

# Historically Speaking

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## Let's Meet the Directors

*Compiled by Julie Spilinek,  
Historical Society Secretary*

After receiving the ballots, in December, naming those who were nominated as directors for 2017-2018, the Society received requests from a few members outside the area who would like some information about them. This issue will feature some details about all the present directors.

### Donita Anderson

I was born Donita Meyer to Maxine (Matousek) Meyer and Fred C. Meyer, one of those on the leading edge of the post-WWII "Baby Boomers". I grew up on the family farm five miles south of St. Paul, where my mother was raised by Tom and Josie (Vrbsky) Matousek; after my dad returned from the war, my parents purchased the farm from her parents. I grew up surrounded by extended family and attended District 15 rural school and went on to St. Paul High School, where I met my high school sweetheart and future husband of 50 years, David L. Anderson, son of Doris and Clayton Anderson of Cushing.

After we attended school in Lincoln (Bryan Memorial School of Nursing for me and UNL for Dave), we were eager to "see the world". We moved to Washington State, spent two years in Seattle, then 15 years in Spokane, where we raised our two sons and I continued my education, earning a BS degree in psychology, then a BS degree in nursing. My first nursing job with a BSN was as an oncology nurse, but I soon moved on to psychiatric nursing, which was my original goal. We moved to Scottsdale, Arizona because of Dave's job transfer, and I worked in a private psychiatric hospital for two years. Dave's job took us to New Jersey, where he commuted to Manhattan; we intended to stay for two years, but, 30 years

later, we left after I retired from a long, engaging career as a nurse recruiter/nurse administrator in a large psychiatric hospital.

We enjoyed every place that we lived, eventually developing a motto, "Every place has something and no place has everything," but we always regarded ourselves as "Nebraska natives". We had family in Nebraska and made regular trips and vacations to Nebraska and had the goal of retiring in Nebraska. We purchased the Jackson farm near Dannebrog 10 years before we moved here permanently two years ago; we made many happy trips to the farm to celebrate holidays and occasions, and our sons and grandsons often joined us.

I sometimes thought that the fact that Nebraska was our "real home" allowed us to explore different parts of our country; I never stopped caring about the rich and unique history of Nebraska, as well as its future challenges.

This is my first term as a director.

### Evelyn Dvorak, Treasurer

I was born, raised and lived on a farm near St. Paul all my life. Following graduation, helped on the farm one year (war years) then worked in the local Gamble Store. I married Alvin Dvorak in 1947 and we have five children. After the children were in school I worked part-time at the Gamble Store (Pflepsen's) and also Wieser's Decorating. I was active in the American Legion Auxiliary and continue to be an active volunteer for the Historical Society.

I became a member of the Society before 1992 when the Gruber House was purchased and since, as a volunteer, and have seen many changes in the village.

The Gruber House was remodeled for the first Baseball Museum and rooms for veterans and religious displays. Some of the other changes

## A Message From the President *Kaye Tomlinson*

*Here it is Spring already, what a beautiful time of the year and we have the Historical Village all cleaned up and waiting for summer visitors. The new building is going to be all ready in a month or two and the rest of the buildings need a little spit shine and we will be ready for Spring and Summer 2017. We are hoping to have a lot of visitors—we have a wonderful village. It is a village to be proud of. We lost a big pine tree in one of the early wind storms, but we have three more pines.*

*We are getting ready to move in to our new building. We are working on building a new, moveable wall for our new place. It has shelves on each side and is on wheels that can be moved to make more room if we need it. We are having a Happy Ladder Hanging on the wall in our new building. Everyone who spends or donates \$100 for the new building will have their name on the ladder. There are always things we forget about and here is the public's way to help out. Donate \$100 and have your name on the Happy Ladder.*

*We are looking forward to a terrific spring and summer with lots of visitors, so bring your friends and relatives to see our historical village and the Gruber House. We try to keep busy so our village will grow and grow.*

*Marion Bahenksy is doing wonderful with the Gruber House. She has spent a lot of her own money to repair many different things. She has planted flowers and shrubs over at the Gruber House and waters them for us. She is planning a small porch with a roof over the back door. It will look wonderful.*

*Our goal is to work, work, work. Come and help us.*

*Until next time—"Keep happiness in your heart and remember to tell your loved ones that you love them. Life is short!"*

*Until next time, President Kaye Tomlinson*

were blacksmith shop moved and rebuilt, the school instead of a display room was changed to the old school setting, the depot and post office

moved in, the courtyard established, the agriculture building moved and today thanks to the generous donation of many a dream of Janet Hruza and I probably since 1997, we will have an exhibit hall for everyone to enjoy.

I have served the organization, numerous times as vice president and president and for the past few years as treasurer. I have enjoyed volunteering for the organization and meeting so many people. I hope I will be able to continue and enjoy the new exhibit hall.

## Roger Goettsche

Roger Goettsche is a native of St. Paul. He was born in St. Paul in 1946 and is a 1964 graduate of St. Paul High School. Roger retired in 2001 after a 36-year career with the Union Pacific Railroad and has operated his own sprinkler business since that time. Roger and his wife, Barb, were married in 1969 and they have two children.

Preserving history is very important to him, which is the reason he became involved with the Howard County Historical Society about 10 years ago. He has been a director for the past four or five years.

## Janet Hruza

Janet Hruza also has been a very dedicated member of the Howard County Historical Society for many years, as a member, director, and volunteer. She was born and grew up in Howard County, graduating from St. Paul High School. She became interested in history as a young girl listening to her father tell stories. She also enjoyed antique items even though her mother did not. (Her parents were Dallas and Elnora Rohman.)

Her husband, Jerry, who recently passed away, was also an important supporter of the Historical Society as well as other civic organizations, especially the American Legion. He did a lot of manual labor for the Historical Village.

Together they raised a family and farmed near St. Paul. As a young couple they were active in a group called Rural Youth for young people out of high school. For entertainment they participated in square dancing.

## Carl Huebner

Carl Huebner was born in Sherman County,

the youngest of four children. His parents were farmers and like many farmers of that time, they occasionally moved from one place to another. For a few years he lived in Valley County, moving to Howard County when he was 10. He graduated from Dannebrog in 1944 and joined the service in 1945. Following his discharge he attended the University of Nebraska in Lincoln with a major in agriculture.

Following graduation he found himself in St. Paul and, among other things, he taught an agriculture course to veterans during night classes. By the early 60's he was involved in a feed business in St. Paul.

His next major move took him to Storm Lake, Iowa, as part of a farm equipment firm. Later he lived in Arizona. After his wife passed away, he returned to St. Paul and has been here about 15 years. With his agriculture background he became interested in the HCHS and its extensive collection of farm equipment. He has volunteered many hours of time helping to keep the grounds and exhibits 'visitor ready'. Besides volunteering for the HCHS, he delivers Meals on Wheels to those who live in rural Howard County.

He recently returned from California visiting his daughter and two sons who live there.

## **Jessie Kiser, Vice President**

I was born and raised south of Dannebrog on a farm. I went to country school (District 9). As the last child at home I helped mom and dad with all the things that needed done on the farm.

In 1955 I married my husband, David Kiser. We had three daughters and two sons, who are all married. Now I have eight grandchildren (five boys and three girls) and one great-grandchild.

I have belonged to the Howard County Historical Society the past eight years and have served as president.

## **Lynn Larson**

Lynn Larson is not new to HCHS. She has been director for two year terms in the past. Lynn hails from North Dakota, and retired to rural St. Paul 16 years ago from Grand Island. Lynn has taught at schools in North Dakota and Nebraska and was a registered nurse for 20 years in the area. She states, "I have always enjoyed the preserva-

tion of antiques, and respect and admire the directors of HCHS with their decisions and hard work."

While not always active as a board member, she was willing to volunteer at the various events sponsored by the Society.

## **Jean (Dwinell) Poss**

I have always been interested in the history of our state, also the three counties I have lived in. I was born and grew up in Wheeler County, born at our home north of Ericson, moving to a ranch nine miles west of Bartlett when I was about two. I graduated from Wheeler County High in 1952, started teaching country school, first year near Scotia, then the home school in Wheeler County.

The Dwinell and Poss families were early pioneers that lived and some were born in Howard County. Louis and Emma (Halm) Poss came to Howard County about 1900 from Buffalo, New York with three small children, Walter, Carrie and Katie, perhaps in a covered wagon. It was either the Wayne Frost place or near it, southwest of Wolbach. My son, Dennis Poss, has farmed it since 1977. Esther (Spilinek), Fred (my father-in-law), Jess and Bill were born there. My husband, Darwin, was born near Cotesfield. Darwin and I were married in 1955 and we lived in Greeley County until 1962. We bought a farm four miles east of Elba, moving to Howard County where we raised our family of five boys and one girl. The boys and their families are all living in Howard County, farming, etc.

My grandfather, Charles Dwinell, took the train from Weeping Water, where he along with his family was living, to St. Paul in 1904 to visit his brother, Luther, who lived just northwest of St. Paul. Howard County was already filled with homesteaders so they took his team and buggy going north to find a homestead for grandpa, as he and grandma had four small children and wanted their own homestead. Grandpa and Uncle Luther found a place about 1-1/2 miles north of Ericson, there were big sandy hills, with nice valleys not far from town. They drove the team and buggy on to O'Neill to the Homestead Office to file, and do the paper work. They used two covered wagons, each driving one, to move their family of four children to Ericson. My dad was seven and could

remember a little about the trip, which took about a week.

## Jim Ross

Jim Ross was born east of St. Paul to Adam and Esther Ross. They later moved to a farm west and north of St. Paul, the District 2 community. He graduated from St. Paul High School in 1953, married Rose in 1954 and enlisted in the Navy in 1955. He was stationed in Newport, Rhode Island but was at sea all but three months. He was discharged in November 1957.

Jim and Rose moved to the home place and started farming along with a dairy and hog operation plus a cow and calf herd.

Jim belongs to the Masonic Lodge and Blue Lodge.

As both sets of parents were longtime Howard County residents they became interested in the Historical Society.

Jim's mother came from Sweden when she was six and settled in the Stromsburg area.

## Rose Ross

Rose Ross was born in St. Paul to Fred and Agnes Frost from Wolbach. She lived in the Fairdale Community, attending Fairdale District #43 School and the Fairdale United Methodist Church. She finished the 8th grade at District #43, then graduated from St. Paul High School in 1954, where she took Normal Training classes.

Shortly after graduation she married Jim Ross but continued to live with her parents while he was in the service. During that time she taught in country schools (Districts 21 and 12).

Following his return from the service they settled on a farm and milked cows and raised four children.

In 1981 Rose started working at Delicious Foods in Grand Island, where she worked for 19-1/2 years. She left that job to take care of her mother. After she passed away, Rose began working for Home Care and Companions for 10 years.

She belonged to Eastern Star in Wolbach and St. Paul and has been a Historical Society director for about five years.

## Julie Spilinek, Secretary

I became a director in 2007 when the late Jim Snow asked if I would join the Society. I have

always been a history enthusiast so I agreed. I was immediately asked to help with the *Historically Speaking* publication, which I have done since.

I was born and grew up on a farm in Kearney County, but I have been part of Howard County, specifically Elba, since I married my husband, Roland, in 1961. He was born and grew up on the farm we now own. Both of his parents were also lifelong residents of Howard County. His grandfather, Anton Spilinek, came from Czechoslovakia.

During the past 55 years I have been a school teacher with most of those years as a substitute in area schools. All six of our children attended and graduated from Elba; four of them still live in Howard County.

My hobbies are writing, reading, sewing and gardening.

## Kaye Tomlinson, President

I was born in Velva, North Dakota on November 3, 1939 in a blizzard. The doctor came to help and he had to walk a mile in terrible weather. All my school years were in Velva. I graduated in 1957—went to Minot State Teachers College one year. I married my husband, John, when I was 19 and started traveling around on high line construction. We have moved 56 times so I have lived in many states. Went to college in Walla Walla, Washington and my major was acting, directing in theatre. I played the lead part of Golde in "Fiddler on the Roof", my daughter, Mary Beth, was the Fiddler on the Roof.

I had an opportunity to be the secretary for Eric Severiad, a news commentator for CBS. He was born in Velva and came back to write a book, "Not So Wild a Dream."

I have been to many places to help out with EMT's and CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management), Sioux City plane crash, Katrina, Ground Zero, and Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Life is wonderful and there are so many things to do.

I played softball for many years. I was an avid bowler, rode horseback a lot (barrel racing and pole bending).

I have been an EMT for 37 years. I joined the Historical Society many years ago and then drifted away and moved for our job. Now I am the president and I like my job—I volunteer. There are many things to do.

We actually arrived here in St. Paul in 1969 and had two babies here, Mary Beth and John, Jr. We kept going off to jobs but always came back here. We bought the DX Service Station from Paul Oakeson. We also had Tomlinson Repair in St. Paul and I had preschool here for five years at the Baptist Church. We have lived here in the house since 1996.

## Roger Van Pelt

Roger was born north of Archer in Merrick County December 29, 1933, but moved to Howard County in 1966 on a rented farm.

He, too, has always been interested in local history. When the original buildings were moved from east of the park to their present location he became involved in the organization. Since that time he has been physically active as he helped Carl Huebner with watering the flowers, trimming trees, fixing doors and other maintenance situations.

## Joyce Ward

I was born March 28, 1937 in Grand Island, Nebraska, on a snowy Easter Sunday morning. My parents were Elmer and Louise Leschinsky. I lived in Hall County until I was in the first grade when my parents moved to a farm two miles south of St. Libory. I then attended School District #41 until I graduated from eighth grade. I was the only pupil in my class all through grade school. I graduated from Grand Island Senior High in 1955. I was a telephone operator when Grand Island went to the dial phone system. Then I was a long distance telephone operator until I married Dale Ward on November 2, 1957. We have farmed west of St. Paul all our lives. We were blessed with three children, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. I enjoy my church work, club, cards, sewing and counted cross stitch and crafts. I also love my yardwork and flowers and volunteering in different community things around the St. Paul area, which includes the Howard County Historical Society.

## Tornby to Esbjerg to Hull to Liverpool to New York: Mads Christian Frederiksen, 1907

The HCHS receives a publication from the Museum of Danish America located in Elk Horn,

Iowa. The summer issue from 2015 featured an account of Mads Christian Frederiksen who immigrated to the United States in 1907. Since Howard County has numerous people with Danish ancestry, I felt it might be of interest to them. My own paternal grandfather came to Kearney County from Denmark in 1906-1907 at the age of 16. I was reminded of some of his comments as I read the article. Individuals who came from other areas of the world may have experienced similar situations. Following are excerpts from his personal account.

*Mads Christian Frederiksen (1874-1912) - known as Chris Frederiksen in the US - was born in Tornby parish in far northern Jutland. From a rural family, he was a talented musician and also learned photography. In 1907 he, his younger sister, Johanne Martine, and one of her friends, booked a one-way ticket on the Cunard Line's newest ship, the Lusitania. Chris planned to join his fiancée, Maren Jensine Bentsen (later Vinding, 1884-1974), who had emigrated in 1905 and was living in Chicago. They married shortly after his arrival and later settled in Harlan, Iowa, but within two years Chris succumbed to diabetes.*

We left Hjørring on Nov. 26, 1907. We talked with the last of our friends and it almost felt as if we were leaving the last of what we loved in this country.

We arrived in Esbjerg between 4 and 5 in the morning, and there were several others who were going with us. We stayed in Esbjerg that day. We reboarded at 6 o'clock in the afternoon and then left for Parkeston, England. It was difficult for all of us when we got out on the North Sea since it was blowing, and we had a headwind and the waves blew across the ship. Since the climate bothered us, we went to bed, where we spent most of our time both that night and the following day. I slept most of the time and had a small meal of peas at noon; that was about all I could eat, and the same was the case with my girls.

The name of the ship was *N. I. Fjord* and it was neat and clean when we came aboard. It became very dirty, but that was not the fault of the crew. We were unable to eat the food they served on the ship, so we ate what we had brought and it lasted the entire trip from Esbjerg to England—26 hours.

It was terribly foggy in England, so we couldn't see much. We were supposed to go by express

when we got into the countryside, but somebody accidentally pulled the emergency brake and we were too late getting on that train. We didn't get to Liverpool until evening.

We were awakened at 7 o'clock in the morning to get ready to go aboard the ship. After lunch we were driven to the harbor, where we went into a large building; I believe that there were over 1,000 people. We thought we were going to leave very soon and waited until noon, but with no relief due to the fog.

The fog had lifted Sunday morning, and the *Lusitania* was there. We quickly got onboard; I do not know how many, there were perhaps 2,000 passengers. We were quickly assigned our places; I got a two-man cabin and that was very nice. I am sharing it with a young Swede. Thine and Petrine are sharing a cabin with three Swedish girls. We are quite satisfied with the arrangements; it is new and clean and we have never seen anything better. It will take some time to learn one's way around. We are drifting around between England and Ireland; the ship is not moving. The food is the way it was mentioned in the book. There are very many Polish people, but we do not mix with them. There must be around 1,000. We are having our evening meal and there is a piano, so there is much music. There is a young Norwegian man who plays the piano and another plays the guitar and I play the violin; it is very uplifting, having music. We are also permitted to sing our songs; maybe it will be of benefit. There is an English lady who sings very well. There are parties on deck; at one place there is dancing, at another there is singing.

Monday morning. We are in Ireland, where more passengers are coming aboard. Thus we have not yet gone very far. At 10 o'clock this morning we are leaving, at 26 miles per hour, and we shall not see land again before we reach New York. It will probably be a difficult trip with a strong headwind; the farther we get from land the bigger the waves are getting. Seasickness has started, with vomiting everywhere. I go to bed early.

Tuesday. The seas are rough and there are not many on deck. It looks very wild across the ocean. The high waves come over the ship's deck; it is a wonderful sight. The *Lusitania* is the world's largest emigrant ship and it is like a ball that is tossed around willy-nilly. I have not seen

Thine or Petrine, so I should perhaps go down and see if they are still in bed. Yes, there they are in their beds with their noses sticking straight up. They are a couple of nice girls; they will probably bring a lot of joy. Most of the people stay below, and that is probably the best if one is seasick.

Wednesday. It is still blowing and there is much seasickness; I am doing fine without wiggling my ears. It is sad that the only way one can see movement is by looking across the ocean. Nothing new on the schedule; only big waves and vomiting. When you go down for breakfast or dinner there is nobody there, although there is room for 400. When I am going to eat I take it up on the deck or eat it in my bed.

It is difficult being on the big ocean when it foams wildly. It is fun to walk on the deck; almost like being drunk and having to hold on to something. The ship was lying still and drifted backward for 4 hours; maybe there was something wrong with the machinery. It has been fixed, but there is a delay when there is a headwind. We are not going to reach New York by Saturday.

Thursday. It is not as windy today. Thine is up and feeling well and Petrine will also be coming. Today the dining hall is full of many kinds of people who are speaking many different languages. It is fortunate that the ship is not overcrowded with passengers. The food is good, so we shall not complain. I do not touch the coffee and tea. They are serving English meals with soup every day and a lot of meat. I get my share, but I will confess that Kesten's food tastes better. But it is not worth thinking about that. Things are going well and the beginning is supposed to be the worst. We make sure to get a good start in order to get an even better finish. I am in good health; my back is fine. The wet climate is helping. I wanted Thine to write; she is sitting next to me, and then the Danish men come over to flirt with her. It is a good thing that she has me to take care of things. They are standing around her like coopers around a barrel. Hansen is the leader. There are about 20 Danes, almost all of them men. Sister Thine is going to make coffee for us Danes; it has been 5-6 days since I last had some. Just like Thine and Petrine we drink just water and liqueur. It is not easy to get hot water on board or to make coffee. The latter is almost the worst when our women get sick. I have not noticed any religious people on board, but it is not really easy. There is much

confusion on such a trip, with much noise all around. All of the ones I can understand are using bad and immoral language; they do sing a few patriotic songs and that can be good, but otherwise, they sing songs about old loves and women. There also seem to be many who are getting into relationships; they are sitting around making out, so that it is disgusting. It looks as if it is the worst kind of people who are traveling to America. I know that in Denmark behavior in general is better than here. Otherwise, I have been lucky enough during my lifetime to have lived and can remember to have been among people who were more civilized and polite. Hansen says that the first he learned when he came to America was to lie and swear. If you cannot become a liar you might just as well return home. When you think seriously about it for a moment, it is sad that there are so many people without spiritual interests and without God who are stumbling around in this world and do not enjoy that which is the greatest joy. They have only ears and eyes for what is low and sinful in this world.

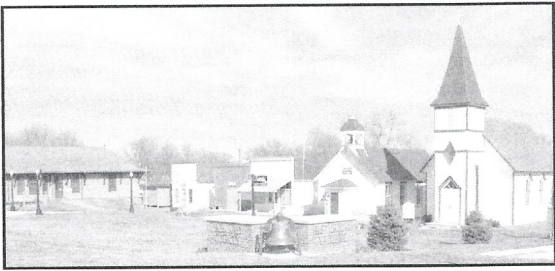
Friday. The weather was nice to begin with. There were more people on deck than there had been before. At 11 o'clock in the morning it started blowing and the waves got big. The ship rocks as never before and it is almost impossible to sit on the benches or to walk. I went to bed and stayed till the next day.

Saturday. Very nice weather; the nicest it has been so far. Today there was a sign of life from the New World. It was a small sailboat and we stood looking at it as long as we can see it; that is a great experience. They say that there is going to be a wedding here today and it is probably true. It is a young Finn who became confused last night when he was going to bed; he got into the cabin of a young girl, also a Finn, naturally, and he spent the night there. It was supposed to have been by accident; but it was against both morality and the law, and they will be denied admission to the country for that kind of behavior. Since this would mean being sent back home they thought that marriage was preferable. It should not be too bad for them, since they can then be together another day and night. When they get to America they can naturally go their separate ways. The free love game is probably being played here. They are dancing 4-5 on the deck now and the Finns are lustily swinging each other around.

Sunday morning. People did not spend much time in bed last night. They have been running back and forth, knowing that we are close to shore. I got up at 5 o'clock and there were many people up on the deck when I got there. We can begin to see the lights, probably at the entrance to New York. The ship is not moving and will probably wait until morning before it sails in. I am going back to bed, and that is where I am writing these lines. People who read this will understand that it is unpredictable here and that the same is the case with this description of our trip, since one cannot just sit down and think about what one should write. No, I am going to let the current flow the way it will and then something will appear on the paper.

We came into the harbor at noon and it was nice to sail toward land since there was so much to see; but it was very foggy. One could immediately see that it was a foreign shore. The buildings and everything else were different than at home, also large-scale. We stayed on board all day. The city was a beautiful sight at night, with its thousands of lights and the many ships moving back and forth, all brightly illuminated. On Monday morning we had our last breakfast, and then went ashore and had our customs inspection. It was easy; we just lifted the [baggage] lid and then we got on another ship and sailed to a different place for a medical inspection. They just looked at our eyes and we spent most of the day there. And received a railroad ticket and we could send a telegram. We left the harbor and the other young men stayed in New York. We went by train to Chicago in the evening. **Duration of journey: 8 days.**

**Dues for 2016 became delinquent on January 31, 2017. Members should check their address labels. If the number is 16, then the dues have not been paid while a number 17 means they are paid. Dues are \$15.**



HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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**INSIDE: This issue was compiled by Julie Spilinek. It contains information on all 14 of the directors of the Howard County Historical Society and also a personal account of a Danish immigrant's voyage to the United States.**

<b>PUBLISHER:</b>	<b>2017 OFFICERS:</b>
Howard County Historical Society	Kaye Tomlinson, President Jesse Kiser, Vice President Julie Spilinek, Secretary Evelyn Dvorak, Treasurer
<b>EDITING, LAYOUT, AND DESIGN:</b>	
Many fine members of the Howard County Historical Society	
<b>CIRCULATION:</b>	<b>OTHER 2017 DIRECTORS:</b>
300+	Jim Ross Rose Ross Carl Huebner Roger Van Pelt Lynn Larson Roger Goettsche Donita Anderson Joyce Ward Jean Poss Janet Hruza
<b>MAILING ADDRESS:</b>	
P.O. Box 1, Saint Paul, NE 68873	
<b>MEMBERSHIP (INCLUDES NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION AND MAILINGS):</b>	
\$15 per person	
Preserving the history of: Boelus, Cotesfield, Cushing, Dannebrog, Dannevirke, Elba, Fairdale, Farwell, Nysted, Paplin, Saint Libory, Saint Paul, and Warsaw	The HCHS is a non-discriminatory provider.