commanders, coordinators, inspectors, secretaries, technicians, fire marshal, firefighters and last but not least, the fire chief.

Norfolk firefighters continue to upgrade their capabilities to deal with any situation, creating

the Norfolk Fire Division hazardous material team (Hazmat), the only state sanctioned and supported such team in Nebraska in 2013, when it was called to deal with a possible hazardous material emergency in Wayne, Nebraska.

Shane G. Weidner held the position of Fire Chief from 1996 until 2011 when he was promoted to Norfolk City Administrator; in 2017 he was named Norfolk's Public Safety Director. Scott C. Cordes became Norfolk Fire Chief in 2011 and continues in that position.

Altogether, it is a history and successful mission of which to be proud, in the past and continuing into the future, of protecting Norfolk and its people, extending beyond Norfolk, not only from fires but unanticipated hazardous situations.

In the beginning of course, all firefighters were volunteers, including the Chief. Norfolk has been served by twenty-two Fire Chiefs since it's founding. The first paid Fire Chief was Rudy Wolff, who became full time in 1946. Past Fire Chiefs of the Norfolk Fire Department are as listed below:

William H. Widaman	1884-1890	Ed Mullen	1909-1910
Charles E. Doughty	1890-1894	Millard R. Green	1910-1015
Joseph J. Clemments	1894-1895	Venus A. Nenow	1915-1924
John W. Edwards	1895-1898	John F. Boehnke	1924-1936
Herman W. Winter	1898-1904	Rudolph H. Wolff	1936-1959
William L. Kern	1904-1905	Fred J. Bussey, Jr.	1960-1970
Samuel R. McFarland	1905-1906	Larry J. Reeves	1970-1991
William P. McCune	1906-1907	William T. Malone	1991-1993
Charles Pilger	1907-1908	Michael V. Smythe	1994-1996
John Krantz	1908-1909	Shane G. Weidner	1996-2011
Ed Conley	1909-1909	Scott C. Cordes	2011—

This photo is of a hose cart used in 1888 and restored by members of the Norfolk Fire Department a few years ago. The hose cart would handle up to 1500 feet of hose with a capacity of 600 pounds of pressure per inch. The carts were housed in hose buildings in the



1200 block of South First Street, the 200 block of South Ninth Street, and in the 200 block of North Eighth Street.

This also shows a chemical cart. The fire fighters would mix two liquids together. The liquids would react with one another forming a gas which would push the liquid out of the tank through the hose and the fire fighter would spray it on the fire.

These are situated outside of the Norfolk Fire Station on Koenigstein Avenue.

----"Trade With Bob Phone 197"----

My Romance With the Soda FountainMemories by Ruth V. (Ralston) Gardels....



It all began at my father's drugstore, **The Elkhorn Pharmacy** as soon as each of us five children were old enough to reach the carbonated water faucet behind the fountain.

Before my turn at the fountain, dad made sandwiches from scratch, brushing melted butter on the bread before laying it on a small grille. The long knife he used to quarter the sandwich I still possess. Dad went out of the sandwich business and we stuck to fountain orders after moving the fountain to 116 So. 4th Street, where it was located from 1926 to closing in 1945.

Every week or so he went to a small gas stove and cooked his famous "Goup", a thick melt-in - your- mouth fudge topping served over a tulip glass of vanilla ice cream ---"Bob's Goup Sundae 10 cents"—read the sign on the front window. Other bargains were milk shakes for 11 cents, sodas and malts for 15 cents, and Coca Cola in real glass for 5 cents. We hand-packed pints and quarts of ice cream in cardboard containers, 25 cents-pints and 50 cents for quarts. The most popular flavor was "White House"—maraschino cherries and whole pecans in vanilla ice cream.

Our drugstore-soda fountain was a distributor for Harding Ice Cream, and five gallon cans of various flavors were stored in a huge freezer at the back of the store. We stayed open till eleven each night, and if we didn't have to work that night, we accompanied our folks when they delivered the 5 gallon cans packed in canvas bags, to towns around Norfolk. Anxiously we awaited our turn as in Battle Creek, after the delivery, the family attended the free shows. We also had exclusive "Whitmans" chocolates and on Valentine's Day, Easter and Christmas, we sold and delivered the \$1 boxes of candy all over the city. Among the teenagers who gathered at our fountain after school and ballgames was our most famous citizen, Johnny Carson. He was in my younger brother's class and a frequent visitor in our home. Johnny never forgot his hometown and has contributed generously over the years.

The drugstore was sold in 1945 when my father, Robin H. Ralston, passed away. The building has since been removed to make way for new construction.

I served the tall lanky fellow who loved cherry cokes many times, and Eugene L. Gardels and I were married Aug. 16, 1942. During his wartime service we traveled all over the country, and after the war, lived in Battle Creek, Nebraska for 45 years, moving to Norfolk in 1991.

Ruth Gardels had many hobbies and was an active member of the St. John's Lutheran Church in Battle Creek, where she sang in the choir. There was no limit to her interests in civic and community activities. She was artistic and many were the cards she hand made and decorated—they were unique and one of a kind remembrances from Ruth.

Eugene passed away Oct. 6, 1993. Ruth (Ralston) Gardels passed away after 93 years of a most enjoyable and satisfying life on Nov. 7, 2015 in Battle Creek. She was survived by three children: James, Susan Jo Baumann, and David of Omaha. Services for Ruth were in the St. John's Lutheran Church, Battle Creek, NE, and burial was in the St. John's Cemetery.

The Norfolk State Hospital for the Insane A Guide for Research

By Nancy Zaruba

This is the tentative title to a book I am compiling that is a collection of newspaper clippings, cemetery listings, census listings, documents and records from various sources and other lists, photographs, excerpts, queries received and other information from many sources all relating to the Norfolk State Hospital for the Insane, now known as the Norfolk Regional Center.

I hope to finish writing and compiling yet this fall and will be looking for a publisher. I've found a lot of interesting stories, which will all be included. I've been helping people search for relatives that were patients at some time and have collected a lot of information that should not be lost.

1889

NORFOLK ASYLUM FOR THE INSANE

The report of the superintendent furnishes a complete history of the affairs of this institution, which was completed and opened for the admission of patients on the 15th day of February, 1888. Pursuant to the provisions of the law the board of public lands and buildings set aside the following territory to comprise the Norfolk asylum district, to wit: the following counties, Antelope, Blaine, Boone, Box Butte, Brown, Burt, Cedar, Cherry, Colfax, Cuming, Dakota, Dawes, Dixon, Dodge, Garfield, Greeley, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox, Loup, Madison, Nance, Pierce, Platte, Sheridan, Sioux, Stanton, Thomas, Valley, Washington, Wayne and Wheeler. All inmates of the Nebraska hospital for the insane at Lincoln who were originally residents of the above named counties were transferred from Lincoln to Norfolk. On the 15th day of February, 1888, a transfer of ninety-seven patients, fifty-four males and forty-three females, was made from the Nebraska hospital at Lincoln to Norfolk by a special train in charge of the superintendent of the Nebraska hospital for the insane. The transfer was safely made and without accident. The total number of patients under treatment since the opening of the hospital has been 119. During the year there have been fifty-two new cases admitted in the Norfolk asylum district. The two new wings provided for by an act of the last legislature have been completed and are now ready for occupancy. When they are furnished, these wings will accommodate 120 patients. The Lincoln and Norfolk asylums are now filled to their utmost capacity. The two wings at Norfolk and the Asylum for the Incurable at Hastings, which are nearing completion, will relieve the pressure for the moment but it must be borne in mind that after these new buildings are filled, there will still be a large number of insane persons in poor houses and jails throughout the state not yet provided for. There is one satisfactory conclusion in connection with this subject, namely the proportion of insane in Nebraska is far below most of the other states. The United States census of 1880 shows, that there was one insane to every 545 of population. More recent local statistics indicate that the proportion at present is probably one in 500 or less. Australia has one in 369, England one in 362, Massachusetts one in 370, New York one in 380, California one in 370, Nebraska (estimated) according to the number of our insane, and the population, one in 1,000. This estimate is made by Dr. Knapp, of the Lincoln asylum. He has given the subject much attention. The superintendents of these institutions--the Lincoln and Norfolk asylums--have done all that possibly could be done to meet the constantly increasing demands made upon them to provide for additional patients. And I can say for the satisfaction of relatives and friends of inmates, that everything which kindness and intelligence, devoted care and attention could do for their comfort has been done. Source: [Omaha daily bee](#). (Omaha [Neb.]) 187?-1922, January 04, 1889, Image 3

1889

The insane asylum at Norfolk was established on three hundred and twenty acres of land donated to the state. The improvements made, consisting of a three-story brick house, boiler and engine houses, laundry, barn, etc. have cost the state \$171,200. The average number of patients in the asylum since opening, February 1888 has been 108, average weekly cost each, \$7.40.

Source: The Columbus journal. (Columbus, Neb.) 1874-1911, March 06, 1889, Image 1

1901

**Fire At Norfolk Hospital ; Interior of Handsome State Institution Destroyed at an Early Hour This Morning ; One Patient Loses His Life In The Fire
Another is So Badly Burned that it is Doubtful if He Lives--Heroic and Cool-Headed Work on the Part of Officers and Others Saves Many Lives and Much Property.**

Fire this morning completely gutted the state hospital for the insane, located on the hill two and a half miles northeast of the city. The work of destruction was as thorough as it was possible for fire to make it and the once handsome main building and its wings are floorless and roofless while the windows, doors and casings have been entirely removed.

Source: Norfolk Daily News, Monday, September 23, 1901, page 1.

A Very Fortunate Fire

Remarkable Small Loss of Life at Hospital Yesterday

Were only Two Fatalities

Superintendent Teal Shows Wonderful Executive Ability in Bringing Order Out of Chaos for the Provisions of Patients.

It was a matter of wonder to those who saw the order that had been brought out of chaos at the Norfolk hospital for the insane last evening, after witnessing the devastation of the conflagration in the morning. By nightfall, Dr. Teal had a place provided for every person to sleep and each was given a good comfortable bed. True, some of the beds were made on the floor, but many of them had cots and springs, and after the excitement of the day it is doubtful if any complained of not being able to sleep. The female patients were quartered in the chapel, while the men were given places in the engine house, over the kitchen, in the barns and in the storehouses. The offices had been removed to the carpenter shop, where the desks of the superintendent, physician and bookkeeper were crowded into a small space, and where a telephone had been erected.

At midnight all was peaceful about the grounds and sleep hung heavily over the officers, attendants and patients. The gaunt walls of the burned building reared their uncovered heads toward the heavens the only sound to break the stillness of the night being the creaking of the iron cornices in the breeze which had now commenced to blow vigorously. The lawns on either side of the building were strewn with furniture which had been taken from the burning structure, guarded by ten sentries provided by the citizens' committee of Norfolk. This morning everyone was up and doing early about the hospital, and breakfast was served practically on time to employees and patients. The general dining room was utilized as far as it would accommodate the patients, and the remainder, were served on the lawn, a la picnic style. Source: Norfolk Daily News, Tuesday, September 24, 1901, page 3.

There is a lot more to this interesting story to be published, along with many other stories to be included in this book. Many patients here were not technically insane but were homeless or disabled from such things a stroke or an accident and there were no "nursing homes" at the time. Some patients spent several decades here and they became their own family. Some of the other stories here include the family sent here for believing in witchcraft. The story of Mrs. Bowser, former matron, who has since attained some notoriety as proprietor of the sod shanty at the Trans-Mississippi and Greater America expositions is included. The story of Ida Macumber, the marriage fraud is quite a story. And the tragedies

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www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nemcgs/

of many suicide victims are detailed. The stories of patient daily life are quite interesting, the celebrating of Christmas, canning of garden produce for the winter, the weekly dances and entertainments held for the patients, the medical care received, the stories of escapes. There is much to savor and the facts to research if you are seeking family.

Here are some of the chapter headings from the table of contents:

In the Beginning**The Great Fire and the Rebuilding****Patients**

Admissions, Deaths and shorter interesting news clippings

Patient Stories: Longer stories of interest

Patient complaints, Joseph Holdobler,

Mrs. Ida Macomber, Marriage Fraud, Frank Brink, Murderer

Hospital Employees; Clippings and Stories, Lawsuits and Scandals

Dr. Kelly and the Soulier Affair

SCANDAL:

Immorality, Neglect and Brutality

INCOMPETENCE AND CRUELTY?

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Hospital Nurse Burns to Death

A Glimpse of Daily Life:

Clippings and Stories

ADMISSIONS, TRANSFERS, DEATHS AND DISCHARGES

From Superintendents' Reports

Census Records 1890, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940

Cemetery Records and Burial Lists

Old Cemetery

New Cemetery

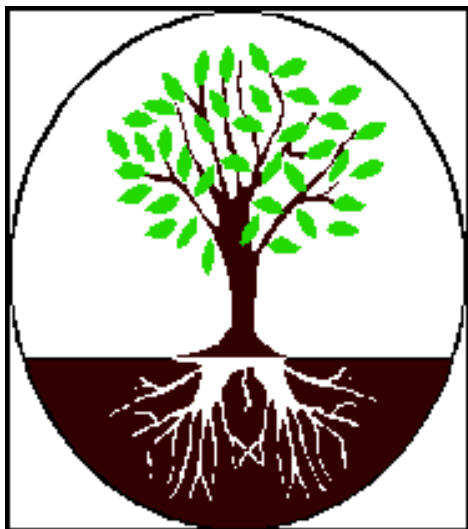
Early Deaths at the State Hospital buried elsewhere according to other sources.

CORRECTION:

The last issue of this newsletter (May/June 2018) had an article by Loren Lindahl on his family history including a confirmation document for Wilhelmina Villnow. The date was translated as 29 March, 1824. The date was mistranslated and the actual date as found in the church records is 29 March, 1874. It was the German translator who misread the document and it's easy to see how the error occurred.

MADSON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 1031, Norfolk, NE 68702-1031



TEMP RETURN SERVICE FIRST CLASS

This is the Final Issue of Madison County Remembers. It's been a good run having been involved with doing the newsletter since 2000, first with submitting articles, then setting up the website and by the end of 2001 taking over the total publication of the newsletter (which has been published since 1973). Though the newsletter has ceased publication, the website has not. The website will be updated in the next year to include many of our newsletters and other items of interest. Our newsletters were indexed in the PERSI Index published by Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana and distributed nationally so we will continue to get queries and answer queries as best we can. Keep in touch. Our email address continues, our website address continues and the group will still meet regularly though the location may change. We have very much enjoyed doing the newsletter and the contact with members from around the country. We'll miss you—don't be a stranger.

Index for this Issue:

Norfolk Avenue—The Way We Were by Bernice Walters, Pages 61-63 ; History of the Norfolk Fire Department Pages 63-71 ; Trade With Bob Phone 197—Memories by Ruth V. (Ralston) Gardels Page 72'; The Norfolk State Hospital for the Insane, A Guide for Research by Nancy Zaruba, Pages 73-75; Society Information, Page 75; Correction of Wilhelmina Villnow document in the May/June 2018 newsletter issue by Loren Lindahl, Page 75; Announcement of the final issue of the Madison County Remembers newsletter, Page 76.