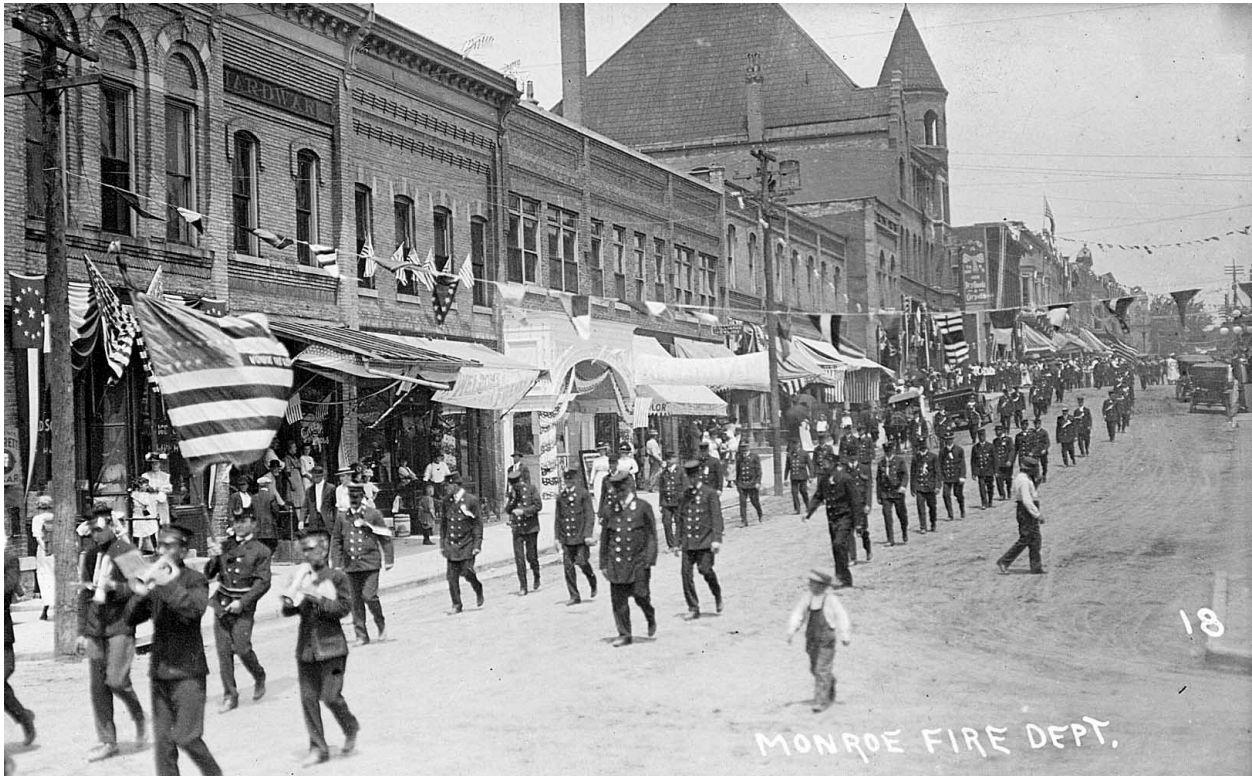


Residents Protest Sunday Evening Movie Showings

It didn't take long for the residents of Monroe to be upset that the new Princess Theater was also showing movies on Sunday evenings. A letter signed by members of four churches was received by the city council on February 6, complaining about the operation and business engagement of the two motion picture shows on Sunday. The Crystal, located just west of the square on 11th Street, was the other theater. They protested "against such occupation and engagement and respectfully request that your honorable body, by its proper officer or officers, cause said places of amusement to be closed on Sunday for any business purposes. And in this protest and objection, act for ourselves and in a representative capacity for said several religious associations." This letter was signed by W. F. Kiester, Samuel Isely, and J. H. Bast for the Methodist church; A. C. Trachsel, J. D. Schindler, and Christ Bleiler for the German Evangelical church; Jos. Trumpy, Sam Holmes, and Ed Faubel for Grace Lutheran church, and E. O. Smith for the United Brethren church.



This undated photo was borrowed from the Green County Historic Images Facebook page and shows the Monroe Fire Department marching south on 16th Avenue. Notice the entrance to what had been known as the Monroe Theater in the south portion of the Gettings Block, but would have been known as the Little theater by the time this photo was taken. This photo was probably taken previous to the one published last week.

The council must not have felt as strongly as the men who signed the petition since the February 24 issue of the Times advertised 5,000 feet of film at the Princess Sunday Evening. They were advertising two big shows for a dime each. In July the council recommended that a license be granted for the Osmundson Brothers to conduct five pool and billiard tables and two bowling alleys.

The Princess theater announced that it was to reopen on the evening of October 4 after being closed for two months for repairs. Under new management the Nickelodeon show was to spotlight Mr. Seydor Leland singing with pictures "that positively have never been shown here before." The admission was five cents for everyone with four pictures that changed every night.

On October 8, less than a year after they opened, the Osmundson Brothers announced that the alleys "have been planed, scraped, and put in fine condition" and were now open to the public.

It was then announced on November 27 that the Princess Theater had been discontinued and that the front was being torn out and the fixtures removed.

It was reported on January 10, 1913 that Gettings had rented the middle store to "two Greeks, one from Freeport and the other from Dixon, Ill., who will come here to open a confectionery store. They will install equipment costing \$7,000 by March 1 and will manufacture candy and ice cream in addition to conducting a confectionery store. They had leased the building for five years with the privilege of ten." It is unknown whether this business ever moved into the space. I never saw any mention of it in the newspaper and it was not listed there in the 1915 city directory.

It was reported on April 9, 1913 that the south space of the Gettings block was to house another theater. J. P. Gruwell, Chicago, had been here to superintend the remodeling, which had already been started by Harry Goddard who had the contract. Gruwell stated that "he expects to make the new play house a model of its kind, sparing no expense or pains to transform the storeroom into a beautiful and comfortable little theatre."

He added, "We are going to give your city the very best and newest of pictures projected by the best and latest improved projection machinery. We plan to show nothing that has not been approved by the National Board of Censors and our programs are to be high class in every respect. It is our idea that our patrons are entitled to and will appreciate our educational as well as entertainment features and service as courteous and efficient as they would receive in the finest theatre in Chicago."

The house was to be lighted and ventilated according to the most scientific systems and all specifications would be passed upon by the state fire marshal so that everyone could feel absolutely assured of safety and healthful surroundings when attending the entertainments. The front outside was to be ornamental as well as beautiful and convenient.

"The Monroe" opened on Saturday, May 10 with heavy patronage. The sidewalk in front of the theater was still packed with many who sought admission late into the evening. When the many lights at the entrance were switched on for the first time, it "presented a very dazzling appearance." The Times felt that more than 3,000 people availed themselves of the opportunity to witness the excellent programs that weekend between Turner Hall, the Crystal, and the Monroe.

I am sure that many businesses have come and gone from these three storefronts in what was originally known as the Gettings block. The 1915-16 city directory showed that the Monroe Theater was still in the south part of the block. J. H. Miller announced on January 16, 1915 that he would be holding auctions daily to reduce the amount of inventory so that he could move to the Gettings block from his location on the northwest corner of 16th Avenue and 10th Street. The directory actually listed his business at both locations. Streiff & Murray and Henry J. Streiff, both furriers, were located in the north portion.

The 1917-18 directory shows the Little theater in the south part. It is the same theater, but had its name changed when the new Monroe theater opened on the south side of the square in October 1916. J. H. Miller was still occupying the middle store with Roy A. Niffenegger & Allen M. Davis operating a billiards hall in the north portion.