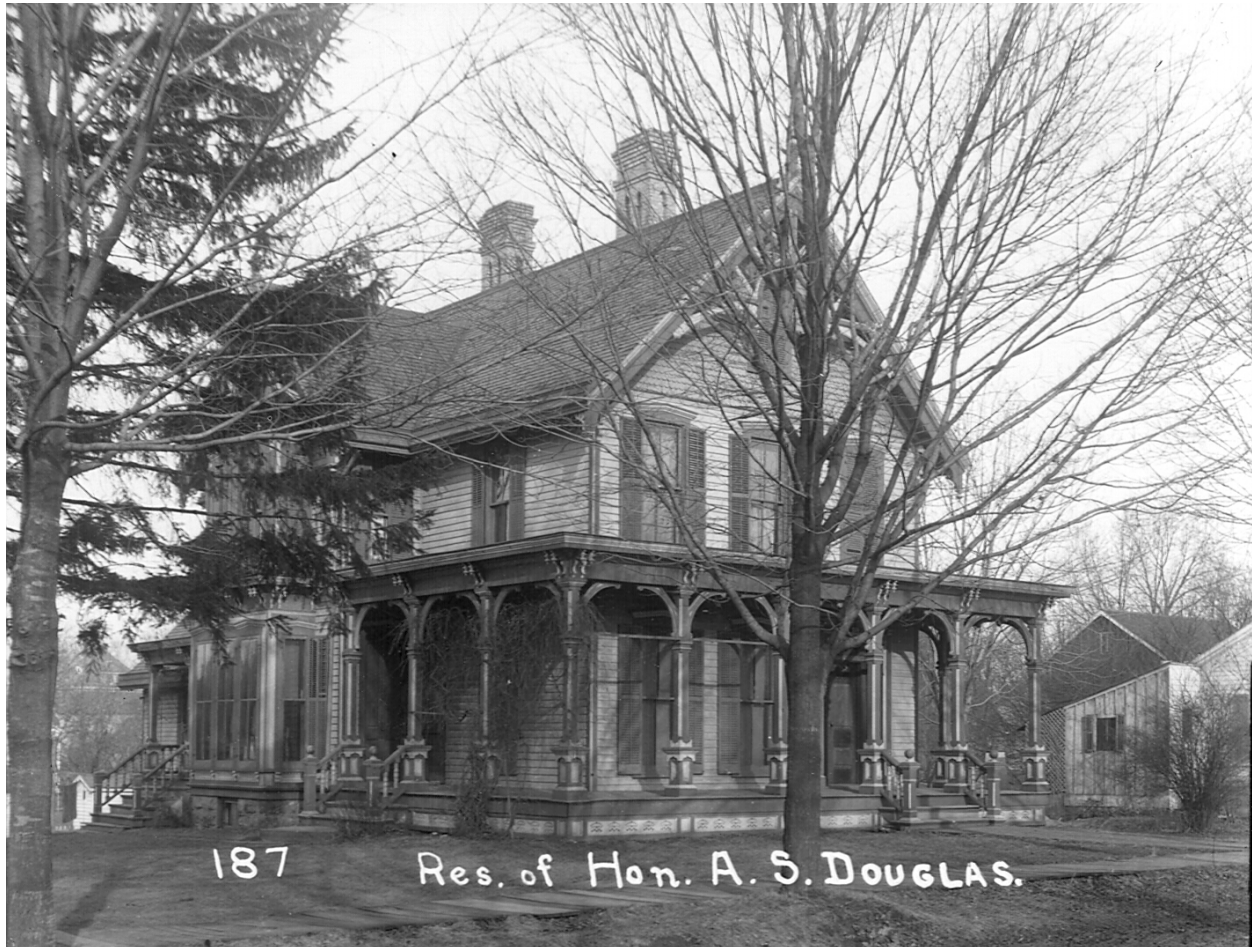


## Shriners Purchase House at 825 19th Avenue for Funeral Home

I enjoy sharing information about buildings, especially homes that are still occupied more than a century after being built. Today I plan to share what I found out about the home at 825 19th Avenue. Frank Shriner purchased that home from the heirs of former Monroe Mayor A. S. Douglas on April 21, 1933 for \$1.00 and "other considerations." After having operated on the east side of the square at 1018 17th Avenue, now Pancho & Lefty's, for about 40 years, they decided to move the Shriner Bros. Funeral Home to this location. An article in the August 8, 1933 issue of the Monroe Evening Times mentioned that the house was built for H. G. White about 50 years prior as well as having been the home of former Mayor A. S. Douglas.



This photo, from the collection of the late John and Virginia Irvin, shows the home of the late Mayor of Monroe, A. S. Douglas. The home was built in 1882 for H. G. White, photographer, who moved to Maine in 1897.

The first mention of this home was in the Monroe Sentinel on May 24, 1882. It simply said that H. G. White was "getting ready to build a new home on his lots." It was reported on August 2 that it was "now under way" and "will be one of the finest in the city." By September 12, the new residence was nearing completion and would be "an elegant dwelling." Several of the rooms would have mantels and fire grates; good ventilation was achieved by registers in the walls. By the time they moved into the house, Mr. White and his wife, Susanna, had four children between the ages of 5 and 11.

The White family lived in that home for 15 years - until all of their children were adults. They then sold the home and moved to Bucksport, Maine in 1897. He had departed by May 26 and shipped most of his household and photo gallery furniture and apparatus; his family was to follow soon after that.

It was reported on September 8 that Douglas had purchased the property at a sale a week earlier for a little less than \$3,000 even though the original cost of the home was nearly twice that; the lots and improvements would have been worth \$2,000 to \$2,500. The editor added, "It is strange that such a piece of property should be foreclosed at such a price. Mr. Douglas is certainly to be congratulated upon his great bargain."

The 1900 census shows Douglas living in the house with his second wife, Abbie, and their two children, ages 11 and 12, plus a daughter from his previous marriage. Five years later it was just the family of four in the large house. By 1910 an additional 24-year-old female lodger, a teacher in the city schools, was living with the family of four. Douglas lived there until he became ill and was taken to Loofbourow Hospital where he passed away on June 7, 1912. The funeral was held at the home on the afternoon of June 10. The relatives and nearer friends "were seated in the home while an even larger number congregated outside during the services."

The 1920 census showed only his widow and her son, Andrew, 35, in the home. She remained in the home until about ten days before her death on December 23, 1928 when she went to visit her daughter near Dayton, Wisconsin. Her body was taken to Shriner Brothers and then removed to the house. The funeral was held at St. Victor Church on the morning after Christmas. The home remained in the family until Frank Shriner purchased it. The 1930 city directory listed Paul Disch living in the home.

The 1933 article stated that the lot was 130 feet by 81 feet and the residence was "reputed to be one of the best built residences in the city." The home would be "entirely rebuilt into a modern funeral home with every up-to-date convenience and facility." Albert Neushwander, a 23 year employee of the firm, also became a member of it. An apartment space on the second floor would become the home of him and his wife. Construction was to start soon afterwards in hopes that the project would be completed before winter set in. It was thought at the time that this might be "the most ambitious construction project of the year in Monroe."

Choice wood finishing was a feature of the home, with butternut, gum wood, and walnut being used, all having been well-preserved. Plans were to use all the same "fine finishing in the new design of the structure."

The full basement under the home was excavated and was 51 feet long. Structural steel reinforcement was to be employed to permit creation of a large chapel, family room, slumber room, music room, office, and preparation on the first floor. Seating was to be possible in much of the space. There were to be exits on all sides to permit convenient access to the driveway which would go around the home.

The large basement would be damp-proofed and equipped with a terrazzo floor so caskets could be displayed. That could be reached either by stairs or by an elevator.

A 3-car garage, 25-feet square, was to be added to the west (rear of the building) and the driveway would run through that. The south was to have a portico, under which caskets could be placed into the hearse directly from the chapel platform. Those attending funerals would be able to enter cars on the drive on the north side. The plan was for all of the cars for family funerals to be accommodated on the grounds of the home.

This must have been quite a change for funerals in Monroe as now the funerals could be held from the funeral parlor instead of from the home. It might make it easier for the undertakers because they did not have to transport the bodies as often.

We will learn next week when the new funeral home opened and hear about more of the changes that were made to the home. There will also be a photo after the home was remodeled into the funeral home.