

Down Memory Lane

By
Bernice Jensen

Gary is doing great. While other small towns are withering, Gary is growing and looking good. Today I am thinking of the days when I was very small. Coming to Gary was always so exciting. These are the businesses that are no longer standing.



Let's start at the end of Main Street at the north end. The large square home on the corner (Mike and Barb Miller home) at 1201 Coteau Street was at one time a hospital where Dr. Fonger, Dr. Martin and Dr. Holmberg had their medical practice. Dr. Holmberg later moved to Canby and practiced there till 1958. Further up the street there was a funeral parlor and Gil Brainard was the undertaker. As a small child my brother, Henry and I would play on the open frame building wooden porch while our parents shopped in the butcher shop next door. When we were told not to play on the porch, my parents said that is where dead people rest until their funeral or they are taken to the family home for visitation. We never looked in those windows again.

Next door was Benners meat market, a small frame building owned and operated by Art and Eva Benner. Art's father, Ben Benner, was the founder of the business. The slaughter house was on the property where the apartment house stands now where I live. They also had a few groceries. Later the building was purchased by Dr. Gross and his dentist office brought many people to Gary. Dr. and Effie Gross were good to our community. After Doc's Barney Ladwig purchased it as a storage place. Later this property was owned by the late Gertie Baer. Farther up the street was a vacant lot that was once a two story house that was the Huffman hardware store. This is the first business that I remember there. Later it was purchased by Otis and Elsie Rule and there Ed and Loretta Weidenbach purchased and operated a busy café her, which featured great food. Other owner operators were Arnold and Elenora Moeller, and Fanny Harkins. Then it was taken down. The café was always friendly and served great food.

Morris Kunas had a barber shop in the building on the south side, and later it was an electric shop and the post office was housed there. The next building was the building where Robs Meat Market is now. It was the First National Bank and it closed in the 30's. It was also the Bartels grocery and dry goods department store. It was fully stocked and I like to remember the grocery side. A large bunch of bananas was lifted up and hung on a big hook and sold off the bunch. Cookies were sold in the bulk in boxes with Isenglass doors. A sack of candy with every grocery order was the normal thing.

The vacant lot next door was once the Gangers Harness shop, Barney Hunt operated the Gambles store, and later Mary Prusa's beauty shop which was a very pretty little shop. Mary was a pretty younger gal and when her husband returned from the World War II, she and her husband left for Sioux Falls. It then became a café and then a cream and egg buying station and was then torn down.

The empty building on the corner was the grocery store operated by Lou Huffman. After the Huffmans moved their store to their home across from the Bed and Breakfast that Will Stones own, and sold out their inventory from their home. Mr. and Mrs. Huffman were the parents of Frankie Huffman, a young man who enjoyed ham radio. Later the Jack Spratt Store was operated by Hinsvarks who also managed the Burr Elevator. After Mr. Hinsvark passed away the business changed owners many times, the Cuffs, Steinleys, and Barney and Barbara Ries.

How many of us remember when we kids would walk on the edge of the building on the south side. We wondered how far we could walk before we fell down off the ledge. The ledge became narrower as you walked to the right.

Another building that is no longer standing is the building where Sylvia's café stood. It was originally a funeral parlor. This was told to me by Mrs. Harley Cole. She said that when a tornado went through the area, the funerals were held outside of the funeral parlor since their family home was destroyed. Very early it was owned by Mrs. Baxter. She had a son Orville, who was just 7 years old. Mrs. Florence Baxter operated a home style café. Orville lost his life in the gravel pit that is where the dump grounds are now. Florence was broken hearted and left to make her home in California. The next business was a black smith shop operated by Reinhardt Stillmaker. He was a large man with a deep voice and always looked so tired. It was later operated by Maude Helmberger and Sylvia Cole. The building is no longer standing. At 415 West where Jack Nielson and Warner Volks home stands was the site of the first School House. On Herrick St. West was the first Liquor Store. My parents purchased it from the Lenertz Estate.

The old mill stood where Dar Koerlin's home now stands. There were livery stables in town where farmer's horses were put in stables and fed. One stable was on the Milt Griffin home and later the Larson home, and then I and my family were there. It is now a vacant lot.

This story is what I remember as a small child, things that I remember the older people talking about. If anything needs correcting, please let me know.

Next month I will take the east side of Main Street and the east side of Coteau.

These are the people that carved the foundation for Gary. When other small towns are dying, our town is growing. If the old timers could look down from Heaven, they would be so pleased.