

Building History – Businesses in the former Bank Block

Barbara Bedau Brow
White Lake Area Historical Society



Previously we explored some of the businesses that were located in the former Bank building (on the far right) after the bank moved out in 1951. So it was only fitting that we should try to discover some of the business that were in the other store fronts that make up the rest of the Bank block.

All three storefronts in the building that is located on the northwest corner of Ferry Street and Dowling were built at the same time. It was started in 1882 and completed in 1883.

By 1882, H. B. W. Vanzalingen had completed the plans for the Muskegon County Bank. The building was 60x85 feet, and two-story. The upper portion of the building was devoted to offices and the lower portion to the bank and two stores. The cost was upwards of \$8,000. The bank moved into the building on the right in 1883. George E. Dowling, Charles H. Cook, and Henry Terwilliger owned the bank.

George J. Moog had a branch of his Whitehall Furniture Store in the building in 1883. And that's when it seemed to have become known as the Moog building. There was a furniture refinishing business on the second floor, over the left and middle sections of the building, according to a map from 1883.

There was something listed as a “club room” located over the Bank building in 1883. Not sure if that was the IOOF or some other club. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) had a club room over the Moog building from 1902 to 1910 and maybe later.

C. L. Streng opened a dry goods store next to the Bank in 1884. Christian Louis Streng came to the Montague area in 1867. His first job was as a Secretary for the Ferry & Dowling Lumber Company, a position he held for two years. He continued to work for the reorganized E. P. Ferry Company as their bookkeeper. He eventually quit the position because it required him to work on Sundays and went into the dry goods business. He operated the store until 1907.

A map from 1892 indicated the space on the far left was vacant. By 1896 there was an unknown Millinery shop located in that space.

Following a fire in the Sadler block in February 1900, Rose & Sons moved next door to C. L. Streng’s store. In March 1907, Rose & Son filed for bankruptcy. In September 1907 Rose & Son was sold to Grossman Brothers of Durand, WI. Isaac Grossman came to town then and took possession of the stock in preparation for a closing out sale. Grossman was basically a liquidator and left town shortly after the sale and returned to Wisconsin.

In June 1907, it was announced that C.L. Streng had sold his entire stock of dry goods and store fixtures to Potter Bros of Elgin and Chicago, IL. Potter Bros operated 17 stores in WI and IL. Joseph S. Potter, the junior member of the firm took charge of the store in Montague, while his older brother William T. conducted business in Illinois. By 1911, the name changed from Potter Bros to J. S. Potter. Eventually they were located in both storefronts to the left of the Bank. Joseph Potter died in 1916 but the business was continued by Mrs. Potter. They remained in business until July 1929 when it was sold to L.W. Mills.

Lucius Warner Mills was from Lansing but was no stranger to the area. He had visited Montague frequently when his father and brother were associated with the bank and resided here. He was married and they had two children. Mills’ wife Sarah passed away in May 1931. He continued to operate the store until November 1932, when he sold his dry goods store back to Mrs. J. S. Potter from whom he bought it. After getting out of the dry goods business, Mills returned to Lansing and decided to sell life insurance for a time. L. W. Mills died in May 1940 in Lansing.

July 1945, it was announced that Robert Barteau had leased one section of the building next to the bank with the intention of opening a used furniture store there. In August 1946, Barteau held an Auction at his Used Furniture store. The reason for the sale was that Barteau was moving the store from its present location to the Walter Hunt building next to the Hunt Hardware store. The move was planned for September 1, 1946. The Walter Hunt building had previously been used as the headquarters for the cherry canning company until earlier that year.

Paul Wiedemann purchased the building in September 1945 and opened as a shoe repair and shoe merchandising store on the far-left end.

In November 1946 Mr. & Mrs. R. N. Peacock opened the Montague Variety store next door to the Bank in a vacant storeroom in the Wiedemann building formerly occupied by Roy R. Barteau’s Used Furniture

store. The Peacocks leased the space from Wiedemann. Richard N. Peacock was also the manager of a drug store in Newaygo where they lived, and Mrs. Peacock had considerable retail experience.

Two years later, in November 1948, Mr. & Mrs. Floyd Bunch of Hart bought Peacock's Variety store. The building was still owned by Paul Wiedeman at the time. They operated their 5c to a \$1 store until August 1950, when Mrs. A. F. "Berdene" Harrington bought the Bunch's Business. Mrs. Bunch died in January 1951 and Mr. Bunch died in April 1954.

Mrs. Helen Panzl then bought Harrington's store in August 1952. In 1957, Panzl moves out of the Weidemann building and into a store next door to Hunts Hardware which was located in the next block on Ferry Street at the time.

In July 1957, Weidemann expanded into the space vacated by Panzl doubling the size of their store.

In 1962, the Tom and Shirley Wonder family purchased Wiedemann Shoes and Clothing store. They remained at this location until 1974 when they moved to Old 31 and Fruitvale Road. By 1999 they were known as Wonder's Western Suppliers.

Nancy Mustaikis opened Nancy's Bridal Boutique in the Ohrenberg 1930 building in June 1975. By October 1977, she and her husband had purchased the former Wonders shoe and clothing store and she moved her bridal boutique there. She also added men's formal wear. Then she purchased the corner building next to her. Nancy remained in business at that location until 1983.

In 1976 Camelot Photo which was owned by Daniel Amstutz was also located in the building at 8695 Ferry. They remained there until 1992, before they moved to 8812 Ferry where they remained until 2001. Daniel Amstutz died in August 2017.

In Aug 2018, Shawna Vander Vrede opened Figgs Boutique in the middle storefront next to the former Bank building. The shop features womens casual clothing and unique gifts. On March 3, 2022, Figgs held a Grand Opening of their newly expanded area in the former Bank building. And in May 2022, Figgs Boutique announced that they had expanded their business into the entire first floor area of this historic building.