

Georgina Gustavson
Narrator

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KMRS
Interviewer

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- LT: 00:00 This is *Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota: a Saturday, KMRS News Feature*. Today, we are talking with Mrs. Carl Gustavson of Morris. Mrs. Gustavson, you were a native of Benson. Tell us a little bit about anything you might remember as a child growing up in Benson. Did you ever live on a farm or had you always live in town?
- GG: 00:22 I always lived in town.
- LT: 00:24 What kind of business was your dad in?
- GG: 00:26 My dad was in the ice business, year-round ice business. In the winter, he'd put up ice, and in the summer it was delivered to the residence, to the produce house, to the refrigerated trains.
- LT: 00:42 I would suppose the trains would be one of the big customers in the summer.
- GG: 00:45 You had to be ready to service at anytime they came through.
- LT: 00:52 I guess just about everybody, at that time, had an icebox, didn't they?
- GG: 00:55 Everyone, everyone.

- LT: 00:58 Today, you know there is so many different things on refrigerator, refrigerator freezers. Was most of them about the same size or were there big and little ones?
- GG: 01:06 They were large and small. The hotels had large ones, the restaurants had large ones, and some of the homes. It depended upon the size of the family, of course.
- LT: 01:18 Did the iceman come to the home only in the spring and summer and fall? What happened in the wintertime?
- GG: 01:24 In the wintertime—I don't know what they did in the winter. We had a cold pantry, I know, so that's what we used. I imagine in the country, they had the same thing. A lot of the farmers used ice before my dad went out of business.
- LT: 01:39 How often did the iceman used to come? In the summertime, I supposed it is more often than spring and fall.
- GG: 01:45 Well, the business part of town and the produce was every day. The residence was every other day or if it was an emergency they could get it.
- LT: 01:59 The business between the river and the town, you used to have a store or a warehouse-type of thing?
- GG: 02:04 It was a good mile from the river to the icehouse. The icehouse was in the east end of town and, of course, the river was west of the town, which was about a mile, as I said. A good mile.
- LT: 02:22 In the wintertime hauling ice used to be just all from sunup to sundown-type of project.
- GG: 02:27 Yeah, it was constant for at least a month of hauling, and I don't know how many trips a day. They had about six big sleds. I don't know if they called them sleds or what they were, but they were a flat bottom with runners on them. Sometimes two teams to a sled.
- LT: 02:49 You must have had quite a few workhorses that he—
- GG: 02:52 Excitement too for the children.
- LT: 02:55 They used to get rides and things like that?

- GG: 02:56 Oh, yes, they always got rides if they wanted to when they were empty. But they weren't supposed to be on the bobs side when they were loaded, so they have no place to hold on.
- LT: 03:07 Well, Georgina, you mentioned that you didn't ever live in the country during the year. But when summertime came, you spent a few months in the summer at your grandparents' house. Tell us a little bit about that. Where was that?
- GG: 03:20 Well, that was on the old farm in Gilchrist Township. They had the post office there, so the neighbors had to come and pick up their mail every day. So there was probably a commotion. I might have put on pounds in the summers. That's where I got my good start.
- LT: 03:41 You know, it's still today, I think there's a little bit of difference between the town hospitality and you go on the farm. There is always room for another person at the dinner table on a farm, isn't there?
- GG: 03:54 That's right. I want to tell you something else about that part of the country. As we grew older—my dad loved it up there, so he built a cottage up there. The first one he built was up quite high. It was off of the lake, but it was a beautiful view of the lake. We stayed there all summer.
- 04:16 My mother didn't like it because she was deathly afraid of summer storms, so we had to leave that. He sold that. We moved down lower nearer to the lake, and we liked that better. My dad would come out Friday nights and stay until Monday morning, and he drove his horse and buggy. That was a two-hour drive, 2-1/2 something.
- LT: 04:40 Shortly after you got married, you moved to a different town. Which town was that that you moved to?
- GG: 04:46 Well, we lived in Willmar for about a year-and-a-half and from there we went to Appleton. We were there for about two-years-and-a-half, and then we came to Morris in either 1930 or '31, in the fall of the year.
- LT: 05:04 Your husband got into the ice business in Appleton for a short time.
- GG: 05:08 He took over for my father in Appleton that time that we went to Appleton.

- LT: 05:12 Doing the same type of thing that your dad was involved with, with the railroad.
- GG: 05:17 Um-hum, same thing.
- LT: 05:20 When you moved to Morris in 1930-31, in that period, it wasn't exactly the best time to be starting up in a business.
- GG: 05:29 We came here in either '30 or '31 in the fall, and it was the time of the drought and Depression. It was tough going for a few years, but we came out of it.
- LT: 05:43 In some of those dust years, I'm sure some of our older listeners remember some of the bad times. Before we started, you talked a little bit about when it rained one time that you wished it probably wouldn't have, even though the rain was appreciated.
- GG: 05:58 Well, one morning the sun was out real nice and it seemed still, so I did a load of laundry, not a load in the machine. I did it with a ringer, an old-fashioned washing machine. I hung my clothes out. I was doing something in the house and I heard thunder. I thought, geez, it's going to rain good.
- 06:20 I came back, and I thought, well, I'll go out and looked at the clothes. When I got out there, there were spots about the size of a 50-cent piece, black as mud, and it was mud.
- LT: 06:33 When the rain was coming down—
- GG: 06:36 It came straight down. It just poured and then it was all over in a few minutes but enough to ruin the laundry.
- LT: 06:44 You mentioned too about your husband was out delivering and got stuck because he just couldn't—
- GG: 06:50 Yes. I remember a couple times he'd gone out in the morning and said, "Well, don't look for me until evening." Long and late in the afternoon, it got awfully dark and I got a telephone call and he says, "I can't make it home. I just in luck to find a mailbox along the way and I pulled into this farm place." I don't recall it who was living at the time, but he stayed there and then came in in the morning.
- LT: 07:17 So those were some pretty bad times. Over the years, it got a little bit better. During some of those early years, what happened when farmers didn't have money—that was one of the big portions of the business, the bulk business, right?

- GG: 07:30 Well, we had to take poultry and animals and sell them if we could, things like that. Of course, we had locker plants. There were locker plants, I think, at that time. I don't recall that, but I'm sure there were.
- LT: 07:45 You've lived in Morris for almost 50 years now, right? I'm sure that there have been many, many changes. What things have you noticed the most—the changes? I suppose people don't change much but buildings do.
- GG: 08:01 Well, there's a big change on Main Street and the new depot for one thing. Well, there is an awful lot of changes all the way through. I like Morris very much, and I hope to stay here now as long as I'm around.
- LT: 08:21 Very good. Georgina, I always ask one question when I end the interviews and that's when I ask how old you are.
- GG: 08:28 I'll be 83 the 21st of August.
- LT: 08:31 I'd like to wish you happy birthday.
- GG: 08:33 Thank you.
- LT: 08:34 We've been talking with Mrs. Carl Gustavson of Morris, on *Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota: a Saturday KMRS News Feature*.