

Building of the Gettings Block in 1910

In the previous column we heard about the loss of three wooden buildings in the block of 16th Avenue just south of the square. These buildings were destroyed by fire in 1905. The remains of the old wooden buildings were evidently cleaned up and the lot was left empty for five years until it was announced on July 13, 1910 that, "A new building may occupy the vacant lots on South Jackson street at no distant date." The lots had been vacant a long time and the interest on the investment had been running into money. The property had been on the market with the price fixed at \$150 a front foot for any part of the 68 feet.

L. H. Gapen, who had owned half interest in the property had sold his half to his partner, John Gettings. Gettings, who also owned the building immediately to the north of it, then started talking about building and inquiring about plans and the cost of materials. Even though there had been no inquiries about purchasing the lots, there were many chances to rent stores. There would be a great demand for any room in a new block. The article predicted that the rooms might be rented before the ground was broken. At that time there were no empty store buildings in the town, and there hadn't been any for years. Jackson Street (16th Avenue) was considered the best business street in town outside of the square.



This photo, from the collection of Marie Ammon Laeser, was taken on April 16, 1921. It shows the Gettings block that was built in 1910 after fire had destroyed the wooden buildings that occupied that location on October 5, 1905.

Gettings announced on December 10 that he planned to erect a new block with three store buildings in the spring. In addition the second floor would be divided off into living apartments. This would occupy the entire space between Steinman saloon and the Deininger and Kubly meat market. Gettings decided to have the plans drawn up immediately so that "operations may be undertaken as soon as the frost is out of the ground in the spring."

A notice to contractors asking for bids was published in the Monroe Evening Times on January 11, 1912 by architect Robert L. Rote. Sealed proposals for "furnishing all materials and labor for the construction of a store and flat building" were due by February 1. The building was to be 67 by 92 feet, with

two stories plus a basement. A \$5 deposit was required to receive the plans and specifications. In addition a certified check made payable to Gettings for two per cent of the bid was to be included with the bid. It was announced on February 2 that Robert Rote got the contract for \$11,750; work was to start immediately.

The joists for the block arrived in early June after a long delay that had tied up operations. A large force was then put to work. It was reported on August 24 that Baltz Kamm, in an inebriated condition, plunged to his death into the basement of the block at 10:30 the previous evening. Night policeman Jacob Sacker saw the man fall into the open space at the front of the building. Sacker ran across the street to police quarters to get his light and returned with Officer Mackey; they pulled the man from the basement. Dr. R. B. Clark was summoned immediately and pronounced the man dead from a broken neck. The remains were taken to the Shriner undertaking establishment after Dr. Clark made an examination at the Clark drug store.

No blame was attached to contractor Rote nor to the city authorities for the space being open in front of the building. The space 30 feet in front of the building had been shut off by Rote by a railing. However, due to complaints from pedestrians who were forced to walk in the street, it had been taken down ten days earlier. The place where Kamm fell was more than four feet from the edge of the sidewalk, which was the private property line.

According to the November 25 paper, a five-cent movie theater was to open in the south building as soon as it could be made ready. Equipment was expected to arrive within a few days. Al Yeagers, Freeport, was to take charge of the theater, which was to be modern and up-to-date in every way. The theater would be controlled by a moving picture syndicate that owned theaters in a number of larger cities. The new Princess theater opened on new year's night with a packed house for the first show. The house was then refilled several times during the evening.

The inside of the theater was elegantly finished and the seats graduated in two sections to the rear of the building leaving ample aisle space in the center. Two rear exits and two front exits were provided and the piano and player were hidden from sight in a pit in front of the stage.

Osmundson Brothers planned to open their pool and billiard hall in the north room of the block at noon on November 30. Four pool tables and one billiard table had been installed by the day before opening even though the fixtures had not arrived. They planned to hold a grand opening some time within a week when the bowling alleys in the basement would be ready for use.

This column will be concluded next week