

# DEADWOOD WALL OF FAME

2005

## George Beshara

Born: May 25, 1883

Died: June 17, 1959

A career as a farmer led Lebanese immigrant George Beshara to Deadwood, where he introduced the frontier town to a new technology: shopping carts.

George Beshara was born in Ferzoul, Lebanon in the spring of 1883. In 1901, at the age of 18, George immigrated to the United States through Ellis Island. He ended up in Minnesota, where he spent several years farming and peddling fruits and vegetables. He returned to his hometown in Lebanon and married Kokabe (Kathryn) Zammer on his 26th birthday. The newlyweds returned to the United States and found their way to Deadwood in 1915.

It wasn't long before George found a horse and wagon and took up his old job of selling fruits and vegetables. This time he found customers wherever his cart would take him. In time, his territory expanded throughout the entire Black Hills and onto the plains of western South Dakota. However, George soon decided to make his business a bit less transient. In 1929 he stocked the living room of his home at 17 Charles Street with \$80 worth of food and began his first grocery store.

Beshara's Market was an immediate success. George soon purchased the lots next door at 13 and 15 Charles Street, where he constructed his first small store. After several more years of success, George transformed his business into Beshara's Super Market – the first self-service grocery store in Deadwood.

Before Beshara's market, Deadwood residents shopped much like their pioneer ancestors. Clerks kept their dry good behind the counter and would bag groceries for their customers, sometimes delivering them to their houses later on. Meat, milk and bread had to be obtained separately from the butcher, milkman and bakery. When George started his modern supermarket, very few people had ever seen a shopping cart before. In fact, George had to make a special trip to Denver to pick up a load of these modern grocery store staples. His sons would have to greet new customers at the door and escort them through the aisles, educating them in self-service buying.

Of course, George held on to some old-fashioned habits. He frequently would invite customers to lunch at his home next door on the spur of the moment. Kathryn never knew how many people to cook for from day to day, but she was always up to the task. George also would regularly extend credit to families struggling during the Depression era. When they would come in to pay their bills, George made sure each child would walk out with a pocketful of candy.

Despite the initial success of Beshara's Super Market, the coming of World War II spelled the end of George's business. Rationing made it difficult to keep the shelves stocked, while four of his six sons – and employees – served in the armed forces. Even after the war was over, chain stores began to move into Deadwood and the competition left Beshara's hard-pressed to stay profitable. Eventually George had to close the market, although his son Joe later converted it into an automobile dealership.



After Kathryn died on August 18, 1951, George moved to Rapid City and lived with his daughter and son-in-law, Rose Ann and Dick Walker. He passed away there eight years later.



DEADWOOD  
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DAKOTA

A National Historic  
Landmark