

Vance E. Miller

12-8-82

Longtime Groton businessman and community leader Vance E. Miller, 84, passed away Monday morning, Nov. 29, at Dakota Midland Hospital, Aberdeen, following several years of declining health.

Funeral services were held at the United Methodist Church in Groton on Thursday, Dec. 2. Officiating were the Rev. John Maines, pastor of United Methodist Church and the Rev. F. Philip Strain, pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran Church. Burial was in the family plot in Groton Union Cemetery.

Casketbearers were Leonard Broman, Eugene Abeln, Darrell Clocksene, Dennis K. Larson, Henry Lehman and Maurice Olson. Mrs. Gene Cassels was organist and Earl Ruden and Richard Ruden ushered. The Paetznick-Garner Funeral Chapel of Groton was in charge of arrangements.

Born in Groton on June 11, 1901, Mr. Miller was a member of a pioneer family whose association with the Groton community began shortly after the first homesteaders came to the area. In 1882, Mr. Miller's grandfather, the Rev. Christian Mueller, arrived from Wisconsin with his wife Margaret. He served as a "circuit rider" for the Evangelical Church traveling by horse and buggy over Brown, McPherson, Edmunds and Spink Counties. Of the two daughters and seven sons in the family, many of the boys were interested in being merchants, and they worked in and owned various businesses in Groton and nearby communities. Five of the boys simplified the spelling of their name to Miller.

In 1896, Vance's father, Orion (Ora) H. Miller, participated in the formation of Groton Mercantile Co., and in 1905 founded Miller Mercantile Co., with three brothers, Henry, Arthur and Albert. In that same year construction was completed on the Miller Block, a building which continues to occupy a prominent place on Groton's Main Street.

Mr. Miller's mother, Carrie Yaukey Miller grew up in Mt. Auburn, Ill., and came to Groton in 1897 following her marriage to Ora. She passed away in childbirth when Vance was six years old. Following her death Vance was often in the care of his Grandmother Margaret Mueller, until his father married Cora Ingelse in 1913.

In his youth, Vance worked part time in the business of his father and uncles. He graduated from Groton High School with the class of 1920. Following two years attendance at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, he returned to enter the family business full time in 1922.

With the death of his father in 1926, Vance became the principal owner and manager of the business. Miller Mercantile Co., was sold in 1973 and Vance retired after 51 years of service to the community. During the years of his management, Mr. Miller expanded the business and modernized its facilities a number of times. He also operated a grocery store in Redfield and

owned hatcheries in Groton, Webster and Britton.

On September 6, 1924, he married Gertrude E. Wagener, a member of another pioneer family. She also was a graduate of Groton High School with the class of 1920. They had two children, Vance Jr. and Marilyn (Schornack). His first wife passed away in 1961.

Five years later he married Nelda Tammen on March 19, 1966, at St. Paul, Minn. Nelda was from Clara City, Minn., and had been associated with Variety Supply Co., a wholesaling organization serving V-Stores such as Vance's. Nelda had two children before her first husband passed away and Carrol and Mavis and their families were close to Mr. Miller until his death.

Mr. Miller was active in numerous church, community and business organizations and events. An enthusiastic booster for Groton and small towns in general, Mr. Miller headed the Booster Club in 1961 during the 60th Anniversary Celebration and served as president of Groton's 75th Anniversary Celebration in 1956. In 1981 he was honored as a member of the Groton Centennial Royalty.

He served on the board of Variety Supply Company of Clara City, Minn., and was vice president of the board of directors of First National Bank of Groton. He headed the Groton School Board when the new school was built in 1935 and was one of the founders of the Carnival of Silver Skates. He also served as Boy Scout leader, and was a charter member of the Groton Kiwanis Club. He was a

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 8, 1982

member of the South Dakota Retailers Association, and was honored in 1967 by the Groton Jaycees with the community booster award for outstanding service.

Deeply interested in the early history of the area, he saved and shared many mementos, records and memories with others. He was on the Brown County Museum and Historical Society Board. He was a long-time and active member of the Methodist Church, serving on the church board, as a Sunday school teacher for many years, and as treasurer of the church's memorial fund.

Readers of "The Groton Independent" will remember his weekly "Ramblings" columns which appeared faithfully in each edition for some 20 years.

Survivors include his widow Nelda; one son, Vance E. Miller Jr., Portola Valley, Calif.; one daughter, Mrs. Allen Don (Marilyn) Schornack, Des Moines, Iowa; one brother, Norman, Wayzata, Minn.; one sister, Mrs. Gayle Gage, Hopkins, Minn.; six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Nelda's family also share in his loss: Mr. and Mrs. Carrol Tammen of Hastings, Minn., and the Rev. and Mrs. Allan (Mavis) Hatlen of Snohomish, Wash., seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Gertrude; one sister, Carrie Lalla; and one granddaughter, Jacquelyn Margaret.