

## Albert Miller Purchases George King Jewelry

The wife of George King, jeweler in Monroe from the 1850s, passed away at the age of 71 on February 16, 1888. Maria H. Aldridge was a widow with a daughter, Clara, when she came to Monroe in 1858 and married Mr. King in November of that year. She had taught music here for 25 years and “played the first melodeon ever used in the M. E. Church here.” She had the misfortune to lose her sight two years earlier. The funeral was held from the family home on the southeast corner of 16th Avenue and 17th Street. After Maria’s death, he moved in with his daughter, Fannie Adams, and her husband, Jacob, on the northwest corner of 15th Avenue and 16th Street.

Nothing more about King was seen in the newspapers until his obituary in 1891. He died on Sunday morning, January 25 after a 2-week illness. He was two months short of his 69th birthday, but “his silver white hair and full flowing beard indicated a much greater age. He was a man of fine tastes, an artist by instinct, and in his earlier days was thought to be a fine musician.”

It was announced a month later that King’s jewelry stock was purchased by Albert Miller, who had been with King’s business “for several years.” As mentioned in the previous column, Albert was the son of Anton Miller, who had converted his furniture business into the City Hotel in 1879. It was reported that Albert had his own jewelry business in Minnesota at this time, but he, his wife, and son, Walter, moved back to Monroe where he operated the jewelry business on the west side of the square. The family was living on the east side of the 1400-block of 15th Avenue later that year. By 1895 they were living on the southwest corner of 9th Street and 13th Avenue, with a daughter, Charline, added to the family.

According to Albert’s obituary, the couple lived in Superior, Nebraska for a year after they got married in 1885. Then they spent five years in business in Julesburg, Colorado before returning to Monroe. It appears that the newspaper article was in error that they returned to Monroe from Minnesota.



This photo of the south side of the Square, which is on display at Culver’s in Monroe, was taken in the early 1900s. Notice that the rightmost building displays “A. Miller” above the roofline. Also note how different the storefront looked back then and how much more ornate the building was. An earlier photo of this building can be seen on page 27 of the Monroe Area Pictorial History.

Nothing was printed in the newspaper about the Miller jewelry store for the next eight years. At that time, it was reported that Miller's stock had been destroyed by a fire on Sunday morning, August 30, 1899. The fire was discovered in a building on the east side of the Square shortly after noon. The fire department arrived quickly and soon had the blaze under control. But the building was completely gutted and nearly \$5,000 worth of property had been destroyed. Most of that loss was on Miller, who carried only \$1,000 insurance. The building was owned by Mrs. Adeline McCammant, daughter of Peter Wells, whose loss was only \$500, all of which was covered by insurance. It was thought "that the explosion of a lamp left burning near the back of the store started the blaze."

It was reported on September 13 that Miller had settled with the fire insurance company and was getting ready "for a 'fire sale' to close out his damaged goods, and all other goods on hand at half or less than half value."

An article in November 1900 stated that Miller was located on the south side of the Square. "This is one of the most handsomely finished storerooms in the city, and it is filled with a large and elegant stock of fine jewelry, watches, clocks, silverware, novelties, pianos, organs, and musical merchandise, and believe we may truthfully say that it is the best line of its size in Southern Wisconsin." The editor added that Miller "has a large trade and makes a point of selling goods at a low margin of profit so that he may replenish them frequently with latest productions."

No record of a purchase of the building at 1604 11th Street was found, but Miller's family of four was living upstairs above the business in 1900. An ad on October 19 stated that he had secured an eye specialist, a graduate optician with experience. "If you have trouble with your eyes or have headaches, it will pay you to consult a person who understands his business. We make examinations free and charge but little for glasses."

An interesting ad on September 7, 1906 started, "Just 3,878 inches west of the post office you will find the home of the beautiful line of Chickering, Chase Bros. and Strohber pianos." It also added that they carried pedal extensions, which allowed children of any age to use the pedals and have perfect foot and back support. "It is adjustable and guaranteed to fit every make of piano and any size child. It is endorsed by music teachers everywhere."

The same ad stated, "We have some genuine bargains in slightly used pianos and organs, to make room for our fall stock, on easy payments if desired. Any reasonable offer accepted." They added a list of a few people to whom they have sold pianos, which included N. B. Treat, Monroe Business Institute, John Teehan, Deutche Gesellschaft, Will Hartwig, and Charles Grant, my great-grandfather, and many more. They were planning to have an exhibit in the agricultural building at the Green County fair. "Visitors are always welcome and incur no obligation to purchase."

Albert spent Saturday evening, August 6, 1910 in the store. When he was placing the cash in the safe in preparation of closing about 11:00, he fell to the floor. Mrs. Miller, who was in the apartment upstairs, heard him fall and rushed downstairs. She found him over a chair with a gash in his forehead and gasping for breath. Before a physician arrived, "life was extinct." Miller had complained of chest pains and also had rheumatism, but had not previously suffered any acute attacks. Death was caused by apoplexy.

In the next column, it will be revealed about how much longer Miller Jewelry remained in business.