

Old Stone Home Part of Early Avon

AVON -- The Oliver Rathburn family residence at the corner of Nagel and Schwartz Roads, now 103 years old, is part of the early history of the City of Avon.

It was originally built by the late A. J. Nagel's father, Peter Nagel, who carried stones for the house on a cart pulled by a yoke of oxen from a nearby quarry.

The Nagel family came to Avon in 1826 from France, settling on 1,100 acres in what is now the Detroit-Nagel Road area. The first family home was a log cabin, erected where Nagel and Schwartz Roads now cross.

Since the days of 1733, when the Indians battled the white soldiers for possession of the land, the area that has become the City of Avon has yielded a multitude of artifacts.

These give mute evidence to the struggle for existence that took place in those days. It was not until the early 1800's that white settlers considered establishing resi-

dency in the area, after the Indians became reconciled to the invasion of white men in territory they had considered their own.

A pioneer by the name of Noah Davis was the first homesteader in French Creek, later called Troy and still later named Avon. The Wilbur Cahoon family followed, and the Roy Cahoon family still occupies the family homestead on Detroit Road.

This house is New England in character and design, and is one of several in Avon carrying history on its beams and within its walls. Two small stone houses on Center Road--one north and the other south of Detroit Road -- also date back to the early years of the city, as does the former schoolhouse, now a private home, just east of the Avon Center Cemetery.

Also important historically is the Stone Eagle Farmhouse, owned and occupied by Mrs. Gladys Tomes, Detroit Rd. Many of the old buildings are gone. The mills along French Creek, and the swing- ing bridge remembered by many a school child, have vanished from the sites they once occupied.

The carriage barns that were behind St. Mary Church are gone, as is the blacksmith shop that once stood in the center of town.

Changing times have brought a multiplicity of changes in Avon over the passing years as progress moves inexorably ahead.

The early Indian trails have either disappeared entirely, or given way to roads. Woods have been cleared, and the land tilled. As farming became something less than profitable, methods changed. Some chose to change their means of making a living, while others chose to continue coaxing produce from the soil, but in other ways.

The gentle countryside, which one supported grazing animals, yielded to progress and became homesites. But it was years and years before the little community, as large in area and so small in the number of inhabitants, was to progress to this point.

The ladies who swished their long skirts over board walk to shop for a spool of thread at the general store, and the men who held the reins of the horse hitched to the buggy that brought them "to town," did not even dream of what the future would hold in store for their little community.

Since the early days of Avon, the names of Davis, Cahoon, Allen, Nagel, Schwartz, Conrad, Long, Fitch, Heckel, Mills, Stander, Thelisen, Traxler, Wagner, Weber, Wilhelm, DeChant, Hubbard, Buck, Snow, Moore, Shoemaker, Mitchell, Sweet, Linden, Moon, Gates, Rink, Heider, Smith, Urie, Jameson, Chester, Peak, Forthofer, Nagel, Thome, Frank, Williams, Winter, and many others have marched across the pages of Avon's history.

It would be impossible to print all of the names of those who had a hand in the making of the city as it is known today.

From Avon's early days to today, the original spirit of the pioneers who settled Avon has remained with the community. The pioneers persevered, continuing to live from day to day despite sometimes incredible odds. They fought the wilderness and the Indians and sickness and harsh winters, and each spring saw them a little stronger, a little bit more indomitable.

During the early and mid-1800's, when the city was governed by township trustees, a clerk, a treasurer, and more than a dozen or so road supervisors, and of course, the constables, there was no town hall.

It was not until April 11, 1870, that the trustees assessed the township people for the purpose of building what they called a "townhouse." This building, of red brick with long narrow windows at the sides and stone steps leading to the front door, dating from 1871, cost the Township of

Avon the princely sum of \$2,000, according to old city records.

Annual elections in those days were held in early April, not in November, as now. Township business was conducted by the trustees and other officers, the records show. In those days (the 1850's) men had to clear their own ditches by digging, and even French Creek was cleaned by this method. Each man dug so many rods, from point to point and the township trustees even set a time limit as to when the work must be done.

The yellowing township records show that Avon first began to think about incorporating into a village in 1916, and petitions for such action came into being in 1917, when the population of Avon was 1,625.

The members of the township board of trustees at that time were John Forthofer, Edward Brown and Lawrence Leonard.

An election was held on the incorporation on Sept. 29, 1917. A total of 108 votes



Mr. & Mrs. Oliver R. Rathburn of 3285 Nagel Rd. in period costume in front of the Rathburn residence, the old Nagel homestead built in 1861.

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were cast -- 92 in favor of incorporation, and 62 opposed to it.

In October, 1917, the incorporation was filed in court and in January of 1918, the Village of Avon officially came into being. The first mayor, and members of the council were E. A. Brown, John J. Forthofer, Lawrence Hackel, Lawrence Leonard and C. B. McAllister. Regular meetings were set for the first Monday of each month. Appointed to the position of street supervisor of sewers, ditches and drains.

F. J. Stack was the village's first solicitor. Lewis Bennett was the clerk.

Some of the first order of business to be considered by the new council of the new village was the approval of an ordinance prohibiting the placing of glass on walks and paths in Avon, and approval of an ordinance permitting saloons in Avon to open for business at 4:30 a.m. Central Standard Time.

In 1919, the council approved an annual budget totalling \$11,445. This was divided

thusly: \$2,300, general fund; \$180, health; \$360, safety; \$8,400, service; and \$200, cemetery.

Employment came under council's scrutiny at this time, and an ordinance providing for the road commissioner in 1918 was paid 50 cents per hour. Police employed to assist the road commissioner were paid \$2.50 per hour.

The Drag Race is on, the cars are being tuned(?) up and the drivers (?) are getting their instructions from Head Starter and Head Commissioner of the race Police Chief Robt. Gillis. Because of the intense desire on the part of the participants to win this race, it was decided that the Chief of Police be the sole judge and rules commissioner, one of the rules set forth by Chief Gillis is that no car (again we use the word loosely) shall exceed the speed limit to be set by the Judge (Chief Gillis).

In these days of minimum wages and high salaries, it is interesting to note that the road commissioner in 1918 was paid 50 cents per hour. Police employed to assist the road commissioner were paid \$2.50 per hour.

The Drag Race Saturday Morning at 9 AM

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9:30 p.m. at the Avon Plaza parking lot on Detroit Rd.

MONDAY, SEPT. 7

Featured Monday will be an Ox Roast from noon to midnight. This will be held at Avon Isle Park, just off Detroit Road a short distance west of the intersection of Colorado Ave. (Rt. 611).

Women's games will be held here from 2 to 3:15 p.m. with men's games following from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. Judges of sesquicentennial costumes will be held at 6:30 p.m., with ribbons to be awarded to the winners.

Beards grown by the men during the summer months will be judged at 7 p.m. with trophies to be awarded.

Categories in the costume judging include men's, women's, boys and girls, and infants up to two years of age, including boys and girls.

Contestants in the "shave-off" each will receive a Schick shave set, complete with razor, shaving cream and blades. The winner will receive a full year's supply of free blades from Schick, and each contestant will receive a hand mirror from Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co.

Prior to the beard judging and "shave-off," the Keystone Kops will roam through the city fining unbearded men who do not have shaving permits and confining them to the stockade.

Two television sets will be raffled off during the week-end. One is a color set and another is a black-and-white set. Both are on display at the Electronic Service Laboratory on Detroit Road in the Avon Plaza. The drawing will take place Monday at 10 p.m. From 7 to 11 p.m., there will be dancing at Avon Isle Park.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
to the City of Avon!
on its
Sesquicentennial Anniversary!
Tom's Country Place

Catering to Weddings - Private Parties - Dances

3442 Stoney Ridge Avon, Ohio