

Anton Miller Closes Furniture Business and Opens City Hotel

Anton Miller proposed on January 1, 1879 “to close out my entire stock of furniture, lumber, materials, and machinery, a complete outfit for a furniture factory, between this and April 1st, 1879. So all persons desiring to purchase furniture, or the lumber to make furniture out of, or machinery to do the work, either, both, or all, can do so at chair-bottom prices.”

A notice on February 19, 1879 stated, “all accounts on his books must be settled before the 1st of April 1879, either by approved note or cash, without fail. Don’t forget it.” An advertisement in the same paper said that he would close out all the furniture stock within 60 days with unprecedented bargains to his customers. “The furniture must be sold, for I am going to retire from this business.”

By April 9 Anton Miller was talking of opening a hotel in the building that had housed his furniture store, which he was to refit. What prompted this huge move for the 64-year-old Miller is unknown. It was reported on May 21 that Miller had “opened his ‘City Hotel’ for public patronage; and invites travelers and his friends generally to call and see him. The ‘City Hotel’ has lodging capacity for about fifty persons, and many more day boarders.” The ad said that it was “in full view of the public fountain.” Good stabling was also available there. By the middle of June, the hotel was “already doing a good business, and is becoming popular.”

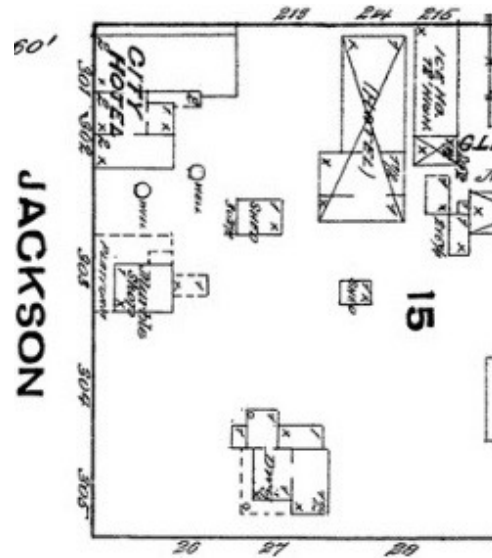
It was reported on August 27, “Anton Miller has been making some desirable improvements in his hotel, and is making arrangements to accommodate an extra number of guests during the County Fair, at reasonable figures. One thing is quite certain Old Anton is getting his share of the public patronage, and he proposes to treat his patrons so well that they will all come again.” An advertisement in December said that everything was new, neat, and clean with reasonable prices.

The 1880 census showed Anton, 65, Augusta, 42, two daughters, and two sons living at the hotel. The youngest son, Otto, was a 4-year-old. A 46-year-old servant and a 60-year-old hostler were also living with them. There were also four male boarders occupying rooms there; Adam Schmidt, 28, boot and shoe dealer, was one of those.

Anton’s health seemed to go downhill after he fell on an icy walk in front of Leuenberger’s brewery, just to the east of his home on Tuesday morning, March 13, 1883. He dislocated a hip, but Dr. Monroe reported that he was doing well at that time. It was reported on November 19, 1884 that he was ill with kidney and liver disease, but was feeling “some better on Monday.” Unfortunately, he passed away on November 26 with 12 of his children present at his deathbed.

Miller had been involved in the community having been active with the Green County fair in its early days. He was one of the organizers of the Monroe Turn Verein (predecessor to the Turner Hall Club) in 1859. He was also a member of the Odd Fellows, who attended his funeral in a body with rights of the order being performed. The Monroe Cornet Band “discoursed appropriate music to and at the grave.”

Mrs. Miller was the administrator of the estate and announced on February 18, 1885, that the City Hotel was for sale, “A bargain in city property.” She continued to operate the hotel until Robert Kohli rented it in March 1886. He had “the interior of the capacious building thoroughly overhauled, renovated and improved, so that it is now one of the most comfy second class hotels in this portion of the State. A splendid barn, connected with the house, affords ample accommodation for horses, while the accommodations for guests, permanent boarders and transient patrons are of such character that the hotel



This Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1884 shows what the property on the southeast corner of 12th Street and 16th Avenue (Jackson Street) looked like about the time of Anton Miller’s death. At the far east of the City Hotel lots, the stable is shown with the ‘X’ through it. A photo (from the same era) of the marble shop that sat behind the Hotel can be seen on the top of page 63 of the Pictorial History of Monroe.

is bound to become a general favorite for the traveling public and a pleasant and comfortable home for regular boarders. The rooms are light, airy and pleasantly located; the beds are clean, sweet and comfortable; the tables are supplied with good, wholesome and substantial well-cooked food, and there is nothing omitted that will tend to the wants and conveniences of the guests.”

After renting the hotel, Augusta and some of her children moved to a home that was located at 1410 15th Avenue, now the site of the Middle School property. Augusta was also a German immigrant who came here in 1858 at the age of 20. Emma, Emil, and Otto were living with her in 1895. Unfortunately, Emil passed away in 1898 and Emma in 1899. Augusta told the 1900 census taker that she had given birth to five children, but only one was still living. By 1910 the census showed that she had given birth to six children with none of them still living. Her brother, William F. Zilmer, was living with her in 1922 when she passed away at the age of 87. Her house was later in the possession of H. B. Miller, Anton’s grandson from his first wife.

This brief description gives us a glimpse of what these immigrants had to endure as well as what they did to help make the community a better place. I hope that you’ll think about and appreciate those efforts the next time you eat at the Suisse Haus. There is much more history about this property and the businesses at this location that might possibly be shared in future columns; I chose to end this part of the story with the moving out of the immigrant family who created the business.