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As I Recall: Furnishing old Broadway

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Bergstrom and Crowe Furniture was founded in 1908 on Fargo's Broadway. Photo courtesy Cass County Historical Society, Bonanzaville, West Fargo

On the occasion of its 25th anniversary in 1933, Bergstrom and Crowe Furniture company announced a silver anniversary sale.

At that time, Bergstrom and Crowe's address was 208-210-212½ Broadway. The one-half on an address usually indicated the upstairs part of the building at that address. The north-end street level at 212 was home to a grocery store owned by Wallace W. Janke, and the space above was used by the furniture company.

Bergstrom and Crowe was founded in 1908 when George W. Crowe, R.E. Crowe and J.B. Bergstrom purchased the D.I. Ames business, a general house furnisher on Broadway at the southeast corner of Second Avenue.

Bergstrom and Crowe was originally located in the quarters of the Dakota Electric company at 123 Broadway, where Metro Drug is now located. After discovering they needed more space, they engaged Fargo hotelier Peter Elliot to erect a building for them. He named the building Loretta after his youngest daughter.

According to "Fargo's Heritage," by Norene A. Roberts, the building, built in 1909 in the classical commercial style, was a three-story brick structure with a 75-foot front on the west side of Broadway and extending 140 feet deep. The north portion at 212 was added in 1912.

The principals in Bergstrom and Crowe were J.B. Bergstrom, George W. Crowe and R.E. Crowe. Bergstrom died in the influenza epidemic of 1918, and his widow, who was a sister of the Crowes, married P.W. Satory and was active in the business at the time of the silver anniversary.

In 1947, the Loretta block was purchased from the estate of Peter Elliot by Scheels Hardware, Bergstrom and Crowe Furniture company and the Store Without a Name in the Walker block on First Avenue North, which was owned by George M. Black.

The buyers issued a joint statement at the time of the sale stating, "There is a bright future for business in North Dakota and in Fargo. We further believe this location on Broadway has excellent prospects."

In 1939, George W. Crowe's son, George C., joined the business. And in 1947, James W. Crowe started taking an active part in the business.

In 1969, after more than 60 years in downtown Fargo, Bergstrom and Crowe built a new one-story facility at 2902 S. University Drive, Fargo. The building, designed by Kirkham, Michael and Associates, had 28,000 square feet, with the sales floor taking up 20,000 square feet. Twin City Construction was the general contractor.

At the time of the move to the new location, the president of the organization was George W. Crowe, with George C. Crowe serving as vice president.

In 1979, Simon's Home Furnishings of Fargo and Moorhead purchased Bergstrom and Crowe. James W. Crowe had been managing the store in the year leading to that.

And now the Loretta block is getting a new life. After 102 years on the street, it's about time. The Kilbourne Group still believes there is a bright future in downtown Fargo. They are renovating the areas at 208 and 210, once occupied by Billiards on Broadway, for retail and office space. Boerth's Art Gallery at 212 will not move.

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