

Judge John A. Bingham Helped Shape Monroe

Judge John A. Bingham lived in a portion of the home that still stands at 621 14th Avenue. Mr. Bingham was one of the people instrumental in the building of Monroe.

From the industrial census of 1860 we learn that Mr. Bingham operated a flouring mill which was valued at \$20,000. He used steam to power the mill, which had 2 run of stones. He employed six men for a total of \$163 per month. Their raw materials included 72,000 bushels of wheat (\$64,800), 16,000 barrels (\$4,000), 800 cords of wood (\$1,000), and 50 gallons of oil (\$50). They produced 16,000 barrels of flour (\$72,000) and 370 tons of mill feed (\$3,700). He also operated a cooperage nearby valued at \$1,000. He employed 5 men for a total of \$20 per month. Raw materials used were 200 m staves (\$1,000) and 80 m hoops (\$250). They produced 800 flour barrels per month (\$2,000).

From the Monroe Sentinel, Mr. Bingham was mentioned in an article from June 1, 1861 in which it stated that he was the secretary of the Green County Seminary. It mentioned that the tuition was \$2 per quarter for primary branches and up to \$5 for higher mathematics. There was no deduction of the fee for absence (unless unavoidable).

An advertisement on May 10, 1854 stated that, "John A. Bingham, attorney and counselor at law and County Judge, had also opened a general land agency and exchange office in Ludlow's building on the east side of the square. He was prepared to sell drafts on the eastern cities and remit money to any part of the United States at current rates. He would also buy or sell coin, exchange, and bank notes." [A photo of the building referred to here can be seen on page 23 of the Pictorial History of Monroe.]

Later that year, on November 15, the paper stated that Messrs. Bingham and [Arabut] Ludlow, along with a Mr. Washington Delano of Ohio, were associated in a banking house and filed their intentions. They expected to get into operation the first of January. From the known business character of these gentlemen, it was fair to say that Monroe would have a first-rate banking house. This bank was first known as the Bank of Monroe.

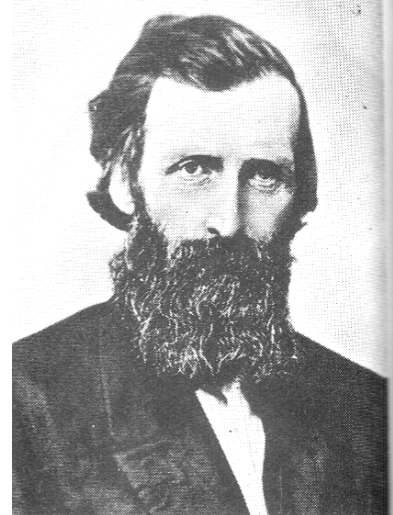
The Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad Company had approached the people in Green County in the mid-1850s to help fund bringing the railroad through Monroe. It was reported on February 7, 1855 that Mr. Bingham and a few other prominent men from the area were appointed to directorships and would attend a meeting on February 13 in Milwaukee. All stockholders who were not able to attend were asked to prepare their proxies and hand them to one of the directors to take to Milwaukee.

At a meeting of the Green County Agricultural Society and Mechanic's Institute [the official title of what has become known as the Green County fair] was held on January 2, 1855 to elect officers for the ensuing year. Mr. Bingham was elected president and also served on the committee on farms, animals, tillage, crops, mechanical productions, etc.

Mr. Bingham had also invested in land as evidenced by an advertisement from July 16, 1855. Mr. Bingham and [Norman] Churchill offered 50 acres of land for sale at a public auction at the office of Ludlow & Bingham on Saturday, August 11, unless it had previously been disposed of. The land was located in Monroe, ½ mile east of the square on the Beloit Road [part of 23rd Avenue that is now south of 13th Street]. The land could be sold in lots, one, two, two and a half, five, or ten acres to suit the buyers.

Mr. Clinton, of the railroad company, had been in town for several days to collect the percentage due on the cash stock subscription in September 1855. He had only been moderately successful as the farmers had not yet marketed any wheat. The company did not feel at liberty to let the contract until the right of way as far as Bass Creek was secured. At that time Messrs. Ludlow and Bingham felt enough interest in the matter to induce them to advance the necessary amount without interest.

Under the direction of A. C. Barry, state superintendent of common schools, the Green Co. Educational Association was formed at the Court House on May 9, 1856. The purpose of this group was



John A Bingham (1819 - 1865) was one of the men who supported this community so that it could become the city it is today.

to improve its members in useful knowledge and for the advancement of popular education. Mr. Bingham was elected president.

An advertisement on July 6, 1857 stated that, "From and after this date, six per cent interest will be allowed on call deposits if left 60 days at the Bank of Monroe." This would certainly encourage people to invest in their own future. In October 1859, it stated that, "All of the issues of the Bank on the east side of the square were well secured and worth their face in gold."

When N. Churchill & Co.'s new flouring mill was about to go into operation in late October 1859, the news article stated that nearly all of the money had been advanced by J. A. Bingham, who had given an earnest of his interest in the welfare and growth of the village.

A school picnic was to be held at J. A. Bingham's grove [now part of Twining Park] on Saturday afternoon, June 2, 1860. All of the schools were requested to meet at the seminary at 1 p.m. to form a procession to march around the square, then proceed to the grove where an entertainment of vocal and instrumental music would be provided.

All of the information for this column was taken from the book, *Becoming A Village: Monroe, Wisconsin in the 1850s*, which was published in 2009. It contains a wealth of information about Monroe, its residents, and its businesses at that time. Copies of this book are available from me for \$15 each.