

Fairmont's New "*Half Million Dollar*" Shopping Center

A shopping center can be defined as one or more buildings forming a complex of shops representing merchandisers, with interconnecting walkways enabling visitors to walk from unit to unit. That description would fit Fairmont's Five Lakes Centre; however, the shopping center that preceded it was built in the late 1940s and was at one time known as the Tower Shopping Center.

The year was 1948, and what the November 3rd edition of the *Sentinel* referred to as the "vast facilities of the Fairmont trade center" was set for its grand opening on Friday and Saturday, November 5 & 6. The corner, known as the Byers corner, was said to have mushroomed from a weed patch in 1936 to a new shopping district by the late 1940s.

This location was originally the site of a fruit shack in 1941 at the corner of Blue Earth Avenue and Highway 15 and was owned by P. S. Byers. Later that year, Byers expanded and built a brick tile building for his fruit stand and enlarged it into a grocery business.

Byers launched his major expansion program in 1946 when building materials became more readily available after the war. That project provided space for the O. P. Skagg System super market, Turner Lockers, the War Surplus Store, Benson Heating and Air Conditioning System, and the Odegard Barber Shop. He had an additional and unrelated building venture that included a warehouse and apartment building on North State Street.

In addition to the stores mentioned above on what was called "Byers Corner," the new shopping center included the following stores: Ken's Mens Store, Finley Piano Exchange, Martin County Appliance, Inc., Griffith's Bakery, Nelda's Beauty Shop, Meier's Lunch & Soda Fountain, Wash 'n Shop Laundry, Weber's Standard Service, Adam's Texaco Service & Feed Store, Marvin Carlson Fyr-Fyter extinguishers. Byers stated that in addition to these retail businesses, offices were available for rent as well.

His newest building on this site, a two story structure of brick, contains eight apartments in addition to the drug store, lunchroom, beauty shop, piano exchange, laundry, and professional offices. He stated that another new business, the Mankato Jewelry Company, would move into the building in the very near future.

This site eventually became known, although perhaps unofficially, as the "*Tower Shopping Center*." It is currently the present site of the Kwik-Trip Store in Fairmont.

For more information on this topic, or to become a member, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.



PURE

FROZEN FOOD PACKER CO.

OPS

SUPER FOOD STORES

LAWRENCE - LUSGARD

CAFE

TOWER SHOPPING CENTER
FAIRMONT, MINN. 3871

Fairmont's New Shopping Center Grand Opening Friday, Saturday



Byers Store No. 3 is newest addition to east Fairmont's half million dollar shopping center. . . .