

Final Rebuilding of the East Side of the Square in 1879

The old wooden buildings on the south half of the east side of the square had burned to the ground in May 1879. It was reported on July 16 that the new Bridge block was in its second story and that the Wells', Rusch's, and Bragg's buildings would be under roof in two weeks if good weather prevailed.

By July 23 the "new block had to stop growing to wait for brick" for ten days or two weeks. R. Craven had already put fire into his brick kiln the previous Saturday, and hoped to have burnt bricks ready to take out by the following Monday, so that work on the buildings would not be delayed long. It was also announced that Studley & Lichtenwalner had rented Wells' new building and would move as soon as it was finished.

By the end of July, D. S. Young & Co. were getting ready to move back to the square and Rusch's basement was being fitted up for a meat market, which Miller & Thom had rented.

On August 6 it was announced that brick work was resumed on the walls of Bridge's block and that Studley & Lichtenwalner hoped to move into their new quarters on September 1.

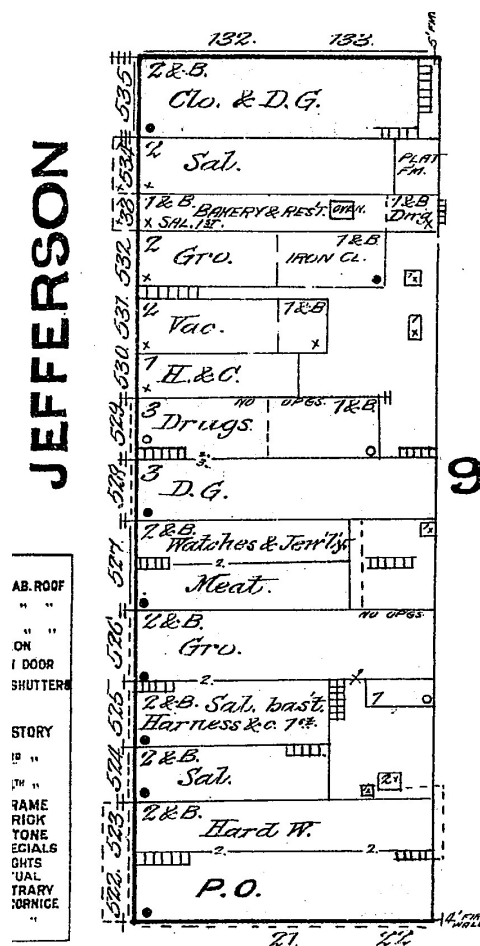
Another week later, it was reported that, "In a few days, probably this week, there will arrive from the factory direct a special car load of extra plate glass, for the new fronts of Bridge's, Bragg's, Wells', Corson's, McCormick's, and H. W. Whitney's new fronts, under orders from our enterprising Druggists Stearns & Smith, through whom these gentlemen purchased. The average size of the plates is 82x136 inches – full size – varying a little of course. Mr. Whitney besides putting in a new front, will make other improvements in the interior of his store occupied by J. B. Treat. The glass already ordered will cost about \$1,500." The Whitney building was the brick building that stopped the fire from spreading to the rest of the buildings north of it. Peter Wells was already "sidewalking" his new store.

The brick work on the new buildings was completed by August 20, only three months after the fire, in spite of the strike by bricklayers and having to wait for brick to be produced. The "handsome cornices are up, and the renters will soon take possession. The buildings are very handsome, and Monroe takes great pride in them."

By the first week of September the east side of the public square was cleared of the building rubbish; remnants of brick piles and mortar beds that disappeared. The first full size plate glass ever put in a Green County building was put into Well's and Rusch's blocks on Tuesday, September 2.

D. S. Young & Co. was in new quarters on the northwest corner of the square by mid-September and were piling in the goods. Studley & Lichtenwalner were also in their new store and in good shape to sell goods. They were filling up the "capacious store with new goods, and will always keep a complete stock of groceries, drugs, oils, paints, wall paper, curtains, lamp goods, &c., &c. They want their old customers to come and see them, and new ones are always welcome."

It was never stated why they changed their mind, but Thom & Miller rented from Corson instead of Rusch's basement, moving into the elegant store room with a cellar late in September.



This is a copy of the 1884 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the east side of the square, which includes the buildings that were rebuilt in 1879. The legend shows that the buildings between the Hoehn Clothing Store on the north end and the building that now houses Bartels & Co. Tap and Sunrise Donut Cafe were all still wooden at that time. The photo that was printed last week was probably taken about the same that this map was made.

By mid-October Johnny Malay (the boss bootist) planned to move his shop to the upstairs of Bridge's new block. Stearns & Smith were still making improvements in their handsome drug store at the same time by "painting, papering, re-arranging, and filling up with new choice wall papers, lamp goods, etc."

Mrs. Coldren had removed her stock of millinery into McCormick's new store, next door south of J. B. Treat's and planned to open on Saturday, October 25. She had "new and desirable goods, embracing a complete assortment of the latest and most elegant goods in her line."

Dr. Ada Bingham (Helen Bingham's sister) had taken rooms in Bridge's Empire Block and had begun the practice of medicine by mid-November.

E. L. Smith was occupying Bridge's corner store early in December with a stock of goods to be sold at forced sale - at half price or less.

Before the end of the year, the Post Office was moved to Bridge's new block on the southeast corner of the Square by order of the Postal Department.

It was mentioned on June 11 that the village board was talking strongly of buying a Steam Fire Engine. It was suggested at that time that it be left to a Special Election by the people to raise the tax. Nothing was mentioned again in the paper until May 24, 1882 when it "was being agitated quite thoroughly." It was "asserted that in case of a fire breaking out on the public square, or in the more crowded part of the city, the apparatus now on hand would be utterly inadequate to even check conflagration that would sweep away enough property to buy a score of engines that might be saved with proper facilities." A petition to purchase a steam engine was being circulated and had more than 100 signatures early in June.

An election was held in November as to whether to purchase the "steam fire engine, hose, hose carts, and tower, build reservoirs in different parts of the city, available for fires, at a cost of not to exceed \$8,000." A tax would be levied when needed, but no sooner. The vote on November 7 passed by a majority of 101. It is unknown when the engine was purchased, but the fire department took it out for practice late on July 26, 1883 where it "worked satisfactorily."