Liberal Hall

Liberal hall was built in 1878 by Tom Scales for the Hastings Free Religious Society, a group of liberal thinkers in religious matters. The outside of the frame building measured 50 by 75 feet. The interior had a stage at one end and a gallery that ran around three sides.

For eight years the building was the only auditorium or public building in Hastings. In addition to being a hall for lectures on educational and philosophical subjects, Liberal Hall was also used as a courtroom, a dance hall, a theater, a gymnasium and a school room. Seven times it was the Salvation Army Hall. It was used as a house of worship by the United Brethren Church, as a lodge room by the Knights of Columbus and as a meeting place for the G.A.R. post.

In 1879 Liberal Hall was the courtroom site for the trial of I.P. "Print" Olive and Fred Fisher who were charged with the murder of Luther Mitchell and Ami Ketcham in Custer County. Because there had been threats of violence, the trial was moved to Hastings. The Olive trial was presided over by Judge William Gaslin, who was known to place two loaded six-shooters before him when he opened proceedings. This event became one of the most famous frontier trials in the state of Nebraska. In 1886 the hall was leased by the Germania Society and the name changed to Germania Hall.

The final owner of Liberal Hall was Fred Schouburg. He purchased the building for the lumber and dismantled the structure in 1916.