

Gas Stations in Monroe - Highways 11-81

Last week we had a tour of the gas stations along Highway 69 as it wound through Monroe in the late 1950s and found that Highway 69 intersected with Highways 11-81 for four blocks along 20th Avenue from 13th Street to 9th Street with a gas station on each of those two corners.

Highways 11-81 came in from the east, following County KK from near the radio station. The easternmost gas station near the city limits was the Southern Wisconsin Co-op; that building later housed the GCR Tire Center and was located at W5206 County KK. County KK eventually came around the bend and turned into 13th Street. On the right, at 2915 13th Street, was the Foley Service Station in the 1930s, which had disappeared by the 1950s. A more recent occupant of that location was Kelty Cabinets & Furniture. Ficken Oil Co. opened across the street, where Cenex now stands, in October 1961.

Further west, just east of the intersection with 23rd Avenue, was a Texaco station first operated by Earl Schneider in the late 1930s and lastly by Chuck Koch in the 1960s. The building has since been razed and there is now a home on that location. Across the street at 2303 13th Street was a Cities Service Station as early as 1930, operated lastly by Jim and Dick Hyland in the 1950s.

The combined highways continued west until the previously mentioned intersection with 20th Avenue. From here all three highways, 11, 81, and 69, followed the same route for the four blocks to the current BP Station at 9th Street and 20th Avenue. At this intersection Highways 11-81 turned left to travel within a block of the courthouse square. The first gas station in Monroe was built on the northeast corner of 17th Avenue and 9th Street sometime before 1927. Photos of the construction of the Murray gas station and a portion of the completed station are shown on page 65 in the Monroe Area Pictorial History. Many of us will remember this as the location of Ed Goecks' Clark Station.



This photograph, taken about 1925, shows the gas station on the northwest corner of what is now 17th Avenue and 9th Street. Don's Standard Service later operated in this location. This snapshot came from the collection of Jan Woelfler. Notice that the Universalist Church, now the museum of the Green County Historical Society, can be seen in the background on the right and part of the former Ludlow Hotel can be seen in the center beyond the gas station.

On the northwest corner of 17th Avenue and 9th Street was the Standard Oil Station, which was operated by J. M. Deifel in 1927 and will be remembered by so many as Don's Standard Service. It closed

in the 1980s and was the home of the Monroe One Hour Cleaners for many more years; this building now sits empty. The southeast corner of this intersection, where Thrivent Financial is now located, was the home of Dearth Texaco in the 1960s. The construction of the Holiday Station, where Stop N Go now operates, began on October 11, 1967. There had previously been a gas pump there when Monroe Sales operated on that lot. Roy Thomas found a 1915 Sanborn fire map that showed a 280-gallon gasoline tank buried at that location.

After North School was torn down, Consolidated Gas and then Speedway operated at 1419 9th Street. Those stations were torn down and then replaced with the office that now houses Lahman Chiropractic. Clarence "Slim" Frietag built the Pure Oil Super Service in the next block west that opened in 1935, with his father, Henry, as operator. It had many owners during the years before Century Ecowater Systems took over the building about 1980. A photo of Simon Meyer in front of the service bay is included on page 72 of the Pictorial History. The Rufenacht Oil Co. was established as early as 1930 just a few blocks to the west of this, where 9th Street curves into 8th Street, and remained there until KwikTrip took over that location. After KwikTrip moved from that location, Raskovic Automotive moved there.

After passing under the walking path that crosses above 8th Street there were two more stations at the bottom of the hill. Roy's Service Station was on the north side of 8th Street as early as 1930 and later became a Shell station. Across the street, in what used to be the Medicine Mart building, was the Pure gas station operated by Herman Huber until Pure Oil pulled the franchise from all Wisconsin stations. Highway 81 then turned north on (or near) what is now 8th Avenue while Highway 11 continued west along 8th Street toward Browntown. There were no more gas stations along Highway 81 in Monroe.

There have only been two gas stations west of what is now the large intersection with the bypass at the lights. The 1951 city directory shows that James Green Motors, a Studebaker dealership, also had a filling station at 412 8th Street, now the location of Zersen Flooring. Russell Kundert opened the Deep Rock Station on the north side of the street just to the west of that location in 1963; Phillips 66 now operates there. This station can be seen on page 75 of the Pictorial History.

Next week we will explore the rest of the gas stations in Monroe, some that came about after the bypass was built around Monroe.