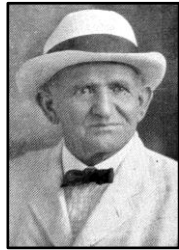
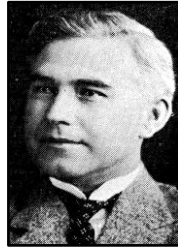


LITCHFIELD HISTORY



People
from
Litchfield's Past

MADGE BELLINGHAM (Ruth Funsdahl)

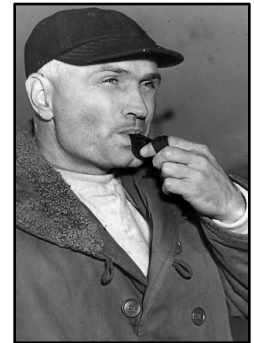
Madge Bellingham was born in Bellingham, MN, a community named after her father. She graduated from Ashbury Methodist Hospital Nursing School in 1914 and was the night supervisor and then assistant superintendent of the hospital. She came to Litchfield in October 1917 to be the superintendent of the new hospital, Litchfield Hospital, located on North Holcombe and remained in that position until the hospital closed in 1952.



Miss Bellingham was not in Litchfield a full year when the 1918 flu epidemic struck. She worked from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m. for almost six months. Madge was always referred to as "Miss Bellingham" by all who knew her. She was a very respected and dedicated nurse and gave her life to the hospital.

BERNIE BIERMAN (Mayor Keith Johnson)

Bernie Bierman was born on a farm March 11, 1894 in Springfield, MN. He was a young boy when his family moved to Litchfield where his father sold food and then men's clothing. As a child he was frequently confined to bed or forced to use crutches as a result of a bone disease called "Osteomyelitis." Consequently, he took part in none of the usual boyhood games or sports. After three operations corrected the ailment, Bierman went out for athletics for the first time in his second year of high school.



In his senior year, Bernie was captain of the undefeated Litchfield High School football team which out scored opponents 137 to 0. Upon his graduation in 1912 he entered the University of Minnesota where he earned seven varsity letters football (3), track (3) and basketball (1). Three years' of varsity football at Minnesota found Bierman as captain of the undefeated 1915 team which won the Western conference championship.

Bierman began his coaching career at the Butte Montana High School in 1916 as head coach but terminated it in 1917 to enlist in the Marine corps during World War I where he achieved the rank of Captain.

After the war, Bernie accepted a position with the University of Montana as head coach. In 1922, Bernie accepted an attractive offer by a prominent Minneapolis bond house, but his love for sports got the best of him and in 1923 he accepted a position as assistant to his former Minnesota teammate, Clark Shaughnessy at Tulane. Mississippi State hired Bierman in 1925 and when Clark Shaughnessy resigned at Tulane in 1927, Bierman succeeded him.

It was at Tulane where players and coaching assistants nicknamed Bernie "The Silver Fox."

In 1932 he accepted a position at the University of Minnesota as head coach of the Gophers. The next three years the Gophers went undefeated. While at the University of Minnesota, Bernie became legend. He had five undefeated seasons, seven Big Ten Championships, and five National Championships (1936, 1940, 1941). This era is referred to the "Golden Era of Gopher Football." In 1934, Halsey Hall, great Minnesota sportswriter and broadcaster, dubbed Bernie's all-gold uniformed team "The Golden Gophers."

In 1942, Bernie was ordered to active duty in the Marine Corps and served in World War II as a member of the Navy V-5 Pre-Flight Program. During the war he planned the most doctrinaire sports project of World War II and became Director of Marine and Navy physical training, commanded the Pre-Flight School Training Cadre for First V-5 Instructors and coached the Iowa City Pre-Flight Seahawks. When the war ended in 1945, the man who had entered as a private came home a lieutenant colonel.

After the war, Bernie returned to the University of Minnesota and coached from 1945 to 1950. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1955. The present day Bierman Track and Field Stadium and Bierman Athletic Field are named after him.

Bierman's Gophers won 93 games and 3 national titles from 1932-1941 and 1945-1950. He was the only major college coach to win three consecutive National Championship Crowns. Bernie was, without a doubt, the most legendary coach in school history.

In 1950, Bernie resigned. He admitted the decision was the most difficult decision of his life. Mr. Bierman's combined coaching record at Montana, Mississippi A. and M., Tulane and Minnesota was 163 victories, 57 defeats and 11 ties in a career that spanned 26 seasons, including 16 at Minnesota from 1932 through 1950. Bernie died in Laguna Hills, California on March 7, 1977.

FRANK DAGGETT (Brent Schacherer)

Frank Dagget was a prominent citizen of Meeker County. He was born in Vermont in 1837 and served in the Civil War in both the Vermont and Minnesota Regiments. He later commanded two African-American heavy artillery regiments and became a part of the Army of the Potomac.

Frank came to Litchfield in 1872 to start the Litchfield Ledger. Prior to coming to Litchfield, Frank had served the Glencoe Register, St. Paul

Pioneer Press, Minneapolis News, Minneapolis Tribune, Stillwater Gazette, and La Crosse Leader among others. He also served as Clerk of the Minnesota House three times.

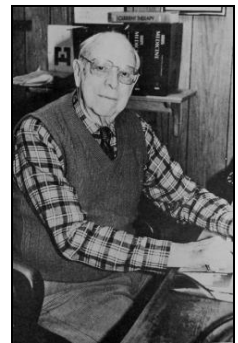


Frank had reported headaches and not feeling well for about three days, On October 14, 1876 he was at his desk and collapsed. A doctor was summoned but he was gone in 15 minutes. Condolences came from all over the state. The St. Paul Dispatch reported, " As a man he was notable, just, and true, a devoted generous friend, a magnanimous foe."

Daggett was an important part of the beginnings of the G.A.R. in Minnesota and was the Minnesota G.A.R. Commander in Chief in 1867. He helped found the first G.A.R. post in Litchfield, although it did not remain active after his death in 1876. The G.A.R. was reorganized in Litchfield in 1883 and was named for this fascinating man who accomplished a great deal in his 38 years.

DR. LENNOX DANIELSON (Dr. Dan Johnson)

Dr. Lennox Danielson was the son of Litchfield's Dr. Karl Danielson. They practiced medicine together on the second floor of 202 North Sibley Avenue. Dr. Karl Danielson emigrated from Sweden in 1880 at the age of five, He graduated from Rush Medical College in 1900 and moved to Litchfield in 1910. His son, Lennox, came back to Litchfield to practice with his father in 1932. Many times, they were paid in produce. They did home deliveries; the delivery bag was packed and ready at all times.



Dr. Lennox's wife, Julia, was also a physician and many times gave anesthesia for surgery. Their home, currently owned by Jason Tibbits, was actually a farm of three acres with stables and an orchard.

Dr. Lennox served over 30 years on the Litchfield School Board and guided the community in the construction of Wagner School, the Litchfield High School, and Ripley Elementary School. Several difficult decisions were made during these projects and Dr. Lennox provided positive leadership to a compromise to the betterment of the community.

ANNA OLSON DETERMAN (Dr. Brittany Koch)

Anna Olson Determan was born in Malmo, Sweden, January 13, 1885. Anna's parents came to America with their family of nine children and arrived at Litchfield in the spring of 1888.

Anna attended Litchfield schools and graduated from high school in 1905. Upon graduation she attended the Teachers Training College in Winona and the University of Minnesota. She taught school for fourteen years and later became a supervisor of high school teachers training departments.



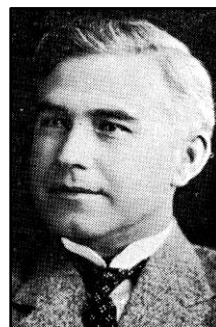
Active in the civic and political affairs of Litchfield and Meeker County, Anna promoted and organized the Litchfield League of Women Voters (1921) and was its first president. Later she served as a member of the State Board of the League as a representative of the Sixth Congressional District. For two years she headed the Central Parent Teachers Association of Litchfield and in 1933 served as chairman of the Women's Division of the N.R.A. She was a student of governmental affairs and became a popular speaker. A Minnesota weekly commented on her ability as a public speaker, "Few women in Minnesota are as conversant with economic issues and few understand as well the rank and file of Minnesota citizenship."

Governor Floyd B. Olson appointed Anna a member of the Board of regents of the University of Minnesota in May of 1933. While she was a member of the board, she won national distinction for introducing and securing the passage of a resolution in June 1934 where military training at the university was made optional for students. Minnesota was the second state in the union to take such action. In 1935 Mrs. Determan was one of two delegates that represented Minnesota at the National Conference of University Regents and Trustees held in Columbus, Ohio. Upon the expiration of her term of service in 1936, Governor Olson appointed her to membership on the Board of Control where she served until June 1939. While Mrs. Determan was on the board, she made many improvements in the administration of the penal, charitable and correctional institutions of the state. She insisted on a sound and humane treatment of rehabilitation and among results she achieved was the establishment of libraries in hospitals for the mentally ill and the expansion of educational and recreational facilities.

Anna Olson married Dr. Bernard S. Determan on June 6, 1917.

DR. BERNARD S. DETERMAN (Dr. Frank Koch)

In 1894, Bernard's father, Benedict, established his wife and eight sons on a farm of 320 acres in Lincoln County, Minnesota. Bernard attended the public schools in Lincoln County and continued his education at the Southern Minnesota Normal at Austin, the McFadden Sanitarium at Chicago, the Sanitarium at Battle Creek, Michigan and the National Chiropractic College at Chicago and was known as an outstanding member of his profession (drugless healing). He moved to Litchfield and practiced his profession from 1918 to 1938.



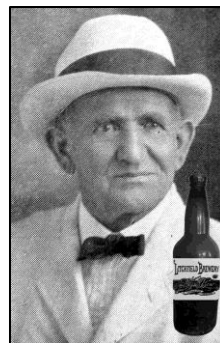
Dr. Determan was very interested in public affairs and the development of the village and county. He served as mayor from 1929 to 1932. During this time he furthered the extension of electric service to rural districts. He gave freely of his time and official influence in prevailing on the grocers of the city to cease the sale of butter substitutes. Dr. Determan joined in the effort that led to the establishment of the Legion Park and the drum corps. He served six years as a member of the Board of Education and was

chairman for Meeker County of the Federal Housing Administration.

Mr. and Mrs. Determan had one daughter, Kathryn Ann, who graduated from Litchfield High School in 1935 and from the California State College at San Jose in 1939. She won high honors in the social science department.

ERHARDT LENHARDT (Jeanie Schultz Doran & Jeff Woods)

Erhardt Lenhardt was born in Saxony Germany on April 5, 1844. In 1873 he came to Meeker County with his family and formed a partnership with Louis Poetzer establishing the first and only brewery in the county on the northwest shore of Lake Ripley. The business was profitable but the partnership was dissolved at a later date and Lenhardt became the sole owner.



The brewery had a residential house, a house for his up to eight workers, a malt house, a bottling house with walls two feet thick, a cooper's shop to make barrels, an ice house, a stable with swine sheds and chicken coops. The brick lined caverns were used to store grain, beer and ice blocks that were hauled on sleds from Lake Ripley. The many tasks required to make beer were done by hand. Candles were made on site to light the underground brewery and its three tunnels that led to the caverns. Erhardt was a frugal man and he was always looking for bottles. He went to area funeral homes to get the old embalming fluid bottles. Today, all that remains are the grain cavern and the opening to one tunnel.

Erhardt was a good businessman and purchased the Howard House hotel in 1901, renaming it the Lenhardt Hotel. The hotel provided accommodations for twenty-three employees and a guest capacity of 40 rooms, a roomy lobby, ladies parlor, dining room, coffee shop, with barber shop and rest rooms in the basement. The hotel was heated throughout with steam.

Mr. Lenhardt was public minded and in the forefront of every movement to advance the interest of the Litchfield community. He was a charter member of the St. Paul's German Evangelical Lutheran Church and contributed liberally to its support and was the leading contributor in the purchase of the bell. Erhardt retired in 1910 and sold the brewery to his son, Edmund, and son-in-law William Shoultz. They ran it in partnership until Litchfield voted to go dry in 1914. A fire destroyed the brewery in 1915. Edmund also purchased the Lenhardt Hotel in 1914 and ran that for many years. He lived there with his family.

Both Erhardt and Edmund were generous members of the community. Rumor has it that Erhardt kept sack lunches in the cooler so that no one went away hungry after stepping

off a train or just traveling through. His family carried on the practice. Edmund carried large amounts of cash with bills in every pocket. He cashed checks for people who did not get to the bank.

Edmund was characterized by his red toupee and gray side hair. This was seldom seen since he wore a bowler hat most of the time. His father, Erhardt was characterized by his white suit coat and white panama hat. Erhardt passed away on February 14, 1929.

J. FRED & CHRISTINA SCHNEE (Dean Urdahl & Maschell Bjorge)

Calvin Schnee moved to Litchfield in 1924 starting the Schnee dynasty of entertainment. He purchased the Unique Theater which at the time showed silent movies for 10 cents. Penny candy was two for a penny, three for a penny, or four for a penny. Hardy Bronson played the piano for the silent movies. He would play nice and slow and then in the chase scenes he was all over the piano. When there were horses galloping, the music was fast and furious. Then in the middle of the good part, the film would break. The kids booed until it got taped together again.

In the late 1920s, talkies came to Litchfield and the cost was 50 cents. The first one starred Al Jolson in the "The Jazz Singer." The line was a block and a half long. Of course the talking was not right. Sometimes the man was talking but it looked like the horse. Then one man was talking and it should have been the other one.

In 1935, Calvin's son, Fred, started construction on the Hollywood Theater. It opened in November 1936. Adult tickets were 35 cents and children's were a dime. Movies were so popular that there was a system to locate doctors, nurses, and emergency people. The doctor would call the telephone operator and tell her he was going to the Hollywood. Then he would leave his name with the usherette. If someone called the operator looking for his doctor, the operator would call the Hollywood and the usherette would locate him.

In 1955, Calvin's other son, Lloyd, built the Starlite Drive in Theatre. Most communities had a drive in movie in the 1960's. Lloyd operated both the Starlite and the Unique Theater while brother Fred operated the Hollywood. Unfortunately, our Unique Theater was demolished in the 1980's.



Opening night at Starlite Drive-In Theatre with the first car through the gate. Fred Schnee stands nearby.

HANS TJELLESEN SMIDT & ANNE KIRSTINE (HOLM) SONDERGAARD

Born on October 10, 1867 in Rodding, Denmark, Hans immigrated to the U.S. in 1890 to Litchfield, Minnesota where he took up his trade as a butter maker at the Litchfield Creamery. Hans took 16 year old Alfred Anderson, founder of Anderson Chemical Company, under his wing and mentored him on the creamery business for two years.

The Sondergaard home was located at 302 Swift Street South at the corner of Swift and Ripley. The house was later moved to 326 S. Donnelly Avenue. Upon acceptance for a position as Federal Butter Inspector in Minneapolis, the family moved in 1912. Later in life, Hans became a professor of agriculture at the University of Wisconsin (1926-1938). His first wife was Anne Kristine Holm. Anne was born on October 4, 1871 in Vonslid, Norre Tyrstrup, Vejle, Denmark and died on 10-30-1934 in Madison, Wisconsin at the age of sixty-three. The couple had three children, Ragni, Edith (Gale) and Hester. Hans remarried when Anne passed away. Hans passed away in Madison, Wisconsin on November 24, 1947.



RAGNI HOLM (SONDERGAARD) SCHROEDER

Ragni was born in Litchfield on August 16, 1896. The eldest daughter, Ragni was a talented singer and pianist. She graduated from the University of Minnesota School of Music with a B.A. in 1919. She married a teacher, Earl M. Schroeder, in Detroit and they had one son. Ragni passed away on January 2, 1963, age 66, in Detroit, Michigan. Earl passed away on March 6, 1977, age 83, in Plainwell, Michigan.



EDITH HOLM SONDERGAARD (Robyn Richardson)

Edith (Gale) Sondergaard was born in Litchfield on February 15, 1899. She grew up in Litchfield as the star of many neighborhood plays. Childhood friend Ethel Swanson recalled that Gale had a flair for drama even as a child. In time her star would take her to national fame.

Edith graduated from Central High School in 1917. The 1917 Centralian yearbook described Edith as having, "the heart to conceive, the understanding to direct and the hand to execute." While in high school plays she also attended the Minneapolis School of Dramatic Art before moving on to the University of Minnesota where she graduated in 1921 with a B.A. Edith did a short stint in the Chautauqua circuit before joining the Keller Shakespeare Company in



1921. Although she was born Edith, Sondergaard chose the name "Gale" as a stage name while an actress on the Chautauqua circuit.

Gale's New York stage debut came in November 1923. She had come up through the ranks in Minnesota theater and just two years out of college she appeared on Broadway working for the John Bonstelle Stock Company and the prestigious Theater Guild. On May 15, 1930, Sondergaard married her second husband, Herbert Biberman, the manager at the Theatre Guild. They adopted a son and a daughter, Daniel Hans and Joan Kirstine.

Like many theater people of the time, Gale had little interest in or regard for the movies. But director Mervyn LeRoy was fascinated with her face and asked her to test for his film, *Anthony Adverse* (1936) in the small but important role of Faith Paleologus. Gale, a relative unknown to film-goers, won the Oscar. She was nominated for another Academy Award for her supporting role in *Anna and the King of Siam* in 1946.

A fact not widely known is Mervyn LeRoy's first choice to play the Wicked Witch in "*The Wizard of Oz*" was Gale. On August 20, 1938, MGM announced Gale would be cast as the Wicked Witch. But when others involved in the film vetoed the idea of a glamorous witch, she turned down the part and it was awarded to Margaret Hamilton.



In the 1950's, Gale's husband was accused of communism and named as one of the "Hollywood Ten." In 1951 Gale was subpoenaed and ordered to testify. Her film career was halted by her taking the Fifth Amendment. In talking about the effects of the blacklisting, she said she missed the acting very much but she was not bitter and happy that she had taken a stand.

Two years after her blacklisting, director LeRoy cast her in a supporting role as Barbara as Barbara Stanwyck's mother in "*East Side, West Side*" to test industry reaction. The negative response to her appearance completed the blacklisting and she didn't appear in a major Hollywood film for 28 years. Gale worked for stock companies from 1948 to 1950 and appeared in several productions. For the next five years she stayed home, read and wrote a one-woman show which she called "*Woman*". She performed the play from 1955 to 1958.

In 1967, Gale was the guest artist at the Tyrone Guthrie Theater for the season. While appearing at the Guthrie, she went out to Litchfield to revive childhood memories of Lake Ripley, the library, bandstand in Central Park, and the train depot. Local resident Phyllis Koenig said, "She was very accepting of the kids when she was here and was quite thrilled, I think, that we had named the Thespian Chapter, "The Gale Sondergaard Chapter."

In 1973, after she was called back for retakes on the TV movie, "*The Cat Creature*," where she was surprised by Charlton Heston, who presented her with a gold Oscar statuette replacing the plaque she had won decades earlier for "*Anthony Adverse*".

In Gale's career, she appeared in more than 40 Hollywood films, numerous TV shows, radio and many Broadway plays. She worked with many famous people some of which included Bette Davis, Shirley Temple, Bob Hope, Bela Lugosi, Claudette Colbert, Jimmy Stewart and Louis and Costello.

Following several strokes, Gale passed away on August 14, 1985 at the Motion Picture and Television Hospital in Los Angeles, California, where she had been a patient since 1982. Her ashes were scattered over the Pacific Ocean.



HESTER HOLM SONDERGAARD (Jayne Piepenburg)

Born on July 5, 1903 in Litchfield, Hester was the younger sister of Gale Sondergaard. Like her father, Hester played the violin. She graduated from Central High School in 1920. Hester attended the University of Minnesota and was a member of the Masquers Dramatic Club. Hester graduated in 1924 with a Bachelor of Science degree. She played violin in the University Symphony Orchestra in 1925.



Hester moved to New York where she became a Broadway stage actress working with such notables as Frances Bavier, Lee J. Cobb, and John Carradine during the mid to late 1930's. She also became a well known radio character actress who worked for CBS Radio, NBC Mystery Theatre and Arch Obeler Radio from 1939 through 1948. Some of the actors Hester worked with were Marlene Dietrich, Katherine Hepburn, James Cagney, Ingrid Bergman, Burgess Meredith, Sebastian Cabot, Robert Young and Glenn Ford.

Hester's life in movies is limited to four films, *Seeds of Freedom* (1943), *The Naked City* (1948), *Jigsaw* (1949) and *The Big Break* (1953).

The McCarthy witch hunt for communism sympathizers destroyed Hester's career. She later became a speech pathologist and married Congressman Hugh DeLacey. Hester died on February 26, 1994 in Los Angeles County, California at the age of 90.



MRS. STEWART (Tiana Schweim)

Mrs. Stewart's® Bluing (MSB) was born in the early 1880's. MSB owes its existence to a peddler and his mother-in-law, a marginally successful five and ten cent store and a fireworks explosion. From the beginning, Mrs. Stewart's® journey was an interesting one!

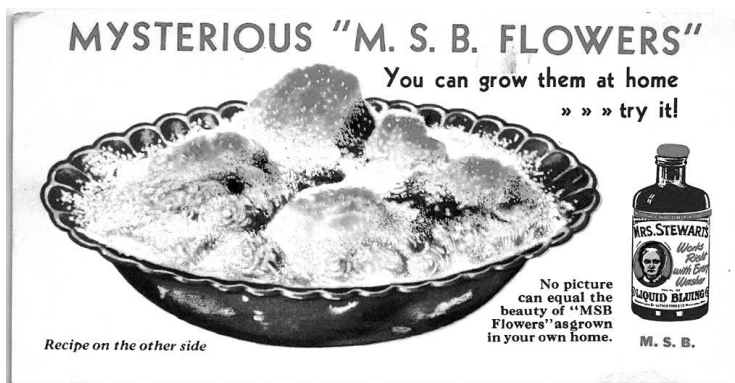


In the late 1870's, Al Stewart from Litchfield, a traveling salesman for a Chicago wholesale grocer, was a familiar figure in Iowa and southern Minnesota. In his market basket full of samples, he always carried a bottle of bluing, which he made in his home on South Holcombe Avenue with his family assisting him according to a formula he had acquired.

Meanwhile, Luther Ford crossed paths when Mr. Stewart began searching for someone to manufacture his bluing for him. Following a spectacular (but accidental) eruption of fireworks in the Five and Ten Cent store, Mr. Ford realized the potential of a (safer) future in the bluing business! Al Stewart sold Luther Ford the rights to his bluing formula, and the first documented sale of Mrs. Stewart's® Bluing was logged on July 30, 1883. Mr. Ford quickly made plans to extend distribution across the region.

Before the automatic washer arrived, the process for bluing white fabric in the home consisted of soaking or washing the clothing in hot soapy water, usually in a large kettle over a stove or in a wash tub, then rinsing the clothing thoroughly in another kettle-often two times. Finally a "bluing" kettle was prepared – cool water with just enough bluing added to make the water a light, sky-blue color in which the clothing was simply dipped in briefly and removed, then hung to dry. Today, bluing can be used in the wash cycle or final rinse cycle in most top and front-loading machines to restore fabric to the "whitest white".

Mrs. Stewart's® Bluing has been a liquid from the beginning and has never been marketed in any other form, and, as incredible as it may seem, it is essentially the same product today as it was back in 1883. Mrs. Stewart's® Bluing had lots of competition from other "blues". It was such a superior product that other companies were constantly trying to imitate it. Labels were copied and even reused in many cases. Loyal Mrs. Stewart's® Bluing users were not easily fooled, however, and all of these "masqueraders" eventually faded away. The first bottles of Mrs. Stewart's® Bluing probably carried a homemade handwritten label. Eventually, Mr. Stewart decided to have his labels commercially done. The printer he contacted recommended that a label be used which featured a picture of an older woman as this would help sales to increase! He asked his wife for a picture of herself to use, but she refused to have her picture used on a label of a bluing bottle. He plucked a photograph of his mother-in-law from the mantle and promptly delivered it to the printer. So, that no-nonsense granny who appears on every bottle of Mrs. Stewart's® Bluing throughout North America is none other than Mrs. Stewart's® mother, the real Mrs. Stewart thus losing her opportunity to be immortalized!



The Salt Crystal Garden is a favorite family or school science project for all ages.

The MSB label design has remained fairly constant from the early days to the present, with one exception. On the advice of an advertising agency in the early 1970's, the "stern granny" look of Mrs. Stewart on the label was replaced with the pleasant face of a silver-haired, "with it" looking, wrinkle-free, smiling woman in a stylish hairdo. Consumers went on a rampage! A flood of mail came in from all across North America wanting Mrs. Stewart back! They got her back, too! Over the years, Mrs. Stewart has undergone several very minor changes, but according to the company never again will consumers be surprised with a "stranger" on the label of Mrs. Stewart's® Bluing!

THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION THANKS

Litchfield Chamber of Commerce

Litchfield Community Theatre

Litchfield Independent Review

Meeker County Historical Society Staff

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Maschell Bjorge, Jeanie Shoultz Doran, Ruth Funsdahl,
Dr. Dan Johnson, Mayor Keith Johnson, Drs. Frank &
Brittany Koch, Jayne Piepenburg, Robyn Richardson,
Brent Schacherer, Tiana Schweim, Dean Urdahl, Jeff Woods

Researchers/Writers

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