

Historic Houses - Miller-Anderson-Roesler-Vohs House

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C1907 - The Miller family gathered at their home.

On May 4, 1905, it was reported in the Montague Observer that "Carpenters and masons are very busy in Montague. George Miller will build a residence across the street from the Presbyterian Church for himself and his family."

The cement foundation of George Miller's new house was commenced yesterday by Thieman & Son who have the contract for all the mason work, as was reported in the Montague Observer dated September 21, 1905. The article went on to say that the plans and specifications were perfected by Ernest Hulbert and the house will be modern in both architecture and interior arrangement. The building will be 30x36 feet, two story, with two large gables and six smaller ones.

A 50 foot veranda 8 feet wide will extend on three sides of the house and a seven foot porch will grace the rear at the lake front. The veranda is designed to be a very handsome affair, cement being the chief material used in its construction. Cement block will extend above the porch floor which will also be cement. Short columns will extend from the cement work to the roof and the semicircle corners will add beauty to the plan.

The house will contain twelve rooms besides a commodious cellar. Mr. Miller has a considerable amount of the lumber on hand, which he manufactured himself, including ash and oak for the interior finish.

By April 19, 1906, the interior of George Miller's fine residence was being finished in handsome woods. The floors were being laid in alternating maple and cherry; doors and casings were finished in select ash from Mr. Millers own timber lands. This house will be thoroughly modern, equipped with a steam heating plant.

Mr. & Mrs. Miller expect to occupy their new home this week – according to an item from April 26, 1906.

George Miller was born in Oceana County on 10 December 1863, to John and Susanna (ne Eilers) Miller. He married Cecelia Helen Kraus in Claybanks on 7 January 1893, and they had 5 children: Fr. Louis John (1895-1963); Margaret Catherine (1904-1980); Frances Susan (aka Sr. Mary Roberta) (1907-1995); George W. (1909-1972) & Mercedes (aka Sr. Marie Celine) (1910-1985).

In the 1910 Census George was living on Prospect Street and his occupation was listed as Mill Owner and Farmer. By the 1920 Census he and his wife and children were living in Muskegon Hts. By the end of the 1920s they had moved to California. George died 9 January 1936 in California. His wife Cecelia was born 1 July 1873 in Detroit and died 19 June 1954 in California.

It's unclear exactly when the house changed hands, but Adolph Anderson was the next one to occupy the house.

Adolph's father had worked for the Murphy Sawmill in Maple Grove and moved with the company when it relocated to Wisconsin. While living there Adolph was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin, on 23 October 1889. His father's failing health was the reason they returned to Montague to be closer to relatives and friends. Soon after returning to the area, his father died in 1892 leaving his mother with 2 small boys - a 6 year old and 3 a year old – to support.

By the time Adolph was in the 10th grade his help with family finances was needed. He quit school and went to work for Nufer Box Factory starting at 75 cents per day. He gradually worked his way to \$7.50 a week. He kept the job for 15 months until he was offered a job at the Montague Bank at \$3.00 a week. While it was less money it did give him the chance to continue school and the hope of graduating. After another 15 months, the cashier of the bank, Mr. E. P. Mills, was taken ill with typhoid fever and Adolph was offered the job of running the bank. This was just before his 18th birthday. In 1911 the bank incorporated as a State bank.

Adolph married Helen Ripley, daughter of L. G. Ripley, in the bay window of the Ripley house on June 10, 1914. During their marriage they had four children: Baby Boy (1915-1915); Paul Ripley (1916-1961); Phyllis Catherine (1917-2011); and James Howard (1921-2003).

He was elected cashier and director in 1916. In the late 1940's the bank became Montague State Bank and Mr. Anderson became President of the institution. Adolph retired in 1956 but remained a member of the Hackley Bank Board of Directors until 1967. The Andersons travelled to California and Europe during the winter months but would return to the area during the summer. They eventually sold their house on Old Channel Trail and moved into an apartment in North Muskegon. Helen died in Muskegon 16 June 1971. Adolph died in Grand Rapids 21 May 1981. They are both buried in Oak Grove Cemetery along with three of their children.

Henry Roesler was the next one who acquired the house in the early 1960s, as he had a “House Blessing” conducted in January 1963.

Henry Edward Roesler, Jr. was born in Chicago on 31 January 1927 to Henry E. Roesler, Sr. and Gladys Nelson. He moved to Montague from Chicago with his parents in 1941 and graduated from Montague HS in 1945. He graduated from the University of Chicago and the Worsham College of Mortuary Science in 1949 and became licensed Funeral Director in Michigan in 1951.

On May 15, 1954, he married Velma June Walgren in Whitehall. During their marriage they had 7 children: 2 daughters – Linda & Cindy; and 5 sons - David, Doug, Dean, Dwight & Darrin.

Roesler joined the Montague Police force in 1954 and was promoted to sergeant in 1955. Montague Mayor Ed Scharmer appointed Henry Chief of Montague Police in 1957, a position he held for more than 10 years.

In 1966 Roesler was named interim city superintendent after Frederick Walch resigned. He was appointed city superintendent in 1967, as well as being police chief. A new police chief was named in 1969 and Roesler continued as city superintendent until he resigned in 1970.

Henry was first elected to the school board in 1972 where he remained until 1984 when he was defeated by James Schlicting.

In 1991 Roesler unseated Montague Mayor Chester Pecak and retired from the Montague Police force. He served as Montague Mayor for 20 years – from 1991 until his death 1 November 2011. Had he lived, he would have been Mayor for another term, as he had won the election.

Rebecca Vohs purchased the house in 2016 and moved in with her four children: Leo, Andie, Javen and Lucy Zamojcin. One of the first things she did to the house was to have a new roof put on. When the work began it was then discovered that there were 3 layers of asphalt shingles over the original wooden shake shingles.

She cleaned, scraped, and calked. She indicated that she used so many tubes of liquid nails it felt like she was “gluing the house back together.” With a three- or four-inch brush in hand, it took all spring and summer to paint the shingle siding on the house, and 22 pillars, finishing in the fall.

Rebecca indicated that she used some 26 gallons of semi-gloss primer and paint on the exterior to change the color from the goldenrod with brown trim to white. Later she added black trim and a black front door. It would be interesting to go back in time and find out what color pallet was when the house was originally built.

The original house had a steam heating system (radiators) as evidenced by several holes patched in the wooden floors. Fortunately, it had a modern heating system in place when Rebecca bought the house.

Inside Rebecca removed the drop ceilings from several rooms, exposed the hardwood floors throughout the house including the bathrooms, and removed three layers of linoleum in the kitchen to expose hardwood floor in there. She also removed all the wallpaper, repaired some plaster and painted all the rooms. She was thrilled that none of the woodwork in the house had ever been painted and was still all original.

She upgraded the upstairs windows with insulated casement windows, eliminating the need for climbing to change the screens and storms each season. She also had plexiglass installed as a means of protection and insulation of the beautiful stained-glass windows.

With the help of her dad Ken, they saved the barn/garage by installing a drain and 6 support beams, replacing the single one that was twisted and barely holding everything up.

Rebecca was born in Oregon and later moved to Royal Oak, Michigan where she graduated. As a child, she and her family always had a cottage at Lost Valley and always loved this area. She moved to this area in 2003. She has a degree in sociology, but art has always been her passion which seems to have flowed over to house restoration. This was not her first historic home she owned in the area, however. At one time, she owned the big stucco house on Coon Creek and the Frank Crane Red Brick Farmhouse on Stanton. When she's not working on her house, she can be found working at Howmet.

Rebecca had the pleasure of knowing Velma Roesler while she was at White Lake Assisted Living. She feels blessed and proud to be able to call this house home and hopes to keep the Old Channel Trail house for 50 years, as a place for her kids to land and be able to enjoy our beautiful White Lake and Lake Michigan.