

## **SODTOWN, THE COMMUNITY THAT WOULD NOT DIE**

**by Irvin Urwiller and Alice Howell**

William Fieldgrove was chief engineer and lineman. In March of 1905 the Sodtown neighbors organized the Farmers Mutual Telephone Company, and plans were made to build a line from Sodtown to Ravenna, Luce and St. Michael. By fall the company had spread like wildfire in every direction and had a total of thirty-four phones. Several miles of line were built, and it was now evident that the company must put in a switchboard and hire an operator.

Luce was then a progressive spot with a store, post office and two blacksmith shops, so the switchboard was installed in the home of the Fox Brothers, who ran one of the shops, and their sister became the first switchboard operator. The name was changed to the Sodtown Telephone Company, many miles of line were built with toll lines to Shelton, Ravenna and Cairo, and service was good. The Fox family continued to operate the board until 1919. By this time a larger board was needed which was operated a short time by George Wrinkle at his store in Luce, but in the winter of 1920 a small house was purchased and remodeled and served as the telephone office for many years. Several operators manned the switchboard until May 15, 1960 when the company switched to dial phones, moved into a new cement block building, insulated and fireproof, in the southeast corner of Section 5 in the Gardner Twn. A Stromberg Carlson automatic switchboard was installed and members were now able to dial anywhere through the courtesy of the Northwestern Bell Telephone Company acting as a connecting agency.

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## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHURCHES IN BUFFALO COUNTY**

### **Part II**

**by Alice Shaneyfelt Howell**

Soon after Immanuel was founded, another rural Missouri Synod congregation, Zion Lutheran, was organized in 1885 on the eastern edge of the county, north of Shelton in Gardner Township. It was known also as the St. Michael church or the Luce church, but for many years has been identified as the North Shelton church. A parochial school operated until 1946. Mrs. Floyd Pope, who prepared

a history of the church, recalled the custom in the early years of the girls sitting on the west side with the ladies behind them, and the boys on the east side with the men in back of them.

# NEBRASKA PLACE-NAMES

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LINCOLN

1925

**Luce.** Situated in Gardner precinct. Named after the first postmaster and storekeeper. The post office has been discontinued