

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.

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Naper Paper

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FIVE NAPER BUSINESSES DESTROYED BY BLAZE EARLY SATURDAY; HEAVY LOSSES SUFFERED

Such was the headline in the Butte Gazette on Thursday, July 16, 1942. The headline continued “\$15,000.00 Loss Estimated With Less Than One-Third Covered By Insurance; Plans are Being Made To Rebuild if Material Can be Secured”

Fire apparently started in the back of Jacob Stahlecker’s store (now the location of Goodman’s Store) but was burning intensely before it was discovered. At the time, Naper had no water system except a bucket brigade. It was impossible to control the fire.

A concrete wall between Stahlecker’s store and Krotter’s Lumber Yard kept the fire from spreading to the south. However, the fire burned from Stahlecker’s store north to the street.

The flames completely destroyed the Schultz beer parlor and café, Ed Stahlecker’s cream station and shoe shop, the former Farmers State Bank building and

Maertin’s Store. All that was left of that half block were some charred trees, piles of ashes and the bank vault, long since abandoned.

Many responded to the call for help and much of the stock from Maertin’s store was removed. Buildings across the street were saved by people fighting the sparks that were flying through the air.

The loss was estimated at about \$15,000, only one-third covered by insurance.

Jake Stahlecker’s store (furniture and funeral home) and contents were valued at more than \$5,000 with only \$2,000 insurance. After the fire was burned out, Mr. Stahlecker found his safe with the contents unharmed.

The next building north was the location of Harold Schultz’s beer parlor, pool hall and café on the south and Ed Stahlecker’s cream station and shoe shop on the north. The building was

owned by Mrs. Stephen of Omaha.

Both of those businesses were total losses. Only the stock in Schultz’s business was partially covered by insurance.

The next businesses north were the former Farmers State Bank building (unoccupied) and Wm. Maertin’s store. Both buildings were owned by Maertin’s father. The buildings and fixtures were a complete loss although most of the stock from the grocery store was removed before the fire got that far.

Mr. Maertin rented the former Adam store located across the street to the east and was open for business.

Below: Photo taken after the fire on the site of Maertin’s Store—Delma Dalldorf, Kathryn Blakkolb, Yvonne Reber, Donna Weickum, Marilyn Sieh, Delores Zeitner and JoAnn Katzer. Note the bank vault on the left.



ANYBODY FOR A BALCONY SEAT?

Way back in the Dark Ages, Naper had a theater. It was where the Fire Hall/VFW Club is now situated.

When you entered the building, the ticket booth was to the north and the snack bar just west of the ticket booth. Youngsters under the age of 12 could get a ticket and a bag of popcorn for 25 cents!

There were two doorways to the seating area, both covered by curtains. The seating area extended to the west wall of what is now the first room (bar) in the VFW Club.

To the left of the entry was the stairway going to the balcony. Only couples (perhaps those romantically inclined?) and the very brave ever climbed the stairs. The stairs were the only way to access the projection booth, located in the center of the balcony. There were a few seats on each side of the projection booth.

Back in the day, smoking was permitted everywhere. When you got

to the top of the stairs and looked toward the projection booth, it looked as if you were in the middle of a recently smothered prairie fire—vision was severely limited, but probably for good reason.

A movie goer was seated next to the wall one evening and had her right arm on the armrest and her left hand on her right elbow. She swears a tiny furry “thing” ran across her hand and then up the wall.

The theater was open on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. If you attended on Friday, you could get in free on Saturday and if you attended on Sunday, you’d get in free on Wednesday.

Jerome Blum remembers that at Christmas time, the teachers would accompany the students to the theater for a free movie followed by a sack of candy. Then if the students had some cash, they were allowed to go to the store (Drug Store perhaps?) and

buy a gift for their parents.

Movie goers remember seeing Song of the South and Quo Vadis among other entertainment. The movies were shown twice every night. Previews of coming attractions, a cartoon and a newsreel were shown before the movie started.

Before the theater was built, movies were shown on the side of the old state shed (where Terry Sachtjen’s house now stands) and Frieda Blakkolb played the piano. One of the first operators of the theater was Ted Ulrich. After World War II, Jack and LaVerne Adams, Barney and Bertha Smith, Midge and Louis Kortmeyer, Earl and Eileen Cressman, Junior and Norma Sieh, Russ and Sandy Whitley and Merlin and Dennis Green were some of the owner/operators.

After the theater closed, the town bought the building in 1964 for use as a fire hall.

Oh, the stories it could tell.

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WELCOME TO THE FAMILY REUNION!

Oh, the fun we have at family reunions! If we're lucky, all of the favorite family foods have been prepared. There are some new babies to cuddle and coo over. There are old buddies from childhood escapades. There may be some additions to the family tree, thanks to marriages and partnerships. And sadly, there may be persons missing, due to death, illness, divorce or estrangement.

One of the family reunions with a longevity record is the Kulm reunion, started in 1973. June Brown, a Kulm family member, organized a family reunion in honor of her father Alex Kulm.

There are eight branches of the Kulm family which trace back to Alexander and Magdalena (Eisenbeis) Kulm who were married in 1851 in Gluckstal, Russia. Their children were Jacob Sr., George, Matthaus, Elizabeth, John, Alexander, Christian and Katharine. Six of the children (Jacob Jr., George, Elizabeth, John, Alexander and Christian) emigrated to the United States. Matthaus and Katharine remained in Russia.

The Kulm reunion is held in the United States in even-numbered years and ro-

tates among six different states: South Dakota, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California and Nebraska. The event is hosted by family members living in that state. In odd-numbered years, the reunion site is out of the United States and has been held in Switzerland, Germany and Australia.

In 1982, the reunion was in Naper and was hosted by Lester and Arlene Neumiller and Finn and Edna Nelson. There were 257 attendees. Lester and Edna's mother was Lydia Kulm Neumiller, daughter of Jacob Sr.'s son, Christian and his wife Ricka. In 1994, the reunion was again held in Naper with Ralph and Janice Kulm (son of Rudy Kulm) and Marvin and Judy Cline (son of Elsie Kulm Cline) as host couples. They are also descendants of Jacob Sr.'s son, Christian, and his wife Ricka. There were 220 attendees in 1994.

Judy Cline, daughter-in-law of Elsie Kulm Cline, wrote a story about Christian and Ricka Kulm who came to the United States and the Naper area. (Naper Paper, Winter, 2010) Elsie was the youngest of Christian and Ricka's 11 children. Chris-

tian and Ricka's descendants who attended the reunion in 1982 are in the photo below. You might see some familiar faces—Neumiller, Cline, Kulm, Windmeyer among others.

After being postponed twice for COVID, the reunion was held in 2024 in Seward, Nebraska. That makes 51 years and still going strong. Tradition continues as the reunion in Seward was hosted by Lester and Arlene's daughter and husband Marcia and Mike Hogan, and Finn and Edna's son and wife John and Marsha Nelson.

The reunion is a three-day event culminating on Sunday with church, a brunch, silent auction results and a raffle. In 2024, Sandra Windmeyer Wade and Donna Windmeyer Luehmann donated quilts to be raffled. Their mother was Christina Kulm Windmeyer, a daughter of Christian and Rika.

Marcia Neumiller Hogan donated a Kulm family history book to the Naper Museum in August. The book, written by June Brown and copyrighted in 1995, is nearly 1200 pages long and mind-boggling in its scope and the research completed.



AUDITORIUM BURNS MARCH 18, 1983

The Naper community was shocked on March 18, 1983, when the auditorium burned to the ground. The fire was well under way by the time it was discovered about 9 am.

The Naper Rural Fire Department was assisted by units from Bonesteel and Burke, South Dakota, and Butte and Spencer, Nebraska.

The auditorium was a multi-purpose building, built in 1955. The school districts in the west end of Boyd County had consolidated in 1954 and the auditorium was used for sports, musical programs, class plays, and other school activities including baccalaureate and commencement.

stroyed, as well as students' personal items, such as gym bags and athletic shoes.

Having no auditorium presented a problem for the class of 1983—where would commencement ceremonies be held? One option would have been to hold the event at the school which is only a block east of the auditorium. The crowd for such an event would have been much larger than the space would accommodate.

So, at 8 pm on May 13, 1983, the seniors (Joy Cline, Andrea Sieh, Michael Sieh, Lyndon Vogt, Scott Cline, Tim Mayer and Lawrence Reiman) and their class sponsor, Phyllis Camin, were

Gas and Electric of Greeley was the contractor for the \$208,000 project.

According to the village board (Ben Herrmann, Tim Whitley, Bob Wentz, Ray Fuhrer and Gene Riesselman), the funds came from a \$140,500 Community Block Grant from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, a \$52,000 insurance settlement and pledges of more than \$25,000 from Naper residents, area families and Naper High School alumni.

Some of the appliances and accessories were contributed by local residents.

The new building is 140 feet by 70 feet and constructed on the same site as the building that burned in 1983. It has a regulation-size basketball court with a maple floor, a kitchen, locker rooms with showers, rest-rooms, a large storage room, and room for the city office on the west end. Construction was completed so the school could use the facility as soon as school started.

Coincidentally, at the same time the new hall was under construction, the White Horse Hall of Fame was also being built at the end of the street just north of the auditorium. Fred and Darlene Kirsch of Salem, Oregon, were contractors for the 24 x 48 metal building. It was completed in August, 1984.

The Hall of Fame was used by Ruth Thompson as a museum for the White Horse Ranch and as headquarters for the International Albino Association for several years. She later donated to the village of Naper. At the present time, that structure is used as the village office and the Naper Library.

The auditorium built in 1984 is still used by the community for family reunions, funerals and funeral dinners, wedding receptions and dances and other gatherings—but since 2003, when the Naper Attendance Center closed, no school events.



Above: Firemen directing streams of water on the east end of the auditorium.

In addition to school activities, the building was used for community events such as wedding and anniversary receptions, birthday parties, dances, funerals, funeral dinners and the annual Memorial Day program.

Nothing was salvaged from the building, including the municipal records which were kept in the hall. All of the volleyball and basketball equipment used by the school teams was de-

seated on an underslung (low trailer used to move hay) and braved temperatures in the mid-40s with a north wind, probably close to mid-40s also.

Chairs for the event were furnished by local churches and the VFW club. The audience was encouraged to bring their own chairs.

The next school year (1983-1984), students were bussed to Butte for volleyball and basketball practices.

Home games were also played at Butte.

In April of 1984, construction of a new auditorium was begun. Greeley

The Santa Tradition Continues

On page 2, Jerome Blum recounted how students were allowed to attend the movie and then receive a sack of candy on the day school was being dismissed for Christmas vacation. It isn't documented whether Santa attended the movie or not.

However, for at least 40 years, Santa has appeared at the auditorium and passed out sacks of candy for the youngsters and gifts for the adults.

For many years, customers of the local businesses would sign up for a free gift. The signed "tickets" were put into a coffee can or some other secure container (a mayonnaise jar, perhaps?) and delivered to the hall on the day of the "Christmas drawing." During the event, Santa or one of his helpers would draw the names of the lucky recipients. Local businesses donated hams, turkeys, boxes of candy, and gift certificates among other things.

Over the years, the method has changed. Presently, on the day of the drawing (December 21, this year), people sign in as they come into the hall. There are two different sign-in sheets—either adult or children. Local and area businesses and individuals donate gifts and/or money with which gifts are purchased for the children. Santa draws the name of the lucky recipient who then comes forward to get the gift. Some of the children are so shy that a parent has to bring them forward. Others are so eager they stampede across the floor.

For more than 25 years, children have received as many as three gifts each, depending on the gifts available and the number of children signed up.

Santa Loren Sieh with Jeanne Reiman at District 7's last Christmas program, 1988



Since Santa is often tied up with last-minute efforts at the North Pole, several local men have filled his boots. Larry Osbahr, Jeff Schurmann, Terry Steskel, Loren Sieh, Larry Anderson and Dave Kapsa have all donned the suit to be Santa.

One of the years when Larry Anderson was Santa, it was extremely cold and many older folks didn't come to the drawing. Town board members Gene Riesselman and Ben Herrmann hauled Santa to individuals' homes. Larry's beard froze up and his glasses were so steamed up that he didn't know where he was going but maybe that helped conceal his identity.

Dave Kapsa's son Chris was two years old when Dave tried on the suit. Chris was scared! So Dave would put the mask on and off and say, "See? It's Daddy." Chris was in the audience when Santa came in the hall and yelled, "That's my Dad! That's my Dad!" So much for secrecy.

Duane Sieh complained that no matter how many places he signed up for the Christmas drawing, he never won a turkey. Imagine his surprise in 2000, when a large—very large, in fact—cardboard box was in place. His name was drawn and a very large, very much alive turkey was in the box. It's a mystery how a live turkey could get to Naper from the North Pole.

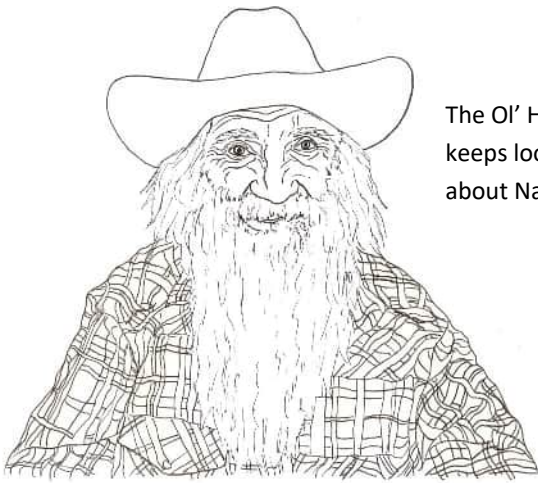


Left: Duane examining the box—does he dare open it?

Below: Bob Wentz, unidentified holder of the turkey, and Vern Goodman reveal the contents.



**SANTA AT THE AUDITORIUM
DECEMBER 21 AT 1:30 PM**



The Ol' Homesteader keeps lookin' for news about Naper!

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!"

SOME FAIR-LY GOOD RESULTS

Grayson Vogt and Hadley Vogt (son and daughter of Ryon and Emma Vogt, grandchildren of Bryon and Sharon Sattler Vogt, great-grandchildren of Mabel Riesselman Sattler), Emerson Higgins, Jayden Higgins and Bergen Higgins (daughters of Skye and Allyson Higgins, granddaughters of LaVern and Brenda Klien Higgins, great-granddaughters of Margaret Vogt Schmitz), Gage Schochenmaier and Sofie Schochenmaier (son and daughter of Joe and Kelsey Zink Schochenmaier, grandchildren of Jeff and Rindy Zink, great-grandchildren of Louise Neumiller Zink), and Elsie Haglund (daughter of Cory and Jessica Cline Haglund, granddaughter of Keith and Lora Sieh Cline, great-granddaughter of Marvin and Judy Hoyt Cline and Marilyn Smith Sieh) won honors in many areas at the Boyd County Fair.

Elsie Haglund and Gage Schochenmaier were winners in the bike races at the fair.

CROSS COUNTRY RUNNERS RUN

Kaci Koenig (daughter of Kevin and Stacy Zink Koenig, granddaughter of Jeff and Rindy Zink, great-granddaughter of Louise Neumiller Zink) and Ethan Zeisler and Savannah Zeisler (children of Jesse and Kim Zeisler, grandchildren of Sheryl Zeisler) did very well at cross-country for Boyd County Schools. So well in fact, both Ethan and Kaci represented Boyd County at the state cross-country track meet in Kearney and set new personal records!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Darlene Lechtenberg celebrated her 95th birthday October 26. She taught school for 48 years, many of those years in Naper. If you were one of her many students who would like to wish her a happy (although belated) birthday, her address is 48600 903 Road, Butte, NE 68722.

SCHOOL IS BACK IN SESSION!

Jaylee Lechtenberg (daughter of Shane and Beth Nelson Lechtenberg, granddaughter of Ivan and Nancy Wentz Nelson, great-granddaughter of Bob Wentz), Kaci Koenig, Emerson Higgins, Aaron Melton and Landon Melton (sons of Shelby and Heidi Melton, grandsons of Bryon and Sharon Sattler Vogt, great-grandsons of Mabel Riesselman Sattler), and Savannah Zeisler were named to first quarter honor roll at Boyd County Schools.

Kayla McCarthy (daughter of Darin and Connie McCarthy, granddaughter of LeRoy and Maxine Windmeyer McCarthy) attended the FCCLA Fall Leadership Workshop in Wayne October 14.

Kaci Koenig, Kinsley Cadwallader and Rylen Cadwallader (daughter and son of Lee and Stephanie Whitley Cadwallader, grandchildren of Tim and Bonnie Fuhrer Whitley), Aaron Melton and Savannah Zeisler had perfect attendance for the first quarter at Boyd County Schools.

SAYIN' GOOD BYE TO OLD FRIENDS

Marlys Mills Walters, a 1964 graduate of Naper High School, died October 19, 2024. She grew up northeast of Naper and had lived in Fairway, Kansas, for many years.

Gaynell Rockholm Keller, a life-long resident of the Naper community and a 1949 graduate of Naper High School, died October 22. She was an active member of the alumni association and UCC. It's likely she was the last woman to live in a sod house in Boyd County as she and husband Bill lived in the round house four miles east of town for 30 years.

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

LETTERS and more . . .

Figured it was time to support the Naper Paper again. Always enjoy it and look forward to each issue.

Stan Stahlecker

Thanks so much for the newsletter. I grew up with my Grandpa Herman (son of Dietrich and Anna) on his Clearfield, SD homestead. My dad was Eilert. Hope this helps with some of your expenses.

Don Ahlers

Here is a little something to help with postage or whatever you need.

I enjoy reading the paper and especially about the White Horse Ranch. My wife, Barbara McAfee, was there in 1956 and we got married on the ranch in 2007.

Thank you.

Kenneth and Barbara Woehl

Please change my address. Enclosed is a donation for next year. Thanks!

Neal Peterson

This is for the Naper Paper. We love it!

Min and Paul Westland

Naper School Will Sponsor Community Sing Monday

The Naper public schools in cooperation with the community, will sponsor a Christmas program, Dec. 16t, at the Naper town hall, beginning at 7:30 p. m. This venture it is believed, is the first of its kind in this section of the state.

The grade school children under the direction of Mr. L. Andersen and Miss J. Cerney, will present Christmas pantomimes, recitations and plays, and the high school pupils will lead the audience in singing suitable Christmas songs in connection with the program.

The success of the program is entirely up to the audience. If the community fails to attend or if those who attend fail to sing wholeheartedly, the program will not have accomplished its purpose. There will be no admission charge.

Thanks to Karen Reiser for finding the article about the Christmas program so it could be included in the Naper Paper.

Murphy's Laws of Quilting Fons & Porters Love of Quilting Karen Buck

1. No matter how much of a particular fabric you have for the quilt you want to make, you will always be half a yard short.
2. Even if you own 200 shades of blue thread, you will not have the one that matches the project you are starting.
3. If you have a piece of fabric 10" wide and need five 2" wide strips, you will cut one of these strips 2 1/2" wide and be short one strip.
4. You will always run out of bobbin thread 1" before the end of the last border seam.
5. The scissors and pincushion, even if you have six of each, are always on the other side of the room. You will not discover this until you sit down.
6. The only beverage you will never spill on your project is water.
7. When you measure twice and cut once, the piece is still too short.
8. Your computer will crash just before you can save the design you have worked on for two hours.
9. If a pin goes astray on the floor, you will step on it.
10. You will break your last sewing machine needle at midnight...the night before your quilt is to be turned in for the guild quilt show.

The above article was copied from Facebook. Although many, if not most, things reported on Facebook are less than accurate, most quilters will agree these statements are true.

CORRECTION

In the last issue, the Ludemann family was incorrectly named as descendants of Wilhelm and Katharine Ludemann. The correct lineage is Johann and Katharine Ludemann. Wilhelm is the brother who stayed in Germany when John, Carl, Henry and Fred emigrated.

Join Us at the Women's Table

by Marilyn Sieh

A few friends had mentioned to me about the men gathering around a table at the Naper Café so why can't we women have a table of our own? I thought about it for a short time and thought, "Why not!" I picked a day and time, made a few phone calls and asked friends to call others who might be interested in joining us.

So on Tuesday morning, May 2, 2023, we met for the first time at our "women's table." We really enjoy our time together while we drink our coffee or tea.

We welcome anyone who would like to join us.

I took the picture for myself but will share it with you.

From left: Phyllis Camin, Mabel Sattler, Grace Bendig, Leola Riesselman, Linda Goodman, Ann Anderson (back to camera), Mary Schumann



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Naper Historical Society

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Staff of Naper High School newspaper Bear Tracks, 1953-1954

Standing: Superintendent Ray Fredericks, Barbara Vogt, Elaine Peterson, Ann Ludemann, Joan Fuhrer, Virginia Schonebaum, Shirley Vogt

Seated: LaVern Tech, Janis Blakkolb, Carol Peterson, Nola Dummer, Ioan Reber, advisor

