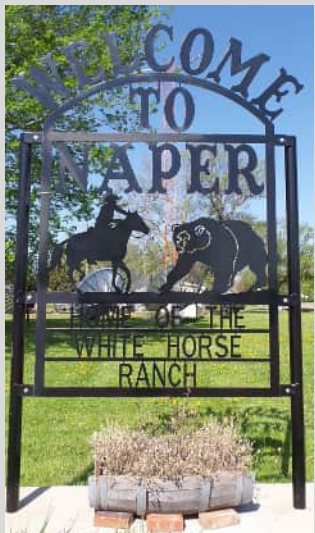


A PUBLICATION FOR AND ABOUT THE TOWN OF NAPER, NEBRASKA, PUBLISHED BY THE NAPER HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The mission of the Naper Historical Society is to preserve, interpret, display, communicate, promote and honor the history, original structures, special places and artifacts of the people and culture of Naper, Nebraska, and the surrounding area. The Naper Historical Society intends to accomplish this mission by operating a museum, publishing a newsletter, sponsoring events, and in other appropriate ways. The Naper Historical Society will initially focus on four themes: School Days, Life in Naper Through the Years, White Horse Ranch, and Naper 28 Plane Crash.

IN THIS ISSUE

- BRIDGES
- GERMAN/RUSSIANS
- OTTO BENTZEN
- SAVE BOYD COUNTY
- ALUMNI BANQUET
- OL HOMESTEADER
- LETTERS



Naper Paper

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Spring, 2022

A BRIDGE IS DONE!

The Keya Paha River Bridge southeast of Naper is done! It is located just east of the old bridge. The gravel road has been rebuilt and has a new layer of gravel. Quite a change from the old iron bridge, the remains of which are seen below.



The old bridge (left) provided many a memory for folks who traveled this road. It was a picturesque setting for graduation, family, wedding and Christmas photos. It provided a link from Highway 12 to the Stuart-Naper road, although it was narrow enough that large farm machinery had to go a different route. Now even the remains have disappeared.

ANOTHER BRIDGE IS ALMOST DONE!

The view on the right looking south across the Niobrara River is the one most often shown in the Naper Paper as there was no traffic allowed across the bridge. Now commuters and local residents can drive on the work bridge unless it is blocked by cranes.



The view on the left is looking north into Boyd County. The bulky objects on the right are concrete pads wrapped around the concrete railings still in the curing stage. Only foot traffic (and only when there are no workers present) is allowed across the new bridge at this time. Soon!!!

MORE RUSSIAN HISTORY

by Bob Allpress

In 2005, I wrote about the Russian heritage of Naper, which can be found in the 2004-5 winter edition of [Naper Paper \(napernebraska.org\)](http://napernebraska.org). Recently I found more information that clarifies why so many Russians left their homeland and emigrated here.

From 1521 to 1763, the Germans saw nothing but 240 years of war and strife. There was no central government and the majority of the citizens were nothing but serfs working for a land baron, knight, city or principality.

As I cited in the first article, Czarina Catherine II (Catherine the Great), a former German princess, offered enticements for German citizens to emigrate to the sparsely settled Volga region of Russia.

Her terms were:

Free transportation to the Volga.

Unqualified religious freedom

No taxes or licenses for 30 years for farmers.

Interest free loans

Self-rule within their colonies

And the offer that later became a deal breaker fostering the mass emigration to the United States - No military service for all settlers and their descendants.

Almost 100,000 Germans took her up on her word.

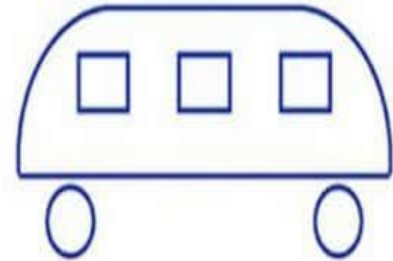
From 1763 to 1871, these German/Russians learned how to prosper in their bountiful land. But Catherine's descendants Alexander I and Alexander II whittled away at Catherine's promises. In 1871, Alexander II decreed that German settlers would have to conform to all Russian laws and the men be conscripted into the Russian army. So began the Russian exodus.

The first wave of settlers came to the Dakota region in 1872. By 1873, there were more coming to Nebraska. Then the famine of 1890 and the 1917 Russian Revolution hastened further emigration. By 1920, nearly 19,000 Russians had settled in Nebraska.

So now, you know why so many of us can trace one side or the other of our family tree back to one of these intrepid German-Russians.

ARE YOU SMARTER THAN A

PRE-SCHOOLER?



LOOK AT THE BUS -

IS IT TRAVELING LEFT OR RIGHT?

92% OF PRESCHOOLERS ANSWERED

CORRECTLY. (SEE ANSWER P.7)

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A MAN OF MANY TALENTS

By Ramona Bentzen

Otto Soren Bentzen was born September 6, 1890 to Christen Christensen Bentzen and Jorgine Nine Sorensen Bentzen at Jutland, Denmark. He was named Otto Soren Christensen but at age 12, perhaps at his confirmation, took the name Bentzen. He was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran faith. He was a very serious and inquisitive child, looking for knowledge and adventure. He bought a book called Fifty Hours in English and tried his best to learn the language.

At age 16, he came to America through the port of Boston, eventually arriving at Harlan, Iowa. He worked for the fellow who paid his passage while completing his high school education. He told us he had 16 cents in his pocket when he arrived. My son now lives in Harlan. While visiting Mike, we ate the train station which had become a café. You placed your order at the old ticket window. I had to envision a 16-year-old, with just 16 cents to his name, arriving alone and standing at that very same ticket window.

Later Otto went to the Black Hills and Sundance, Wyoming, where he did a bit of gold prospecting. He later returned to Iowa, farmed and accumulated machinery and horses. His next move was to Wausa, Nebraska, where he continued farming.

At Wausa, he met Hannah Feldt, who had been born at Rock Springs, Wyoming, in 1887. Her father worked for the Northern Pacific Railroad. At the age of four, she returned to Sweden with her parents due to a death in the family. Her parents never came back to America but Hannah returned to America and came to Wausa in 1913.

Otto and Hannah were married September 3, 1914, in Hartington, Nebraska. Their sons Jack and Art were born in 1915 and 1916.

In 1920, the family moved to a farm near Herrick, South Dakota. Jack and Art attended school at St. Charles. Otto was an assessor in Gregory County, a member of the township board and an active Farmers Union member. In 1926, Otto bought a farm in Nebraska, northeast of Naper.

The family moved to this farm in the fall of 1927. Their son Raymond was born there in 1928. Raymond lived his entire life on this farm except for two years in the United States Army. I continue to live on this farm and in just four more years, it will have been in the Bentzen family for 100 years.

Otto continued to be active in the Farmers Union, served on county boards and the Corn-Hog Association. He was elected as representative to the Nebraska State Legislature from the 63rd District for the 1935-1937 term, the last two years of Nebraska's two-house (bi-cameral) legislature. Nebraska is now the only state with a unicameral legislative government.

While serving in the legislature, Otto spoke in defense of hen-pecked husbands. The following article was published in the Washington Evening Star April 7, 1935.

"Representative Otto Bentzen, Republican, of Naper, stood forth today as a champion of hen-pecked husbands. Speaking in the house against an amendment to the proposed Nebraska Liquor bill that would prohibit possession of unsealed bottles of liquor in automobiles, Bentzen said,

"I'm speaking for the hen-pecked husbands. You want people to take their liquor home and drink. But some men can't do that."

Otto was interested in every thing and everyone. He was a helpful, intelligent man. He did income tax preparation for many, sold insurance, and was a generous friend to all.

He took our children for many walks on Sunday afternoons, talking and teaching them about plants and nature. I think they can all still identify sheep sorrel, dandelions, thistles and cocklebur.

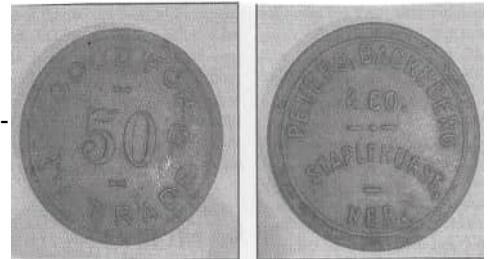
Otto's wife Hannah passed away June 12, 1951. Otto passed away October 22, 1969. Both are buried at Knoll Crest Cemetery at Naper, Nebraska.



Otto Bentzen

COIN HISTORY TRACED

Bob Allpress found the copper coin (below) in a backyard in Burke. One side of the coin says "Good for 50c in Trade" and the other side says "Peters, Backeberg & Co. Staplehurst, Neb."



Bob researched the history of the names on the coin and found William Fred Backeberg was born in 1890 in Hanover, Germany, emigrated in 1905 and was naturalized in 1912.

Fred Peters was born in 1868 in New York and was the owner of a billiard hall in 1900 and 1910.

In 1910, William was a salesman at a general store, most likely a store owned by Fred Peters. In 1913, he married Lillie Peters (possibly the boss's daughter) and in 1917, Woodrow D. Backeberg was born.

In 1920, Peters and Backeberg were co-proprietors of a general merchandise store. The family lived in rural Seward County. In 1930, both families can be traced to an address in Winner, South Dakota, where again they were co-owners of a department store.

In 1940, Fred Peters was deceased and William and Lillie were running a boarding house in Winner.

Woodrow died in Winner in 1977. His widow Bernice died in Sioux Falls in 2005. No children could be traced to the couple.

Bob Allpress enjoys metal detecting and doing research on various topics. The 50c coin has increased to almost \$7 by today's standards. Wouldn't it be interesting to know what kind of merchandise could have been obtained with that 50c coin in Staplehurst.

TELLING THE STORY OF SAVE BOYD COUNTY

Boyd County has, for the most part, been a peaceful place to live. But in 1989, Boyd County was put on a roller coaster ride for 17 years. First some background information:

In 1980, Congress passed the Federal Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act which suggested that states form regional compacts. "Low-level radioactive waste" means everything except high-level, which would be the rods from a nuclear reactor. Boyd County residents were told time and again there would be nothing more than booties and gloves from medical facilities.

In 1982, the Nebraska legislature entered into an agreement with Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Kansas to form the Central Compact. In 1987, USEcology was awarded the contract for low-level waste and recommended Nebraska as the host state for the Central Compact.

It was said that Boyd County was chosen because of its sparse population, poor economy, distance from other compact states and having a parcel of land available with a willing seller. Boyd County was promised lots of money if the county supervisors would accept the site. Governor Orr couldn't understand why anyone would turn down the money

In 1989, the organization of Save Boyd County Association was announced in local newspapers. Members of Save Boyd County were against the dumpsite and People for Progress were for the dumpsite, a situation which divided the local population and caused much angst. The worst thing about the division was that some families were split apart. The best part was that many new friendships were made, friendships continuing to this day.

There were many tactics employed by Save Boyd County members over the next few years, always with the hope the proposed dump would be disbanded. A telephone tree was developed so that word could be spread quickly when an important

issue was being discussed. For instance, Governor Kay Orr met people in surrounding counties but avoided Boyd County. (The only time she came to Boyd County was to meet with a Save Boyd County member who fasted for 30 days in protest. It was quite a surprise when she knocked on his door, unannounced, in the middle of the night!) Governor Orr was going to be in Springview and thanks to the telephone tree, many Save Boyd County members were able to meet her coming out of the courthouse. They wanted only to ask some questions but they were not received cordially.

Hundreds of signs were produced, some on old barn wood, some on chunks of Masonite, some on cardboard, some painted directly on buildings. When a sign was stolen or vandalized, a new one took its place almost magically. (See below)



Two old school buses were put into service after being colorfully painted. The buses transported Save Boyd County members many places including trips "around the block" (circling the dump site), to the capitol in Lincoln, to many parades in northern Nebraska and neighboring South Dakota, to several rallies where Governor Orr was speaking. At one such rally, a group of young people accompanying Governor Orr

unloaded, dispersed into the crowd and waved flags, giving the impression the entire group was in support of the speaker. This tactic is still being employed today!



Below: The skunk that traveled from parade to parade was a big hit.



Save Boyd County members paid their own expenses wherever and whenever they gathered for meetings or protests. However, there were experts to be consulted and a lawyer was kept on retainer. There was advertising done in local and regional periodicals. To offset these costs, huge auctions were organized; lunch stands sold food at farm sales; hundreds of t-shirts, caps, pins, and bumper stickers were sold; license plate lists were compiled and sold; a lemonade stand providing refreshments for BRAN was set up along Highway 12; canoe races were held in the ditches on the east side of the dumpsite to emphasize the conditions of the wetlands; free will offerings were taken.

In November, 1998, in a second round of public hearings, USEcology had to prove Nebraska was wrong in their arguments about the dumpsite. They were unable to do so and eventually the permit for construction was denied because there was so much water on, under and around the site, as seen in the photo below.



On August 1, 2005, Nebraska offered and paid \$141,000,000 for an immediate settlement, which the compact accepted. The dump was officially null and void.

Fortunately for Save Boyd County members, the best of the best talent was available when needed at this trying time. Boyd County has once again become a peaceful place to live.

[Ed Note: A reader requested a story about the “dump” and Save Boyd County. Several people collaborated on this article. If you’re interested in more details about the dump, you can read Nuclear Nebraska by Susan Cragin, copyright 2007.]

+++++

Below: The new storage shed at the partment of Roads is nearly complete.



Well, it’s about time! There will be an alumni banquet this year!

The banquet is set for May 28, the Saturday night of Memorial Day weekend, beginning with a social hour at 6 pm. Museums will be open from 2-4 pm.

This year, classes ending in zero, one and two will be honored. Alumni who live out of Boyd County will receive a letter soon with details. Boyd County alumni whose class is honored will also receive the letter.

NEW ADDITIONS TO NAPER



Above: The new shop building under construction at Tony Druke Trucking. Both buildings are on the south side of Naper.



SCHOOL NOTES

Paige Druke (daughter of Tony and Beth Goodman Druke, granddaughter of Vernon and Linda Goodman) and Natasha Zeisler (daughter of Jesse and Kim Zeisler, granddaughter of Sheryl Zeisler) played girls basketball for the Boyd County Spartans.

Jaylee Lechtenberg (daughter of Shane and Beth Nelson Lechtenberg, granddaughter of Ivan and Nancy Wentz Nelson, great-granddaughter of Bob and Barb Stoltenberg Wentz), Kyla McCarthy (daughter of Darrin and Connie McCarthy, granddaughter of LeRoy and Maxine Windmeyer McCarthy), ReNae Kluckman (daughter of Jim and Blair Vogt Kluckman, granddaughter of Kelly and Lois Nicolaus Vogt, great-granddaughter of Don Vogt) and Kaci Koenig (daughter of Kevin and Staci Zink Koenig, granddaughter of Jeff and Rindy Zink, great-granddaughter of Louise Neumiller Zink) played junior high girls basketball for Boyd County.

Zander Kluckman (son of Jim and Blair Vogt Kluckman, grandson of Kelly and Lois Nicolaus Vogt, great-grandson of Don Vogt), Brett Koenig (son of Kevin and Staci Zink Koenig, grandson of Jeff and Rindy Zink, great-grandson of Louise Neumiller Zink) and Wyatt Heermann (son of Casey and Jill Heermann, grandson of Jerry and Dorothy Dummer Heermann) played boys basketball for Boyd County Spartans.

January 26, at District 9 STAR competition in Ord, speech winners were ReNae Kluckman who received gold district champion, state qualifier; Natasha Zeisler who received Level 3, gold, district champion state qualifier; Jaylee Lechtenberg who received silver district runner-up; and Liz Arellano (daughter of Jessica Vogt, granddaughter of Vern and Deb

Vogt) who received silver district runner-up, state qualifier.

Daydra Zeisler (daughter of Mark and Tiffany Zeisler, granddaughter of Sheryl Zeisler), Natasha Zeisler and Zander Kluckman were named to the All Academic Team for the Niobrara Conference.

THE HONOR ROLL!

Zander Kluckman, Natasha Zeisler, Paige Druke, Brett Koenig, Lanie Lechtenberg (daughter of Shane and Beth Nelson Lechtenberg, granddaughter of Ivan and Nancy Nelson, great-granddaughter of Bob and Barb Stoltenberg Wentz), Michaela Roth (daughter of Mike and Dee Roth), Ethan Zeisler (son of Jesse and Kim Zeisler, grandson of Sheryl Zeisler), Kaci Koenig, Kyla McCarthy, Evan Brewer (son of Kip and Rachel Heermann Brewer, grandson of Jerry and Dorothy Dummer Heermann), RaNae Kluckman and Shaeden Polenske (daughter of Trudy Waterman and Guy Polenske) all were named to second quarter honor roll.

WELCOME!

Ramona Bentzen has two more reasons to be proud—Raymond Jacobsen was born on December 13 to Tony and Jackie Bentzen Jacobsen. His arrival is a lovely coincidence—December 13 is the 35th wedding anniversary of his grandparents, John and Jan Bentzen. Ramona is great-grandma.

Luke Bentzen Knight was born November 3. Sheila Bentzen and Justin Knight are parents; Ray Bentzen is grandpa and Ramona is great-grandma.

Kendall and Desiree McCarthy are parents of Kohen Drake McCarthy born January 13, 2022. Grandpa and grandma are Kevin and Angie McCarthy; great-grandparents are LeRoy and Maxine Windmeyer McCarthy.

The Naper Paper is your paper. We rely on you, our readers, for support, both financial and “a pat on the back”. We count on you for stories and ideas about what we need to write, print, explore, photograph. We appreciate you and want to say “Thanks!”

SAYIN' GOODBYE

Almon Adam, the last of the Adam triplets born just south of Naper in 1930, died December 23, 2021, at the age of 91. He often contributed news to the Naper Paper.

Ronald Kulm, a 1956 graduate of Naper High School, passed away December 30. He had farmed northwest of Naper for many years while living in Fairfax.

Larry Anderson, the official proofreader for the Naper Paper, died unexpectedly January 5. He had been a part of this community since 1979 when he and his wife Ann Ludemann Anderson married and moved here.

Have you looked at the Naper Historical Society website? (napernebraska.org) You'll find every issue of the Naper Paper (photos in color on the website!), photos of all the classes from Naper High School, stories of Naper history, the White Horse Ranch, businesses, cemeteries, and historical photos.

If you need to contact the historical society, you may:

call 402-832-5471,

mail to Naper Historical Society Box 72

Naper, NE 68755

e-mail at papabear@threeriver.net

FOR SALE—ONE MULE?

An old hillbilly farmer had a wife who nagged him unmercifully.

From morning 'til night (and sometimes later), she was always complaining about something. The only time he got any relief was when he was out plowing with his old mule. He plowed a lot.

One day, when he was out plowing, his wife brought him lunch in the field.

He drove the old mule into the shade, sat down on a stump, and began to eat his lunch. At once, his wife began pestering him. Complain, complain, complain, nag, nag, nag; it went on and on.

All of a sudden, the old mule lashed out with both hind feet; caught her smack in the back of the head and killed her on the spot.

At the funeral several days later, the minister noticed something rather odd.

When a woman would approach the old farmer, he would listen for a minute, then nod his head in agreement; but when a man approached him, he would listen for a minute, then shake his head in disagreement.

This was so consistent, the minister decided to ask the old farmer about it.

After the funeral, the minister spoke to the old farmer, and asked him why he nodded his head and agreed with the women, but always shook his head and disagreed with all the men.

The old farmer said, "Well, the women would come up and say something about how nice my wife looked, or how pretty her dress was, so I'd nod my head in agreement."

"And what about the men?" the minister asked.

"They wanted to know if the mule was for sale."

Letters, Letters, Letters

Graduated from Naper in 1940, retired from the telephone company in 1981, still living in my Redwood City home built in 1951 and still enjoying the Naper Paper very much.

Frieda Ahlers Voll

I am never ceased to be amazed by the quality of the Naper Paper. Always look forward to getting it.

Leroy Ahlers

We enjoy the Naper Paper. Thanks for all your time and work.

Lawrence and Jane Reiman

Keep up the good work. Enjoy the paper very much. Here's a small donation. Hope it helps. Thank you.

Loraine and Bob Woehl, Sr.

Thank you. Diana and I enjoy reading the paper. Enclosed is a donation to keep the paper coming to us.

Dan Williamson

Enclosed find a donation for the Naper Paper. Always look forward to receiving it.

Carol Ludemann

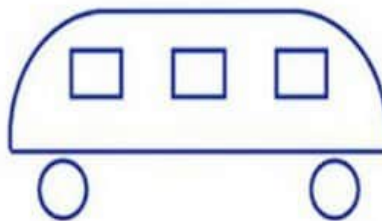
I always enjoy the Naper Paper! Thanks so much for the work you do. I am enclosing a check to help with expenses. Best wishes.

Jean Reiman

Just sending a check and noting the fellow Bentzens restoring the cemetery sign. Merry Christmas!

Gary Bentzen

(son of Art, grandson of Otto)



ARE YOU SMARTER THAN A PRE-SCHOOLER? IS THE BUS TRAVELING LEFT OR RIGHT?

The bus is traveling left. How do you know?

Because you can't see the door to get on. How smart do you feel now?

ST. PATRICK'S DAY EXPLAINED

The reason the Irish celebrate St. Patrick's Day is because this is when St. Patrick drove the Norwegians out of Ireland.

Some centuries ago, many Norwegians came to Ireland to escape the bitter Norwegian winter. Ireland was experiencing a famine at the time and food was scarce. The Norwegians were eating almost all the fish caught in the area, leaving the Irish with nothing to eat but potatoes. St. Patrick decided the Norwegians had to go.

He secretly organized the IRATRION (Irish Republic Army to Rid Ireland of Norwegians). A law was passed that prohibited merchants from selling ice boxes or ice to the Norwegians, hoping their fish would spoil. Well, the fish spoiled, but the Norwegians, as everyone knows today, thrive on spoiled fish. So, faced with failure, the desperate Irishmen sneaked into the Norwegian fish storage caves and sprinkled the rotten fish with lye, hoping to poison the Norwegian invaders. The Norwegians thought this only added to the flavor of the fish. They liked it so much they decided to call it "lutefisk" which is Norwegian for "luscious fish."

Matters became even worse for the Irishmen when the Norwegians started taking over the potato crop and making something called "lefse."

St. Patrick was at his wit's end and finally on March 17, he exploded and told all the Norwegians to "Get Out!!" So they got on their boats and emigrated to Minnesota—the only other paradise on earth where smelly fish, old potatoes and plenty of cold weather can be found in abundance!

And now you know the rest of the story. (Thanks, Ramona Bentzen)

NAPER PAPER

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IN THIS ISSUE

- BRIDGES
- GERMAN/RUSSIANS
- OTTO BENTZEN
- SAVE BOYD COUNTY
- ALUMNI BANQUET
- OL HOMESTEADER
- LETTERS



This is the way it used to be done! Photo taken about 1946 on the Fred Rockholm farm (now owned by Kevin and Staci Koenig) during corn harvest. That wagon-load of corn represents several hours of picking corn by hand. Reo Ludemann's team, Dick and Rowdy, are pulling the wagon. Fred Rockholm, Jr., Truckee, California, is seated on the left; Fred and Joan Bunch of Torrance, California, and Ann Ludemann are standing on the corn. Fred, Joan and Ann are grandchildren of Fred and Anna Rockholm.