



FAR WEST
enterprises

Your
Public Relations
Navigator



THE OTHER MILLER BUILDING (Published January 14, 2005, Columbia Business Times) - 1/14/2006

January 9, 2006

About 600 Words

Contact: Jim Muench
Far West Enterprises
(573) 499-4897

THE OTHER MILLER BUILDING

COLUMBIA, Mo. – The building at 800 East Broadway that now houses the Sycamore Restaurant is the only downtown structure that historically bore the “Miller Building” name, according to Cindy Mustard, whose grandfather, Charles B. Miller, built it in 1910.

Home to the Miller Shoe Company, which moved in November 1910 from across the street where Tucker’s Fine Jewelry is now located, the building is notable for Beaux Arts motifs and an ornate side elevation. The shoe store closed in 1976, when the Chapter One bookstore opened at the location.

A prominent local businessman, Miller died in May 1924, about a year after he sold the business to Frank Bihr, who operated the store for years before handing the reins to his son, Ed Bihr, who ran the business until it closed in the 1970s, according to long-time tenant Jack Blaylock. Ed Bihr was president of the Columbia School Board for nearly 20 years, Blaylock said, from about the late 1950s to the 1970s.

According to Blaylock, after about three years the bookstore closed, and Dalton’s restaurant and bar opened in its place. After about five years as Dalton’s, the restaurant and bar changed hands and became Widman’s for 10 or 20 years. The famous electric train that ran around the ceiling was added during the Widman’s years, Blaylock said. The Sycamore Restaurant opened on May 19, 2005.

Many businesses graced the building’s upper floors over time. Charles E. Garey, who sold real estate and insurance, took an office in the building in 1913, and F.E. Frasier joined him in 1919 to form Garey and Frasier Real Estate and Insurance. When Garey retired to Florida in 1933, Francis Cannon joined Frasier to form Cannon and Frasier. Upon Frasier’s retirement in 1960, Blaylock joined the firm to form Cannon and Blaylock, which occupied the second floor and part of the third floor until 2001, when Tom Atkins bought the building and converted the upper floors to apartments. Cannon and Blaylock moved to east Broadway near Stephens Lake, where Blaylock still claims the title as longest-serving businessman with an office on Broadway.

Other early inhabitants of the Miller Building include Mrs. Joe Craig, doctors J.M. Ogle and W. M. Miller, architect Harry S. Bill from the 1920s to about World War II, building contractor J.A.

Douglass, chiropractors Buescher and Buescher, Newlands Orchards Company, Hirth Publishing, and civil engineer W. B. Cauthorne. In the 1930s, attorney Jo Pasley, the Missouri Farmer and the West Point-Annapolis Coaching School joined the tenants, in addition to optometrist Charles W. Betz, the Christian Science Reading Room and the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company in the 1940s.

In 1948, aspiring architect William J. "Joe" Cragin of Columbia joined architect Dave P. Clark on the third floor, with whom he worked until 1960, Cragin said. He remembers doing part-time work for fellow Miller Building occupant Bill Hume, a commercial artist. Realtors Roger M. Rawlings and Clarence D. Mitchell came on board in the 1950s, along with the Mansur Insurance Agency, the Education Service Bureau, the Girl Scouts of America and the League of Women's Voters.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the building took a decidedly political turn, with state Senator Basey Vanlandingham and U.S. Congressman Morgan Moulder occupying the building at various times. In the late 1950s, the building also housed future U.S. Congressman Jerry Litton, who at the time was national chairman of the National Youth for (Senator Stuart) Symington for President. On the evening of Litton's Democratic primary victory in the 1976 Senate race, Litton and his family died in a plane crash in Chillicothe.

###

