

Remembering Marv

Martin County has had its share of individuals that might be characterized as being interesting, colorful, or unique. Each, in their own way, has made significant and lasting contributions to Martin County's history. Their achievements, accomplishments, or mere presence has proven instrumental in the development and legacy of Martin County.

One such notable individual from the past that might fit the above characterization was Marv Carlson. He was well known as a KSUM radio personality as well as for his second hand store. His radio career began in 1949 as Farm Services Director for KSUM and, according to the July 8, 1984, edition of the *Sentinel*, spanned thirty-four years including his other endeavors. While on the radio, he would announce the markets, weather conditions, playing polka music, and providing what could be considered as "corny" jokes. In addition, at age fifteen he learned auctioneering from his older brother, Walter, and worked as an auctioneer for Arend's Sale Yard in Blue Earth. He traveled as much as 45,000 miles annually auctioneering.

However, Carlson was undoubtedly best known for his second hand store. According to the 2007 *Sentinel Hometown Legends* magazine, his store was dubbed the "Eighth Wonder of the World." His shop, a local legend in and of itself, had virtually everything from valuables to what some might consider junk.

Carlson's store had in excess of 100,000 items ranging from horse collars to caskets. The casket was found in an old barn about 110 miles away. After agreeing to take it, he tied it to the top of his car and drove it back to his store much to the bewilderment and chagrin of oncoming motorists. It was one of the few articles in his store that hadn't been used.

Carlson was also known to have one of the Midwest's most valuable collections of firearms. His collection ranged from a Pilgrim's Blunderbuss to the famous Colt six shooters. It also included a South Pacific blunderbuss capable of hurling rocks or anything available that could be launched. Another unique gun in his collection was an eight gauge shotgun of the late 1800s vintage when they were legal firearms.

Guns, dishes, furniture, Indian artifacts, and a working steam engine in a glass case were all a part of the store's eclectic inventory. He counted up to 300 visitors per day, about two-thirds of which were tourists. He also shipped items to every state in the union.

Carlson closed his second hand store in the early 1970s. He then owned Carlson Highway Furniture, Carlson Real Estate, and Carlson Coin Shop.

Anyone who lived in Martin County and the surrounding area at that time will certainly remember this distinctive radio personality, his well known second hand store, and his contributions to the history of Martin County. As Marv would often say, "Keep smiling!"

I would like to acknowledge and thank Marv Carlson's daughter, Carol Cress, for providing information and pictures for this article.

For more information on this topic, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.





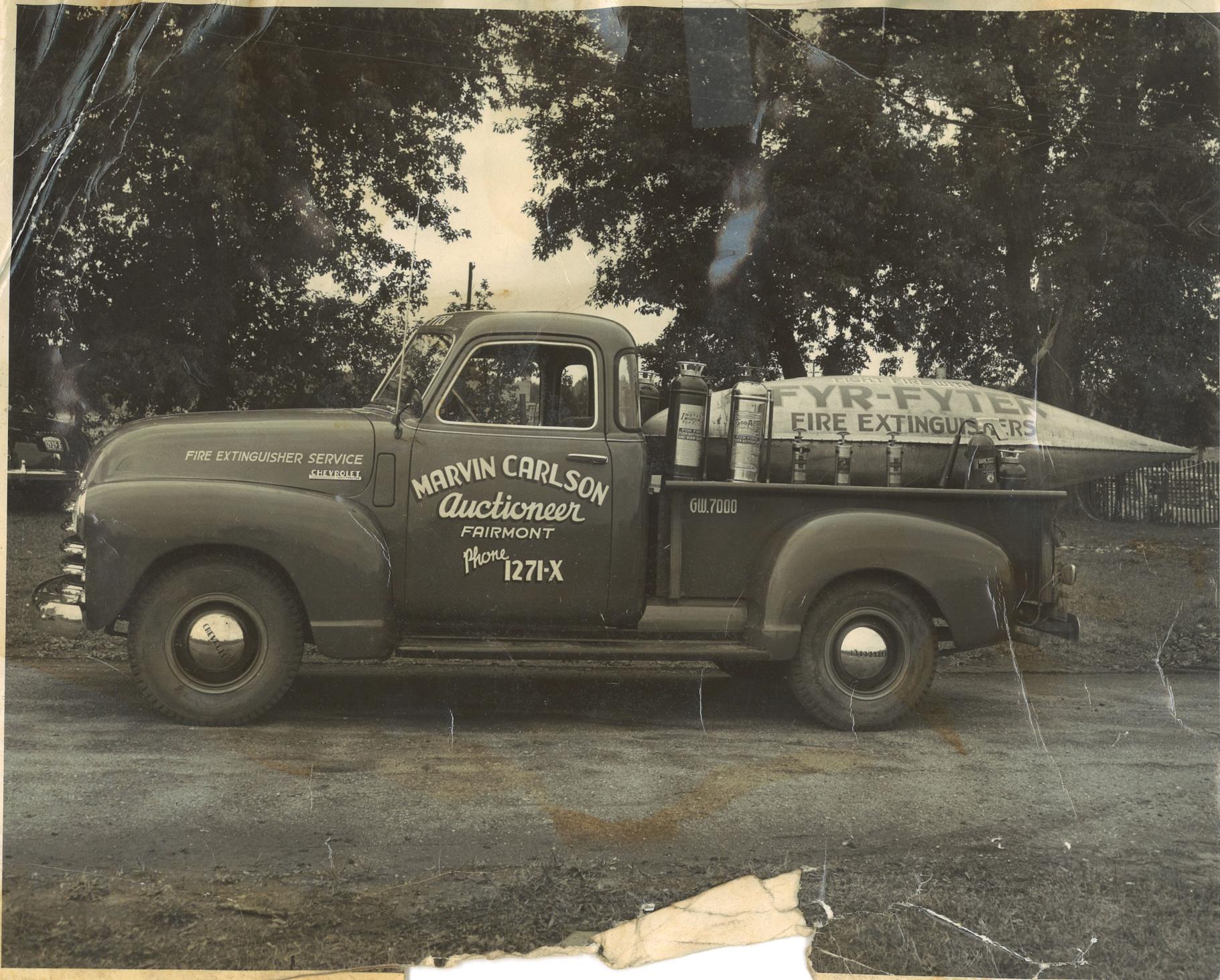


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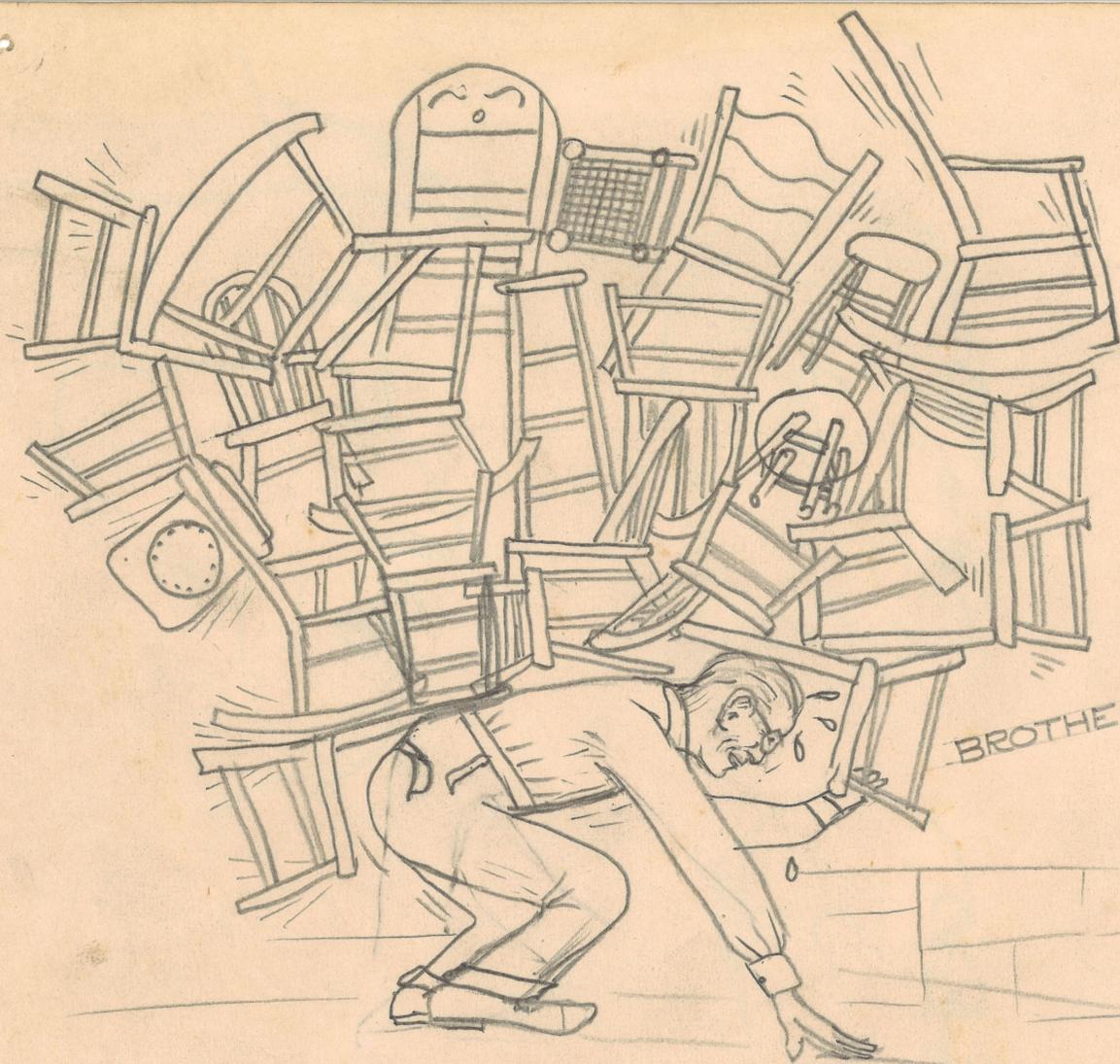


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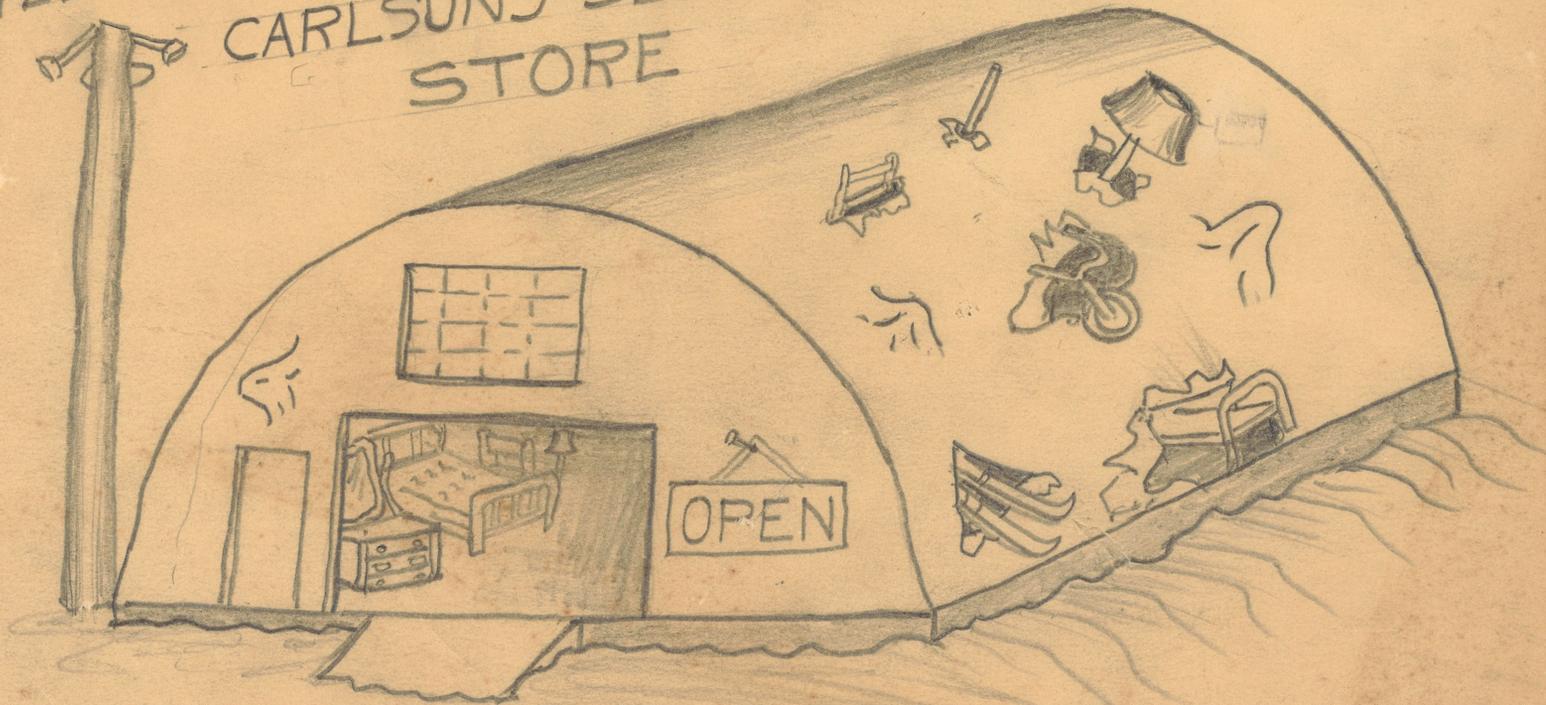
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22 Minneapolis Sunday Tribune • Picture • February 11, 1962

Secondhand Store Is 'Eighth Wonder'

THE STRANGEST conglomeration of merchandise for sale under one roof in Minnesota may well be the stock of the Carlson Second Hand Store in Fairmont. The more than 100,000 items that owner Marvin Carlson, 50, is offering customers range from horse collars to a casket, from an 1870 washing machine to a 1924 Ford truck. The store has been called the world's "eighth wonder."

A glance at Carlson's goods prompts some customers to try the age-old question, "Do you have any left-handed monkey wrenches?" "We tell them the store stopped selling them because few left-handed monkeys are around," laughed Carlson. A left-handed monkey wrench is about all Carlson lacks in the store. Most customers are interested in antique dishes and furniture. During

May to September, two-thirds of the sales are to tourists, who number up to 300 a day. Carlson has shipped antique water-bowl and pitcher sets to every state in the Union, including Hawaii and Alaska.

Ten years ago a neighbor prodded Carlson into purchasing a secondhand store on a partnership basis. Before long, however, Carlson bought out the neighbor and since has built up the stock to its present immense proportions. Otherwise, Carlson continues to carry on other endeavors. He has been an auctioneer for 29 years, for instance, and travels 45,000 miles a year soliciting livestock for the Blue Earth Sales Barn. He also does two morning radio broadcasts daily except Sunday on KSUM.

Photos by HOMER KNOSS



Antique dishes are among the most popular of the more than 100,000 items in Carlson's store. He holds an old iron bank—a popular article, he says.