

Prices in Monroe in 1919

In a recent column I shared how much a Christmas dinner might have cost in 1919. While I was reading the newspapers from 1919, I decided it might be interesting to eventually do a column about the prices people paid more than 100 years ago. Of course, many of us are most concerned about the prices of groceries. I received some positive comments about the Christmas column; one person said how interesting the prices were. I decided this was the time to share those prices and will start with the prices of groceries.

There were about a dozen grocery stores in Monroe at that time. One of the advertisers in the Monroe Evening Times was S. R. Greenwald, whose store was located for about 30 years where the Goetz theater is now located. His advertisement on April 25 showed a one-pound, flat can of pink salmon was \$0.20, two cans of peas or corn were \$0.25, Kellogg's cornflakes were \$0.10, and a pound of Rio coffee was \$0.20. He also sold fancy lemons for \$0.20 per dozen.

The Universal Grocery Co. opened in March of that year on the north side of the square where the Ruehle bakery had previously operated. Their ad on April 25 said to look for the red front. Some of their specials for Saturday were a 10-pound bag of salt for \$0.16, two pounds of ginger snaps for \$0.27, any flavor of Jello for \$0.11; all of their tea that had been selling for \$0.60 per pound, but was going to be on sale for \$0.43 that day. In addition they were selling brooms for \$0.59; the ad said that you would pay \$1.00 elsewhere, but they would not sell to any dealers. They were also selling three pounds of yellow onion sets for \$0.10 and a 100-pound bag of chicken feed for \$3.97.

The Sanitary Market was located on 16th Avenue in the first block south of the Square; Edward Nicollier was the proprietor at that time. Some of the prices he advertised on January 10 were beef roast for \$0.22, all beef steak for \$0.28, pork roast for \$0.32, pork chops for \$0.33, and mutton ranged from \$0.25 to \$0.30.

Abe Heer owned a meat market in the 900-block of 17th Avenue, just north of the Commercial Bank. He operated the shop in the same location for 37 years until his death in 1927. His advertisement on June 27 stated that he would sell plate boiling beef for \$0.10, beef roast for \$0.15 and hamburger for \$0.18. He added that this is the same quality of beef that he had been cutting for years. At that time, his phone number was 73. His ad also said that he was "the home of pure foods."



This photo, from page 119 of the Pictorial History of Monroe, shows Abe Heer's meat market behind a group of motorcyclists. Heer was selling beef roast for \$0.15 and hamburger for \$0.18 in 1919. His shop was located in the first block north of the square on 17th Avenue.

The newspaper advertisements were not limited to groceries. Rose Zweifel had a millinery shop on the south side of the square. Her advertisement on June 27 said that she had a sale starting that day. All of their best dark trimmed hats were going to be half price. A very select assortment, normally priced from \$6.50 to \$8.50, were on sale for \$2.98. A limited assortment of flower and ribbon trimmed hats were being sold for a dollar. Children's trimmed and untrimmed hats were sold for as low as \$0.50. White Panama trimmed hats were going to be on sale for \$3.75. She added that they were receiving new styles in white and light hats daily. She encouraged people to come early to get first choice and stated that they would find many other attractive bargains.

A. R. Steele advertised a sale on his typewriters on May 29. An Underwood typewriter worth \$75 was on a special sale at \$55. A Woodstock typewriter valued at \$100 was on special at \$60. He had two Remington No. 6 typewriters on sale for either \$8 or \$6. There were a few other typewriters listed in the advertisement.

The price that some farms sold for was also shared in the newspaper. It was announced on October 10 that Walter Asmus, of Sylvester, had purchased the John Freitag farm in Clarno Township, consisting of 155 acres. The price paid per acre was \$285; Mr. Asmus was to take possession on March 1. Mr. Asmus had also disposed of his 130-acre farm in Sylvester Township to Walter Sylvester, of Monroe. That farm sold at \$165 per acre with Mr. Sylvester also taking possession on March 1.

A public auction was held at the farm of Rudy Shenkel, south of Brodhead, on December 26. It was one of the largest sales of personal property ever held in the county. The total amount of the sale was \$25,700. The farm had recently been sold to D. W. Roemer, of Hampton, Iowa; Mr. Shenkel planned to move to Monroe and Mr. Roemer was to take possession of the farm on March 1. An added footnote in that article had nothing to do with prices, but was "a peculiar coincidence." The last three owners of that farm had all been named Rudy: Rudy Zweifel, Rudy Kundert, and then Rudy Shenkel.

The Green County Holstein Breeders had a two-day sale at the fairgrounds on October 30 and 31. "Enthusiasm was evidenced at the outset with the tiers of seats occupied by interested dairymen from all parts of [the] county with goodly numbers from neighboring states, all intently watching the individual animals introduced in the ring as the elaborate sales catalog was studied."

The bidding for a yearling bull from the herd of Theodore Bayeroffer was started at \$150. The Illinois State University Normal School paid \$300 for it. A cow owned by Otto Zimmerli, Brodhead, sold for \$445. A 10-month old calf from C. W. Chambers sold for \$210. The highest price paid on the first afternoon was for a cow owned by Babler Bros. that sold for \$710.

Unfortunately, I was unable to find out how much people were earning at that time.