

## James Hodgins 1910-1943



JAMES J. HODGINS was memorialized when the arena was renamed from West Range Arena to Hodgins-Berardo Arena, presumably in the '70s. Hodgins' time was prior to any arena, but in his day, he was manager for baseball and hockey teams in Taconite. His other occupations were village clerk, confectionary storekeeper, and soldier. He didn't live long. World War II came along, and at age 33, "Jimmy" was killed in the Battle of San Peitro, Italy.

*This portrait of James Hodgins in uniform hangs in the Hodgins-Berardo Arena. The painting is unsigned.*

Jimmy was born December 28, 1910 to James S. Hodgins (b. 1863 in Michigan; d. 1917 in Coleraine, MN) and Anna Matheson (b. 1880 in Canada; d. 1964 in Taconite, MN). His parents owned a hotel at Holman Village on the Mesabi Iron Range. When he was age seven, his father died. His mother was widowed with six children, including a four month old baby.

Mrs. Anne Hodgins lived with her family on Broadway Avenue in Taconite and had two boarders in 1920 (Federal census). She married a couple years later Joseph E. Skorich (b. 1888 in Yugoslavia; d. 1964 in Taconite), and he

adopted her children plus they had one child of their own. The kids went to school in Taconite and attended Greenway High School. James continued living with his parents as a young adult. The 1940 census recorded that he owned a tavern. He did not marry.

James enlisted in the war effort...it appears he did so in Texas...and was a private in the U.S Army's 143<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of the 36<sup>th</sup> Division. According to Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org>) "The 36th Infantry Division, composed of the 141st, 142nd and 143rd Infantry Regiments, landed in North Africa, 13 April 1943, and trained at Arzew and Rabat. It was assigned to the VI Corps, Fifth Army, but attached to North African Theater of Operations U.S. Army (NATOUA) for supply.

The division, under command of Major General Fred L. Walker, first saw action in the Italian Campaign on September 9, 1943, when it landed by sea at Paestum, and fought in the Battle of Salerno against intense German opposition. The Germans launched counterattacks on September 12<sup>th</sup> through the 14<sup>th</sup>, but the 36th repulsed them with the aid of air support and naval gunfire. The platoon then advanced slowly, securing the area from Agropoli to Altavilla. After a brief rest, the 36th returned to combat on November 15th. It captured Mount Maggiore, Mount Lungo, and the village of San Pietro, despite strong enemy positions and severe winter weather.

James died on December 15, 1943. His mother was contacted by a friend, Sgt. Grady Fowler, who said James "was hit by an artillery shell and was killed instantly...he met his death in the battle of San Pedro [sic], Italy, in which we lost most of our Company. In fact, out of 900 men who fought this battle, only 180 came back." [Itasca Iron News Vol 41, No 11, front page].

# The Itasca Iron News

COLERAINE, MINNESOTA, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1944

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A documentary film, *The Battle of San Pietro*, was directed by John Huston. Huston and his crew were attached to the U.S Army's 143<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of the 36<sup>th</sup> Division. The film was released in 1945. In 1991, *The Battle of San Pietro* was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant".

[\[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Battle\\_of\\_San\\_Pietro\]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Battle_of_San_Pietro)

The following summer, continues the article in the Itasca Iron News previously cited, "[James'] burial was in one of our well-established American Military Cemeteries in the area in which he was serving, with Protestant burial services conducted at the grave by an Army Chaplain. The cemetery is well cared for and under the immediate supervision of our military authorities. A temporary marker with an appropriate inscription thereon has been erected, and the grave properly recorded."

Almost four years later, Pvt. James Hodgins' body was sent home. This is the obituary published October 17, 1948 for the funeral service at Peterson Chapel in Coleraine, and burial at Lake View Cemetery [clipping courtesy of Itasca Historical Society]:

## Taconite News

### Services To Be Held For Pvt. James Hodgins

Services will be held Saturday at two o'clock in the village hall at Taconite for Pvt. James Hodgins, killed in action in Italy Dec. 15, 1943. His body will be brought to Coleraine on the noon train Friday. He will be at the Peterson chapel until 11 a. m. Saturday then brought to Taconite. Interment will be at Lakeview cemetery, Coleraine. Rev. Payfer of the Coleraine and Taconite Methodist churches, will conduct the service.

Full military honors will be in charge of the American Legion Post, Taconite, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Bovey.

James Hodgins was 33 at the time of his death. He attended Taconite and Greenway schools. Before entering the service he operated a confectionery store, was village clerk, and manager of the hockey and baseball teams.

Survivors include his mother, Mrs. Joe Skorich, brother William, sisters, Mrs. Elmer Stowe of Coleraine, Mrs. Clifford Lue, Superior, Wis., Mrs. Warren Johnson, Brainerd and Mrs. Art Sedoff of Stamford, Connecticut.

James Hodgins: son, brother, athlete, soldier. Hodgins-Berardo Arena is a memorial to his service.

See the film here: [https://archive.org/details/battle\\_of\\_san\\_pietro](https://archive.org/details/battle_of_san_pietro)

[See photos of San Pietro today](#)

Findagrave memorial here: [James J. Hodgins](#)

Do you have a photo or memory about James Hodgins to share?  
Rmail [webmaster@greenwayrec.org](mailto:webmaster@greenwayrec.org).

I I N 7 OCT. 1948