

## The \$100,000 Fire in Monroe on January 13, 1914 - Part 2

The \$100,000 fire occurred on Tuesday, January 13, 1914 on the northeast corner of 16th Avenue and 9th Street in the four-story building that had previously housed the Miller Manufacturing Company. It not only destroyed this building, but two buildings that were adjacent to it - the D. C. Ryan home and the Green County Herold building.

The building that housed the Green County Herold, located between the large building and the Universalist Church, was the last of the three buildings to burn. "The roof kept burning while the fire was working down inside the brick walls so that when the high wall fell over onto the roof the building fell in. The building was insured for \$2,000 and the plant for \$3,000 with a loss estimated at \$10,000."

It was already reported on Wednesday morning that the paper had taken temporary quarters where the American Express Company had previously been located. The newspaper that was to be issued on Wednesday was sent out in abbreviated form and had been printed in the Monroe Evening Times office on Wednesday afternoon. Monroe publishers, the Courier from New Glarus, and a Milwaukee concern offered the Herold the use of their facilities so the publication could continue. "Fred L. Kohli, who is in charge of the business, reports that the business will be carried on as usual and that the paper will not miss an issue."



This photo was copied from one of the postcards in the collection of the late Marv Ruff. Will Trukenbrod made the postcards from photographs that he took of the \$100,000 fire on January 13, 1914. This photo, taken from the southeast, shows the former Miller Manufacturing Company in flames with the Green County Herold building to the right. Both of these buildings were situated on the lot where Stop N Go is now located.

The United Telephone Company, which had just moved into their new fireproof building across 16th Avenue in the fall, sustained a loss of between \$1,000 and \$2,000 to the building and destruction of a block of cable. "The heat from across the street broke the windows in the operating room and all that saved the new switchboard was the water soaked blankets that were thrown over it." The blankets had been borrowed from the Boss livery; a dozen men worked at the windows. The cable that connected 75

subscribers in the north part of the city and a number of long distance lines went down when the west wall of the large building fell out.

Two operators were on duty when the alarm was given, but they were later assisted by members of the construction force in answering the scores of calls.

“As the fire fast gained dangerous headway, the operators became a trifle panicky [sic] and when the wires fell, and the electric service was shut down as a protection against live wires, the telephone service was suspended. The girls worked bravely as long as they remained at the board.” Firemen threw water into the air to keep the flames from reaching this building. At one time the people at work there feared they might have to give up their efforts in a few minutes.

The heavy cable lead on a pole at the southeast corner of the intersection [near the Ludlow Hotel] caused the telephone company much concern. If it were to fall, it would be a loss of at least \$1,000. Linemen climbed the pole with wet blankets and fire extinguishers; it still caught fire several times.

General Manager Weirich was in Chicago attending a convention of telephone men at the time. A large force of linemen were out working on Wednesday morning so the damaged cable could be replaced as quickly as possible.

Much anxiety was experienced by those who were interested in the welfare of the Universalist Church, which sat next to the Herold building. Fortunately, it was out of the path of the wind; there was enough water to keep the flames from getting a start. The roof had caught fire several times; it was feared the costly windows, which had been installed less than 20 years earlier, would be broken when the fire was at its hottest. The Herold building was brick veneered so the walls held the flame. With the water the firemen were able to throw into the building, there was little chance for the fire to spread.

The edge of the roof of the Ludlow Hotel broke out at one time. Some of the windows in the upper rooms on the north side were broken and the lace curtains started to burn. “Timely discovery and an active force on duty kept the fire from doing any serious damage.”

The residence of John Leehey, directly across the street from the Karlen garage, was vacated earlier by the family and almost everything carried out. It caught fire several times, but the firemen were able to save it.

The old YMCA building, which was located on the northwest corner of 8th Street and 16th Avenue and had recently been purchased by Samuel Jackson, caught fire early. The firemen fought this fire as the destruction of this frame building would certainly have spread the fire to adjacent homes. “The work of the firemen at this particular point, although laboring at great disadvantage, was highly creditable.”

The shower of burning embers proved to be a real menace to the entire neighborhood. Some were carried as far north as the Ludlow farm, where those buildings were closely watched. The roofs on several other homes, including one belonging to C. D. Corson three blocks away, caught fire. “The ground in this part of the city was literally covered with flaky ashes by the shower of burning tinder.”

The large building had been erected in 1908, but the business was short-lived with the retirement of Fred W. Miller. The company was then reorganized under the name of Monroe Manufacturing Company. In the summer of 1912 an \$8,000 addition was erected on the north side for the Hokanson Automobile Company of Madison. After Monroe Manufacturing closed out, the building had been vacant with the exception of the garage. At the time of the fire, the building was owned by Brink & Wood, Pierre South Dakota. The value of the property was \$30,000 with the building and fixtures worth \$25,000.

More will be shared about the destruction caused by this fire in the next two columns.