



Stratford Upon Avon? Avon, New York? Mrs. George Phoenix chose the first reference and Mr. Phoenix the second. Thereby they gave the name of Avon to a post office in 1879, which they operated at their home. The present location of Avon is one and a half miles northwest of the Phoenix home, from which the relocation of Avon became necessary due to the placement of a railroad track.

Beginning in 1879 the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad served Scotland, Tyndall, Springfield, and Running Water. As agriculture prospered, farmers and ranchers along the west side of Bon Homme County needed an outlet to markets for their livestock and grain crops. Responding, railroad officials established a branch line from Napa to Platte, purchasing land

from Martin Roose and a Mr. Johnson. Company employees began the work of grading, laying ties, and selling lots for homes and businesses. Land speculators appeared, and the town of Avon was born at its present location.

Some 500 men working on the railroad created a demand that was supplied by Joe Sterba when he opened a saloon. Quickly other businesses appeared, while homes came into place at the little village. By the winter of 1900 the present Clarion Building was finished to house Sterba's saloon. It was the first permanent, commercial building in Avon proper.

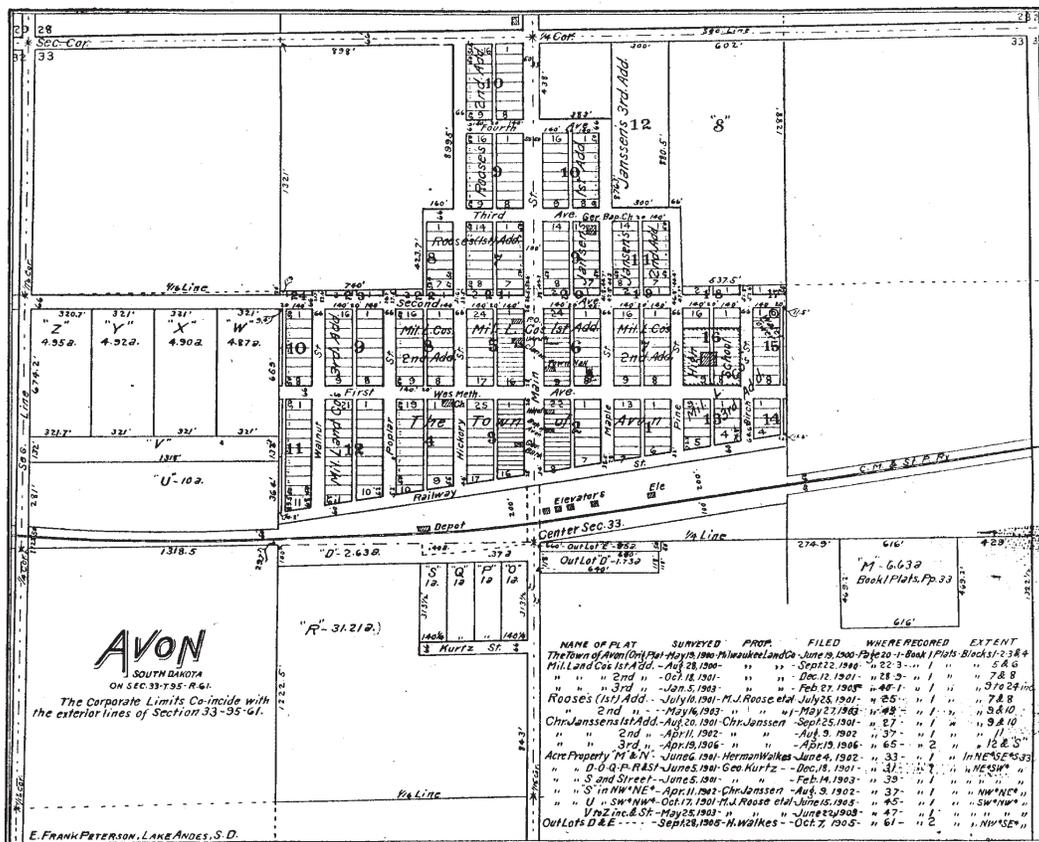
An article in the *Avon Clarion* dated March 14, 1901, described conditions in the town:

Sunshyne Thaler



First saloon in Avon, established in 1900 and operated by Joe Sterba. The building was built south of the railroad tracks before the town was platted. (COMPUTER RESTORATION FROM TWO-PIECE PHOTOCOPY USING ADOBE PHOTOSHOP.)

Sunshyne Thaler



April 26, 1910 (plat).

Avon, a beautiful and thriving little city in the western part of Bon Homme County, South Dakota, and on the new extension of Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad about 100 miles northwest of Sioux City, has, without exception, the brightest and most encouraging future of any town along this line. It has back of it one of the finest farming and stock raising countries on God's footstool, where crop failures are unknown, and covering, as it does, a distance of from ten to twenty-five miles on all sides.



Avon main street, 1902.

Avon



Avon main street, 1902.

Its past dates back but a short time. On August 26, 1900, the lots were sold here and at that time not a shingle was laid in the now flourishing little city. But the many natural advantages of the location attracted people here until the wild desolate prairie was soon converted into the present city of Avon, which is composed of the following business houses: 4 general merchandise stores; 2 hardware stores; 5 farm implement dealers; 1 bank; 1 hotel; 1 furniture store; 2 lumberyards; 4 grain elevators; 1 livery barn; 1 meat market; 1 harness shop; 1 tinshop; 1 newspaper; 1 blacksmith shop; 2 saloons; 2 dray lines; and 3 livestock dealers.



Avon's first Fourth of July celebration, 1901. Looking north on Main Street.

Sunshyne Thaler



West side of Main Street in Avon, 1901. Joe Sterba's saloon.

The four 1901 general merchandise stores mentioned above were operated by C. J. Klewer; C. L. Einkopf; Hauck, Maag, and Mikuska; and H. F. Hornstra. The post office was housed in Klewer's store. The two hardware stores were owned by F. P. Melvin, who also dealt in bicycles, and by Wittmeier and Goehring. The five farm implement dealers included Martin Roose; E. Sunderlin; Hauck, Maag, and Mikuska; Wittmeier and Goehring; and F. P. Melvin.

Avon's German Bank, located in Melvin's Hardware Store, offered general banking services. Bernard Brandt was the cashier. The Hotel de Avon was a first-class lodging house that operated at a profit, with P. McLane as its proprietor. The furniture store was owned by Albert Vauk, and the lumberyards by the Ptak brothers and by Morgan and Colburn. The four grain elevators, which did a booming business, were

owned by the I. Knudson and Company, Western Grain Company, J. P. McMahon and Company, and the partners Terwilliger and Dwight. The single livery barn was managed by W. H. Mentor, and the meat market by A. G. Rauch.

Leo Rauch operated the harness shop, Christ T. Reister the tinshop, and S. W. Luke the blacksmith shop (employing two men). J. Sterba and J. Pritzkau's Company owned the two saloons. James Rehurek and Will Stewart operated the two dray lines--the Avon Dray Line and the City Dray Line, respectively. H. T. Giedd, I. Knudson and Company, and J. P. McMahon and Company were livestock dealers. The *Avon Clarion* was (and in 1993 remained) the town's only newspaper.

In addition to business establishments listed above were those of three builders and contractors--J. L. White, Skeel and Lutz, and

Avon

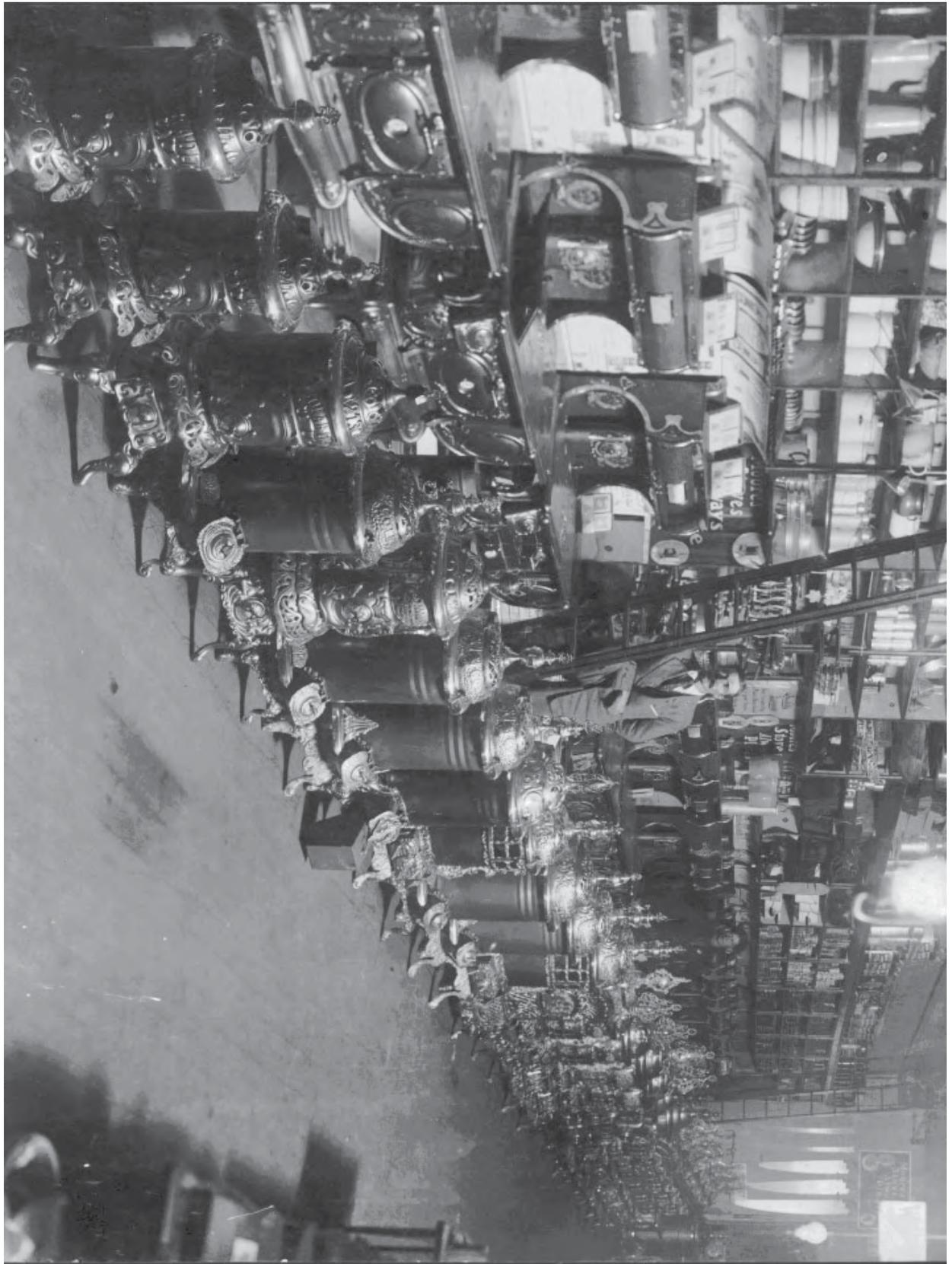


Avon's Main Street, 1902.



Saloon in Avon, 1909, proprietors E. M. Berndt and "Moxy" Pritzkau behind bar.

Sunshyne Thaler



Avon

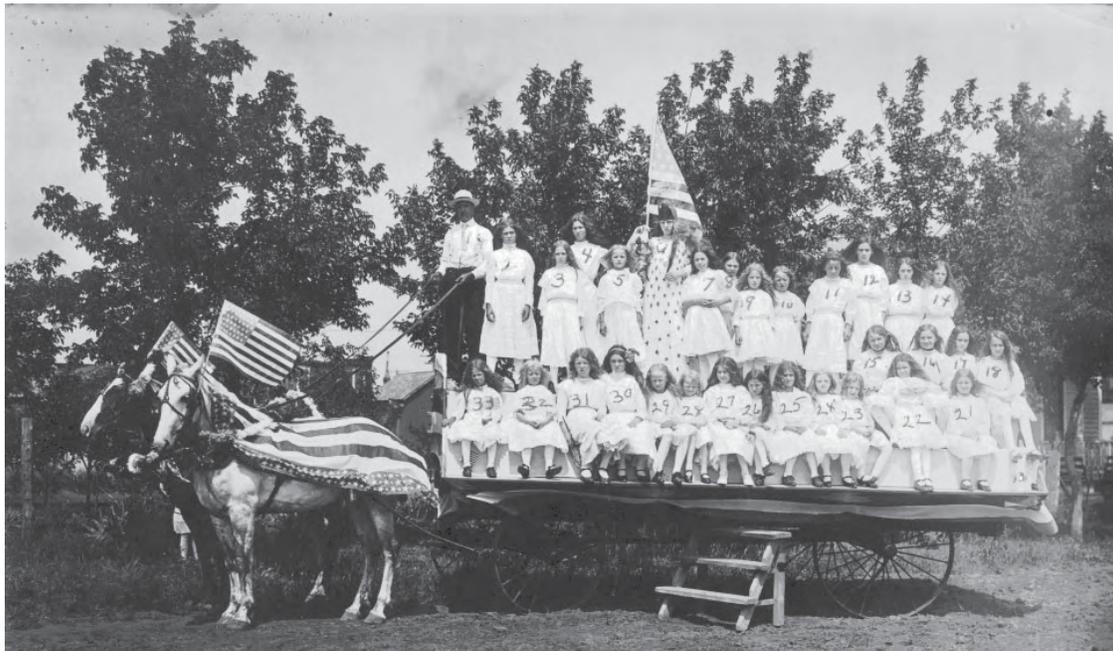
John C. Saxer. George Walker ran a barber-shop.

Between August, 1900, and January, 1902, Avon grew quickly. New enterprises included a city jail (\$265), a barn (\$50) for the hotel (\$3,500), and numerous municipal improvements (\$28,275). Residents constructed a Wesleyan Methodist Church with a parsonage, and from elsewhere brought a building to house the congregation of a German Baptist Church. A predominantly Protestant disposition of residents was apparent (described below).

From the outset their principal focus was service for the burgeoning agricultural community that surrounded Avon. Farm to market roads were barely passable. Horse and wagon transportation was at best slow and cumbersome, but Avon provided a link by rail for both freight and passengers.

Steadily through the twentieth century automobiles and trucks replaced trains as primary means of transportation, and facilitated mobility that diminished the need for so many business establishments. In the year 1990 the Avon meat market closed its doors. Only one lumberyard remained--operated by Schultz Building Center and Ready Mix--and there was no farm implement dealer. The Community Bank and the *Avon Clarion* still functioned, as did two saloons (Stockman's Bar and Kenny's Bar) and a single livestock dealer at Avon Sales Barn (dealing in hogs, cattle, and occasionally horses.) BJ's Drug Store served as a pizza and coffee shop, but there was no pharmacist on duty. Three beauticians, one lawyer, and two insurance agents operated their businesses on Main Street. There were two furniture and appliance stores (operated by

Opposite page - Avon Hardware Company, W. G. Moersfelder, Manager--1908.



Float ridden by young ladies ready for Fourth of July parade, 1907 or 1908. Horses driven by John W. Van Gerpen, Avon.



1912 view showing top of school two blocks east of Main Street in Avon. Many of these buildings are still in use in the 1990s.



1907 Fourth of July Celebration. Horses and buggy belonged to Henry Unruh. Man holding reins is Chris Bangert, Mayor; other man is Mr. Egan, speaker of the day. Minor Store in background, south end of Main Street.

Avon

Powers and by Ludd and Son); three service stations (D and L Oil Company, Avon Standard, and North View Quick Stop); one dining place (North View Cafe); and a motel with laundromat service (North View Motel). Ron's Market supplied consumers living in the Avon and surrounding business territory with meat and groceries. Dave's Locker also sold meat and served farmers' meat-processing needs.

Steve Merkwan's cream-buying station, which operated for 50 years, shut down after the proprietor's death in 1990. Merkwan also had managed a bowling alley for 19 years. Avon Enterprises, which made garments for welders out of leather and heavy-weight canvas as well as fire curtains out of fiberglass materials, was one of the few sources of employment in Avon. Two grain eleva-

tors also remained--the Farmer's Co-op and the Cargill Company. Other Avon businesses and services still in operation included Tjeerdsma and Steckler Trucking Companies; Northwestern Public Service Company; J. D. Construction; Lagendyk's Variety Store; Jurens Repair; Jurens Electronics; Hubner's Ranch Supply; Ferrellgas; Schuh Electric and Schuh Enterprises; Mensch's Greenhouse; Elliott's Plumbing; Dutch's Corner; Southside Lawn and Garden; and Crosby and Jaeger Funeral Homes, Inc. Businesses that had vanished included the livery barn, tin shop, blacksmith shop, dray lines, and milliners, all of whose services had become obsolete.

While serving the needs of farmers and ranchers through business establishments over the years, Avon residents pursued for-



John Thesenga's barber shop, 1911, west side of Avon's Main Street. L to R, John Thesenga, Dave Haley, Harold Reaney, Sandy Hinzman (Shoe Shine Boy).

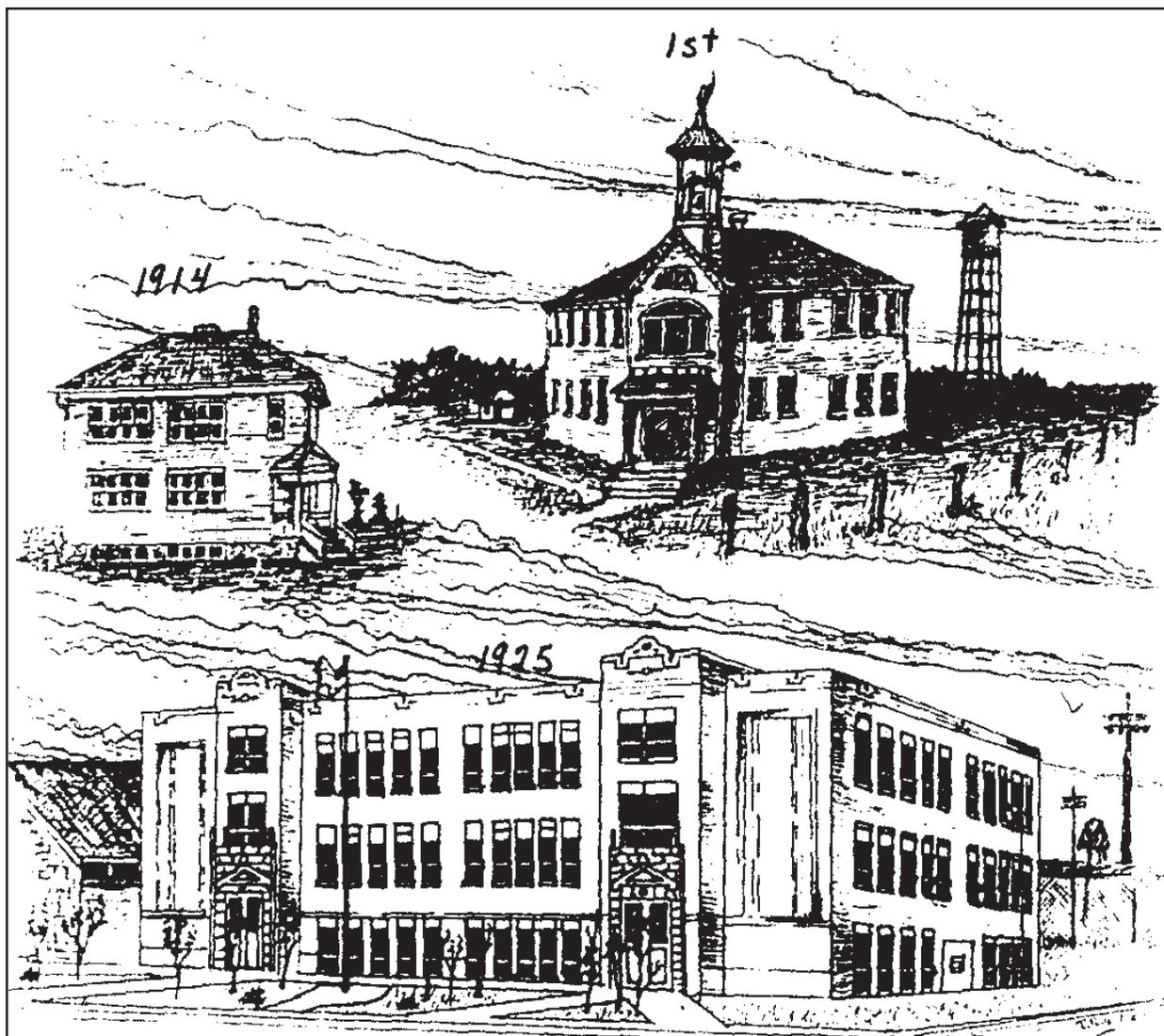
Sunshyne Thaler

mal education with vigor, at no small cost in effort and financial expense. The earliest schools in the Avon area were known as "subscription schools," supported by fees. For rural residents, classes were offered at private homes until schoolhouses could be built. Supplies, such as slates and books, were difficult to come by. Teachers simply were forced to be creative, without much material support. Subjects considered essential by parents and legislators were reading, writing, and ciphering. Beyond these, each

district school board could add other subjects as desired.

Through the years 1862 to 1875, territorial legislators levied a tax of one dollar per capita for education, but public administrators collected no funds. They assessed fines for the illegal sale of intoxicants and marked them for school use, but fines supplied very limited revenue. Settlers operated school programs on a shoestring until federal land grants finally came through.

Credit is due William H. H. Beadle and



These are the three buildings that have housed students and teachers since 1903. Picture drawn by Todd Rauch in 1989.

Avon

several other guests in the home of Reverend Stewart Sheldon at Yankton for Thanksgiving dinner in 1879, when they discussed the preservation of a school fund. Their insistence that no acre of land granted by federal officials for the support of public education should be sold for less than ten dollars, plus the effort of delegates at state-making constitutional conventions to seek twice the number of acres traditionally assigned by the federal Ordinance of 1785, produced a reliable source of funding. In Dakota Territory, as well as in the State of South Dakota, sections 16 and 36 of every township were reserved for the support of public education. As a result, each district in Bon Homme County received a generous grant of land to produce revenue by lease or sale to support an independent school district system.

Prior to 1903 in Avon, school grades one through eight met in a rented room behind the harness shop of A. G. Rauch. In May, 1903, members of a meeting voted to determine the size, cost, location, and construction plans for a schoolhouse. As originally constructed, the building measured 35 by 70 feet, and was two stories high. At a location very near the present school, in December, 1903, a school bell arrived, to the great joy of Avon residents. "The music of its tones was heard as the workers hauled it up to the building." Two months later, classes met in a nearly-finished structure, and on March 3, 1904, the school was in full swing. By September 15 enrollment numbered 80 students, and a month later was up to 100. In the ensuing years, enrollment figures fluctuated. In the late 1960s and 1970s Avon High School enrollment alone ran between 140 and 150. During the 1990 school year it fell to 69, while total enrollment for primary and secondary grades was 247.

A few years after the construction of the first Avon school in 1903, population increase required a larger facility, which was

completed in 1914, and all grades met there until 1925. In the late 1930s and 1940s, this additional building was used as dormitory space for students who lived at non-commutable distances. Its basement housed girls, the first floor a dining hall, and the second floor boys in need of living accommodations. Later this building became a residence for the superintendent, until it was torn down.

In 1925 a brick building was erected close to the street. It, too, became insufficient to meet the needs for space, and in 1960 a gymnasium-auditorium was constructed. The auditorium, which is still in use, has a seating capacity of about 800, and has a regulation-size basketball court. A kitchen and storage room are used to serve student lunches, as well as to serve community events. The original building was 80 feet by 100 feet, with an additional stage and lobby area. New above-ground locker rooms were added to the east side of the auditorium in 1980, increasing its size by an area 64 feet by 34 feet. The old gymnasium in the main building was remodeled in 1965 to accommodate three large classrooms, plus a shop room on the lower level. The former locker rooms were made into classrooms, while the second floor was divided into a large band and chorus room as well as a well-equipped science room. Part of the top floor, previously used as a stage, was remodeled into classrooms, a small study hall, and a library.

Pride in the Avon school is reflected not in a building but in support for excellent academic and athletic programs, which the school faculty maintains. Dropout rates are low, and a large percentage of Avon graduates pursue some form of higher education.

Pioneer life entailed many hardships in addition to devising a means of transportation and setting up a school system. Rugged individuals quickly found that community

cooperation, not individualism, was the best avenue to survival and success in an unforgiving and sometimes brutal environment. Out on the farms and ranches, harnessing natural resources was necessary; the failure to do so could cause the loss of property or life. For example, water--the staple of life--was very difficult to procure, unless settlers were lucky enough to find running streams or springs on their own property. The unlucky ones attempted a variety of methods. Some put eave spouts on roof edges to collect rain water, and stored it in barrels or cisterns. Some dug wells by hand, and bailed the water with buckets. Others dug deeper wells

by the use of horses to force augers deeper and deeper in the hope of striking a vein or artesian flow. Many put up windmills, which employed natural power to draw water from underground sources.

The community at Avon faced the same need for water, and developed a system that not only would serve the needs of individual residents, but also would protect the town from disaster by fire. The fear that fire could destroy a whole community of wooden buildings clustered together compelled Avon's founders to quickly install a waterworks system. In August, 1905, they pumped the first water into a tank, and laid the last piece of pipe. The tank



Laying sewer pipes on Avon's Main Street. The corner building was built about 1907 and is still being used for a grocery store--Ron's Market.

Avon



Mail carriers show off their rigs parked in front of post office and John Berends' shoe store. Frank Pelton's rig is in the middle.

measured 24 feet in diameter and 20 feet high, had a capacity of 2,000 gallons, and rested on a steel tower 100 feet high.

Gasoline engines kept the reservoir full until the late 1930s, when the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) began to supply electricity. Thereafter the water was pumped by a local plant until the 1970s, when the Rural Water System brought water from a central source that supplied the needs of both Bon Homme and Yankton counties.

Postal service, whose establishment in 1879 was responsible for the naming of Avon, always was a vital concern. Avon Post Office moved frequently before the construction and dedication of a permanent location in 1965. Its first location was a store owned by George B. Phoenix, about two and a half miles southwest of the present town. Later it was moved to a place northeast of Avon. When the Milwaukee Railroad laid its tracks

and county officials organized a township, the post office came to Main Street, where it remained until demographic change required the larger quarters at the present site. (From 1879 to 1990 Avon postmasters have included: George B. Phoenix, H. G. Wilson, George Wepking, Charles Klewer, Hayes Fulton, W. J. Robinson, P. J. Schroder, Albert Vauk, Lucy Berndt, Ezra Lamkee, Mary Hornstra, Leo Marek, Inez Haenfler, Clayton C. Fillaus, and Carol Jurrens.)

Rural Free Delivery (RFD) routes came into place in 1906 to enable farmers and ranchers to receive newspapers and letters daily. For the first time, they could acquire information of all types without leaving home. From the outset, RFD carried parcel post, including packages from mail order outlets such as Sears, Roebuck, and Company.

Postmaster Robinson published the notice that routes out of Avon would start on

May 1, 1906, and that patrons should secure mail boxes and place them in such a way that mail carriers could deliver without getting out of their rigs. Mail carriers were required to pass a Civil Service examination, to assure their competence to deal with the hazards of the job. According to the *Avon Clarion*, "Mail carriers started out under very unfavorable circumstances to locate their respective routes. Muddy roads made it no very pleasant duty." Carriers were destined to confront muddy roads for many years. Their rigs ranged from square boxes on wheels pulled by horses to modern-day vehicles. Competition between carriers was keen, each trying to devise the best rig. When in 500

B.C., historian Herodotus wrote, "There is no mortal thing faster than these messengers . . . neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds," he foretold the dedication of the early carriers in Avon, South Dakota.

Means of communication other than mail service reached rural communities. Travelers bearing news were always welcome, whether they rode horses or came by train. Sometimes the arrival of a train became a social event for people anxious to hear the latest news outside town. In 1902 a new communication device entered Avon. Two competing enterprises, the Missouri River



Building the Washington Highway, Avon, October 14-15, 1914. Outfit owned by R. T. Berry, in overalls and white shirt. Man in suit, second from right, was County Commissioner Charles Dirks.

Avon

Company and the Dakota Central Telephone Company, vied for the opportunity of establishing the first phone system, and both contributed. The Missouri Company pushed ahead with its work in the Avon region. During the previous year, however, the Farmers' Independent Telephone Company had been organized south of Avon and its managers entered an arrangement with the Dakota Central Telephone Company. With competing enterprises available to establish telephone service, several developments occurred. A "central" office appeared in Minow Brothers Store, and in 1903 Miss Anna Hayes began her "Hello" tasks as an operator. In 1906 a shipment of 60 telephones arrived at Avon under the name of the German Telephone Company of Bon Homme County, according to the *Clarion*, having been ordered through the Ptak Lumber Company. Subsequently a night operator was added, and the Avon area had 24-hour service to deal with emergencies.

The *Clarion* office made connections with both telephone companies, and printed patron's numbers. The editor encouraged readers to use the telephone to report local happenings, promising to print the news in the "Great Family Regulator." Thus the phone and the press became united.

"First came the pioneer, then the settlement, then the press," wrote J. Leonard Jennewein and Jane Boorman in *Dakota Panorama*. Early in territorial years newspapers appeared at Yankton, Vermillion, and Sioux Falls. As other chapters in this volume indicate, newspapers soon were published at Bon Homme, Springfield, Tyndall, and Scotland. When settlement approached the western edge of Bon Homme County, on February 7, 1901, the *Avon Clarion* went into print, and in 1991 it remained a vigorous--albeit sometimes controversial--publication. Its first editor was Hayes Fulton, followed by W. J. Robinson and Sons in 1903. Other editors

included the Kinsella Brothers, John Stout, L. A. Robinson, James Kirk, Jr., William Dynes, George Corey, Clair Brodeen, and (as of January, 1991) Jackson Brodeen. The *Clarion* first was issued from the building that housed Sterba's Saloon. Temporarily it was suspended in the mid-1950s, as the area suffered from drought and business depression. When the Brodeens moved to Avon in 1956, they published the *Ruralite*, a shopper's guide, and a year later restarted the *Clarion*, with 205 subscriptions. By 1991 the list grew to nearly 1,000.

Churches and their congregations always have played a large role in this community. Five of them warrant inclusion: the First Baptist Church, Avon Wesleyan Church, First Presbyterian Church, Trinity Presbyterian Church, and Zion Lutheran Church

The Baptist Church has roots in a congregation formed in 1886, when the D. H. Plaatje and H. Schroeder families came from Aplington, Iowa, to settle. A Sunday School met in a Methodist Episcopal Church building, located at the site of the Presbyterian Cemetery southeast of Avon. On December 15, 1890, Baptists organized a congregation, then built a chapel, initially calling it the First German Baptist Church. In 1892 they changed the name to the First German Baptist Church of Avon, and continued to include an ethnic identification in the name until the 1940s, when it was abbreviated to First Baptist Church.

Its original house of worship measured 22 by 32 feet, was valued at \$1,500, and was dedicated on December 20, 1891. A plot of two acres, donated by August Voigt, also included a cemetery. D. H. Plaatje and August Voigt became Deacons; August Voigt, Clerk; and Folkert D. Van Gerpen, Treasurer. Trustees included Reinhold Voigt, Folkert D. Van Gerpen, and Jan T. Schroeder. Reverend C. Olthoff, with the help of H.

Sunshyne Thaler

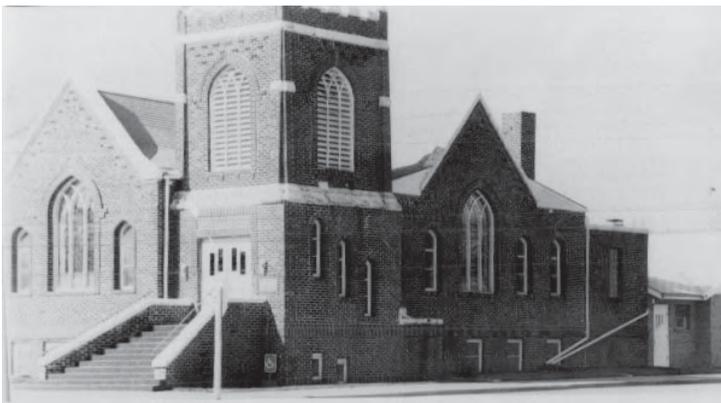
Baptisms, weddings, funerals, weekly fellowship--moments in individual family histories have taken place in the buildings that have housed the churches of Avon.

top to bottom - Friedensburg Bible Church, Rural Avon



Danzig Baptist Church, Rural Avon.

Trinity Presbyterian Church.



First Presbyterian Church.

Avon



Lutheran Church, LCMS.



right - The Wesleyan Methodist Church of Avon is shown with the manse that was George McGovern's early home.



right - Wesleyan Church.



left - First Baptist Church.

Sunshyne Thaler

Schroeder and later W. Van Gerpen, supplied spiritual leadership. Until 1926 ministers conducted services only in German language, but in 1928 changed to the exclusive use of English language.

In 1901 congregation members moved their little country church to the town of Avon, and later the same year constructed a parsonage at a cost of \$1,400. To accommodate a growing congregation, they built a larger structure, which they dedicated in March of 1906. They sold the old church house to city officials, who converted it into a city hall and fire station.

Considerable improvements came to both church and parsonage through the years, and in 1926 a new parsonage was dedicated. After this facility served the needs of Baptists for nearly 60 years, on June 23, 1985, Baptists opened a new sanctuary at the corner of Fourth and Main, which they dedicated "To the Glory of God."

They observed a hundredth anniversary for the First Baptist Church on October 12, 13, and 14 in 1990 with a variety of events. Included were a fellowship banquet on Friday night, a gathering to honor senior citizens on Saturday afternoon, and a pageant featuring highlights of the church's hundred years on Saturday night. Former pastors conducted services all day Sunday. Balloons were launched at noon. There was a catered dinner in the Avon school auditorium. Festivities concluded with a musical-request program in the church on Sunday night.

The Avon Wesleyan Church had a similar history. It was organized in 1880 with nine charter members: Mary A. Baker, Lois Baker, N. E. Jennings, M. R. Jennings, Isaac Luke, Rebecca Luke, Alonzo Luke, Howard Wichersham, and Isa Wichersham. Reverend N. E. Jennings came as the first pastor, when services began in June of 1880, at an annual salary

of \$17, raised to \$107.67 by 1885. Church membership grew to 60 by 1892. The original structure was a sod house, located one and a half miles south and one mile east of Avon. In 1885 Freeman and Mary Hayward donated land one and a half miles south of town, where Wesleyans constructed a frame church with a value of \$800. Subsequently the congregation purchased two lots in the city of Avon, and in 1901 moved their church building from the Hayward property to its present site.

The first trustees were Lewis Baker, Issac Luke, and Alonzo Luke, elected in 1882. Howard Wickersham and Charles Hayward were the first persons to receive Exhorter's licenses. Their role was to earnestly exhort others to listen to the word of God, and to examine their personal commitments to the faith.

Former U. S. Senator George McGovern's father, Reverend J. C. McGovern, served here as pastor during the 1920s, when the Wesleyan Church was rebuilt and enlarged. While rebuilding was in progress, services were held in the Opera House, above Ed Weidenbach's store (in 1991 Powers' Used Furniture Store). The parsonage was enlarged at that time, too, and was used until an additional lot was purchased in 1965 and a replacement built. Wesleyans then moved the old parsonage across the street to the east. During the 1970s this building was preserved and exhibited as the home of presidential candidate George McGovern, but in the wake of his defeat in 1972 it was moved to another location, and later destroyed.

Avon Wesleyan Methodist Church became Avon Wesleyan Church at the time of its merger with the Pilgrim Holiness Church in 1968. Reverend and Mrs. Willard Stone served as religious leaders for the congregation in 1991.

The two Presbyterian Churches came into being within two years of each other.

Avon



NorthVue Cafe and Quick Stop, Ray and Audrey Voigt, proprietors.



Farmers' Elevator.

Avon,

circa 1994



Meadowview Manor.



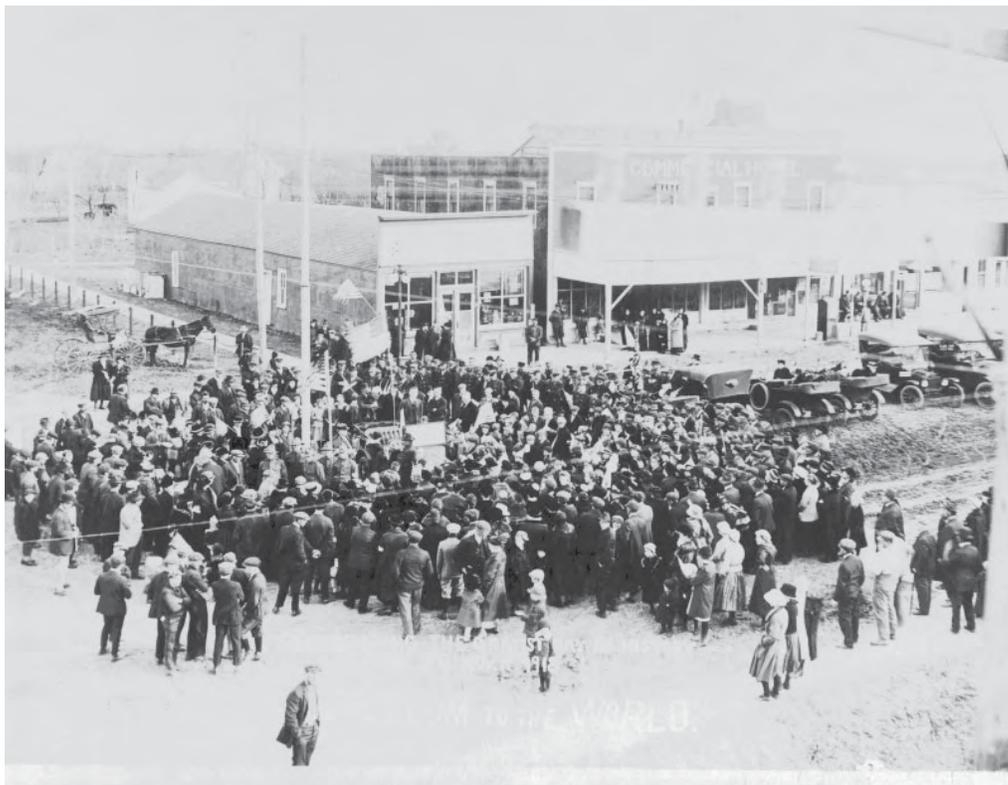
Cargill Elevator.



left - Telephone Office, Avon City Library, Avon Enterprises.

Avon Auditorium, home of the Avon Pirates, built in the early 1960s.





“Celebrating in Avon the greatest day in American history, November 11, 1918.” Northeast corner of south block of Main Street; large building, commercial hotel.

The first of these, originally called Avon Presbyterian Church but changed to First Presbyterian Church, was organized May 3, 1911, to supply Presbyterian ministry in German language on Sunday mornings and in English language in the evening services. First officers included Ed Christjans and A. C. Hanson, Elders; Dr. J. C. Greenfield and Herman Walkes, Deacons; and J. O. Smith, Henry Klock, and W. P. J. Hagerty, Trustees. They purchased a lot from John Berends, Sr., and on December 15, 1911, hired Arthur Eggers to move a rural German Reformed Church building onto the lot at a cost of \$90. The congregation retained its original organization as a German-English entity until

June 24, 1913, when the union dissolved.

Members who remained in the congregation with a disposition to conduct their services in English language renamed their church the First Presbyterian, and arranged its inclusion in the Sioux Falls Presbytery on June 22, 1914. Congregation members voted to erect a new building in 1916, and completed it for dedication in 1918. They added an educational wing, which they dedicated in 1965.

Trinity Presbyterian Church of Avon came into existence June 24, 1913, at the division of the German-English congregation. Former members of the German-English congregation who favored the pursuit

Avon

of spiritual life in a different atmosphere charted a different course under the Presbytery of George in Iowa, which was included in the Synod of the West. This Synod came into being by action of the national General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in 1912, to accommodate German-speaking families across a five-state area. The George Presbytery appointed a commission to act on the matter, meeting for the first time in Lennox, South Dakota, on June 24, 1913. Reverend August Cramer and a committee from Avon presented a petition, and on that day a new congregation was organized and named German Presbyterian Church of Avon.

Members took immediate steps to se-

cure property for a church building and manse, and from Dan M. Lehan purchased property that included a large house suitable for a manse, and enough space south of the house upon which to build a church. The first service and program were held on December 24, 1913. Reverend Cramer appeared as supply minister and later was installed as pastor.

Charter members included: Mr. and Mrs. Ede Christjans, Mr. and Mrs. G. A. Vilhauer, Mrs. Rika Cobie, Mr. and Mrs. Christian Janssen, Mrs. August Cramer, Mr. and Mrs. David E. Christjans, David Christjans, Mr. and Mrs. George Oorlog, Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Haenfler, Mr. and Mrs. John Berends, Martin Johnson, Mr. and Mrs.



1920--Avon--lightning struck Cap Steckler's elevator. John Burbeck's elevator in foreground.

Sunshyne Thaler



Remains of the house in which George McGovern was born. In the 1970s it was preserved as a museum but was moved from its site west of Avon's Main Street and eventually damaged by fire.

William Bangert, Walter Bangert, and Laura Bangert. In 1951, when German language was abandoned in the services, the congregation took the new name of Trinity Presbyterian Church of Avon. Members began work to remodel the church building in 1955, adding a new, front entrance so that steps leading up to the sanctuary could be enclosed and thus made safer and more convenient. The basement also was renovated and beautified. In 1983 they removed the bell tower from the church and constructed a bell tower with bulletin board alongside.

Through the years, members of this congregation had kept the buildings in good repair, but, realizing the need for a new manse, they replaced it with a beautiful ranch style one in 1958. Many hours of donated

effort made this structure possible.

From 1980 to 1983 a three-church "yoking" took place to tie the First Presbyterian and Trinity Presbyterian churches of Avon to the Wagner Presbyterian Church, using the Trinity Presbyterian manse under an agreement by which members of the First Presbyterian Church would share half the maintenance expenses. In 1983 the Wagner Church withdrew from the yoking, however, and a two-church parish was formed with one resident minister. The combined congregation became part of the Presbytery of Sioux Falls, with Reverend James Goble serving as its pastor.

Lutheran services were conducted for the first time in Bon Homme County early in the 1880s. Because the few scattered

Avon

Lutherans in the Avon area could not afford to build a house of worship, they held services in their homes for many years. Pastor Eickhoff, a circuit rider from the Scotland-Kaylor area, served this group, whose members finally constructed a church building in 1889, four miles southeast of Avon at a cost of \$418.35. The church was dedicated to the Triune God in September of that year. Pastor Eickhoff served until 1890. Pastor Ehlen replaced him, while also serving as pastor in Scotland and Kaylor as well as in Avon until 1898.

In 1893 the congregation incorporated its members according to the laws of the state of South Dakota as the Zion Lutheran Church. Later, in the fall of 1897, they built a parsonage next to the little country church. Pastor H. L. Lang was the first resident minister, serving to 1902. Pastor Herman Amend replaced him, and after seven years was replaced by G. W. Steinmeyer, when the parsonage moved to Avon proper. (This is the present home of Jarvis Winckler.) Members sold the church building in the country to Harold Reaney, and it remains a home to



1992--destruction of the building which once housed Ed Weidenbach's Fair Store and the Opera House. Constructed early in the 1900s.

Sunshyne Thaler

Lloyd Petersen. Pastor Steinmeyer served the Avon Lutheran community until 1926.

In May of the following year, Pastor O. W. Mathies arrived in Avon, but died a year later. In January, 1929, members of the congregation supported the construction of the present church, and Reverend Otto Pinnt was installed. Members dedicated the new church in April. Pastor Pinnt served the congregation well for 24 years. During the Depression years, his salary was so low that he was forced to enter the dairy business to support his family, but he remained loyal to the congregation.

Twelve members organized a Ladies' Aid society in 1927, and joined the international Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) in the mid-1940s. The local LWML grew to a membership of 30 by the year 1991.

Reverend Rudolph Hildebrandt and Reverend Howard Mueller served this Lutheran congregation in the 1950s and 1960s, when Reverend John Rische arrived. During his pastorate, Tyndall and Avon formed a dual parish. Members became discouraged after sending 18 calls for a replacement, to no avail. Finally, Reverend Terry Naasz, a native South Dakotan, arrived and served for six years. After his departure to Aberdeen, it took a full year to find another replacement—Reverend Alan Klatt. During his pastorate the church was moved from the west to the east side of the street, and individual Sunday School rooms, a parish hall, and a large entrance were added. Rededication was scheduled for September 30, 1990. Volunteers worked long hours in preparation, meeting the deadline. Lutherans observed Rededication Day with an outdoor service for the laying of the cornerstone. The church was filled with friends from town, from neighboring churches, and from a distance to rejoice with the congregation.

In May, 1991, Reverend Klatt was called

to Sioux Falls. The parsonage stood empty for six weeks before Pastor Tom Phillips was ordained and installed. He immediately re-instituted Bible classes and set into motion plans for a centennial celebration in the congregation in 1993.

An outlying country church has been closely associated with the Avon community. Originally called either the Danzig Baptist Church or the Emmanuel Creek Baptist Church, located eight or nine miles east of the town, it was organized on March 1, 1876, when 27 persons gathered at the home of Ludwig Helvig to form a German Baptist congregation. Reverend Johann Kohrs became the first pastor. The territory it served was determined by the establishment of groups or stations. Danzig Station opened when Reverend John Wendt was the leader from 1877 to 1882. Scotland and Plum Creek Station began during Reverend F. Reichle's nine-year stay from 1882 to 1891. The Tyndall Station evolved during the three-year service of Reverend W. Paul and the five-year service of Reverend Scholz. Pastors used German language in their services for many years, but gradually they introduced English language at both the Tyndall and Danzig locations.

During Reverend A. W. Lang's stay from 1918 to 1931, extensive building programs included a new parsonage in Tyndall, a new building at Danzig, and remodeling of the church at Tyndall. Reverend A. Broeckel served four years during the Great Depression and, following him, Reverend A. W. Lang served a second term for three years. While Reverend Itterman was the pastor, Emmanuel Creek Baptist Church took the new name of Tyndall Baptist Church.

When the time came to observe a 75th anniversary, the Reverend Walter Stein was the pastor (1950-1955). The following four years brought the ordination of Reverend Rubin Herrmann, the adoption of a constitu-

Avon

tion for the congregation, and the remodeling of the Danzig Church basement. Additional remodeling came while Reverend David Zimmerman was the pastor (1960-1967).

Records fail to reveal when Emmanuel Creek Baptist members transferred to Tyndall, but together the two groups formed a substantial congregation. Recent pastors have included reverends Penner, Den Unruh, Alvin Auch, Dan Van Gerpen, Henry Lang, Jason Haas, Henry Lang, and Harry Johnson.

Members have continued to work to beautify the building by carpeting the sanctuary and padding the pews. In 1993 it survives as a place of comfort to the congregation.

For its location along South Dakota Highway 50 and its continued service to farmers and ranchers at the western edge of Bon Homme County, Avon is among the pioneering towns of the county most likely to survive. It represents a population of varied ethnic heritage and religious beliefs.



1992--Power's new building under construction, to be used as a furniture and appliance store.