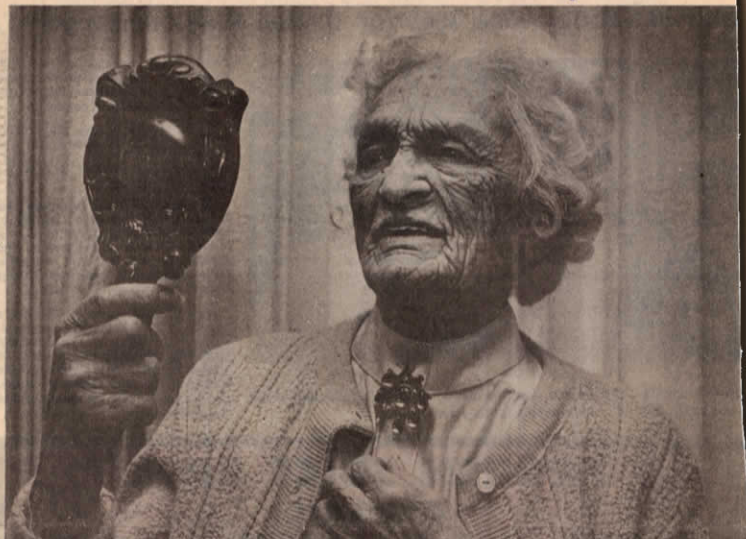


## Biography - Austin

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Local History



(Photo by Don Ide)

Hattie Austin, who will celebrate her 97th birthday Friday, admires an heirloom brooch that her mother

received at her confirmation in the Lutheran Church in Norway.

# Birthday girl recalls childhood Christmases in South Dakota

By DON IDE  
Herald-Republic correspondent

"I was born in 1885," said Hattie Austin with a smile. "That's one thing I never was ashamed of . . . my age."

Hattie, with a few relatives and close friends, will celebrate her 97th birthday Friday, at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Francis (Mabel) Lockett. Near the time of her birthday and the Christmas season, the elderly lady of Norwegian parentage recalls vignettes of her childhood in South Dakota.

Birthday parties in the household were highlighted by the frying of doughnuts and the baking of cookies, Hattie recalled. Christmas parties were at the church building that was also the schoolhouse.

"We would load up the kids in the bobbed and away we would go," she remembered about being pulled by horses through the deep snow and cold air to the Christmas parties, where homemade gifts were exchanged in

front of a big tree and songs were sung in the Norwegian language.

Other recollections from her early childhood include community dances which both young and old attended. She also remembers the grownups trading with Canadian Indians who carried highly prized felt-lined boots and wool socks that were made by German craftsmen in North Dakota.

When she was old enough to go to school, Hattie rode to the schoolhouse on horseback behind her school teacher. Finally, it got too cold to do it anymore, she remembers. When in school, Hattie helped to teach 17 other children how to speak English which she had learned from her mother.

"I've worked at everything," the great-great grandmother said when asked how she had lived so long.

Included in her childhood roles on the Olson family's 160-acre dryland grain farm near Selby were leading the oxen while they pulled the plow in the fields, pitching hay and cleaning the livestock barn. At one time she cut sod and built a

sod chicken house for the family's flock.

Helping her mother with the household chores and caring for the other eight children demanded a lot of time, too, Hattie related. "There were always a couple of babies."

Hattie married Severst Olaf Austin in 1908 in South Dakota. They had four daughters, one who died when only 11 years old, Mrs. Lockett explained. She added that her sister, Mrs. Louise Steves, lives at Yakima and another sister, Mrs. Henry (Frances) Gully, resides at Gleded.

When Hattie moved to Washington with her husband and children in 1920 and arrived at Wapato, she recalls that she was pleased to see an Indian woman riding a horse. "I said 'thank goodness, I can ride horseback here.'"

In her vision of why her grandmother has lived so many years, Jerry Wagner, Hattie's first granddaughter, believes that it is because of her active mind. "This lady still asks questions," she said respectfully.