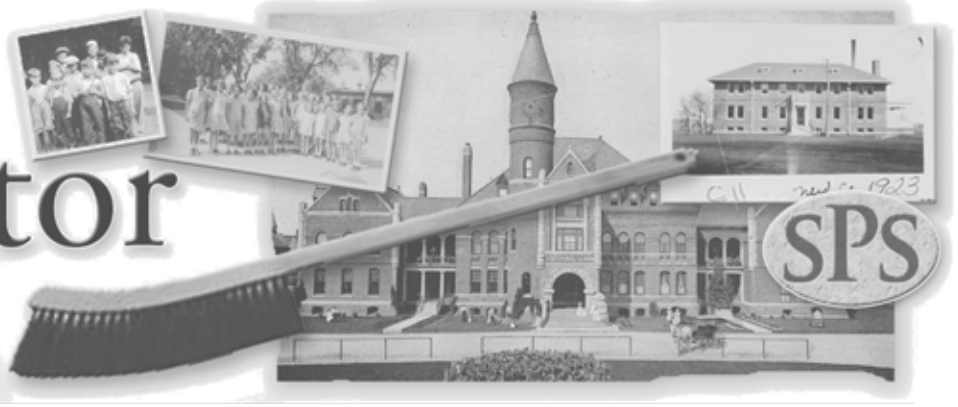


# The Radiator Brush



## Act of Heroism Earns State School Boy Carnegie Medal for Bravery

Excerpts from a December 6, 1907, article in *The People's Press* recount a dramatic rescue:

“August Hansen proved his mettle last Saturday afternoon when he went to the aid of Misses Bertie Borden and Hazel Shaw, who had broken thru the ice on Straight river, rescuing both the young girls from a watery grave. The ice gave way, plunging both into icy water.

“The cries of the girls were heard by August Hansen, who was playing pond hockey, and was the first to reach the place and altho realizing that he was risking his own life, he slid out on the ice and secured hold of Miss Borden's clothes bringing her to the edge of the hole and getting her upon the ice, which gave way. Luckily Mr. Crawford seized a fish spear as he ran to the river and this he handed to Hansen, who then succeeded in getting Miss Borden out of

the river and also pulling himself out. Messrs. Hansen, Crawford and Molitor then gave their attention to rescuing Miss Shaw. A plank had been secured and this laid on the ice. Mr. Hansen went to Miss Shaw's aid and succeeded in placing a rope around her, she was then pulled out of the river.

“August Hansen is an orphan boy, coming to the state school several years ago. He is making his home with Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Jager. He is a member of the junior class in high school. He is working himself while securing an education.”

**Lost His Mother When He Was Five**  
As with many State School children, August Hansen had a hard childhood. He was born on August 10, 1889, in St. Paul, and his family moved to Duluth shortly thereafter. When he was about 5, his mother died leaving behind two boys and a widower. August and his younger brother, John, were not cared for by their father. He left the boys to support themselves. They did so by selling papers on the street.

**Placed at State School in 1905**  
The Duluth Humane Society noticed their plight and began proceedings to remove them from their father's care and send them to the State School in Owatonna. At that time, August asked an official to find a place for John to stay and go to school, and that he, August, would work and pay the expenses. He was willing to give up his own chance of an education. When State

Agent Hans Jager learned of the boy's request, he decided to take August into his own family and give him the same opportunity he had offered his brother. When writing a letter recommending August for the Carnegie Award, Jager wrote, “His act of heroism...was only what I would have expected from him.”

### Tragedy Interrupts

August's Carnegie Hero Award was more than a medal. It included \$2,000 cash to be used toward education. It enabled August to study at Carleton College, Northfield. However, he interrupted his college studies during World War I to serve in the Navy Band, playing the drums. His draft registration card lists him as “married.” He married Lela Van Wagener on June 5, 1917—the same day as registration. His job was listed as “florist.” While August was fulfilling his duties with the Navy Band, he got word that his young bride had contacted Spanish Flu in 1918. He did not make it back to Owatonna before she died.



August Hansen

### GIRL SKATERS WERE SAVED

August Hansen Is Deserving of a Carnegie Reward for Bravery.

PROVES TO BE A HERO



A newspaper headline immediately called for August Hansen to be rewarded for heroism. He received the Carnegie Medal for Bravery in 1908.

### Fulfilling His Promise

After his military obligation ended and he grieved the death of Lela, August eventually returned to the University of

*continued*

*August Hanson - Continued*

Illinois to study landscape architecture, graduating in 1924. He and his new wife moved to Washington, D.C., in 1929 to work for the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks (National Capital Parks). He played a role in landscaping of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, Lafayette Park, and Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. Over the years, he made trips back to Owatonna to visit with the Jager family. His children called them “Grandpa and Grandma.” August Hanson died in 1961 at age 71, his life fulfilling the promise Hans Jager saw in the young boy back in 1905.

*A special thank you to Andy McGuire for his extensive research and writing on State Schooler August Hanson.*

***Circa 1900 Photo Shows New Perspective***

The photo above was discovered in the Museum’s archives. It was shot from the roof of the Owatonna Hotel between 1898 and 1903. The hotel was at the current U.S. Bank location. The 1898 school building is visible and the clock tower is standing. The tower was lowered and the clock eliminated after

the January 1904 fire destroyed parts of the Main Building. This was the view from August Hanson’s time period. Maxine Ronglien wrote on the back of this photo that it was donated by Bette Anderson, but we have no information on the photographer. Has anyone seen this before?

***Recognizing the Passing of Two State Schoolers Who Shared Their Memories*****Iris Segelstrom Wright (1934-2023)****Author of “Iris Blossoms and Boxing Gloves”**

*Iris Segelstrom photographed by her matron.*

Iris Segelstrom Wright passed away in March at age 88. Iris was born in Minneapolis, but the deaths of two children and a devastating house fire, combined with the Great Depression, proved too much for the family to stay together. The parents separated, and their five remaining children were sent to live with different relatives. In 1941, Iris, 6, was referred to the State School in Owatonna, along with brothers Al and Bruce. Her book “Iris Blossoms and Boxing Gloves” is a shared memoir with her brothers about their lives

and experiences at the orphanage. Iris was placed with the Sutherland family near Chatfield and met her future husband, Dick Wright, while in high school there. Besides her family, Iris’ lifelong passion was art. Her love of learning culminated in her graduation from Winona State University at age 66. Iris participated in “The Children Remember” documentary and was part of our oral history project. We’re thankful for her willingness to share her story.

**Kathleen “Kate” Sherman (1936-2022)**

State Schooler Kathleen “Kate” Sherman passed away in

December at 86. Kate was a most loyal Cottage 11 volunteer, coming up from Austin, Minnesota, several times a month. Kate enjoyed sharing photos with visitors of her adoption into the Fayette and Etta Sherman family. She always said she won the lottery when they became her parents.

According to her, several little girls were brought in a room for the Shermans to meet, but two-year-old Kate ran across the room, put her arms around Mr. Sherman’s neck, and called him “Daddy”! think that sealed the deal. Later the Shermans also adopted another State School girl they named Sally. Besides her volunteer time, Kate was a major donor for the audio stations on the grounds. We’re grateful to her for so many reasons.



*Kate Sherman telling her adoption story to C-11 visitors.*

***Orphanage Museum Donations*****Children Remember Legacy Fund**

Warren Slagle  
Fred & Len Fritz  
Dave & Mary Michenfelder

**Memorials**

Anne Peterson – in memory of Jim Hougas