

Historic Preservation

The Little Spearfish Conservation and Historic Preservation Association was established to accomplish three primary objectives: 1) Conservation, 2) Historic Preservation, and 3) Environmental Education. The property was homesteaded (Official Homestead Entry Survey, HES 287, 1917) by Charles and Betty Anderson—immigrants from Gullspång¹, Sweden and Vasa², Finland, respectively. The property was first prospected in the late 1890s by Charles (aka Chas) where he prospected for gold supported by investors living in Deadwood and Terry, SD. One purpose of the Little Spearfish Association is to preserve the historical significance of the homestead, the buildings and the mining heritage.



Photo 1—The original log home on the homestead today.

¹ **Gullspång** is a small village in Southern Sweden near Lake Vattern. <http://www.maplandia.com/sweden/skaraborgs-lan/gullspang-kommun/gullspang/>

² **Vasa** (Vasa in Swedish) is a city on the west coast of Finland. The City is bilingual with most of the population speaking Finnish but about 25 percent of the people speak Swedish. <http://www.maplandia.com/finland/vaasa/>

Historic preservation also includes the cultural history of the times. The family entertained themselves with music and verse as the result of being so isolated. In addition, primary education in the early 1900s included the memorization of poems. Some of the poems, oft recited in the log house above, were about the lifestyle attendant to the pursuit of gold. A selection of those poems recited in those days and into modern times at family reunions and other gatherings are listed below:

1. Ode to Mr. Woolworth
2. Be the Best
3. Face on the Barroom Floor
4. Shooting of Dan McGrew
5. She Powders Her Nose
6. Skunk
7. The Cremation of Sam McGee
8. Vengeance
9. Spearfish Canyon (by Ann Anderson, 1922)

Every attempt was made to find the original version of the poem, as written by the author. For those of us who had the privilege of hearing Ted or Andy recite these poems live, the intonation and pronunciation of the words were sometimes modified. The text of the nine poems listed is provided below:

"ODE TO WOOLWORTH" by Garrold E. Strong (1946)

Dear Mr. Woolworth, I got a
complaint
About one can of ten-cent paint.
My wife she did buy from your
darn store -
She did once - but not no more.
You see last week the spring she
come
And everything she's on the hum.
Do walls, do floors, do windows,
too.
She clean like mad I tell you.
My wife she always clean and
neat
She buy paint for toilet seat.
And one whole week we watch wit
eye
But goshdarn paint she no get
dry.
My wife she's short and kinda fat
Now you can see just where she
sat.
She's got big ring around
complete
Where she sat down on toilet
seat.
I say to her, 'It serves you right
You try to be so doggone tight.'
That 10 cent paint she no darn
good
She won't get dry on no darn
wood.

My daughter she got ring around,
too,
Where from the seat it soaked
through.
For one whole week by gosh we
wait
And now we all got constipate.
By dang we don't know what to do
We got to eat - she must come
through.
My wife she cry and cry and cry
But gol'darn paint she won't get
dry.
My wife she got a Sis, Marie.
She lives all time in home with
me.
Last night I look where she sat
down
By gosh she, too, got ring around.
I try turpentine.
She howl like wolf, she lose her
mind.
I'm scared like hell most all day -
The skin come off, but paint she
stay.
I live long time but never see
A man what got so mad as me.
When I think about that paint
I get so mad I almost faint.
Now, Mr. Woolworth, I ask you
What in hell we gonna do?
For how can home be nice and
neat,
If paint no dry on toilet seat.

Be the Best

By Douglas Malloch

If you can't be the Pine at the top of a hill
Be a shrub in the valley below
But be the best little shrub in the valley below
Be a bush if you can't be a tree

If you can't be a bush be a bit of grass
And some highway to happier make
If you can't be a muskie, then just be a bass
But be the liveliest bass in the Lake!

We all can't be captains there must be a crew
There's something for all of us here.
There's big work to do and lesser to do
And the task we must do is the near

If you can't be the highway then just be a trail
If you can't be the sun be a star.
For it isn't by size that you win or you fail
But being the best of whatever you are.

Face on the Ballroom Floor

By John Henry Titus in 1872

'Twas a balmy summer evening and a goodly crowd was there,
Which well-nigh filled Joe's barroom on the corner of the square,
And as songs and witty stories came through the open door
A vagabond crept slowly in and posed upon the floor.

"Where did it come from?" someone said. "The wind has blown it in."
"What does it want?" another cried, "Some whiskey, rum or gin?"
"Here Toby, seek him, if your stomach is equal to the work —
I wouldn't touch him with a fork, he's filthy as a Turk."

This badinage the poor wretch took with stoical good grace;
In fact, he smiled as though he thought he'd struck the proper place.
"Come boys, I know there's kindly hearts among so good a crowd —
To be in such good company would make a deacon proud."

"Give me a drink — that's what I want — I'm out of funds you know;
When I had cash to treat the gang, this hand was never slow.
What? You laugh as though you thought this pocket never held a sou:
I once was fixed as well, my boys, as any of you."

"There thanks, that's braced me nicely; God Bless you one and all;
Next time I pass this good saloon, I'll make another call.
Give you a song? No, I can't do that, my singing days are past;
My voice is cracked, my throat's worn out, and my lungs are going fast.

"Say, give me another whiskey, and I'll tell you what I'll do —
I'll tell you a funny story and in fact I'll promise two.
That I was ever a decent man, not one of you would think;
But I was, some four or five years back. Say, give me another drink.

"Fill 'er up, Joe, I want to put some life into this old frame —
Such little drinks, to a bum like me are miserably tame;
Five fingers — there, that's the scheme — and corking whiskey too.
Well, here's luck, boys; and landlord, my best regards to you.

"You've treated me pretty kindly, and I'd like to tell you how
I came to be this dirty sap, you see before you now.
As I told you once, I was a man with muscle, frame and health,
And, but for a blunder, ought have made considerable wealth.

"I was a painter — not one that daubed on bricks or wood,
But an artist, and for my age I was rated pretty good,
I worked hard at my canvas and bidding fair to rise,
For gradually I saw the star of fame before my eyes.

"I made a picture, perhaps you've seen, 'tis called the 'Chase of Fame.'
It brought me fifteen hundred pounds and added to my name.

And then I met a woman — now comes the funny part —
With eyes that petrified my brain, and sank into my heart.

"Why don't you laugh? 'Tis funny, that the vagabond you see
Could ever love a woman and expect her love for me;
But 'twas so, and for a month or two, her smiles were freely given,
And when her loving lips touched mine it carried me to heaven.

"Did you ever see a woman for whom your soul you'd give,
With a form like the Milo Venus, too beautiful to live;
With eyes that would beat the Koh-i-noor, and a wealth of chestnut hair?
If so, 'twas she, for there never was another half so fair.

"I was working on a portrait, one afternoon in May,
Of a fair-haired boy, a friend of mine, who lived across the way,
And Madeline admired it, and much to my surprise,
Said she'd like to know the man who had such dreamy eyes.

"She didn't take long to find him, and before the month had flown
My friend had stolen my darling, and I was left alone.
And, ere a year of misery had passed above my head.
The jewel I treasured so had tarnished, and was dead.

"That's why I took to drink, boys. Why, I never see you smile,
I thought you'd be amused, and laughing all the while.
Why, what's the matter friend? There's a teardrop in your eye.
Come, laugh like me; 'tis only babes and women that should cry.

"Say boys, if you give me just another whiskey, I'll be glad,
And I'll draw right here the picture, of the face that drove me mad.
Give me that piece of chalk with which you mark the baseball score —
And you shall see the lovely Madeline upon the barroom floor.

Another drink, and with chalk in hand, the vagabond began,
To sketch a face that well might buy the soul of any man.
Then, as he placed another lock upon that shapely head,
With a fearful shriek, he leaped and fell across the picture — dead![3]

More interesting history of this poem is available here;
<http://stateoflubbock.blogspot.com/2012/07/face-on-barroom-floor.html>

The Shooting of Dan McGrew

By Robert Service

A bunch of the boys were whooping it up in the Malamute saloon;
The kid that handles the music-box was hitting a jag-time tune;
Back of the bar, in a solo game, sat Dangerous Dan McGrew,
And watching his luck was his light-o'-love, the lady that's known as Lou.

When out of the night, which was fifty below, and into the din and the glare,
There stumbled a miner fresh from the creeks, dog-dirty, and loaded for bear.
He looked like a man with a foot in the grave and scarcely the strength of a louse,
Yet he tilted a poke of dust on the bar, and he called for drinks for the house.

There was none could place the stranger's face, though we searched ourselves for a clue;
But we drank his health, and the last to drink was Dangerous Dan McGrew.

There's men that somehow just grip your eyes, and hold them hard like a spell;
And such was he, and he looked to me like a man who had lived in hell;
With a face most hair, and the dreary stare of a dog whose day is done,
As he watered the green stuff in his glass, and the drops fell one by one.

Then I got to figginger who he was, and wondering what he'd do,
And I turned my head — and there watching him was the lady that's known as Lou.

His eyes went rubbering round the room, and he seemed in a kind of daze,
Till at last that old piano fell in the way of his wandering gaze.

The rag-time kid was having a drink; there was no one else on the stool, So
the stranger stumbles across the room, and flops down there like a fool. In
a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat, and I saw him sway;

Then he clutched the keys with his talon hands — my God! but that man could play.

Were you ever out in the Great Alone, when the moon was awful clear,
And the icy mountains hemmed you in with a silence you most could *hear*,

With only the howl of a timber wolf, and you camped there in the cold,

A half-dead thing in a stark, dead world, clean mad for the muck called gold;
While high overhead, green, yellow and red, the North Lights swept in bars? —
Then you've a hunch what the music meant. . . hunger and night and the stars.

And hunger not of the belly kind, that's banished with bacon and
beans, But the gnawing hunger of lonely men for a home and all that it
means; For a fireside far from the cares that are, four walls and a roof
above; But oh! so cramful of cosy joy, and crowned with a woman's
love —

A woman dearer than all the world, and true as Heaven is true —
(God! how ghastly she looks through her rouge, — the lady that's known as Lou.)

Then on a sudden the music changed, so soft that you scarce could hear;
But you felt that your life had been looted clean of all that it once held
dear;
That someone had stolen the woman you loved; that her love was a devil's
lie; That your guts were gone, and the best for you was to crawl away and die.
'Twas the crowning cry of a heart's despair, and it thrilled you through and through —
"I guess I'll make it a spread misere", said Dangerous Dan McGrew.

The music almost died away ... then it burst like a pent-up flood;
And it seemed to say, "Repay, repay," and my eyes were blind with blood.
The thought came back of an ancient wrong, and it stung like a frozen
lash, And the lust awoke to kill, to kill ... then the music stopped with a
crash, And the stranger turned, and his eyes they burned in a most
peculiar way;

In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat, and I saw him sway; Then
his lips went in in a kind of grin, and he spoke, and his voice was calm, And
"Boys," says he, "you don't know me, and none of you care a damn;

But I want to state, and my words are straight, and I'll bet my poke they're true, That one of you is a hound of hell. . .and that one is Dan McGrew."

Then I ducked my head, and the lights went out, and two guns blazed in the dark,
And a woman screamed, and the lights went up, and two men lay stiff and stark.

Pitched on his head, and pumped full of lead, was Dangerous Dan McGrew,
While the man from the creeks lay clutched to the breast of the lady that's known as Lou.

These are the simple facts of the case, and I guess I ought to know.

They say that the stranger was crazed with "hooch," and I'm not denying it's so. I'm
not so wise as the lawyer guys, but strictly between us two —

The woman that kissed him and — pinched his poke — was the lady that's known as Lou.

She Powders Her Nose

Edgar A. Guest (1881-1959)

A woman is queer, there's no doubt about that.
She hates to be thin and she hates to be fat; One
minute it's laughter, the next it's a cry— You can't
understand her, however you try;
But there's one thing about her which everyone knows— A
woman's not dressed till she powders her nose.

You never can tell what a woman will say;
She's a law to herself every hour of the day. It
keeps a man guessing to know what to do,
And mostly he's wrong when his guessing is
through; But this you can bet on, wherever she goes
She'll find some occasion to powder her nose.

I've studied the sex for a number of years;
I've watched her in laughter and seen her in tears;
On her ways and her whims I have pondered a lot,
To find what will please her and just what will not;
But all that I've learned from the start to the close Is
that sooner or later she'll powder her nose.

At church or a ball game, a dance or a show,
There's one thing about her I know that I know—
At weddings or funerals, dinners of taste,
You can bet that her hand will dive into her waist,
And every few minutes she'll strike up a pose,
And the whole world must wait till she powders her nose.

Guest, Edgar A. *When Day is Done*. Chicago: Reilly & Lee Co., 1921.

Edgar Albert Guest was author of the syndicated newspaper column *Breakfast Table Chat*, host of a weekly radio show from 1931 to 1942, and host of a television show in 1951. The Michigan state senate voted Guest the state's poet laureate in 1952.

"ZE SKUNK, ZE SKUNK" (author unknown)

I hunt ze bear; I hunt ze wolf; Sometimes I hunt ze rat.
Las' week I take my axe An' hunt ze skunk polecat
My friend Jacques says he's ver' good fur,
An' sometime good to eat.
I tell my wife I get fur coat An' same time get some meat.

I walk two, t'ree, four mile. I feel wan awful smell.
I say dis skunk he's up and die, An' fur coat gone to hell.
Bimeby i see ze skunk, close up by one beeg tree.
I sneak up vera close behin', an' t'ink he's no see me.
Bimeby i'm close up by ze skunk. I raise my ax up high, when ...
Up, kerplunk, dis dam', dam' skunk she's t'row somet'ing in my eye.

Sacre blu! I t'ink i'm blin'.
Gee whiz! I can no see!
I walk roun' an' roun' an' roun' an' bump in dam' ol' tree!

Bimeby i drop my ax an' light out for da shack.
I t'ink a million skunks dey clim' upon my back.

My wife she meet me at da door.
She seek on me da dog.
She say."you no sleep here tonight.
You go sleep mit da hog."

I try to clim' in hog pen. Gee whiz! Now what you tink?
Dat dam' o' hog not stan' for dat on 'count of awful stink.
No more i'm hunt ze skunk polecat to get his fur or meat.
For if his breath he smell so bad, gee whiz what eeff he speet.

Origin: This poem was usually recited around a fire on Saturday nights at the logging camp.

The Cremation of Sam McGee

by Robert W. Service

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales That
would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights, But
the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge, I cremated Sam McGee.*

Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee, where the cotton blooms and blows.
Why he left his home in the South to roam 'round the Pole, God only knows.
He was always cold, but the land of gold seemed to hold him like a spell;
Though he'd often say in his homely way that "he'd sooner live in hell."

On a Christmas Day we were mushing our way over the Dawson trail.
Talk of your cold! through the parka's fold it stabbed like a driven nail.
If our eyes we'd close, then the lashes froze till sometimes we couldn't see;
It wasn't much fun, but the only one to whimper was Sam McGee.

And that very night, as we lay packed tight in our robes beneath the snow,
And the dogs were fed, and the stars o'erhead were dancing heel and toe,
He turned to me, and "Cap," says he, "I'll cash in this trip, I guess;
And if I do, I'm asking that you won't refuse my last request."

Well, he seemed so low that I couldn't say no; then he says with a sort of moan
It's the cursèd cold, and it's got right hold, till I'm chilled clean through to the bone.
Yet 'tain't being dead — it's my awful dread of the icy grave that pains;
So I want you to swear that, foul or fair, you'll cremate my last remains."

A pal's last need is a thing to heed, so I swore I would not fail;
And we started on at the streak of dawn; but God! he looked ghastly pale.
He crouched on the sleigh, and he raved all day of his home in Tennessee;
And before nightfall a corpse was all that was left of Sam McGee.

There wasn't a breath in that land of death, and I hurried, horror-driven,
With a corpse half hid that I couldn't get rid, because of a promise given;
It was lashed to the sleigh, and it seemed to say: "You may tax your brawn and brains,
But you promised true, and it's up to you, to cremate those last remains."

Now a promise made is a debt unpaid, and the trail has its own stern code.

In the days to come, though my lips were dumb, in my heart how I cursed that load. In the long, long night, by the lone firelight, while the huskies, round in a ring, Howled out their woes to the homeless snows — Oh God! how I loathed the thing.

And every day that quiet clay seemed to heavy and heavier grow;
And on I went, though the dogs were spent and the grub was getting low; The trail was bad, and I felt half mad, but I swore I would not give in;
And I'd often sing to the hateful thing, and it hearkened with a grin.

Till I came to the marge of Lake Lebarge, and a derelict there lay;
It was jammed in the ice, but I saw in a trice it was called the "Alice May." And I looked at it, and I thought a bit, and I looked at my frozen chum; Then "Here," said I, with a sudden cry, "is my cre-ma-tor-eum."

Some planks I tore from the cabin floor, and I lit the boiler fire;
Some coal I found that was lying around, and I heaped the fuel higher;
The flames just soared, and the furnace roared — such a blaze you seldom see; And I burrowed a hole in the glowing coal, and I stuffed in Sam McGee.

Then I made a hike, for I didn't like to hear him sizzle so;
And the heavens scowled, and the huskies howled, and the wind began to blow. It was icy cold, but the hot sweat rolled down my cheeks, and I don't know why; And the greasy smoke in an inky cloak went streaking down the sky.

I do not know how long in the snow I wrestled with grisly fear;
But the stars came out and they danced about ere again I ventured near; I was sick with dread, but I bravely said: "I'll just take a peep inside.
I guess he's cooked, and it's time I looked"; ... then the door I opened wide.

And there sat Sam, looking cool and calm, in the heart of the furnace roar; And he wore a smile you could see a mile, and said: "Please close that door. It's fine in here, but I greatly fear, you'll let in the cold and storm —
Since I left Plumtree, down in Tennessee, it's the first time I've been warm."

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales That would make
your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights, But the queerest
they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge, I cremated Sam McGee.*

VENGEANCE

By Walter Wheatley

Dark and dreary was the night, A storm was drawing nigh,
In vivid streaks the lightning flashed, Athwart the leaden sky.

But see, from out the lonely woods There stands a vengeful man,
A bloodstained club is firmly grasped within his strong right hand.

Like a spectre from the unknown world He glides upon his foe,
A murderous look gleams in his eye as he readies for the blow.

The club is raised—and then, alas, it falls with a sickening thud,
And there upon the dark, cold ground lies murdered. . . a potato bug.

Spearfish Canyon

By Ann Anderson, 1922

When you are tired of the city
and longing for a rest,

There is a peaceful canyon
where the air is always best.

Here you find no cares nor worries
And your trials soon forget,

As you live and roam with nature
and watch the gold sun set.

The mighty walls of the canyon
built by God's own hand,

Seem to ever guard and protect you
as they stand there tall and grand.

The hazy blue of the hilltops,
with the green for your tired eyes,

And the easy swing of the saddle
is life that satisfies.

The murmuring of the pine trees
and answering of the stream.

When the evening shadows deepen
seems like the memory of a dream.

And when you are back in the city
with its busy toilsome way,

You may often think of this canyon
in the hills so far away.

As you long for this restful haven,
your longing is not in vain.

For the canyon is always calling,
“Come back, come back again”.