

**The**  
**Gary Interstate**

Established Sept. 6, 1878; the only newspaper in the world solely interested in the welfare of Gary, SD and vicinity.

Owned and Published

By The

**Gary Historical Association**

**A monthly newspaper with news of the past and present. December 2008 issue.**

[www.garysd.com](http://www.garysd.com)

“The opinions in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the Gary Historical Association.”

**Be informed of what is going on in your town!**

**Gary City Council is the first Monday of the month @ 7:30 p.m.**

**Gary Historical Association Sunday, January 18, 2:00 pm @ Fire Hall**

**Gary Community Club meets the fourth Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Fire Hall meeting room**

**Gate City Economic Development meets third Thursday, Fire Hall, 7:00p.m.**

**Gary, SD and the Former School for the blind are in the news again.**

First was the Clear Lake Courier, then the Watertown Public Opinion. Now there is an article in the South Dakota Magazine. You can read that article by clicking on the attached link. [South Dakota Magazine » Good News For Gary, S.D.](#) For those that do not have internet, it is a good magazine to subscribe to.

**Update on the progress of the Restoration  
Of the Former School for the Blind**

Joe Kolbach, the new owner of the former SD School for the Blind, is making huge strides in his restoration of the property. The broken windows are all boarded up in the boys and girls dorm buildings. There is temporary heat in the girl's dorm and running. The boy's dorm has the mechanics for heat and is ready to go. There is temporary lighting in the three main buildings. The bids have been let for the removal of the asbestos on the property.

Most of the brush/small trees have been removed in the areas of the out buildings and the site of where Lake Elsie used to be. We can very easily see the fountain and pond where the gold fish used to be to the east of the admin. building. Joe and his project manager Jay Grabow are working in high gear to have the property ready for the celebration next July. From the plans that we have seen, we think that all will be very impressed.

FIRST EVENT:

**Gary Blind School Campus:**

***“Design and Dessert”***

December 11<sup>th</sup> 2008, 6:30 p.m.

Girl's Dormitory Auditorium (South Building)

Sponsored by the Gary Historical Association



## **Can we sell you a calendar for \$15 today?**

You can order yours at P.O. Box 83, Gary, SD 57237

### **Down Memory Lane**

By

Bernice Jensen

Dear Friends,

What a joy to see lights in the Old State School for the Blind. Thank you, Joe Kolbach, for making this dream of many people to come true.

My parents met there and I can remember many happy times and stories that they told of their time working there. While my mother worked there Otis Rule was Superintendent and Elsie Rule was the maid. My father was an assistant to Mr. Joe Woodbury, the engineer. Merle Hulderson Lage, her sister, Alma Hulderson Hundertmark and Olga Harkins watched over the boys and girls dorms. Alma also worked as a cook. The teachers I remember my parents visiting with were Miss Berg, Mrs. Gladys Woodbury, music teacher, Miss Holms and Mr. Vodie, basket weavers.

Twenty years later, I worked at the State School. It was my mother's idea as she thought I should have the experience of working with sight impaired people and learn how well handicapped people could manage. I enjoyed working around the students and became friends with them.



The superintendent at that time (1946) did not believe that the students should visit with what he called outsiders. I corresponded with several after I left the school.

Several local activities were held in the auditorium. Town and country night and graduations were held there. The grounds were always welcoming to people to stroll and the fish pond was always a big attraction.

It had a working farm, a herdsman and had everything on schedule. Every morning he would bring big pails of milk to be separated. The cream was sold to the creamery.

I enjoyed setting someone up or playing a joke on a friend. I was cleaning the music room and found an address of a man in the waste basket. I saw him leave the office and he was a senior citizen about 65 –70 years old. I gave the address to the other maid as she liked pen pals. Oh, this will be a great person to correspond with I had told her. I had to talk her into writing this gentleman. One day we came to work and she wouldn't speak to me. What's up, I said? Well, read this. The letter stated he was 72 years old and cannot dance because of arthritis. He kindly thanked her for writing him and it took a few days for her to get over it.

Later the school was moved to Aberdeen SD in the early 60's. My father was the night watchman. He never saw a ghost there! The building was sold to a couple in Clear Lake and they made it into a retirement home and it was well managed. A few years later it was sold again as the economy had changed and it became an expensive investment. Once again I was in the State School with Inter Lakes Community Action serving the Senior Citizens with congregate dining and meals on wheels. It was a county program serving nine towns. I served as manager for 4 years and had many volunteers. It was a program which after the noon meal we had activities like playing games, had parties and educational speakers. It was sold again in the late 70's. The program was discontinued and the home closed. The building has been vacant since that day.

Now the school has been sold to Joe Kolbach and we are all so grateful. Once more the light will shine and the lamp posts will be lit. While many towns are dying Gary is growing.

Thanks to the many people who worked hard to bring Gary back.

This paper was printed by DNB NATIONAL BANK. We want to thank them for this service!

## **MEMORIES FROM THE HEART**

By Betty Schaefer McCormick

Last evening one of my childhood dreams became a reality when my husband and I went to see "The Radio City Music Hall Rockettes Christmas Show". It was outstanding and everything I ever imagined it could be. I remember as a young girl watching them dance on the "Ed Sullivan Show" and then watching them in the "Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade". After their performance, I would go to my room and practice kicking like the dancers, as if I would ever become a dancer like that. I have to admit it was a good exercise, and I can still kick fairly high, even with two knee replacements. The "little girl" in me came out last night.

Christmas is in the air, even though the economy is down and many factories are closing and jobs are being lost. It will always be Christmas and the celebration of the "Christ Child". Even the Rockettes celebrated the Christ Child's birth in their show.

Some of my fondest memories of the Christmas season in Gary were the hanging of the lights and ornaments from the light poles, and I believe we had boughs that hung between the poles. I

can still see all the merchandise appearing in Van's Variety windows, Hinsvark Hardware, Kenyon's Store, Rourk's Drug Store. There were always the perfume sets, the sleds, sets of dishes, dolls, sweaters, and jewelry sets. Those are the ones I remember. I remember one year a purple bracelet that Mr. Van had in his window. Every night after school I would go by the store and admire it in the window. I told Dad about it and knew we didn't have the money. Closer to Christmas, the bracelet was no longer in the window. I was heartbroken, someone had purchased it. I never mentioned it to Dad, I just felt pretty sad. I was about fourteen years old at the time. Another year, I admired a beautiful gold sweater in Van's window and that too disappeared after a few days. On both occasions, those presents appeared under our Christmas tree. My Dad had Mr. Van put them on layaway and Dad would give him a little money each day till they were paid for. I believe, but never asked Dad, but the money came from his card playing at Fannie Harkins pool hall. Mom wasn't able to shop because of her arthritis but she and Dad had talked it over and he was to purchase them as gifts. I still have both gifts and will cherish them always. That bracelet is worth quite a bit of money, it was inexpensive costume jewelry which is now in demand with collectors.

I also have my sled purchased from Hinsvark Hardware. The price is still on it--\$3.99. When our children were smaller we used it for sliding down hill. It now decorates my front porch with boughs from our yard, wrapped packages and a big red bow. It has so much sentimental value and can never be sold or given away.

The one event that probably brought the most excitement to the town of Gary was the arrival of Santa on the fire truck. Children of all ages waited to see the "Jolly Old Man" and receive a very generous bag of candy and peanuts. Santa always came to see my Mother and give her a bag also. He did this to the shut ins or those ill.

I remember the Christmas trees at Westgard Grocery Store. I think they usually cost anywhere from one to three dollars. Mr. Westgard was so generous that if some family did not have the money to purchase a tree, he gave it to them.

One of the things I do remember but don't really care to, is the Lutefisk outside the stores. I especially remember the barrels outside the Steinle Grocery Store. I am not a lover of Lutefisk even though I am of Norwegian nationality. I do enjoy all the Scandinavian pastries, especially those Bertha Johnson would bake and give to us.

One cannot end a story without remembering the church services. I attended both Methodist and Lutheran Sunday Schools. Both churches remain special to me. It was so exciting to receive our recitations and attend practices. I remember one year, one of the Norton babies played the part of "Baby Jesus". His mother would bring him to all the practices at the Methodist Church and he was such a good baby. I was an angel in that program. I was about eight years old. I played the part of an angel in many programs, because of my long blonde hair. We even had real hay and I believe a baby sheep in the program. In the Lutheran Church we did more singing and memorized verses, a very special service. The trees in our churches were always so large and beautifully decorated. The children always received bags of peanuts, candy and fruit and fruits were handed out to the adults.

When one would come out of church and if it was snowing, that was pretty special. These are some of my fondest memories, all "Memories From the Heart". I am sure all of you have some favorites. Please share them with your loved ones.

As always, I wish all of you the very best. Have a blessed holiday and God Bless. Please say a prayer for all our soldiers who cannot be with their families. To all our friends and family suffering with illness, may you have good health; and speedy recoveries; to our friends with

sadness ,may you have happiness. Merry Christmas and may the New Year be one of peace and unity.

**They are all wonderful “Memories From the Heart.**

**Can you** make a donation to the cemetery marker fund? Bernice Jensen did. She actually donated for three markers in memory of two friends and a family member. This is tax deductible and will be entered into our records. **What amount can you help us with?**

### **Letters to Santa 1978**

Dear Santa,

I would like you to give ma a doll that kisses and a blue cuddly blanket. David wants a big blue tractor and Loren wants a tractor and wagon. My mother wants a necklace, bracelet and a ring. My Daddy wants new cowboy boots.

Love, Kathy Giese

Please bring me a play snowmobile, cowboy shirts and play barns. I moved to a big house now.  
John Harris

I want a marching Mickey and mixer and blender set. Linn wants a rabbit hunt game. Mom wants a picture clock. Dad wants a new belt. Bring Renee and Anita a bathrobe and slippers. I love you.  
Kris Hinders

Oops!! 1978

Some people seem to have been born with feet that comfortably fit their mouths. They're always sticking them into it.

Bill Shattuck, a wildlife conservation officer at Pierre, remembers the two boaters on Lewis and Clark Lake who could locate their mouths with their feet—even in the dark.

Shattuck stopped at a “midnight beach party” on Wildlife, Parks and Forestry picnic grounds to remind the party participants to collect and carry out the mound of beverage containers growing in their midst.

As he walked back to his car, he heard the rumble of a boat out on the lake, but he could see no lights. Running lights are required by law, so Shattuck stayed, listening.

When the boat pulled close to the noise and campfire of the party, the boaters and party goers began a verbal exchange, most of it not printable, according to Shattuck. One of the party members shouted a warning to the boatmen, threatening that the game warden had just been through. “Who cares about the #&\$&# game warden!” the sailors jeered back as they roared off.

Shattuck quickly drove to the local marina, anticipating the arrival of the lightless vessel. Sure enough, the sounds of an approaching boat were quickly followed by running lights belatedly turned on as the offenders pulled into the docks.

Shattuck walked down and asked them to stop at his car after they'd secured their craft. In the dark they asked, “Why? Who are you?” Replied Shattuck, “I'm the #&\$&# Game Warden you don't care about.”

As recently as 100 years ago, people were still using a tin kitchen funnel as a hearing aid. It only worked if you stood right there and screamed into it.

### Benner Meats and Lockers

Ben Benner came to Gary in 1901 and shortly thereafter went into the meat market business with Herman Kernes and then Charlie Eckart. Several years later Ben became the sole owner of the Benner Meat Market. Son Arthur joined him in the business in 1919. The meat market was located on the west side, north end of Gary Main Street where the Walt Ochsendorf home now stands. The meat cooler was kept cooled with ice harvested from Jim Donaldson's dam near the railroad trestle. The ice was stored in an ice house between the meat market and the Ethel Bartels property. Sawdust and flax straw were used as a packing insulation on each large block of ice to keep it from melting. Ben Benner and sons lived in the brick house now occupied by Carl Hundertmark. A barn north of this house held livestock ready for slaughter. In early years, the livestock was walked to a slaughter house located on a ravine southeast of the Gary Cemetery. They were butchered there and transported back to the meat market on a horse-drawn platform buggy. They were cut up by hand with hand saws, cleavers and knives. During harvest time, Ben and Art would pack fresh meat in ice and take it by horse and platform buggy to farm wives in the area. There being no refrigeration at the time, only smoked, canned or salted meat was kept on farms in the summertime, so the fresh meat was a welcome sight to the farm wives cooking for large crews of hungry threshers. Little James Cole sometimes rode with the Benners on these routes. In 1934, pork chops were two for 10 cents, lard was one cent a lb. And soup bones and stew scraps were free. Ben Benner died of a heart attack in July 1932, and then Art and wife, Eva, ran the meat market until they opened the Benner Meats and Lockers in 1941 in a new location which was the old 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank building. Dr. Gross started a dentist office in the old meat market location then. Much internal work was done on the Bank Building and jackhammers were used to tear out heavy concrete and steel bars in the fortress of the vault where the 300 new frozen meat lockers would be placed. A \$10 a year rent fee was paid in advance by the 300 locker renters to help finance the construction of the locker plant. A large compressor using Freon gas as a coolant was installed to keep the locker room at a constant temperature of zero degrees Fahrenheit. This compressor was used until 1981 when it was replaced. Two walk-in coolers were also built to keep the meat cool until processed for freezing. An electric band saw was installed to replace the hand saw. The round butcher blocks were brought from the old meat market as well as many knives and the bone handled steel used to keep knives sharp. Art trained Bernard Anderson and Herb Hunt to be meat cutters as well as his wife, son and daughters. Art died in December 1959. His wife Eva and son Dennis ran the locker plant until March 12960 when it was purchased by Jerry Squashingroff, Walt Ochsendorf and present owner, Robert Deslauriers. This is the only remaining commercial business on Gary's North -South main street.

Written by Mavis Benner Johnson  
November 1982

### Christmas Time

It's such a busy, hurried time, when the Christmas Day draws near,  
Buying all the eats and gifts, before Santa does appear.

The streets are filled with colored lights, and we hear the carols play,  
And merchant's windows decked so bright, in honor of the Christmas day.

Each package holds a secret gift, until that glorious night, will fill a heart so full of joy, when its contents come to light.

It's such a gay and wondrous time, with the snow upon the ground,  
With all the gifts and colors bright, in all the homes around.

With children coming home that day, to be with Mom and Dad once more,  
And there are all the grandkids too, whom the grandparents do adore.

Christmas time will soon roll past, and the year is soon to end,  
And everyone is getting mail, as their friends their greetings send.

We wish to you the best of luck, and hope no tragedy will befall,  
And each one to the other's wish, a merry Christmas to you all.

Marietta Thomas

**This paper was printed by DNB NATIONAL BANK. We want to thank them for this service!**

## **Mules for Christmas Surprise Gary Farmer**

By Kris Bode

Occasionally one hears stories of unusual Christmas gifts, from millionaires who shower their wives with jewels and sport cars, to zookeepers who make gifts of live baby tigers. But a rural Gary, South Dakota woman has shown in her own way that the Christmas spirit is alive and strong in this area.

Mrs. Jens Peterson, who lives with her husband and five adopted children, about 4 miles north of Gary, surprised her husband this year by presenting him with a matched pair of Belgian female mules.

During the last part of August of this year, Mr. and Mrs. Peterson saw a pair of mules at the Huron state fair. The color, called blonde, was unusual in a pair of mule; in reality, the mules are a brown color. It was love at first sight for Peterson and the mules, which had been bred near Zell, South Dakota by a Mr. Lueder.

The decision to purchase the mules was, in Mrs. Peterson words, not made until a couple weeks ago. She contacted her son, who lives near the Petersons, and he had them delivered on December 23, just two days before Christmas.

What was Peterson's reaction when he saw the mules? He didn't know that they had brought them, says Mrs. Peterson. He was sawing wood so these guys drove up and put them in the barn. Then I asked him to look in the barn. He went in there, and I didn't see him for a long time. They forgot about coffee and everything.

For the next two weeks during Christmas vacation, Mrs. Peterson says, her husband and two sons will be busy driving the mules around with harness, to get them used to the idea of being hitched. We can use them to haul hay and manure, says Mr. Peterson.

The family has an old wagon, also, which the mules can be hitched to. Owning mules is not exactly a new thing for Peterson, who had a team previously. One member of the team died and as a result of not being able to find another partner for the one surviving, it was sold. The new pair of mules will be two years old soon. It takes about three years for a pair of Belgian mules, like these to reach full size, and when they do, each of them will weigh about 1800 pounds, making them some of the largest mules raised.

While the mules are growing, they will also be learning how to work in harness on the Peterson farm, not an easy task, but then, transporting mules from Zell, South Dakota to the farm was not an easy one either. It was all done in the spirit of Christmas, and the Peterson family will remember this one for a long time.

### **Gary Historical Association Newsletter from the President**

These are exciting times for Gary and the Gary Historical Association. Finally, after about 30 years of sitting empty, there is life at the former SD School for the blind. Joe Kolbach has taken on the huge task of restoring the property. For those that are old enough to remember, do you remember all the activities that used to be there. Lake, park, horse races, fair and assorted other activities that drew people from miles around to Gary. Now we have some of those possibilities back again. The possibility could be a regional recreation center, motel, auditorium, lake, park, camping, place for a rodeo and other sports events, museum, offices etc.

Remember years ago when the grounds were so well kept. There were weddings there as well as funerals and even church services held by the Episcopal Church. The lights were lit in the buildings; the globes on the stone posts along the outer edge of the front lawn were a welcome site in the evening.

Do some of you remember the blind kids that were there. How they were a part of our community. How they used to walk up the hill to the church and if the weather did not permit, members of the church would go to the school and pick them up and take them back again. Yes, the community was very displeased that the state thought that something else would be better, but more important yet, part of our community was being jerked away and we had very little say in the matter. It must have been quite an adjustment for those kids when they moved to Aberdeen. We have been in contact with some of those "kids" over the last few weeks and months. They also remember those days in Gary. There were a lot of happy times and some sad. However they are also so pleased that the restoration is going on. One mentioned that it would be really nice if they could line up a bus and come for the grand opening during our celebration around the Fourth of July.

Watch for updates on this project.

Roger Baer, President, Gary Historical Association.

The flag is flying at the former School for the Blind. It is wonderful to see and hear the plans that Joe Kolbach has in mind for the Former School for the Blind



*The Gary Historical Association would like to wish each of you a  
Merry and Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.*