

New City Bank in Portage on Historic Business Corner

Five Sons of Original Officials Enter Organization

By ZONA GALE

PORTAGE—The building of the new City bank at Cook and Wisconsin streets is the crowning event in the story of a notable corner of the town's business section.

Now that the St. Cloud polished granite is set for the base, and the Bedford stone facing of the outer walls is being raised, the facade is taking shape, and the work is rapidly going forward. It is expected that the building will be ready for occupancy in March.

It is interesting that this year there have come into its organization five sons of the original officers: William L. Breese as president, H. B. Rogers as vice president, Llwelyn Breese as director, and Rodney Breese and H. B. Alverson as stockholders. The other directors are John F. Carroll and A. C. Taylor. T. N. Halverson is cashier and E. J. Crowley, assistant cashier. All the stockholders are residents of Portage excepting H. B. Alverson of Buffalo, N. Y., and Fred H. Runkel of Madison.

Construction is Modern

The new City bank building will be three stories in height and of modern construction. The bank lobby will be 44 by 15½ feet, and will run two full stories to a height of 23½ feet. Opening from it will be officers' rooms, a consultation room, a customers' room, a women's rest room, and a public telephone booth. Wainscoting and counters will be of Italian Botticini marble, and the floor of pink Tennessee marble. Woodwork will be of black walnut, the grills and chandeliers of bronze, and the check desks of marble. A mezzanine gallery will

overlook the lobby running the length of the banking room on the Cook street side.

Double bronze grill gates will lead to the vault, which will have a York circular door of infusite, torch-resisting metal, and will be equipped with the McClintock sound wave burglar alarm. Floor, ceiling and side-walls of the vault are of concrete, reinforced with rivet-grip tool steel. The weight of the vault door is 34,500 pounds. This is the finest and most modern of vault construction, and the insurance companies give it the most advantageous rating of any vault in bank use.

Provisions will be made for installing 2,200 safety deposit boxes. Access to them will be gained from an inner lobby back of the bronze gates. Beyond will be the room for the bookkeeping machines and an opening from this the book vault. The coupon booths will adjoin the safety deposit lobby.

On the third floor will be offices for rent. They will be served by an electric elevator.

The plans were drawn by the St. Louis Bank Building and Construction company, who are erecting the building.

Has Commanding Position

Standing at the convergence of five streets, the bank building occupies a commanding position, with a facade curving from south to west. The buff Bedford limestone set with deep pilasters running to the cornice, lofty curtained windows, copper spandrilles, and bronze double doors will make an impressive entrance to the main business block. The City bank block and the new Raulf hotel will form one of the gateways to the main business section of the town.

In a few months the new bank will be as much a part of Portage as ever was the old—the old whose story, ever since the wrecking of the building was begun, has been re-

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membered and reconstructed by the older residents of Portage.

Sturdily Constructed

The City bank block and the Vandercook bank block adjoining it were built 74 years ago. The mason work on both was done by George Shackell. The crew of the St. Louis company at work on the present structure, say the old building proved nearly indestructible, so sturdily was it built. Laid in mortar before the days of cement, the bricks were yet locked together as by iron.

In 1855, the Vandercook block was occupied by the post office and Brown's Boot and Shoe store on the ground floor, the second story by the Ender house, and the third story by the Masons. Later the county offices were housed here, when L. Breese was county treasurer. In the 60's Emmons Taylor and Harvey Haskell had law offices there, and at this time single living rooms were rented, one of which was occupied by C. F. Gale. In 1880 the Wisconsin State register had its offices in the bank block. Copies of the paper carried a front page line—"Published at the Corner of Cook and Wisconsin Streets, over City Bank."

The Columbia county bank first occupied the City bank building. In 1874 the City bank was organized by L. Breese, R. B. Wentworth, E. L. Jaeger, Rodney Loomis, W. D. Fox, and Andrew Weir. Mr. Breese was president of the organization of the bank until 1917, when at the age of 84, he retired from active business and sold his interests. A director in the bank and its attorney for some years was J. H. Rogers and M. T. Alverson was for 27 years its cashier.