

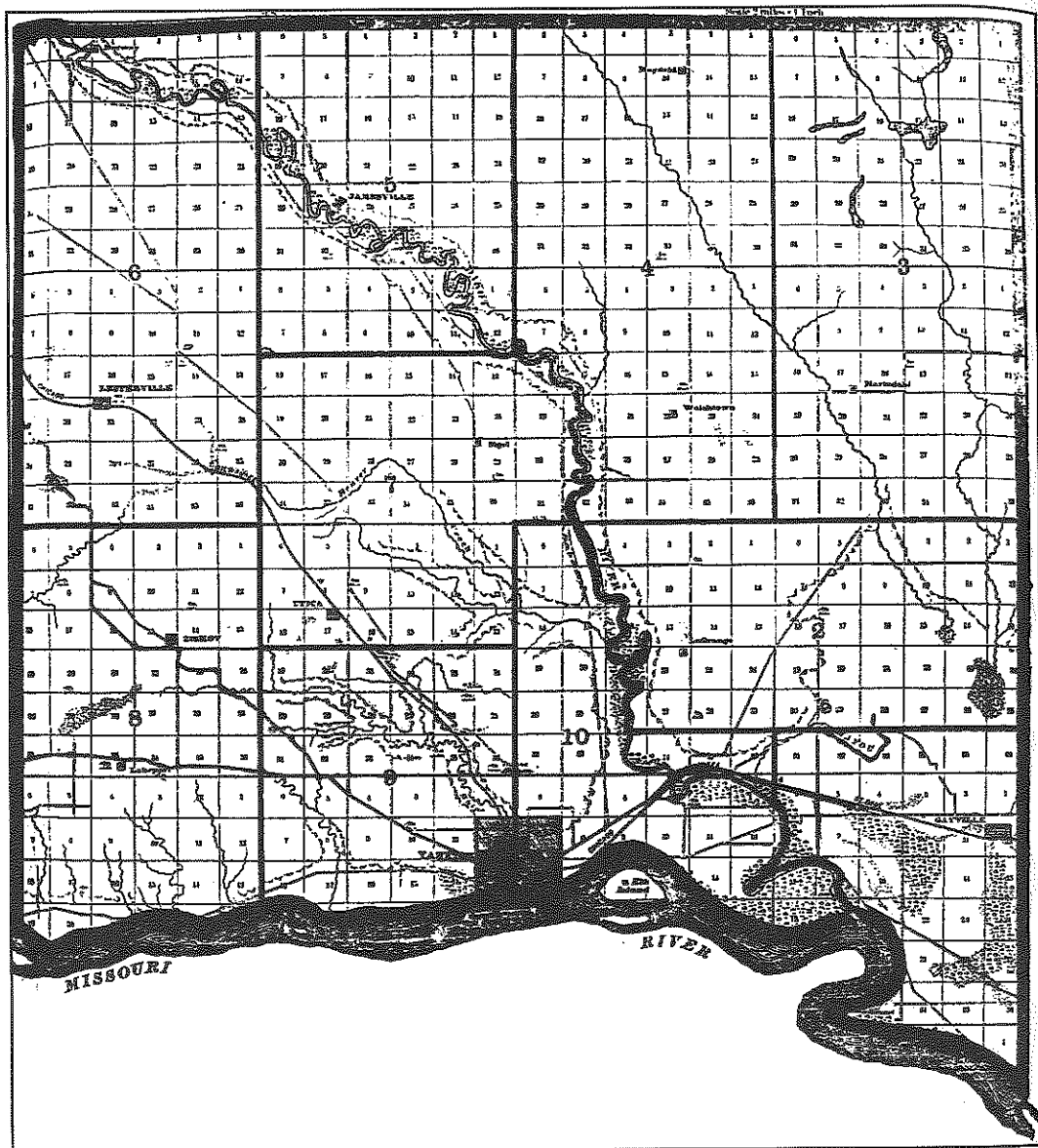
Yankton County, Then and Now

The Sioux City to Fort Randall Road entered Yankton County through shallow lake country pocked with residue from long-past Missouri River floods. Soon after bypassing a slightly higher elevation which would in 1873 host the village of Gayville, travelers encountered the Dakota (James) River. The original military crossing of the James as shown on Lieutenant G.K. Warren's 1856-1857 map appears to have been at a gravel bottomed site probably shaped by geological terrace deposits a very few miles north of where the Greenway Ferry would soon operate. Later still, the Stanage Ferry and then Van Osdel's Ferry provided options.

William P. Lyman built Greenway's Ferry and Trading Post in 1857 for Frost, Todd, and Company. A sign marks the site about two miles northeast of Yankton on Whiting Drive (Old Highway 50). John Stanage began operating his ferry one mile downriver in July 1859, and some time later Abram Van Osdel offered his services near an oxbow closer to the mouth of the James. The three men owned property adjacent to the east bank of the slow-moving meandering river.

John Stanage was first farmer on the James and friend of the Yanktons. He had retired from the military and with his wife and two children arrived at his claim in 1859 with two yoke of oxen, two new wagons, a few cows, a breaking plow and adequate provisions for survival. By October that year, ten log cabins, one dugout, twenty-seven white men, four white women and five children composed the Stanage neighborhood. In 1863, General Alfred Sully chose the Stanage Ferry to transport his army across the river because the site provided good camping privileges. The camp site became a mail drop on the Military Road.

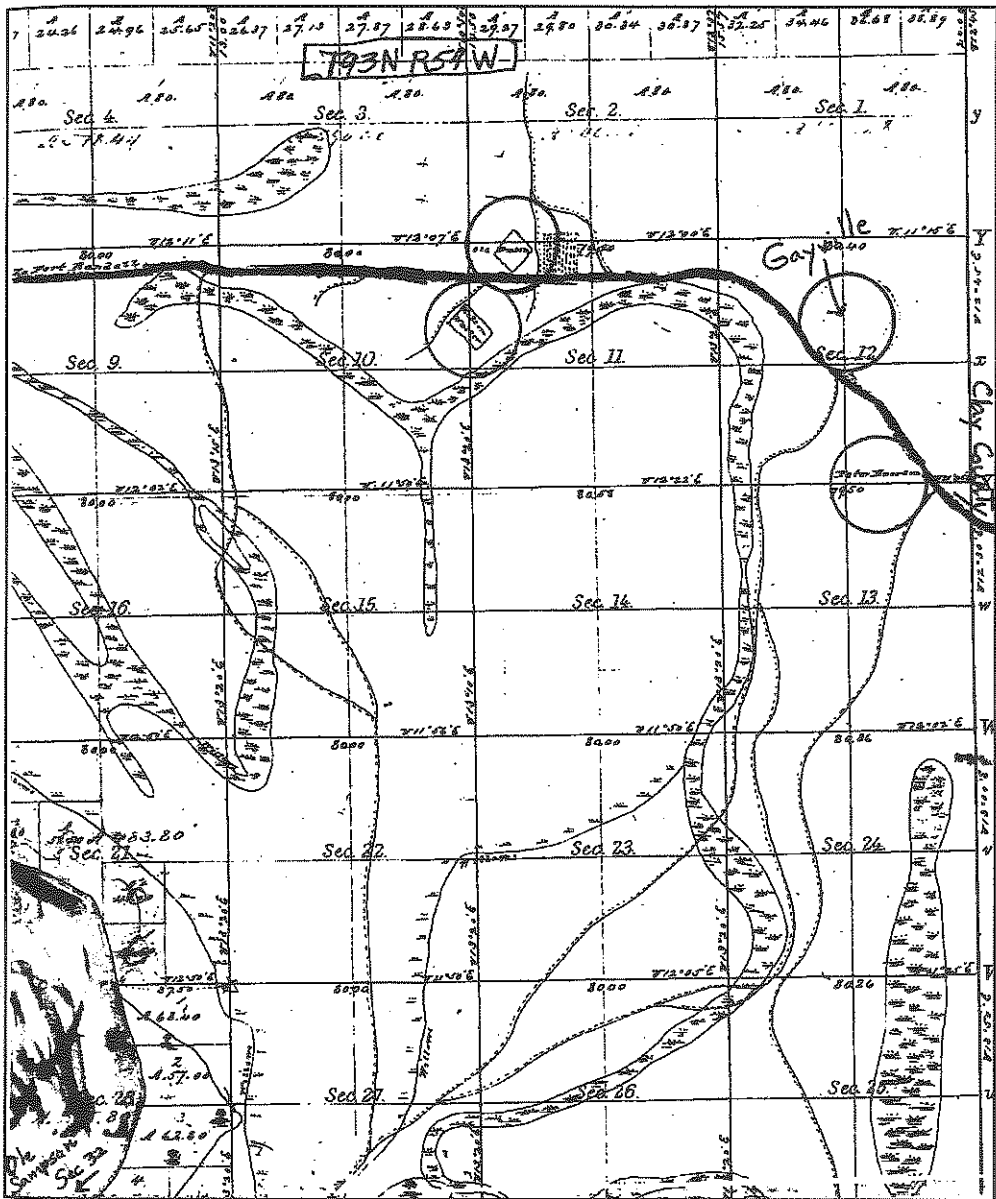
Neighbor Felix LeBlanc, born 1820 in Canada, was reluctant to give up well-paid employment as blacksmith and mechanic at Yankton Agency and hired local character Gonzague Bourret, nicknamed "Old Dakota," to hold and improve his claim in his absence. To the neighborhood's amusement, Bourret resented the regular visits required of Mrs. LeBlanc and her children as he had no use for women and preferred his own cooking to hers!



Andreas Atlas of Dakota 1884. Note Gayville (far lower right on railroad); Lakeport (far left on Military Road) and Ziskov both in Township 8; Utica and Sigel both in Township 7; Lesterville and Norway (far left upper corner) in Township 6; Jamesville on the James River, in Township 5; Walshtown and Mayfield in Township 4; Marindahl in Township 3 and LaGrange in Township 2.

Felix LeBlanc built the first bridge across the James near his claim. General Alfred Sully reportedly used the frame structure during one of his military expeditions. Either flood or fire destroyed the bridge and in 1865, LeBlanc left both the Yankton Agency and his claim for Iowa.

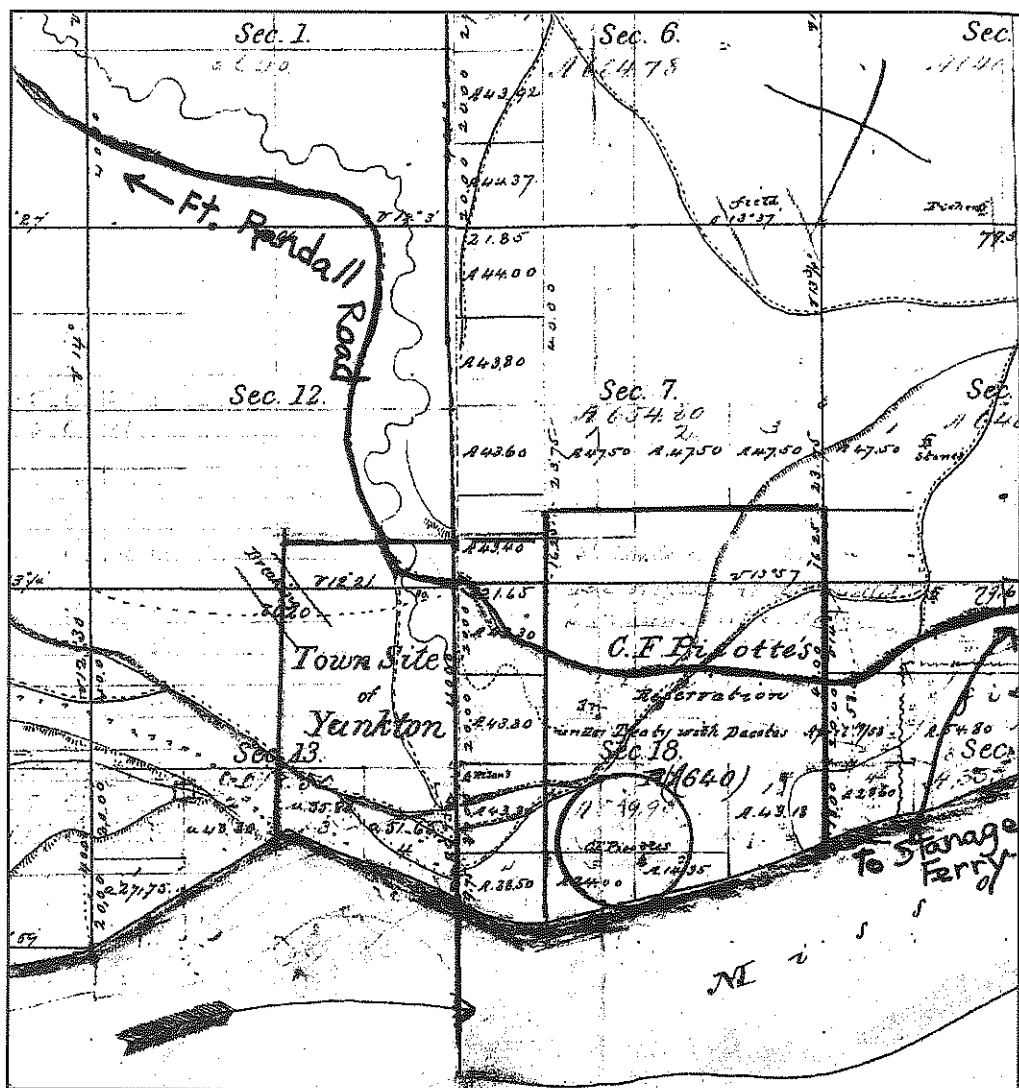
Abram Van Osdel, born 1810, had moved to the Yankton area in 1862 and homesteaded the next year on the east bank of the James. He was a self-taught doctor, politician and respected citizen, but disillusioned by political setbacks, he eventually moved to Kansas where he died in 1870.



An early survey map shows Fort Randall Road entering Yankton County at an angle bypassing area where the town of Gayville would locate in 1873 (circled). Also circled are sparsely located homesteads.

Abram L. Van Osdel, Jr., came to Yankton in 1863 and helped his father operate the family ferry. Both father and son had been in the military. An experienced carpenter, the younger Van Osdel helped build bridges across the Big Sioux, Vermillion, and James Rivers. A politician like his father, the businessman, banker and publisher moved in 1897 to Mission Hill where in 1910 he published *The Historian*, a weekly newspaper, later monthly. He and his wife are buried in Mission Hill Cemetery.

In the late 1850s, when the riverside village of Yankton became a destination, a branch of the Sioux City to Fort Randall Road dipped down to the town. Early maps show the road entering through Charles Picotte's property at 8th Street, then known as Main, and exiting in a northwesterly direction to rejoin the original trail. Today's railroad tracks in Yankton follow a similar route.



A close-up survey of Yankton City indicates the Sioux City to Fort Randall Road proceeding from Stange's Ferry at the James River through C.F. Picotte's Reservation, awarded him for assistance in negotiating the Yankton Treaty of 1858. Below Picotte's name (circled) is a faded symbol signifying his residence.

Yankton became the most important port upriver of Sioux City, Iowa. A labor pool swelled as jobs along the Missouri increased and hotels, stores, and taverns began offering amenities. How different from when only the Frost, Todd, and Company cabin-store and a trial store operated briefly by W.P. Holman and his son C.J. for Sioux City investors overlooked the river.

Excellent histories of Yankton tell the story of political wrangling during early territorial days, of the 1862 crisis when frightened settlers built the Yankton Stockade, of the terrible Flood of 1881, and other growing pains which contributed to the building of a solid community. A historical sign erected in 1966 by the Yankton Chamber of Commerce and State Highway Commission succinctly details the story in a somewhat subjective manner under the title "Yankton: Mother City of the Dakotas." The sign now stands on grounds of the Yankton County Historical Society Museum.

"Frost, Todd & Co., under the guise and license of trade stores along the Missouri and at the Struck-by-the Ree camp at Yankton, were able to get in on the ground floor of potential community sites, when others could acquire no rights.

A rural concern, out of Sioux City, "squatted" C.J. Holman in March 1858 near the river at Yankton but Frost Todd soon thereafter erected a post near the foot of present Walnut Street. John Ball surveyed the township in the fall of 1860, and soon thereafter Moses K. Armstrong platted the area up Walnut and on both sides.

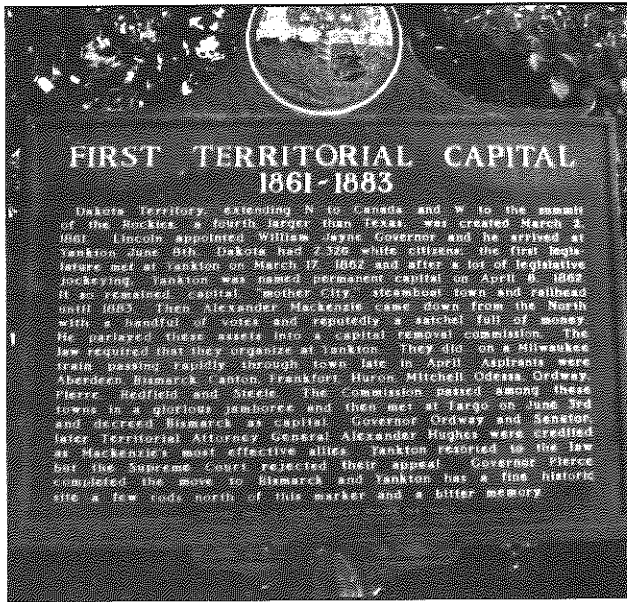
J.B.S. Todd had an office at 2nd & Broadway and H.C. Ash an hotel at 3rd & Broadway. Downer T. Bramble erected the 1st store in town near Walnut & 2nd and on April 17, 1860 was named post master of the town of Yankton. Charles F. Picotte, who had a land grant at Yankton by the treaty of 1857, had a house in the east end of town.

Gov. Wm. Jayne arrived in late May, 1861 and set up the Territorial Capitol in a log cabin near Ash's Hotel with Wm. Gleason, Attorney General as a water carrying cabin mate. Not long after, on June 6, 1861 Frank M. Ziebach started the Weekly Dakotian. There were 10 advertisers in that first issue, including W.W. Marsh who ran the Fort Randall Stage. When the Indian War of the Outbreak brought trouble in August 1862 the Yankton Stockade protected the settlers. There are 21 historic markers in and about Yankton."

Not a free standing sign but a plaque on a large boulder memorializes one of Yankton's earliest white residents, possibly the first. Frenchman Pierre Dorion lived among the Yanktons "at

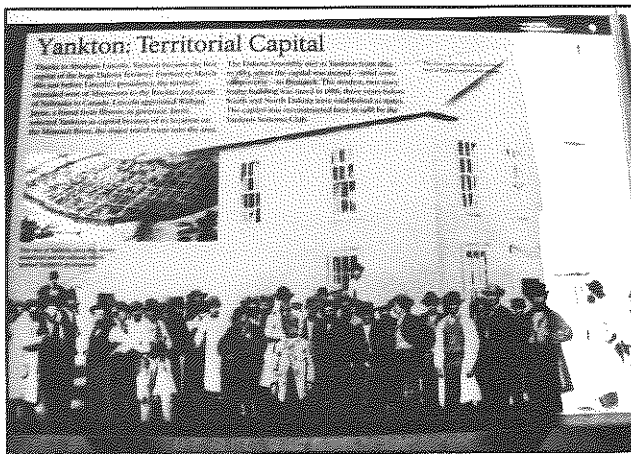


The first Dakota Territorial Supreme Court hearing, conducted by Judge L.P. Williston, occurred in Vermillion on August 6, 1861. Yankton hosted the first Territorial Supreme Court Appellate hearing on December 3, 1867, with Justices Jefferson P. Kidder, Ara Bartlett and John W. Boyle officiating (seated, upper center). The trio also served as (the only) trial judges in the territory.



A historical sign erected in 1956 by Hotels Charles Gurney and Nancy recounts the political story of Yankton's role as First Territorial Capital, 1861-1883. (sic) "Dakota Territory, extending N to Canada and W to the summit of the Rockies, a fourth larger than Texas, was created March 2, 1861. Lincoln appointed William Jayne Governor and he arrived at Yankton June 8th. Dakota had 2,326 white citizens; the first legislature met at Yankton on March 17, 1862 and after a lot of legislative jockeying, Yankton was named permanent capital on April 8, 1862. It so remained, capital, "Mother City," steamboat town and railhead until 1883. Then Alexander Mackenzie came down from the North with a handful of votes and reputedly a satchel full of money. He parlayed these assets into a capital removal commission. The law required

that they organize at Yankton. They did, on a Milwaukee train passing rapidly through town late in April. Aspirants were Aberdeen, Bismarck, Canton, Frankfort, Huron, Mitchell, Odessa, Ordway, Pierre, Redfield and Steele. The Commission passed among these towns in a glorious jamboree and then met at Fargo on June 3rd and decreed Bismarck as capital. Governor Ordway and Senator, later Territorial Attorney General Alexander Hughes were credited as Mackenzie's most effective allies. Yankton resorted to the law but the Supreme Court rejected their appeal. Governor Pierce completed the move to Bismarck and Yankton has a fine historic site a few rods north of this marker and a bitter memory."



A historical sign in Yankton's Riverside Park tells an abbreviated version of Yankton's tenure as Territorial Capital. The Missouri National Recreation River; Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Yankton; and National Park Service, United States Department of Interior sponsored the installation. "Thanks to Abraham Lincoln, Yankton became the first capital of the huge Dakota Territory. Formed in March 1861 just before Lincoln's presidency, the territory extended west of Minnesota to the Rockies and north of Nebraska to Canada. Lincoln appointed William Jayne, friend from Illinois, as governor. Jayne selected Yankton as capital because of

its location on the Missouri river, the major travel route into the area. The Dakota Assembly met in Yankton from 1864 to 1883, when the capital was moved—amid some controversy—to Bismarck. The modest, two-story frame building was razed in 1886, three years before South and North Dakota were established as states. The capital was reconstructed here in 1988 by the Yankton Sertoma Club."

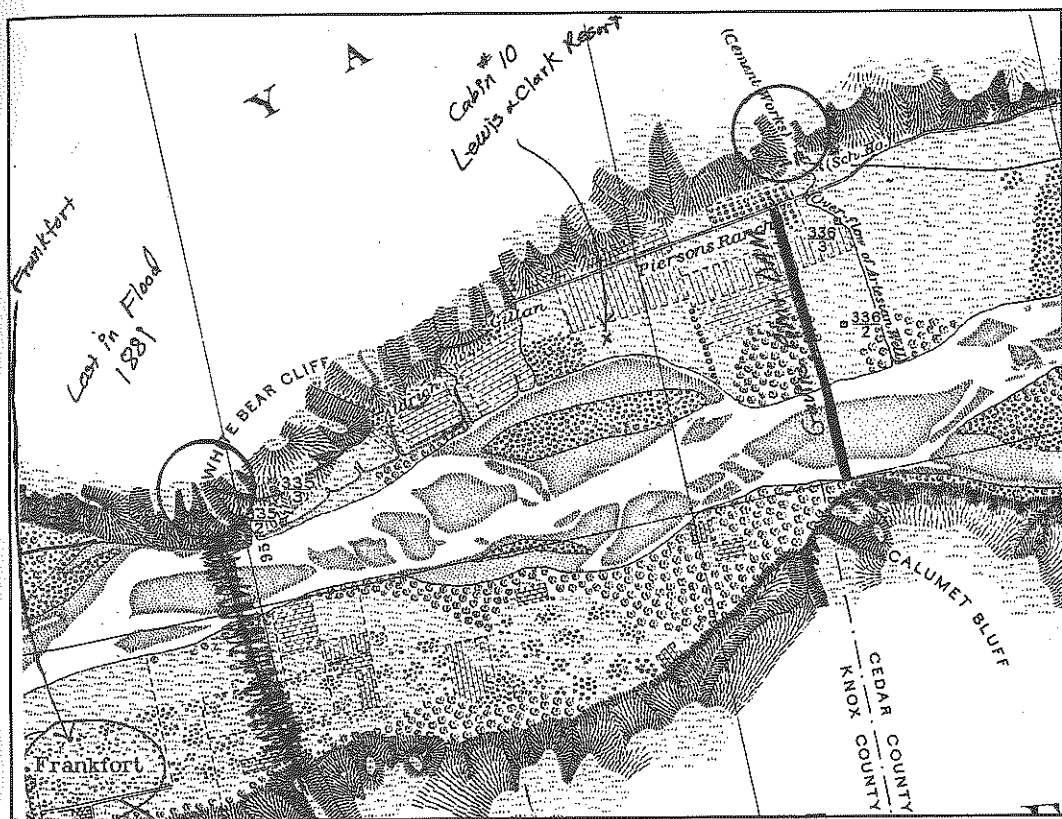
least as early as 1774," claimed local historian Bob Hanson in an article published by the *Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan* as part of a series leading up to the local celebration of the 2003-2006 Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Pierre Dorion was fur trader, friend of the Sioux, and like many traders had a native wife. He spent summers in St. Louis where he met leaders of the Corps of Discovery and joined them as interpreter and friend. Dorion returned to Yankton in 1811 and died there. In 1859, almost 50 years after his death, local Indians wailed a respectful dirge around Dorion's grave, then located on a hill at the western terminus of 3rd Street, before departing for the Yankton Sioux Reservation.

Years later, a building contractor found Dorion's bones while excavating and removed them to lower 3rd Street. Grave robbers, or rather, entrepreneurial youths, according to Hanson, removed artifacts remaining in the original grave and sold them to local inventor Hiram White, dealer in guns and new and rebuilt musical instruments, who in turn was said to have



A large boulder at the junction of 2nd and 3rd Streets near Discovery Bridge in Yankton reviews the life of Pierre Dorion, interpreter for Lewis and Clark.



A Missouri River Commission map published in 1892 shows several locations west of Yankton, including White Bear Cliff (circled), "Cement Works" (circled), Piersons Ranch, and in Nebraska, Calumet Bluff. (Disregard scratched-in line below White Bear Cliff.)

bartered them for twelve years of education at Yankton College. The artifacts disappeared after the college closed, their location unknown.

After diligent effort, Hanson located the second Dorion burial site and alerted the National Park Service who cooperated with him in preserving it. The City of Yankton assisted by placing a large boulder inscribed with Dorion's story at the junction of 2nd and 3rd Streets near the Discovery Bridge.

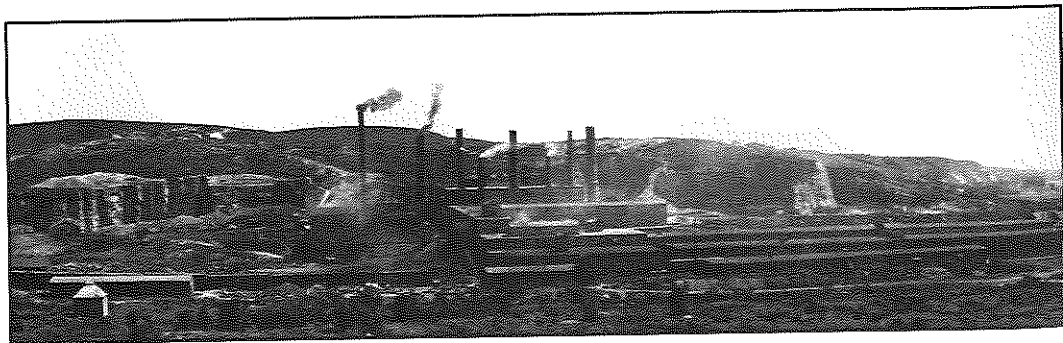
"West of this stone near the crest of the hill is the burial site of Pierre Dorion, Sr., an early trader in what is now South Dakota. Born in Canada in 1740, Pierre came to this area around 1774-75 to trade with the Sioux. He married Holy Rainbow, daughter of a Yankton Sioux chief. While delivering a boatload of hides and tallow to St. Louis, Pierre met the Corps of Discovery on June 12, 1804, on their trek upriver and was hired as their interpreter. On August 29 and 30, Pierre translated the Sioux language for Captains Lewis while in grand council below Calumet Bluff near Gavins Point Dam. Pierre was then hired by Lewis and Clark to take a delegation of Yankton Sioux to Washington, D.C. to meet President Thomas Jefferson in 1805. Pierre died in 1810.

Bob Hanson has become a repository of tantalizing historical snippets. One such tale came to him from "Old Dane Jens" who was said to have acquired it from steamboat Captain Grant P. Marsh. *"Five soldiers sent to guard a road at or near White Bear Cliff (several miles west of Yankton) were stricken by a mysterious disease and died. Their remains on the hill where they were buried were robbed by Indians who stripped the corpses and donned the soldiers' clothing. The Indians died also and the bones remaining at the burial site turned to strange flakes."* Who were the soldiers and what was the disease?

Native Chalkstone

Chalkstone played a prominent role in the development of Yankton industry. Not only did building firms use locally available soft native rock to build numerous homes and businesses in town but also the Western Portland Cement Company used the product in its plant located in lowlands west of Yankton known as Smutty Bear's Bottoms.

In 1890, a British company headed by William Plankinton purchased 500 acres of chalkstone to use in producing cement similar to that being produced in Portland, England. Yankton subsi-



From 1890 to 1910 the Western Portland Cement Company, established several miles west of Yankton near river bottoms, manufactured many tons of cement, shipping some to the Panama Canal.

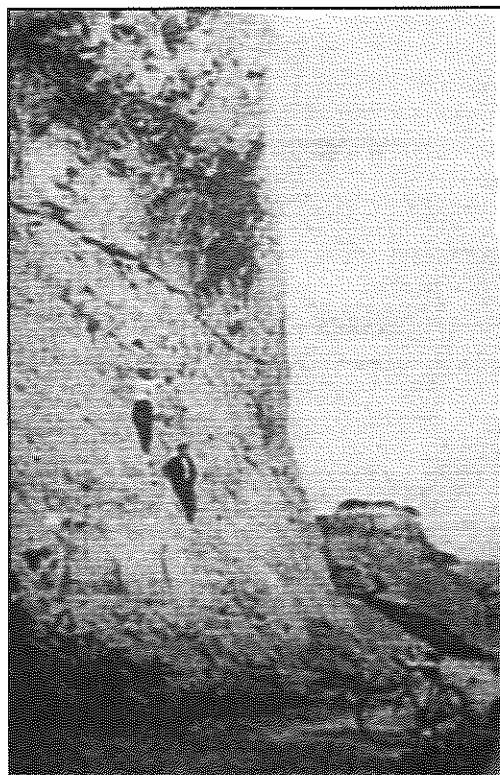
dized a five-mile railroad spur (laid in four and one-half days) to the plant which in its prime had several smokestacks and produced 300,000 barrels of cement annually. Portland Cement was shipped to the Panama Canal project and to Orman Dam near Belle Fourche in western South Dakota. Due partly to Plankinton's death, poor management which followed, the Panic of 1907, and miscellaneous factors, the plant closed in 1910 and was dismantled in 1917. Today aged railroad ties and steel rails form a protective railing along a steep cut in the hills on former factory grounds.

Eventually the Missouri River encroached on the railroad spur and wagon road which had run west from the foot of Walnut along the bottoms. The county then improved an old trail which had descended from the hills of West Yankton to river level along a chalkstone bluff. A natural two-chamber cave halfway down often served as shelter and destination for discreet (sometimes indiscreet!) adventures. In its prime, the larger chamber measured twenty feet in diameter, its domed ceiling twelve feet high. However, by the late twentieth century, the popular natural landmark had surrendered to the environment. Few traces of chalkstone bluff or cave remain on the steep timbered bank bordering the improved Chalkstone Road which continues to hug the hillside en route to "Sisters Grove," a timbered park on flat land near the river owned by the Yankton Benedictine Sacred Heart Monastery.

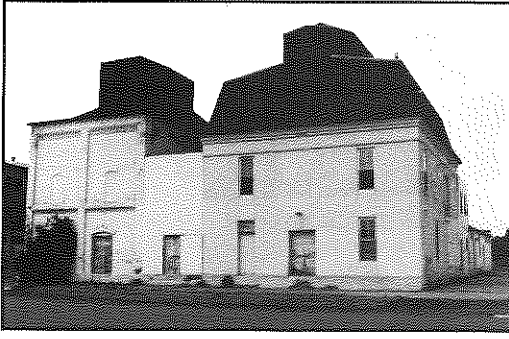
Yankton brewer Charles F. Rossteuscher found the environment of Chalkstone Cave favorable for aging and storing his product. Soon after his arrival to Yankton in 1860, Rossteuscher established a meat market, and in 1866, a brewery at 2nd and Walnut. In 1901, after having



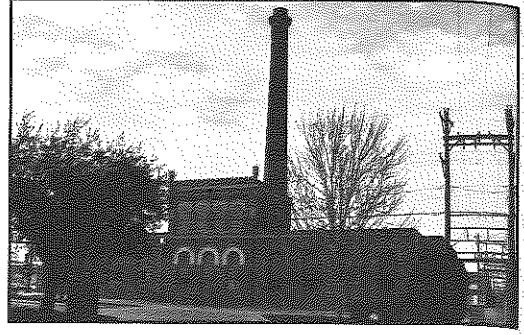
Partial ruins of Western Portland Cement Company are reminders of a major factory which covered ten acres with mud basins, dry kilns and warehouses. Barely visible behind trees (top left) is the single remaining smokestack where once were eight.



Two men leave their bicycles on a rude trail west of Yankton en route to Chalkstone Cave behind them.



Excelsior Mill, built in 1872 of chalkstone with quartzite foundation at 2nd and Capitol Streets, provided flour for forts, agencies and miners. The mill was originally powered by artesian wells, later by steam boiler. Brick additions in 1900 and 1943 did not alter its distinctive exterior as the unused building continues to face Capitol Street.

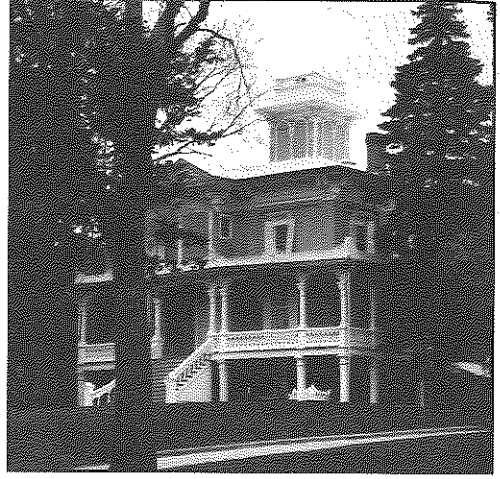


Rossteuscher's 1866 Brewery retains portions of its original appearance at the 2nd Street and Walnut location which, enlarged and improved in 1901, became Schwenk-Barth Brewing Company, producers of once-popular Rosebud Beer.

passed through several hands, Rossteuscher's Brewery became the enlarged Schwenk-Barth Brewing Company, its twin buildings occupying half a block, and the popular Rosebud Beer was born. An impressive smokestack marks the original location today.

An unused chalkstone landmark building on Capital Street near the river bears vestiges of its former distinction. Soon after Downer T. Bramble built Excelsior Flouring Mill in 1872, it was producing more than 200 one-hundred pound sacks of wheat flour daily. Much was shipped upriver to Indian Agencies and military posts. Three sets of burrs and a fourteen-foot flywheel brought to Yankton by the steamer *Peninah* served the factory well until Bramble's financial empire crumbled in the late 1880s.

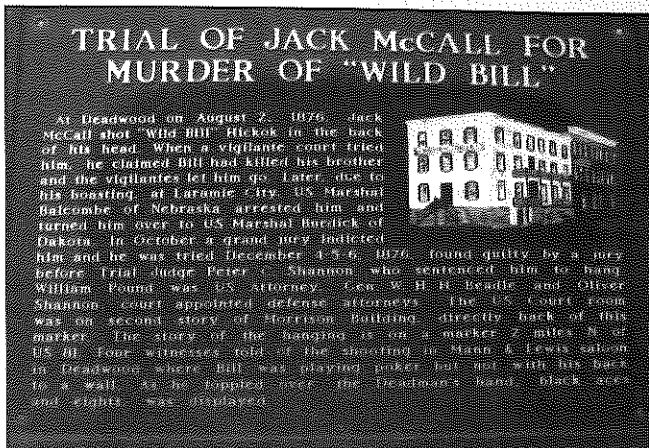
Chalkstone was the material of choice for some pioneer Yankton home builders with masonry skills. Among them was Ephriam Miner who built his chalkstone home at 613 Douglas Avenue in 1873. Unusually thick walls and deep window wells helped keep inhabitants warm in winter and cool in summer. In 2009, the residence remains a symbol of pioneer ingenuity and practicality. A chalkstone house at 815 Capitol served as chapel and dwelling for Rev. Valentine Sommereisen, first resident Catholic priest serving missions as far as Fort Randall. Third governor of Dakota Territory Andrew J. Faulk built a chalkstone residence at 318 West 1st Street in 1867. Beneath its three feet thick walls were storage cellars of various sizes. Although possible still to see chalkstone dwellings in Yankton, the limited number is dwindling.



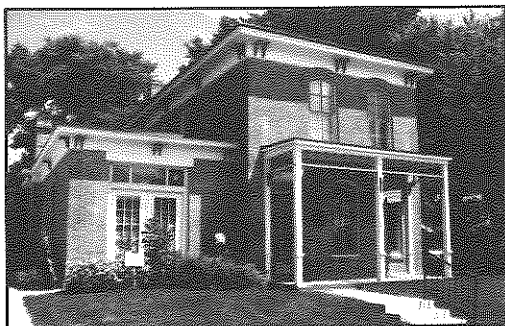
The hill in west Yankton on which the chalkstone Ohlman-Shannon House was built in 1871 was once known as Magazine Hill. Settlers had stored gunpowder there and Indians were said to have buried their dead nearby. During renovation in the 1950s, workers found a three-foot entrenchment filled with broken glass designed to keep rats from boring into the foundation.

One impressive example is the three-story mansion built of chalkstone and granite in 1871 by Lumberman Charles H. McAntyre on a hillside in west Yankton on Green Street between 2nd and 3rd Streets. The Ohlman-Shannon House, as it came to be known, became the home of Territorial Chief Justice Peter C. Shannon and later Martin P. Ohlman, Sr., and wife Emilie. Shannon would preside at the trial of Jack McCall in 1876. Ohlman had been a liquor dealer, and after prohibition, became a respected banker and politician. The location was known as Magazine Hill (because gunpowder had been cached there in settlement days) and Inspiration Point because of the panoramic view of the Missouri River from its "Widow's Walk" enclosure on the roof.

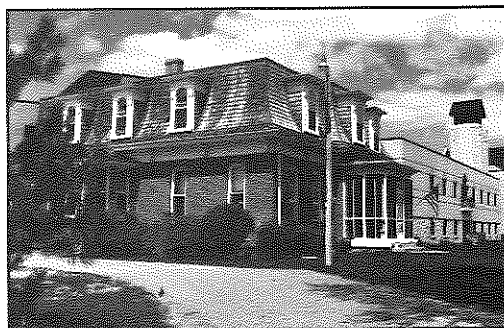
On Sacred Heart Monastery grounds high above the Missouri near the west city limits of Yankton presides the chalkstone and brick rectory built in 1883 for Catholic Bishop Martin Marty. The Bene-



"Jack McCall killed 'Wild Bill' Hickock," a jury decided in Yankton December 6, 1876. A historical sign designed by Gurney Hotel Company and fastened in 1960 on an exterior wall of their hotel on 3rd and Capitol states the following: (sic) "At Deadwood on August 2, 1876, Jack McCall shot 'Wild Bill' Hickok in the back of his head. When a vigilante court tried him, he claimed Bill had killed his brother and the vigilantes let him go. Later, due to his boasting, at Laramie City, US Marshal Balcombe of Nebraska arrested him and turned him over to US Marshal Burdick of Dakota. In October a grand jury indicted him and he was tried December 4-5-6, 1876, found guilty by a jury before trial Judge Peter C. Shannon (then Chief Justice) who sentenced him to hang. William Pound was US Attorney, Gen. W.H.H. Beadle and Oliver Shannon, court appointed defense attorneys. The US Court room was on second story of Morrison Building, directly back of this marker. The story of the hanging is on a marker 2 miles N of US 81. Four witnesses told of the shooting in Mann & Lewis saloon in Deadwood where Bill was playing poker but not with his back to a wall. As he toppled over, the Deadman's hand, black aces and eights, was displayed."



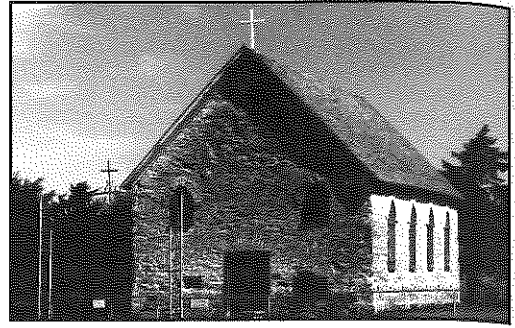
In 1874 fifth Territorial Governor John L. Pennington lived in this home at 410 E. 3rd Street in Yankton. Now occupied by offices of *South Dakota Magazine*, the structure is the only territorial governor's home remaining today.



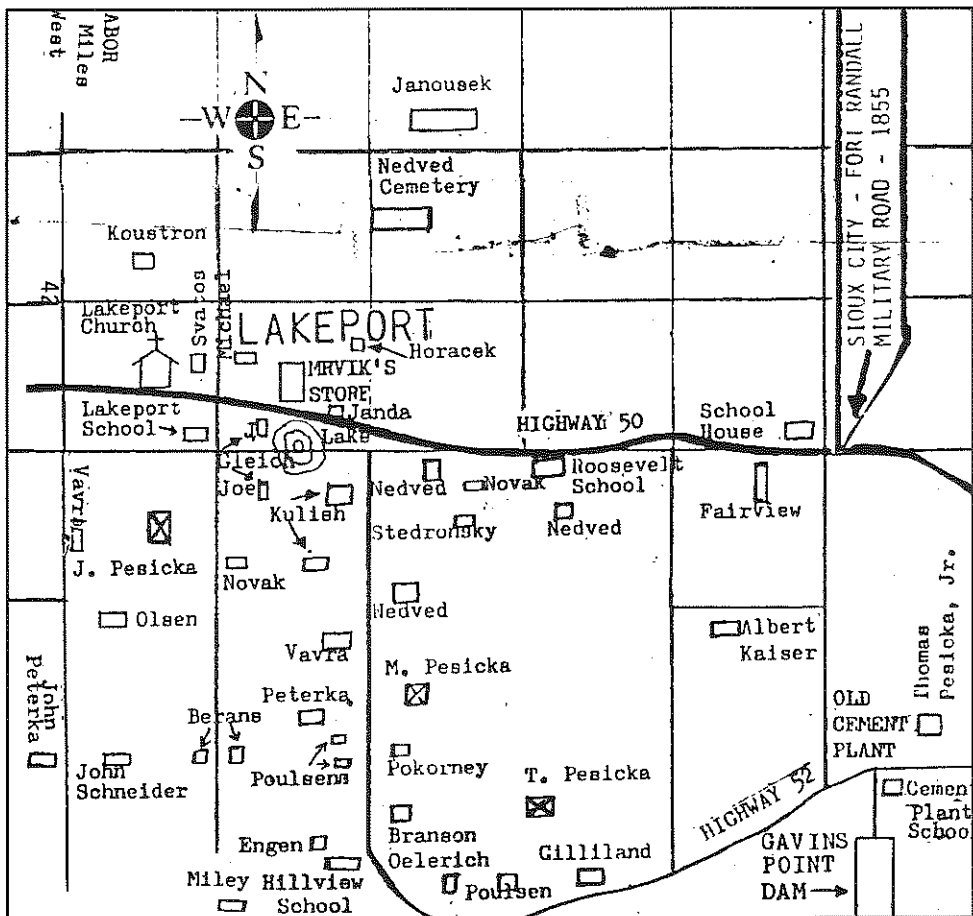
The brick-covered chalkstone rectory Yankton Catholics built in 1883 for Bishop Martin Marty shares space on Sacred Heart Monastery grounds.

dictine Abbott from Indiana had firmly established missionary work among Indians previous to coming to Yankton where in 1880 he built a school for Catholic Indian boys. Benedictine nuns continue to preserve and utilize the old rectory.

A landmark chalkstone Catholic Church built in 1884 by a predominately Bohemian neighborhood stands about ten miles northwest of Yankton close to the Lakeport area where soldiers on the Sioux City to Fort Randall Military Road once camped. Brothers George and Parker Brown built a log hotel there in 1861, just in time to serve Companies A, B, and C of the Four-



Lakeport's St. John's Catholic Church, built of chalkstone by Bohemian Catholics in 1884, continues to host annual memorial services which began in 1984 after restoration. One hundred eighty celebrants noted the church's 125th anniversary on September 13, 2009.



Local historian Romaine Pesicka, whose roots are in the Lakeport area, provided this sketch of the community and its relationship to the Sioux City to Fort Randall Road. Note location of "Janousek," top center, would-be railroad town east of Tabor. (Not to scale)

teenth Iowa Infantry en route to Fort Randall. On May 6, 1873, General George Custer and his entourage camped at Lakeport as well. The little village, once site of grocery store, school, hotel, saloon and dance hall, prospered well into the 20th century before fading and dying. The woe-begone eyes of the now isolated St. John the Baptist Catholic Church continue to contemplate travelers on the road, now Highway 50/52, one-half mile south.

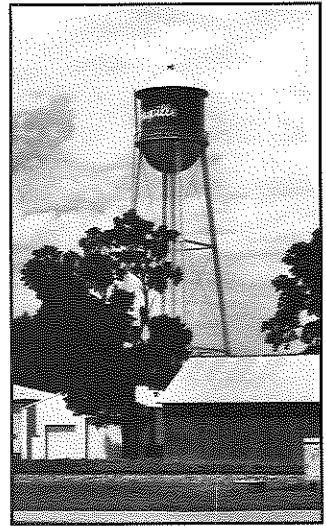
Towns and Villages

Besides the county seat of Yankton, current population 13,530, six towns exist in Yankton County in varying degrees of prosperity: Gayville, Volin, Irene, Mission Hill, Utica and Lester-ville. The Sioux City to Fort Randall Military Road passed close to the location where Gayville would be established in 1873, a little more than five miles east of Yankton.

Halvor Brynellson, one of Gayville's first settlers, crossed from Nebraska to the "Lakes" region in the spring of 1868. On December 24, 1872, he purchased 160 prime acres in an area where residual flood waters had created a dimpled landscape. Shortly after, railroad speculators purchased 69 of his acres, which just happened to become the future site of a town. Devious maneuvers may have convinced Brynellson, who in gold-seeking days prior had been robbed twice, to sell prime land for, it was rumored, one dollar.

Charles G. Wicker, partner of railroad contractors, and Elkanah Gay laid railroad tracks which required huge amounts of dirt fill. On January 26, 1873, the locomotive "C.G. Wicker" arrived, and Gay, for whom the town was named, became first depot agent. Iver Bagstad, another primary promoter of the town, had come to Yankton by ox team in 1868. He opened the first general store in Gayville in 1873 and later built a hotel, partly to house his many employees.

Four miles north of Gayville, current population around 410, the little village of Volin clings to a modest hill where flatlands meet gentle bluffs. Henry P. Volin, for whom the town is named, was owner of land adjacent to the prospective site. Volin was platted in 1894 and in its heyday, access to two railroads guaranteed



Named for Elkanah Gay in 1873, Gayville, population near 400, proudly claims to be "Hay Capital of the World."



Volin's limited Main Street features two original light posts, the second barely visible at the far end of the street) and the historic Town Hall topped with bell (left) where town business is conducted. The stamped-metal structure built in 1905 once served as site for theater, opera, lectures, basketball and public meetings.

its growth. In 1893, the South Western Railroad, running between Sioux Falls and Yankton, came through followed in 1885 by an extension of the Chicago and North Western Railroad from Centerville to Yankton. For years the town, promoted by the *Volin Advance*, offered all amenities needed to prosper. Population in 1915 was noted as 333. The diminishing and eventual elimination of railroad service and a serious fire in 1939 contributed to the town's decline; however Volin continues to be home to a modest population of just under 200.

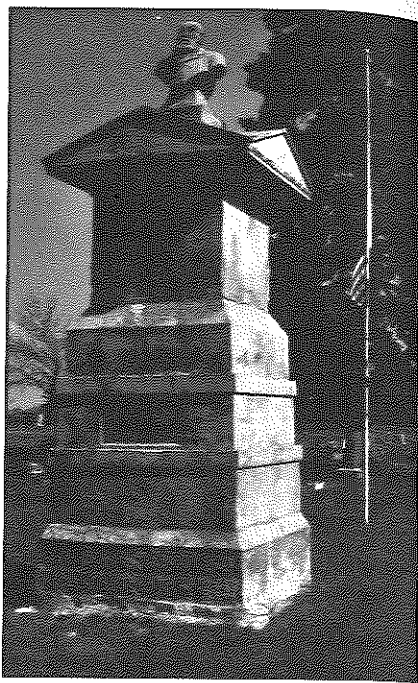
Had the village of Mission Hill existed when the original Sioux City to Fort Randall Military Road served its purpose, residents might have observed large military movements from their hilltop homes. Congregational missionary and long-time resident D.B. Nichols founded the village in 1888, naming it as he did because of a nearby small mission maintained by the Congregational Church. Nichols retired in 1905 and moved to Yankton, but is buried with his wife in Mission Hill.

Mission Hill was platted in 1894 and businesses soon flourished. At one time the town was known as an egg-marketing phenomenon, shipping as many as 145,000 eggs per week! Following Abram L. Van Osdel, Jr.'s move to Mission Hill in 1894, recreational facilities improved. He developed Nichols Park at the base of the hill. It featured a man-made centerpiece lake he named Lincoln Lake (after Abraham). To alleviate the absence of non-Lutheran Protestants in the region north and east of Yankton, Van Osdel and his wife donated five acres for a Congregational Church, cemetery and parsonage. Ephriam Miner, member of Yankton Congregational Church, donated bricks from his kiln for the church, and a cornerstone was laid in April 1888. Dr. Joseph Ward from Yankton College assisted with dedication services in August that year.

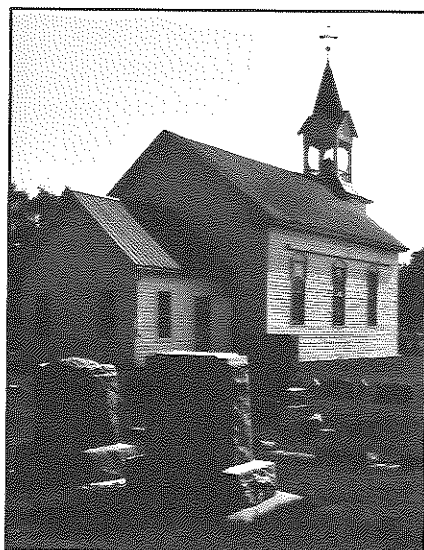
About 170 residents populate Mission Hill, down only slightly from 189 recorded in 1915. The village is located about five miles northeast of Yankton.

On a gentle sloping hill one mile east of the center of Mission Hill stands the pioneer Vangen Lutheran

Lutheran Norwegian settlers organized Vangen Lutheran Church in 1864 and built the current church on a hillside one mile east of Mission Hill in 1918. A traditional Memorial Day service is held annually in the cemetery and indoors.



A massive monument topped by a bust of Rev. D.B. Nichols overlooks Mission Hill Cemetery. A plaque states "*Votive Shrine in Memory of Rev. D.B. Nichols, Founder of Mission Hill Congregational Church.*" Prior to moving to Mission Hill, Nichols had pastored at Bon Homme Village (1880-1886), where he oversaw construction of the 1885 Bon Homme Memorial Church, relocated to Tyndall in 1989 as a museum.



Church, present church built in 1918. Descendants of Norwegian Lutherans gather annually for a Memorial Day service which recognizes former pastors, including Rev. Emil Christensen (1867-1876), first resident Lutheran pastor in Dakota Territory. Traditional customs are followed: males sit in pews on the right of the center aisle; females (and small children) on the left; offerings are placed individually, men first, women following, in a plate at the front of the church.

A historical sign erected in 1961 near the entrance of the church by Jarl and Wilner Holman bears the following message:

Vangen Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1969-

Following earlier Missionary work this church began in Dakota Territory among Scandinavian Lutherans as early as 1861, and was organized October 8, 1864 with Reverend Emil Christenson as minister. The church built in 1869 was built of lumber hauled by "volunteers" from Sioux City by ox team. It is the oldest Lutheran Church still standing in the Dakotas.

Hebrews 13.8 "Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and forever"

German and Bohemian settlers surrounded the Utica and Lesterville communities west and northwest of Yankton. Both towns are viable but are challenged to attract businesses and residents to their communities. Both have or have had entertainment icons whose names remain recognizable to many.

Utica, population under 100, is located ten miles from Yankton, close enough to serve as bedroom community but with few amenities. The village was always small, in fact, didn't exist when Czechs settled in the area in the early 1870s. Utica stands on the homestead of N.W. Tyler who received title on December 10, 1880. He sold his land to Daniel McCarthy, who had 40 acres surveyed for a town on September 1, 1893. "Mr. Higsbee" started a small store which failed for lack of trade, but in 1892, partners Darby and King started another which succeeded and Utica was born. The partners added a small lumber yard and warehouse, expecting to barter for grain loaded on the railroad passing through



Top: An undated postcard photo sent with a one cent stamp shows a rutted Main Street in Utica. "This is the hotel with the "X" over it," the writer explains. "I tell you Utica is a big town...all there is, is what you see on the other side of this card!"

Below: A square two-story brick school built about 1910 stands in the center of Utica.

town. Darby built the first residence and others followed. Five saloons opened in five years but most faded away.

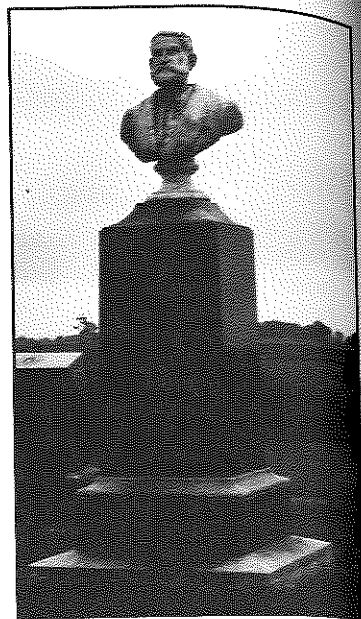
A landmark name in Utica familiar to a declining older age population is Lumbago Inn, created by the genial Harry Arrundale. Prior to World War I, Arrundale had been a drifter, a vagabond who traveled the country, landing penniless in the Yankton area in August 1914. Unsuccessful efforts to start a pool hall in Utica, later a hotel, were interrupted by service in the Great War. Influenza, then prevalent, precipitated a quick discharge from the Army and he returned to Utica where he married and went broke again. Finally he found success in his popular Lumbago Inn, a combination dance hall, saloon and hangout. When asked about the unusual name, Arrundale credited an altercation with a disgruntled customer ending in blows to his own body. While shrugging off pain, he discovered that no longer did he feel the lumbago which had plagued him for years! Arrundale generously shared proceeds from his successful business by providing Utica with lights for the baseball park.

Three miles west of Utica lies a landmark which testifies to the tenacity of a Czech settler who chose a claim in north-west Section 11, Ziskov Township. The Nikodym Cemetery was established on land belonging to Josef Nikodym, who ventured into Dakota in 1870 with his family in a buggy drawn by an old horse. For five years the family resided in a hole in the ground over which he built a roof. Shortly after moving into a new cabin, Nikodym's horse died, and he bought a cow on credit which he trained for travel. Nikodym and his Presbyterian neighbors were unable to build a church but established a cemetery in 1876. Infrequent burials continue.

Lesterville was settled in the mid-1870s by Czechs from Bohemia and Germans from Russia. On March 1, 1876, Henry Rudd built a sod house, later known as the Ripple Farm, on the stage line from Yankton to Firesteel. (The Firesteel Trail to Fort James forked away from the Sioux City to Fort Randall Road five miles northwest of Yankton at the intersection of today's Highway 50 and 314 Avenue.) Lesterville, once known as Moscow, became a stop for changing horses and feeding passengers. When the trail became a post road, Rudd named the post office Lesterville, possibly after a grandson named Lester Dix. When the railroad came through in 1882, the village moved to its nearby current site on land for which Jacob Koch had secured patent in May 1879. Platting occurred on April 10, 1883, and the Milwaukee Railroad Depot was built in 1885.

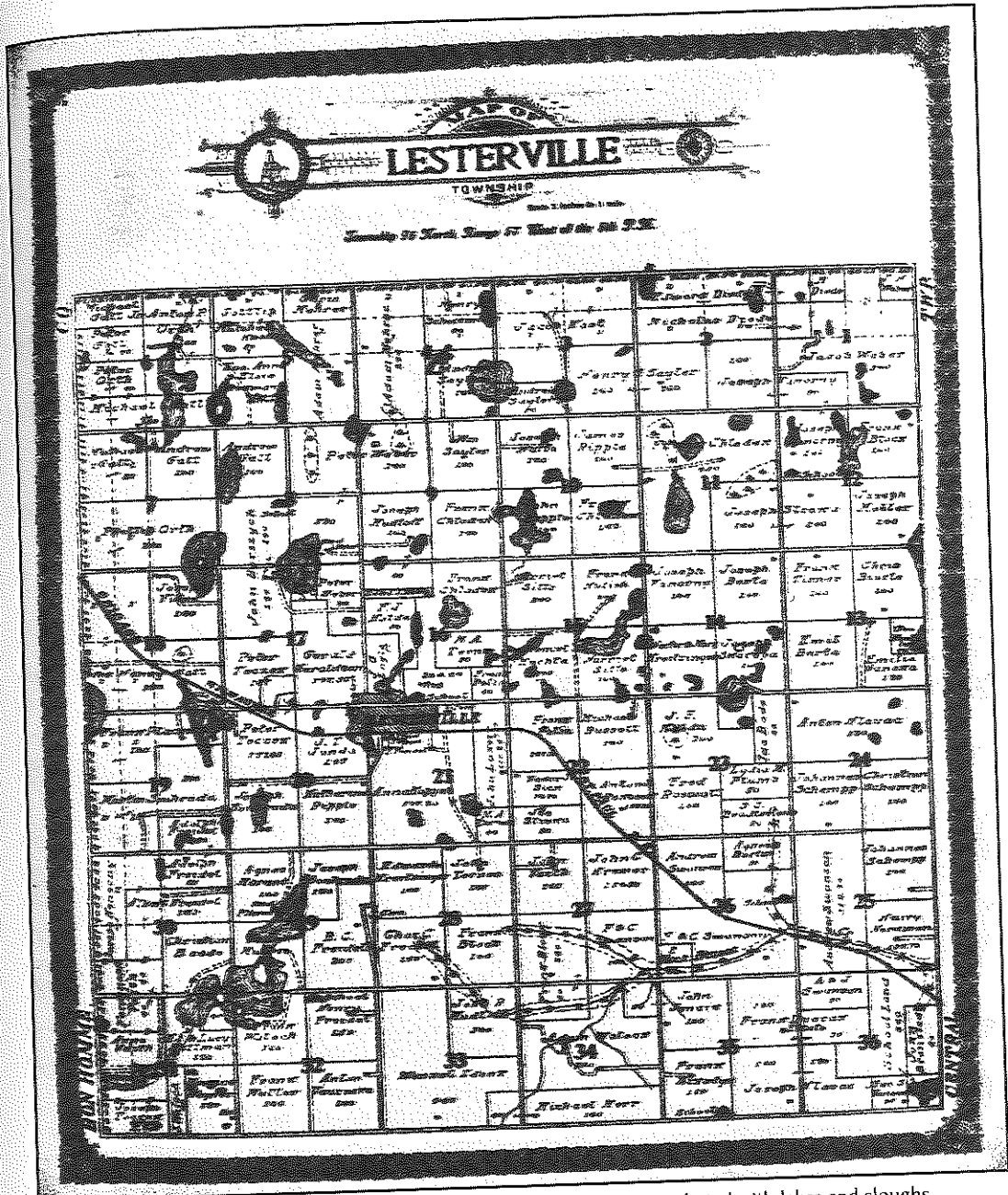
At Lesterville's prime, all one might need was available. Main Street stretched four blocks north from the depot and several adjacent elevators. Three churches served, including a Congregational Church founded in 1881 by Mrs. Joseph Ward of Yankton College which functioned for 90 years. St. John's Catholic Church remains active but its future appears to be in jeopardy.

Rural Polish immigrants who patronized Lesterville businesses established their own St. John the Baptist Catholic Church and cemetery three miles south of town in 1873. It flourished until 1903 and was eventually demolished, leaving behind only its cemetery to mark the site.

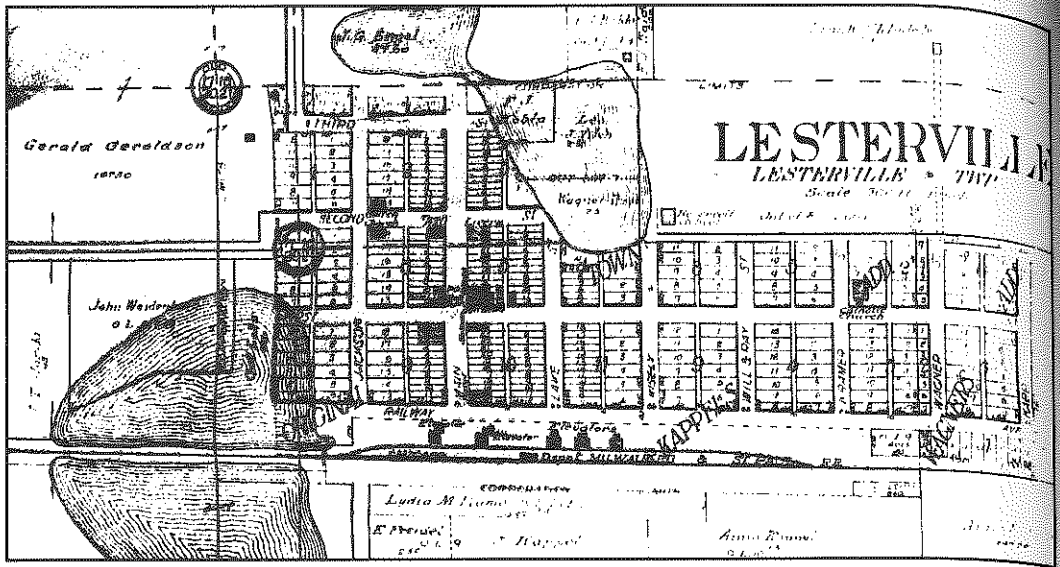


An impressive bust of Frantisek Kulis (1847-1913) presides over Nikodym Cemetery (Cesko Narodni Hrbítov) three miles west of Utica. The nearby modest tombstone of founder Josef Nikodym states in Czech that he was born in 1834 and died in 1927. His wife Anna, (1837-1909), shares Nikodym's burial plot.

Lesterville's decline began prior to the 1930s; however today's population of about 150 supports a post office and several successful businesses. One is the controversial Swede's Bar, controversial because the caliber of its featured exotic entertainment bothers some for moral reasons while others welcome revenue the business provides the town coffers. Swede's is known regionally to hunters, sportsmen, planners of bachelor parties, and the like.



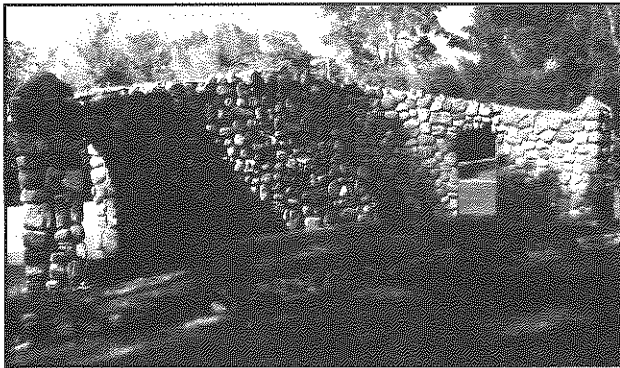
A 1910 plat of Lesterville Township places Lesterville near center of an area dotted with lakes and sloughs.



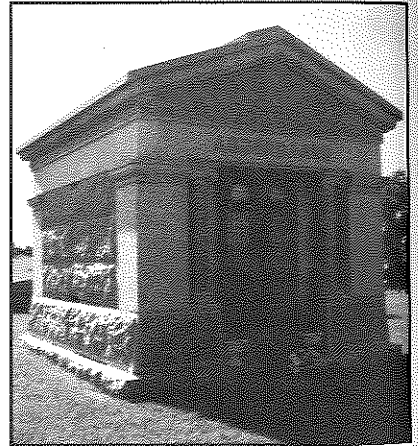
A town plat of Lesterville published in the 1910 Yankton County Atlas shows three churches (two facing each other on West 2nd Street and a Catholic Church on Kramer and 1st), and five elevators near the depot.

Lesterville has always been a baseball town and past amateur baseball teams have forged outstanding records. An impressive ball park is sandwiched between the well-kept Catholic Church and its cemetery located just east of the city limits.

The thriving village of Irene nestles in a valley intersected by Highway 46 at the very northern border of Yankton County in Turkey Valley Township. Turner and Clay Counties claim the north, east, and south portions of Irene while Yankton claims the industrial property along the town's west entry. The village, once known as Adelia, benefited in 1893 from the presence of the Great Northern Railroad which laid its tracks that year generally along the Old Sioux Falls to Yankton Trail.



In 1937, WPA workers constructed an attractive fieldstone outdoor theater in Irene City Park. Inscribed on a plaque is "A.H. Hagen, WPA Project No. 1893."



The remains of Danish immigrant and prominent land-owner Peter Nielson Aggergaard and his wife occupy an impressive private mausoleum in Hillcrest Cemetery on Highway 46 just west of Irene City Limits.

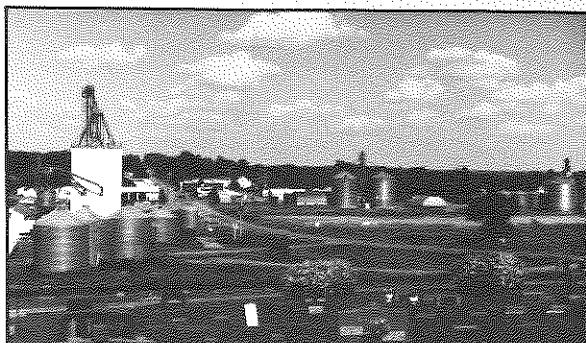
Several ghost towns existed briefly in Yankton County, most associated with the railroad or otherwise victims of transportation: Fullerville, 1901-1937; Janousek, 1917-1934; Jamesville (on Firesteel Trail), early 1900s; Talmo, around 1928. Murky histories cloud Ziskov, Odessa, Bergen, Turkey Valley, Mt. Hope, Marindahl, Walshtown (where in 1895 a typhoid epidemic raged), Mayfield, Norway, Newport, and Sigel.

The Sigel Church, Cemetery and Parish Hall (possibly once a township hall) lie one mile west of Highway 81 on the Lesterville Road (300 Street). Inscribed on a worn cornerstone of the aged church are the words, "St. Agnes," an undecipherable date, and "What things God hath prepared for them that love him. I Corinthians 2,9." The George and Katharina Sigel tombstone in the cemetery notes that both were born in the 1840s. Many names there show German heritage.

Exactly one mile west of Sigel on 300 Street is the striking slender and tall brick and sandstone Martinus Lutheran Church, U.A.C. 1882-1923, attesting to what may well have been and continues to be a cluster of Scandinavians.

Janousek was named for Attorney Janousek who in 1906 convinced the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad to lay a sidetrack and livestock yard on George Fejfar's Yankton County land five miles east of Tabor. Although town lots were put up for sale in 1917 and a general store and bank were built, nothing remains.

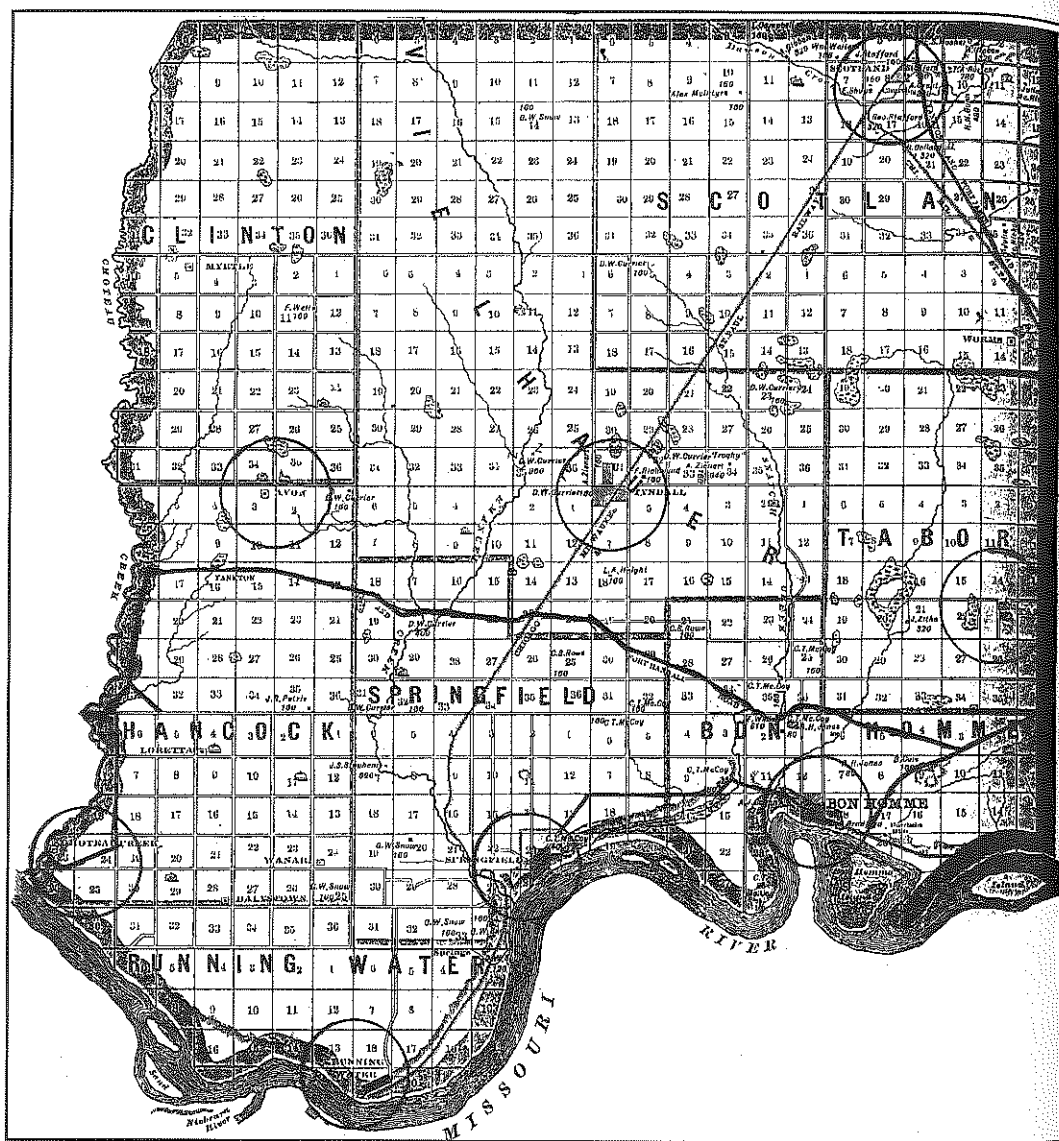
Pioneer roots are deep in Yankton County. The mission of the Yankton County Historical Society and the Dakota Territorial Museum in Yankton which it owns is to preserve and nourish those roots.



The western portion of Irene, "the little town in the valley," resides in Yankton County. Highway 46 bisects the town.



A chalkstone home built in 1873 by Ephriam Miner at 613 Douglas Avenue in Yankton has been "grandfathered" into a bustling modern neighborhood.



Andreas Atlas of Dakota 1884. Circled, right to left, along the Missouri River are: Bon Homme Village, Springfield, Running Water, and the Choteau Creek crossing. North of the Military Road, also right to left, are: Tabor, Tyndall (center), and the Avon Post Office. Scotland appears in the far upper right corner along the Firesteel (Fort James) Trail.