



# Notable Interments

**Mary Adams Kercherval** (G-35-8-5), who sometimes went by the name Mary Adams, a cook for Lt. Col. George A. Custer and a mother, was born into slavery on August 16, 1833, in Kentucky. Her owners were reported to be Jeffery and Elvira Tumbleton. When and how she won her freedom is not known, but it probably came after President Lincoln issued his famous Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863; or it may have happened after ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865 which outlawed slavery. In any event, it is known that Mary had two husbands; the first was Ben Simpson and the second Jerry Kercherval. Mary had seven children-four girls and three boys-between them; her two sons by Kercherval were Charley and Samuel, born in 1860 and 1861, respectively. It is believed that Mary began cooking for Lt. Col. George A. Custer and his wife when they were in Fort Dodge, KS in 1866. She came to the Dakota Territory in the spring of 1873 when the Seventh Calvary (which was assigned to guard the workers extending the Northern Pacific tracks westward through Sioux country to the Yellowstone River) was transferred to forts along the Missouri River. She and her son Charley, then 13 yrs old whom traveled in the ambulance which carried Custer's hunting dogs, accompanied Custer on the Yellowstone Expedition of 1873. Custer, in letters to his wife who was at Fort Lincoln during the expedition, made several references to Mary's cooking for him. Initially, Custer had planned to permit Mary, along with his wife, Elizabeth or "Libbie", to accompany him on the Black Hills Expedition, but according to Mrs. Custer's book, *Boots & Saddles, Or Life in South Dakota With General Custer*, he changed his mind just before the expedition was to depart; she wrote that Custer believed it might be too dangerous to take the women into the sacred Sioux region; in addition, Custer told the two women that there wasn't enough space in the expedition's wagons to accommodate them, to this excuse Mary was said to have responded, "Me and Miss Libbie could keep house in a flour-bar-r'l". Mrs. Custer, in her book, refers to the family cook only as "Mary" and indicates that she was a black woman, but does not give her surname; however, there is no evidence to indicate that it was anybody else than Mary Kercherval. Mary's own accounts of her years with the Custers were unchallenged during her lifetime, and haven't been questioned since her death either. Mrs. Kercherval evidently stayed behind when Mrs. Custer left Fort Lincoln shortly after the death of her husband at Little Big Horn in June of 1876. It is not known when Mary came to the Black Hills, but her sons, Levi Simpson and Charley and Samuel Kercherval settled in Centennial Prairie (which is one and a half miles south of Spearfish) in late 1880. Samuel Kercherval obtained his patent to a tract of land in Centennial Prairie on October 11, 1887 and his mother Mary acquired patent to land there on December 20, 1892; she later conveyed this tract to her son, Charley, on June 28, 1895. During this time, Charley married Elizabeth Maxwell

(whose mother was too a cook, but had been one at Fort Keogh, MT) and together they raised 9 children (2 of whom died early), later in life Charley and Elizabeth moved to Oakland, CA where Charley passed away on February 14, 1941 at the age of 81. One of their sons, Roland, ranched near Dewey in Custer County until shortly before his death in 1978. It is not known whom Mary's son Samuel married, but he is known to have had two sons, Richard and Ted, who lived west of their Uncle Charley's land on Centennial Prairie.

Samuel died on January 30, 1925, and was buried alongside his mother in section (G-35-8-2) at Rosehill Cemetery in Spearfish. They were buried in Section G (also known as "Nigger Hill", at the time) because of discrimination against blacks in region in the twenties and is indicated by the fact that the graves of Mary and her son were located in an entirely separate section and were in fact distant from the other sections of the cemetery. Jim Riggs, a long-time Centennial Valley rancher, bought part of the old Kercherval Ranch in the valley in 1946; subsequently, he donated part of it to the High Plains Heritage Center, which was an appropriate gift as the Center's purpose is to preserve the history of the region, and the Kercherval family is certainly an intriguing part of that history. *Bibliography: Bob Lee's Black Hills Notebook*

**John Wolzmuth** (D-29-8-5) was appointed by Governor Pennington in 1875 along with Fred T. Evans, R.D. Jennings, E.C. Brearly, and A.W. Lavender as the first County Commissioners of Lawrence County. Mr. Wolzmuth also served as Mayor and City Council Member in Spearfish. Mr. Wolzmuth held membership in the Masonic fraternity and has passed from the blue lodge through all of the degrees of the Scottish Rite to the Mystic Shrine. He also held membership with the Modern Woodmen of America and attends the Congregational church. His political endorsement was given as the Republican Party and he was one of its active workers in Lawrence County. In 1886 his fellow townsmen elected him to represent the county in the lower house of the territorial legislature and he was a member of that body when South Dakota became a state. He had served altogether for eight or nine terms. He had done much to shape legislation and his reelections indicate the confidence and trust reposed in him by his fellow townsmen, who recognize that in him loyalty is combined with ability and public spirit. He also served as mayor of Spearfish for a number of terms, has been a member of the city council and was one of the first county commissioners. He served on the board of education, having in charge the public and normal schools of Spearfish until the law was changed. His work has indeed been of direct value to his community and to the commonwealth and in all of his public service he has placed the general good before personal aggrandizement.

<http://ftp.rootsweb.ancestry.com/pub/usgenweb/sd/biography/kingsbury/v4/wolzmuth.txt>

**William E. Lown** (A-19-62-3) was born in Columbia County, New York, on November 11, 1846. His parents were John J. and Catherine Lown and he had ten siblings. W. B. was educated in New York and later began building wagons and carriages until 1872. He left New York to engage in cattle ranching in Montana before he moved to Spearfish. On December 30, 1881, W. B. Lown married Clara M. Short (A-19-62-4), of Redwater, at her parents' home in Mineral Point, Wisconsin. They had three children: William Earnest (A-19-62-3), Charles R. (A-19-63-2), and Clara Bernice Boland. William and Clara Lown came to Spearfish in 1880 and opened a hardware store. From 1880 to 1890, Lown engaged in the mercantile and hardware business on Main Street until the building burned down. Following the fire, he moved to California and invested in orange orchards. In 1892 he returned to Spearfish and commissioned Swan Thompson (C-24-15-8) to build a sandstone business complex on the corner of Fifth Street and Illinois. Here Mr. Lown created one the most successful mercantile stores in this area of the state of South Dakota.

The store, aptly called Lown's, was a genuine general store that sold groceries, clothing, and wagon accessories, among other things. His sons became part owners of the store and it eventually came to be known as W. B. Lown and Sons General Merchandise Store. Mr. Lown and his sons were very knowledgeable about their inventory and were very generous with credit during the Great Depression. The Lown General Store was a successful business for 70 years in that location. On the other corner of the block, the corner of 5th and Jackson they built their substantial Queen Anne style home. The home is a large and graceful Victorian featuring a tower on one corner. It boasts many of the classic Queen Anne features of the time, including the two and a half story tower, decorative shingle trim, and an irregular roofline with a steeply pitched roof. A decorative gable enhances the front entrance. Mr. Lown died on March 27, 1927, at St. Joseph's Hospital in Deadwood, South Dakota and was buried in the Rose Hill Cemetery in Spearfish. His wife, Clara, was buried there as well, in 1929, after having moved to California.

*[hpc.spearfish.sd.us/Tour/williamelownhouse.htm](http://hpc.spearfish.sd.us/Tour/williamelownhouse.htm)*

*<http://iis.bhsu.edu/lis/findingaid/lown.cfm>*

**\*John "Jack" O'Harra** (B-8-27-1) was actually a rancher who more or less moonlighted as a deputy for Lawrence County as a bill collector for local merchants. O'Harra was part of a posse assembled to intercept the George Axelby gang which was trying to free a prisoner being escorted from Miles City to Deadwood for horse theft. O'Harra was killed by members of the George Axelby gang on February 14, 1884 in Stoneville (now Alzada, MT). O'Harra died shortly after being dragged to a store from the street where he'd been gunned down. Cunningham, the cook at the Driscoll Ranch, was watching from the saloon when he was killed in the shootout by the gang. Axelby escaped, never to be heard from again. Campbell, a member of the gang was killed by the law during the pursuit. Harry Tuttle, another of Axelby's gang, was shot, and then hospitalized in Spearfish. During the night a vigilante committee dragged him from his bed, took him outside and lynched him. *(Information Provided by Les Krueger)*

**\*Art Henry** (unmarked burial likely at B-8-34-3), another well known African American from the region, was Lawrence County's 1st African American rural mail carrier. He owned a cabin where the Pizza Ranch/ Howard Johnson now sits. A local legends talks about gold left by Henry on property near his cabin that has never been found.

**\*Harvey Fellows** (B-16-38-4) was a renowned stagecoach driver in the Black Hills. He was the longest running stagecoach driver in South Dakota and the nation as Spearfish claims to be the last community in the United States to have stage coach service. Harvey died from complications sustained in a fall from a parade float during the 1929 Days of '76 parade in Deadwood. *Information Provided By: Linfred Schutler*

## **\*War Veterans and Related Notes:**

**Civil War:** **Albert Wesley Drew** (B-4-10-7) Markers for Union soldiers tend to have a rounded top; whereas, markers for Confederate soldiers seem to come to a point; it is said this is due to Confederates not wanting no damn yankees sitting on their headstones.

**Spanish American War:** **Eugene Blodgett** (J-26-27-4) and **Clifford Island** (E-32-43-2) were Spanish-American War veterans. It is said more soldiers died of yellow fever and food poisoning than actual combat itself. Eugene however would succumb to death due to a coronary embolus. A white bronze statue honoring the Spanish American War Veterans is located in the Spearfish City Park.

**British Army Veterans:** **Rufus Bailey** (B-8-43-2) is one of two British Army Veterans buried at Rose Hill Cemetery. Bailey moved from Canada to The U.S. and was a territorial legislator in Iowa and Colorado and a territorial governor in Montana before settling down in Spearfish. Rufus died from a 2<sup>nd</sup> story fall he sustained at a motel located where modern day coffee shop Common Grounds is located. **Jenkin Jones** (D-30-49-1) lived right across the street from Rufus, in a motel as well, where modern day Ace Hardware is; it is not known if they were friends or not. Jones was rescued during the Spearfish Motel fire, but not without some trouble. Jenkin had crippling arthritis throughout his body which made rescuing his stiff, rigid body not so easy; he also made it difficult because he vehemently and unrelentlessly convinced the fire fighters to rescue his shoes, but to no avail.

**Germany Army Veterans:** **Friedrich (Fritz) Broderson** (E-32-94-1) (died on trip over) and Johanna Broderson

**Mexican War Veteran:** Jon Cooper

## **Early Presidents of Black Hills State University:**

In August 1885, **Fayette L. Cook** (A-19-67-8), Superintendent of Schools for Olmstead County, Minnesota, was hired to be principal (later president) of what was now known as Spearfish Normal. After thirty-four years of service, Professor Cook retired in 1919 having created a stable and successful institution for teacher training for the citizens of South Dakota.

In 1919, **E.C. Woodburn** (E-32-54-3) was appointed president of State Normal. In his tenure as president he undertook many changes, some planned and others unexpected. By 1922, State Normal began to offer four-year degrees. In 1941, the college was renamed Black Hills Teachers College, reflecting its mission and curriculum.

**Russell E. Jonas** (C-28-125-6) succeeded President Woodburn in 1942 as president of Black Hills Teachers College. Enrollment declined during World War II, as was the case for most colleges and universities of their day. BHTC responded to the war effort by hosting the training operations for Air Corp Cadets for the War Manpower Commission. After the war, with the help of the G.I. Bill of Rights, enrollment grew rapidly.  
Information Provided By Black Hills State University

## **Other Notable Figures:**

**Josef Meier** (H-40-39-7) One of Europe's oldest theatrical presentations, Josef Meier's original version of this Passion Play was first performed on the American Stage in 1932. The Passion Play continued as a touring production for several years, until becoming a permanent institution in the United States in 1939, when it was decided to settle the company in Spearfish. With its' natural setting, a 600' stage was constructed. The Greatest Story Ever Told was re-enacted during the summer months through the summer of 2008. From 1953 until 1998, the Passion Play was also hosted during the winter season by the Lake Wales, Florida, Amphitheatre. Josef Meier was also one of the pioneers of Black Hills tourism.

### ***Time Magazine 11/14/1940***

The famed Passion Play of Oberammergau, Germany, is apparently acceptable to Adolf Hitler, but has been postponed this year on account of the war. Considered the most important of the Passion Plays, it was first produced in 1634. But in 1932 a troupe of Passion Players emigrated to the U. S. from Lünen, Germany, where they claimed their play had been given ever since 1242. One of them was Josef Meier, seventh-generation Passion Player. He had their drama translated into "American." with a reorganized troupe began acting it in various U. S. towns, and looking for a permanent home to replace Lünen. A few years ago an automobile finance man named Guy Bell from Spearfish, S. D. saw Meier's players in Sioux Falls, S. D. He got to know Meier, persuaded him to settle in Spearfish. It was a small, attractive place, high in the Black Hills. It was on the Black Hills tourist route, which promised sizable audiences. Most important, the zealous Mr. Bell persuaded fellow townsmen to spend \$28,000 for an open-air amphitheatre (to seat 7,000), with masses of evergreens and towering Lookout Mountain as a backdrop.

There, during the past few summers, the Passion Play has been performed twice a week in clear, still air free from mosquitoes. The permanent cast of 23 has been swelled, for mob scenes, by local Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Audiences have included thousands of tourists, Wyoming cowboys, Dakota farmers. Last week the Black Hills Players were on their first extended tour (by automobile) of big U. S. cities, as far afield as New Orleans. Into the Minneapolis Municipal Auditorium they drew audiences of 4-5,000. Josef Meier, as usual, played the Christus. His wife, a former Chicago girl, Clare Hume, was a handsome Mary. Their two-year-old daughter Johanna, who had the sniffles at one performance, was the infant Jesus. No applause was permitted during the play, while Meier was realistically crucified with trick nails, while he was resurrected in white satin. Nor was there any applause for a solemn moment after the final curtain. Then it was loud and long, while many people swarmed backstage to stare at Meier. This solid urban success of the Black Hills Players made it appear that in Spearfish, S. D., the U. S. may have acquired its own Oberammergau. *Time Magazine (11/14/1940)*  
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,777543,00.html>

**D.C. Booth** (D-29-26-4) DeWitt Clinton Booth served as the first superintendent of the Spearfish Hatchery (now known as the D.C. Booth Historic Fish Hatchery) in Spearfish from 1899 until his retirement in 1933. He came to the Spearfish Hatchery as the youngest superintendent in both age and service when the hatchery was still under construction. He established the Yellowstone Fisheries in 1901 and continued to supply them for 10 years. During the years which corresponded with D. C. Booth's superintendence, the Spearfish facility played a key role in the development of trout stocking programs and techniques across the American West and the world. Booth's philosophies and personality would dominate the hatchery for over 30 years. From the beginning, the D. C. Booth style was to accept any challenge, exude extreme confidence, and labor, day and night to meet the crisis. There was much to be done during the first years of the fish hatchery. Aside from the buildings, the site was something of a disaster and cleanup of the area began the day of his arrival. A wire was received that the first shipment of eggs was on its way. No hatching trays were ready to receive the shipment, so trips to hardware stores and lumberyards located necessary materials to improvise hatching trays and other necessary equipment. Working day and night, Booth and his assistants had everything ready. Disaster followed close on the heels of success. In August of 1899, a cloudburst gave Booth and his staff an introduction to the shortcomings of their hatchery site. The following flood completely filled the spring reservoir and deposited several inches of silt in the ponds and hatching troughs and destroyed the eggs. For the rest of the Booth era at the hatchery, stream diversion and rock retaining wall construction would receive considerable attention. Because no funding was available, Booth and his staff worked in their spare time to construct a storm channel 1,200 feet long and 16 feet wide. Booth took great pride in this work. These measures, taken to protect the spring, stood the test. As the site became more secure, the business of hatching trout continued. Soon the stocking inventories in the Spearfish station's letter book provided a fascinating look at early fish stocking programs in the Black Hills. In addition to the immediate area, deliveries of fish were soon being made as far away as points in Nebraska and Wyoming. The most colorful chapter in the history of the Booth era at Spearfish was the hatchery's role in the management of Yellowstone National Park Fisheries. The Spearfish facility was given the added responsibility of this additional area with no additional staff or funding, yet Booth and his staff were successful in both endeavors.

The Booth Home is one of the most elegant of its age in Spearfish. Built in 1905 by its namesake, it was the first house in Spearfish to be built with radiated heat. A few pieces of silver cutlery and ceramic tableware are the only authentic pieces left in the home as Booth was a simple man and fineries were not affordable on a government employee's salary. Booth retired on November 1, 1933. Today, D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery is one of the oldest operating hatcheries in the country serving as a living fishery museum to the public and many organizations. Still rearing trout for the Black Hills through a cooperative effort with the State, the Hatchery also serves to protect and preserve U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's historic and cultural heritage, fishery records and artifacts for educational, research, and historic purposes, and provide interpretive and educational programs for the public.

[http://www.sdhalloffame.com/bio.cfm?cat\\_id=15&inductee\\_id=56](http://www.sdhalloffame.com/bio.cfm?cat_id=15&inductee_id=56) & *D.C.Booth NFH*

**Grace Balloch** (I-15-16-5) Library services in Spearfish date back to the early 1900's, when books from the Spearfish Normal school were loaned out from a store front on Main Street. For a while during the depression the first true library opened up and was funded by the WPA, as a means of creating jobs. But the WPA soon left, and with it, the so-called library. When Grace Balloch, an English teacher at Black Hills Teacher's College, passed away in the fall of 1944, she left her entire collection of books, about 1500, to the City of Spearfish. Those books were the beginning of the Spearfish Public Library. As Grace had stated in her will, a library board of three women was established. The library planning board was composed of Florence Bettleheim (B-8-13-2), Millie Heidepriem, and Frances Repass (B-17-52-1). In April of 1945, on a public vote of 240 to 94, Grace Balloch Memorial Library was established. The library officially opened June 23, 1945, between the hours of 2:00 and 5:00 p.m. daily, except Sunday. It maintained these hours until June 1, 1946

when Evelyn Hesseltine became the first official head librarian. During her 20 years as librarian, she not only maintained the original collection, but increased circulation from 1,162 books in 1945 to 14,639 in 1964. Miss Hesseltine retired in 1965. Even though the library was official, the city still did not have the funds to provide a building. Mr. and Mrs. Tom L. Cutter, owners of the Spearfish Hotel, offered one of their rental offices on Hudson Street as a home for the library for six months. The books were moved to that space in 1945, and stayed there until they outgrew their space in 1962. They were then moved to the Sullivan building on Fifth Street. When Anna Herr Frantz, Grace Balloch's sister, passed away in 1959, she left the Balloch home to the city with the stipulation that the site be used to build a new library. The library building fund was established in 1960, and after raising money through fines, fees, gifts, a city levy, and a federal grant, construction on the new library began in 1969. In May 2008, the library opened the Kathy Follette (G-35-77-3) and Mattie McVey (B-20-100-3) Mystery Room with money received in memory of the two women along with the assistance of numerous local individuals and businesses. The newly decorated room houses the library's mystery collection as well as comfortable seating, an electric fireplace, and coffee for a relaxed reading atmosphere. Grace Balloch Memorial Library is currently funded through Lawrence County, which also funds all four city libraries located within the county.

In 1985, the Friends of Grace Balloch Memorial Library was established to assist the library in raising funds for equipment, materials, and other needs beyond county funding. The Friends also sponsors community programs such as, guest speakers, exhibits, films, and story hours; all of which are free and open to the public. Currently, library circulation is nearly 150,000 a year, with a collection of over 60,000 books, more than 4,000 videos, and over 3,000 audio books.

**Robert Evans** (C-24-17-2) Early settler of Spearfish, noted for establishing the Tonn-Evans irrigation ditch and starting farming the Spearfish Valley.

**Michael Tonn** (A-19-71-8) Alice Emily McFarland-Tonn (A-19-71-7) married in November, 1878, in Deadwood. M. G. Tonn owned the Wyoming Store in Deadwood. After their marriage they moved to Spearfish. Mr. Tonn along with Robert Evans are credited with constructing the Tonn/Evans irrigation ditch for farming practices in Spearfish Valley. They had one daughter, Carrie, who was born June, 1880 in Deadwood. Alice died in 1933, in Spearfish. Carrie married Clarence Snedecker and resided in Deadwood. She had one daughter named Alice.

**M.E. Anthony** (C-28-51-8) highly regarded by fire departments statewide.

**Arnold Jorgensen** (A-6-11-3) rancher and Jorgenson Park namesake



**\*Question:** *Is there another Spearfish Cemetery in the Mountain Plains area? The City of Spearfish map in the phone book says there is, but local historian Linfred Schuttler doesn't think so. Linfred explained that there was a lot of rock mining in the area, so creating a cemetery there would prove to be quite difficult. He also mentioned that if you ever did find bones up there, it would probably be because there used to be a butcher shop up there.*

**Note:** *History/Information is correct/accurate to the best of our knowledge; any inaccuracies were unintended and will be corrected when noted!*

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**IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF VANDALISM TO CEMETERIES IN THE NORTHERN HILLS, INCLUDING THIS ONE; IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON ANY STOLEN OR VANDALIZED HEADSTONES, PLEASE CONTACT LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE SOCIETY OF BLACK HILLS PIONEERS (SBHP)**

*The Society of Black Hills Pioneers*

*E-Mail:*

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**(REWARD MAY BE AVAILABLE!)**

