

## Becoming A Village: Monroe in the 1850s

Have you ever wondered what people who lived in Monroe in 1860 were doing or where they came from? Monroe had only been incorporated as a village two years earlier in 1858. In this column you will see how people made a living in 1860 and where they were born. There may be some occupations that you have not heard of before. This information comes from a book, *Becoming A Village: Monroe, Wisconsin in the 1850s*, a book that I compiled in 2008. There is a list of individuals in the book with their specific information listed.

The census from 1860 is very informative about the families, business people, industry, and farms that existed in the village of the time. For each family it will give the name of each person, their age, the country or state of their birth, and an occupation if they had one. The federal census statistics stated there were 2,207 persons in the village; I only found 2,173 on the actual census.

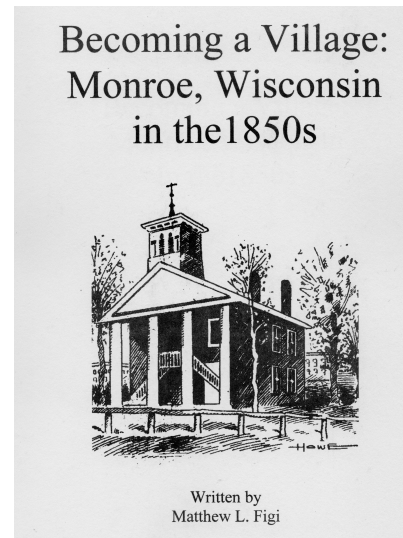
Of the people whose birth places were listed, 111 were born in Germany, 11 in Prussia, 3 in Saxony, 3 in Bavaria, 1 in Austria, 4 in Holland, and 91 in Switzerland. There were a total of 224 persons born in continental Europe. From the British Isles there were 44 born in England, 111 in Ireland, 4 in Scotland, and 4 in Wales. From North America there were 56 born in Canada and 2 in New Brunswick.

There were 69 born in Maine, 28 in New Hampshire, 55 from Vermont, 52 from Massachusetts, 3 in Rhode Island, and 24 in Connecticut. That made 231 who were born in the New England states. Also from other eastern states, there were 3 born in Maryland, 3 in North Carolina, 12 in New Jersey, 185 in Pennsylvania, 335 in New York, 174 in Ohio, 1 in Delaware, and 13 in Virginia. There were 553 people born in Wisconsin, the oldest of whom was a 29-year-old schoolteacher. Of the others born in the Midwest, there were 80 born in Illinois, 40 in Indiana, 2 in Minnesota, and 15 in Michigan. From other states, there were 5 born in Iowa, 8 in Kentucky, 1 or 2 in Missouri, 2 in Tennessee, and 3 in Texas.

The fact that there were 231 people who lived in New England would explain why the town square and the court house in the center was designed in a style similar to those in New England. When one studies the family units listed in the census records, it might be possible to find out by which path the family migrated to Monroe.

There were a number of occupations represented in the village in 1860. One of the surprises was that there were 76 farmers and 2 farm laborers in the village. In addition, 2 were listed as surveyor and farmer. More can be learned about the farms in the agricultural census information in the book. There were 7 clergy listed, one each from the Methodist, Baptist, Universalist, NS prys, and Qn advent, Catholic (born in Ireland), and congregational denominations. There was also a person listed as a Congregational minisher [sic]. In addition there were 2 agents, 3 apprentices (1 to a shoemaker and 1 to a barber), 2 artists [who were actually photographers], 6 bakers, 2 barbers, 17 blacksmiths, 1 boarding house operator, 1 book binder, 1 book dealer, and 1 bookkeeper. There was 1 brakeman, 3 brewers, 1 brick maker, 4 brick masons, 4 butchers, 8 cabinet makers, 57 carriage makers or trimmers, 2 civil engineers, 33 clerks, 3 convicts, 9 coopers, and 1 person listed as deaf and dumb. Kaziah Jinings was listed as a doctress. In addition there were 2 dentists, 2 druggists, 2 Ec. Physicians, 1 Hompt [Homeopathic] physician, 6 physicians, and 1 student of dentistry. There were 7 lawyers, 1 retired lawyer, and 1 law student.

There were 7 schoolteachers, 3 music teachers, and 7 teachers [with no specifics]. There were also 1 hostler, 3 hotelkeepers, 1 guest and boarder, 1 livery stable operator, and 2 draymen.



The cover of *Becoming A Village: Monroe, Wisconsin in the 1850s*, written by Matt Figi in 2008.

Also included were 10 grocers and a grocery clerk, 3 jewelers, 1 liquor merchant, 1 salesman, 7 saloon keepers, 1 watch maker, and 1 goldsmith.

There were 1 wool sorter, 1 weaver, 8 tailors, 8 seamstresses, 3 milliners, 1 mantan maker, 2 sewers, and 1 who did washing and sewing. There were also 1 editor, 33 merchants, and 12 printers. There were also 1 manufacturer, 1 gunsmith, 2 harness makers, 1 machinist, 3 marble cutters, 6 millers, 2 potters, 23 shoe makers, 1 tobaccoist, 5 tanners, 1 tanner, and 8 wagon makers.

There were 56 laborers, 6 joiners, 8 masons, and 1 moulder, There were 1 steam engineer, 2 firemen for engines, 2 railroad agents, and 1 conductor. In addition, there were 4 lumbermen, 4 plasterers, 14 painters, and 4 stone masons.

Finally, there were 1 mail agent, 3 miners, 1 musician and saddler, 3 patent rights vendors, 1 editor, 2 peddlers, 1 real estate agent, 53 servants, 1 speculator, 1 undertaker, 1 theatrical person, 2 surveyor and farmers, 1 horse jockey, 1 independent, 1 grain merchant, 1 grain buyer, 1 grain dealer, 1 forwarding clerk, and 1 forwarding merchant.

I find it interesting that there were already 7 lawyers at that time. If you are interested in more information from this book, you may browse through it at the Monroe Public Library. I also have copies available for purchase for \$15. I'll be sharing more information from the book in future columns.