

## The Earliest Years of the United States House

As we approach the end of the fourth year that I've written this column, I continue to be astounded by the responses that I continue to receive. Feedback doesn't only come from those who live (or have lived) in this area. Because of the internet, the responses come from people who have found information in one of my columns after they google for a relative. On September 27, I received an email message from Stephan Schuetze-Coburn, who lives in California. He shared that he had borrowed a copy of the Pictorial History of Monroe through an inter-library loan. Because of this, he was then able to find my columns in The Monroe Times. One column that he found on the internet had some information about his third-great grandfather's, (Anton Miller) furniture business. He then wondered if I had done, or would be doing, any columns about the United States House, which was located on the northeast corner of the Court House square in the early days and had been owned by his great-great-grandfather, Louis Schuetze. He added, "Your column is a delight, and I look forward to reading more of the pieces you have published in the coming days, as well as to seeing future columns to come." By the time we talked a few days later, I was impressed by how many of the columns he had read - and how much he remembered about them! In honor of Stephan, today's column and three more will give as complete a history of that hotel as I can give - and will finish the fourth year of this column.



This photo of the United States House appears in the Pictorial History of Monroe. This hotel was said to have been built in 1847 and occupied the northeast corner of the square until 1890, when it was moved. As seen here, the First National Bank, which was the tallest building on the square, sat next to the west of the hotel.

The 1884 Green County History states that the United States Hotel "was erected many years ago, by Charles Hart, who conducted the business for a time and was succeeded by E. Reynolds." Helen Bingham's 1877 history of the county gave a more specific year (1847) for the original building. The Sentinel announced in April 1851 that Mr. A. T. Hart would be the new landlord. It is unknown whether these two Harts were the same person or, possibly, family members. Many more proprietors were listed in the 1884 history, which became somewhat confusing while looking at the newspaper information. I'll focus in these columns on what I found in the newspapers because that information is probably more accurate than someones memory 30 years later.

There was a long article in the April 28, 1855 Monroe Sentinel about a peddler who had his wagon broken into while at the United States House. Goods amounting to between \$200 and \$300 had been taken. The entire long article is reprinted in *Becoming a Village: Monroe in the 1850s*, so I will not share the rest here.

On March 4, 1857, the Sentinel reported that “Uncle Jimmie Campbell was found dead on the floor of the United States House. He arose during the night to get his bottle from behind the bar. The hostler, who occupied a bunk with him in the barroom, struck a light and “found him dead behind the bar, yet warm.” The hotels of yesteryear were certainly not held to the standards of today.

The 1860 census showed Edmund Hill, 42, was the keeper of Hills Hotel. His wife and two daughters also lived there with 11 other people, including a hotel clerk and three servants. E. Mosher was listed as the next owner of the hotel in the 1884 history, which is confirmed by an article in the March 1, 1865 Sentinel, which stated that Captain Edward Ruegger had purchased it from Mosher. “Capt. R. announces his intention to keep up the reputation which the house has for so many years maintained, and those who know him have no doubt that he will do so.”

The hotel had changed hands again less than a year later as it was announced on February 14, 1866 that Messrs. Wells had taken over. The editor stated, “The new proprietors are affable, energetic young men and are determined to keep a good house. We wish them abundant success.” The ad in the paper listed the men as W. L. P. Wells and S. R. Wells, who invited boarders or guests by the day or week. They added that they had good stabling with “attentive grooms and good feed feed at your service.”

Hotels often had sample rooms; the United States House was no exception. An article on October 17, 1866 said that a Mr. Johnson had a whiffletree on display that had been patented “last May” with very valuable improvements.

It was announced again on January 2, 1867 that the Drake Brothers had leased this hotel and changed the name to the Revere House. “They are giving the premises a thorough overhauling, and have commenced like men who ‘know how to keep a hotel.’ Success to the Revere House.” An article on July 3 referred to the hotel as the United State House again when it was mentioned that the proprietor was “making extensive preparations to entertain the multitude” on July 4. Several fat turkeys had been slaughtered for the occasion, and “all the luxuries of the season will be brought into requisition.”

As one can see, the United States Hotel had a variety of proprietors in the first twenty years of its existence. As we’ll learn next week, a new proprietor became active and took pride in the business for many years to come.