

## A Look Back in Time – The '50s

The 1950s was a different time indeed. The average annual salary was \$2,992.00; life expectancy for men was 65 and for women was 71; a loaf of bread was fourteen cents; the ratio of men to women in the workforce was 5 to 2; and bomb shelters were a big deal!

Some nationally known names from that era include Harry Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Dr. Jonas Salk, U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy, Mickey Mantle, and Rosa Parks.

Locally there were a number of names that influenced the landscape as well, either as a result of their business ventures or what they brought to the area. One of those individuals that impacted the local scene in a positive manner was Blayne Guckeen. Prior to World War II, Guckeen had dreamed of owning a photograph studio. Preceding the war and while working for The Fairmont Daily Sentinel in the 1940s, he was instrumental in developing the modern news photo coverage of that era. He was then called into the military and served as a photographer in the Navy. Upon leaving the service in 1945, his dream became a reality as he opened a studio on Blue Earth Avenue in Fairmont.

His business steadily grew and he built a larger studio. Guckeen emphasized the fact that, in a single word, "quality" was the primary ingredient for his growth in the photography field. He stressed that his best advertising is in his work and that Guckeen's Studio achieved a reputation that goes beyond Minnesota's borders. Their "Heritage Portrait" was basically a standard portrait that was hand finished in artist's oils to give it the rich textured look of an oil painting. This was significant in the fact that Guckeen's did the complete process on site rather than sending the work to out of state finishers. Guckeen served as president of the Fairmont Chamber of Commerce, served on the city council, and was president of the Minnesota Professional Photographer's Association in 1957.

Martin County was also in the business of beauty in the 1950s. Fairmont had an accredited beauty school established by Mr. & Mrs. DeLyle Lahart in the 1940s. In the 1950s, it was operated by Mr. & Mrs. Elmer Fandel. Mrs. Fandel started her beauty career by attending the St. Paul Academy of Beauty Culture in 1933 and at one time ran a beauty shop on Payne Avenue in St. Paul.

Elmer Fandel also attended the Beauty Culture Academy with the intention of becoming a barber. However, he soon became interested in hair styling and continued his studies along those lines. Consequently, he became licensed in both barbering and hair styling.

Mr. Fandel had the opportunity to enhance his hair styling skills while in the service. During World War II, he was able to visit Paris beauty salons and study techniques from the “fashion capital of the world.”

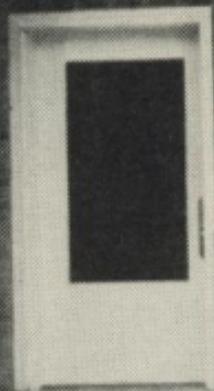
Following the war, Elmer Fandel and his wife, Miriam, continued to operate their beauty shop in St. Paul but eventually decided that they wanted to live in a smaller town. They learned that the DeLyle School was for sale in Fairmont and, having the background and qualifications for teaching, decided to purchase it and moved to Fairmont in 1950.

Prospective students wishing to enter the DeLyle Academy of Beauty Culture would have to be at least seventeen years old and have the minimum of an eighth grade education. If accepted, students were provided a textbook divided into two sections, theory and practice. The school could enroll up to thirty-six students and had an average graduation rate of twenty-four. It also offered refresher courses for beauty operators who were delinquent or wished to reenter the beauty business.

Guckeen’s Studio and DeLyle’s Academy of Beauty Culture were both significant fixtures in our local area. However, although times have changed and these professions have evolved, they are still significant to our culture and society.

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

# GUCKEEN'S STUDIO



# DeLYLE'S

## ACADEMY OF BEAUTY CULTURE

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**STUDENTS PRACTICE** the practical part of their training on each other until such time as they become sufficiently proficient to work with customers who come to the beauty school. All work, whether done for student or customer is constantly supervised and checked by a competent instructor.

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