

## The Broken Promise of John Goetz in 1916

As I search the old newspapers, I find much information that I think might be interesting to include in these columns, but never know what people might enjoy or appreciate. I have a number of computer folders labelled with different topics where I store them for future columns; this column came from my folder labelled “romance/marriage/divorce.” The feedback that I have received from so many of you is greatly appreciated.

The Times of May 24, 1916 states that the first lawsuit filed in the Green County circuit court since March 20 was placed on the docket that day by Circuit Clerk Max G. Booth. It was an action of Miss Pearl Blount against John Goetz for break of promise with damages of \$5,000 being asked for.

Miss Blount alleged that three years earlier on April 10, “Mr. Goetz laid his heart at her feet.” After due deliberation she accepted his suit and told him that in September of that year that she would have her trousseau in readiness and would be “prepared to stand with him under the orange blossoms” to share the joys and sorrows of future years. The exact date in September was not given in the allegation.

The complaint stated that even though more than two years had elapsed since the time set for the marriage, and more than three years since the question was popped, the plaintiff was still Miss Pearl Blount. She had been willing and waiting for the happy day all of this time. She felt the anguish she had suffered by her long wait and her belief that Mr. Goetz did not intend to lead her to the altar was worth “the sum in hard, cold coin of the realm, \$5,000.” She also prayed that the court would give her a judgement in this sum against the defendant.

It was reported on September 23 that the case had been settled outside of court. The article in the Times was fun to read. “The general public, waiting for the past several months for the coming of the October term of the district court, . . . has been doomed to disappointment. The case has been settled out of court.”



This small procession is shown marching south in what is now the 900-block of 17th Avenue. The tailor shop of John Goetz is shown near the right, next to the Commercial & Savings Bank building. Goetz had first worked as a tailor with his father on the north side of the square, later in the First National Bank building (shown on page 19 of the Pictorial History of Monroe), and finally from his home at 820 17th Avenue (shown on page 65 of the Monroe Area Pictorial History).

It went on to say that the defendant “had paid her devoted attention and had pressed her to name the happy day when they should be married. She had finally listened to his ‘sweet whisperings’ and had accepted his suit, setting a day for their marriage and had prepared her trousseau, but the date selected had

come and gone and still she had not been led to the altar. On the other hand, she alleged that Mr. Goetz had called on her with less and less regularity and finally had ceased his attention altogether. As a balm for her wounded affections she asked for damages in the sum of \$10,000.”

I’m not sure which amount is correct, but either one had to be a great amount of money in 1916. It was understood at the time, without any court document, that Mr. Goetz paid \$250 in lieu of all claims that might be held against him.

I was quite surprised when I read in the December 14 paper (of the same year) that Mr. Goetz had married Mrs. Delphy Turner, of Leola, South Dakota, at 10:00 that morning in Goetz’s father’s house in Monroe. It turned out that the couple had been sweethearts more than 30 years earlier while in school. At that time they were considered to be too young by their parents and became separated when the lady’s family moved west.

Mr. Goetz had given her a ring before she moved away with her family. She had cherished the ring for all of these years and “today [it] served the purpose intended.” Each had been married, had children, and lost their spouses to death. For their children, “the marriage is as pleasing as to their parents.” The newspaper also reported on December 23 that the couple had returned to Monroe after their honeymoon to Leola, South Dakota where they visited relatives.

The couple was able to spend more than 25 years together before his death in June 1942. They first lived in their home at 820 17th Avenue in Monroe. After retiring in the early 1920s, they made winter visits to their son in Miami because of John’s heart trouble. They then made Coral Gables, Florida their permanent home only four years before his death. Delphy passed away at a San Diego rest home in April 1963 and was buried in San Diego.