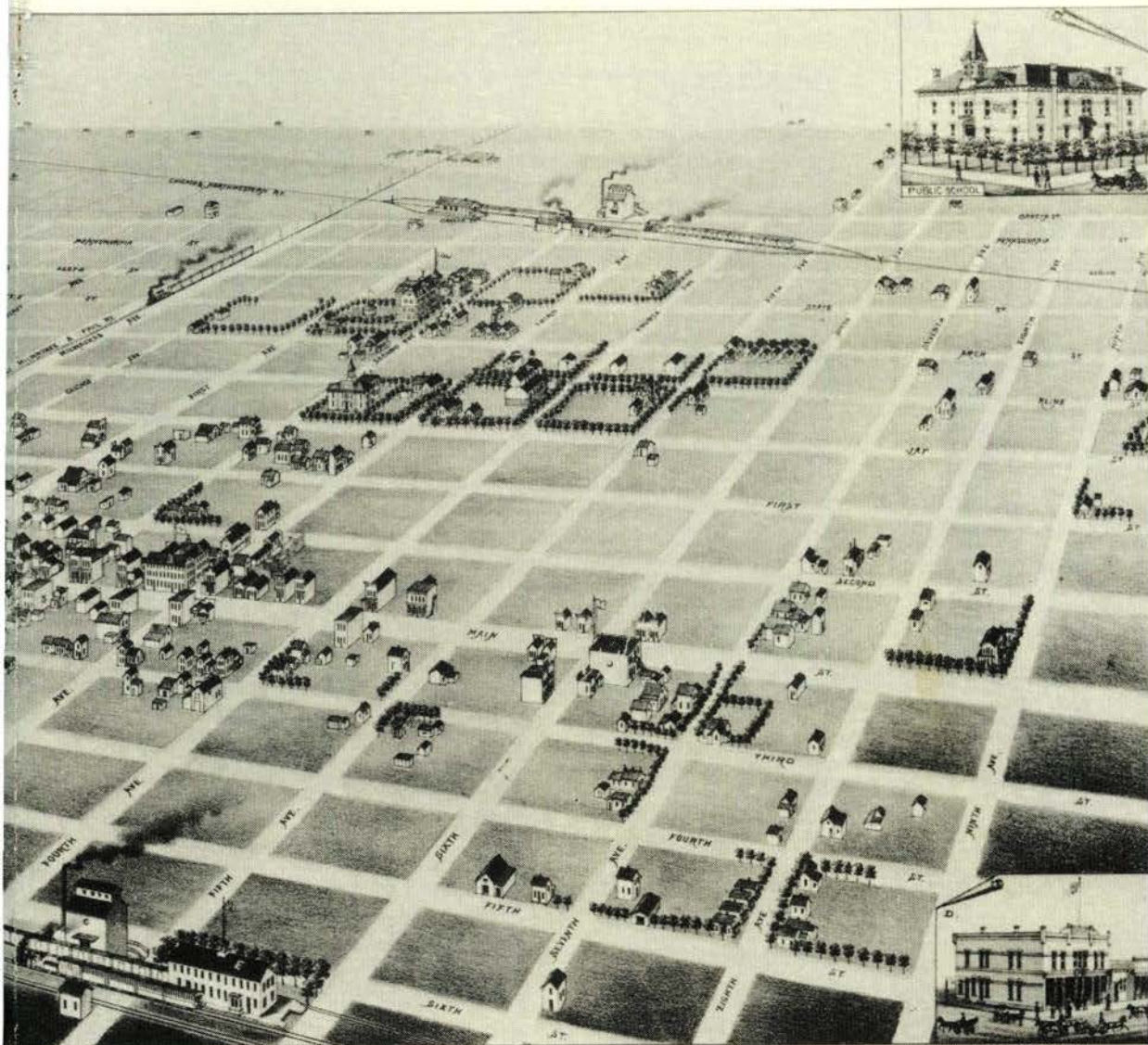


# The Town in the Frog Pond

Stories of Builders, Buildings and Business  
in Aberdeen's Commercial Historic District  
by Don Artz



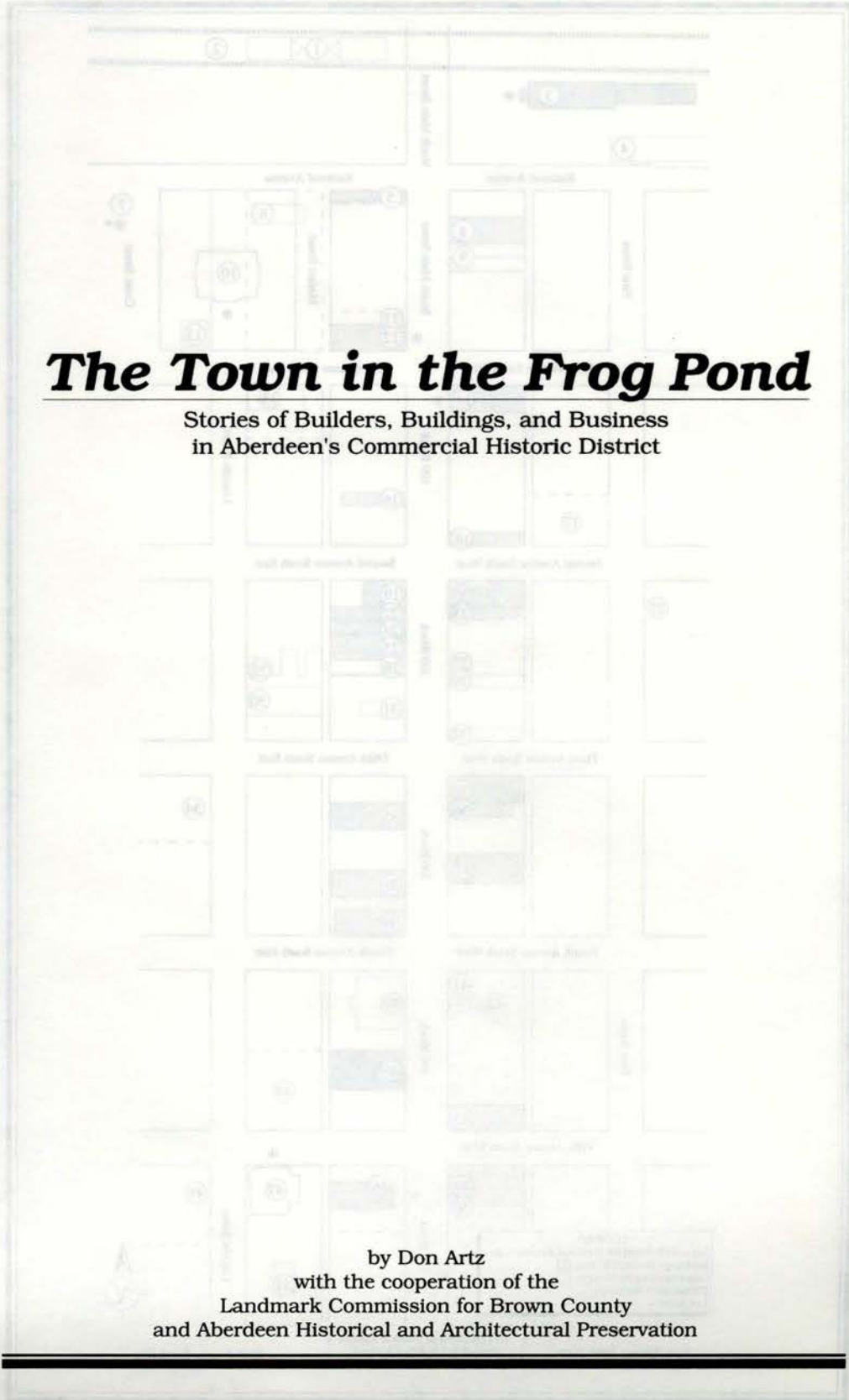
U. S. LAND OFFICE

BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF  
**ABERDEEN, DAK.**

PUBLISHED BY  
F.H. HAGERTY, BANKER & REAL ESTATE.  
AND  
H.M. MARPLE, REAL ESTATE BROKER.  
ABERDEEN, D. T.  
MAY 1883.



Some points of interest in and near Aberdeen's Commercial Historic District



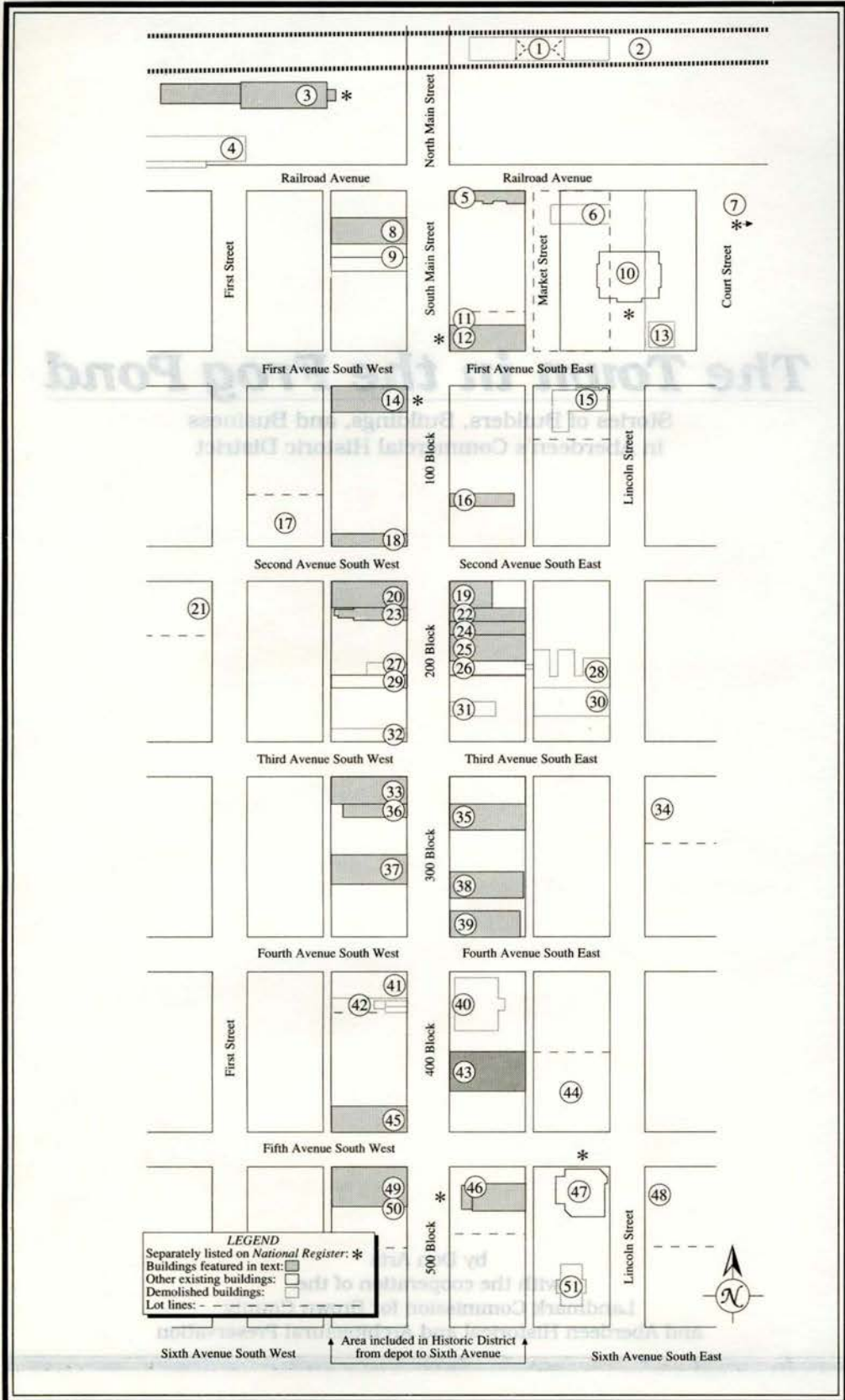
# **The Town in the Frog Pond**

Stories of Builders, Buildings, and Business  
in Aberdeen's Commercial Historic District

by Don Artz  
with the cooperation of the  
Landmark Commission for Brown County  
and Aberdeen Historical and Architectural Preservation

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Some points of interest in and near Aberdeen's Commercial Historic District



Main Street #	Map #	Map and Text Cross-Reference	Page #	
North Main	1	1. The first Milwaukee depot, built in 1881 on the east side of Main Street.	6, 11	
		2. Site of the Milwaukee's 1882 artesian well. It flooded the streets.	18, 36	
		3. The present Milwaukee depot, built in 1911, was their fourth.*	9-10	
		4. The site of the Milwaukee's 400 foot-long freight depot.	10	
South Main	1	5. The present Bel Aire Apartments, first called the Commercial Hotel.	12	
	6-8	6. The Artesian hotel was on Lincoln (2nd) Street before the Court House was built. Dotted lines represent street and alley locations at that time.	14-16	
		7. The Great Northern Depot, now law offices, and a landmark.*	9	
	10 & 12	8. The Hay Furniture building was built in 1903 for an undertaker.	51	
		9. Both buildings have been used as theaters, one of them for 31 years.	15, 18	
	19	10. The Court House is included here as a landmark.*	51	
	21-23	11. The county parking lot was the site of a theater with seven names.	13-18	
		12. In 1888-90 the Dacotah Prairie Museum building was the focus of dramatic power-plays in Aberdeen banking.*	7, 18, 19-20	
		13. Site of the world's largest artesian well and most powerful "water motors."		
	100 Block	102-104	14. The Alonzo Ward Hotel, built in 1928 after an earlier one burned.*	21-23
		117	15. First the Kennard Hotel, later the Commercial Club, then Moose Lodge.	14, 15
			16. Architect-designed in 1926 for Burg's, a \$1-and-under department store.	23
		124	17. Firestone's location was the site of an excavation for a huge theater.	47-54
200 Block	201-203	18. Stewart's School was originally the home of First National Bank.	24-27	
		20. The Citizens Building, when built in 1910, was the state's tallest.	29-31	
	205	21. Norwest Bank's site once attracted both dancers and car buyers.	40-41	
		22. Built to be a saloon, it opened on the eve of local prohibition.	32	
	206	23. The R. E. Huffman building began life as a sort of a bank.	34-35	
	207	24. For 44 years this white glazed brick building housed Olander's.	35	
	209-211	25. The Engel Music building was home to Woolworth's for 26 years.	36-37	
		26. The first Radison Hotel and the Harbor Cafe were here.	22, 36	
	213	27. The 1885 Aberdeen National Bank, our first stone and brick building.	14-15	
	214	28. A skyway and a tunnel connected the first Radison hotel to the second.	22-23, 48-49, 51	
	216	29. One part of the Main Street Mini-Mall was once a theater.	35, 51	
		30. The Aberdeen Theater was on this parking lot. <i>Aberdeen Theater?</i>	18, 42-43, 45	
215-223	31. The Sherman Apartments are on the site of the Sherman Hotel.	12, 21, 22, 51		
	32. David Strauss started his 44 years in Aberdeen retailing here.	41-42		
300 Block	302-304	33. A Kresge's dime store for 50 years. Its landlord took an interest in gloves.	32-34	
	305-307	34. Now a part of Feinstein's, it was a chocolate shop and ballroom.	36-39	
		35. Built in 1907, it has housed the Strauss <i>Golden Eagle</i> and a school.	41-42	
	306	36. The site of the Gottschalk Opera House, which burned in 1910.	38-39, 48, 59	
	314-316	37. The Coast to Coast building, on the site of our first "skyscraper."	42-43	
	315-317	38. One family has sold shoes in this building since 1919.	43-44	
	321-323	39. <i>The Main</i> building was built with two floors, not three.	44-47	
400 Block	401-411	40. The site of Aberdeen's first Federal Building.	53	
	402-404	41. The site of Jewett's first wholesale house and of Baum's <i>Saturday Pioneer</i> .	18-19, 39, 52	
	406	42. The site of that well-stocked store, Baum's Bazaar. 402-406 was Bostwick's.	18-19	
	413-417	43. The Capitol Building, "where the best pictures played," for 63 years.	47-55	
	422-424	44. The site of the <i>Family Y</i> was once Harry Walker's ice rink.	54	
500 Block	422-424	45. This building was built for Aberdeen's best grocery store.	55-56	
		46. The Masonic Temple.* Those Masons really knew how to live.	29, 56-61	
	501-509	47. The Methodist Church is included here as a landmark.*	59	
		48. What was it the Masons didn't build here?	59	
	502-506	49. Malchow's building was built for Cadillac and Buick sales and service.	61-62	
		50. The site of the Inter-State Grain Palace. Wasn't that something!	61-65	
502-512	51. This parking lot was the site of the first Alexander Mitchell Library.	44		

\* Separately listed in the *National Register of Historical Places*.

# Thanks . . .

to the staff and volunteers of the Alexander Mitchell library, and to the taxpayers and donors who support that excellent institution. Similarly, thanks to the staff and volunteers of the Dacotah Prairie Museum, and to all my cohorts (volunteers all) on the Landmarks Commission. Special thanks to Scott Anderson, Tandy Holman, Peg Lamont, Art Buntin, and Helen Bergh.

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Thanks (but no blame) to Judy Krueger and George Lindboe, who proofread portions of this publication. Thanks to the many others who have made suggestions, and provided leads, information, and encouragement. Thanks in advance to all who will correct our mistakes, make suggestions, and add to our information.

Don Artz

June, 1991

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*Dedicated to Charles H. Prior,  
who may not have known what he was doing,  
but knew how to get it done.*





## *How to build a city . . .*

---

The people of Aberdeen have built a monument to Andrew Melgaard, who gave the city a beautiful park. They dedicated another to Father Robert Haire, appropriately commemorating him as a "Friend of Humanity." They plan to memorialize L. Frank Baum, whose Dorothy of Emerald City fame was probably conceived here. There is even a monument to the municipal mules, Maude and Kate, recognizing their thirty-one years of valiant service to the city. There is no monument to Charles H. Prior, who had a more profound influence on the community, though he never lived here.

In late nineteenth century America, railroad companies founded most new communities as each rushed to lay track faster than its competitors. They expected to profit both from the freight and passenger traffic these towns would generate, and from the sale and lease of prime city lots. A new end-of-the-line community was certain to be a boom town, at least until the tracks moved onward. When there were no automobiles, trucks, airplanes, interstate highways, or even paved roads, railways had the economic impact that all combined have today.

In 1880, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad was building its Hastings and Dakota Division westward through this east-central section of what was then essentially unpopulated Dakota Territory. At the same time, they were building their James River Division to run north and south through the same area. The pace was frantic. William Rehfeld of Warner, who worked on the construction crews, wrote about it in his letters:

*During the summer of 1880 we graded 223 miles of railroad from Ortonville to Ashton and Frederick, Dakota, and from Huron to Redfield, Aberdeen and Ordway . . . . We lived in covered wagons, tents or dugouts . . . . Everybody had enough railroad work to do for \$1.25 per day for ten hours work.<sup>1</sup> . . . it took about 4000 good men and about 1500 teams to do this work.<sup>2</sup>*

The Milwaukee's original plan for its Hastings & Dakota Division would have taken it from Ortonville on the Minnesota border, west to Bristol or Andover, then northwest to Columbia and Bismarck.<sup>3</sup> Columbia, founded in 1879, was the first town in Brown County. Superbly sited on the James and Elm Rivers, it was developing rapidly. In 1880 it became the county seat and had a post office and a mail route to Jamestown. Columbians were busy building hotels. A new dam on the James River would provide a lake for recreation and transportation and power for a flour mill. Steamboats would soon begin paddling to Ludden and points north on a regular schedule. Columbians had hopes (shared by the remarkably optimistic neighboring village of Ordway, among others)<sup>4</sup> that their city would become the territorial capitol. All they lacked was a railroad, and they were certain they would get it. But when Prior, the superintendent of the Minneapolis office of the Milwaukee, contacted the city leaders about right-of-way and property considerations, they made demands that he felt were unacceptably expensive. He changed the route, and grade construction then proceeded west from Bristol until, after angling slightly north, it stopped in August in the middle of a dry slough. It was here that Prior planned to build a city.

It is unlikely Prior knew his new town site was subject to annual flooding. In the fall of 1880, he was preoccupied with labor problems; but even from his office in Minneapolis, he could see the advantages of the site just by looking at a map. It looked good for freight and passenger business: the new Milwaukee tracks would bisect the planned Chicago and North Western line

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1. *Centennial Minutes*, Helen Bergh, Dakota Prairie Museum, 1989.

2. *Brown County History*, p. 384.

3. Some sources say the route was originally planned to Andover and then to Columbia, and others, to Groton and then Columbia. It never went to Bismarck, thus indicating that the Milwaukee changed plans as new competitive factors arose. Prior registered Groton's town plat on the same day as Aberdeen's, so it seems unlikely there was a plan for a route from Groton to Columbia.

4. Perhaps the town's optimism was not so remarkable. Territorial Governor Nehemiah Ordway was either a scoundrel or a dupe, and allowed his name to be used to promote land speculation based on the idea that he had the power to have the territorial capitol moved to this piece of undifferentiated prairie.



Charles H. Prior

at a point almost equidistant from the grandly platted new towns of Rudolph and Ordway. It looked good for community development: the North Western's managers had been expecting to benefit from a new city where grade stakes indicated their line would intersect the Milwaukee's James River Division.<sup>5</sup> Prior's revised plan would spoil their hopes. Acting as town site agent for the railway, Prior and his wife Delia bought a half-section of land for \$380 on November 10, 1880.<sup>6</sup> He platted the city of Aberdeen on a portion of this property, and the Watertown Land Office registered the plat on January 3, 1881.

As superintendent of all Milwaukee operations west of the Mississippi, Prior was an enormously powerful man; in military terms, he was equivalent to a general. As town site agent, he extended that power and increased his wealth. The railroads had learned that once their construction plans were known, speculators purchased all the best town site property. To keep the Milwaukee's plans secret, Prior purchased land for town sites in his own name. He resold it in his own name and presumably passed a portion of the proceeds to top executives, who did not want profits to flow to stockholders unnecessarily. It is likely that Prior supervised the selection, purchase, and platting of all the Milwaukee town sites in Minnesota and Dakota west of the Mississippi and east of the Missouri. He named most of them, including Prior Lake, Minnesota. He named Aberdeen to honor his boss, Alexander Mitchell, for his birthplace in Scotland. Prior, who was born in Connecticut, was responsible for importing all those Massachusetts and Connecticut village names: Webster, Bristol, Andover, Ipswich, Groton, Westport, and others.

Prior planned the location of the new city's depot along the end of the grade and centered its main street just to the west of the depot. Then he subdivided sixteen blocks of the property, and in June contracted with Mr. Samuel Jumper to begin selling lots. The tracks and first construction train would not arrive until July 6, but before then, impatient speculators walked or rode from as far as Watertown, eager to be among the first buyers.

Unfortunately, after a winter of deep snows and a late spring thaw, many lots on Main Street (Prior had named it First Street) were under water. George B. Daly, Columbia's first school teacher and later an Aberdeen newspaper publisher, recalled that rival towns "were in great glee over the town in the frog pond."<sup>7</sup> Related to today's landmarks, the "frog pond" consisted of a large body of water west of the Milwaukee depot with several tributaries, including one that cut across Main Street near Second Avenue and extended to the corner of Third Avenue and Lincoln Street.

According to Daly, Jumper had another obstacle: at \$125 to \$150, the 25x142 foot Main Street lots were almost twice as expensive as the twice-as-big lots on neighboring Lincoln Street (then called Second Street). When frugal entrepreneurs conspired to establish the primary commercial district on this slightly drier ground, Jumper mounted his horse, galloped along the grade to the telegraph station, and got Prior's permission to suspend the sale of the cheaper lots. Anxious to get started, prospective businessmen competed to buy the choicest submerged property. Thus, more than in most cities, major businesses concentrated on one street.

The early speculators apparently justified their confidence in their abilities to make good use

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5. This site was variously called *South Junction*, *Grand Junction*, and *Grand Crossing*, and was never platted. Prior's decision to avoid this site was a great blow to North Western opportunities in the area. Forced out of any convenient depot location because Prior owned the property, they first bypassed the new city and refused to acknowledge its existence. Eventually, admitting defeat, they built their depot a mile from the center of town.

6. The date makes it seem as if Prior chose the route, graded it, and *then* purchased the property. Since that does not make sense, it didn't happen. To prevent competitive moves, the sale was registered several months after it was negotiated.

7. *Atlas of Brown County*, Vermillion, South Dakota, 1905.

of wet real estate. In the first edition of Aberdeen's first newspaper, published on August 4, 1881, editor D. C. Wadsworth marvelled, "Aberdeen now has 64 buildings of all kinds and sizes. Can that be beaten by any town at the advanced age of three weeks?"<sup>8</sup>

Rapid development continued. In 1886, multi-talented city engineer Walter Butler published a fascinating city map. It shows Aberdeen in the center of a circle with nine rail lines extending in all directions, like spokes on a wheel. Butler labelled his dramatic graphic with a catchy slogan: "Aberdeen, The Railway Hub of Dak."<sup>9</sup> After statehood in 1889, Aberdeen boosters began to promote the city as *The Hub City of the Dakotas*. With Main Street at its commercial center, it would serve a large area of both Dakotas not only with merchandise, but also with medical, legal, governmental and financial services.

Reminding us of our current doubts about census accuracy, the census of 1890 determined that Aberdeen's population was 3,182, while the 1889-90 Pettibone *City Directory*, published before census numbers were available, differed radically, estimating the count at 6876:

*The exact truth is marvelous almost beyond belief; . . . Where else has a city of Aberdeen's size and quality grown up in seven short years? No mushroom prairie-squatting shanty growth is hers; but, built up of substantial brick blocks, elegant mansions, and public buildings, which would be a pride to any city, with a complete system of waterworks and sewerage, with all the advantages that make life pleasant and profitable, Aberdeen sits amid her treasures a queen of the rich prairies about her, and reaching forth her iron arms to the north and south, to the east and west, she gathers to herself the products of millions of as fertile acres as the sun shines upon, returning in their stead the comforts and necessities which the dwellers on rich prairies require.*

After bypassing the prefatory ballyhoo, an 1890 visitor might discover from that directory (and from a little conversation at the horseshoe counter of Alonzo Ward's Star Lunch Counter) that whatever the population might be, there were about 230 businesses in the city. It had sixty-some retail stores, twelve wholesale houses, twenty hotels, and four restaurants. It had a flour mill, seven livery stables, three lumber yards, three brick factories, a cracker factory, eleven farm implement dealers, and a plow factory. It had thirty-five lawyers, six banks, and seven newspapers, including one published by L. Frank Baum, who had recently abandoned retailing. It had eight physicians, six drug stores, five music teachers, two artists, two architects, forty-three real estate agents, six meat markets, one fish market, and one map publisher. It had a soda pop factory, a foundry, a steam laundry, an opera house, a band, a greenhouse, an undependable electric company, state-of-the-art telephone service, a notorious artesian well, a library, a race track, a brewery, four cigar factories, and at least nine churches. One of these, Sacred Heart, lost its founding pastor in 1890: Bishop Martin Marty told the irrepressibly populist Father Haire to choose between politics and pastoral duties, and he chose politics.

After a fierce rivalry, in 1890 Aberdeen became the county seat, replacing Columbia both in governmental functions and in hope for future growth. Prior's half-section of swampy prairie had become the most valuable commercial property within a 150 mile radius. Rudolph and Ordway were already well on their way toward their present ghost town status.

Aberdeen would continue to grow, with some painful interruptions, for the next seventy years. During that period the Milwaukee depot was the focus of Aberdeen's commercial activity. All the buildings discussed in this publication were constructed on the six blocks of Main Street

8. *The Aberdeen Pioneer*. Its two pages were printed on one side of a sheet of white muslin because paper supplies had not yet arrived. A rival paper, *The Dakota Pioneer*, published the next day by John Drake, was also dated August 4.

9. Four companies had built or planned the nine grades, but in 1886 there were only three operating railroads. Aberdeen did not get its fourth railway and ninth line until the Minneapolis and St. Louis began serving customers in 1907. Until then, the wheel actually had only seven spokes. Butler, always responsive to hopeful railway promoters, made an even more optimistic revision of his map in 1888. Though the railroad situation had not changed, he now showed *ten* lines. He also added to his *hub* metaphor: "Aberdeen's Wheel of Fortune." On these copyrighted maps, our city engineer called himself "W. P. Butler, Map Publisher." Perhaps he should have copyrighted "Wheel of Fortune."

south of the railroad tracks.<sup>10</sup> For forty years there was no significant commercial activity outside the central area. As trucks preempted much of the freight function of the railroads, as automobiles and airplanes became the choice of travellers, and as farming became more mechanized, the nature of the city changed. It was no longer the dominant wholesale and distribution center of the Dakotas, but its retail and service businesses began to serve a larger area, and to spread out over other areas in the city. Partly because of the strength of its concentrated Main Street retail area, Aberdeen is one of the last cities of its size to build a regional mall on its outskirts. Therefore, its central business district retained more of its original function longer than most. In 1991, it remains the financial and governmental center of the city and is home to more than 150 businesses. Approximately 3,000 people work in Aberdeen's core area.

### **About this book . . .**

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The six blocks of Main Street south of the Milwaukee tracks are listed as an Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. All the buildings in this area are included, but some contribute much more than others to the character of the area, and some were listed independently before the district was listed. Our mission in this book is to review only those buildings that contribute the most, as determined by a survey. We will do that, but we'll wander from the subject when we think the side trip will be entertaining or instructive. We won't treat all buildings equally because our primary concern is to communicate the flavor of the times. We'll introduce you to a few *Ghosts* along the way: people, places and conditions that gave the street its character.

We could not describe architectural designs without using murky architectural language, but a *Glossary of Architectural Terms* follows the text, and you may use it without shame.

We'll proceed in street-number order, as if we were fearlessly walking down the middle of the now dry street and alternately examining buildings on either side. Appropriately, we'll start at the depot. But first, with the aid of an Aberdeen promotional pamphlet published in 1888, let's visit a lonely but hopeful group of settlers who made the wrong choice:

#### *Ghosts*

*The first settlement in the vicinity of Aberdeen was made in the fall of 1880, by a party of twelve from Watertown, Dak. They came in wagons, and pitched their tents about three miles south of the present city. Their winter city was built of sod and hemlock boards.*

*In November of that year a post office was established, called "Grand Crossing." A name suggested by the intersection of grade stakes, at what is now known as "South Junction."*

*The first postmaster of this guess at Aberdeen, assures the writer that the tradition of his having carried the large mail of the region in the tail-pocket of his coat is unfounded . . . But this was not Aberdeen, either in fact or in name; the guess was erroneous.<sup>11</sup>*

. . . and we'll visit another, solitary figure, an entrepreneur too excited by his prospects to be lonely:

*The first recorded instance of a white man spending a night here was May 24, 1881, when Samuel H. Jumper arrived in his wagon from Watertown, having pushed ahead of his party, who decided to make camp for the night . . . He huddled in his wagonbed that night during a violent electrical storm.<sup>12</sup>*

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10. Though Prior assisted others in the platting of the residential *North Aberdeen Addition*, he did not allow a Main Street grade crossing to be built, thus inhibiting development—especially commercial development—north of the tracks. His intention, of course, was to expedite and concentrate commercial development on his property south of the tracks. He ignored a court order to open the grade, but eventually became responsive after a series of nearly violent confrontations with irate citizens. At one time, protesters anchored a locomotive with log chain and stopped all rail traffic.

11. Allen Penfield, *Aberdeen, Story of Central Dakota*, Salisbury Newsdealers, Aberdeen, 1888. The tracks

There's a story about an Aberdeen native, touring Japan, who was shown a Buddhist temple in Kobe. "You may not believe this," he told his tour guide, "but they copied that from the Milwaukee depot in Aberdeen."

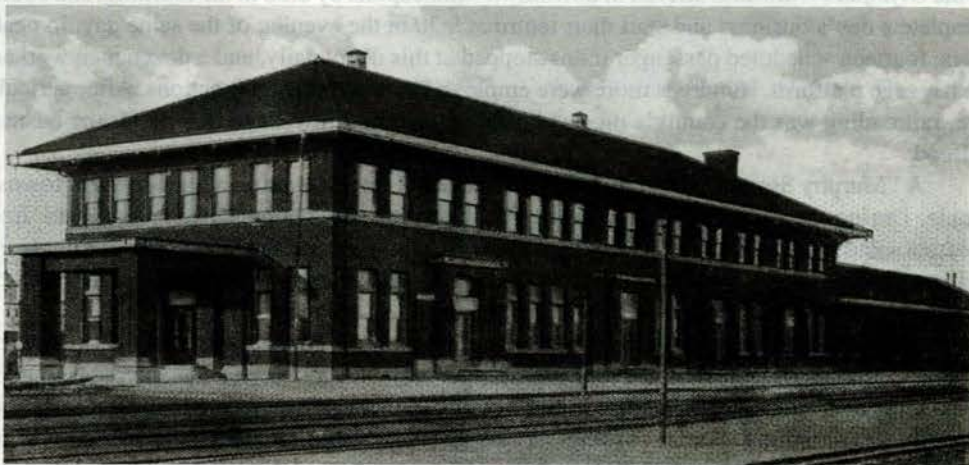
Japanese architecture had intrigued Americans since the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876. If our Aberdonian could have taken advantage of time travel to visit that exhibit, he might have wondered how the elegant *Domicile* on display at the Japanese pavilion could have imitated our 1911 depot.

The answer resides with *Prairie School* architects who were powerfully influenced by Japanese architecture. From the turn of the century to about 1920, the Prairie Style brought fresh new influences into American architecture. Previous styles, mostly derived from European models, had been largely *monumental*: the idea was that structure should dominate its site. In the more *organic* Japanese tradition adapted by Prairie School architects (including, most notably, Frank Lloyd Wright), structure maintained harmony with its environment.

Milwaukee Railroad planners, in commissioning the design of their fourth depot in Aberdeen, gave the city a very large structure that was decidedly *avant garde*. Typical Prairie Style features include a low-pitched hip roof in red tile with a substantial overhang, and persistent horizontal emphasis. The broad embossed line of the eaves, the rows of same-size windows on both floors, the concrete belt courses under the window rows, the inset brick courses travelling the great length of the building, all repeat the horizontal theme that ties this building to its prairie site. Structural ornament is subdued, but careful thought was given to the choice of textures, materials and colors.

The architect was J. A. Lindstrand of Chicago. The consulting engineer, as it happened, was Joseph H. Prior, the son of Charles H. Prior.

It is difficult to imagine the speed with which this building was constructed. The old depot burned in January of 1911, and it is not surprising that planning occupied the first half of the year. The Milwaukee used its own construction crews, under the supervision of engineer F. J. Herlihy of Chicago. Construction did not begin until late July, but the building was put in service in



*The Milwaukee Depot*

(continued from note 11, page 8) eventually crossed about a mile-and-a-half south of Melgaard Road on what is now Brown County 10. The Rice Brothers had dismantled their Watertown store building and moved it to this location in 1880, but abandoned it in 1881 when the correct town site location became obvious. John Firey moved that store to Main Street in 1882, where it became Lacey Drug, on the present site of Domino's Pizza.

12. *Brown County History*, p. 187.

December. Its estimated cost was \$93,000, and the railroad made other improvements at the same time in keeping with Aberdeen's new requirements as the largest divisional center of the Milwaukee system.<sup>13</sup> A new freight depot, more than four hundred feet long, with access to six sidings was constructed on west Railroad Avenue. The Milwaukee's total investment in Aberdeen in 1911 was \$375,000, and they planned to spend another \$100,000 the next spring.

A story in the November 11 *Daily News* described some features of the new depot:

*The passenger station is a two-story semi-fireproof structure, the foundation and floors being of reinforced concrete, and the walls of hydraulic pressed Coon creek pavers, the trimmings are of concrete manufactured by the workmen on the job . . . .*

*The trimming downstairs will be in weathered oak with beam ceilings and oak pilasters. The lobby and waiting room will be trimmed six feet from the floor with red pressed brick capped with an oak cap. The floor tile will be of red and black squares set in black mortar joints. The second story, which will consist of private offices, will be trimmed in weathered oak.*

*The first floor will be finished into a lobby, waiting room, ticket offices, women's resting room, news stand, dining room and kitchen. The women's resting room, ticket office and smoking room will be finished in oak paneling six feet high. The waiting room, which will be 30x95 feet, will be finished in red pressed brick. The women's resting room will be equipped with all modern conveniences including rocking chairs and couches.*

In the year this depot was built, the Milwaukee also completed a bridge over the Missouri at the appropriately named new city of Mobridge. From that time until to 1969, South Dakota's only transcontinental passenger service was available from the Aberdeen's Milwaukee depot. Through most of these years, the equipment and service were excellent. In a list of the nation's superlatives, John Gunther claimed, "The smoothest roadbed I have ever known on an American railroad is the velvet line of the Milwaukee into Chicago."<sup>14</sup> Passenger trains routinely achieved and exceeded their 79 mile-per-hour speed limit.

Though travel eastward from Aberdeen left at the inconvenient time of 2 a. m., passengers on the *Olympian Hiawatha* arrived in downtown Minneapolis by 6:30 in the morning, and could complete a day's business and start their return at 8:20 in the evening of the same day. In peak years, fourteen scheduled passenger trains stopped at this depot daily, and a dozen men worked the baggage platform. Hundreds more were employed in other railway functions. After agriculture, railroading was the county's biggest business, and the Milwaukee was by far the busiest railroad.

A "Murphy System" chain restaurant in the depot served waiting passengers and townspeople. During the Second World War the depot canteen was nationally famous for the free pheasant salad sandwiches served to servicemen in transit. It was staffed by Red Cross volunteers and supplied by local hunters and other donors. In one month, volunteers served 23,845 servicemen. More than 1,500 were served in one day.

After the war, passenger service declined as good air connections and fast highways became common. Eventually, only one passenger train a day served the city. Passengers complained of erratic service and discomfort as railroad management strove to reduce costs and to justify discontinuing a money-losing service. In 1982, when the Milwaukee Road was in receivership, the State of South Dakota purchased these tracks and the depot and leased them to the Burlington Northern Railroad, now the only operating railroad company in Aberdeen. The depot is mostly empty now, since the Burlington's substantial freight operations require little space.

13. In 1910, the *Hastings and Dakota Division* and the *James River Division*, both previously headquartered in Minneapolis, were combined into one division and headquartered in Aberdeen.

14. *Inside U. S. A.*, p. 910. Harper, 1947.

## Ghosts

The first depot was built in 1881, across the street, east of the present building. As construction was about to start, the first edition of Aberdeen's first newspaper commented:

*The depot will be soon in the course of construction, and is, we are informed, to be 40-90 feet on the ground and a very first class depot in every respect, such as Aberdeen needs and will for all time to come.*<sup>15</sup>

That depot served, not for all time, but for seven years. It was less than first class as some remembered it:

*... passengers often found their car far down the tracks, surrounded by slough grass. Those arriving with their possessions and livestock often had to disembark into water and knee-high grass.*<sup>16</sup>

On October 9, 1888, the first depot had some customers who aroused considerable curiosity. The next day, the *Daily News* impolitely announced:

### **HEAP BIG INJUNS**

*... The scene at the railway restaurant last evening where the Indians partook of supper almost beggars of description. The red men were arrayed in a line on one side of the counter, while the people, anxious to catch a glimpse of the renowned Sitting Bull and his younger and fit successors, Gaul and Grass, crowded into the room to its utmost standing capacity. Throughout these scenes not a smile or a change of countenance was noticed in the visitors. Although there was no attempt to conceal the interest they had awakened among the people, yet they gave no sign or any particular notice of it. Until the departure of the train the same eager throng besieged them at every turn and the depot platform could not hold all the men, women and children who congregated.*

Sitting Bull, the medicine man, and thirteen chiefs were travelling to Washington, D. C. in the company of agent McLaughlin to confer with the Committee on Indian Affairs. They were unhappy with the fifty cents per acre the government was offering for their lands, and intended to demand \$1.25 per acre. Eventually, the Indians unhappily agreed to a compromise offer.

This was the first time many Aberdeen residents had seen an Indian, but they were nonetheless paranoid. Only twelve years had passed since Sitting Bull's strategy helped defeat Custer at the Little Big Horn. Twenty-six months after the incident in the depot, the December 16, 1890, *Daily News* used this headline:

### ***Sitting Bull is Sent to the Happy Hunting Grounds By the Indian Police.***

Two weeks later, on December 31, referring to what is now called the Massacre at Wounded Knee, the *Daily News* continued its euphemisms:

### ***Over Two Hundred and Fifty Redskins are Sent to Their Long Home.***

The inadequate first depot was replaced in 1889 by one built on the west side of the street. When the second depot burned in 1906, it was replaced by another, which also burned, in January of 1911. The present depot is the fourth and was built on the same site in that same year.

The following story, dealing with one remnant of the frog pond, appeared in the *Evening News*, July 2, 1904:

### **FILLING A MUD HOLE**

*Superintendent Tucker of the Milwaukee company is doing a good job of filling at the station grounds. The low land south of the house freight track*

15. *The Aberdeen Pioneer*, August 4, 1881.

16. *Brown County History*, p. 385.

*has been filled to the street line and the low ground and pond between the depot and the round house is now being filled in. This hole alone will take about 300 carloads of clay.*

*... When the filling here is completed it will afford much additional yard room and remove an unsightly spot near the handsome new station.*

## **1 South Main Street**

**1905**

This building was built in three sections by Andrew L. Larson. It extends the full length of its 142 foot lot and puts its rear porches over the public sidewalk. Larson owned an earlier, wood-framed hotel at this location. He replaced that structure with brick construction one section at a time over a period of years. The front section, which is dated 1905, is the newest. The façade is of red-brown brick and the rear sections are of red brick. Windows have semi-circular arches, and corbelling is used along the top of the third story. Originally, the ground floor was devoted to the lobby, a large dining room and kitchen, and a laundry.

Larson called it the Commercial Hotel, and it is the oldest Main Street structure in continuous use for lodgings. It was always budget-priced compared to the more prestigious Alonzo Ward Hotel or Sherman House. Its location across the street from the depot guaranteed a steady flow of customers. In 1947, the building was sold and the name was changed to the Linmore Hotel. It became the Bel Aire Apartments in 1970.

### *Ghosts*

This report appeared in the *Evening News* on February 1, 1929, when prohibition was in force:

#### **HOTEL HEARING GOES ON TODAY**

*The preliminary hearing of Thomas Wilkie, charged with operating a disorderly house . . . is being continued today, with the introduction of the liquor taken in the raid on the Commercial Hotel, of which he is the proprietor . . . Roy Fox, former night clerk . . . who was also charged with operating a disorderly house, waived preliminary hearing yesterday through attorney Frank Sieh, who is also acting as Wilkie's counsel.*

*Lulu Thompson, a former resident of the hotel, and Mrs. Martin Small, a former chambermaid brought testimony yesterday concerning activities in the hotel, including drinking parties, fights, and gambling. Both testified that they had seen girls living in the hotel enter men's rooms, and that men entered their rooms, while Mrs. Thompson stated she had seen girls very scantily clad, enter other men's rooms. Mrs. Thompson further testified that one of the girls told her she had made \$20 from the three men who visited her room one night. Both witnesses stated that both Wilkie and Fox knew what was going on, and that it apparently had his sanction, and even his assistance. Some time the two defendants even brought the men up to the girls' rooms, and that on various occasions they had been seen selling liquor to men.*

It may be difficult for today's citizen to imagine the density and variety of commercial enterprises inhabiting these streets in the past. In the *first block* of South Main Street, which today begins with the Bel Aire Apartments and Flame Cafe, the 1928-29 *Aberdeen City Directory* lists a total of six hotels and one "lodgings." There were three restaurants, five clothing stores and a tailor, two furniture stores, two billiard halls, three barbers, two employment agencies, two motion picture theaters, a window cleaner, two confectioners, a cigar manufacturer, a manufacturing jeweler, at least six lawyers, two accountants, a hairdresser, two dentists and a dental laboratory, an auctioneer, two fruit brokerage companies, a heating equipment contractor, two



coal companies, a "mining and fuel" company, a building and loan association, two chiropractors, an "installment goods mercantile company," a building contractor, an investment company, three real estate agencies and two "land companies," a fruit market, a grocery store, several apartments, some offices of unidentifiable uses, the Western Union Telegraph Company, and the Christian Science reading rooms. With all that, there were two vacant storefronts, and nine vacant offices.

## **6-8 South Main Street**

**1903**

W. C. Allen, publisher of the *Dakota Farmer*, described John Moore as "possessing a sanctimonious look, befitting an undertaker." The sign carved in stone at the top center of this handsome building says "J. B. Moore Furniture Company," but the faded sign painted in white letters on a black background high on the side of the building says "Undertaker."

Most early furniture dealers were also undertakers, or perhaps it was the other way around. The relationship started because some furniture manufacturers also manufactured coffins. One of Moore's competitors, Andy Gerup, ran the following advertisement in the *Aberdeen Daily News* in 1903:

Four Cars of Iron Beds Received.  
This beautiful bed at only \$9.50.  
Undertaking promptly attended to.  
Satisfaction Guaranteed.

J. B. Moore was Aberdeen's first furniture store operator and one of its first retailers. He had come to Aberdeen from New Brunswick, Canada in 1881. In 1882 he owned a store he called Pioneer Furniture, and his ads for that store were similar to Gerup's:

### **The Cheapest Place in Town to Buy Your Furniture**

Coffins and Caskets with Beautiful Styles of Trimmings always on hand.

From about 1892 to 1902, Moore was manager of the National Union Company, a general merchandise store. In 1903, he built this building to house his new furniture business. The buff brick structure has two stories, but the first is taller than most, and there is a graceful balconied mezzanine between the first and second. The mezzanine and the central stairway have finely turned balusters. The building has a raised parapet, an interrupted pediment, a Palladian window with console keystone, and simple pilasters adorned with egg-and-dart motif. These are elements of Neoclassical architecture. The ground floor has a standard commercial front, with large display windows flanking a recessed entrance. A sign now covers the large transom.

Moore died in 1916, and the business did not do well after that. A \$35,000 mortgage from B. C. Lamont in 1919 remained largely unpaid in 1928. The Hay family purchased this building in 1932 and still use it for the same purpose. It is the oldest building in South Dakota in continuous use as a furniture store.

Julius Huebel became Moore's funeral director in 1907 and purchased that part of the business in 1915, making the Miller-Huebel Funeral Home another indirect successor to Moore's 1882 Pioneer Furniture.

## **21-23 South Main Street**

**1889**

We last saw Sam Jumper, illuminated by lightning, huddled in his wagon and covered with an oil skin to keep out the pouring rain. He must have spent much of the night worrying about his horses and wondering if he had been wise to leave his comfortable job as manager of the Nicollet House in Minneapolis, a position he had held for the previous fourteen years.

On the bright, clear morning of May 25, 1881, he woke, "so taken with the sight of green grass stretching in all directions," he decided he'd be more than a land agent for Charles Prior. He decided to make this place his home. "He pitched a big tent at Main Street and First Avenue South

for the first store.”<sup>17</sup>

Two months later the first edition of the *Aberdeen Pioneer*<sup>18</sup> included this story:

*Messrs. Jumper & Bliss have a store building twenty-four feet wide by fifty feet deep and two stories high, the lower portion of which will be used for the sale of goods cheap, and the second story is to be used as a family dwelling.*

Jumper had teamed up with a remarkably enterprising pioneer named Christopher Bliss, and Jumper's tent evolved into the Jumper & Bliss store, housed in a frame structure at 21 South Main. As partners, they recorded their purchase of the property at 21-23 South Main from Charles H. Prior for \$550 on August 11, 1881. In a town with so few stores, this one had to be most things to most people, and it was: post office, bank, lumber company, hardware store, and real estate office. Jumper soon sold his interest in the bank and the store to Bliss, and Bliss continued operations in the same location.

In 1884 editions of the *Dakota Pioneer*, Bliss sometimes placed three ads across the full width of the page. The large, central ad was for the C. A. Bliss Mammoth Store, which sold general merchandise, crockery, and groceries. Flanking ads promoted the Bank of Aberdeen, “C. A. Bliss, Pres.,” and the Hotel Artesian, “C. A. Bliss, Prop.” By 1888, he was busier yet: he was still operating the hotel, the bank and the store, and was involved with the Bliss and Pearson Real Estate Agency. He owned and operated at least 1,200 acres of farm land in Brown County. He was trying to get a street railway started and was general manager of the hopeful Aberdeen, Sioux Falls & Montana Railroad. He was suing the city, claiming that he owned a portion of the property the city was using as Railroad Avenue.<sup>19</sup> He was active as president of the Territorial Fair Association and of the Aberdeen Farmers Elevator, and he was secretary of the Aberdeen Plow Company. He was also building one of Aberdeen's most striking homes, the house that would be known as *Easton's Castle* after he sold it to C. F. Easton a few years after it was built.

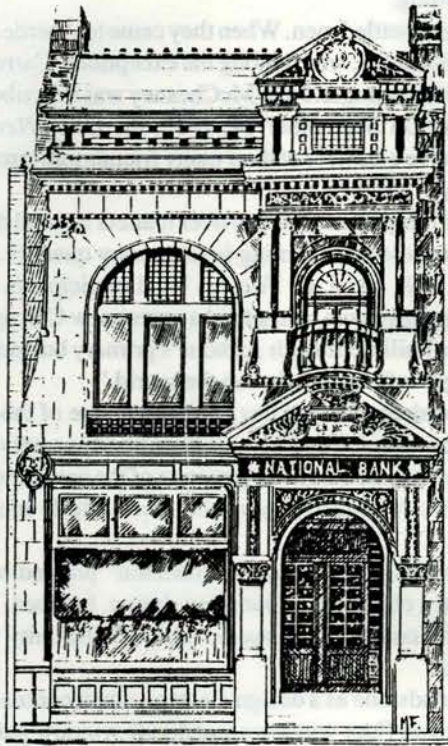
The whole town seemed busy building and confident of an endlessly prosperous future. On June 2, 1888, the *Daily News* reported that “Aberdeen is just now experiencing the largest and most substantial building boom it has ever known. Upwards of a hundred new buildings are now in the process of erection.” Those new buildings included the Kennard Hotel, the Union Bank Building, and the Dayton Block. The Milwaukee was about to construct a much needed new depot, the second of four. John McChesney was building a two story brick structure next to his Aberdeen National Bank, which had been the first brick and stone building on Main Street. C. F. Easton's new Building and Loan Association announced it had \$50,000 to lend for new homes, and Frank Hagerty was opening new banks in Webster and Verdon, to add to his collection. Hagerty, who had already developed several Aberdeen residential areas, was planning a huge north side development. T. C. Gage was pioneering West Hill, which was more like a suburb than an addition, a full mile from Main Street. Easton was building a grand new house on the corner of Nicollet (Sixth Avenue) and Arch Street, a house he would soon sell to B. C. Lamont. Among others joining Bliss and Easton in building new homes were Harvey Jewett, Mayor Pratt, Frank Hagerty, and Henry Marple.

As 1888 began Henry Marple was a popular young banker associated with Frank Hagerty in a very busy bank on the present Citizens Building location. A July 3, 1888 article in the *Daily News* headlined IMPORTANT CHANGES stated that the firm of Hagerty and Marple would dissolve, and that John T. McChesney was about to sell the stock of his Aberdeen National Bank to some Chicago investors named Webster, Sears and Cadieux. Marple was to be named president. On the next day, the paper confirmed that the changes had taken place. But on July 29, the paper said McChesney would take a year's leave of absence and would pass operations on to others

17. *Brown County History*, p. 281.

18. August 4, 1881.

19. In 1888, Railroad Avenue was called Chicago Avenue. According to a story in the October 30, 1888 *Daily News*, Charles Prior had sold this property to Nathaniel Dare as recently as May 1887, and it was platted as Dare's Addition. Bliss and John Drake had purchased it later that year, knowing it was being used as a thoroughfare by the city. They fenced it on October 3 to precipitate the lawsuit. The law suit was not settled until 1892, and was decided in favor of the city.



*McChesney's 1885 Aberdeen National Bank*

“long connected to the bank . . . instead of selling to a syndicate as was some time ago reported would be done, and now seeks rest and health.” McChesney left town.

On July 30, the paper reported that a new banking firm was being formed by the previously named Chicago investors and Marple. A week later, it said the new firm would be known as the Northwestern National Bank and would be ready for business in a temporary location in two or three weeks. On August 28, the *Daily News* announced that C. A. Bliss had sold the property at 21-23 South Main to a new banking company headed by Marple, which would begin construction of a building immediately. The abstract shows that Marple paid Bliss \$10,000 for this property, and Marple then deeded the property to Northwestern National Bank for the same amount. It was the highest price yet paid for fifty feet of Main Street property. The abstract also shows that Jumper sued Bliss to be certain he got his share of the proceeds from the dissolved partnership.

This story appeared in the September 2, 1888 edition:

*The new building to be built on the corner of Main Street and First Avenue will have a frontage of fifty feet and be one hundred and fifty-two deep.<sup>20</sup> The Northwestern National bank will occupy the corner room on the first floor. The new institution will have a capital of \$150,000 and will be one of the strongest and best managed institutions in the west. The other room fronting on Main street has been rented by Thompson & Kearney [the successor to the C. A. Bliss grocery business] who will occupy it with their grocery and crockery stock. Three other fine rooms on the first floor will front on First Avenue. The second and third floors will be fitted up for office purposes. The building will be heated by steam and will contain all the modern improvements, electric lights, elevator, etc.*

The planned elevator (claimed as a “first in this section of Dakota”) shows the builders had more confidence in the dependable delivery of electricity than was justified by the power company’s record at the time. Across the street, at the present site of the Clark Title Company, the Kennard Hotel had its grand opening in July of 1888, about six weeks before construction started on the Northwestern Bank Building. It was the most modern hotel the city had yet seen. It had a *steam* powered elevator.

The Kennard, Aberdeen’s first brick hotel, may have caused Bliss to reconsider the future of his four-year-old Hotel Artesian. The Artesian was located one block north of the Kennard, on the present Court House lot. Once preferred because of its then unique indoor bathrooms, the Artesian was now outclassed. Bliss announced the sale of furniture and fixtures in July of 1888

20. Like all Aberdeen Main Street buildings built from lot line to lot line, it is 142 feet deep. Originally, there was an alley behind this building. Lincoln Street ran through to what became Railroad Avenue: the Artesian Hotel would have been at 4 South Lincoln Street, if today’s numbering system and street names had been in use. Market and Court Streets were platted as sixteen-foot-wide alleys until the Court House was planned.

and soon began dismantling and salvaging the building.

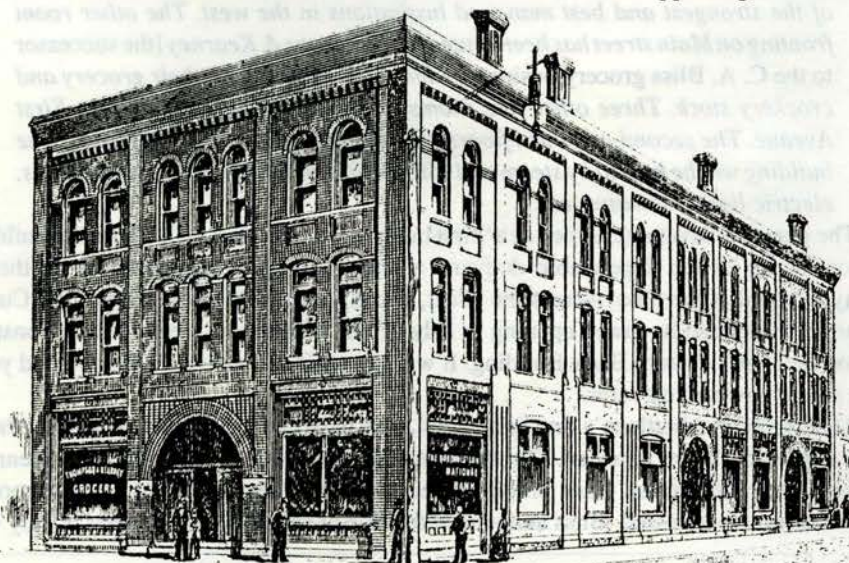
Frontier towns do not attract many middle-aged, settled men. When they came to Aberdeen in 1881, Samuel Jumper and T. C. Gage, in their mid-thirties, were among the exceptions. Carroll Easton was then twenty-four, and John Firey was a year younger. John McChesney was described as "a beardless youth" when he founded his bank. On September 14, 1888, the *Daily News* announced that "Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Marple will receive a number of their many friends tomorrow evening, it being their second wedding anniversary."

On October 24, the *Daily News* said that after "considerable delay over matters beyond the control of the officers," the bank would open for business that morning in temporary quarters. It named prominent local citizens T. C. Gage, J. W. Hoit, and J. H. Firey as local participants in addition to Marple, repeated the names of the Chicago investors, and added a potent new Chicago name: "many times millionaire" Phil Armour. It was Philip Danforth Armour's primary business that later caused Carl Sandburg to eulogize Chicago as "Hog butcher to the world."

Perhaps by coincidence, Armour visited Aberdeen the next day, arriving in one of those legendary executive-palace railway cars. He was accompanied by Milwaukee railroad executives who were examining the city and reviewing the apparently non-existent progress of the new depot. Mr. Armour, "who is interested to some extent in city property, gave the place a little more attention than he is accustomed to do at other points."

Marple approved a three story Romanesque design of "Chicago Anderson" pressed red brick in a running bond pattern. He soon announced a change to a four story design, but then, in November, said that because of the lateness of the construction season and the difficulty in securing materials, only three stories would be built.

The unknown architect used Lake Superior sandstone as a design element, and it contrasts nicely with the red brick. Pilasters divide the large main floor windows and divide window pairs on the upper floors. Unusual, almost Richardsonian, arches with granite imposts frame the three main entrances. Pressed metal trim, looking a bit like carved stone, was used in the spandrels. The windows on the main floor have segmented arches constructed with arch bricks. The second floor windows are double-hung and have segmented arches. The otherwise similar third floor windows have round-headed, leaded arches with triple rows of arch bricks. Exterior walls are twenty inches thick, and the foundations are cut field stones and mortar. Three main supporting walls are of brick



*Henry Marple's Northwestern National Bank Building,  
later known as the Hagerty Block, then  
the Western Union Building, and now the Dacotah Prairie Museum.*

and are sixteen inches thick. First floor ceilings are pressed metal.

Like many early Aberdeen commercial structures the entrances to this building are a few steps above street level. Some say its designers were remembering the 1884 flood: Main Street became a canal when the artesian well drilled for city water supply was considerably more productive than expected. More likely, they designed the building to admit light and customers to the basement level. Until Main Street was widened and remodeled in 1977, the basement had three entries from the sidewalk, one under each first floor entry. At various times, portions of the basement served as a barber shop, a retail store, a produce warehouse, and a boxing gymnasium.

The large bank-vault on the main floor served the Northwestern National Bank. A built-in safe on each upper floor served other tenants. These safes have excellent artwork painted on their doors. Other first tenants included three real estate offices, a second grocery store, a druggist, and seven law firms.

The bank opened in its new location in February of 1889. The following story appeared eleven months later, in the January 15, 1890 issue of the *Daily News*:

#### **MARPLE RETIRES**

*Yesterday was "Wall street day" in Aberdeen, it being the date fixed for the annual election of directors in the First, Aberdeen, and Northwestern national banks of Aberdeen. Interest centered chiefly around the election at the Northwest National, as it was softly whispered on the breezes that Henry M. Marple was to be superseded as president of that institution. The election was called for 4 o'clock p. m., and when at 7 o'clock the board was still in session, the report of the early morning was given color. Finally, at 8 o'clock, the board adjourned having elected the following officers:*

*President — Ira Barnes*

*Vice President — William E. Briggs*

*Cashier — William Briggs*

Marple had been fired, apparently at the insistence of George Webster of Chicago, and it is not likely we will ever know why. The *Daily News* cited "a difference of opinion between [Marple] and some of the stockholders relative to the policy of the bank," and said the Aberdeen investors and Cadieux wanted to keep Marple as president, "even presenting a resolution protesting against the election of an outside party as president, but they could not accomplish it and [Marple] resigned." The two William Briggses named were not the same person, but cousins. Vice President William E. Briggs, new to Aberdeen, assumed day-to-day management. Ira Barnes was the manager of the Barnes and Persons Lumber Company in Aberdeen.

The story concluded:

*. . . [Marple] wishes it distinctly stated that notwithstanding the unpleasant result, he will retain his stock and use his influence in the interest of the bank. For the present he will take a needed rest, remaining in Aberdeen most of his time, but as for future business plans he can say nothing as yet.*

The nineties were hard times. National depression and local crop failures caused many bank and business failures. A run on Frank Hagerty's bank brought it down in 1890, also bringing the city's first and most spectacular millionaire to insolvency and making waves throughout the community.

In 1891, an additional mortgage was placed on this building. George Webster then took title. According to a story on Aberdeen banks in the June 17, 1956 edition of the *American News*, "The Northwestern Bank liquidated itself in 1892 having decided there was not enough business in Aberdeen to support so many banks."

Christopher Bliss, Henry Marple and Frank Hagerty were all energetic, inventive and confident, but all disappeared from the Aberdeen scene in the difficult nineties.

Webster sold the building to Ellery and Sarah Mead in 1899. Mead was a hardware dealer. Frank Hagerty's brother Jay purchased it from the Meads for \$31,000 in 1907, and it then became

known as the Hagerty Block. In 1920, the Western Union Telegraph Company, already a tenant of a smaller first floor space, leased the most visible part of the main floor for \$165 a month. The building was popularly known as the Western Union Building for more than fifty years.

The building would have several more owners, and many more tenants and vacancies during its commercial life. These were some of its tenants:

Insurance companies Aetna, Prudential, and Northwestern Mutual, the Milligan & Robertson Agency, AOUW Grand Lodge (Henry Neil, recorder), W. Clair Hagerty;

Real estate agents W. D. Swain, Howard & Hedger, Highlands Co., John Wade, J. F. Hagerty;

Lawyers Roger Campbell, George Fletcher, Ernest Gunderson, Max Stokes, May Joyce, Elmer Thurow, Vernon Williams, Ivan Huntsinger, Charles Gorsuch, P. J. Maloney, King & Olander;

Dentists B. F. Wallace, Thomas & King, Walter Morgans, and the Aberdeen Dental Laboratory;

Physicians Hiram King, Bernard King, Paul McCarthy, William Gorder, Charles Weishaar;

Others: Granger Business School, Aberdeen Railroad Co., Aberdeen Engineering (G. A. McLaughlin, president), Aberdeen Gas Company, F. H. Ellerbe, architect, Mannes Engineering,

Coe & Howard title company, the Main Surplus Store, American Printing, Western Printing,

Carpenter Printing, Hayes Printing, violin maker Jacob Leinar, chiropodist Margaret Avery,

chiropractors Alva Ingebritson and M. E. Kerl. The third floor was once used for apartments.

The building survived a fire in March of 1903, a fire that started in the "banana room" of the Gamble Robinson Commission Company, in the east end of the basement.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation took title to the building after a bankruptcy in the thirties. A company called Northern States Corporation purchased the building from a court appointed trustee in 1944. It was unfashionable and almost empty in 1970 when three of that corporation's stockholders, Fred Hatterscheidt, Peter Bradbury, and Herman Pickus, purchased it and donated it to the county for use as a museum. A citizens' task force and donors developed the Dacotah Prairie Museum and the Lamont Gallery in these premises.

#### Ghosts

Anxious to have a municipal water system, in 1884 the city engaged a firm to sink an artesian well. Work began in February, east of the present Court House. Walter Butler, who was city engineer at the time, remembered it this way:

*On May 23, the drill hit the cap rock at 908 feet, and the world's greatest well began to flow with such terrific force that several tons of steel drill rods were blown out of the well like shot from a cannon and, broken and twisted, fell on the derrick. Then came the six-inch column of water and sand rising sixty feet high and out of control.<sup>21</sup>*

Bert McKeever later drew on the recollections of others to report:

*The town was aghast. There was no way to stop the flood which soon deluged the streets, filled basements and made Main Street a river on which row boats plied. Main Street had always been low. The wooden sidewalks were three feet above the roadway. An immediate project was to fill the street to its present grade. A ditch was dug to divert the flood to the Moccasin Creek and as many as 60 wagons worked to carry away the sand that was part of this first eruption.*

*Finally, a gate valve was fitted to the well to control the flow and Aberdeen had its first water supply.<sup>22</sup>*

On June 10, 1888, shortly before the Northwestern Bank Building was being planned (with the undoubted attention of T. C. Gage), this social note appeared in the *Daily News*:

*L. Frank Baum, of Syracuse, New York, who has been visiting his sister,*

21. *First There Was The Prairie*, p. 69, Dacotah Prairie Museum Foundation, 1988.

22. J. H. McKeever, in *Early History of Brown County*, p. 38. In fact, this was a repeat performance: two years earlier, the Milwaukee Railroad had drilled an artesian well which also ran wild and flooded Main street, only a little less spectacularly than the municipal well.

*Mrs. T. Clarkson Gage, finds recreation from the cares of an extensive business in that fascinating pursuit, amateur photography. Mr. Baum is proficient in the art, and during his stay in this city secured a number of fine negatives of Dakota land and cloud scapes. One picture, taken by the glorious twilight of Dakota, will when finished up prove of especial interest as an example of advanced photography.*

Louis Frank Baum, whose business may not have been so extensive as the writer imagined, apparently became enamored of the opportunities as well as the austere aesthetics of the Dakota scene. This ad appeared in the September 28 edition of the *Daily News*:

**WATCH FOR THE OPENING OF  
BAUM'S BAZAAR**  
MAIN STREET (Former Land Office Location)  
**MONDAY, OCTOBER 1, '88**

We shall offer a magnificent and complete assortment of  
Art Pottery and decorated Table ware,  
Bohemian and native Glassware,  
Parlor, library and table Lamps,  
Japanese and Thuringian Baskets and Wicker ware,  
Toys in immense variety,  
Latest novelties in Japanese Goods,  
Plush, Oxidized Brass and Leather Novelties,  
and Gunther's celebrated Chicago Candies.

NOTE: — Every lady attending the opening day will be presented with a  
box of Gunther's Candies. We are the only agents.

Baum's Bazaar must have been a fascinating, if crowded store. Baum has more listings than any other merchant in the 1889-90 *City Directory*. He is listed under Cigars & Tobacco, Confectioners, Crockery & Glassware, Booksellers & Stationers, Florists, Ice Cream, Japanese Goods, Jewelers, Novelties, and Sporting Goods. His store was located in a wood-frame building of about 22x40 feet, at what would now be called 406 South Main Street.

Baum did not persevere in this venture, but if Aberdeen lost an imaginative shopkeeper, it gained in entertaining journalism. Baum leased the *Dakota Pioneer* from John Drake and renamed it the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*. He hired out the printing and operated from an office next door north of the Bazaar, in the Jewett Block, at what is now 402-404 South Main. The sites of the Bazaar and the *Pioneer* office are both included in the presently vacant Bostwick's building. Though Baum left for Chicago (and eventual fame and fortune) in 1891, the *Saturday Pioneer* was a delightfully personal journal during its too brief life.

While in Aberdeen, Baum practiced his story telling craft on his four-year old niece, Matilda Gage. It is often assumed—at least by Aberdonians—that Matilda served as a model for *Dorothy* in the *Oz* series. Baum also enriched the Aberdeen social scene through his participation in every theatrical event of the time. The Gage family added the *Bazaar* to their other operations.

Frank Hagerty founded the city's first electric company in 1886, using the flow from the city's artesian well to power a dynamo. It was hailed as the most powerful "water motor" electric plant in the nation:

*The Aberdeen plant comprises 20 lamps of 2000 candle power each, which will be placed in different parts of the city and in several store buildings. These will furnish light sufficiently powerful to light the country for several miles around, and in the night time Aberdeen will loom up like a brilliant meteor.*<sup>23</sup>

23. *Aberdeen Republican*, April 15, 1886.

The water motors were not up to the task and were replaced by successively larger steam engines, but the company was notorious for its insufficient current and outages. After a series of equipment disasters, this part of Hagerty's empire was liquidated in 1892, with all the rest.

For many years, builders, hoping for better times, installed combination gas and electric fixtures. In the nineties, the *Dakota Farmer* installed a steam powered printing press.

A 1907 publication of the Commercial Club (a forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce), in its attempt to lure businesses to Aberdeen, apologized: "Unfortunately the city is at the present time without electric lights, with the exception of a number of private plants, and the streets are being lighted by gas lamps, owing to the fact that the contract with the old electric light company expired pending the granting of a franchise for a new plant."<sup>24</sup> Aberdeen lacked city-wide electric power from 1893 to 1907. Even after the city granted a new franchise in 1907, dependable electric power was not available. The management of the *Daily News* and the Cosy Movie Theater, disgusted by inadequate and undependable power, installed private systems in 1911, with the help of G. A. McLaughlin. The street railway almost failed at its inception because of inadequate power. Service got better in 1912, when the Aberdeen Light and Power Company built a plant on Third Avenue Southwest. In 1923, the new Northwest Public Service Company purchased that power plant. Those businesses had offices at 402 South Main until 1948.

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This story appeared in the July 1, 1892 edition of the *Weekly News*:

*H. M. Marple, who left . . . to take a position in Toledo Ohio, is the winner of a five dollar prize offered by the Blade to the person who would send the first correct solution of a word contest. Mr. Marple had his answer in the Blade office within 50 minutes after the Blade went to press. A full explanation is made in the Blade . . . of the way he arrived at the solution.*

On October 13, 1892, a social note in the *Daily News* announced:

*Mrs. H. M. Marple has gone south for the benefit of her health. A large circle of friends regret her absence and entertain hopes of an early return.*

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This story is from the October 11, 1897 *Daily News*:

*From F. B. Hoit [the son of J. W. Hoit, who had been Marple's associate nine years earlier] of Tacoma and Minneapolis, who was here briefly last week, it was learned that Aberdeen people who located in Washington and the coast country are doing quite well and are for the most part quite well satisfied. C. A. Bliss is clerking in a big department store in Tacoma, and while naturally looking somewhat older than he did in palmy days in Aberdeen, he is still very active and enjoys good health and has a fairly good income.*

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A story in the April 6, 1911 *Daily American* reminds us that Western Union once provided accurate time to much of the nation by leasing regulated clocks:

*The working force consists of five operators, two delivery clerks, one bookkeeper, a battery and clock man, five delivery boys and the manager . . .*

*The position of battery and clock man has just been created, as previously, when a clock needed repairing, a man had to be sent from St. Paul for the purpose. All he does is look after the [Western Union] electric clocks in the city (some 30 in all) and keep the batteries in good condition.*

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Until the 1950s, telegraphs were preferred to telephone for most important messages. They were equivalent to today's express mail and fax services. A Western Union "messenger boy"

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24. *A Souvenir of Aberdeen*, J. F. Kelley & Co., Aberdeen, 1907.



remembers the job and the times this way:

*I was twelve when I got my first job, in 1943, delivering telegrams for Western Union. I got the job because my father, Harry Schuminski, was the manager. I was paid ten cents an hour, and had to supply my own bicycle. The wages weren't too bad: Saturday afternoons I could go next door to the World Theater and see two movies for ten cents. And the job gave me status.<sup>25</sup>*

## **102-104 South Main Street**

**1928**

Pioneers were fond of bragging about how little money they had when they arrived in town. Alonzo LaRue Ward may have been the winner in this contest, claiming he had arrived in Aberdeen in 1883 with five cents in his pocket. He was twenty-one years old.

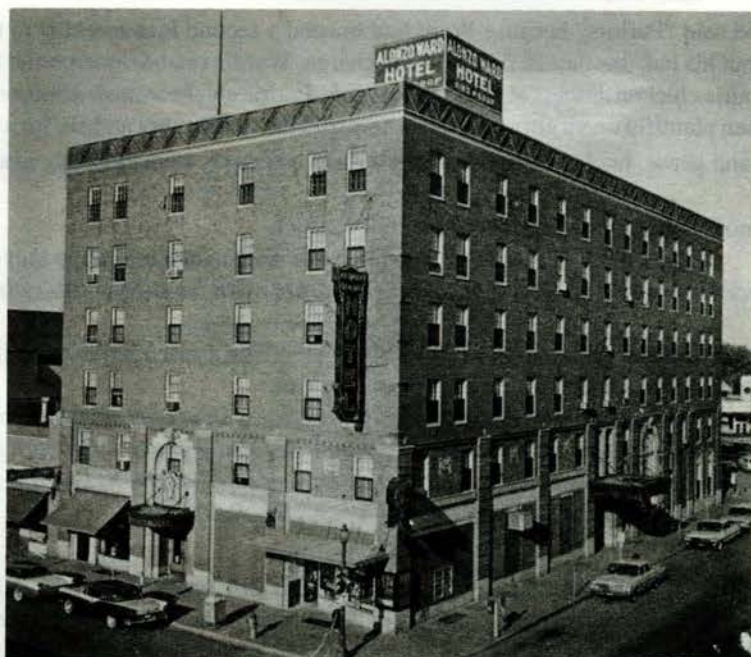
Starting, somehow, with a modest lunch room, he satisfied enough customers so that ten years later he could build the first Alonzo Ward Hotel. He purchased the building then on the corner to the north, enlarged it into a hotel, and added the lobby to the lunch room. In 1905, he added a third story to the structure. He also managed to put together almost half-a-block of prime retail rental space on the ground floor. He did all this with enough style so that this cobbled-together, somewhat Italianate red brick structure was considered one of the city's more impressive buildings. It shared "best in town" honors with the new Sherman Hotel.

On the day before Thanksgiving, 1926, the headlines of the *Aberdeen Daily News* read:

### **WARD HOTEL GUTTED BY \$300,000 FIRE**

The fire destroyed the building. Insurance covered only \$117,000 of the loss, but Ward soon began planning a new fireproof structure. On August 27, 1927, the day Lindbergh dipped his wings and dropped a message of greetings to Aberdeen, Alonzo Ward announced that work would start at once on a new \$500,000 hotel.

On May 15, 1928, Ward opened the new Alonzo Ward Hotel on the same site. Afterward,



*The Alonzo Ward Hotel*

25. Recollection of Dick Schuminski.

there was no question about which hotel was Aberdeen's finest. The "Ward" was host to many celebrities and was long the center of Aberdeen's social life. Aberdeen's first radio station, KABR, was located on the sixth floor and transmitted from a tower on the roof.

The Ward family sold the hotel in 1964, and it has since had several owners. The present owners have combined many of its 120 rooms into apartments, but it still operates as a hotel.

Ellerbe & Company of St. Paul designed the six-story building in reinforced concrete and light brown brick. It has a darker brick cornice in a herringbone relief pattern. The yellow-framed windows on the upper floors are six-over-six light, double hung. Many ground floor details have been changed, but there is an impressive Palladian window on First Avenue. This window once provided light to the lobby, but now it is sealed on the inside. There are *Beaux-Arts* design themes in the cast concrete insets, and the general design effect is neoclassical. Fine limestone detail and brick quoins distinguish the base. The iron canopies over the two main entrances are original.

The lobby has been reduced in size to make room for other facilities, but there is still a wealth of excellent original oak woodwork and fixtures. A handsome, restrained *Beaux-Arts* ballroom with an arched ceiling almost twenty feet high graces the mezzanine.

#### Ghosts

In 1886, Al Ward's Star Bakery & Lunch Counter advertised that you could get "a Well Cooked Dinner, a Good Lunch, a Box or a Plate of Oysters, a Bag of Fruit or Confections . . ." <sup>26</sup>

By 1889, the ad style (in the *City Directory*) had become more distinguished:

*A. L. Ward*  
*Restaurateur and Caterer*  
*Finest Breads and Cakes Baked Fresh Daily*  
*Ladies' and Gentlemen's*  
*Restaurant, Lunch and Ice Cream Parlors*

The ad said "Parlors" because Ward had opened a second location next to the Sherman House, and put his half-brother Ben B. Ward in charge. Ward's establishments and the Sherman promoted prairie chicken dinners at twenty-five cents. Prairie chickens, now almost extinct in this area, were then plentiful on virgin prairie. Farmers sold them, lead shot and all, for a nickel. Sand Lake ducks and geese, hunted from boats and with live decoys, were similarly available.

This note is from the *Weekly News*, July 14, 1892:

*A. L. Ward has purchased a water motor and fan and as soon as they are placed in position, those who enter his restaurant will have no fear of hot winds.*

Alonzo Ward died in January of 1929 at age 67, less than a year after his beautiful new hotel was completed. August Witte remembered him this way:

*I was one of the men, young men at the time, who used to enjoy boarding at the "horse shoe" counter of his restaurant. He had a fine trade at that little place because he was a man that treated his customers right. Al Ward was a progressive man – a builder – he was a man that did things . . .* <sup>27</sup>

#### All In the Family

In 1909, Ben Ward built the first Radison Hotel at 213 South Main, next to the Sherman Hotel. A bit later, he built a new 121-room Radison across the alley, on Lincoln Street, and connected the structures with a skyway and a tunnel. Ben Ward also built the Orpheum Theater, Aberdeen's grandest opera house, and connected its lobby with the lobby of the Radison. Ben's

26. Allen Penfield, *Op. Cit.*

27. *Daily News*, Friday, Feb. 1, 1929.

son, Alfred (known as *Babe*) later operated the Harbor Cafe at the original Radison location. A parking lot has replaced the Radison and Orpheum on Lincoln Street. The present unsightly south brick wall of Pleinis Jewelry is not part of the original Radison, but is all that remains of the many-times ill-fated Sherman Hotel. It now belongs to the city of Aberdeen.

Alonzo and his brother Beecher operated a bakery that (with the help of William Owsley) became The Ward-Owsley Co. The Ward-Owsley facilities, now used by Jobbers Allied Moving and the Praise Family Bible Church, cover most of the 200 block on First Avenue South East. In the 1920s, Ward-Owsley was an ultra-modern bakery and candy factory, and distributed their own brands of bread, candy, soft drinks, and ice cream throughout the area.

The Wards leased the Sherman Hotel properties, and Alonzo L. Ward II was manager of the Sherman Hotel and nearby Ryan Hotel in June of 1926 when a fire nearly destroyed those structures. It was only five months later that fire destroyed the first Ward Hotel. After his father died, Alonzo L. Ward II managed the new hotel that bore his name. His son, Alonzo L. Ward III went into the hospitality business elsewhere.

## ***117 South Main Street***

***1926***

Property owner C. D. Kennedy hired George Fossum to design this building, and contractor A. J. Clocksin to build it. Fossum designed the main floor for Kennedy's tenant, the Burg Company, a St. Paul based variety store chain. This was store #32 for the Burg company.

The two story commercial structure of dark brown brick has a fine white decorative terra cotta brick on the façade. There is a floral pattern in white terra cotta near the cornice. Terra cotta bricks also serve as sills framing the upstairs windows and the transom. Fossum's design specified seven offices on the second floor.

The Burg Company advertised the store as a *Junior Department Store* and claimed to have eighteen departments with approximately seven thousand items in inventory, "none priced over \$1." The Burg store did not last long in this location, perhaps because of the depression or increasing competition from other chain stores. In the late thirties, the Fashion Shoppe was located here. In 1945 it was occupied by The Aberdeen Furniture Studio. Brown's Painting and Flooring moved into this space in 1964. The second floor was once the office of Joe Goodrich, a band musician, insurance agent, and cigar maker. At various times it also housed KABR radio station, an Internal Revenue Service agent, attorney P. J. Maloney, contractor Herman Pickus, a Treasury Department Intelligence Unit, and Ursa Louis Freed, Architect. Freed designed many school buildings in the Dakotas, some residential and commercial buildings in Aberdeen, and the present Sacred Heart Rectory. The ground floor is now occupied by New Trends, a school supply store.

### *Ghosts*

Cigarettes, like wrist watches, were among the sure signs of a sissy until the first world war. Real men kept cigars and watches in appropriate vest pockets, and all the country really needed, according to some, was a good five-cent cigar. Aberdeen had four cigar factories in 1890, each producing what the country presumably needed. By the time Joe Goodrich was making cigars above the Burg store the situation had changed: demand had declined, and competition from large manufacturers had put most local factories out of business.

Our early cigar factories were not necessarily cottage industries. A story in the September 15, 1900 *Daily News* puts the business into perspective. It said a successful Huron cigar manufacturer, Sauer Brothers, was planning to add a factory in Aberdeen. The company had twenty-five manufacturing employees in Huron and expected to have as many in Aberdeen:

*... which will mean a force of thirty on the payroll when it is going at full capacity. . . . Difficulty is being experienced in finding a proper building in which to start the factory. Rooms of any sort are scarce in Aberdeen, and it is a hard proposition to get a place here which will furnish the light requisite to the best workmanship.*

This story is from the April 1, 1910, *Daily News*:

*H. H. Ellerman, internal revenue inspector, this morning gave out figures on the making of cigars in the district embracing North and South Dakota, the report taking in statistics gathered up to and including December 31, 1909. During the last year, it is shown 13,050,944 cigars were made in the district, in which there are 110 factories. The stamp tax on the cigars amounted to \$36,000.*

In 1909, Aberdeen had three cigar factories, two of them on Main Street. Sauer Brothers, of Huron, was then at 22 Third Avenue South West, the present home of the Johnston insurance agency. If each of these factories made its share of Dakota cigars, Aberdeen produced 355,935 cigars that year. Many more were imported from other states and nations, and spittoons still graced most public rooms.

## ***124 South Main Street***

***1889***

The Union Bank Company built this narrow, three-story building on the northwest corner of Second Avenue and Main Street. Its stockholders and officers included Frank Hagerty, Jay Paulhamus (Hagerty's nephew), W. A. Ward, Henry Marple, and Charles Howard. Hagerty and Paulhamus sold their stock to other stockholders before the building was completed. The Union Bank, with its announced capitalization of \$200,000, seemed in a stronger position than any other Aberdeen bank of the time. Since it was an investment bank, it is not surprising that nature and extent of its banking business remain mysterious, but we know that a year after this building was built, the bank was not operating. Another financial tenant when the building opened was the Western Farm Mortgage Company, and the structure was sometimes called the Western Farm Mortgage Building.



*The Dakota Central Telephone Building. Dial systems started here in 1905.*

Few Main Street buildings have changed more in design. An early photograph, taken after J. L. W. Zietlow's Dakota Central Telephone Company moved in, in 1905, shows it as a brick building with its main entrance centered on its Second Avenue side, under a wooden bay on the upper floors. Its style, mostly exemplified by the arched windows and bay, was Renaissance Revival. From 1905 to 1918, this building was known as the Dakota Central Building.

Today, the building houses Pred's Coats, but its original structure is obscure because it was long ago combined with its neighbor building on the north. From Main Street, if you don't look up, the two appear to be one building. Reminders of its amputated bay are visible through the stucco that almost conceals its brick construction. A Sullivanesque cornice replaces the original overhanging eaves. Only the arched outlines of its sealed upper floor windows clearly identify it as the same building.

In 1918, when the phone company moved to its present location, Dakota National Bank became the primary tenant of this building; it was then called the Dakota National Bank Building. The Buttz Drug Store, across the street east, often advertised its location as "On the Corner With Three Banks," referring to the Dakota National, the Citizens Bank, and the First National Bank. The Dakota National Bank and its president W. D. Swain appeared to be very successful in the 1920s, but the First National Bank absorbed this bank in the disastrous year of 1929.

In 1940, Newberry's, a chain "dime store," opened at this address. Newberry's used this building, the space next door, and combined basement areas for sales, making it one of the city's larger stores. There were offices on the second and third floors, which are now warehouse space. Squire Land and Loan had its first Aberdeen offices here. Other tenants included the Adjutant General of South Dakota, W. D. Swain's insurance offices, the Williamson law offices, the Associated Contractors of South Dakota, and Herges, Kirchgassler and Associates, architects.

### Ghosts

Saturday, June 23, 1888, shortly before construction started on the Union Bank Building, heavy rains fell, causing the frog pond to reappear on Main Street and in the basements. The next day, the *Daily News* reported:

*The steam pump will begin work Monday and keep it up until the city's cellars are dry as a bone.*

Tuesday, June 26, the news was updated:

*The steam pump began work at the Shuler building yesterday morning.*

*The hose extends down First Avenue where it empties into the artesian ditch.*

*The drying process is going on slowly but surely.*

The city first used the "artesian ditch" when the well the Milwaukee Railroad drilled in 1882 flooded the streets and basements. It took the run-off from the wells and came in handy as the city's open storm sewer for years after that. Thursday, there was this hopeful report:

*The sun began to assist the steam pump yesterday. Their joint labors will soon dry out the city.*

— with this less favorable comment:

*Main street looked like the principal thoroughfare of an Illinois town yesterday — deep and plastic with rich mud.*

— and Friday, almost a week after the rain:

*The steam pump is still at work on the Shuler cellar. The engineer remarked yesterday as the little steamer puffed away diligently at its mammoth task, "This is a good deal like trying to run a large farm with a single horse." The capacity of the pump is from sixty to seventy-five barrels an hour.*

They moved the pump from Shuler's to the second basement Tuesday, July 3. The *Daily News* reported its progress every day, but by July 10 skepticism was increasing:

*The steam pump was moved to Ward's restaurant last night. Will it ever reach the mal-odorous center of town?*

— and on July 11:

*The steam pump succumbed temporarily to fatigue yesterday, but as evening fell, its monotonous "chug, chug" was once more heard upon the banks of the historic pond at the corner of Main Street and First Avenue.*

— and on July 14:

*The cellar of the Shuler building again holds fully two feet of water.*

The water filled excavations for buildings under construction, making work difficult and workmen miserable. This story appeared in the *Daily News*, August 25, 1888:

*Some of the men at work on the excavation for the Union Bank Co.'s building struck for a raise yesterday. They have been getting \$1.75 [per day] but wanted \$2.00.*

Various sources tell the story of J. L. W. Zietlow and the Dakota Central Telephone Company:

*In 1868 a 17 year-old German boy named J. L. W. Zietlow emigrated to the United States and made his way to the Midwest. He took whatever farm work he could get and saved his money. By the time he was 23, he had a job in a sawmill at Winona, Minn., and money in the bank.*

*Then misfortune struck twice. Zietlow lost his right arm in a sawmill accident, and because the bank failed, he lost the money he'd saved. But he wasn't defeated. As soon as he was able, Zietlow took a commercial course at Naperville (Ill) College. In 1880 he . . . spent part of the year working at a manufacturing concern associated with the state prison at Stillwater, Minn. There he began to experiment with telephones and other electrical devices. By 1886 he had telephone exchanges operating in Aberdeen, S. D., and in nearby Columbia . . . .<sup>28</sup>*

*Zietlow was practically a one-man telephone company during these trying years. Despite being one-armed, he set poles, strung wires, installed phones, and repaired equipment. His son, J. Ford Zietlow; his wife; and his daughters, Essie and Nina, helped operate the switchboard. For all the family involvement, Zietlow received seventy five dollars a month<sup>29</sup>*

This ad appeared in the July 19, 1890 *Daily News*:

### **Special Messenger System**

I Have established a Special Messenger System for the purpose of delivering messages and parcels and the transaction of any business entrusted to me.

#### **MOUNTED MESSENGERS**

are always waiting at the Central Telephone Office.

Call up central and see how quick a messenger will be at your door.

Charges Moderate

J. L. W. ZIETLOW

Nina Zietlow Chilson, once a "Mounted Messenger," remembered:

*Many times I rode my bicycle to different stores or offices to tell them someone wanted to talk to them.<sup>30</sup>*

Bob Perry, telephone pioneer and historian, tells this story:

*When she was nine years old, Essie Zietlow was operating the switchboard in the telephone office which was located above the fire station on the present city Municipal Building lot. One day she got bored and set off the fire alarm to relieve the tedium. Then, because J. L. W. Zietlow's inventive mind had*

28. James C. Rippey, *Goodbye Central; Hello World*, p. 86.

29. *Brown County History*, p. 373.

30. *First There Was the Prairie*, p. 33.

*automated the system, things began to happen: the gates on the fire horse stalls opened, and the well-trained horses trotted into position under the harnesses. Zietlow had rigged these with a push-button release, so before Essie could say "I didn't really mean it," the horses were harnessed and the fire crew ready to go. The mayor decided not to punish Essie, saying the crews needed practice.*

*During the early 1890's, Aberdeen led the world in telephones per person: one instrument for every 6.5 people. In contrast, the figure for New York City was one telephone for every 14.5 people, and the figure for the country as a whole was one phone for every 22 people.<sup>31</sup>*

In the early years of the century, Zietlow regularly placed ads in the *Aberdeen Daily News* soliciting installation of electric bells and promised "other electrical work attended to promptly." The newspaper called him "the electrician."

*... an automatic dial system was installed on November 6th, 1905. It is not certain, which town, Aberdeen or Sioux City, had the first automatic electric dial service [in the world].<sup>32</sup>*

*The first installation of dial long-distance lines in the world was completed on December 5, 1917, by John Wicks, an engineer for the Automatic Electric Company. The lines went from Aberdeen to Huron and from Aberdeen to Watertown. The dial switching equipment was located at Doland, South Dakota.<sup>33</sup>*

*When J. L. W. Zietlow died Nov. 14, 1922, the Dakota Central was a \$5 million company with 93 exchanges, 30,000 subscribers, nearly 40,000 miles of long distance lines and 450 employees.<sup>34</sup>*

## **201-203 South Main Street**

**1906**

The bank that began life as The Farmers and Merchants Bank on January 2, 1883 was the second Samuel Jumper had organized in his first year-and-a-half in Aberdeen. When it became Aberdeen's first federally authorized bank six months later, he changed the name to First National Bank of Aberdeen. The Gannon and Suttle families purchased the bank in 1899. In 1906, at a cost of nearly \$50,000, they built the structure that was the bank's home for the next fifty-two years. Gannon and Suttle sold their interests in the bank to Northwest Bancorporation of Minneapolis in 1926.

The Classical Revival design is capped with a simple parapet and cornice. Modillions, dentils, and pilasters with Corinthian capitals enhance the façade. Pilasters separate large window spaces. The building, made of Minnesota sandstone, is now painted tan. It has a rose quartz granite foundation, as do many Aberdeen buildings from this period. When the bank occupied the building, its cream-white color and neoclassic design gave it the aura of a federal institution. An ornate bronze entrance has been replaced with a commercial aluminum door.

The building now houses Stewart's School of Hairstyling. In 1958, the bank was the first financial institution to move from Main Street to First Street and is now called Norwest Bank.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 373.

32. *Brown County History*, p. 375.

33. *Ibid.* Bell System long distance dialing did not start until 1938, and then only regionally.

34. *Rippey, Op. Cit.*, p. 91. Dakota Central was then housed in the present telephone building. In 1934, Northwestern Bell Telephone Company purchased Dakota Central. It is now owned by U. S. West Communications.



*The First National Bank Building, July 4, 1924*

*In the background are the "saloon" building George Fossum designed for James Workman, Olander's, the Firey Building (then occupied by Woodward Drug), the first Radison Hotel, and the Sherman Hotel.*

### Ghosts

From an 1893 publication promoting the city and its leading citizens:<sup>35</sup>



Samuel H. Jumper

*Col. Jumper is one of the best known men in the west. He has a fine record as a soldier and citizen. Enlisting from his birthplace, New Gloucester, Maine, in the Tenth Maine Infantry, September 30, 1861, being then under fifteen years of age, he participated in all the battles of the regiment, including Winchester, Cedar Mountain, Second Bull Run, South Mountain and Antietam. He re-enlisted as a veteran in the Twenty-Ninth Maine Infantry, and was engaged in the battles of Sabine Cross-Roads, Winchester, Fishers' Hill, Cedar Creek, Va., and others, being wounded during the charge of Sheridan's army in the last named battle, and for meritorious conduct promoted on the field.*

The 1887 *Aberdeen City Directory* lists S. H. Jumper as Fourth Ward Alderman, serving on the following standing committees: Police, Claims, Sewers, Water-works, Streets and Alleys, Finance and Taxes. Aldermen received a salary of five dollars a year. The same source says that in 1887 he was president of the First National Bank, president of the Building and Loan Association, president of the local council of the Provident Aid Society, Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, Captain of Company G, Dakota National Guards, E. C. of the Masonic Damascus Commandery, and president of the Aberdeen Telephone Company, a predecessor to Zietlow's Dakota Central.

Aberdeen's first citizen, first real-estate agent, first retailer, and first banker was also first president of the Brown County Old Settlers. He was our seventh postmaster (for seventeen years) and eleventh mayor. He was the first president of the Coe and Howard Abstract Company and of the Aberdeen Savings Bank. He organized the first gas company. He worked with C. A. Bliss,

35. *Aberdeen and Brown County, S. D.*, published by *The Aberdeen Sun*, circa 1893.



Henry Marple, Frank Hagerty, and others to start our first library, and he served on the Board of Education. He was a director of the Inter-State Grain Palace Association. He had one of the first automobiles in Brown County, a 1904 Cadillac. He became a brigadier general in the state militia. He was an Elk and a member of the Knights of Pythias. A charter member of the Masonic Temple, in June of 1902 he was elected Grand High Priest of the Royal Arch Masons. With C. A. Bliss and others, he made an early, unpopular attempt to organize a street railway. He was secretary or treasurer of many other organizations and partner in still others.

Samuel Jumper moved to Minneapolis in 1915, but he maintained his residence here. His will specified that he receive a Masonic funeral in Aberdeen, and after he died in 1921, the Milwaukee *Columbian* brought him back along the path of his 1881 wagon tracks to be honored by his friends. Then, to complete the circle, his body was taken to Maine for burial.

Frank B. Gannon, long-time president of First National Bank, was the son of an impoverished wood cutter. It is likely that his early years caused him to be both conservative and compassionate. There are more stories about Gannon than any other Aberdeen pioneer, most of them humorous. Like this one, most revolved around his Coolidge-like taciturnity and conservative nature:

*A customer in whom Gannon did not have much faith was interviewing him with regard to a loan. This would-be borrower dwelt on his claims for accommodation without visibly impressing Gannon. Somewhat exasperated, he finally exclaimed: "What will I have to do in order to get a loan in this bank?"*

*"You would have to be born again," Gannon answered quietly.*<sup>36</sup>

Gannon and Suttle came to Aberdeen from Ellendale and were friends and relatives as well as business partners. Their once elegant and still imposing homes are neighbors at 714 and 720 South Main Street. Samuel Jumper lived at 1 Ninth Avenue Southwest, a block south.

From the 1910 edition of Polk's *Aberdeen City Directory* we learn there was a Turkish Bath in the basement of the First National Bank building.

## **202-204 South Main Street 1910**

In 1909, both the city of Aberdeen and Dakota Central Telephone Company were in a period of burgeoning growth. The telephone company had recently moved its offices from 202 South Main across the street north to what is now 124 South Main. John Ford Zietlow was the son of Dakota Central founder J. L. W. Zietlow and a director in the telephone company. Former Governor Charles N. Herreid was its vice president. W. G. Bickelhaupt was its secretary-treasurer. They saw a dual opportunity in using the available prime property (the site had once been the location of the Hagerty and Marple Bank building) and in forming a bank. In any event, their experience would have led them to have enormous faith in their abilities and in the future of Aberdeen. They joined with Ole Swanson, a prosperous farmer, and with Charles Russell, a banker, in founding the Citizens Bank Company.

They planned much more than a bank, however: they would build the finest office building in South Dakota, with the new bank as its anchor tenant. In 1909, they sold \$100,000 worth of bonds to finance construction of the building. The actual construction costs were \$86,000.

The six-story business building was then the tallest in the Dakotas. Structures of this kind were not practical until there was a dependable source of electric power for elevators and until steel and concrete construction eased fears of fires in tall buildings. In a 1912 insurance map used

<sup>36</sup> *Aberdeen, a Middle Border City*, 1940, pp. 69-70. This Gannon story and others are told in more detail in the June 17, 1956, edition of the *Aberdeen American News*.



*Fireworks from the Citizens Building Roof Garden, June 8, 1911  
 Note the electric lines for the street railway.*

to train fire fighters, this was one of only three Aberdeen buildings designated as fireproof.

The building had two similar "main" entrances. The bank entrance was centered on the Main Street side, and no longer exists. The main entrance to the office building is still on Second Avenue, then across from the main entrance of the telephone company. It is flanked with classic details: columns with volutes at the capitals, molded pediments, and an egg-and-dart decoration. The entrance opened into a lobby dominated by two elevators in wrought-iron cages, semi-surrounded by a marble-clad steel stairway. People enjoyed watching the inner workings of the elevators, as architects have relearned in recent years. Children were also fascinated with the glass mail-chute. They could watch as mail deposited on floors above floated down to its collection point. The most cosmopolitan innovation was the roof garden restaurant and entertainment complex. It was a great excuse to try the elevators, and diners could get a breathtaking view of the city. Prairie winds soon ended roof-top dining.

A cigar store in the lobby provided the latest newspapers and magazines and was sometimes staffed by a teenaged Carl Swanson, who later managed the building. From the lobby, patrons could enter the bank or ground-floor retail stores.

The Citizens Bank Building immediately became the most fashionable address for medical, dental, legal, and insurance offices. The building has had so many tenants that any reasonably-sized listing would be unfair, but we have put a page-full in an appendix.

This comment appeared in the April 24, 1910 *Daily American*:

*The popularity of the new Citizens bank building is the marvel of everybody. When its six stories were reared it was supposed that if they were all filled with tenants that the other buildings about the city would have to be vacant, almost.*

*Nothing like that has happened. The new building is almost filled and yet there does not seem to be any noticeable falling off in the other buildings . . .*

In 1914, the Swanson family mortgaged its extensive farm property to purchase the bonds. This gave them ownership of the building, but later caused them to lose most of their lands.

The Citizens Savings and Trust Bank merged with the First National Bank in 1929. Anderson's Drug moved into the space the bank had occupied. The Walgreen chain drug store took over the space in 1940 and remained in that location for forty years. In 1965, the Swanson family sold the building to ROR Enterprises, and it is still in use for offices and retail stores.

### *Ghosts*

Because sound waves continue to reverberate in space forever, if you listen closely enough you may hear a reader of the April 27, 1910 *Daily American* saying, "What'll they think of next?"

*Aberdeen's roof garden [on the roof of the Citizens Building] is now fast becoming a reality, leaving no room for doubting Thomases as to the intentions of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Runyon [the managers] . . . .*

*Workmen are busy getting the floor in place and planting the large shipments of roses, climbing plants, etc. which have arrived.*

*About 150 rose bushes have arrived which will be planted along with 110 natural palms and 100 ferns between the booths to separate them from each other. One hundred climbing honeysuckle and a similar number of grape vines have also arrived. These will be planted along the railing and trained up the sides of the fencing and posts supporting the canvas covering, before the summer is over, making the new place one veritable bowery of green separated into numerous small booths and a fine large dancing floor.*



*The Roof Garden of the Citizens Bank Building*

*The floor space is 142 x 24, being set aside for dancing purposes. The stage will be located at the east end of the building and here will be the picture machine. Motion pictures with a big act feature every two weeks or oftener and music by Cason's orchestra will furnish the general run of amusement . . . .*

*The furnishings and fixtures will all be in the rustic. Thirty rustic tables with oak tops for refreshments will be located in the booths. 120 rustic chairs with eight rockers and four settees to match will comprise the main part of the furniture, supplemented by 300 folding chairs to accommodate the crowds. A soda fountain of the latest pattern will complete the fixtures.*

*The opening attraction will be Bert Morphy, the man who "sings to beat the band." The management has received word that Mr. Morphy will arrive in this city direct from New York on Sunday, May 22, ready for the grand opening*

Monday, May 23. Mr. Morphy has the international reputation as the greatest outdoor singer in the world, having performed in all of the leading cities of both hemispheres.

The lack of paved streets was the city's most persistent embarrassment:

... particularly in the business district, because of ankle deep mud which was followed by ankle deep dust in dry times. Gravel had been put on Main Street after it had been raised two feet following the well flooding of 1884. The gravel helped only slightly. Extremes were endured for twenty-six years until, in 1907, Aberdeen had its first hard-surfaced streets – five blocks on Main Street from the Milwaukee tracks to Fifth Avenue South, and one block off Main Street east and west for that same five blocks. Frequently in the spring, the creosote-soaked wooden blocks would bulge because of moisture from ice and snow.<sup>37</sup>

Paved streets and the expectation of dependable electricity finally made the street railway seem practical, and it began operations twenty-two years after first construction had been attempted:

It was Thanksgiving Day in 1910 when the streetcars of the Aberdeen Railroad Company ... made their first official run. It was July 22, 1922, when service was discontinued. The initial run coincided with the Thanksgiving Day football game between Northern Normal and Industrial School and the Montevideo Institute. "Thousands rode on the cars which were veritable sardine boxes all day long."<sup>38</sup>



Street Scene, with trolley. The Aldrich Hotel was also known as the Excelsior Block, built partly on the site of the present Coast to Coast Building. See page 42.

With the city engaged in technological advances and metropolitan experiments, and with its trading area in a period of great prosperity, it was easy to overlook things that had not changed. The Aberdeen Township *Minute Book* from 1911 included this entry about downtown parking problems:

37. *Brown County History*, p. 207.

38. *Ibid.* The quote is from the *Aberdeen Daily News*, November 25, 1910. Investors in the street railway company formed by Charles Howard included J. L. W. Zietlow, Charles Russell, and F. B. Gannon. C. N. Herreid was on the Board of Directors.

*Resolved that the city of Aberdeen provide some place or places for farmers to hitch their horses when coming to town. This question has now reached a place where something has got to be done in this matter. We must have some place to tie our teams or quit coming to your burg. You must not kick if your farmer customers send away for their goods if you do not treat them white. No man can sit in his rig and do business from his wagon seat.<sup>39</sup>*

#### Far Afield

In attempting to convince residential lot buyers that the particular piece of flat prairie they were buying was higher than others, Aberdeen developers built altitude into the name of their developments. Their commercial poetry gave us these names: *Highlands*, *West Hill*, and *Highland Park*. The improbably named Wampler L. Cochrane, a school superintendent turned real estate promoter, followed that practice in naming his development *Morning Heights*. Wampler had offices over 410 South Main, thus providing a weak excuse for this excursion.

The prospect of street cars may have caused Cochrane a certain amount of unjustified euphoria. The following ad copy appeared in the May 18, 1910 *Daily American*:

*Come out and see what we have and start a home of your own. Where the people are, is where the Street Car Companies will usually want to go with their lines. Morning Heights will have the people and it will not be long until you see street cars going through the city on which will say "Morning Heights" and hear the conductor calling out, "This car for Morning Heights."*

*It takes only \$5 to start a home or make a good investment. It costs you no interest or taxes to carry it, it will be worth twice what you give for it before it is paid for on these terms. Quite a number have sold their lots in Morning Heights Addition already at a good profit.*

If Cochrane's name is heard in Aberdeen today, it may be because he named a street for himself. No urban archaeologist, however diligent, will discover traces of trolleys on that street.

More than eighty years ago, Cochrane made a promise we sometimes see repeated by others in today's papers, concerning another persistent embarrassment:

*The Moccasin . . . will be dredged and improved generally in the near future, and this will add materially to the value of the land.<sup>40</sup>*

The Moccasin, even when unobstructed, seldom knows for certain which way it is supposed to flow. It inspired an early Aberdeen literary type to compose these lines:

*Of all the words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest are these, "The Moccasin."*

## 205 South Main Street

1912

George Fossum was the talented architect whose work includes the Presbyterian Church, the Christian Science Church, the Municipal Building, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Faith United Methodist Church, the Y.M.C.A building, Simmons School, a Ward-Owsley building, and Isaac Lincoln Hall at Northern State University. He also designed this store-front structure for James I. Workman, who leased it to J. A. Oster for use as a saloon. This was not Fossum's only bar: he designed the Rosebud, too, but unfortunately, nothing remains of its fanciful parapet today.

Oster's timing could not have been much worse. The 1913 *City Directory* shows thirty-four saloons in Aberdeen, most of them within two blocks of Oster's establishment. By 1915, the only legal saloon left in Brown County was in Ferney. Local option prohibition had closed all the rest, and they remained closed until 1932.

The dark red brick two-story structure has a lunette parapet and Sullivanesque geometric patterns made of contrasting tan bricks along the bottom of the second floor windows. There are

39. Quoted in *First There Was the Prairie*, p. 59.

40. *Aberdeen Daily American*, May 1, 1910.

apartments and offices upstairs, and a fur vault in the basement.

This building is visible in the photo on page 28, with its signs indicating tenancy by the Band Box, a millinery store. In 1936 it became the first home of Marie O. Simmons ladies ready-to-wear. When Simmons moved to their present location the Dottie Dunn hat shop moved in. P&H Bootery purchased the building in 1950 and occupied it until 1974. Shoe stores and Feinstein's Up the Street have occupied it since, and it is now used by Dakota School and Office Products.

## 206 South Main Street

1891

A story in the *Chicago Democrat* in March, 1891 called the Building and Loan Association of Aberdeen the "Giant of the Dakotas." In their fifth year, they had recently moved into their splendid new building at 206 South Main. They were in the midst of growth and great expectations, having financed most of the city's new home construction. The founding force behind the association was C. F. Easton, but a list of those involved would be a concise *Who's Who* of early Aberdeen. Its president was the ubiquitous Samuel Jumper, and others involved included T. C. Gage, Judge A. W. Campbell, Charles A. Howard, B. C. Lamont, W. G. Bickelhaupt, Frank Gannon, C. E. Reed, and August Witte, who was soon to be mayor.

The structure they built is still a favorite of many in Aberdeen, though remodeling has completely disguised its original ground floor. Its delightfully eclectic architecture combines elements of Renaissance Revival, Romanesque and Moorish romanticism. The three story structure is constructed of chiseled brown stone and Philadelphia pressed brick. Faces adorn the brackets supporting the hipped roof. The third story windows have Moorish arches and are arranged in an arcade whose columns have Corinthian capitals. Below the windows are more carved brackets, supporting a wrought iron balcony. The third floor was used as a lodge room.

The second story was used for offices. Its windows are tall, narrow rectangles. A group of three is paired with a group of two, and each group is framed with a relief border. A carved stone Romanesque balcony on the second floor has been removed. The Moorish theme once recurred in the transom of the main floor window, and the entry was flanked by columns whose Corinthian details repeated those on the third floor.

The Association opened for business in its new home on January 30, 1891. The next day, the *Aberdeen Daily News* described the main floor:

*... complete in all its appointments and glitters from ceiling to floor. The interior is finished in natural birch and the ceiling in hard pine with raised panels. The floor is of tessellated tile while the fixtures and the furniture from the cashier's room in front to the director's apartment in the rear are exceedingly rich and show superb taste. The building is heated by steam and lighted by gas throughout.*



*The First State Savings Bank  
Earlier, it was the Building & Loan Association.*

The Association's charter expired in 1903, and after that, until 1930, the building was occupied by the First State Savings Bank. R. E. Huffman purchased the building in 1935 and used it for his office supply business. It continues in that use today, with the firm under new ownership. The business has long been known as "The Store with the Redwood Front."

## 207 South Main Street

1912

White glazed brick sets this building apart from the more traditional brick colors on Main Street. Diamond shaped green tiles decorate the corners, and the brick cornice is dentilled. Two generations of the Olander family operated a clothing store in this location from 1912 to 1958.

Adolph Olander came to Aberdeen from Minneapolis in 1888. He became a partner with Duncan McPherson in a men's clothing store. Olander opened his first shop in 1909, and in 1912 built this building. McPherson converted his clothing store at 216 South Main into the Lyric Theater in 1914.

In the photograph on page 28 you can see Olander's sign: it reads CLOTHING vertically, and is topped by an out-sized derby. A June 27, 1914 *Daily American* article called him a "clothing and gents' furnisher." Olander's sons, Carl and Adolph Jr., were later associated with the store, and Adolph Jr. managed it from 1928 until it closed thirty years later. It has since housed Schiff's Shoes, Stevenson's, and World Electronics. It is now home to Jan's Ceramics.

The Olander family lived in the upstairs apartment. Artz Studio was located above Olander's from 1915 until 1928. Beauty parlors and Graf Studio were in the same location later.

### All in the Family

In 1888, at the age of 16, Arnold Lambert Artz left his home in Moke, Holland, and made his way to Bowdle, Dakota Territory, unaccompanied by parents. Bowdle was then booming as an end-of-the-line town on the Milwaukee Railroad. Arnold had worked with an itinerant photographer, and decided this would be an easy way to make a living. In 1896, he founded Artz Studio, which prospered. He soon had a branch studio in Hoven, and a mobile studio in a wagon that could be moved from town to town. But by 1913, it was obvious that Bowdle was not the place for a growing business: Arnold, his wife Gertrude, and their six children moved to Aberdeen, which then had fifteen photographic studios.

Arnold's son, Ralph, joined him in the business. So did his son, Maurinus. And then his daughter, Ann. And his daughter, Loretta. And his daughter, Dorothy.

The studio in Aberdeen was becoming crowded: Maurinus moved to Huron, and started another Artz Studio. Later, he sold that studio, moved to Salem, Oregon, and started another. His son Dick became involved, and the business evolved into a large photo processing plant, employing other members of Maurinus' family.

Ann married Lloyd Flolo, and they started a photo studio in Ellendale. When Maurinus left Huron, the Flolos purchased that studio. Flolo Studio is still operated by their son, Tom. Their daughter, Shirley, was also involved, and once operated a studio in Redfield.

Loretta married Don Hardin. They started Hardin Studio, which is still operated on Aberdeen's Main Street by their son, Kim. Their son, Gary, was also active in the photo business, both in Aberdeen and in Oregon.

Dorothy married Hollis Button, whose father operated the Monogram news stand on Main Street. Together, they operated a photo studio in Valley City, North Dakota, and later in Campbell, California. Hollis also designed and manufactured equipment for the photo processing industry.

Ralph, his wife Frances, and their children, Bob, Bernadine, and Don, all worked together as Artz Studio became Artz Camera Supply. Bob and Don later extended the wholesale photo processing business and built a second plant and more photo retail stores in Fargo. The company which contains Artz Camera Supply is now called Monarch Photo. Don's sons, Paul and Steve, worked at Artz Camera Supply and are presently employed by a Boston photo supply company. Bob's children, Barbara, Kathy, and David, all work for Monarch Photo.

This story appeared in the May 2, 1912 edition of the *Aberdeen Weekly News*:

*John H. Firey has purchased the John Derra lot adjoining his on the north, the two lots being the first two north of the [first] Radison hotel, the buildings on which were razed by the fire of January 4, and Mr. Firey now intends to erect a 50x100 strictly fireproof business block on this site as soon as possible.*

*The building will be a two story structure of brick construction, the facing being in a deep chocolate colored brick with white Bedford stone trimmings. The first floor will be devoted to two store rooms, while the second floor will be fitted for office rooms. A full basement underneath will also be used for rental purposes.*

Few people in Aberdeen today would know what you meant if you mentioned the Firey Building, but that was the first name for the structure now housing Engel Music Supply. Woodward Pharmacy was the building's first tenant. Their sign is visible in the photo on page 28. From 1926 to 1952, the north half of the ground floor was occupied by F. W. Woolworth's Five & Dime. The Dottie Dunn hat shop was a tenant of a smaller space at the south end, and the Nagel Jewelry Store occupied another portion of the frontage until they were succeeded by Pleinis Jewelry. Pleinis later moved next door, in the remnants of the first Radison Hotel.

These were some of the office tenants: Williamson & Williamson law firm; Harry Wells, dentist; Clarence Burns, insurance; A. J. Schultz, photographer; J. H. Firey, real estate; Meritt and Harlow Kerl, chiropractors; Carl I. Locken, insurance; Wilfred Rivett, optometrist; Norbert Bauer, dentist; Schliesman Agency insurance and real estate; Meir Insurance; Marvin Heiser's Dakota Camera Repair; State Department of Game Fish and Parks; IBM; Bitterford Galleries.

#### *Ghosts*

In 1882, twenty-three year old John Firey was fresh out of pharmacy school and travelling from Carthage, Illinois, to Larimore, North Dakota, to open a drug store. He missed his intended train connection in Redfield and had to stop in Aberdeen.

In Aberdeen, the Milwaukee Railroad had recently drilled an artesian well. It was night when Firey made his forced visit, and the well was still running wild and flooding much of the city. He stepped off the train into the drainage ditch that diverted the water into Moccasin Creek. Soaked and muddy, Firey went to the Sherman House to change. While waiting for his clothes to be washed and dried he met Father Haire, who gave him a sermon on the comparative business benefits of Aberdeen and Larimore. Haire must have been convincing, because Firey stayed. He opened a drug store, was an organizer and manager of the Jewett brothers' wholesale drug and grocery firm, was appointed postmaster, was an immigration agent for the Milwaukee Railroad, and became one of Aberdeen's most successful commercial property owners.

According to a story in the April 22, 1926 *Evening News*, the new store the Woolworth company was planning for the Firey Building had one feature that was experimental:

*When the new Woolworth store is opened in this city, an innovation is to be tried out which is a new idea in cities of this size. Upon the outcome of this venture here will depend upon whether similar installations will be made in Sioux Falls, Fargo and other places of about this size.*

*The new department is to be a luncheonette installed in a white tile area across the rear of the big storeroom. Counter service will be offered with 5, 10 and 15 cent prices, the menu to include the usual run of substantial. This is already part of the store in many large cities but this is the first time it is to be tried in the smaller places.*



The *Evening News* of May 1, 1926 included this headline about Woolworth's opening day:

**WOMAN FAINTS IN CRUSH  
AT OPENING OF BIG NEW  
WOOLWORTH STORE**

The next day, the *Sunday American News* reviewed the event:

*The local store is one of the largest of the Woolworth stores in the northwest and besides floorwalkers, 60 girls acted as clerks.*

*Yesterday a supply of 6000 yards of gingham was sold out completely, over 1000 pounds of peanuts were sold and 300 ferns, 600 geraniums, and 200 shrubs were all gotten rid of as a feature of the opening.*

*The interior of the store has been beautified by newly tinted walls with decorative panels with the Woolworth initial on each panel and by nearly 50 huge chandeliers which are the exact replicas of those used in the Woolworth stores on Fifth avenue, New York.*

*A new type of candy counter has been installed made entirely of glass so that an all-around view is obtained.*

This ad appeared in the August 16, 1883 *Dakota Pioneer*. Father Haire, a militant prohibitionist, could not have approved:

**BUY YOUR**  
Drugs, Patent Medicines, Paints, Oils, Putty, Fine Soaps, Perfumery  
Fine Candles, Smoking and Chewing Tobaccos  
**PURE WINES and LIQUORS**  
For Medicinal Use, of  
**J. H. FIREY**  
Successor to HEINLEIN & FIREY  
**ABERDEEN                      DAKOTA**  
I have the largest and most complete stock of drugs in the Jim River  
Valley — all new and fresh — and  
**WILL SELL CHEAPER**  
Than any one in Town

*Medicinal use, indeed! But Father Haire and Firey, a Presbyterian, remained friends until Haire's death in 1916. When the monument to Haire on the "Normal School" grounds was dedicated, Firey was the primary speaker, and described his friend as "fearless in attacking evil, ahead of his time . . . and the possessor of advanced economic ideas."<sup>41</sup>*

## **302-304 South Main Street**

**1927**

This building was built in 1927, but let's return to 1902, when a story headlined **NEW BUILDINGS** in the January 24 *Daily News* included this paragraph:

*Late last fall B. C. Lamont bought 75 by 142 feet on what is considered by some to be the most important corner in the city, on Main street and Third avenue, and is planning to erect a block thereon covering the entire area and devoted to stores and offices.*

Perhaps because the two story wood-framed structure at 302 South Main remained solidly rented, Byron C. Lamont postponed most of his plan for twenty-five years. Although he built on the south twenty-five feet of this property in 1907 (see 306 South Main Street, below), it was not until 1927 that he replaced the structure on the corner. He built the present building for the S. S. Kresge Company, the predecessor to K-Mart. Like several other national chain stores, Kresge's

41. *Early History of Brown County*, p. 190.

moved to Aberdeen in the twenties.

The two story brick commercial building has white Bedford stone detail on the second floor: there are small, flat pilasters with urn-shaped Corinthian capitals and a molded stepped cornice and lintels. These details give this typical commercial building a Classical Revival style. The cornice bricks are laid in a herringbone pattern. The general contractor was S. W. Jonason. The Kresge company specified their own architect. Kresge's occupied the front of the building to a depth of about ninety feet. The plans called for three other tenants to occupy the rear area, with individual entries on the Third Avenue. Total construction cost was almost \$80,000, and Lamont gave the Kresge company a fifty year lease on the ground floor. Offices were planned for the second floor.

Kresge's had two stores in Aberdeen, almost next door to each other. B. C. Lamont was landlord to both. The one on the corner at 302-304 was called the S. S. Kresge 5-10-25¢ Store, and the other, at 308 South Main, was the S. S. Kresge 25¢-\$1.00 Store. The "Dollar" store closed in 1955, and the Farmers and Merchants Bank opened in that location.

The Kresge company changed the name of the store at 302-304 to Jupiter in 1966. When their lease expired in 1977, Kresge's moved, and Maurice's, a women's clothing store, occupied the space until 1990. Office tenants included these: Austin Coward, accountants; Lucian Craig, C. P. A.; Sylvan Hagenson, accountant; Clive Acker, attorney; King and Ronayne, lawyers; Jack Hart, insurance; Travelers Equitable, insurance; George Wells, dentist; Sherman Ellyson, chiropractor; the Republican Service Office; the U. S. Army Recruiting Service; Howard Bastian Finance and the Bastian insurance agency; Stoia, Seiler and Associates, Northwestern Mutual Insurance; James Eckrich, physician; Margie Kupfer, chiropractor; Capital Beauty Shop.

#### *Ghosts*

Byron Lamont was far richer than Alonzo Ward when he returned to Aberdeen in 1883. He had fifteen dollars in his pocket.

Though born in Dansville, New York, Lamont earned a law degree from the University of Wisconsin. He first visited Aberdeen in 1881, when he was twenty-two, even before the first trains arrived. He then travelled to Huron and set up a law practice, but he had little business and grew discouraged. Headed back to Wisconsin, he met a Dakota enthusiast at a train stop. The visit changed his mind, and a year later, in 1883, he returned to Aberdeen.

He set up as a notary, practiced a little law, and became deeply involved in real estate with "his natty, curly-headed cousin, S. W. Narregang."<sup>42</sup> He did not continue combined operations with Narregang but did maintain an interest in Narregang's company.

"Fourteen years later, he was described as 'perhaps the heaviest real estate dealer in the Northwest.'"<sup>43</sup>

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An 1893 publication, promoting the city and its citizens, said of Lamont:

*... so steady has been the increase in his transactions that he now employs two and three clerks . . . Mr. Lamont is widely known for his conservativeness. He has never invested a dollar in speculation.*<sup>44</sup>

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W. O. Wells and Mose H. Bantz came to Aberdeen from Independence, Iowa. In 1907, they started the Wells-Bantz Whip Company, specializing in buggy whips and other leather products, most of which they imported from Westfield, Massachusetts. They rented a small room at 102 Third Avenue South East from Charles Gottschalk, owner of the adjacent Gottschalk Opera House.

In June of 1910, Bantz sold his interest to Wells and became an insurance agent. A month later, a fire that destroyed the opera house also destroyed the area Wells was leasing and all his

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42. *Aberdeen American News*, June 17, 1956. Narregang and Lamont were not cousins. Spencer's brother Linford Narregang had married B. C.'s cousin Harriet Lamont.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Aberdeen and Brown County, S. D.*, published by *The Aberdeen Sun*, Circa 1893.

stock. Though under-insured, he arranged to rent the second floor of the Jewett Block, at 402-404 South Main, and started over.

Wells was more than shrewd enough to know buggy whips were not a growth product. The spectacularly successful automobile show held in the Gottschalk four months before the fire may have been convincing. In his new location, Wells concentrated on manufacturing new products, and gradually changed the name of his company to reflect the diversification. In 1911, he called his company the Aberdeen Glove and Whip Company; in 1913, it became the Aberdeen Glove and Hosiery Company. He soon employed thirty-five seamstresses.

In 1914, his business attracted the attention of a twenty-five year old businessman named Maurice Lamont, who became a partner. The company was renamed Wells Lamont. The next year Maurice Lamont died in a tragic hunting accident, but B. C. Lamont continued, and then expanded, his son's interest in the company. The company moved to Minneapolis in 1917 and later to Chicago. It became the largest supplier of gloves in the world, due in large part to Wells's genius for marketing. The Lamont family maintained an interest in the Wells Lamont company until it merged with the Hammond Organ Company in 1967.

## ***305-307 South Main Street*** ***1926***

John Combs came to Aberdeen from Huron in the summer of 1901 and sold ice cream. He returned the next year and rented space in the back of the Gunsolus store for the same purpose. In 1905, he opened his own confectionery shop at 307 South Main. He advertised prompt delivery of ice cream anywhere in town. In 1926, he built this building to house his new restaurant.

John and his children, Fred, Bess, Tillie, and Grace all worked in the restaurant. Menu specialties were milk shakes, banana splits, and Sweet Marias (ice cream with chocolate sauce and peanuts). If all that makes it sound as if the family ran a soda fountain, a visit to the \$85,000 building built for Combs in 1926 would quickly expose that thought as a partial truth.

The restaurant was large. It had handsome booths and could seat 225 patrons. It had a lunch counter and display cases for candies and baked goods. The lamp shades in the booths enclosed pressed butterflies, and there were electrified push buttons on each table that could be used to summon the waitress. Fresh hot rolls, pies and cookies could be purchased "to stay or to go."



*Combs Chocolate Shop and Trianon Ballroom*

It is likely that when the Combs family opened their new establishment, they expected it would serve the entire community. During the mornings and afternoons, it did that; but the nights, especially during its later years, belonged to the teenagers. Combs' was more like a youth center

than anything else the community has provided. It was a grand hang-out.

Combs was open late — at least until after the first movies were out at the four or five downtown theaters — but since the crowd was young, they served far more hamburgers, Cokes and shoestrings than anything else on the menu. Later, a jukebox abetted the juvenile atmosphere. For many years, the business was run by Tillie and Bessie Combs, who had a tolerant, if firm, attitude toward their young clientele. Generations of Central High graduates remember Combs (and head-waitress Mary Ott) as an integral part of their high school years. There is nothing like it in Aberdeen today.

Originally, there was a ballroom upstairs, called the Trianon. The August 24, 1926 *Evening News* said, "The 20 foot arched ceiling will provide good acoustics, according to Fred Combs, and is excellent for decorative purposes. A professional decorator from Minneapolis or Chicago will be employed to add touches of beauty to the place." A bowling alley later replaced the dance floor, and today, that large space is occupied by a tennis court. The R. A. Thomas fur store once leased the front portion of the second floor.

The restaurant was L-shaped, using fifty feet of the building's width at the rear, but twenty-five feet at the front. The rest of the frontage housed Kirkpatrick's Jewelry and Optometry. When those businesses moved in 1962, Feinstein's expanded into that space.

Contrasting red brick and concrete coping on an ornate parapet with concrete detailing above the windows combine to give the building an Italian look, now partly camouflaged by ground floor remodeling. A hipped roof hides behind the parapet. The architect was George Fossum, and the general contractor was Fred Peterson.

Bess Combs closed the restaurant in 1953. Feinstein's ready-to-wear has since occupied the space.

#### *Ghosts*

Almost everyone went to dance halls in the twenties. Rondell, Armadale, Wylie, Scatterwood and Tacoma Park were all popular, and so were barn dances, where there the law had less control of illegal drinking. But the city dance halls were classier and more convenient. This story about growing competition appeared in the August 18, 1926 *Evening News*:

**BATTLE OF CENTURY ON HERE BETWEEN  
HALLS TO WIN DANCE PATRONAGE  
Roof Garden Owners Stirred by  
Coming Delights of New Combs Ballroom.**

*Dempsey and Tunney . . . may fight it out in the east but the conflict will be nothing in comparison to the battle of the dance halls which is in prospect for Aberdeen this winter.*

*Impending competition for the Roof Garden has set Ira and John Kruger into a furor of planning to meet the attraction which the new ballroom in the Combs' building is going to have.*

*This new amusement center for the city will be of beauty and attraction, it is said. Not only will it occupy the entire second floor of the building except the office suites in the front, but it will have a ceiling 20 feet high. It is said to have been leased by the Klitz orchestra for a term of years and the Butterfly orchestra will return to hold forth there.*

*Entrance will be had up a broad staircase from the confectionery, an arrangement which will make it possible for the dancers to sit at the tables [and] to partake of refreshments before dances and afterward. This arrangement is in compliance with a city ordinance which prohibits the use of pass out return checks at the door of any public dance hall.*

*The Roof Garden was Aberdeen's new dance hall last year and Messrs. Kruger spent several thousand dollars in making it a place of beauty and*

*convenience then. Now that this newer place is being brought to completion they have taken up the gage of battle to win the favor of the dancers of the community.*

*An addition to give their hall a width of 100 feet instead of 50 feet, and thus be the biggest in town was suggested, but after the brothers got an architect's estimate of the cost this was abandoned.*

This Roof Garden is not to be confused with the aborted 1910 Citizens Building open-air Roof Garden. The Kruger brothers' dance hall was not on a roof, but on the second floor of the first building in Aberdeen made especially for the sales and service of automobiles. It had been built in 1910 for F. W. Boettcher's Aberdeen Automobile Company, on the present site of the Norwest Bank. The space the Krugers were using had once been known as Boettcher Hall. In 1926, during the "battle of the century," its ground floor housed Olander Motor Company, a Studebaker dealer. Later this building was home to Loel Lust's Quality Chevrolet Company.

The story took on added interest because John Kruger, one of the owners of the Roof Garden, was also Police Commissioner. As the Trianon was about to open, just before New Year's Eve (the most lucrative day of the year for dance halls), Kruger delayed approval of its license. He claimed he took this action because of fire regulations. A story in the January 3, 1927 *Evening News* reported, "Mr. Kruger explained that his duty as commissioner, elected by the people, compelled him to think of the safety of the people . . ." Previously, one of the Krugers had been quoted as threatening that they "would run 25 cent or free dances to break the Klitz boys." The license was soon approved when it was pointed out that inspectors had found no fault with the Trianon's safety precautions, that they exceeded those in the Roof Garden.

In the long run, the Roof Garden won the battle. It outlasted the Klitz brothers' Trianon Ballroom by many years. Years later, the Trianon had a brief resurrection after the bowling alley that replaced it moved to the new Bradbury Building at 820 South Main Street.

## **306 South Main Street**

**1907**

David Strauss came to Aberdeen in 1887 and started a clothing store he called The Golden Eagle at what is now 224 South Main Street. When B. C. Lamont built the building at 306 in 1907, Strauss was its first tenant. He changed the name of the store to Strauss Clothing in 1916, and moved next door to the first Alonzo Ward Hotel. Hoilien & Bachman Hardware occupied this space until 1929, when the Wolter Shoe Store moved in. In 1940 the shoe store was succeeded by the Jarold Shop, a women's clothing store, and by Trade Home Shoes in 1958.

The Granger Business School occupied the second floor until 1917, teaching double-entry bookkeeping, shorthand, and penmanship. Several music teachers have had offices in this building. From 1946 to 1956, Hardin's Studio was located upstairs, and later, Dave's Photos. More recently, Lamont Architects and Lamont Interiors have used this space.

The building is faced with buff brick. There is a continuous rusticated concrete sill under the second floor windows. Molded brick forms an outline for these windows. A series of arched brick corbels supports the cornice, and the parapet is topped with rusticated rose quartz granite.

### *Ghosts*

In 1887, David Strauss visited Aberdeen with the idea of opening a store. He liked what he saw, but when he returned to Iowa, he had to convince his wife. He also had to tell the truth, and he told her the new frontier city was a pioneer town of only 3,000 people, with wooden sidewalks and dirt streets. She asked, "Are the people nice?" He said, "They are lovely, cultured people." She said, "Let's go, then." It was a decision of a lifetime, because David Strauss, who had already had fourteen years' experience in the clothing business in Chicago, operated his store in Aberdeen for the next forty-four years. He remembered the times in a speech made on his fortieth anniversary in Aberdeen:

I recall fitting out four farmer boys — their ages were from six to thirteen. Each got a suit, overcoat and cap—the entire purchase amounted to \$16.85, and then their dad thought that was rather steep.<sup>45</sup>

## 314-316 South Main Street

1938

This Georgian Revival façade is unique in the core area. There is a steep-pitched slate roof and gabled dormers on the third floor. The second story has four very tall double-hung windows, sixteen-over-sixteen lights. There is a balustrade at the base of each window. These windows provide light for the mezzanine and the second floor. The ground floor has a typical commercial front with a recessed center entrance and large display windows on each side.

The building was designed and built for the Montgomery Ward Company, who leased it from John Firey. Fred Peterson was the contractor. Firey had owned the St. Nicholas hotel (the north portion of the Excelsior Block) on this site previously. Coast to Coast has occupied this structure since 1973.



*Montgomery Ward Building*

### Ghosts

The following story is edited and condensed from one that appeared in 75th Anniversary Edition of the *Aberdeen American News*, June 17, 1956:

Partly because the two original owners got so mad at each other, the "skyscraper of early Aberdeen" was a building with a split personality. Histories of the north half and the south half of the old Excelsior Block were separate stories almost down to the time the northern part was torn down 29 years ago to make room for the Montgomery Ward store building.

The building, known as the Excelsior Block, was constructed by S. W. Narregang, a real estate man, and John Patterson, a former live-stock buyer. It was, for a year or two, the tallest structure in the infant city.

Old timers later recalled that although Narregang and Patterson shared the same office they were sometimes so bitter toward each other that they wouldn't speak. When it was necessary to communicate with each other, they wrote letters, and apparently sent them through regular postal facilities.



*Excelsior Block*

Jackson Hardware rented the north half of the building, and in 1892, the south half was first home of the Olwin-Hall Dry Goods Company, which became the Olwin-Angell Company.

Patterson, in 1903, disposed of his half of the structure to John Jackson

45. *Brown County History*, p. 292.

*of Jackson Hardware, and Jackson later constructed the Jackson addition on the north side of the building.*

*The upper floors of the Excelsior Block were divided into small rooms, each, in the early days, heated by a small stove. These rooms were the lodgings of the young bachelors—and young married men who had left their wives “at the East.” Many of the roomers were later leading businessmen of the Hub City. The lodging business was discontinued when Jackson Hardware took over the area for warehouse space.*

*When the hardware firm moved out in 1907, John Firey purchased the north half of the Excelsior Block, and the upper floors again became a hotel. But it was another group of pioneers who occupied them. The West River area was being opened for settlement and now throngs of homesteaders were pouring through Aberdeen. For many of these people, the Excelsior was the place they spent their first night in Aberdeen.*

*For a while it was known as the Hotel Aldrich and was operated by J. M. Aldrich. It later became the St. Nicholas Hotel and was operated by Mrs. Ann B. Kittelson until 1937.*

*The Patterson or Firey portion of the Excelsior Block, and the Jackson addition, were torn down that year to make way for the present Montgomery Ward Building. Its last ground floor occupant was the Sudow department store. The top two floors of the Narregang or southern half were taken off, leaving the ground floor.*

Today, if you travel through the alley, you may notice oddly-placed bricked-in rear windows of the one-story building south of Coast-to Coast, now occupied by Head Start and Vanity. This is evidence of the first floor remains of Spencer Narregang's south half of the Excelsior Block. Only a bit of red brick parapet on the Main Street side hints at the more-than-century-old schizophrenic “skyscraper” hiding within.

#### All in the Family

Dr. Thomas P. Ranney purchased the Van Slyke building, which has housed the Sears store since 1932. As a gesture of friendship between landlord and tenant, he invited General Wood, then president of Sears Roebuck, to come to Aberdeen to hunt pheasants. After that, Wood was a frequent guest at Ranney's massive granite home (the one he had purchased from Ralph Brown), at 402 South Kline. Two of Dr. Ranney's daughters married Sears executives. His son became a Sears store manager. One wonders if Ranney family history would have been significantly different had pheasants not been so successfully introduced to the Dakota prairie.

Paul Ranney married John Firey's grand daughter, Elizabeth. John Firey owned the property leased by Montgomery Ward and Woolworth's. Through inheritance from Firey, the Ranney family acquired the Montgomery Ward property, becoming landlords to two of the major chain stores in town. Mrs. Ranney's mother, Margaret (Firey) Antleman, then owned the property leased to Woolworth's. John Firey's home at 418 South Arch Street was also Margaret Antleman's home, not far from the Ranney house.

## **315-317 South Main Street**

**1907**

This building was first known as the Champlin Block, after Oren Champlin, a real estate agent and former drayman. It once housed the McDiarmid and Slater Red Front Grocery and the C. A. McArthur Hardware Company. Other early tenants included B. F. Sperry, grocer, the Williams-Cameron Hardware Company, J. M. Michael Furniture Company, and the Aberdeen Plumbing and Heating Company.

The second floor consists of large open spaces. It has been used as a meeting room by the Elks, the American Legion, and the Odd Fellows. It was once known as the Rainbow Ballroom.



### The Champlin Block

It served as offices for the Wilbur F. Kearns real estate agency in 1917. It was used as a reading room by the Church of Christ Scientist, and later, by the city: it housed the Alexander Mitchell Library in the fifties after the first library building had been condemned and the present building had not yet been built.

In 1919 the Webb-Carter Shoe Company moved into the space previously occupied by the hardware store. That store began life as Webb-Robertson in 1909 when L. A. Webb and C. R. Robertson purchased the shoe department of Olwin-Angell Store. In 1911, Robertson purchased the Leader department store in Redfield and sold his share of the shoe company to D. H. Carter, of Chicago. Carter, the *Daily American* said on March 22, 1911, "is a travelling man, and will not take an active part in the business." Webb-Carter Shoe Company became simply The Webb Company after L. A. Webb's son Harold bought Carter's interest in 1940. The business is now operated by Harold's sons, Maurice and Robert. Old-timers still call the store Webb-Carter's, despite the more than fifty years that has elapsed since the never-present Carter gave up his interest. Webb's have occupied the same space (and more) for seventy-two years.

The McDiarmid family owned the south half of this building when their store was here. That half continued to live a life of its own until the Webb family bought it in 1982 and united it with the half they had been using since 1919. In between, the south half had been owned and used by Feinstein Brothers Golden Rule Department Store and by Olwin-Angell's.

The building is neoclassical in style and the façade is of brown brick with a molded, dentilled and pedimented metal cornice. On the second floor, symmetrically placed windows with semi-circular arches are flanked by two sets of pilasters with Ionic capitals. The windows were later filled with glass blocks.

**321-323 South Main Street**

**1903**

Sometimes early businesses seemed involved in something like those "progressive" social games that were popular at the time. Anthony Harry Olwin came to Aberdeen in 1883 and was associated with the Jewett brothers in their Red Front Grocery at 302 South Main Street. He purchased the Jewett interests in 1887 and operated the store with the help of Walter Butler, the former city engineer and map maker. The Jewetts then began specializing in wholesale grocery sales from a new three-story building called the Jewett Block at 402-404 South Main.



When A. H. Olwin joined with a Mr. Hall in 1892 to form the Olwin-Hall Dry Goods Company in the Excelsior Block at 316 South Main, James McDiarmid became the manager of the Red Front Grocery. We will see more of Mr. McDiarmid later, down the street.

We are not certain what happened to Mr. Hall, but by 1893, Olwin was sole owner of the Olwin Dry Goods Company. In 1897, Robert H. Angell joined Olwin, and in 1903 and they incorporated the firm as the Olwin-Angell company. Olwin was the manager, Angell the assistant manager. Frederick Chauncey Ackley was employed by the firm in 1902 and there met and married the firm's bookkeeper, Verta Pearson. Verta was Harry Olwin's niece, the daughter of Isabel Olwin Pearson.

Harry Olwin died in 1913, and Robert Angell became the manager until his death at age fifty-three in 1919. Fred Ackley then became store manager. Later, Fred's son Olwin became manager, and his daughter Isabel was buyer. Chicago's Marshall Field's purchased the company in the mid-thirties, but the Ackley family repurchased the stock after a few years.


Olwin's department store and the Jewett wholesale warehouse on Kline Street and Railroad Avenue were both built in 1903 by the same contractor, Gray Construction Company of Watertown. Charles A. Jewett negotiated with Gray's for a "quantity discount" on the two buildings. He also worked with an Aberdeen firm to supply the granite used in these structures. Aberdeen Granite was a new company formed by banker Ralph Brown when he foreclosed a mortgage on the Ortonville Granite quarries. The next year, Brown used Ortonville granite to build his own house, at 402 South Kline.<sup>46</sup> Granite from the Aberdeen company was also used, combined with brick, in the nearby Bassett home and in the Methodist Church.

The building that housed Aberdeen's premier department store was originally a two-story structure. The *Daily News* announced that it would be built of "granite, pressed brick of different colors and terra cotta. The interior finish and the shelving, counters, cases, and other fixtures will all be in oak and the store a metropolitan institution in every respect." The store opened in 1903. Business was good, and a third story was added in 1914, with similar architecture. Stucco conceals the remains of the original cornice between stories. There are rounded colonettes with egg-and-dart motifs at the capitals, which are in sets of three between the upper-story windows. The foundation is granite, and there are granite courses on the first and second floors. The large windows on the upper floors made the store "light as day" according to its advertisements. They are now filled with glass bricks.

During its lifetime, Olwin's, as it was popularly called, was considered the city's best retail store. Some

## The Olwin-Angell Store

Aberdeen, South Dakota



**Two Floors Light as Day**

**First Floor Departments**

Department A—Silks, Wool and Wash Dress Goods, Linens, Domestic and Linings.

Department B—Gloves, Corsets, Laces, Embroideries, Ribbons, Notions, Ladies' Neckwear, Umbrellas and Parasols.

Department C—Ladies' and Children's Knit Underwear and Hosiery.

Department D—Men's Furnishings.

Department I—Patterns, Embroidery Materials, Infants' Wear, Art and Linen Novelties.

Department H—Muslin Underwear and Corsets.

**Second Floor Departments**

Department F—Carpets, Rugs, Linoleum, Lace Curtains, Portieres, Shades and Drapery Goods.

Department G—Ladies' Suits, Cloaks, Furs, Skirts, Waists, Petticoats and Children's Dresses.

**Telephones**

3021—Carpet and Drapery Dept.      1413—Bundle Desk and 1st Floor Depts.  
1732—Ladies' and Children's Ready-to-Wear Dept.      1413—Offices.

46. The January 24, 1902, *Daily News* reported the expected cost of Brown's house as \$3,500, but it was designed by E. W. Van Meter as a wood frame structure, not granite.

specialty stores may have excelled in certain types of merchandise, but a gift box from Olwin's always lent prestige to the giver. It was *the* place to buy china, carpet, draperies, linens, fabrics, cosmetics, costume jewelry, and clothing for everyone. Though Webb-Robertson purchased the shoe department in 1909, Olwin's later went back into the shoe business in an annex almost next door to Webb's. The Webbs and the Ackleys remained friends.

Children—and adults—were fascinated by the machinery that delivered the cash from all departments to the accounting office. The salesperson put the cash or check and sales record in a little container, similar to those now used in drive-up banks. After loading the container into a tube, the salesperson pulled a cord to get it started, and you could hear it whoosh on its way. In a minute or two, it returned your change and receipt with a satisfying kerthunk, and the transaction was then completed. Harry Olwin had become familiar with this system when he installed a "cash railway" across the street in his Red Front Grocery in 1888. The Olwin-Angell system was still in use when the store closed in 1969.

Olwin-Angell policy was to satisfy customers, regardless of expense. If a customer wanted a spool of thread delivered, it would be done. The store opened Christmas mornings so people could exchange presents promptly. Window displays were a key part of Olwin-Angell's marketing strategy. Main Street window shopping was recreational and informative because merchants like the Ackleys insisted that their windows be interesting, artful, and frequently changed. A shopping trip to Aberdeen usually included a trip to Olwin's, if only to view the windows, or to take the elevator to the third floor where there were well-maintained rest rooms.

Today's retail stores are often staffed by part-time employees, often by students. A job at a store like Olwin's was thought of as a *position*, and was often retained until retirement. There was little staff turnover. Isabel and Olwin were kind-hearted, perhaps to a fault. Display manger Gordon Haug once recalled that an employee hired for a Christmas rush in the 1930s was still working inefficiently thirty years later because "Oly" did not have the heart to fire her.

What Isabel liked best about her job were the buying trips to New York, where she'd arrange to see the latest Broadway plays. It was not possible to dislike Isabel or Olwin. Olwin Ackley died in 1968 at age fifty-four, after he had arranged the sale of Olwin-Angell stock to Herberger's. The change took place in 1969. Olwins and Ackleys owned this building from 1903 until 1984, when it was purchased by the Frank family, who now use the ground floor as a men's clothing store. Until she died in 1985 at seventy-seven, Isabel lived in the house she and Olwin grew up in, at 416 South Kline. Her father bought it from the Olwin family, and before that it had been Frank Hagerty's.

### Ghosts

From the October 6, 1897 *Aberdeen Daily News*:

*Robert H. Angell of Minneapolis, for several years with the big mercantile house of Goodfellow and company in that city, was an arrival this morning and will be the guest of A. H. Olwin for a few days.*

As ground breaking for the Olwin-Angell store was about to begin, the *Daily News* of March 12, 1903 noted with some alarm this sign of an improving economy:

*It is reported that in view of the fact that common labor is going to be scarce in Aberdeen this summer, the Russian laboring element is already asking \$2.25 per day for ordinary work.*

The "Russians" were actually German immigrants from Odessa, and, as the most recent immigrant group, were then at the bottom of the local social ladder, not considered as fully enfranchised citizens. The same edition quotes the *Ellendale Record*: "The preliminary hearing of the five Russians charged with the murder of Chris Rott at Ashley was completed last week."

By 1920, the census revealed that 300,000 German-Russian immigrants had settled in South Dakota. Most of them had passed through Aberdeen.

At times, Olwin's were the city's only source of roses. Judging from this ad from the June 12, 1903 *Aberdeen Daily News*, they did not take advantage of their monopoly position to inflate the price:

ROSES - - - 50 CENTS PER DOZEN TOMORROW

Olwin-Angell Store

In 1907, a thirty-five year old woman named Marie Ovitz came to Aberdeen from Mineral Point, Wisconsin, and went to work for Olwin-Angell's as a clerk. She did so well, and was so popular, that she soon headed the store's most important department, ladies' ready-to-wear. She became buyer, long before Isabel Ackley held that position. "Miss Ovitz" was frequently mentioned in Olwin's advertisements, a sure sign of a large customer following and an influential position. On July 8, 1926, the town gossips got an eyeful from the *Daily News Society Notes*:

***Marriage License Issued to John Simmons and Miss Ovitz***

*According to the Minneapolis papers a marriage license was issued here yesterday to John Simmons and Miss Marie Ovitz, presumably residents of Aberdeen. If this be the case then their marriage is an event of outstanding interest and a very great surprise to a widespread circle of friends and acquaintances.*

*Mr. Simmons is owner of the big colonial mansion on Main street south [1408] and has long been prominent in the city and county as farmer, banker and politician. Miss Ovitz is a member of the Olwin-Angell company and has been head of the ready-to-wear department for several years.*

*While no one among the acquaintances of either could be found who had any information of the marriage, it is known that Mr. Simmons and his daughter, Ruth, aboard a new car, are in Minneapolis. Miss Ovitz, also last Sunday sent word to the store that she was leaving on vacation this week.*

John Simmons, the presumptive bridegroom, had come to Aberdeen in 1882 at age twenty-three and worked as a grocery clerk in the C. A. Bliss Mammoth Store. He pleased Bliss, who made him cashier of the C. A. Bliss Bank. Simmons soon moved to Frederick, where he was successful both as a farmer and a banker. In 1906 he returned to Aberdeen and bought a farm. Now, in 1926, the man whose farm had become the huge new Simmons residential addition, the man who had recently donated the land for the new Simmons school, the man who lived in the only house in town that was *always* called a mansion, the man who had been a member of the first South Dakota legislature, who had been instrumental in moving the county seat from Columbia to Aberdeen, and was once chairman of the Brown County Republican Central Committee, that man, at sixty-six, had married a *store-clerk!* And no one knew! Oh, it was *so much* to talk about!

When the wedding party returned to Aberdeen, Simmons, his daughter Ruth and his wife Marie took up residence in the mansion, and John Simmons continued to list his occupation as *farmer*. Marie became vice president of Olwin Angell's, and in 1936 she started a store of her own. It was often said to be the most exclusive women's fashion store in town, and it is still in business on Aberdeen's Main Street. She called it Marie O. Simmons.

Marie Ovitz Simmons died at age seventy in 1943, eleven years before John Simmons died at the age of ninety-six.

***413-417 South Main Street***

***1926***

In 1925 the United States was in a period of prosperity, progress, mobility, dreams and romance. Almost every day, the front page of the *Aberdeen Evening News* featured a shapely and talented beauty queen, a glamorous and much-married movie star, a flamboyant and promiscuous heiress, a ravishing and mysterious aristocrat, a winsome and plucky aviatrix, or some combina-

tion of these nouns and adjectives, often linked with delicious scandal. Saturdays, one page of the eight-page paper would be devoted to breathless promotional descriptions of the week's new crop of movies, written by studio press agents.

Aberdeen had five motion picture theaters, plus the Orpheum, which was mostly a vaudeville house, but also showed movies. In Brown County, Groton, Frederick, Hecla, Claremont, and Stratford also had movie theaters, and Verdon had an "opera house." Each theater usually showed at least two films each week, with two shows on weekdays, adding matinees on weekends. Almost everyone, young and old, went to the movies at least once a week. In larger cities the older theaters, which were usually converted storefronts, were being replaced by new, made-for-the-movies picture-palaces whose names and design themes reflected the romantic dreams they peddled. On December 23, 1925, this headline appeared in the Evening News:

**NEW \$150,000 THEATER FOR CITY  
BY BIG SYNDICATE GOING UP AT  
FIRST STREET - SECOND AVENUE**

The story explained that the Finkelstein & Rubin chain, after a long, fruitless search for Main Street property, had purchased a site on First Street and Second Avenue. It would begin construction so that the new theater would be ready for use in the fall of 1926. The seating capacity would be about 1500, an astounding figure, almost equal to the total of Aberdeen's existing movie theaters, and about one tenth of the city's population. "The syndicate now has theatres under construction in Sioux Falls and Fargo," and was operating theaters in Mitchell and Madison. It owned the State, Garrick, and Strand theaters in Minneapolis, the Capitol in St. Paul, and was about to open a \$250,000 theater in Eau Claire. They would soon have ninety theaters. On February 10, they announced that they had completed the property purchase for a price the newspaper estimated at \$30,000.

The Finkelstein & Rubin company was not the only one in the area familiar with large chain operations. Harry Walker had started with one theater in Brookings. Five years later, he brought the first motion picture to South Dakota, *The San Francisco Earthquake*. Walker began assembling a collection of theaters. In 1909 he moved to Aberdeen to manage the Gottschalk Theater for Charles Gottschalk and to operate his own theaters out of an office in Gottschalk's building. Walker and his partner M. C. Kellogg advanced their knowledge of the theatrical booking business by association with Gottschalk, who also booked acts for theaters in a several-state area and had served most of Aberdeen's theater needs since 1884.



*The 1913 Aberdeen Theater became the Orpheum in 1914*

The fire that destroyed the Gottschalk Opera House in July of 1910 left Aberdeen without a major theater. Walker worked with Ben Ward, owner of the Radison Hotel, to persuade civic leaders to subscribe \$10,000 to partially fund a new theater, another opera house, with a seating capacity of 800. Unlike the Gottschalk, which could seat 1,500 people when folding chairs were added, it would not serve as an auditorium or arena, but it would be more elegant than any theater the city had yet seen. It was built in 1913 at 218-220 South Lincoln, at a cost of \$75,000, connected to the Radison Hotel lobby, and was called the Aberdeen The-

ater. Late in 1914, it became the Orpheum. Walker designed it for stage shows; movies were an afterthought. In 1914, because of Walker's need to fill this theater, Aberdeen was the only city in the two Dakotas with its own summer stock company.

By 1919, Walker owned "the largest independent theater circuit in the United States, including 166 houses in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming," earning him the trade-paper nickname, "The Czar of the West."<sup>48</sup> He sold these theaters to McCarthy Brothers, a Fargo theater company, but later repurchased three in Aberdeen.

Walker announced plans for a new theater on February 11, 1926, and the March 12 *Aberdeen Evening News* developed the story:

*H. L. Walker, manager of the Walker amusement company stated yesterday that arrangements had been completed whereby construction on the company's new theater on south Main street will be underway by the middle of April.*

*Mr. Walker stated that it had been decided to call the new theater the "Capitol" instead of "The Mecca" as had been previously announced. "No theater in the Northwest," said Mr. Walker, "in a city boasting a population of less than 100,000, will be more substantially erected, more comfortable and up-to-date in all its details than the one we will build this spring."*

Finkelstein & Rubin management had previously announced that contractors would be given specifications in March and asked to submit bids. On April 27 they announced that bids would be let in a few days on a gigantic theater, measuring 100 by 142 feet. The final price was now estimated at \$225,000.

The next news of the progress of the competitive camp came from Narregang Investment Company, as told in this story from the *Aberdeen Evening News*, April 22, 1926:

*The most pretentious building that has been erected on the Main street of the city for a considerable number of years is planned in the announcement of the Narregang Holding company of a five-story structure to cost between \$150,000 and \$180,000, to be occupied by Brown Brothers State Bank and Trust Company and a new theatre to be known as the "Capitol," and owned and operated by the Walker Amusement company.*

*Decision to go ahead with this new building was reached today, and as a result of the new structure, a new company to act as a subsidiary of the Narregang Investment company, the Narregang Holding company, has been formed to control the ownership of the new building, and four other structures.*

*Harry Brown, manager of the Brown Brothers State Bank and Trust Company said today that a temporary location of the banking offices has not yet been secured.*

*... A 20-year lease upon the banking location has been secured by Mr. Brown, with a 15-year lease granted the theatre company.*

"Natty, curly-headed"<sup>49</sup> Spencer Willis Narregang had come to Brown County in 1882 when he was twenty-one years old. He opened a drug store but discovered he was far more interested in real estate and loans. His repeated ads in early newspapers claimed he would "sell you the world, and loan you the money to buy it." He was enormously successful. Twelve years before the Capitol Building was built the *Daily American*<sup>50</sup> had told this story:

*Mr. Narregang has been loaning money on farms and city property here for 28 years, during which time his total loans have exceeded the ten million dollar mark but he has never lost a penny in either principal or interest and he has never taken a piece of real estate to collect a loan.*

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48. *Aberdeen Daily News*, May 23, 1930.

49. *Aberdeen American News*, June 17, 1956.

50. June 17, 1914.

*The Narregang Investment Company, of which Mr. Narregang is president and principal owner, is in the business of handling investments, real estate and insurance. It makes a specialty of first mortgages . . . The company has the only general insurance agency in the state, handling every kind of insurance that is written. The company is handling a quarter million dollars worth of city and farm realty at the present time, and is also farming 3,000 acres of land in the Dakotas.*

In 1926, the sixty-five year old Narregang was still president of his old investment company but had lived in Texas for eight years. Vigorous new management had taken over the day-to-day operations from their offices in the Narregang half of the Excelsior Block. Ernest Rhodes and Fred Hatterscheidt were young, smart, and ambitious. E. C. Rhodes had come here from Bowdle and was most interested in agricultural loans and insurance.

Fred Hatterscheidt was born in Cologne, Germany, and came to the Aberdeen area at the age of nine, speaking no English. After graduating from Aberdeen Business College (where everyone called him "Fritz"), he went to work for Spencer Narregang in 1912. After time-out for participation in the military, he became expert in the development of commercial leases. The Capitol Building was Hatterscheidt's dream. In 1926 he was thirty-three years old.

Excavation began on the Finkelstein & Rubin site, but before the contractor poured the footings, the work came to a stop, and rains filled the hole with water. The barrage of press releases from the Walker and Narregang team did not stop, nor did the interest of the news editors. On May 13, this exciting headline greeted sidewalk superintendents:

**WORK STARTED ON NEW  
WALKER THEATER WITH  
GIANT STEAM SHOVEL**

The story that followed said the general contractor was Fred Peterson, and the architects were Buechner and Orth, of St. Paul. Two days later, another story elaborated:

*A distinctive feature of the front will be a 30-foot electric sign bearing the word "Capitol," the name of the building and the theatre.*

*Across the street frontage of 75 feet the building will be divided into a banking room for Brown Brothers at the north end. Then comes the entrance to the theater lobby, then the entrance to the elevator of the building and a recessed entrance to the basement rooms and then at the south end a storeroom. This storeroom may be used as an addition to the present J. C. Penney store [then at 419 South Main, immediately south of the Capitol] or leased to one of several other tenants who are seeking it.*

Illustrations showed the architects' drawings with the prominent vertical sign with a capitol dome motif. The designers specified a five-story brown brick building with a dark grey granite base and flat tan stone trim running along the fifth floor and at the cornice. They were influenced by the popular *Art Deco* trends of the time and applied geometric details with Moorish and Celtic motifs. The *Art Deco* influence continued in the interior design of the theater. The design of the building and the theater was more restrained than many of that period, perhaps because it was primarily a business office building.

On May 18, an *Evening News* headline announced:

**Walker Interests Now  
Own All Aberdeen Show  
Houses and Build More**

Walker had added E. G. Anderson's Garrick, Princess, and Colonial to his collection — the Orpheum, Rialto and Lyric. Today, Aberdeen is proud of its five-screen cineplex, which shows perhaps eighty films a year. In 1926, Aberdeen's six theaters may have shown five hundred films and had time for more than fifty vaudeville productions and plays, as well. Here's a list of those

1926 theaters, their locations, and other names they once used:<sup>51</sup>

1926 Names	Other Names		Address	1991 Use
	Earlier	Later		
Colonial/State			10 S. Main	Hay Furniture Annex
Princess	Cosy	Aster/Time	12 S. Main	Labor Temple
Garrick/State	Bijou/Strand	Ritz/Pix/World	19 S. Main	Parking Lot
Lyric			216 S. Main	Mini-Mall
Orpheum	Aberdeen		218 S. Lincoln	Parking Lot
Rialto	Idle Hour		404 S. Main	Bostwicks

On July 2, The Finkelstein & Rubin company claimed their plans were now complete, and construction would soon begin. The paper told of the problems of draining the excavation with the city pump, which had recently worked so valiantly fighting the Sherman Hotel fire. On July 9, it said that S. W. Jonason, the contractor, was shoring up the banks of the excavation to prevent cave-ins, and would erect a fence for safety. Such mundane defensive activity could not compare with the drama of the earlier steam shovel or the steel workers who were now rapidly erecting the imposing skeleton of the Capitol Building.

Walker, once a professional poker player, may have thought his ownership of all the existing theaters would intimidate Finkelstein & Rubin management. If so, he may have been correct. On August 9, an *Evening News* story quoted a not very concise Mr. Cubberly of the Finkelstein & Rubin company:

*With the sudden shift of farming outlook this summer, we decided after the crop situation fell off, that it would be better business to take the cost of carrying the \$40,000 we have in the lot and excavation in Aberdeen rather than go ahead with the investment of \$150,000 in a building which would not prove a profitable venture in the face of circumstances as they developed this summer.*

Cubberly said, in effect, "Things don't look good; maybe next year."

Walker soon closed the Colonial/State and sold the Princess. He allowed his lease to lapse on the Orpheum, and Ben Ward reopened it with new local management. Walker would reclaim control of the Orpheum later. The *Evening News* printed dozens of stories about the Capitol all that year. They followed the progress of the steel workers and noted Mr. Peterson's serious injuries when a steel beam fell on his ankle. They monitored the progress of the brick layers and discussed the purpose of those projecting beams on the front of the building. They described in detail the sign that was to be suspended from those beams and covered the installation itself. They announced Walker's plans to purchase



*The Capitol Building, just after the bank moved out*

51. Compiled from information in *Movie Time*, Art Buntin, published by Dakota State College, in *Papers of the 10th Dakota History Conference*, 1978. We are also indebted to N. S. U.'s Doctor Buntin for other theater information printed here.

an organ and described the organ, a "Master Kimball," in detail. Walker chose it after seeing a similar, but less deluxe model, in the new Finkelstein & Rubin Egyptian theater in Sioux Falls. The Capitol's organ would be identical with one recently installed in the new Roxy Theater in New York City. Like everything else in Aberdeen's new theater, Walker said it would be the best.

The newspaper discussed the theater's ventilation plan and other innovative and metropolitan features on January 11, 1927:

*... a new departure in this part of the country, consisting of four foot tunnels around the entire building, and another underneath the floor running through the center from end to end, from which air is drawn into the interior, doing away with the more crude and drafty methods of the old playhouses.*

*Besides an elaborate box office in the foyer, both the ladies' and men's rest rooms are provided on each side of the lobby, equipped with comfortable upholstered furniture, private telephones, while all the prerequisites in the ladies room for putting the finishing touches before entering the theater are provided, such as tables, mirrors and the like.*

*Fronting the gallery seven boxes are provided containing, instead of the old fashioned hard chairs, the most comfortable double upholstered seats that could be procured.*

A matinee opened the theater on January 12, 1927. The first presentation was not a film, but a stage production: *The Green Hat*, an adaptation of Michael Arlen's novel. A preview announcement said it was "terrifically frank in its handling of sex, yet it is in no way obnoxious to the average adult." The play had a cast of sixteen, and the eight member *Capitol Theater Orchestra* played an overture, two selections between each of the four acts, and, for the exit, *The Capitol March*. The architects had designed the theater for stage productions as well as films, and it had a conventional stage (now reduced in size), dressing rooms, foot lights, and an automatic asbestos curtain.<sup>52</sup>

If a Capitol patron, standing in the long line to see the first evening performance of *The Green Hat*, had brought the day's *Evening News*, he might have read that the Finkelstein & Rubin company was confident they would award construction contracts for their new \$225,000 theater in the spring.

The first motion picture film was shown the next day. It was Paramount's comedy, *Kid Boots*, starring Eddy Cantor and Clara Bow. Though the Capitol opened in the same year that the first talking pictures were released, its first films were silent. Theaters relied on the talent of the organist and the versatility of the organ, "with its accoutrements to vary and sweeten its tone." J. Gibbs Spring, organist for the first film, was described as "an expert organist from the east."

When sound films came to the Capitol, in 1928, they were produced with a rather primitive system. Wally Bleckert, a long-time projectionist, remembered those early *Vitaphone* "talkies:"

*It was a Western Electric patent, and the theater had to lease the equipment. The sound was not recorded on the film, as it was later, but on a phonograph record that had a ten-minute playing time. To keep the sound synchronized, the film had to be on ten-minute reels, too. A ninety minute film took nine reels of film, and nine phonograph records. We needed two operators: one to start the projector, and another to start the record at exactly the right time. If a piece of film was damaged, it had to be replaced with a piece of black film of exactly the same length.*

The theater was the first public building in Aberdeen to be air conditioned. It was always the premier theater in Aberdeen and was correctly advertised as the place "Where the Big Pictures Play." At one time, the management suggested patrons should make reservations. The Capitol became a once-a-week habit for much of the population, a place to be seen in your best clothes,

52. The curtain failed to operate properly when a fire started on the stage of the unoccupied theater on November 11, 1930. Smoke damage was extensive, and the Capitol closed for repairs. According to Wally Bleckert, Capitol projectionist at the time, when it reopened on April 5, 1931, the waiting line stretched for blocks.



much like church. The city's other theaters, some thought, were for cultural infidels. Its potential as a quality motion picture theater is still far greater than any typical cineplex theater.

The Finkelstein & Rubin company never built in Aberdeen. Instead, in 1927 they bought a half-interest in the Walker company. Eventually they filled the huge hole they had dug on First Street, and the Firestone company built a store on that location. By 1930, the Finkelstein & Rubin company was part of the Paramount Publix company, which controlled 1,400 theaters in the United States and foreign countries.

The Brown Brothers claimed to be the oldest business firm in Aberdeen. Frank or Ralph Brown had indeed been in business here since 1881, though not always at the same time, and not always as a bank. The bank was incorporated in 1908 and their sons were now in charge. From 1900 until 1926, the Brown Brothers operated in one of the buildings that was demolished to make room for the Capitol. After the theater, their bank was to be the most visible tenant in the new building.

The Brown Brothers State Bank and Trust Company opened its shiny new facilities in 1927 and promptly went bankrupt, rather like a ship sinking as it is launched. The brief notice in the Evening News on March 2, the day after the bank closed, implied that speculation in west-river lands had led to insolvency. Erken Jewelers moved to the Brown's location, which today is occupied by the Happy Reader book store.

Though the newspaper claimed "the amount of local business is very small," the bank's failure naturally caused much enmity among depositors, and the several Brown families, members of the town's social and commercial elite since 1881, left Aberdeen. Taking bizarre revenge, someone dynamited the Brown family burial plot at Riverside cemetery.

The Narrengang Holding Company did not have an easy time renting their new building. The 1928-29 *City Directory*, which shows *no* vacancies in the much larger Citizens Building, lists seven on the fourth and fifth floor of the Capitol Building. But the new building obviously gave prestige to its occupants. Mose Bantz, the insurance agent and former buggy-whip salesman, was an early tenant. So were Dr. Paul Bell and the Gorder Real Estate Company, the Coe and Howard Title Company, and B. C. Lamont. Narrengang offices were moved from the old Excelsior Block to third floor of the Capitol Building, where they are today. After L. T. Van Slyke sold the building that still bears his name to Dr. Ranney in 1930, the Law Firm of Van Slyke and Agor moved to the Capitol Building. The successor firm, Siegel Barnett and Schutz, now occupies both the fourth and fifth floor. Douglas Bantz (Mose's son) established his firm here.

J. C. Penney's never moved into the south "storeroom" of the Capitol Building, but chose a site at 301 South Main for a new building. The building built for them is now used by Feinstein's Down Under. Later, Penney's moved to a larger store in the Sherman Hotel building, near Woolworth's. In the 1950s, Fred Hatterscheidt fulfilled an old dream and built a new building for Penney's (and Woolworth's) at 401-411 South Main, next to the Capitol Building, on the old post office lot. Hirsch-Black, a drapery, gift, and toy store, was an early and long-term tenant in the space Hatterscheidt had hoped Penney's would occupy.

Harry Walker retired from the theater business on May 22, 1930, when he and his local partner, banker F. H. Gannon, sold their remaining interest in the Aberdeen Walker theaters to Paramount Publix corporation.<sup>53</sup> Less than eight months later, the *Evening News* told this story:

*Since his retirement from the theater business last May, Mr. Walker has devoted his time to his farm two miles west of Groton. This farm was his hobby and it had been his plan to make it the model farm of South Dakota. He had stocked his farm with some of the best livestock in the northwest and had nearly accomplished his ambition when death came.*<sup>54</sup>

Walker was fifty-nine years old when he died. The editor's eulogy included this praise:

*He was a generous employer, a good provider in his home—a kindly*

53. Fred Hall Gannon was the nephew of Frank Gannon, the former bank president.

54. Edition of January 6, 1931.

husband and father—one who never forgot to share his success with his family. His home in South Aberdeen,<sup>55</sup> with its background of flowers and shrubbery and birdhouses is a demonstration of his love of beauty and appreciation of the things that make a model home. He was a builder whose hand and brain were never allowed to idle.

Walker was buried at Riverside Cemetery. The Master Kimball organ now graces another Capitol, the statehouse at Juno, Alaska. The "double upholstered seats" have been removed to the Masonic Temple. As for the theater itself, as of this writing, it is empty, unused, and forlorn.

#### Ghosts

The fire that destroyed the Gottschalk Theater in July of 1910 also deprived Harry Walker of some of his expected income. Perhaps the future "Czar of the west" had to cast about for new ways to earn a few dollars. This ad appeared in almost every January issue of the 1911 *Daily American*:

<p><b>Postoffice Ice Rink</b> Cor. of 5th Ave. Lincoln St. <b>H. L. Walker</b> <u>15¢ to all</u> Ladies' and Gentlemen's skates for rent at reasonable rates.</p>
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This is an excerpt from a story is from the *Weekly American* of December 18, 1913:

#### **WALKER'S BIRDS TAKE ALL FIRSTS**

##### **LOCAL MAN EXHIBITS RHODE ISLAND REDS AT REDFIELD AND WINS**

*H. L. Walker returned last evening from Redfield where he attended the official American Poultry Association show and exhibited 17 birds.*

*The birds exhibited by Mr. Walker . . . took first in everything in their class. In the cock class his birds took first and second places. His hens took first, second, third and fourth places. His cockerel No. 25 took first place. His four pullets took first, second, third and fifth places and his pens took first and second prizes.*

On January 10, 1926, this was the lead story in the *Aberdeen American News*:

#### **HEALTHY CONDITION OF SIX HUB CITY BANKS REVEALED IN YEAR-END STATEMENTS**

*A report compiled from the December 31, 1925 business statements of six Aberdeen banking institutions revealed that bank deposits here at the close of 1925 approached the immense figure of almost \$10,000,000.*

*In commenting on this exceptionally strong banking situation, further evidenced by the fact that not a city bank statement shows any report of loans from the Federal Reserve branch at Minneapolis, businessmen enthusiastically pointed out that Aberdeen has assumed pre-eminence as the financial center of South Dakota.*

*The huge resources of the local banks which weathered a period several years ago when bank failures throughout the state were a common every-day occurrence, are unparalleled in comparison with any other South Dakota city.*

Though the Brown Brothers Bank was the last bank failure in Aberdeen, by 1931 only two of the six banks in the 1926 story were still operating. Old-timers heard echoes of another crash,

55. 1423 South Lincoln Street.

long ago. Aberdeen had started the decade of the nineties with six banks and ended it with two. The two surviving banks were the same, both times.

When Fred Hatterscheidt died on January 23, 1973, the next day's *American News* included this information in his obituary:

*Mr. Hatterscheidt was initially employed by the Narregang Investment Company . . . that business later became known as F. W. Hatterscheidt & Co.*

*Mr. Hatterscheidt organized or was affiliated with a number of corporations. In 1925 he bought the G. W. Hart Farm Mortgage Co. of Watertown. He organized the Narregang Holding Corporation in 1926, the Northwestern Company in 1929, the Narregang-Hart Company in 1930, the Northern States Corporation in 1944, the Hatterscheidt Foundation Inc. in 1947, the Northern Warehouse Inc. in 1953, the Northwest Building Co. in 1954, the Jamestown Terminal Elevator, Inc., and the Farmers and Merchants Bank in 1955, and the Aberdeen Grain Inspection, Inc., in 1957. He incorporated F. W. Hatterscheidt & Co. in 1963.*

## **422-424 South Main Street**

**1910**

Early citizens might choose their grocery supplier based on color preferences, if they wished. Harvey and Charles Jewett established the Red Front Grocery in 1883 at 302 South Main Street. In 1889, John Sheehan and Thomas Owen ran the rival Blue Front Grocery, across the street at 311 South Main. For those with a hunger of a different color, there was the White Front Saloon.

James McDiarmid came to Aberdeen in 1885 from New Brunswick, Canada. Perhaps replacing John Simmons, he worked for C. A. Bliss at the Mammoth Store. He continued with Thompson and Kearney when they bought the Bliss grocery operations and opened their new store in Henry Marple's brand-new Northwestern Bank Building in 1889.

In 1887, A. H. Olwin purchased the Red Front from the Jewetts. In that same year, a very young George Slater went to work at the Blue Front. When Olwin left to start his department store in 1892, McDiarmid became manager of the Red Front. In 1903, when Mr. Olwin and Mr. Angell were building their new department store, Mr. McDiarmid and Mr. Slater purchased the Red Front. In 1907, they moved their store across the street to Oren Champlin's handsome new building, at 315 South Main. They changed the name to McDiarmid & Slater Red Front Grocery, which must have required a large sign.

In the first ten years of the century, Aberdeen's growth was phenomenal: greater than it would experience in any later decade. The census in 1900 had shown a city population of 4,087. In 1910, it was 10,752, a gain of 163 percent. In that same period, a comparatively sleepy Sioux Falls had grown by only 37 per cent, to 14,000. Aberdonians logically felt that since Aberdeen's business activity and growth rate was greater than Sioux Falls, it would not be long before Aberdeen would become South Dakota's largest city. One story called the city a "Young Chicago,"<sup>56</sup> and another predicted that the city would have a population of 50,000 within ten years and had best be ready.<sup>57</sup>

McDiarmid and Slater were both excellent grocers and good businessmen and took advantage of the expanding economy to expand their business. After less than three years in their new location, they built their own building, at 422-424 South Main. They built a two story tan brick structure, 50 feet wide and 142 feet deep. The corbelled cornice is decorated with exceptional geometric patterns formed by different-size reddish-brown bricks. The building had outside entrances for the bakery and basement stores, and one of these remains on Fifth Avenue, the last of dozens that once crowded the street's then wider sidewalks. The second floor contained

56. *Aberdeen Daily American*, April 16, 1910.

57. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1910.

business offices. It was also home to the Red Men's Hall, and later, the Eagles Hall.

The 1910 *City Directory* lists sixteen retail grocers. All but one of them were on Main Street or within two blocks of it. Although most were "cash-and-carry," several offered delivery service and charge accounts. The housewife could prepare a list, phone it in, or bring it in. Her purchases would then be delivered to her home. She could choose either morning or afternoon delivery. She could pay her grocery bill monthly, at the same time she paid the bill to the company that delivered her milk order every morning. What a wonderfully civilized way to do business! Compare it to today's cart-pushing, waiting in line at check-out, carrying bags to the car, and carrying them again to the kitchen.

If you can imagine yourself bringing your list to McDiarmid & Slater, imagine also a long glass candy counter inside the front door, with a clerk behind it to serve you. Perhaps you'd like something for the children while you shop. Along the south wall there are coolers for cheese and milk. Mmmm! Smell the hot bread being baked in the basement bakery? It's five cents a loaf, and you can buy it sliced. They'll slice it while you wait. It's the greatest thing . . .

Over here we have a meat market, right on the premises, so you don't have to make a separate trip to Lockington's or Jensen's. If you thought the *deli* was a modern food store innovation, then let your imagination look at the one in this store, where employees from the nearby Tiffany Laundry are buying prepared food for their lunches. Gourmet foods? Yes Ma'am, right over here: our exclusive brands, preserves, spices, snails . . . Yes ma'am, we have fresh oysters. Catering? Certainly.

The cashier's office was in the center of the store, in a carved, polished wood cage with a brass grill, impressive as any bank. It was dominated by a fancy brass cash register with half-a-dozen drawers. You might go there to pay your bill, but otherwise, you would deal with professional clerks, men and women who chose to make the grocery business their life's work.

By 1930, the *City Directory* listed fifty-two grocery stores. Although sixteen of these were "downtown" stores, the increasing market share of the neighborhood store was obvious. Another change: the 1930 list included three Red Owl stores and a Piggly Wiggly. Chain stores and affiliated stores had begun their ascendancy, and soon imported the supermarket concept.

James McDiarmid worked in his store until his death in 1936. His forty honorary pall bearers included John Simmons, John Firey, Frank Suttle, Harvey Jewett II, Fred Ackley, August Witte, J. Ford Zietlow, Ira Kruger, T. C. Gage, W. C. Allen, and B. C. Lamont. The McDiarmid & Slater store continued in business until 1957, operating to the end in much the same way that it had in 1910.

The corner area has since been occupied by Bittner Pharmacy, Mr. D's Style Shoppe, and The Kitchen Connection. Courtney's Book Store occupies the other street-front section. Most of the upstairs offices have been converted to apartments.

#### Ghosts

This story appeared in the *Dakota Pioneer*, September 13, 1883:

*Messrs Jewett Bros. wholesale grocers have put a travelling man on the road and will hereafter solicit orders from the merchants from the surrounding counties for goods in their line. This is a move in the right direction and the sooner people realize that this is destined to be the distributing point for this great valley, the better it will be for them and for Aberdeen.*

## 501-509 South Main Street

1897

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This news story appeared in the June 9, 1910 *Daily American*:

### OWLS BUILD NEST HERE

*F. J. Lynch, national organizer of the Original Order of Owls, whose home office is in South Bend, Ind., assisted by N. W. Holland, state organizer,*

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58. *Aberdeen American News*, June 17, 1956.

*are instituting a nest in this city. The organization, though one of the youngest, is the strongest lodge of its years in existence. Organizing in 1904 it has expanded to Canada, Alaska, Mexico, Cuba, Porto-Rico, the Philippines, Sandwich Islands, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and all of the United States.*

We have not researched the fate of the Owls and know nothing of their Aberdeen nest, but we know that pioneer communities and immigrant societies engendered a need to belong. An 1896 survey showed that Aberdeen had an adult male population of about 1,000 and had almost 1900 male club memberships.<sup>58</sup> The *average* man belonged to 1.9 male-oriented organizations. If the survey had been more comprehensive, it would have shown that he and his wife belonged to many other organizations as well.

Early Aberdeen citizens, male and female, responded strongly to invitations to membership in all sorts of societies. Every "right-thinking" citizen belonged to a church, and thus was also involved in its auxiliary organizations. Almost everyone had intense political beliefs, and at various times there were organizations for socialists, progressives, populists, prohibitionists, even the Ku Klux Klan. Naturally, the Democrats and Republicans had the strongest organizations, and in early years each had its own supporting newspaper, avowedly partisan and often casually slanderous.

There were literary, dramatic, debating, and musical societies, most of which met in members' homes. There were sewing circles, card clubs, and poetry societies. Some groups, like the Knights of Columbus and Altar Society, required specific denominational membership. Some, like the A. O. U. W., were catch-alls, providing lodge membership, family activities, and insurance benefits. Others, like the Masons, Shrine, Elks, Odd Fellows, and the Knights of Pythias were mostly male bonding societies, providing a certain amount of good-old-boy escape from the women-folk, some secret ceremonial ritual to make members feel like privileged insiders, and a degree of exclusivity, to add both personal and commercial value. Advancement through the titled ranks provided prestige and a sense of accomplishment. Annual conventions in other cities promised exotic adventures. To keep wives from complaining too much, most male organizations had women's auxiliaries and family activities. Almost all added charitable works, sometimes substantial, to their venue.

Of the lodge organizations, the oldest, most exclusive and most celebrated, perhaps the only one with strong old-world and historic roots, was the Masonic Order. The Masons had an early presence in Aberdeen and a history of political and civic involvement.

In 1882 a group met to form a lodge and received their charter the next year. The first meeting took place in the Jewett Brothers' Red Front Grocery, and naturally, Samuel Jumper was there, serving as junior warden. They made do with a lime barrel for an altar, and saw-horses for seating, but conditions improved. A year later, at their territorial convention in Aberdeen the Masons served a banquet. Here is the menu, from soup to nuts, and beyond:

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*Soup: Mock Turtle Soup and white wine.*

*Fish: Broiled lake trout; baked white fish.*

*Boiled: Chicken with oyster sauce*

*Roast: Sirloin of Beef, demi-glace; spring lamb, mint sauce; chicken, savory dressing.*

*Entrees: Filet of beef aux champignons; chicken croquettes a la cream; orange fritters with strawberry syrup.*

*Relishes: Lettuce, olives, radishes, young onions.*

*Cold ornamental dishes: Shrimp salad, sardine salad, chicken salad.*

*Vegetables: Mashed potatoes; new green peas, mushrooms in cream; new string beans.*

*Pastry and dessert: English plumb pudding with brandy sauce, lemon meringue pie, Washington cream pie, green apple pie, apricot pie, peach meringue, lemon jelly, fruit cake, Port wine jelly, sponge cake, silver cake, French kisses, pound cake, vanilla ice cream, Roman punch.*

*Fruits and nuts; Bananas, green apples, oranges, Brazil nuts, filberts, mixed candies, English walnuts, figs.  
Chocolate, coffee, iced milk, green tea.*

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O Pioneers!

Whether because they ate so well, or because there was a natural selection process from the Protestant leadership of the community, the Masons wielded enormous power, sometimes overtly, sometimes not.

By 1887, the Masons had moved into a new hall on the third floor of the Jewett's big new building, at 402-404 South Main. The hall was carpeted, the altar upholstered, and the chairs as "fine as could be obtained,"<sup>59</sup> but even then they were planning a building of their own. This story appeared in the August 11, 1888 *Daily News*:

*. . . the feasibility of constructing a Masonic temple at an early date was considered . . . If a \$40,000 structure is erected the Commandery can secure title from Mr. Prior to the old land office site, free of cost, and it is expected this condition can be readily agreed to, as by subscription and a reasonable loan the full amount can be raised. The building will be 75x142 feet and will be used almost entirely as an opera house and for Masonic purposes.*

The present Masonic Temple didn't happen in that location, in so large a size, at so great a cost, nor did it happen so soon. The nineties were financially troubling years for the nation and for Aberdeen. Perhaps the wonder is that the Masons had the confidence to build at all.

Most of the officers and directors of the Inter-State Grain Palace association were also Masonic leaders. The construction of the Grain Palace in 1893 fulfilled the need for a large community hall, and allowed the Masons to plan a more intimate structure, dedicated to Masonic purposes. These details appeared in a story in the *Weekly News*, August 19, 1896:

*The Masonic Building Association has just let the contract for its proposed building to Geo. W. Brown, a well known contractor of Minneapolis, who agreed to furnish all materials and do all the work on the structure for the sum of \$9,700. [This was \$2,050 less than the lowest local bid, which the Masons regretted they could not accept] . . . By the terms of Mr. Brown's contract he is to have the building plastered by the first of November and completed by the 20th of that month. The principal materials are to be white brick and brown stone.*

*The building is to be three stories with basement, and covering a ground space, counting piazzas, of 52x84 feet. The larger frontage will be north, but the entrance and an elaborate old colonial time porch will face the west. The basement will be used for boiler, kitchen, cloak room, storage and other purposes; the first floor will be divided between a magnificent banquet hall and a series of club rooms, and the second and third for the lodge rooms proper. The structure is to be heated by a steam plant and lighted by electricity and gas . . . It is not expected the north frontage will be very attractive . . . The old colonial style of architecture will be followed throughout.*

*It now seems probable the dedication of the new temple will take place some time January next. A series of social and civic society functions are promised at that time which are likely to be remembered by Hub City people for a good many years to come and which should effectually dispel the ennui of mid-winter life.*

The Masons financed construction with the sale of certificates of indebtedness to members, other Masonic bodies, and the public. There was no mortgage. On January 14, 1897, a *Weekly News* reporter saw the dedication ceremony as a city-wide celebration of regional, even national

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59. *American News*, June 17, 1956. The menu and the "lime barrel" story are from the same source.

importance:

*Not only the Masons of the city and community but their friends as well met last week upon the Level, acted upon the Plumb and parted on the Square.*

*The occasion, as a goodly part of Christendom knows, was the dedication of the new \$16,000 Temple at the corner of Main street and Fifth avenue in this city. Before the ceremonies had been completed, and the festivities proper commenced, an epoch had been marked in Freemasonry of the Dakotas and the northwest. Fraternally and socially the event, for many obvious reasons, has not been approached in the history of this new country. The aggregated beauty, wit and wisdom of the city and the vicinity was there . . . Youth and Pleasure met again, and the dance was on and joy was unconfined and sleep was off until dawn . . .*

*The spectacle when the company had all assembled was an inspiring one. Members of the Masonic order, attired in conventional black with white gloves and aprons, were seated in the front rows and between them the Grand Lodge formed and marched in single rank. Flanking these seats were a hundred ladies or more and their escorts. Music's "voluptuous swell" was heard and a flood of light illuminated every corner and niche in the building. Many of the costumes worn were exquisite in their loveliness. Natural flowers were everywhere seen. Seldom has the eye feasted on a more brilliant or animated scene . . . Midnight had been nearly reached when the assembled people began to "chase the glowing hours with flying feet." Prof. Boughton's orchestra, with enlarged and superb instrumentation, and stationed in the east wing of the gallery, rendered excellent music for those who selected the lodge room for the dance, while the dining room upon the first floor was immediately cleared and made ready for the use of those who could not find places on the floor above. The Payton orchestra was stationed here and delighted all guests . . . At 4 o'clock this morning the Temple was still illuminated, the soul of the music still lingered, and the apparently unwearied dancer was enjoying his favorite pastime.<sup>60</sup>*

The Daily News of December 30, 1896 had said the Masonic Temple corner stone — *was procured from the same quarries at Jerusalem from which Solomon procured the stones for his beautiful temple. The stone is hollowed out, and contains a receptacle for such historic matters as may in future ages be interesting.*

Otherwise, the building seems less remarkable than the reporter's rhapsodic hyperboles: it was a three-story flat-roofed brick box with a pillared porch. Historically, it was more important. It was the fourth building in the nation and the first west of the Mississippi dedicated entirely to Masonic purposes. And architecturally, it did not remain ordinary.

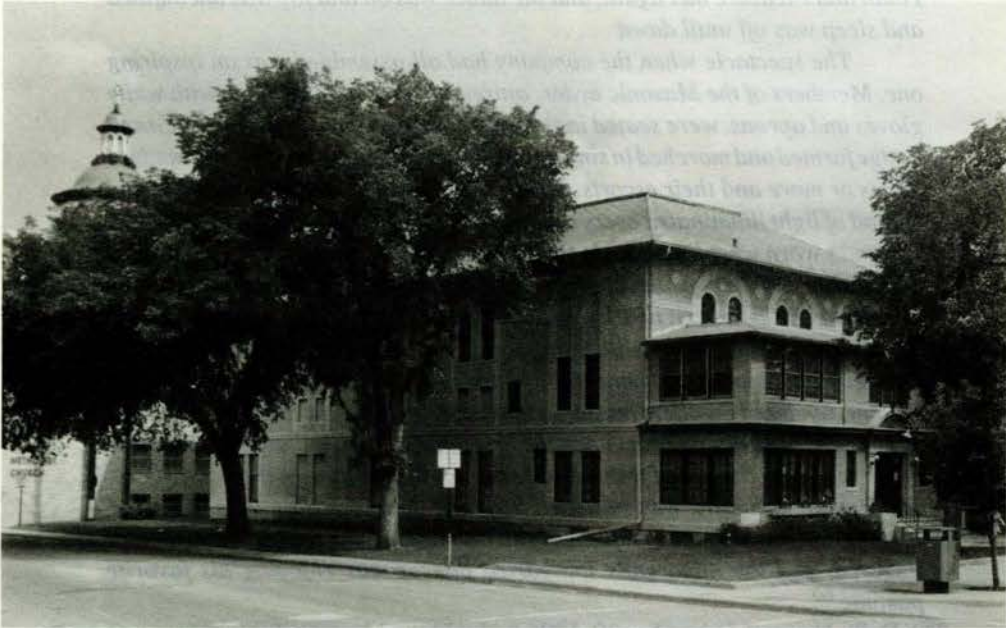
At least as early as 1910 the Masons were planning to replace their thirteen-year-old temple with something better. For \$17,000, they purchased a quarter-of-a-block lot on the corner of Lincoln Street and Fifth Avenue, across the street east from the almost-new First Methodist church. In pioneer towns, building life-spans were sometimes very short, and whatever was not new caused insecurity. Since Aberdeen had the first Masonic Temple in the area, every other temple was newer. A story in the June 7, 1910 *Daily American* reported "Work on the foundation for the new \$100,000 temple will be completed this fall." When the Gottschalk Opera House burned a month later, some Masons saw an opportunity to sell the "old" temple to those who wanted to tear it down and erect a new theater on that site.

Again, plans went astray. Instead of building new, in 1914 the Masons remodelled their 1897 structure and effected a remarkable transformation. The builders added to the length,

60. January 21, 1897.

covered the original box and the addition with a hipped red-tile roof, added a two-story window-wrapped porch to the front, and covered all the brick surfaces with stucco. On the "not very attractive" north side, they modified some rectangular windows with tall Romanesque stucco relief arches and enclosed window pairs with similar, larger arches. The building's less-visible, less-attractive south side gives a better indication of the original design.

In a mental picture of the building, formed only by the description above, one might imagine something dreadful, a lop-sided frosted cake with swirls and appendages. But the designer's changes were masterful, and the Masonic Temple may be the only building on the street that looks better now than it did when new. The original Federal box now has an airy look, a mixture of Mediterranean and Romanesque features, with Moorish overtones.



*The Masonic Temple, as it looks today*

By definition, Masons are builders. They got the itch to build again in 1926, and a May 16 *American News* story reported on their plans:

**MASONS TO ERECT SPLENDID TEMPLE  
Plans for New Structure at 5th Ave. and Lincoln St. Location  
Work to Start this Year.**

*The Masonic order is to have a new home in the home in the near future, according to plans and steps taken at a recent meeting of the Masonic Temple association . . . . A committee has been working for some time on tentative plans and sketches of the proposed building and their progress was reported at the meeting. It is planned to start the building this year and have the foundation completed before frost sets in this fall.*

Nothing came of the plans.

In 1957, when the First National Bank was searching for a location for a new building, the Masonic site on Main Street was their first choice. The Masons deliberated, and put this building at risk again. After all, they still had that Lincoln Street lot, only a block away, and wouldn't it be better to keep the city's major bank on its major street? They decided not to sell, again saving this historic and graceful building. Today, the Masons still lease their Lincoln Street lot for parking, as they have for decades, and they still use the Temple for Masonic functions. In some



of these events, perhaps they still “chase the glowing hour with flying feet.”

#### Ghosts

... as late as 1902, rainmakers had tried to make rain by constructing very tall pipes which carried smoke and gasses up from fires built in the Masonic Temple yard in Aberdeen.<sup>61</sup>

According to an article in the *Aberdeen Weekly News*, July 18, 1912, the Improved Order of Redmen, whose tribe then met in their lodge rooms above the McDiarmid & Slater store, elected and appointed the following officers at their state convention in Aberdeen: Great Sachem, Great Senior Sagamore, Great Prophet, Great Chief of Records, Great Keeper of Wampum, Great Representative, Great Sannap, Great Meshinewa, Great Guard of the Wigwam, and Great Guard of the Forest. “Five new chiefs were added to the great council of the reservation of South Dakota during this season, they having served through many battles as sachems of their various tribes, and were deemed worthy of admittance to the council of the great chiefs.”

## 502-506 South Main Street

1917

The first automobile in Aberdeen came here by train and was displayed at the Inter-State Grain Palace in 1897. Reporters covering that harvest festival exposition season that year seemed not to notice this example of the technology that would cause Aberdeen’s growth to slow a few decades later. As long as the goods of the nation moved by rail, as long as the consumer’s buying range was restricted, and as long as farming remained labor intensive, Aberdeen’s growth would be limited less by competitive markets than by the agricultural economy of the area.

Almost exactly twenty years after that first car was shown, during the Harvest Festival, a new building on the Grain Palace site was opened to the public. Appropriately, it was built for the purposes of displaying, selling and servicing automobiles. Clarence Boyd and Bob Roman constructed this building for their Boyd-Romans Auto Company. A story in the October 2, 1917 *Daily News* told about the building:

*A handsome two story structure of Mina pressed brick, it is a splendid addition to the business district of Aberdeen.*

*The beauty spot of a building attractively and conveniently appointed throughout is the show room. It is finished in white and grey with lofty steel ceiling, tiled floor and large eastern window frontage. A stairway leads to a balcony where are the offices and a ladies rest room furnished with chairs and a writing desk.*

*Convenience is the keynote of the large storage room which will accommodate 200 automobiles, including the main floor space and stalls. There is also a large turn table. On a long balcony on the south side of the storage room will be located the tire repair and accessories department . . . . A shipment of the latest make Buicks and Cadillacs is on the way here and these cars will be on display in the show room and at the Harvest Festival grounds.*

The dark-brown brick commercial structure has an understated sixteen-row corbelled cornice. On the upper floor, there are *Chicago School* windows between simple pilasters.

Today, it may seem strange to build an automobile dealership in the center of town. The 1919 *City Directory* lists almost fifty businesses related to automobiles. Insufficient Main Street space was available to these mostly new businesses, so all but six of those businesses found locations a block or two off Main Street. The exceptions were on the near north side, still close to the core area. In selecting their more expensive Main Street location, Boyd and Roman were investing in convenience and prestige.

Roman sold his interest in this company to Boyd in 1922, and the name changed to Boyd

61. *Brown County History*, P. 91.

Automobile Company. Boyd sold his Buick distributorship to Armour Grover in 1934, and this building was Grover's Master Service until 1938, when Grover moved to Second Street. For several years a Red Owl Store was located here.

Charles "Bud" Malchow was a popular manager of the Gamble's Store at 18-24 South Main until he started his own company in 1945. He located his new business at 506 South Main. Boyd and Romans had added this part of the building a year after the structure at 502-504 was built. It matches so well it appears to be the same building. Malchow's then sold appliances as well as furniture and floor coverings. They eventually took over the original building, and at one time also sold boats and motors. Bud's son, Tom, is now owner of this store.

The freight elevator that opens to the street on the north side of this building once transferred cars from one level to another. Today, it handles furniture and carpet. The automotive service area on the upper floor has been converted and is now known as the Boyd Apartments.. Frank Ashford, a nationally known artist, once had studios here, as he did in the Citizens Building.

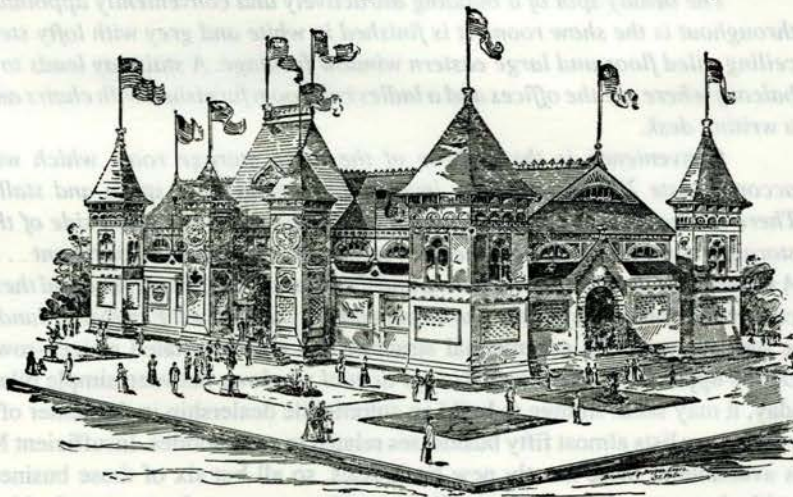
#### Ghosts

This story appeared in the *Daily News*, March 29, 1893:

*Yesterday's meetings in the Building and Loan block were the most enthusiastic and largely attended of any held . . .*

*Upon motion a committee consisting of Rev. Burdick, Ira Barnes, Geo. Schlosser, S. W. Narregang and Rob't Moody was appointed to organize a corporation to be known as the Inter-State Grain Palace Association, with a view of erecting and operating a wheat palace in Aberdeen. It is proposed to manage this new enterprise as a two state matter, and for the further purpose of thoroughly advertising the great wheat belt . . . It is the intention of the incorporators to have the wheat palace all complete by the 11th of September and to keep it open during the five days of the state fair and the twenty days following. It is a capital idea, and if successfully carried out will be to Aberdeen what the corn palace is to Sioux City.*

The Grain Palace had its grand opening exactly as scheduled. The huge wood-frame structure was designed by Aberdeen architect E. W. Van Meter.<sup>62</sup> In design, it was a large central hall with pyramidal spires topping the rectangular towers that flanked the entry and each corner.



THE INTER-STATE GRAIN PALACE

ABERDEEN, SOUTH DAKOTA, SEPT. 11-23, 1893.

62. Edward Van Meter was one of Aberdeen's most talented and active architects, but his work has been mostly forgotten. He came to Aberdeen from St. Paul in 1882. He designed the Dickey, Edmunds, and McPherson

Smaller, lower-ceilinged halls were attached. It was crude, but that was a requirement of its combined budget and size, and the construction time allotted. Besides, it didn't look so crude in the advertising posters, or in the minds of the citizens.

The Grain Palace had been financed by subscription and partly built by volunteers. Its grounds occupied a half-block of Main Street, on the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue.

If the function of the Grain Palace was to restore pride to a community badly battered by economic depression and drought, it did that. If it was to provide a large meeting and entertainment space, a place for harvest-festival fairs, it did that. If it was to gain regional and national attention for the community, it did that, too. This story is from a national magazine, *The Illustrated American*, December 7, 1895:

#### ***A South Dakota Grain Palace***

*The great northwest is just now experiencing a revival in business, no small portion of which is due to the enormous wheat crop which is now being threshed and marketed. Minnesota, and North and South Dakota, have raised about one hundred and sixty millions of bushels of wheat this year, and the railroads of these states are being taxed to the utmost to draw this enormous yield to the city markets.*

*A fine recognition of this bountiful harvest is that of the little city of Aberdeen, South Dakota, in its grain palace. A large building was given up to the display of the products of the State, and to evidences of the prodigality of the harvest. The whole interior of the building was decorated with grains and grasses—wheat and corn and rye and timothy and meadow grasses. It is well-nigh past belief the artistic effects which lie hidden in an ear of corn. Elaborate*



*The Grain Palace Interior*

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(Continued from note 62, page 62) County court houses, as well as school buildings in Aberdeen, Ellendale, Eureka and Leola. He designed the first Alexander Mitchell Library, Ralph Brown's home at 402 South Kline, and no doubt many other buildings, since he advertised his services almost daily in the newspaper. He also served as Aberdeen city engineer and county surveyor.

*designs, typical of husbandry, mottoes of thankfulness for the harvest, emblems of fraternal orders, arches and walls and ceiling and pillars tricked out in rich grains deftly interwoven, plaited, and what-not.*

*At one end of the long main auditorium rose a great arch to the ceiling, something in type like the matchless arch at the entrance of the transportation building at the World's Fair in Chicago. The Arch was a massive affair, yellow for the most part, but relieved here and there by other colors, as the brown of grasses or the scarlet of the ripe, red ears of corn . . .*

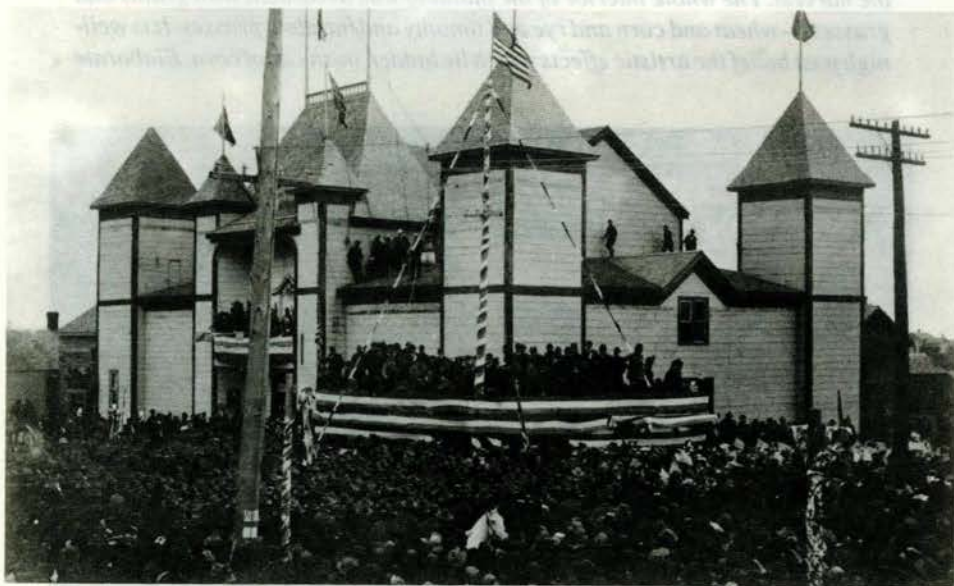
The Grain Palace became the center of Aberdeen's celebratory life. It was convention hall, exposition grounds, opera house, theater, and community church, all in one. It was more, though. It was a symbol of the young city's energy and unity, its ability to persevere in hard times.

Each October, a festival brought visitors on excursion trains from as far as Jamestown and Huron to see professional plays as well as agricultural and industrial exhibits. Annually, hundreds of citizens volunteered to decorate the building and serve in whatever capacity was required.

In 1893, a community-wide prayer service was held in the Grain Palace in thanksgiving for rain.

When the campaign train carrying William Jennings Bryan arrived much later than scheduled in October, 1896, ten thousand people stayed up all night to hear the man who had recently electrified the nation with his "cross of gold" speech. He spoke from a stand in front of the Grain Palace.

In October, 1899, twenty to thirty thousand people gathered in the decorated streets to



*A Grain Palace Celebration*

honor the First South Dakota Infantry regiment on its return from the War of Philippine Insurrection. President McKinley and four members of his cabinet reviewed the troops from a stand in front of the Grain Palace, and the President gave a brief address. A reception was held in the Grain Palace, and the ladies served a baked turkey dinner for the returning heroes.

In the evening of September 13, 1900, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt's train arrived in Aberdeen during his vice-presidential campaign. From this account in the next day's *Daily News*, we trust the Colonel did not feel ignored:

*... At almost the same instant that Colonel Roosevelt's train arrived in the city, the procession started on its march from the corner of Main Street and Eighth*

avenue. The formation consisted of three principal divisions, comprising mounted rough riders, torch bearers and fireworks brigade. Nobody knows how many men were in line. The procession was six blocks in length, the men marching in close order, as many as six to ten abreast, and the effect of the moving throng with the hundreds of sparkling lights was dazzling . . . .

The rear division of the procession consisted of the fireworks brigade and this was moved far enough south to allow the carriages to be brought to a point where the distinguished guests could view the glittering line stretching down through the colonnade. The spectacle was a brilliant one, the hundreds of lights showing the floating flags and banners, and the festoons of bunting in the most effective manner . . . . But the scene was nothing compared to what was to follow. At a signal the fireworks brigade turned itself loose . . . . Hundreds of men in columns instantaneously lighted mammoth Roman candles and in an instant the sky was filled with a display of fireworks such as not one of the many thousands of spectators had ever seen . . . . The great crowds went wild with delight as the thousands of fire balls shot into the air far above the tallest buildings. As the candles burned out, others were lighted to take their place and the display lasted for several minutes . . . .

At the conclusion of the display, the bands and drum corps again began to play and the carriages containing the distinguished guests joined the parade, and under escort from the reception committee, with the mounted rough riders following the carriages, moved to the grand stand at the Grain Palace. As the procession moved again, Grecian candles were lighted along the entire length of the colonnade and the scene was only less dazzling than had been that of a moment before . . . . The hero of San Juan hill was cheered by the crowds filling the sidewalks and he gracefully acknowledged the cheers at frequent intervals as he passed along the thoroughfare. The columns of men in line separated at the stand and countermarched north, cheering lustily for Roosevelt . . . .

Teddy rode through the streets, following the parade, which some estimated included four thousand marchers. The banners included one that said, "Give 'em Hell, Teddy." Roosevelt, asked what he thought of the demonstration, eyed the banner and said "Delightful!" According to a *Chicago Tribune* report, "600 Russians from a colony forty miles northeast of here" joined in the parade. "Rough riders and cowboys rode by the stand at the Grain Palace trying to yell their lungs out. After a while they and the torch bearers got through countermarching and yelling. Mayor Adams then introduced Colonel Roosevelt," who mounted the bunting draped platform and gave a speech on the evils of trusts, the joys of the strenuous life, and the need for an eight hour day. While Roosevelt was speaking, the crowd frequently drowned out his voice with prolonged cheers.

Nineteen months after Roosevelt's visit, on April 28, 1902, this was the lead sentence in a story that appeared in the *Weekly News*:

*Aberdeen's Inter-State Grain Palace was completely destroyed by fire this morning between 12 and 1 o'clock.*

## Glossary of Architectural Terms

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- arch brick:** a wedge shaped brick used with others to form an arch.
- baluster:** usually, a turned, a *vase-shaped* support for a railing or bannister.
- balustrade:** a complete railing system, including a top rail and its balusters, and sometimes a bottom rail.
- belt course:** a full-length horizontal course of bricks, stone, or boards, often at floor level.
- bracket:** any overhanging device used as support for a cornice, eaves, ledge, balcony, etc.
- capital:** the structural and usually decorative *cap* of a column. See Corinthian, Doric and Ionic.
- colonette:** a small column, usually decorative rather than structural.
- console:** a decorative bracket in the form of a vertical scroll, projecting from a wall to support a door or window head, a piece of sculpture, etc.
- coping:** the top layer of a brick or stone wall, often of another material (such as tile, metal, or concrete, or stone, when the wall is brick) and usually sloped to shed water.
- corbel:** a projecting stone or brick used as a support; a bracket; also see corbelling.
- corbelling:** 1. the use of corbels in a series; 2. a system of masonry in which each brick or stone course projects beyond the one beneath it.
- Corinthian:** the most slender and ornate of the Greek architectural orders; characterized by a bell-shaped capital with volutes and two rows of acanthus leaves with an elaborate cornice.
- cornice:** any molded projection which *crowns* or finishes the part to which it is attached; 2. the exterior trim of a structure at the meeting of the roof and wall.
- dentils:** literally, *teeth*; small, square-edged solid blocks which are separated by vacant spaces; often used as a decorative element on cornices, parapets and moldings.
- Doric:** the simplest of the Greek design orders; Doric capitals have no volutes.
- egg-and-dart:** a design motif consisting of alternating egg-shaped and dart-shaped designs; often used as a decorative border on moldings and cornices.
- façade:** the exterior face of a building; its architectural front.
- Ionic:** a Greek design order characterized by the spiral volutes of the capitals.
- lintel:** the horizontal beam or stone above a door or window; it supports the structure above.
- lunette:** shaped like a crescent moon; or, the semi-circular space within an arch.
- modillions:** blocks or scroll-like brackets used to support the corona (overhang, or *crown*) in the Corinthian order.
- Palladian:** derived from the Italian Renaissance designs of Andrea Palladio (1508-1580); often refers to a window design comprised of a larger central arched sash flanked by smaller non-arched side-lights.
- parapet:** 1. a low wall or railing, used to keep people from falling from a roof or terrace; 2. in an exterior wall, the part entirely above the roof.
- pediment:** in classical architecture, the triangular gable end of the roof above the horizontal cornice. A broken or interrupted pediment is one that has been split at the center; the gap may be filled with an ornament.
- pilaster:** a pier or pillar integrated with a wall, often with a capital and a base, like a column.
- quoins:** in masonry, a hard stone or brick used, with similar ones, to reinforce the external corner of a wall.
- relief:** the elevation of a part of the surface above a surrounding plane, for design purposes.
- Richardsonian:** derived from designs of H. H. Richardson (1836-1886), the first American architect to achieve international fame; Richardsonian arches are typically wide, almost semi-circular heavy stone arches.
- running bond:** in masonry, a bond in which bricks or stones are laid lengthwise; all courses are laid as *stretchers* with the vertical joints of one course falling midway between those of adjacent courses; *stretcher bond*.
- rusticated:** made rustic; stone or brick having a quarried or hewn appearance.
- spandrels:** the sometimes ornamented spaces between the curves of an arch and the rectangular frame enclosing the arch.
- Sullivan-esque:** derived from designs of Louis Sullivan, a Chicago architect (1856-1924).
- tessellated:** made in small squares.
- volute:** the dominant spiraling scroll ornament on the capital of a column; also used on consoles.

# Appendix

## *A Partial Listing of Citizens Building Tenants from 1910 to 1950*

**Accountants:** J. A. Edstrom, Equity Co-operative Auditing, G. A. Anderson, Charles Rodolf

**Architects:** Ellerbe & Round

**Beauty & Barber Shops:** J. M. Bieber, M. A. Thomas, Venetian Beauty Shop, Rex Beauty Shop, Charles Bowell, Mari-Posa Beauty Shop

**Chiropractists:** Helen Valansky, Maude Thomas

**Chiropractors:** E. L. Dowd, Geo. Baumann, Stanley Hardin

**Cigars:** G. L. Stockham, Watt Cigar Co. Central Cigar Store, E. J. Bunce, S. W. Huintinton, W. F. Campbell, Mrs. Birdie Lapp, Monogram Cigar Co.

**Dentists:** Leona A. Dix, George P. Dix, P. H. Fishback, W. E. Sargent, G. F. Schweiger, O. D. Westall, T. C. Bonney, L. E. Fisher, E. E. Cook, E. F. Weidenbach, W. A. Wells, J. H. Hoeven, E. E. Cook, Harry Wells, Walter Morgans, Charles B. Kelley, Gregory Donovan

**Grain Companies:** Quinn-Shepherdson, Reagan & Hoopes, McCaull-Dinsmore, Farmers Union Grain Co., South Dakota Wheat Growers, Trask Grain Co., McCarthy Brothers Grain Co., Wilbur Hyde grain buyer, Cargill Commission Co., McDonald & Wyman, Hallet & Carey

**Insurance:** Fisher-Truman Agency, Northwestern National Life Ins. Co., Geo. C. Dennis, Dakota Mutual Life Ins. Co., Northern Casualty, First National Life, W. P. Seguin, National Union Fire Ins., C. Boyd Barret Jr., Reed Ins. Agency, Belle B. Fisher Agency, W. M. Frederick, Western Mutual, Charles Bacheller, Perry Peters, T. L. Jones, Nordahl Hoilien, Pacific Mutual, Equitable of Iowa, Alf Voedisch, R. S. Lavery, Swanson-Locken Agency, Great American Ins., Pennsylvania Fire Ins. Co., Inter-State Surety of Redfield, Western Adjustment, Reed Agency, Connecticut Fire Ins. Co., Coats Ins., L. E. Locken Agency, Leonard Swanson Ins., A. N. Hoffman Agency, Western Union Life Ins. Co.

**Lawyers:** B. S. Beckington, J. J. Conry, E. L. Baker, C. N. Herreid, Elliot & Stilwill, G. F. Sime, Hazle & Huntington, C. L. Klahn, Corrigan & Darling, Hugh Allen, Wm. Wallace, A. N. Goodman, L.T. Boucher, C. F. Brewster, W. F. Corrigan, J. M. Brown, T. L. Arnold, D. M. Joyce, Corrigan & Walton, M. G. Dubel, Business Men's Assurance Co., Max Stokes, A. Clay Darling, Arnold & Giantvalley, Henry Kohler, Bill Hyde, Henry Kohler, Paul Maloney

**Miscellaneous:** Borroughs Adding Machine Co., Aberdeen Trust Co., Gotzian Co. Wholesale Shoes, Michael Condran Billiards, Aberdeen Railway Co., Minneapolis Threshing Machine Co., Russell Threshing Machine Co., Brown County Abstract & Title Co., L. B. Hunt, abstracter, R. B. Easton city engineer, Wm. Potter engineer, Moreau Lumber, Mitchell Lumber, Republican State Committee, Dakota-Montana Magazine, S. D. Humane Society, Dakota Advertising Agency, Haynes Coal Mining Co., Aberdeen Poster Advertising Co., Christian Science Reading Room, Bristol Time Clock Co., H. L. Walker Theatrical Booking, U. S. Collector of Internal Revenue, Tacoma Park Industrial Assn., Tacoma Park Association, G. H. Fish Bill Poster, Veterans Association, Dakota Collection Agency, Real Silk Hosiery Co., B. H. Korsedahl Tailor, George Narrengang Contractor, D. G. Gallet Jeweler & Mfg. Agent, Anna Marsh Photographer, Keatings Luxor Co., Thompson Yards Lumber, Noyes Bros. & Cutler Drugs, N. P. Benson Optical Co. Coe & Howard Title Co., Culbert Spring Water Co., Murphy Finance, Royal C. Johnson US Congressman, Hugh Triplett Engineer, Staude Mak-a-Tractor Corp., Dakota Central Telephone Co., K. O. Lee Farm Implements, Northern Pacific Railway Co., Montana Flour Mills, Blair Collins Coal, Sidney Luhman wholesale tobacco, V. M. Zweber grain elevator contractor, Blair Collins Coal, Sonotone of the Dakotas, S. W. Jonason contractor, Hughes Johnson contractors, US Social Security Administration, White Cross Cleaners

**Osteopaths:** D. B. Roberts, R. D. Rifembark, Ronald Tilgner

**Optometrist:** M. W. Maas, Paul Bell

**Physicians:** R. D. Alway (oculist), J. D. Whiteside, J. F. Adams, Miller & Miller, Murdy & Murdy, Homan & Freyberg, Anton Sornsen, W. A. Bates, Frank Miller, J. A. Schulte, J. O. Kraushaar, M. C. Johnson, R. D. Wilson, Frank Miller, B. C. Murdy, L. D. Whitney, M. C. Johnston, R. D. Wilson, P. T. Ranney, C. E. McCauley, F. J. Tobin, Ray B. Ferguson, L. D. Whitney, Murdy Murdy & Field, Agnes Keegan, Earl A. Pittenger, Robert Gelber, Steven Kruzich, Frank Cooley, Paul McCarthy, Carson Murdy, Edward Rudolph, James Berbos, Jonathon Bruner, Granville Steele

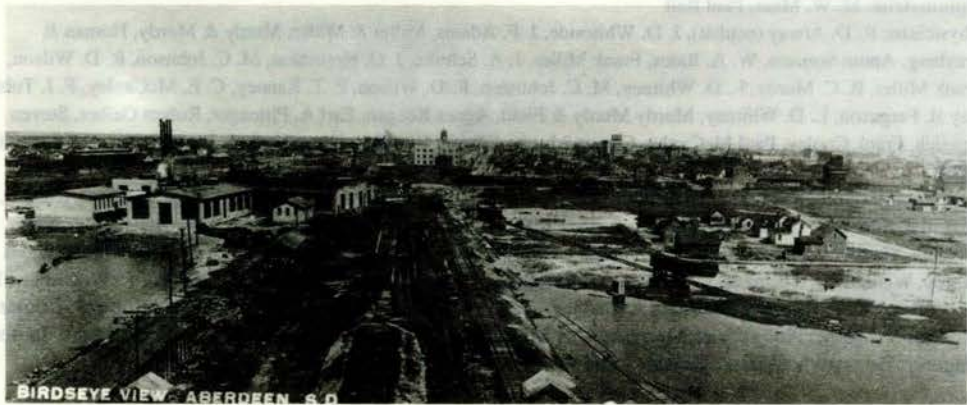
**Real Estate:** Cooley-Laisy Co., H. Stenson, N. J. Lindgren, F. L. Huff, Draeger Land Co., John Simmons, Rund & Taylor, F. S. & E. J. Coats, Roche Realty & Investments, J. H. Healy, Charles Woolman, E. J. Martyn, Overby & Wosnuk, Theo Wosnuk, Fish Land Co., Joseph E. Kelley, Sacramento Valley Farms Inc., Angus McMillan, James Coffey, Wampler L. Cochrane, C. B. Foncannon, Frank F. Hofacre, Ruud & Taylor, P. W. Hunter, C. W. Leighty, B. A. Williams, C. F. Brewster, Bunsness & Lindboe, W. S. Wade, C. C. Fletcher, Perry Peters, John B. Romans, Lincoln & Murner, Leighty & Marquis, Gus McDonald, Walter Heynacher, Benjamin Williams, James Hagerty, Bertram Vahldick, Geisler Land Co., B. M. Dickinson, Eyestone Realty



*The Sherman Hotel, as it looked in about 1917, on the site of the Sherman Apartments.*



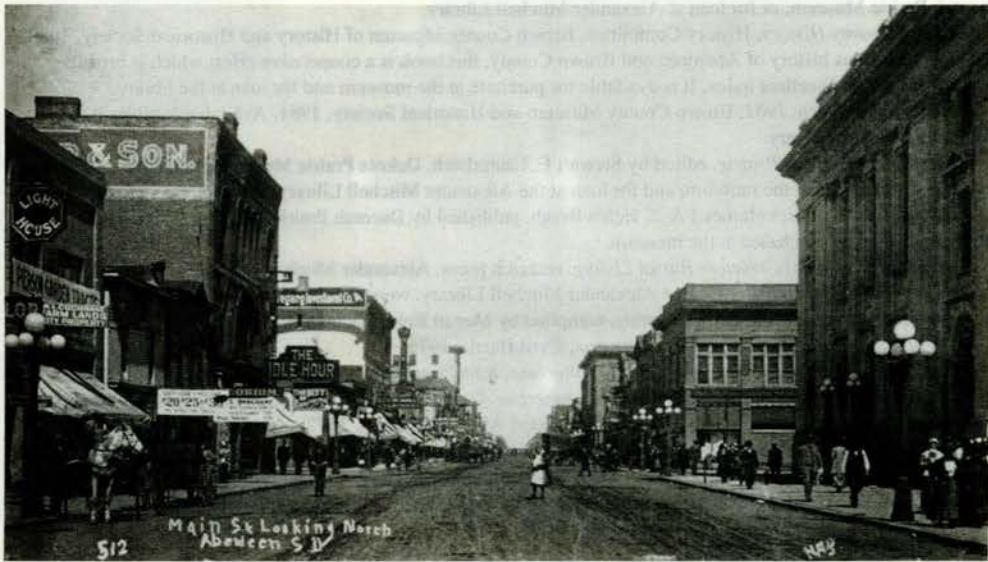
*The first Alonzo Ward Hotel, as it looked in 1900. The location is the same today. Note gas street lights.*







*Circus Parade in the 90s. The Aberdeen National Bank is the first building in the background.*



*Street scene circa 1910. The Idle Hour was a theater in the former Jewett Building, at 402-404 South Main. Frank Baum published the Saturday Pioneer from an office here in 1890, and operated Baum's Bazaar from the building to its left. The Federal Building (post office) is the first building on the right.*

## Sources . . .

This publication uses some of the research and unpublished writing done for the Landmarks Commission by John Neff. We did most of our other research at the Alexander Mitchell Library, using city directories and microfilm copies of Aberdeen newspapers. We have identified most of these newspaper sources, but source of the information on the business location of L. Frank Baum's *Saturday Pioneer* was overlooked. It is in a story in the January 19, 1890 *Daily News* headlined "The Pioneer Sold Again."

We researched abstracts at the Court House offices of the County Auditor and Register of Deeds.

The contention that Harry Walker was once a professional gambler is from unpublished, privately circulated memoirs by Hugh Agor, called *South Dakota Stories*. The information on the relationship, or rather, non-relationship, of Spencer Narregang and B. C. Lamont (which corrects a 1956 *American News* assertion) is from Robert Lamont.

We made the map on page 2 with the help of a remarkable fire insurance map owned by Bob Perry. It depicts every building in Aberdeen in 1913. W. P. Butler's city maps are also invaluable. The 1888 version is reproduced in this publication. The 1886 version can be seen in *Brown County History*.

Some of our information comes from the oral history project of the Dacotah Prairie Museum. Many of the photographic illustrations were made from the museum's file photographs. The cover and inside cover illustrations are from documents in museum archives.

These books and publications, listed in order of publication date, were helpful for general history:

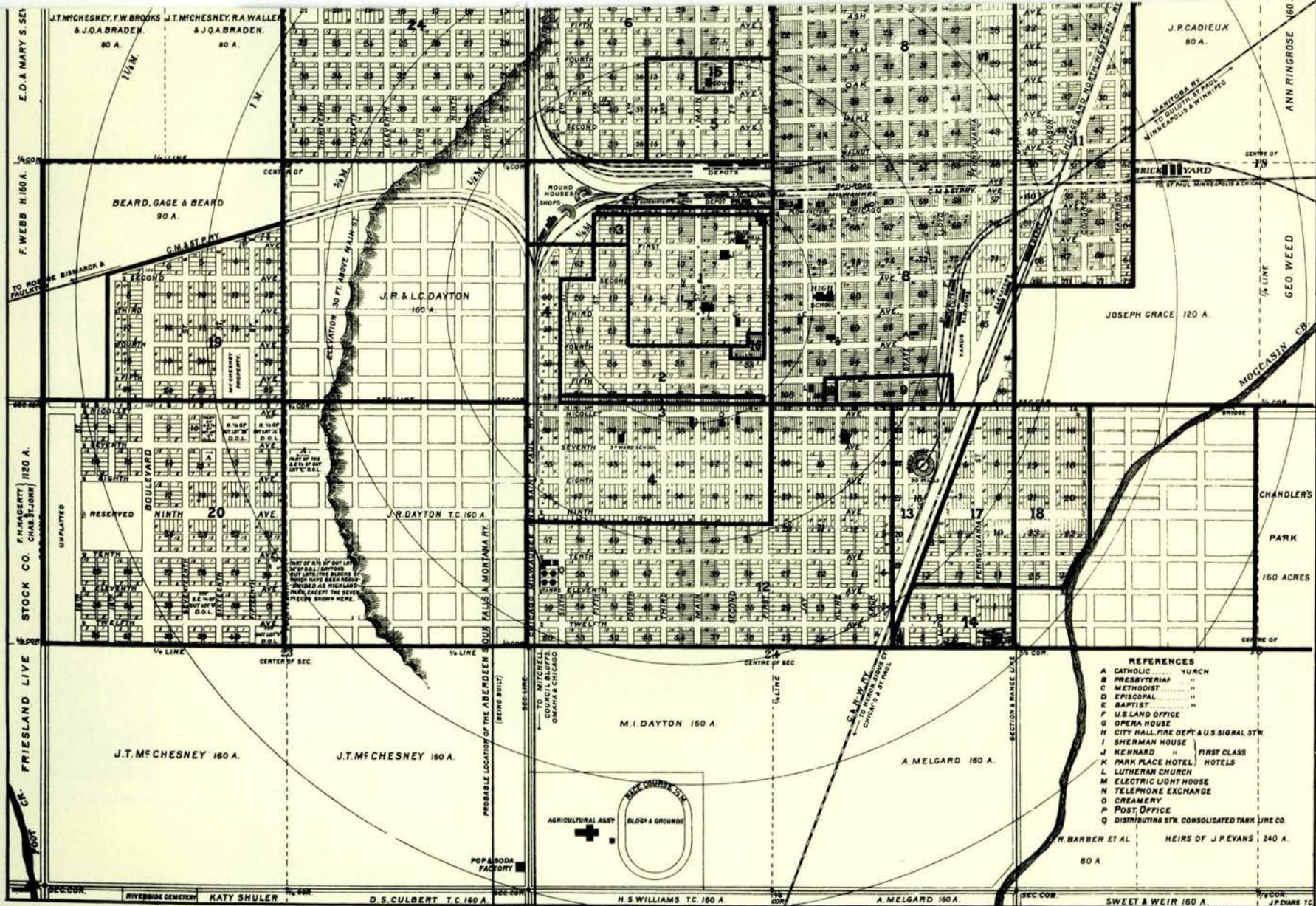
- *Aberdeen, Story of Central Dakota*, Allen Penfield, Salisbury Newsdealers, Aberdeen, Dakota Territory, 1888. On reserve at the Alexander Mitchell Library.
- *Aberdeen and Brown County, S. D. Illustrated*, published by *The Aberdeen Sun*, circa 1893. This is a good source for biographical information on early businessmen, and is on reserve at the library.
- *Atlas of Brown County*, E. Frank Peterson, Vermilion, South Dakota, 1905. This atlas contains George Daly's account of the founding of Brown County and Aberdeen. It is far rarer than the 1911 *Atlas*, but is available for research at the Alexander Mitchell Library and Dacotah Prairie Museum.
- *A Souvenir of Aberdeen*, J. F. Kelley & Co., Aberdeen, 1907. On reserve at the Alexander Mitchell Library, this is an excellent picture book of early Aberdeen, and reviews the city's status as of 1907.
- *Standard Atlas of Brown County*, Geo. A. Ogle & Co., Chicago, 1911. This atlas is most interesting for the photographs included. It is available in the research room of the library.
- *Unfinished Histories: Tales of Aberdeen and Brown County*, South Dakota Writers' Project, Works Projects Administration, American Guide Series, 1938. It is available at the Alexander Mitchell Library.
- *Aberdeen, A Middle Border City*, South Dakota Writers' Project, Works Projects Administration, American Guide Series, 1940. On reserve at the Alexander Mitchell Library.
- *Goodbye Central; Hello World*, James C. Rippey, published by Northwestern Bell, 1975. Available at the Alexander Mitchell Library.
- *The Early History of Brown County*, Brown County Territorial Pioneers, 1978. Available for purchase at Dacotah Prairie Museum, or for loan at Alexander Mitchell Library.
- *Brown County History*, History Committee, Brown County Museum of History and Historical Society, 1980. The most ambitious history of Aberdeen and Brown County, this book is a cooperative effort which is broadly sourced and has an excellent index. It is available for purchase at the museum and for loan at the library.
- *Historic Aberdeen, 1881*, Brown County Museum and Historical Society, 1981. Available for loan at the Alexander Mitchell Library.
- *First There Was the Prairie*, edited by Stewart E. Lauterbach, Dakota Prairie Museum Foundation, 1988. It is available for purchase at the museum, and for loan at the Alexander Mitchell Library.
- *Centennial Minutes*, volumes 1 & 2, Helen Bergh, published by Dacotah Prairie Museum, 1889. These publications may be purchased at the museum.
- *Riverside Memorial Cemetery Burial Listing*, research room, Alexander Mitchell Library.

These books and publications, all at Alexander Mitchell Library, were helpful for architectural information:

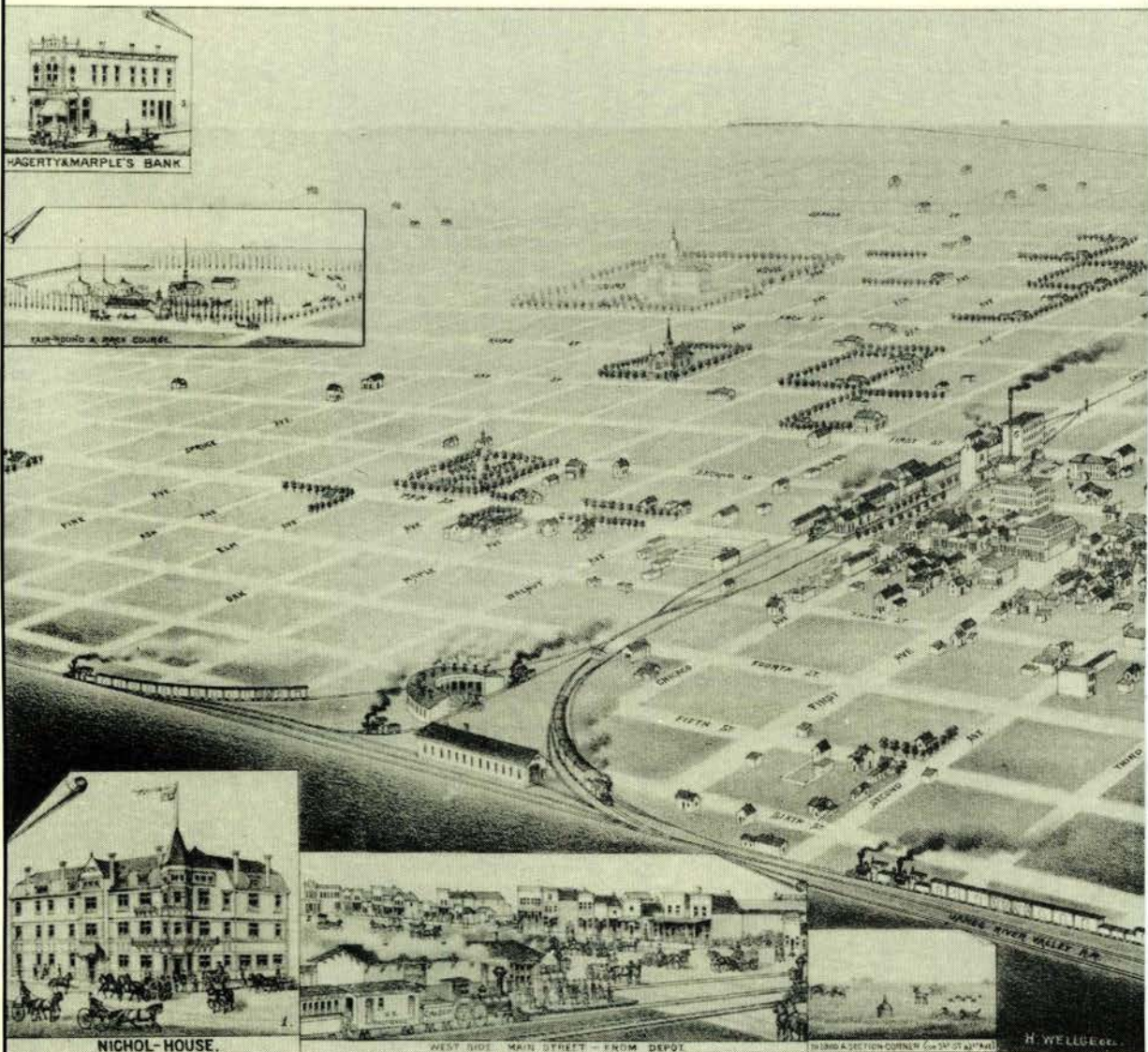
- *Architectural Records in Brown County*, compiled by Megan Reid, Dacotah Prairie Museum, undated.
- *Dictionary of Architecture and Construction*, Cyril Harris, 1975.
- *What Style is it?: A Guide to American Architecture*, John Poppeliers, Preservation Press, 1983.
- *The Buildings of Main Street: a Guide to Commercial Architecture*, Richard Longstreth, Preservation Press.
- *The Japanese Influence in America*, Clay Lancaster, Abbeyville Press, 1977.

Centuries ago, Aristophanes discovered that frogs like to offer sardonic comments on the world about them. The source of any such comments in this book is a frog who claims his ancestors worked for the Greek comedian. He makes his home in Aberdeen, as his family has for generations. It is only coincidence that the frog's name is Jumper.





- REFERENCES**
- A CATHOLIC CHURCH
  - B PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
  - C METHODIST CHURCH
  - D EPISCOPAL CHURCH
  - E BAPTIST CHURCH
  - F U.S. LAND OFFICE
  - G OPERA HOUSE
  - H CITY HALL, FIRE DEPT. & U.S. SIGNAL STN.
  - I SHERMAN HOUSE
  - J KENNARD CHURCH (FIRST CLASS)
  - K PARK PLACE HOTEL (HOTELS)
  - L LUTHERAN CHURCH
  - M ELECTRIC LIGHT HOUSE
  - N TELEPHONE EXCHANGE
  - O CREAMERY
  - P POST OFFICE
  - Q DISTRIBUTING STN. CONSOLIDATED TANK LINE CO.



1. Nichol House
2. Artesian Hotel
3. Sherman House
4. Park Place Hotel
5. Hagerty & Marple's Bank
6. Aberdeen Flouring Mill

- A. Presbyterian Church
- B. Church
- C. Public School
- D. U.S Land Office
- E. C., M. & St. P. R. R. Depot
- F. Chicago & Northwestern Railway Depot