

## Georgia – On My Mind

When you hear the name “Georgia,” you might think of the southern state, or perhaps the song made famous by Ray Charles. However, to many Martin County residents the name “Georgia” brings to mind fashion, a clothing store perhaps ahead of its time, and quite likely a stylish entrepreneurial owner that blazed a trail for other women to follow. That store, of course, was Georgia’s, and it was located on North North Avenue, now Downtown Plaza, in Fairmont. The owner was Georgia Meister, an astute business woman with a flair for fashion that set her, and her merchandise, apart from others.

Georgia Parker initially came to Fairmont to teach home economics after graduating from the University of Minnesota. She married Charles Meister, an established businessman who was the vice president of the Fairmont Canning Company. After she married, she began working for the Fairmont Canning Company as a home economist. During her tenure in that position, she was instrumental in developing an improved method of freezing foods for the company.

However, in 1957, she made a career change daring to enter what was considered at that time to be “a man’s world,” that being the business world. She borrowed money and opened a store. The store was, Georgia’s, her namesake, and was a boutique that sold furs, gifts, and other high-end women’s apparel.

She had an eye for fashion and she traveled to the major metropolitan areas in the United States, including New York City, to purchase clothing for her store. She also shared her knowledge of fashion by holding shows in Fairmont and in Spirit Lake, Iowa. In addition, she taught classes on etiquette and wrote a weekly fashion column in the *Sentinel*, entitled “*Georgia Says*.” In her column, which was in fact an advertisement for her store, she would discuss fashion trends, new arrivals in her store, and anything and everything that might be of interest regarding women’s fashions of the day. She very effectively used catch phrases, such as: “Smocks ‘smack’ of high fashion, especially those at my store,” as stated in one of her ads in April of 1972.

Although Georgia was very smart and ran an extremely successful business, she may also be remembered as being flamboyant, fashionable, classy, and perhaps a bit of a mystery. She never revealed her age and rarely allowed anyone to take her picture, even though her picture did accompany her newspaper column.

Nevertheless, those that remember Georgia and her distinctive offerings know that they experienced an exclusive and unique shopping experience. Georgia’s kept this area at the forefront of innovating and exciting fashion design in women’s clothing for many years

Georgia passed away in 1985 after which her store immediately closed.

For more information on this topic, or to become a member, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.

