The 300th Back in the Day Column

It is quite difficult for me to fathom that it was more than six and a half years ago that I wrote my first Back in the Day column that was printed on February 1, 2020. This is the 300th column in this series, which is something I never thought would happen back when Emily Massingill asked me to commit to writing these in January of that year. I never would have continued to write if it had not been for all of the wonderful comments that I have received. There is no reason to write these columns if one doesn't know that there are people who read and appreciate them.

As I mentioned in a previous column, all of the Back in the Day columns are available to read at any time on the Monroe Public Library site, https://www.monroepubliclibrary.org/figicolumns.html. In this column I will give you some updates on information that has been found about some of the previous columns since they were published. I shall include the column number in parentheses for each of those if you care to review the original column. For certain columns, the one posted on the library website has an additional map or photograph that was not printed in the paper.

You may recall that the earliest article I found about the O.D.D. club (column 256) was from November 1, 1919. Unfortunately, nothing was known by me at that time about when the club was formed or its purpose. A search on newspapers.com (accessed on the library website) found an article in the Monroe Evening Times on February 23, 1948 about the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the O.D.D. club. The celebration was held at the home of Mrs. N. H. Durst, one of four charter members who were present that evening. Mrs. LaVern Deal, Mrs. Charles Eastman, and Mrs. Rudolph Maurer were the other charter members attending. The club was organized during World War I to support Red Cross work, but continued as a social group that met regularly.

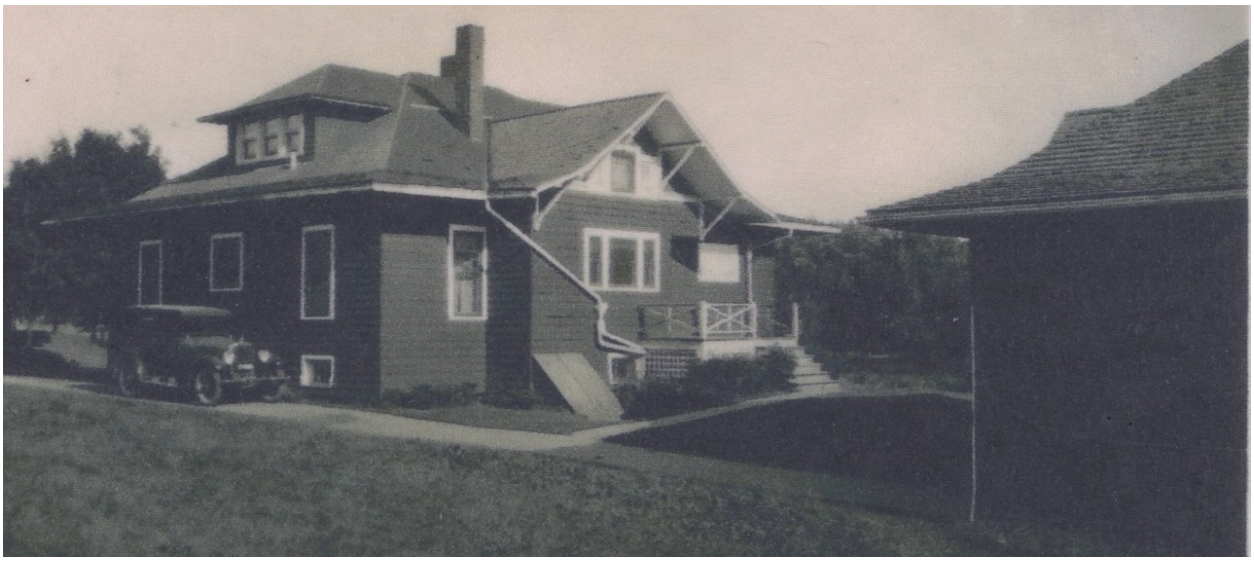
This photo of the home at 509 20th Avenue was taken in June 1916 and has been passed to the recent owners of that property. The house was built in 1910 by Fred V. Kundert and his father-in-law, Jacob Voegeli, for Fred and Elsbeth to reside in. Notice the windmill behind the house, probably the one mentioned in a previous column about the Gettings Addition

The Monday Reading Club (column 264) celebrated their 30th anniversary on March 26, 1928 at the home of Mrs. Robert Rote with 40 present. Meetings continued to be held weekly and membership

was still limited to 25. Mrs. Relf, one of the cofounders, gave a short history of the club and its activities and paid tribute to the late Mrs. A. F. Rote, who still served as an inspiration to others. The other cofounder, Mrs. Jenny Chadwick, was residing in Los Angeles at that time.

I mentioned several walkers/hikers during the 1920s (column 270). Since then I've found a few more articles about other ambitious people. Oswald Babler, 91, walked from Monticello to New Glarus in August 1926 to visit friends. He commented that "he was not at all tired and said he could also walk back." In the previous year he had hiked the 12 miles from Monticello to Monroe with C. W. Netherwood, who was 82 at the time.

On one of my weekly trips to Dairy Queen, Luke Molinaro asked me if I knew any of the history of the home at 509 20th Avenue, which he and Lexi had recently purchased. I had known of three families who had lived there, one in the 1960s and the others much more recently. I knew that this house is located in the Gettings Addition (column 234), so I had a natural curiosity to learn more. When he told me that he had photos of the home taken in 1916, I knew I wanted to find even more information for him. I started looking through the city directories that took me back to the time of the photo. That lead me to some interesting information from two obituaries that I found on separate trips to the library!



It was shared in the obituary of Fred Kundert, 35, in October 1910 that he and his wife, Elsbeth, had "recently moved into the two finished rooms of the costly bungalow" that he was building with the help of his father-in-law, Jacob Voegeli, 62. The day after Fred died, Jacob helped his daughter select a lot at Greenwood cemetery, engage Rev. Alfred Schuh to perform the funeral, and select a casket at Shriner's. He then went to his home on 7th Street and committed suicide. A double funeral for Elsbeth's husband and father was held in the unfinished home on that Thursday afternoon. She continued to live in that home until her death in the home on July 30, 1933.

When I met with the editor back in January 2020, we never discussed for how long I would write the columns, nor did I ever even think about how long I would do this. Many people encourage me to keep writing as long as I can; I hope that I can do it for at least a couple more years. However, climbing up and down the ladder at the Court House with those heavy record books and my changing brain may force me to quit - or at least slow down! As many of you know, I am rather obsessed with learning as much about our local history as I can. It does no good for me to learn all of this if I don't share it with others. I still have so much information that I wish to share that I hope I will be able to continue writing for years to come. Be aware, however, that I may cut back the frequency of these columns at any time. I continue to read and index the Monroe Evening Times as I write these columns; I am currently reading 1928.

Know that all of the positive comments that I receive motivate me to keep writing - and, hopefully, writing better columns as time progresses. Thank you to all who read these columns and give me so much feedback.