

## Monroe Building Boom in 1916

As any reader of these columns might realize, I am totally intrigued by the history of our area. The history of any building, past or present, is one of my favorites to share. I came across an article in the May 2, 1916 issue of the Monroe Evening Times, which stated that construction in the city for that year was to be the greatest in the city's history. More than 50 new homes were to be built that year along with two new schools, a church, a theater, the IOOF temple, and a veterinary hospital. Believe it or not, a conservative estimate of the total cost was only \$300,000.

This article stated that even more than 50 new homes might possibly be erected during the summer months, with many of them already under various stages of construction at the time the article was written. At that time the estimate for the average cost of a home was \$3,000, for a total of \$150,000.

Lincoln School was to be built on the southwest corner of 16th Avenue and 14th Street and was expected to cost \$65,000. Many residents will remember that this building was destroyed by fire in 1973. The former St. Victor's Parochial School opened in the fall of 1916 at an estimated cost of \$20,000. The two-story school was located on the same location as the current school and was used until 1957 when the current school was built. Photos of both of these schools can be seen in the gray Pictorial History.



This photo of the former Roub veterinarian hospital, copied from the collection held at the First National Bank and Trust, was probably taken in the 1970s. The building was razed in the early 1980s to make a larger parking lot for First National Bank, now the site of First National Bank and Trust. The concrete at the top of the building is carved with J. F. ROUB D. V. S. 1916.

It was decided in January to build the third Immanuel Evangelical Church on the southwest corner of 16th Avenue and 16th Street. This building still stands and is the current home of Mount Olive Lutheran Church. It was to cost about \$15,000 to build it of pressed brick and Bedford stone, with copper and galvanized cornices and asbestos shingles, but ended up costing \$40,000. It still looks almost the same as it did when it was dedicated on July 22, 1917.

More than a year after deciding to build a new temple, the International Order of Odd Fellows were ready to accept bids for building the three-story structure at 912 17th Avenue in April. The contract was awarded to Wagner & Bauman, a Monroe firm. The current post office was not built until 1932, so the IOOF had a 10-year contract for the post office to occupy the first floor of their building. The newspaper had estimated that this building would cost \$15,000, but no final cost was given in the

newspapers. A photo of the new building was taken on January 5, 1917 and can be seen in the Pictorial History. The first social function held in the building was attended by 200 people; the Esther Rebekah lodge gave a program in the lodge room on the second floor and served refreshments in the banquet room on the third floor. The first floor of this building now houses Exit Professional Real Estate.

It was announced on October 10, 1915 that Dr. J. F. Roub was making plans to erect a new business block on the southwest corner of 17th Avenue and 9th Street. The property had been purchased from Fred J. Karlen, who had reserved property between this site and the Karlen Block on the northeast corner of the square for another two-store block. The Roub building was to be 40 feet by 96 feet and had two store fronts facing the east. It was two stories high with a basement and apartments above the stores. The rear of the building was for the veterinary hospital and operating rooms. The building was made of pressed bricks and was completely equipped with baths and a heating plant. The Times estimated at the time that it would cost \$20,000. Roub's son, the one that many of us remember, completed his veterinarian course in April 1916 and joined his father in business. The hospital, J. F. Roub & Son, was in the north side with the elder Roub living in the apartment above. The south part of the building was first occupied by Wells Fargo & Co. and American Express. An early photo of this block is also shown in the Pictorial History. This building was purchased by the First National Bank and razed in the early eighties to add more parking for the bank, as the building that Karlen built to the south of it had been razed prior to that. The last known business tenants of the building, listed in the 1980 city directory, were American Family Insurance and House of Letters.

The last item mentioned in the article was the remodeling of the double store on the south side of the square into the Monroe Theater, which was to cost about \$10,000. There is a photo of both the double store taken in 1906 and then the outside of the theater after the remodeling in the Pictorial History. The Monroe Area Pictorial History also has a photo of the inside of the theater, which could seat nearly 750 people on three floors. There were 300 cushioned opera chairs on the ground floor. There were "eight perfectly appointed boxes with specially designed seating" on the Mezzanine. Leon Goetz worked with the state fire department and had enough exits so the entire theater could be emptied in two minutes. The theater opened at 10:30 on Cheese Day, October 10, 1916 and kept crowds coming until midnight. The formal opening was on Sunday, October 15. This building now houses Cactus Co. Booze N' Bites.