

## The Final Years of the United States House

Between 1:00 and 3:00 on Monday morning, April 7, 1884, burglars gained access to the saloon of the United States House on the northeast corner of the square and broke open the hotel safe. They took about \$300 in cash, a gold watch that belonged to Louis, and another that belonged to an employee. They left notes and other securities. "The plucky slanderers also took from the wine cellar a bottle of the best wine ten years old. The thieves left through the front, then went around to the back where they drank part of the wine. They also ate part of two pies and drank some milk, which they found in the cellar. Schuetze's overcoat and several other articles were also missing. According to an interview in 1931 with Louis' son, Albert, who was 14 at the time, he "helped follow the trail of scattered loot and papers for several blocks next morning, although the men were never apprehended."

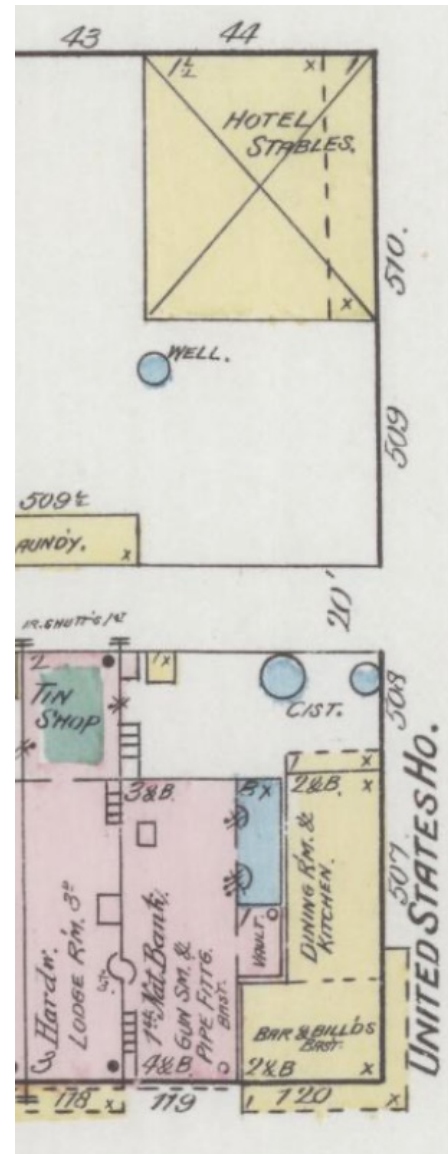
A short article in the April 29, 1885 Sentinel mentioned that Schuetze was putting hardwood floors in the his hotel office and the billiard hall restaurant. But a longer article the following week really sang his praises saying he had "just completed the work of repairing the inside and filling it up in the best possible manner. New floors of hardwood strips have been laid in the billiard room in the basement and the office above. These rooms have just been gracefully painted and grained; both are large and commodious, and most of the other rooms have received new paint, kalsomining and papering. The U. S. House is the only hotel situated on the Public Square, and occupies the very best position in the city. Mr. Schuetze is a gentleman who has had twenty years experience and has won his way to distinction by toil to make his guests happy. His genial wife has no superior in her line of business; her cordiality and goodness of heart has won her many friends."

Another article on July 8 stated that the hotel had been painted outside and inside, and another new plank walk was installed on the east. Another article on December 16 sad that the hotel's new omnibus sleigh "is a very showy affair. It is the prettiest thing about the establishment."

Unfortunately, Louis Schuetze, 44, passed away on February 3, 1886 after operating the hotel for more than 18 years. Henry Hoehn, administrator of his estate, offered the hotel property for sale at an auction held on April 10. Jacob Karlen purchased the property for \$7,500 and planned to keep it as a hotel "for the present." The editor added, "We were surprised that there were not more bidders for this really desirable corner. There were but three persons who seemed disposed to offer for it."

A short article on April 28 stated that Karlen & Warren, the new proprietors, had put things in fine shape. On June 9, it was shared that they had added a piano "to its outfit," adding that Karlen and Warren "propose to keep up with the times."

As early as August 11, 1886, Jacob Karlen was talking of rebuilding the hotel, either that fall or the following spring. "It is not improbable that a handsome new brick, three-stories and a basement, will take the place of the old building that has so many years been familiar to ye 'weary traveler.'" It was reported on October 13 that work on the new U. S.



This portion of the Sanborn Fire Insurance map from 1889 shows the northeast corner of the square that was occupied by the United States House. Several things to notice are that the bar and billiards room was on the south, facing the square, while the dining room and kitchen were on the north part facing east. Notice the stable, two cisterns near the hotel, and the well near the hotel stables. I found it interesting that the vault for the First National Bank and another room were taken out of the property that I would have expected to be part of the hotel.

House was progressing finely. On April 13, 1887 the Sentinel said, "The report that the new United States House is not to be built this year is now said to be false."

Similar reports of building on this location continued to be printed. According to the June 13, 1888 issue of the Monroe Sentinel, "Mr. Jacob Karlen told the editor of this paper, that as soon as Jacob Steinman could get at his job, the new building on the site of the old United States House would be commenced. He hoped it would be in a few week, now." It was then reported on June 27 that "Steinman is about ready to begin" that work. Again on July 4, it was reported that, "Work on the U. S. House block will begin soon. Jake Steinman has the contract." However, this would not happen for three more years.

Karlen finally removed his saloon from the old United States House about April 1, 1890, with the old hotel to be torn down for Karlen's new block. The Sentinel reported on June 4 that the "second detachment of the old U. S. House is on wheels, and ready to start west. The old stager is to be made over into dwelling houses." When I was first back in Monroe, Inez Buehler Goecks, told me that one portion of the hotel was moved to 805/807 10th Street to be used as a home.

We will learn more about the building of the Karlen Block, which was not a hotel, in the next columns.