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## Rising From the Ashes

### March 27, 1908, Gary Interstate

J.R. Fonger met with the insurance adjuster Monday and his loss was satisfactorily adjusted. Mr. Fonger will undoubtedly rebuild and will put up a building that will be a credit to the east side of Coteau Street.

### April 3, 1908, Gary Interstate

Notice - All persons knowing themselves indebted to me are earnestly requested to settle at once, I need the money. - M.M. Schiltz

J.V. & H.J. Wells moved the goods salvaged from the fire into the lower part of the town hall and had a "fire sale" at reduced prices. Ole Bushland immediately opened a barbershop in temporary quarters in the office building of the Trageser brothers and then relocated to J.Q. Adam's shop. J.R. Fonger opened a store temporarily in the Millard building including a line of drugs and medicine.

Within two months, the process of rebuilding had begun. J.R. Fonger and the Bartels brothers worked together to build new buildings on the site of the fire. Excavation began the second week in May and was the largest excavation ever made in Deuel County. That's going some. Rock for the foundation was hauled in by Chas. Roske and the stone masons began their work.

### July 17, 1908 Gary Interstate

Friday was the warmest day of the season so far. In the afternoon the mercury climbed to 108 in the shade. The stone masons working on the foundations for the new buildings were forced to quit during the afternoon on account of the intense heat.

Continued on page 3

**Fairchild Farmgirl**

Page 2

**They Ride**

so We Don't Forget

Page 5-6

**After the Fire**

Looking to the Future

Page 1, 3 -4, 9

## – Fairchild Farmgirl – Happy New Year friends!

I hope you are having a great start to this 2026! In case you're wondering, our Christmas was pretty fun. As every year, we finish gift opening and guests and older kids go to their own houses and Ron and I look at each other and talk about how we need a bigger house. With boyfriends, a husband and one fiancé, we had 15 kids here. We loved every minute.

With being a school employee, I had a great break. I took two classes, one for Microsoft Office (Excel and Word) and one for Customer Care. I'm trying to be the best business person and a good business person too.

Then Friday after Christmas hit. With three days left out of ten of break, I got super sick. I had the worst cold and stuffed up head. My theory? I was out in the trenches of buggars, too little personal space and spit flying at work, and I get home and that must have been the time that the virus manifested. Like when you were in high school science and you had just set up the experiment and the teacher says, "now put it in a warm safe and dark place so the ingredients of the experiment can work it's magic.

Luckily I just finished my week of work up and I do feel a lot better, and I'm on meds for a sinus infection. The funny thing was, I was laying in bed thinking about all you guys as my readers, with an insanely stuffed up head, for example, my nasal passages were actually like a vacuumed sealed tight. It was crazy. But there I was, with Nyquil, DoTerra oils on my feet, I ate enough garlic to kill a vampire and Vicks covering my neck, feet, head, (but not my nose....Ron said, "don't put it by your nostrils, I heard it can give you brain damage." Honey, I was so clogged up that the jaws of life couldn't get ½ an inch up my nose). And personally sudden brain damage would've given me a few more days at home to recuperate.

Anyway, I remember laying there in my bed with about ten blankets covering me as I chuckled at the funny article I was going to write about me feeling so awful. It was the only solace I had, because literally everything else was so terrible.

But as a 51 year old lady with a 51 year old brain, do you think I could remember what I was going to write about? Nope. It had to be good because I can remember not falling asleep, fighting the Nyquil, giggling quietly as not to wake up Ron.

Next time I'll get my butt outta bed and write it down. I promise...that is if I can remember that I should.



Gary's Parade of Lights

Until next time,  
Fairchild "full of vinegar and brain  
fog" Farmgirl





## Rebuilding

By July, the foundation was complete and ready for brickwork to begin. After an initial consideration of using cement block, Springfield, Minnesota brick in two colors was chosen to construct the new block. The Fonger building measured 25 feet wide and 70 feet long; two stories high. The Bartels building was 47 feet wide and also 70 feet long; two stories tall. The two buildings had a shared stairway to the second floors and also second stairways in the rear.

The Fonger building was designed with a drug store on the first floor and offices for Dr. Fonger (son of J.R. Fonger) on the upper floor. Dr. J.H. Fonger later decided to establish a hospital on the upper floor of the new building, something that had been needed in the community for some time. The plans included four large bedrooms on the north side and reception and operating rooms on the west end. Also planned were sanitary features of a bath, toilet, and closet.



The Bartels building had two large store rooms on the first floor and a single room upstairs with a fifteen foot high ceiling. This was to become the opera house complete with a stage extending completely across the room and wide enough for any purpose for which it is intended.

By the middle of September, the brick work was complete on the new buildings and the interior and the putting on of the roof could progress. The woodwork was being rushed and the plasterers began covering the lath on the new block. A.W. Bartels has had several opportunities to rent his new building when completed.



**August 7, 1908 Gary Interstate**

WANTED, to rent, small modern house, close in. Will pay good rent for right place. See State Bank, or address W.R. Chittenden, Canby, MN

W.R. Chittenden would become the first tenant in the Bartels building.

The Gary Interstate published weekly updates throughout the building process. Once the plasterers completed their job in late September, the windows and doors were installed. The new buildings had modern steam heating plants and were outfitted with the most up-to-date equipment throughout.

Less than seven months after the tragic fire, the new opera house formally opened on October 9, 1908. It had a seating capacity of 450 people, the floor of hard maple, dressed and oiled. The entire upper floor is lighted with electricity, sixty-eight lights of 32-candle power which spread a brilliancy to every corner of the house. Seven radiators furnish heat for warming this house and the hall is furnished with very comfortable opera chairs of modern make. Traveling theater companies rode the trains and presented plays in the opera houses along the railroad lines.

**October 2, 1908 Gary Interstate**

It is up to every fair minded citizen of Gary who thinks this new Opera House a benefit to his town and surrounding country to turn out and help make the opening a success, as it is certainly an improvement to which we can point with pride.

The opening of the "New Store" of A.C. Chittenden was held on October 24, 1908. The store carried a mix of general merchandise - groceries, shoes, dry goods, clothing and furnishings.

J.R. Fonger has moved his salvage stock of goods into the new store. His shelving and counters had not yet arrived but when all is done and arranged, he will have one of the best appointed drug stores in the entire northwest.

**October 23, 1908 Gary Interstate**

Roller Skating - The Opera house will be open for roller skating on Tuesday and Friday evenings of each week at 8 o'clock.

Postmaster Bartels has moved the office into its new and elegant quarters in the new block, and it seems quite metropolitan in appearance now.

Through the years, the Bartels building evolved from an opera house to a theater - the Garden/Prom Theater, and it also held dances and roller skating by pushing back the chairs. Other occupants were McGrinols Millinery, Gary Creamery, Berntson's Pool Hall, Bartels' Lunch Parlor, Gary Municipal Liquor Store, and, again, the Post Office from 1963-1983. The building collapsed in September 1990.

The Fonger building also saw changes over the years. It continued as a drug store (Fonger's, Rowland's, Fonger's, Peterson's) through the early 1920's. Following the death of Dr. Fonger, Dr. P.T. Martin occupied the upper floor in 1924. The main level housed the Gary Bakery until 1948 when Bill Hinsvark moved the Marshall-Wells Store to this location. It became Van's Variety from 1954-1970 and Kenyon's Variety from 1970-1975 when it became the Senior Citizen Center. The basement of the building was home to several cafes, a pool hall, the Sports' Inn and Harvey Schulte and Dr. Gross's Fishing Equipment.

The Fonger building was torn down following the collapse of the Bartels' building in 1990.

Nosbush Plumbing built on the site in 2020.



**A Look Back...*****125 years ago, January 1901***

No more shooting of prairie chicken or quail until September 1<sup>st</sup>

Henry Ludwig receives abdominal gunshot wound while removing loaded gun from buggy

AW Kelsey has new harness shop

Marriage: Alma Wood & Leon T Walker

Births: Girl to Mr. & Mrs. Frank Wells

Boy to Mr. & Mrs. Irving Greeley

***100 years ago, January 1926***

3000 lb. good sized perch recently placed in Lake Cochrane

High test gasoline for your auto 23 cents a gallon

Masked ball held by firemen a success

Birth: Boy to Mr. & Mrs. Merle Rowland

Auction: Palmer Farms---Richard Haugen

***75 years ago, January 1951***

Highway 22 boosters meet with Gary men

Junior class to present "Let 'er Go Gallagher"

Gary Telephone to expand

Elaine Benner receives Deuel County DAR award

Basement fire at Lyndon Hansen's

Marriages: Glenda Pearson & Harold Bliss

Marilyn Aure & John O Nichols

Births: Girls to Mr. & Mrs. Percy Buetler

Sgt. & Mrs. Wm. Knipe

Boys to Mr. & Mrs. Fred Stangeland

Mr. & Mrs. Clarence Bindert

Auctions: Jas. E Bostic --- Wm. Stanke

***50 years ago, January 1976***

Donna Fritz Carpenter receives Heaton Scholarship

Gary 8's square dance club to start lessons

GHA holds meeting to discuss Bicentennial

Fire at Louise Battles home

Senior of the week – Dawn Bailey

Birth: Girl to Mr. & Mrs. Harold Sillman

Deaths: Herman Wiederich—Arthur McKie

—Mrs. Leo Eckley

**History Help Needed**

Can anyone identify this location or this house?



These pictures are in the Gary Historical Association's Museum Collection and it would be nice to know their origins – it might lead me down a path for another story.

**GATE CITY GENERAL**

*A little bit of everything...*

**Monday - Saturday**  
8:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

**Sunday**  
8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

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**"THOSE WHO CANNOT REMEMBER THE PAST ARE CONDEMNED TO REPEAT IT."  
- GEORGE SANTAYANA -**

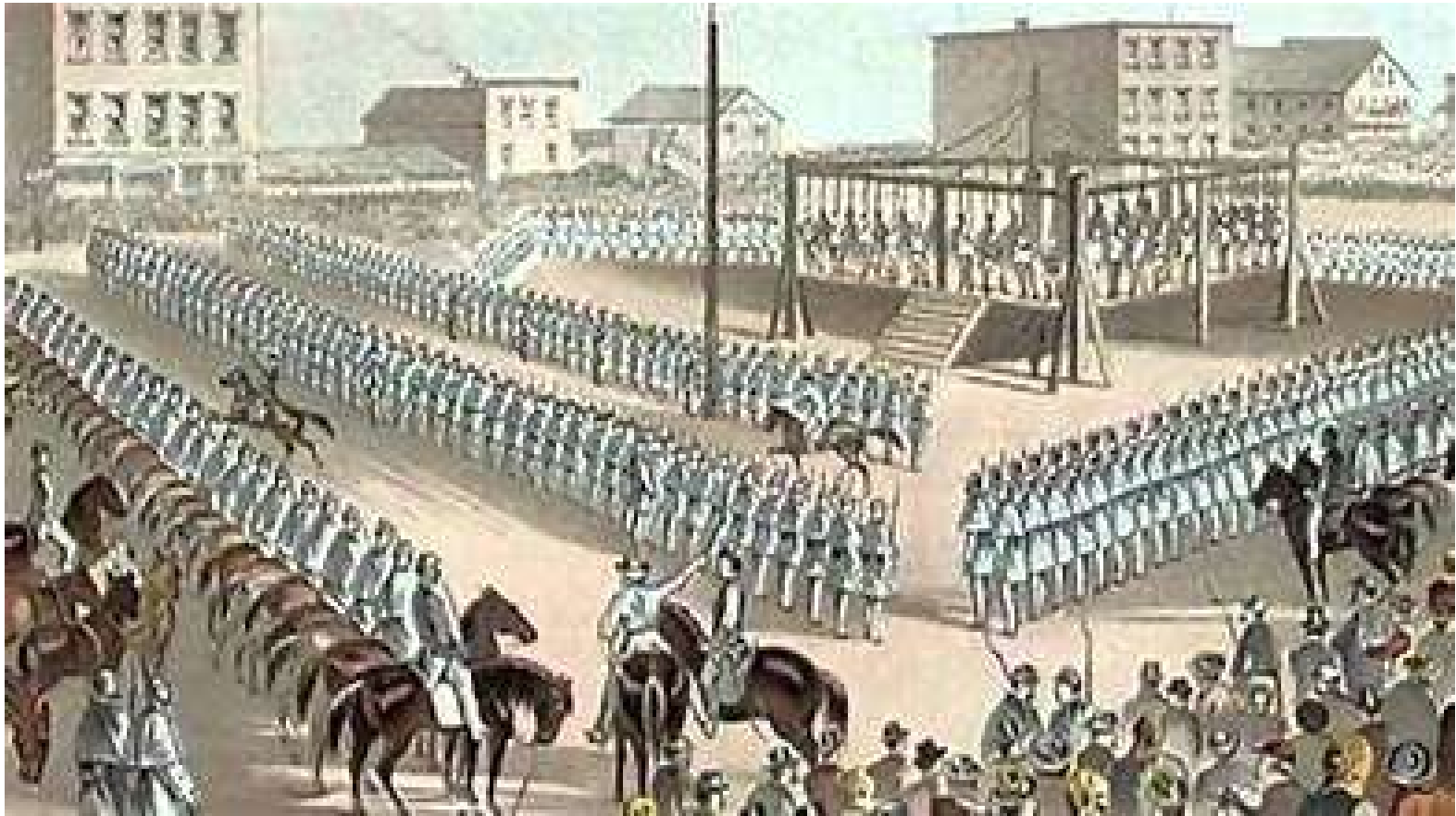


Arriving at Mankato's Reconciliation Park, Dec 2024

The Makahto Reconciliation and Healing Ride (formerly called the Dakota 38+2 Memorial Ride) arrived in Mankato, Minnesota on December 26th, 2025 to honor and remember the 38 Dakota men who were hanged on December 26, 1862 for their parts in the U.S.-Dakota War. The ride originated at Crow Creek in South Dakota and covered 330 miles. The Dakota Exile Ride also arrived in Mankato having begun in Santee, Nebraska. This ride is in support of the Dakota tribes that were exiled to South Dakota and Nebraska following the war.

The Dakota Conflict began on August 18, 1862 when the Dakota, who were facing starvation and displacement, attacked the Lower Sioux Agency and white settlements along the Minnesota River in southwest Minnesota. The war lasted for five weeks and between three and five-hundred white settlers were killed and thousands more were displaced. An estimated 300 white and mixed-blood women and children had been held hostage by the Dakota and were released to Colonel Sibley's troops at Camp Release in September of 1862. The number of Dakota men, women, and children lost is unknown but 150 Dakota men had fallen in battle. In the aftermath, approximately 2000 Dakota people were interned at Fort Snelling. The conditions in the camp were very poor and between one and three-hundred Dakota died from disease and starvation at Fort Snelling. In less than six weeks, a military commission sentenced 303 Dakota men to death for their actions during the Dakota War. President Abraham Lincoln reviewed the convictions and commuted all but 39 of the 303 convicted. One conviction was overturned and 38 Dakota warriors were hanged on December 26, 1862. Two additional men

were later captured and hanged as well. It remains the largest, one-day, mass execution in United States history.



Governor Alexander Ramsey called for the Dakota to "be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the State". This action was rejected in 1912-13 and an apology was later issued to the Dakota people for "150 years of trauma inflicted on Native people at the hands of state government".

The following year (1863), the surviving members of the Dakota tribe were expelled from their homeland and transported to the Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota and the Winnebago Reservation in Nebraska. Today the memory of those people, now known as the "Dakota Exiles", lives on with a memorial ride, similar to the Dakota 38 + 2 or Reconciliation Rides but specifically meant to tell the story of those exiled Dakota people.

But what caused this terrible tragedy for both the settlers and the Dakota people? The root cause of the conflict was the U.S. Government's action regarding the treaties that ceded large tracts of land to the government in exchange for a reservation strip twenty miles wide and 150 miles long, centered on the Minnesota River. The Dakota were also promised cash annuities, debt payments, and other provisions in these treaties. The Dakota were encouraged to become farmers rather than continuing their hunting traditions. The narrow strip of reservation land could not provide enough game and the competition for the available fur-bearing animals was great from the neighboring settlers. The Dakota suffered a crop failure in 1861 followed by a harsh winter and depleted wild game. This led to starvation and terrible hardship for the Dakota. In the summer of 1862, tensions between the Dakota, the Indian agents, and the fur traders reached a boiling point. The government was two months behind on payments and provisions to the Dakota people and many Indian agents were defrauding the Dakota and becoming independently wealthy off that which the treaties had promised to the Dakota people.

On August 4, 1862, 800 Dakota arrived at the Upper Sioux Agency and broke into a warehouse containing sacks of flour. Minnesota's volunteer infantry attempted to stop the looting but realized that the Dakota were only seeking food, not combat.



Four young Dakota hunters killed five white settlers near Action, Minnesota after a disagreement over a nest of eggs. The next day, Chief Little Crow led a faction to attack the Lower Sioux Agency in an effort to drive all settlers out of the Minnesota River Valley. The U.S. government was slow to respond to the crisis as the Civil War was still being fought. On September 23, 1862, an army of volunteer infantry, artillery, and citizen militia led by Colonel Henry Sibley defeated Little Crow at the Battle of Wood Lake. Little Crow and his followers fled to the northern plains of Dakota Territory and into Canada. Following the defeat at Wood Lake, Little Crow hoped to ally with the western Sioux, including the Yankton, Lakota, and Sisseton, as well as gathering support from the British in Canada, but was not successful. He returned to Minnesota and was killed near Hutchinson, Minnesota on July 3rd, 1863 while gathering raspberries with his son.

The bodies of the 38 Dakota who had been hanged were buried nearby but were dug up and used for medical instruction by many local doctors including Mayo Clinic's Dr. William Morrow Mayo. Little Crow's remains were put on display at the MN state capitol building for a time. The Native American Graves Protection and Reparation Act brought many of these remains back to the tribes and families of the Dakota.

Mary Wingerd, historian, disagrees with calling it the Dakota War as it is "a complete myth that all the Dakota people went to war against the United States", rather it was "a fraction that went on the offensive". She estimates fewer than 1,000 mostly Mdewakanton men out of a population of 7,000 Dakota were involved in the uprising. Additional Sissetons and Wahpetons may have joined the fighting - once again, only a fraction of the 4,000 that lived near the Upper Sioux Agency - in defiance of the elders who opposed participation.

Historical research reveals that many Dakota helped the settlers escape the area. Lorenzo Lawrence, who had connections to early Gary, led captive women and children to safety at Fort Ridgely, traveling at night to avoid both the Dakota and the white men. It took five days and nights to travel to Fort Ridgely which was located a bit northwest of New Ulm. I estimate they traveled approximately 70 miles in the dark of night.

*"I am Lorenzo Lawrence. I am fleeing from the Indians with some White women and children, and my own wife and children. We are going down in boats, and when we come here we found the dead bodies of a man and boy, and I buried them near the house under the mound of dirt. I have ten captive women and children that I am fleeing with, and I write this so anyone who comes can tell who was here."* Then I tacked the paper on the door. Afterward I went in the house and took a kettle and dish and knife, and went back to where the women and children were. And we made a fire and stewed some of the meat we had, and the women and children were very glad to get some cooked meat soup. And the women asked me, *"What did you see at the house where you went?"* But I did not want to tell them I had found the dead bodies and buried them, because I thought it would frighten them, so I did not tell them that. . . .

Why is history so much more interesting now than it had been in my school years?  
-Patti Haas



Gary's Parade of Lights



Let’s Address the Problem

The cause of the great destruction from the 1908 fire was primarily a lack of water. In the subsequent months, action was taken to remedy this issue. The old town pump which was located at the corner of the Atlas lumber office (Coteau Street and First Ave) had been in a state of 'innocuous desuetude' - a harmless state of disuse - for many months. By September, the pump had finally been repaired and water once more could be hoisted from the depths of the well.

The main town well was located uphill near the power house and was failing. It was decided to dig a new well at the north end of Coteau Street where the city park is located. A pump would be installed at that location and water pushed up the hill through the existing main to a large steel tank located near where the present day water-tower sits. Water would be pumped into the tank which is under a heavy air-pressure sufficient to throw a stream of water over the highest building in town. The pump at the well would be controlled from the power house by an electric current connected to a dynamometer. In case of fire, the pump will supply the needed water until the wire should be severed by fire, then the tank would be utilized, thus giving the amount of water sufficient for any fire which could break out here.

About this time, the subject of sewage was being discussed. Gary, at the time, had no sanitary sewage system. The community had power, telephone, and a municipal water system but not a sewer system. Drainage would not be a problem as everything flows downhill in our town. It was brought up and discussion encouraged to consider subscribing to such an enterprise. **October 2, 1908 Gary Interstate**

Side note - It is interesting what little tidbits are found when reading through the archives of the Gary Interstate.

**July 10, 1908 Gary Interstate**

F.H. Greene returned from his Wisconsin visit Tuesday evening. He brought back with him three red squirrels and expects to populate the woods around here with the little animals.

I wonder how that worked out!

- Patti Haas

Lighting up the Season

Success! The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Gary Parade of Lights was definitive success. There were over 20 entries, lots of character appearances (not just the inflated ones) and an abundance of Christmas cheer.





The Gary Givers

FUNDRAISER

TRACK

THE JACK

THURSDAY NIGHTS

at the Gary Liquor Store

TICKET SALES: 5 P.M. – 7 P.M.

Drawing: 7:15 P.M. – Must be present to win!

\*\* Must be at least 21 years old to participate. \*\*

2 tickets – \$5 ♥ 5 tickets – \$10 ♥ 20 tickets – \$20

The winners of the Gary Community Club Light judging Contest!

- 1st Place- Mike Miller
- 2nd Place – Sharon and Mark Kloos
- 3rd Place (tie)- Jillian Anderson & Family
- AND - Patti and Doug Hulscher





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2026 Schedule:

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Jan 31<sup>st</sup> – BBQ Ribs

Feb 7<sup>th</sup> – Prime Rib

Feb 21<sup>st</sup> – Smoked Pork Chops or Rib Eye

Mar 7<sup>th</sup> – Prime Rib

Mar 21<sup>st</sup> – Smoked Pork Chops or Rib Eye

Apr 4<sup>th</sup> – Prime Rib

Apr 18<sup>th</sup> – Smoked Pork Chops or Rib Eye

May 2<sup>nd</sup> – Prime Rib

May 16<sup>th</sup> – Smoked Pork Chops or Rib Eye

May 30<sup>th</sup> – BBQ Ribs

June 6<sup>th</sup> – Prime Rib

June 20<sup>th</sup> – Smoked Pork Chops or Rib Eye

\*Hamburgers also available

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Contact Loran at 507-277-5525

Or email [garylegionhall@gmail.com](mailto:garylegionhall@gmail.com)

If you have any story ideas or questions pertaining to the Gary area that could develop into an article, feel free to email them to [ghainterstate@gmail.com](mailto:ghainterstate@gmail.com).