

Architectural Analysis of Historic District

This work is taken in part from the National Register of Historic Places nomination placed by the Woman's Club of Monroe in 1982.

General Description. The Monroe Commercial District comprises an area of some ten-city blocks in the central section of the city. Monroe was platted in a grid pattern, and the district itself is completely surrounded by residential areas; as a result, the district in appearance is very homogeneous and cohesive. The heart of the district is the courthouse square. The square's wider streets than the remainder of the district, and buildings in the square area are mostly 19th century constructions. Each side of the square has 5 or 6 structures abutted to each other and alterations in the buildings have been largely confined to the ground floor, with display windows and the like. The primary open space within the district is also in the square, the large courthouse green. The green once contained numerous elm trees, which have almost entirely disappeared. The green, together with the wide streets about the square, conveys a sense of spaciousness and provides clear vistas. Outside the square, the rest of the district's approximately 65 buildings are a combination of shops and manufacturing sites. In the southern part of the district, particularly, there are several old manufacturing sites once important to Monroe's economy. Alterations in the buildings outside the square have been fewer and less noticeable, but there has also been some new construction (e.g., the Swiss Village Mall in the south part of the district, now a charter school). Buildings are also more widely spaced outside the square, but the lack of trees and the narrower streets offset this, so that no real open spaces exist. Nevertheless, the district as a whole is not cramped or crowded and can be easily traversed.

Building types. The commercial area in Monroe originally was confined almost completely to the square, and the buildings during the early years were all frame structures. Since the 1880's, most buildings inside the historic district have been either sided or replaced with brick. Most buildings are two or three stories in height, constructed of either red or cream brick and decorated with ornamentation that reflects the Victorian motif of the late 19th century. Of special note among the buildings of early twentieth-century vintage are three (the Goetz Theater, the Young Building, and the Times building) whose glazed terra-cotta tile facades rival the most flamboyant Victorian examples in decorative interest. Although notable exceptions exist, as noted in the inventory, Victorian mode dominates the architecture of the district and reflects the period of greatest growth. While very many of the architects who designed these buildings are no longer known, local sources do indicate that the workmanship in the construction of the buildings came from craftsmen who lived in Monroe. This befits a city that was growing rapidly and the Monroe commercial area did indeed expand between 1880 and 1920. Most of the significant buildings inside the historic district are and have been retail shops, but several sites for manufacturing are in the southern part of the district. Some of these are no longer in use. Generally, all the retail shops are in good condition, while some of the manufacturing sites, again mostly in the southern part of the district are deteriorating. Some efforts are being made, however, to restore the structures, although these plans will depend on the ability to find economically feasible ways in which they could once again contribute to the commerce of Monroe.

Description of Pivotal Buildings. The inventory of sites in the commercial district follows and consists of two parts. The first part is a descriptive list of all pivotal structures. The second part is an index of all structures within the district boundaries. These structures are marked either P, for pivotal; C, for contributing; or N, for non-contributing. The index also contains a list of all owners. At the south edge of the district there is some archeological potential where former grist mills and other manufacturing buildings have been razed, but this potential awaits verification.

Pivotal Buildings. Unless otherwise specified, all lot numbers refer to Lybrand's Donation to the City of Monroe.) Buildings are listed sequentially by street—9th Street through 17th Avenue. (1) Courthouse Square Green County Courthouse 1891

Architect: G. Stanley Mansfield. Owner: Green County. This is the second county courthouse built in Monroe and is the district's most dominant visual feature. The building is a distinguished example of Richardsonian Romanesque, and has the additional merit of containing two fine murals by German-born artist Franz Rohrbeck. (NRHP, 3/21/78).

NINTH STREET

1502-9th Street (Lots 131-133 Arabut Ludlow Memorial Library 1904

Architects: Claude and Starck. Owner Union School District, 1510-13th Street, Monroe (now owned by Vance Miller). The Ludlow family contributed \$12,500.00 to the construction of this library as a tribute to the important Monroe businessman. The library was the first building in Monroe built for this purpose, the earlier town library being kept in the second floor of a shop on the square. It had been the city library since, (now located in the former Monroe Clinic Building 925-16th Avenue) now offering to the reading public some 40,000 volumes (compared to 6200 in 1907), on all subjects. The Neoclassical design of this building was provided by two of Wisconsin's most prestigious architects. (Monroe Evening Times, October 13, 1848 and October 13, 1973; E. C. Hamilton, The Story of Monroe, 1976, 87, 197-198. Hereinafter called Hamilton.)

1617-9th Street (Lots 126-127) Green County Historical Museum 1860

Architect: unknown. Owner: City of Monroe. This building is the Universalist Church, where many of Monroe's early businessmen and their families, who were predominantly Yankee in origin, worshipped. The land for the building was donated by Jacob Lybrand. During its early years, the structure was used to store supplies for the Union Army. The church was renovated several times, and once was a magnificent example of Gothic architecture. The steeple, however, was removed in 1910, after being struck by lightning. In 1966, the building was given to the city, due to the decline in the size of the congregation. Now used by the Green County Historical Society, the building still contains some of the early leaded stained glass windows, but its primary significance derives from its connections to Monroe's pioneer businessmen, including Lybrand, Treat, and Ludlow. As such, it represents the social unity of the commercial district's beginnings. (Lucile Becker, Affectionately Yours, 1977; Monroe Evening Times, November 29, 1965; Wisconsin State Journal, October 3, 1958).

TENTH STREET

1601-1603-10th Street (Lot 15) Young Building 1889

Architect: unknown. Owner: Nancy N. Mortell Trust, Kellogg Citizen's Bank, Green Bay, Wisconsin (now owned by Lakowske Investments, Inc.). This building was for many years the location of the Monroe Sentinel; the city's most important 19th century newspaper. It was also, from 1918-1928, the site of the city offices for Monroe. (Hamilton, 156; Monroe City Directories, 1900-1930).

ELEVENTH STREET

1500-1512-11th Street (Lot 70-71) Syndicate Block 1888

Architect: unknown. Owner: 1500 (Lots 70-71) Rudolf E. Maurer (now owned by Charles Kind), 1502 (Lots 70-71) Herman J. Christen (now owned by Scott Patterson), 1504 (Lots 70-71) Lois Hodgson (now owned by Marvin Rufi), 1508-1512 (Lots 70-71) Sherman Hodgson (now owned by Marvin Rufi). The construction of this building by a group of Monroe businessmen evidenced the fact that Monroe's commercial activities could no longer be confined to the square. Since its construction, the Syndicate Block has been used for a variety of retail businesses, including laundries, meat markets, two early theaters, and offices for the Monroe Business College. The structure continues to be used by several shops and has been little altered. (Hamilton, 184-185; Monroe City Directory, 1891.)

1514-1524-11th Street (Lot 21) F. F. White block 1900

Architect: A. D. Conover. Owner: City-Urban Enterprises, Route 1, Box 270, Monroe (now owned by Get Realty). The White block has been noted as the most distinctive late Victorian commercial construction in Monroe, combining almost all the varied motifs that characterized this genre of architecture. (NRHP, 1/31/79).

1708-11th Street (Lot 28-30) Goetz Theatre 1932

Architect: Livermore, Barnes and Samuelson, Madison (Monroe Evening Times, 9/1/31). Owner: Robert & Nathan Goetz, 1708-11th Street, Monroe (now owned by Goetz Theatres, Inc). The district's only motion picture theatre, the Goetz Theater stands out for its flamboyant style, particularly the curvature in the front façade gable and the colorful glazed terra-cotta ornamentation. Overall, it is a good example of the early theaters that were built in many small towns during the period. (Information based on material gathered by Dorothy Maurer of Monroe)

1724-11th Street (Lots 49-51) Federal building 1932

Architect: James A Wetmore. Owner: United States Postal Authority. One of the last constructions in Monroe's commercial district during its historic period, the post office is a large Neo-Georgian building, the style of which is a marked contrast to the 19th century, Victorian era buildings that dominate the district. (Construction date from building cornerstone).

TWELFTH STREET

1324-12th Street (Lot 5, Russell's Donation) Green County Agricultural Services

Architect: unknown. Owner Green County Cheese Coop., 1324-12th Street, rear, Monroe (building was razed) the lot is owned by Mountain Crest SRL). This two-story brick structure, with metal siding covering two sides, has been since early in the 20th century, the location of the Green County Cooperative Cheese Co., the district's longest operating cheese manufacturer. Much of the cheese that is made is sold locally in the cheese stores around the Courthouse Square. (Information from an interview with cheesemaker, Eldon Ott, by Carol Brand, 2/17/81).

1404-12th Street (Lots 152-153) Jailhouse Tap 1870

Architect: unknown. Owner Fred W. Huber, 1404-12th Street, Monroe (now owned by Mountain Crest SRL). This structure was, for a number of years, the third jail for Green County, constructed at a cost of about \$25,000.00. The building originally provided facilities for the jail and offices and living space for the county sheriff. The appearance of the building today is essentially the same as when it was built except for an underground, dirt floored cellblock that was razed to make room for new construction. (Booth & Dietz, *Memoirs of Green County*, 1913, 39-40. Hereinafter called Booth & Dietz; Information provided by David C. Riese, M.D.)

1616-12th Street (Lots 162-164) Monroe Cheese Corporation 1888

Architect: unknown. Owner Edwin Rufenacht, Pres., 1616-12th Street, Box 260, Monroe (now owned by Bank of Monticello). This building was originally part of the Gottlieb Leuenberger Brewery, a small local brewery that lasted only through the late 19th century. The building was eventually sold to Kraft Foods, and is now a local cheese manufactory (business now closed and building empty). (Hamilton, 158,190).

1505-12th Street (Lots 73 &74) Rufer Refrigeration)

Architect: unknown. Owner: Rufer Refrigeration (Mike Hubbard), 1505-12th Street. This Structure was first the site of the Monroe Electric Company, the first generator and provider of electric power in the commercial area. The building was sold in 1924 to Wisconsin Power and Light, which occupied the building until 1980. (Hamilton, 183).

FOURTEENTH AVENUE

1208-14th Avenue Huber Brewing Complex 1880's

Architect: unknown. Owner Joseph Huber Brewing Co., Inc., Brewery Office, Box 277, Monroe. Originally the Monroe Brewery, then the Blumer Brewery, Huber acquired the operations in 1944 (acquired by Mountain Crest SRL in 2006). As both the Blumer and Huber Brewery, this business has been a major employer in Monroe for a century and was the single largest business in the City. Good management has benefited the operation and made it more fortunate than most Wisconsin breweries. By 1970 the Huber Brewery was Wisconsin's fifth largest, doing business over the entire midwest, as well as Louisiana and California. Within the complex, the historic buildings consist of the main plant and the bottle works. (Hamilton, 53, 6668; Monroe Evening Times, October 13, 1973 and January 22, 1979).

FIFTEENTH AVENUE

1301-15TH Avenue (Lots 6 & 7, Block 32 of Rattan's Addition) Green County House 1866

Architect: unknown. Owner M. Doyle, 1301-15th Avenue, Monroe (now owned by Jim Doyle). One of Monroe's earliest hotels, this building has changed very little in its appearance since construction. In 1882, the hotel was bought by Fred Thomm; a Swiss immigrant and it subsequently become a very popular winter resort for many of Green County's Swiss cheese makers and dealers. (C.W. Butterfield, History of Green County, Wisconsin, 1884, 931-932. Hereinafter called Butterfield; booth & Dietz, 280.

SIXTEENTH AVENUE

907-16th Avenue (Lot 40) Times Building and Annex 1922

Architect: unknown. Owner: Cerbins, Smith and Wyss, 1005-16th Avenue, Monroe (now owned by Ruffue, Pas, Jacobson & Koster). This building has been the printing plant for the Monroe Evening Times, the city's 82-year-old newspaper. The adjoining annex is a one-story building with visually interesting features, including a terra-cotta front façade with a paned clerestory over the entrance. (Monroe Evening Times, October 13, 1972).

1001-1005-16th Avenue (Lots 16-17) Treat Block 1872

Architect: unknown. Owners: T. Chester Becker 1001-16th Avenue, Monroe, (now owned by S. D. Devco, LLC, Dr. David & Sharon Riese), Grace B. Painter 1003-16th. Avenue, Monroe, (now owned by S. D. Devco, LLC, Dr. David & Sharon Riese), Charles T., Harold, and Dorothy Meythaler 1005-16th Avenue, Monroe, (now owned by Marc Klein Trust). The Treat Block is the most imposing building that remains from the early square. Old photographs show that it was a very fine commercial Victorian, although much of its decoration has since either been removed or deteriorated. Now the most notable features are the stone and brick window caps. The building was built by J. B. Treat, one of the city's earliest businessmen. Treat migrated to Monroe from Maine, operated first a grocery, then more extensive investments. He was one of the organizers and directors of the Monroe Manufacturing Co., as well as owner of a large sawmill. He served his adopted city as state senator from 1875-1879, and so in several ways contributed to the development of Monroe. (Hamilton, 102-103, 169, 183; Butterfield, 286-287, 929-930).

1007-16th Avenue (Lot 17) Caradine building 1869

Architect: G. F. Schultze. Owner Alma Caradine, 2639-6th Street, Apt. 3, Monroe (now owned by Lakowske Investments). Now the location of the Monroe Bakery (in 1982), this building had already been recognized for its architecture, particularly the unique brick work over the round-arched windows. (NRHP, 5/8/79).

1019-1021-16th Avenue (Lot 19) Chenoweth Building 1889

Architect: unknown. Owners: Lloyd F. Marty, Samuel F. Humble, and Evelyn Baumgartner, 1019-16th Avenue, Monroe (now owned by Julie & Tso-Ching Lin). Constructed by Benjamin Chenoweth, one of early Monroe's most respected entrepreneurs, the Chenoweth Building is a well preserved example of the 1880's and 1890's brick structures that replaced the earlier frame store on the square. The building has been in good condition, and had finely detailed Queen Anne-style

bays on the second floor of its front façade. The structure also has fine cast metal detail in the cornice. (Hamilton, 183).

1217-16th Avenue (Lots 1 & 4, block 34 Rattan's Addition) Monroe Planing Mill 1840's

Architect: unknown. Owner: Joseph Huber Brewing Company (building razed, lot owned by Mountain Crest SRL). These two empty buildings, a frame structure built in the late 1840's and a brick two-story commercial building erected later, were the remains of the once very important Monroe Planing Mill, established in 1858. The frame building was first used as a tavern and hotel, being later moved to its present site as part of the mill. The brick building was built for the mill in the latter stages of its existence. Except for a gristmill, the Planing Mill was Monroe's first large scale processing or manufacturing center and an early source of capital for the growing commercial district. The frame building, which had a gable roof and simple rectangular windows, was probably the oldest structure in the commercial district. (Hamilton, 17, 40; Helen M. Bingham, History of Green County, 1877, 92-93. See also Booth & Dietz, 80).

SEVENTEENTH AVENUE

1000-17th Avenue (Lot 10) Schuetze's Clothing 1875

Architect: unknown. Owner: June Schuetze 613-25th Avenue, Monroe (now owned by George Hughes). This structure has been one of the cornerstones of the business district, being since 1876 the location of a clothing store. The building has also been subjected to less alteration than many other square buildings and has finely detailed cornice ornamentation, representative of the styles when it was erected. (Hamilton, 172).

1114-17th Avenue (Lots 27-28) Schlitz Building 1888

Architect: unknown. Owners: Richard L. and Gertrude Soddy, 2204-8th Street, Monroe, WI 53566 (now Mary Soddy). This building exemplifies an interesting aspect of the early brewery business in Wisconsin. The structure was built by the Schlitz Brewing Co. of Milwaukee as an outlet for their beer; that is, the company leased the building for many years to a local saloon, which offered only Schlitz products. For many years after 1920, the building was used as a printing office, and now has branched out to a general office supplies store, (Information about the early uses of the building based on interview with Mr. Fred Kohli, former owner of the building, and supplied by Mrs. Bessie L. Houser).

1129-17th Avenue (Lots 45-46) Lanz Heating & Sheet Metal 1874

Architect: unknown. Owner: Herman Lanz, 1129-17th Avenue, Monroe (now owned by Ackee & Bammy II, LLC). This building is the old Monroe Manufacturing Company, which was established in Monroe as early as 1865, and was another of J. B. Treat's financial ventures. The company did a variety of cast iron manufactures and repairs, but came to specialize in agricultural implements, and later carriages. As such, the building was the site of some of Monroe's earliest manufacturing endeavors. The structure is substantially the same as it was originally built and has an interesting hipped monitor roof. (Booth & Dietz, 282-283. See also Monroe City Directory 1885; Hamilton, 102-103, 159, 169, 178-179).

1217-17th Avenue Turner Hall 1937 (Lots 1 & 4. Bl. 35 Rattan's Addition)

Architect: Max Hanisch. Owner: Turner Hall Club, 1217-17th Avenue, Monroe. This building replaced the original Turner Hall, which was destroyed by fire in 1936, and is a Swiss chalet design. The hall is still very tied to the Swiss heritage in Monroe and is the center of social activities in the district. Many dances, benefits, and theater performances have been, and still are, given at the hall. A wing was added to the building in 1954, to enlarge the facilities. (Monroe Evening Times, October 13, 1948; minutes from the organizations that jointly own and operate the hall, the Swiss club, Swiss Singers, Cheese Makers Association and G. U. G. G.).