

The Capital City

No 3

The two blocks included within the limits of this article were among those earliest improved, and therefore do not show such rapid growth during the past decade as some other portions of the city, still the improvement on Washington avenue in the way of new buildings within the territory bound on the south by Allegan street and the north by Ionia, has been very marked. Had we taken the business blocks erected during the past 15 years they would have included nearly two thirds of those on Washington and Michigan avenues.

This time we shall commence at the handsome and substantial two-story McClure block¹, west side Washington avenue and a few rods north of Allegan street. It was erected in 1875 by the late H.B. McClure of Illinois. The first floor is divided into two commodious stores; the south having been occupied by E.S. Porter, the wide-awake and successful grocer during the last eight years. On Sept. 9, however, the fire demon badly damaged the store and goods, but the burned and smoked inside has given way to new woodwork, paint, and paper, so that there is no trace of fire or smoke to be seen. Mr. Porter, who camped outside his temporary barracks for a brief season, is back in his old quarters with a complete and brand new stock of goods, seemingly, without an unpleasant recollection even of the trying circumstances under which he was compelled to "go without standing on the order of his going." The north store is occupied by George W. Frary, the standard hat and cap man; and Watson Raplee, the genial jeweler. This store stood vacant for more than two years for the reason that Mr. McClure thought the rent should be at least \$1,000 a year. He was offered a rental of \$850 per annum several times but refused that sum. The upper rooms are occupied by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Eight O'clock club, the dental office of George H. Cole, and the Ladies literary club has just rented a suite of rooms in this building. Mr. McClure told a representative of the Republican a short time before his death that on the corner just south of the present block he should in the near future erect a block out Ohio sandstone, a building that would eclipse any business block yet erected in the city. Mr. McClure did not live to carry his plans to maturity, but it is understood that his estate will erect a substantial block on that corner the coming season. The block above described is the only improvement of the kind during the whole decade on the west side of the avenue between Allegan street and Michigan avenue, while the building space on the east side of the avenue was entirely filled in more than ten years ago. One of the stores belonging to the Wardwell estate, now occupied by R.A. Bailey², the veteran boot and shoe dealer, was destroyed by fire in 1879, when used as a cigar store by one Berger. It was rebuilt in 1880, and first occupied by N.J. Roe with a stock of groceries. When the latter removed to his present quarters on the southeast corner of Allegan street and Washington avenue, Mr. Bailey filled the store with a heavy stock of boots and shoes, and has since been able to "hold the fort."

¹ 112-114 S Washington 1883.

² 121 S Washington 1883.

When we pass to the block between Michigan avenue and Ottawa street on the east side we first find the two story store erected by the late J.M. French, jr., in 1877³. It is now owned by J.M. French, sr., and has been occupied ever since its completion by the well known clothing firm of Lederer & Sons. The upper story is occupied by attorneys Humphrey & Randall, and insurance agents, Miller & Davis.

Just north of the French building is the store of Henry Woodworth, erected in the same year. This is also a two story building, and the lower floor is occupied by the owner as a boot and shoe store⁴. He is one of the few Lansing dealers, who never pay any rent. The upper rooms are occupied by Prosecuting Attorney Nichols and Insurance agent E.O. Kelly. Judge Gillam also has an insurance office on this floor.

On the corner of Ottawa street is the brick block of F.M. Cowles, build in 1876. It is 24 by 66 feet and three stories in height. This building was erected in place of the one destroyed by fire in that year. For the past six years the first floor has been occupied by N.J. Jenison, the young and enterprising dry-goods dealer. The second story contains the law offices of E. Cahill and Ostrander & Baird.⁵

The east side of the block has had no new buildings in the decade; and the same thing can also be said for the west side of the block between Ottawa and Ionia streets, the extensive opera house and other stores in that vicinity having been erected in 1872.

Going to the west side of the avenue and beginning again at the south end of the block we find ourselves face to face with the Moody & Turner edifice of the "new post office building," as it is called⁶. The structure not only attracts the eye of every visitor to the capital city, but has given Lansing a reputation of having the finest and best arranged post office in Michigan. The building is three stories in height, covered with a Mansard roof, and cost \$38,762.15. It was completed in 1879, when building material was at the lowest notch, and could not now be duplicated for \$50,000. A detailed description of this magnificent and substantial building was given on the Republican of Sept. 30, 1879. The whole lower floor is occupied by the post office department, while the second floor contains, besides the real estate and business office of J.M. Turner, one of the owners of the building, the law office of J.C. Shields, S.F. Seager, S.S. Olds, S.C. Smith, M.V. & R.A. Montgomery, and that of Dodge & Black. Real Estate Agent W.K. Prudden, Architect Will Appleyard, and Lansing Mutual benefit association have commodious office room on the third floor.

Next door to the post office is a two story building, 22 by 90 feet, erected by E.R. Merrifield, and first occupied by the grocery firm of Carr & Bunn, but later Bunn & Johns.⁷

³ They must have meant the west side of Washington avenue. Lederer & Sons, Humphrey & Randall and Miller & Davis were all located at 113 N Washington in 1883, on the west side of the street.

⁴ Located at 115 N Washington in 1883, the west side of the street.

⁵ 123 N Washington 1883.

⁶ The Post Office was located on the south east corner, not the west corner.

⁷ 204 N Washington in 1883.

Two doors north of the Moody & Turner block is the two story brick store of George Crawford, erected in 1879; first occupied by Charles Cleveland's news stand, but now owned and conducted by the well known and enterprising Crotty Brothers. Dr. Knapp has an office in the second story.⁸

Beyond the Crawford building is another two story building 22 by 60 feet built by the Uebele estate in 1877. It has been occupied as a saloon from completion.

Beyond this is the two story brick store of that level headed German boot and shoe dealer, Fred Shubel. He erected this building in 1877, and while the first story furnishes him with a neat and convenient room for a well selected stock of goods, the upper rooms afford himself and family a comfortable home.

Still further north is another two story brick building erected by S. Beck in 1877. The first floor is now filled with the handsome dry goods stock of D. Rodman, while W.L. Swan has an intelligence office on the second floor.

Just beyond this is the "German block." It was built in 1874 by Gottlieb Berner, Jacob Eichele, and John Nagle. It is three stories in height, and was a substantial improvement on that part of the avenue. Mr. Berner soon sold the south store to J.M. Turner, which is now occupied by F.J. Fellman's tea and coffee store. Mr. Eichele has utilized the central part of the building as a hotel ever since its completion.⁹ Mr. Nagle's store was used for some time as a boarding house, then as a harness and leather shop by Crawford and Ziegler, but it is now rented to E.P. Newman, who will soon open a large stock of dry goods. The building is 66 by 80 feet and three stories high.

A few doors north of the German block is the two story brick block erected by Fred Trostle, the well known gunsmith in 1877. The first floor is now occupied by John Hermann, merchant tailor. On the block just north of D.W. Buck's furniture rooms¹⁰ is the two story brick building of J.W. Hinchey, erected in 1879. The south store is occupied by Hungerford & Ward as a general grocery and feed store, while the south room is occupied by the bakery and confectionary stock of the industrious and enterprising George Brake.

The two story frame building across the street, nearly opposite, was erected by Manning Baker in 1880, and is now occupied by Charles H. Mann as a showcase manufacturer. Mr. Mann also gives a portion of his time to the manufacture and repairing of cabinet ware.

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⁸ 206 N Washington in 1883.

⁹ 216 N Washington 1884 German block 214, 216, 218.

¹⁰ 301 N Washington 1884.