



# The Carnegie Courier

Newsletter of

The Mitchell Area Historical Society (MAHS)  
& The Mitchell Area Genealogical Society (MAGS)

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## Life in a small town on the plains of central South Dakota

*This program was given to a DAR meeting held at the Carnegie Resource Center; they and Roger Cashman graciously allowed us to print the text.*

Good afternoon, ladies of The Daughters of the American Revolution. I am Roger Cashman, chosen perhaps by accident as I have lived a bit longer than most. I come from Wessington Springs, a small town founded less than 150 years ago on the old Noble Trail and at the East side of Wessington Hills. Now let me begin telling you a little bit about the country we live in.

Most of you grew up when the streets were shaded by trees, highways were paved and telephones had dials. Streets were always well lighted during the night.

Wessington Springs is a small town; half of the streets don't have sidewalks. I ride my electric scooter on the streets to the doctor's office and grocery store. A combine or tractor and plow occasionally cross over town on Main Street. The nearest traffic light is at the crossing of Highway 281 and 34, six miles east of town.

The town was founded in 1878 by Reverend A. B. Smart, away from the sinful world. The Free Methodist Church established an academy. They later upgraded it to a Junior College and Teacher Training School. A great many of the country's school teachers started with a Summer School Course after graduating high school in order to qualify for a teaching position.

The Noble Trail, a military road from Minnesota crossed the Wessington Hills on a gentle grade to the city park; it angled up the ridge beside the ravine. There were a few



**Roger Cashman, 2022**

trees in the gullies and water under the gravel hills. For centuries it had been a neutral ground as many of the Indian Tribes camp there. It was the only constant source of water between the Missouri and the Big Sioux Rivers.

There were trees along the Big Sioux, a few around the lakes near Madison, some spots along the James River at Wessington Springs, the Missouri River and the Black Hills. Otherwise, you could ride for days and see nothing growing higher than short grass. Nothing!

Thomas Schryock, one of the original settlers, harvested his first crop of grain and hauled it with a team of horses and wagon across the prairie to Mitchell; then returned with a load of lumber for building. It took two days to get to Mitchell and two days coming back walking beside the wagon. There was no road, not even a wagon track across the prairie.

We are in an Artesian basin, a large pool of water deep underground. Be-

fore it was tapped numerous times it was under high pressure and wells flowed constantly. Thomas Schryock had an artesian well, running water in his house. His well still flowed when I was a youngster, but the pressure was much lower.

Woonsocket was established several years later when the railroad lines were built from Sioux City through Mitchell, Woonsocket, Wolsey and Aberdeen. Woonsocket got their water from an artesian well. My mother said the pressure early on was such that the firemen could take the shingles off a house standing on the ground. As time went on the pressure became less and less.

My Granddad Pendexter, Dan Cashman Pendexter, was a land agent. He was returning east from the gold fields and stopped at Woonsocket; he liked the place and stayed buying and selling land for eastern investors. My Grandmother, Ida Ferris, married Dan Cashman Pendexter. She was fresh out of convent school, and she came to live for a time with her aunt and uncle who owned the hotel in town.

Grandmother Ida Ferris Pendexter started a private subscription (students had to pay a fee) school in one of the rooms at her uncle's hotel. The next year the city organized the first public school in the new town. Ida also taught in the first school in Woonsocket. Eventually, every farming community had a school within walking distance.

Residents of every community, no matter that most had little or no formal education, built a barn. They lived in that while building a house and a church.

*Continued on page 2*

## Life in a small town on the plains ... Continued from front page

Often the school was held in the church. Many settlers could not speak English. A bunch of the kids were free laborers on the farm, but they must have some education. My mother, Florence Ursula Pendexter Cashman, taught in one school where her first task was to teach the first graders to speak English. They had only heard German at home.

If you were around here before World War II, you will recall that the highways were all gravel roads. I believe that the only paved highways were 10 or 15 miles into Sioux Falls. All of the other state, county and federal highways were graveled. Actually 40 was "High Speed" because your car was essentially on ball bearings. Gravel would roll under the tires. Gravel roads developed potholes quickly and became very bumpy, if not frequently bladed. The 20 miles on Highway 281 from Wessington Springs to Highway 14 into Huron frequently required an hour or more. From Wessington Springs to Mitchell was an hour and half, maybe two-hour drive. To Sioux Falls was a 3-hour drive. In the Model "T" days, Madison was a day's drive. Before 1921 or 1922 when Douglas MacArthur conducted an Army Convoy across the Rockies and the Sierra Nevada Mountains, there was no road to the West Coast. No road at all! The Army Convoy required a month or longer to make its trip. Travel was much slower!

I was born in 1928 so I lived through the drought years. My Dad was fortunate; he had a job as a Substitute Clerk in the Post Office, a steady job, yet with a small paycheck. In 1933 this Post Office with a Post Master, two clerks and a substitute clerk, were told to layoff one person. The two clerks agreed to take a reduction of salary enough to pay the substitute clerk's \$35 per month. The employees worked 40 hours; mail traveled by train 7 days of the week. The Star Route Carrier from Woonsocket would drop mail in Wessington Springs at noon on Sunday. My Dad came from church to the P.O. every Sunday, took in the mail pouches and



Lottie Mae & John M. Cashman Dec 1971

distributed mail into the boxes, before going to dinner.

Five days of the week, a small train with an engine, mail car, one coach, boxcars and cabooses left Wessington at 5 AM, went past Woonsocket through Howard, then onto Pipestone and later returned. I recall once four or five of us drove east to the point where the railroad grade began to rise from Firestone Creek into Wessington Springs. We smeared axle grease on the rails; I heard later that the railroad crew was very unhappy about the prank! It took a considerable amount of time to get the engine across a few feet of the track. My paternal grandfather, Frank Cashman, worked as a railroad telegrapher for the Milwaukee Railway in Tulare, SD. The train had 100 cars which held 40,000 pounds or 20 tons. It was a very long train.

The Post Office was open five days from 8 AM until 6 PM, also until noon on Saturday. Mail was distributed into the boxes on Sunday. There were no mail deliveries in town, only in the five rural routes. The longest route was about 50 miles, I believe, the shortest was more than 30 miles. Most carriers at the time had a Model A Ford to use when there were snow drifts or muddy roads on the route. Until I left Wessington Springs, there were five or six stores that sold groceries plus two meat markets that sold meat and milk. Most of the meat markets no longer butchered cows and pigs. They bought quarters or sides hanging from a packing plant.

Most of the groceries had a cold case, a refrigerated case for cheese, milk, eggs and butter. Some had a refrigerated case for ice cream. Hooks, a small store in the north part of town, sold ice cream. Habicht's and K&K were department stores which sold groceries, men's, boy's, women's, and girl's clothing, and a dry goods; they had a cashier's desk connected to each department by a cable operated device to carry money and sales slips. Alice McDonald was a cashier for Habicht's for many years. The boys had a duty of fishing eggs out of the buckets filled with oats as cushions. They had to use care so not to put a finger through an egg. Most farmers and families came to town on Saturday evening. They went to the barber shop and perhaps some to the movies about 9 PM. Everyone lined up at the grocery store to load their purchases and go home. When the boys finished work, they went home after 10 PM.

We lived well, as I recall. My parents always planted a large garden as many did, but only a few potatoes as we had gumbo soil. Grocery stores had very little or no fresh fruit or vegetables. Apples would stay fresh and were shipped in barrels or boxes. Oranges, peaches, available during a season, and lemons could be shipped. My mother always bought and canned peaches as well as a box of pears. She canned perhaps a hundred or more quarts of tomatoes, peas, beets, corn, carrots, spinach, peaches, pears, rhubarb, strawberries, goat, pork and chicken. There was usually a 5-gallon crock of sauerkraut and another of eggs in a solution of salt peter (a.k.a Sodium Silicate). My father dug a shallow pit lined with straw, filled it with carrots and parsnip; he then covered them with straw and dirt. During the winter months, we took out whatever we wanted. Many people, farmers and townspeople butchered steers and hogs and preserved the meat either by canning, drying, salting, or smoking. I believe pork chops were partly cooked and stored in crocks with lard covering to seal the meat.

*Continued on page 3*

## Life in a small town on the plains ... Continued from page 2



Florence Ursula Pendexter Yearbook photo

Most people in small towns canned as did all the farmers. During the winters, my dad often bought a 100-pound box of frozen fish which he stored in the garage. We were able to have fish, salmon, herring and white fish to eat during December through March. Not once did it thaw even though there often was no snow. Winters seemed much colder then! We also had goats and chickens. As a baby, I could only have goat's milk so that meant we had chores to do every day.

My parents had a nice car. They bought a Studebaker St Regis in 1932 and another one in 1937. They paid cash. The car sat in the garage during the week. My Dad always walked six blocks to work and came home for lunch at noon. We rode in the car to church and sometimes to Mitchell, Huron or Letcher on Saturday or Sunday. One dollar would buy 5 gallons of gas. Gas pumps were made with a lever at the side. You would push and pull the lever once to bring up about a quart of gas into the gas globe at the top.

Nick Anton's flour mill ceased milling flour around 1931 or 1932. After that, he slithered coal and grain and

ground grain for livestock feed. His grinder was powered by a large electric motor. He always telephoned the electric plant asking for another generator to add to power the grinder.

Hayes Lucas and Fullerton Lumber yards were always busy. International Harvester-Farmall, John Deere, Allis Chambers, J. I. Case had dealers here. Chevrolet, Ford and later Dodge car dealers were here. There were two blacksmiths, Claude Schott added an electric welder. The town had 6 or 7 gas stations. However, Mr. Freeman at the White Owl sold only gas and oil and he had a repair shop. A Fuller Brush man went door-to-door with brooms, brushes and cleaning products. Salmar Gundersen drove a yellow delivery van and peddled spices, coffee, tea and chocolate throughout the area. My mother never brought much from either one.

Ivan Giles sold ice during the early 1930's before refrigeration. When I was small, we had a coal-wood stove in the kitchen and an ice-box which held 50-pound blocks of ice. The ice was refilled once per week. When propane became available, the cook stove was changed to a propane stove which sat beneath the west window of the kitchen. A 100-pound propane bottle stood outside of the house. Cities had, of course, gas for heat and light for a half century.

Everett Brown owned a barber shop beneath the Bank at the corner of Main and Wallace Street. I believe he had three chairs, employed two barbers though safety razors were common by my time. There was always a waiting line for a haircut on Saturday evening, when it was common for farmers to come to town. When I came back to Wessington Springs, there was no barber shop, only hairdressers for women.

Dentists at the time in Huron and Mitchell certainly had electric drills, but when I was small, I went to the dentist here who removed the decayed matter from a tooth with a hammer and chisel. I can still feel the whack-whack-whack of the hammer on my jaw. That was during the early 1930's. It was many years later when

I went to visit a dentist again.

I was a hard worker and never participated in any sports but spent my time doing jobs around the farm. My philosophy was that if I was to get sunburned and be outside in the heat, I would do it working rather than sitting at a baseball field. My hard work ethic has helped me throughout my life. I served in the Navy, taught school, visited many places in Europe (Heidelberg, Germany; London, England; Cornwall, England; Paris, France), and several states in the United States. I have lived in several places: Wessington Springs, SD; Kansas City, Missouri; Arkansas, California for a time after the service, Florida and finally back to Wessington Springs, South Dakota. It's a good life.

Editor's Note:

"Quick Description: Noble's Trail circa 1857 was the Dakota Territory's First Highway which connected Ft. Ridgley, MN with the Missouri River went through Wessington Springs, SD." [https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/wm1531\\_First\\_Highway\\_in\\_Dakota\\_Territory\\_circa\\_1857](https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/wm1531_First_Highway_in_Dakota_Territory_circa_1857)

THIS MARKS A CAMP-SITE  
OF DAKOTA'S FIRST HIGH-  
WAY 1857. KNOWN AS  
NOBLE'S TRAIL FROM  
FT. RIDGLEY, MINN TO THE  
MISSOURI RIVER

\* \* \*

ALSO MARKS THE SITE  
OF LEVI HAIN'S LOG CABIN  
ERECTED 1876.



# Storing Family Papers and Photographs

## Store items at a low temperature and low relative humidity.

The lower the temperature the longer your items will last, because cooler temperatures slow the rate of chemical decay and reduce insect activity. Keep the temperature below 75 degrees Fahrenheit (F). Keep the relative humidity (rH) below 65% to prevent mold growth and reduce insect activity. Avoid very low relative humidity because relative humidity below 15% can cause brittleness.

## Consider cold storage for acetate negatives, color negatives, prints, and slides

Acetate negatives and color negatives, slides, and prints are vulnerable to fading and deterioration within decades, if stored at room temperature. Cold storage can slow this deterioration, but it requires special packaging and steps. Learn how to prepare items for cold storage at National Park Service Cold Storage. <https://www.nps.gov/museum/coldstorage/html/index.html>

## Reduce the risk of damage from water, insects, and rodents

Store items out of damp basements, garages, and hot attics. Keep items away from sources of leaks and floods, such as pipes, windows, or known roof leaks. Store items on a shelf so they don't get wet. Store items away from food and water which are attractive to insects and rodents.

## Packaging family papers and photographs for storage. Boxes, folders, rolls, sleeves, albums, and scrapbooks!

Use containers that:

Are big enough for the originals to lay flat or upright without folding or bending, are the right sizes, so

items don't shift - Use a spacer board if there are not enough items to fill an upright box and don't overstuff the box.

Are made of board or folder stock that is lignin-free and acid-free or buffered. (Archival Boxes)

**Rolls** - Large flexible sheets can be stored rolled.

Roll onto a sturdy tube so it is less likely to be crushed.

Use an archival quality paper tube that is buffered with low-lignin content.

Select a tube that is at least two inches longer than the width of the widest sheet.

Five sheets may be rolled on to one tube. Roll all five sheets onto the tube at the same time, not one after the other.

If your originals are brittle, torn, or heavily used, place each sheet in a polyester L-sleeve. These sleeves reduce the risk of tears and other damage due to handling

Only place one item in a sleeve and make sure all parts of the text or image is visible. This way the item can stay in the sleeve while being viewed.

Use sleeves that are larger than the original. Any part of the original extending outside of the sleeve is likely to be damaged.

Don't use sleeves in books. The sharp edges of the polyester will tear the book page.

## Albums

There are a variety of binding styles and types that are safe, including spiral, ring binders, post or clamp bindings, or traditional sewn bindings. The album cover material can be cloth, stable plastic, or leather. Choose the look and the style of the album you like. More important

than the cover material is the quality of the album pages and other materials in direct contact with the photographs and papers.

Avoid overstuffing albums; don't add too many items to the pages or too many pages to the album. This can cause damage to the pages of the album and the attached items, as well as make it difficult to use.

The safest method to mount photographs and papers is without glue or adhesive. This can be done by:

Using pages or envelopes that are acid free and sleeves made of stable plastics such as polyester, polypropylene or polyethylene.

Using corners made from acid free paper or stable plastic films such as polyester, polypropylene or polyethylene.

## Materials to Avoid When Storing Family Papers

Synthetic glue (white glue), hot glue gun adhesives or any other unknown glues. They can damage the front as well as the back of photos or newspapers

Rubber Cement

Pressure Sensitive Tape - Most Tapes

Rubber Bands

Magnetic albums that have a self-stick adhesive with a clear cover

Non-Stainless steel staples and paper clips

Unknown plastics or polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastics. Unstable plastic slide sheets as they become wavy and discolored.

The above information can also be found on the National Archives website: <https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives/storing>.

*"Preserve your memories, keep them well, what you forget you can never retell." - Louisa May Alcott*



## HELP!!!!!! Many hands make light work!!!

HAVE AN EXTRA COUPLE HOURS A WEEK?

Looking for a volunteer to make "Back In Time" for the newspaper

Like to **clean?**

Like to **organize?**

Like to **write stories/articles?**

Have a **skill/talent?**

Like to **research?**

Like to **help people?**

Like to **decorate?**

Like to **research/write grants?**

**flexible days and flexible hours**

The Carnegie Resource Center could really use your help! We have many projects being worked on right now. We will train you and help you get started. We would love some help with various things that need to be done at CRC. Anyone who has a skill or talent can be utilized. We will be working on more projects that organization and vision will be of use. Helping our guests that visit is always fun and interesting. Some of them just love to tour the building and see our Oscar Howe original works and prints. Some of our guests want to research family or a business in town. We would love to be able to have a list of people that would be willing to help us out. Since we are volunteers, you can set when you are able to help. We would love for you to contribute an article for our Carnegie Courier, about a business or family. Anyone with experience in grant writing would be a huge plus for us. We currently decorate for the seasons, if you would like to participate, we would love to have you. This is not a complete list of what is needed, but hopefully you get the idea. Please give us a call at 605-996-3209 or email us at info@mitchellcarnegie.com. In the subject line please type: would like to help. Thank you for considering this. As my grandmother always said, "Many hands make light work!!!"

### DWU Comes to Help



Six members of the Dakota Wesleyan University softball team volunteered at the Carnegie Resource Center on May 2, 2023, as part of their Service Day. They were such a positive group of young women who pitched right in and helped with inventory and worked in the archives room with the newspapers. Thank you for thinking of the Carnegie and helping out for a morning. Every little bit helps preserve our history. Pictured, L to R top: Andi Borchers, Meghan Daffern; 2nd row: Sophie Wietzema, McKenna Thomason; Right side: Britain Smith; Front: Jaden Warner.

### Stars and Stripes Forever Quilt Raffle Winner



Congratulations to Dianna Roeder for winning the Stars & Stripes Forever quilt that was raffled off. The drawing was held on Feb. 20.

# Mitchell Area Genealogical Society

**By Beth Walz**

Hello Everyone!!

I am so glad we have nice weather! I hope at least some of you are planning on a "genealogy trip" this summer. Trips can have a wider variety of purposes.

First - a conference - personally, I highly recommend something local, regional or in state. The mega conferences have too many people for me. Attending a conference with topics related to your research is always beneficial.

Second - Looking for homestead locations. Old maps and county directories help with research before you go.

Third - Document cemeteries or take pictures of tombstones. It is amazing to see these cemeteries around Memorial Day.

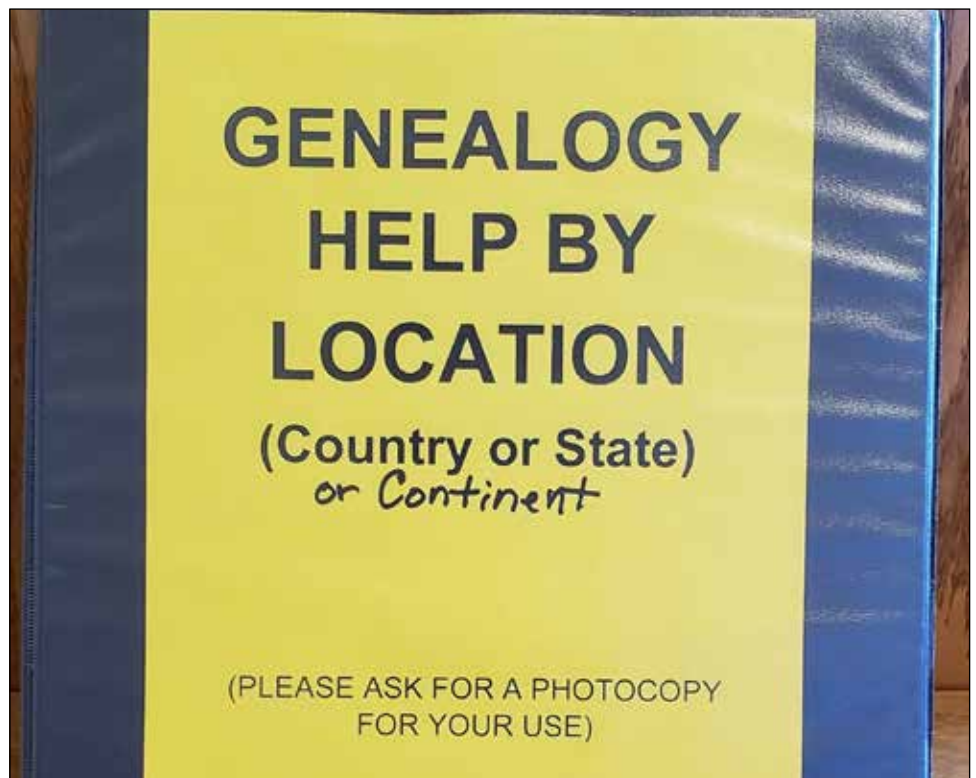
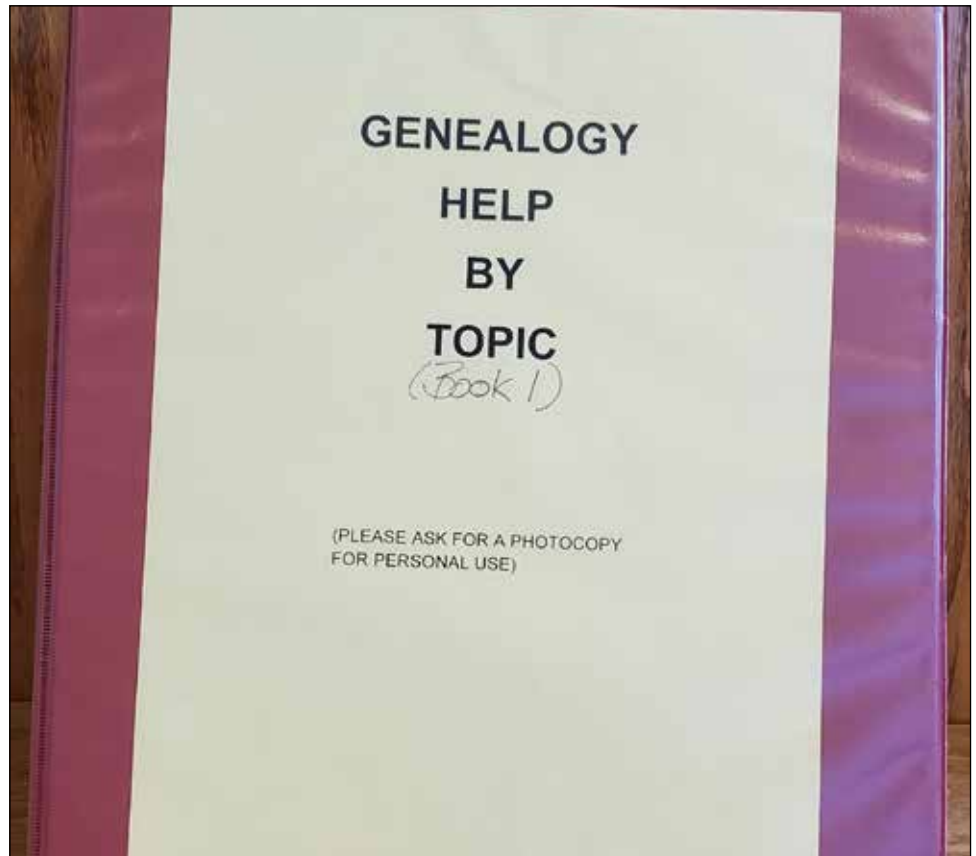
Fourth - Meet distant relatives that you have made contact with.

Fifth - Visit other historical & genealogical societies to access their research materials.

Sixth - Visit the local repositories -anywhere that keeps records- where your ancestors lived.

Not taking a trip? Need help jump starting your research? These two binders (at right) are located at the Carnegie Resource Center. We have been accumulating helpful research material and websites. The top binder contains helpful information by Topic such as Germanic research or cemeteries. The bottom binder contains helpful information by location such as researching in Texas or Florida.

We will gladly share this information and the Carnegie Resource Center is free for anyone to visit and research.







Train Wreck in Mitchell, South Dakota on September 12, 1908. Site of accident - Burr Street overpass

Another source stated that one of the crew running the switch engine had fallen asleep due to 16 hours of steady work.



engineers are getting rather superstitious about working after 659, for it is the third time that it has been in a wreck. Mr. Plant, the switch engineer, was also in the same wreck. On this occasion none of the engineers or firemen were injured. A brakeman by the name of Earl Murphy jumped from a freight car when the collision occurred and in falling, sprained his back.

When the switch engine went over the bridge the boiler exploded and the noise sounded like a big charge of dynamite. The steam escaped with terrific force for a short time and created much excitement in the neighborhood. In a short space of time hundreds of people went to the scene of the wreck and watched the operation of clearing the track. The head engine was off the rails and stood on the ties of the bridge and was finally pulled on the track. The second engine gave but little trouble. Before morning the south line was cleared.

The freight train was made up of coal cars heavily loaded. Three cars, two flats and one box car, were thrown from the track. One flat car was thrown off the track and turned directly south, standing upright. The box car was thrown from the track and turned over on its side. The other flat car was simply smashed to smithereens and the coal was scattered over the ground. Work was commenced Monday to remove the wrecked cars.

The south line enters the city on a curve and it is impossible for the engineer to see a train on the main line but the fireman has a clear vision from his side of the cab. The rule of the company is that trains on entering the yard limits are required to have their trains under absolute control so they can be stopped within a very short distance. The engineers claim, it is said, that the air on the engine did not work, which was responsible for the wreck.

Photos by Leland Art Co.

**THREE ENGINES IN A WRECK**

Switch Engine Badly Wrecked and the Other Two Were Damaged But Slightly.

Out at the east end of the yards of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad company there seems to be an unfortunate fate for the company in the matter of wrecks. Saturday afternoon at 3:45 o'clock occurred the third in the course of four years.

At that hour Julius Plant was working in the east end of the yards with his switch engine, and with the length of his train, 15 cars, he had moved out on the south line and crossed a half dozen car lengths over the viaduct, which crosses Burr street road leading off to the south. At the same time a freight train with two engines was coming in from the south at a speed that was reckoned about 20 miles an hour. The inevitable happened and a collision occurred.

When the impact occurred the switch engine was lifted in the air and then fell over to the street below, partially filling the roadway and stopping traffic. The farmer who went under the bridge not five minutes before with a load of hay congratulated himself that he was not there later.

When the switch engine went out on the main line and had traveled about six car lengths over the viaduct Plant noticed the freight coming in from the south. When it emerged from the cut he whistled six times to give warning to stop and it seemed to him that the head engineer made an effort to stop his train as it slowed up. However, after crossing the Dry Run bridge the train seemed to gain more impetus, resulting in all probability from the force of the 21 cars of coal pushing the engines forward. As the freight approached closer and there was no

slackening of the speed, it appeared to Mr. Plant that it was not going to stop, consequently he and his fireman jumped for safety. Engineers Stewart and Hopkinson and their two firemen evidently saw the danger and they, too, jumped from their engines. Before leaving his engine Plant had started to back up with the idea of possibly getting out of the way, but seeing it impossible he pulled the throttle wide open and let the engine go as far as it would. It was caught just as it backed up on the viaduct and then thrown over, wrecking the engine in bad shape. The two freight engines were not damaged to any great extent and can easily be repaired.

A peculiar fact about the collision is that engine 659, the head one on the freight, was the same engine that was in the wreck about a year ago when Engineer Summers and his fireman were killed. The trainmen and

*The Mitchell Capital*  
Friday, September 18, 1908

# Upcoming Events 2023

*Michell Area Genealogical Society (MAGS)  
And Mitchell Area Historical Society (MAHS)*

June 19, Monday, 7:00 MAHS Business Meeting

June 26, Monday – MAGS -Visit to Mount Vernon Historical Museum -Meet at 6:15 at the Carnegie Resource Center or at 6:30 in Mount Vernon

July 17, Monday, 7:00 MAHS Business Meeting

July 20-22 The 52nd GRHS International Convention, Mandan, ND - Germans from Russia – for more information see <https://www.grhs.org/pages/Conventions>

July 24, Monday 6:00-6:30 p.m. MAGS Business Meeting  
7:00 p.m. MAGS PROGRAM – Germans from Russia presented by Yvonne Haefner

August 18-19 Minnesota Gen Society, Midwest Migration Institute : Midwest Genealogy Foundations: Migrations to and through the Midwest Mendota Heights MN for more information see <https://mngs.org/midwest-migration-institute>

August 21 – 7:00 p.m. MAHS Business Meeting

August 28 – 6:00-6:30 p.m. MAGS Business Meeting  
7:00 p.m. MAGS Program – Exploring The Resources at the Carnegie

August 31-Sept 4 - South Dakota State Fair – Primary exhibits -Our Ancestors Trails also Gene Breaks daily

September 3-10 Dakota Genealogists Trip to Salt Lake City, Utah to download brochure  
see <https://rcgenealogy.com/eventListings.php?nm=51>  
(Reservation deadline Aug 3)

Oct 27-28 - North Star Genealogical Conference, Eagan, Minnesota; for more information <https://www.mngs.org/north-star-2023>

2024 – Feb 29-Mar 2 – Roots Tech – Salt Lake City, Utah  
(Est. Attendance 27000)

*Carnegie Resource  
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