

Gas Stations in Monroe - Highway 69

Sometime after I completed the Pictorial History of Monroe as a fundraiser for the Green County Historical Society in 2006, Bob Dearth suggested that I write a book about the history of the gas stations in Monroe. One day when I visited him at the dealership, he handed me a map of Monroe on which he had marked the locations of about 25 gas stations that he remembered. One has to remember that the highways used to pass through the city before the bypass was completed in the late 1960s. The stations were scattered throughout the city and were operated by one or two men, most of them also doing some mechanical work in one or two bays in the station.

To understand where all of the gas stations were, we will trace how the highways traveled through Monroe in the late 1950s. The original plan for the book was to give a history of when each station was opened, who the owners were, and what happened to the property after the station closed. The purpose of this column is to simply document the locations of each station, and possibly name one or two of the proprietors.

Highway 69 came in from the south over the overhead bridge just south of 30th Street and turned east at the former Oaktron building, now an Alpine Slicing and cheese company. The first gas station that one would pass was the old Jug; a photo appears on page 96 of the Pictorial History of Monroe. It was operated by Chuck Buehler in the early 1940s. The highway would continue east until it turned north on 11th Avenue. At that intersection, where the Swiss Wheel Motel once operated, was a gas station owned by Edwin Deal and John Mueller as early as 1927. The highway went north until it then turned east again



This photo, from the collection of Barb Buehler Markham, was taken in 1958 and shows her father's filling station which was located at 1902 11th Avenue. Many may remember that this building later housed the City Taxi, Wentz Transportation, and Porkie's Filling Station. It now serves as a private residence.

onto 19th Street. On the southeast corner of that intersection was a gas station owned by Herbert Buehler for years. Just east of that on the north side of the street was the gas station known at one time as South Side Pure Oil, now the location of Loescher Heating & Air Conditioning. On the corner of 13th Avenue and 19th Street was the Kingdon gas station. Beyond that, on the location of what used to be Bernie's restaurant, 1331 19th Street, was a gas station that was first operated as Albert Frey's Service Station in 1933.

The highway again turned north on 16th Avenue and went over the railroad tracks via the overhead bridge, which was removed decades ago. Just past that was Crandall's gas station on the left and then on the northwest corner of 16th Street was another gas station for which I've not found any information. It was at this corner that the highway again turned to the east for four blocks to 20th Avenue, where it turned north yet again. At the intersection with 13th Street it merged with Highways 11 and 81 coming from the east, where there was a gas station that is now the State Farm Insurance agency. I'll come back to those two highways again next week after we finish the Highway 69 route.

Highway 69 continued north passing a gas station at the corner of 20th Avenue and 9th Street, now the site of the BP station. The highway still continued north to 6th Street where Herman "Connie" Burkhard owned a gas station on the northeast corner, which was actually started by Edward Lacey in 1933. A photo of the grocery store that the Einbecks later operated in this building is on page 81 of the Pictorial History. The directories also list a Pure Oil Station on the southwest corner of that intersection in the 1930s; a two-story house now sits at that location.

The highway went two more blocks west from there until it turned north and headed out of town. At this last intersection, the Pure Station, and later Kickapoo, stood where the H & R Block office now stands. On the corner across the street was what many of us remember as Swiggum's gas station with Swiggum Beverage Depot attached. A photo of this station can be seen on page 78 of the Pictorial History of Monroe. This location was originally started as Studer Super Service. There was one last station on Highway 69 north of this intersection. A listing in the city directories in the mid-1940s stated that there was a filling station at Marty Chevrolet Sales at 525 18th Avenue.

Next week we will look at the stations that used to be along Highways 11-81 as they travelled through Monroe. And then the following week we will look at the stations that were scattered through Monroe, some of which were built after the bypass was added.