



American pioneers split rails to build homes, mined gold in far away California, built railways; hardy, dedicated people. And Avon's name is linked to those pioneers. There were no cosmetics when Avon started; no beauty industry existed. There were no creams, no lipsticks, and no face powder.

### An Idea Is Born

In 1886 David H. McConnell, owner of a door-to-door book business had an idea. The idea was two-fold, to manufacture products of rare quality and to sell them through direct sales to consumers in their homes – but with a singular difference.

First, instead of itinerant peddlers with little sense of responsibility, Mr. McConnell employed people who lived where they sold. Then, instead of salesmen, he sought to use saleswomen – a truly radical concept in 1886. In those days everyone knew a woman's place was in the home answering doors, not knocking on them.

What would they sell? That was the third stroke of genius by Mr. McConnell. He chose perfume. He named his new business the California Perfume Company in honor of the first investor, a friend who had moved to California.

### The Legacy of Mrs Albee

At about the time that noted lady from France first raised her torch over New York Harbor, another lady carried the first sample case of perfumes from a on-room company at 126 Chambers Street in New York City. The lady's name was Mrs. P.F.E. Albee, a 50-year-old widow and friend of the McConnells, who needed money to support her brood.

Mrs. Albee, a native of New Hampshire, traveled the large horse drawn wagon; and during this period she also recruited other ladies who eagerly sought work in their own towns.

Ladies in long skirts and poke bonnets began knocking on doors, first in New England, then in the middle West, launching a tradition that today continues to echo on millions of doors around the world.

The legacy of Mrs. Albee, the first "Avon Lady" lives on. As the pioneer of *Avon Calling* tradition, she has the title "Mother of the California Perfume Company".

### Products – First There Was One

The first product the Company sold in 1886 was Little Dot, a highly popular set of five perfumes. Within a few short years several cosmetics were added and the magnificent Avon line of today had its beginning. There was a Face Lotion, Violet Water and a Violet Almond Meal, and powdered toilet soap.

The heart and soul of David McConnell was in his growing business. He loved working with people. The addition of each Depot Agent, later called Representatives, and the related manufacture of the goods to supply her, was constant source of pride and challenge to him. Mr. McConnell saw the desire for cosmetics ripen and grow throughout the country and his Company continued to expand and prosper. The period, 1910 to 1915, was a time when people everywhere were taught to use cosmetics.



### **A Gold Medal**

By diligence, ingenuity and perseverance, Mr. McConnell's quest for growth and excellence proved eminently successful. The plain little boxes that originally housed the CPC products became lovelier and lovelier. In 1915, at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, the Company won a Gold Medal, the highest award for "Quality of Products and Beauty of Packaging."

### **A New Name**

The Company's expansion continued and Depot Agents were numbered in the thousands. With distribution spreading into almost every one of the 48 states, it was decided that the name California Perfume Company was too regional for such a far-reaching Company.

In 1928 a line of new products called *Avon* was introduced and included a toothbrush, a cleaner, and a talc. The following year a new line of *Avon* beauty products was started and by November 1936 the *Avon* name was extended to all of the Company's products. Household specialties and baking items were given the trade name of *Perfection*.

The Good Housekeeping Seal was awarded to the entire *Avon/Perfection* line in 1937 and *Avon Baby Products* received the "Tested & Commended by Parents Magazine" seal in 1946.

The *Avon Corporation* remained privately owned until 1946 when common stock was first offered to the public on the American Stock Exchange. The New York Stock Exchange began trading *Avon* stock on April 2, 1964; *Avon* is still growing today.

### **Ideas and More Ideas**

David McConnell died in January 1937, but his ideas and ideals continue to be fulfilled. Perhaps the most important new idea he left was a Company environment that encouraged and stimulated the flow of new ideas and concepts.

The *Avon Company* began selling outside North America in 1954 when they opened the doors of their first international subsidiary in Puerto Rico. Products have since been marketed in Central America, South America, Europe, Asia Australia and Africa. *Avon* opened in El Salvador in 1979. Traditionally a direct marketing company, *Avon's* fastest growing markets today are in China and Russia. China banned all door-to-door selling by the 2006; *Avon* products there are sold primarily in retail stores.

Like a story from Arabian Nights – a tiny perfume business has grown into a giant corporation – a story that began with a single idea. That's the story of *Avon*.

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