

Avon Baptist Marks 160 Years

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AVON — When you talk about the history of Avon Baptist Church, you have to talk about the history of Avon itself, the two are so closely interwoven.

Avon Baptist Church is the oldest church in Avon, founded 160 years ago in the year 1817. But, as with nearly every church history, it's necessary to backtrack a couple of years to the real beginnings.

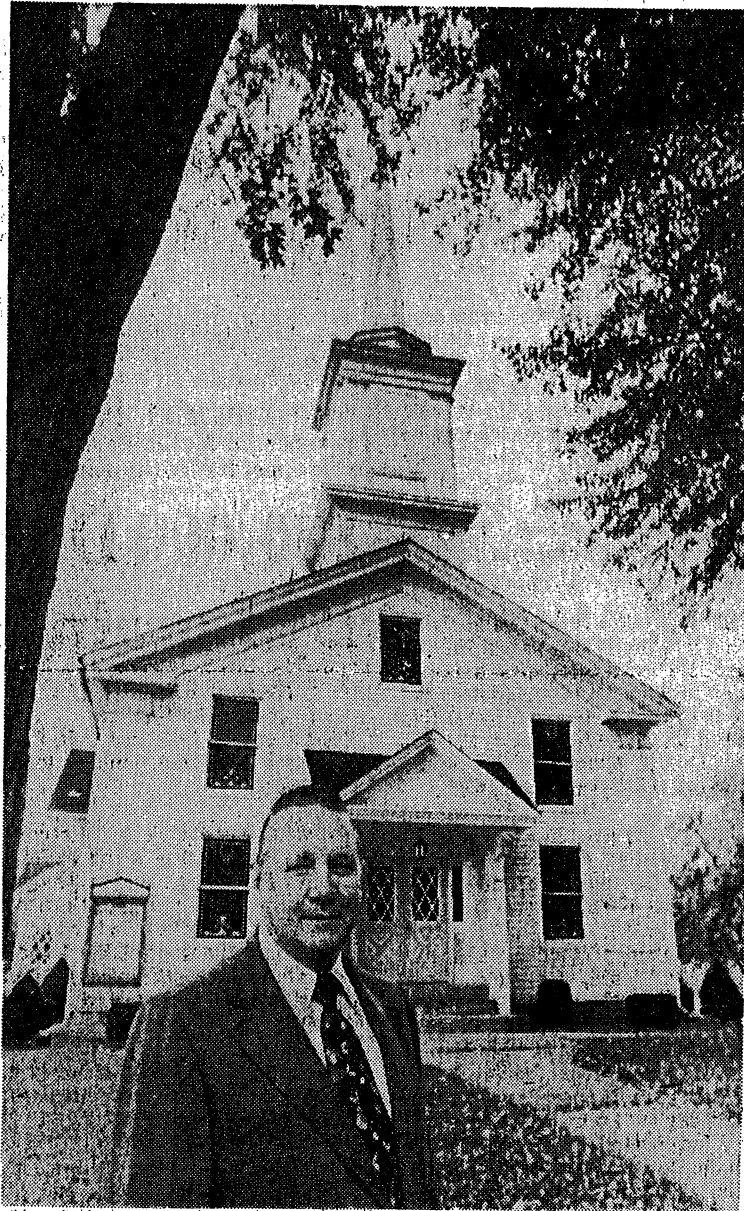
SO LET'S START in the summer of 1814, in Montgomery County, New York. Nicholas Young and his son, William, Wilbur Cahoon and family, Lewis Austin and family, Ephraim Keys and family, and two brothers, Spink and Reuben Cooper and their wives, left Montgomery County for "Township Number 7, in the 16th Range," Ohio.

The cavalcade consisted of five horses, four yoke of oxen and five cows. When the party reached Ashtabula, Ohio, Keys and his brothers, along with Spink and Reuben Cooper, decided to set down roots. The other three families, however, continued on to their point of destination and became the first permanent settlers in the area now known as Avon.

In the summer of 1815, three brothers — Abraham, Oliver and Lodowick Moon — arrived in Avon. Another brother, Ames, later joined them, and the Moon homestead on Detroit Road is occupied today by Mrs. Flora Moon.

According to the church history, the original families of Avon decided they must have a place to worship in "the faith of their fathers." The first religious service in Avon Township was held at the house of Nicholas Young, immediately after a settlement was begun by a local Baptist preacher, Jashaf Taylor, who lived in Dover Township in Cuyahoga County.

A BAPTIST CHURCH was not formed, however, until 1817. In June of that year, Elder Hartwell from the east made a missionary tour through Avon, and held meetings at the house of Wilbur Cahoon a few times before traveling westward. Upon his return some two or three months later, Elder Hartwell found that the seed sown on his first visit had brought forth a fruit. That is, the following persons had formed a church: Nicholas Young and his wife, Jared Barr of Avon, Jashaf Taylor, a Mr. Alwell and his wife of Dover, a Mrs. Dean and a Mrs.



THE REV. GLENN THORN, pastor of Avon's oldest church, stands in front of the Avon Baptist Church on Stoney Ridge Road. (Journal Photo by Jim Fiedler)

Alexander and his wife of Rockport.

In 1818 a log school house was built in Avon, where regular church services were held. The first ordained minister to settle in Avon was the Rev. John Tuttle, who was followed by a Rev. Teachout.

In 1826 or 1827, a large block meeting house at the corner of Detroit and

Center Roads was built by members and friends of the Avon Baptist Church. Meetings were held there by all denominations, and it was acclaimed at the time as "a great convenience." But, in 1836, the building burned down.

Again the church was without a place of worship, but meetings were held in various homes, and in 1838, the

membership voted to form themselves into a Missionary Society Auxillary the Lorain County Baptist Missionary Society. In 1839, delegates were sent to the first meeting of the Lorain County association held with the Elyria church.

ON DEC. 21, 1838, the church bought its present church site on Stoney Ridge Road from Andrew and Maria Dale for \$40, and built a 30 by 40 building there. The church has been remodeled, and is still in use. The congregation today at 2575 Ridge Rd.

Up to this time, reads the history, several of the church members lived in Lorain and in 1840 the letters to start a church at the West Branch of the Church.

In 1876 a baptistry was added to the 1878 the parsonage was built from the Langdon family.

Pastors or elders who served the first 160 years of the church such names as Hill, Ber Nesbitt, Andrews, G Knowles, Watkins, DeW McKee, Day, Owen, Kenn Dennis, Dann, Preston, Stoturnbull, Shumaker, Tyle Hill, and Mavis.

Others who served the church supply pastors, like Joseph Stubbs of Lorain, and Birdsall of Elyria, who came to help with inspiration.

THE PRESENT PASTOR of Avon Baptist Church is the Rev. Glenn Thorn.

The church will be celebrating its first 160 years with special services beginning Monday and through Sunday, Oct. 23. Services will be held each evening at 7 p.m. with Brother Gary Ballard as speaker, and special music by the church choir.

On Sunday, Oct. 23, "A Sunday" will be observed at 11 a.m. there will be Sunday school at 11 a.m., a special anniversary service with a gift for all who are 65 or over will be served at the School at 1 p.m., and there will be a service of gospel music featuring the Ron Merrill family at 7 p.m., refreshments will be served.

That evening, a service will be held at 7 p.m. with recognition of church members. The closing message will be brought by Brother Ballard.