

## Weber Brothers Stores

The store conducted by Weber Brothers at 127 South Central Avenue is a high grad establishment in every sense of the word and is patronized by the best class of people.

For the last two years it has been catering to them by offering the finest lines of groceries, both fancy and staple, fruits, vegetables, canned and bottled goods, etc.

Confectionery, garden seeds, cigars and other goods are also handled, and in fact, everything to be found in a high grade grocery serving a good class of custom is to be found there, and the general appearance of the establishment is very neat.

There are few stores in the state, if any, where the service is better than at Weber

Brothers' store. They are courteous and painstaking and make every effort to please. They have built up a very large patronage, which has been gained through always having first-class goods and otherwise satisfying their customers.

Hubert and Herbert Weber, who compose the firm, have many friends and are very popular. They are classed among our highly respected young business men.

*(from the Marshfield Times, April 19, 1916)*

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## **FIRE LOSS TO WEBER BROTHERS STORE IS ESTIMATED AT \$35,000 TO \$40,000**

### **Structure is ruined Friday**

### **Office and Four Apartments Also Wrecked; Fight Blaze for Hours**

### **Other stores Damaged**

Fire, believed to have started in an ice machine in the basement of Weber Brothers No. 2 Grocery and Market, 337 S. Central avenue, about 3:30 p.m. yesterday, destroyed the store, and four apartments and a dentist's office on the second floor.

Damage to the store and building was variously estimated at from \$35,000 to \$40,000 and was entirely covered by insurance. Furniture and personal possessions in the four apartments were almost, a total loss and were not insured.

Dr. H. L. Laessig managed to salvage a portion of his records last evening. His office furniture and equipment, however, was a charred ruin this morning. The loss, estimated at \$3,000, is partly covered by insurance.



*(News-Herald Photo)*

**HUNDREDS WATCH FIREMEN**— Hundreds watched yesterday as firemen poured 500,000 gallons of water into the burning Weber Brothers Store No. 2, managed by Arnold Weber. Dense smoke which filled the building kept the firemen from reaching the seat of the blaze, which began in the basement of the structure and caused damage estimated at \$35,000 to \$40,000. Auto traffic was barred from Central avenue between Third and Fourth streets, but several thousand people watched the blaze in the course of the afternoon and evening.

### **Fireman Saves Money**

Occupants of the apartments who were unable to save any of their possessions, were Mrs. Helen Eckes, in Abbotsford at the time of the fire; Mrs. Evelyn Thor, reported to be visiting in Milwaukee; and Mrs. Stella Athans and daughter, Eileen.

Smoke forced Mrs. Lucy Cournoyer, 79, living alone in an apartment in the southwest corner of the building, to evacuate her dwelling before she was able to obtain \$200 in currency pinned to a corset in a dresser drawer in her bedroom.

Robert Chapel, a volunteer fireman donned a smoke mask, however, entered the apartment by way of the adjacent Adler Pastry Shop roof, and recovered the money.

### **Other Stores Damaged**

An estimated several hundred dollars damage was also done by smoke and water to the pastry shop, C. J. Paulin, manager, said this morning.

The Marshfield Book and Stationery Company, north of the Weber Store, was closed today pending insurance adjustment for damage done by smoke and water to its premises. The store was without heat today due to the influx of water in the basement.

Last night a foot of water was present in the basement of the book store, R. L. Webster, manager, said, although the basement was draining better today in spite of a constant flow of water through the basement walls. No estimate of damage to the book store stock has yet been made.

### **Started Suddenly**

The fire started suddenly, Weber Store clerks reporting that they had been in the basement only moments before smoke began to pour into the first floor via heating registers and cold air ducts. Alvin Regel and Don Heiting, clerks, rushed into the basement to investigate and found the fire centered about the ice machine.

Smoke enveloped the store so quickly that very little besides the cash in the register could be saved. Clothing and personal possessions of clerks were also lost in the conflagration.

The Fire Department arrived quickly, but was immediately handicapped by the clouds of acrid, dense smoke. Chapel, using smoke mask equipment, entered the basement through an outside stairway. Smoke obscured any signs of the inferno and made it impossible to locate the base of the blaze. Intense heat, however, finally drove firemen from the basement.

### **500,000 Gallons of Water**

Five lines of hose were laid to combat the blaze as police closed off the 300 block of Central avenue to traffic. A half million gallons of water were used in fighting the blaze, the Water and Light Department reported today, an amount only once exceeded — when the Marshfield Fair Store burned on Oct. 29, 1936. At that time, 600,000 gallons were used in fighting the nine hour fire.

The entire Department fought the fire from 3:30 until 10 o'clock last night. Three firemen re-

mained on duty throughout the night, guarding against any recurrence of the blaze. Water and Light Department employees who took over this morning, were playing water upon smoldering ruins intermittently at mid-morning.

Actual flame was not readily apparent until about 5:30 p.m. when the blaze, working its way through the first and second stories, burst through the roof.

### **Employees Transferred**

The 15 employees of the gutted store have been transferred to the other two Weber Brothers stores here. Arnold Weber said, and it is hoped that no lay-offs will be necessitated. Work of removing the debris and rebuilding the store will be started as soon as insurance adjusters finish their examination.

Hubert Weber said this morning that the store stock is about a 90 per cent loss. A number of hams and sausages in the smokehouse at the rear of the building, and belonging to farmers in this vicinity, were saved.

A cat, belonging to Mrs. Eckes, was rescued from the second story, as were two crates of live poultry in the store.

### **Built in 1887**

The building, erected by August Furstenberg, a pioneer Marshfield resident, in 1887, has been occupied by the Weber brothers since 1919, when they opened a grocery in the building. In 1923 the meat market was added.

Yesterday's fire is the third and most costly fire incurred by the firm during its years in business here. In 1925, a fire caused \$12,000 damage to the same store, and in 1928, a \$15,000 conflagration struck the Weber brothers Economy Store.

The fire yesterday is the second disastrous fire in the city in less than two months, closely following the blaze which badly damaged the Parkin Ice Cream Company plant, W. Ninth street, on Jan. 5.

*(from the Marshfield News-Herald, 15 February 1941, pages 1 and 6.)*

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**American House, P. Weber**, is the shingle displayed on the corner of Central Avenue. The hotel building is 22x54, with brick barn, 32x44, the two buildings costing Mr. Weber about \$5,000.

*(from the Marshfield News Herald, May 18, 1946.)*

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## HUB CITY, HUB WEBER HONORED AT BANQUET

Marshfield men from all walks of life united here last night in paying tribute to one of the city's major business firms and its president — the Hub City Jobbing Company, Inc. and Hubert (Hub) Weber. The occasion was Marshfield's sixth annual Industry Appreciation Night dinner.

Nearly 250 men from the ranks of industry, business and the professions filled the Elks Club dining hall to capacity for the occasion, designed to honor some three dozen local industrial organizations in addition to "the Firm of the Year." Hub City.

Walter (Prince) Koenig, president of the Marshfield Milling Company, which was honored at a similar event in 1960, delivered the principal address of the evening, in



(News-Herald Photo)

### AT 'BIGGEST' INDUSTRY APPRECIATION NIGHT EVENT

Marshfield's sixth annual Industry Appreciation Night dinner Thursday evening honoring Hub City Jobbing Co. Inc. was "biggest ever" in point of attendance. W. A. Uthmeier, executive secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, said a total of 248 persons were served, 235 in the Elks Hall, where some aisles between tables were eliminated to increase the customary capacity, and the late-comers elsewhere in the Elks Club. In the photo above, hostesses Mrs. Sally Schmidt, Mrs. Erwin Johnson, and Miss Jane Thompson present boutonnieres to Joseph Helbach and Charles Worzella on their arrival at the Elks Club.



(News-Herald Photo)

In this photo are the Weber brothers (seated, left to right), associated with the development of the honored firm, Herbert, President Hubert and Arnold. Standing are Donald Weber, sales manager and son of the president, and Jack Connaughty, purchasing agent and stores supervisor and son-in-law.

which he noted the importance of the Hub City firm to the community and lauded the good qualities of the men who founded and built the company.

Observing that the jobbing company does a gross business of 12 million dollars a year, he pointed out that it is the largest of its kind in Wisconsin and is third in size among all the state's jobbers.

Citing its personnel of 90 employees, he also called attention to the long list of Marshfield businessmen, especially those allied with the food industry, who gained their first experience in business as em-

ployees of the Weber brothers' retail stores.

With Hub Weber at the speakers' table were his only son, Donald, who have been associated with him in various Weber enterprises, and his son-in-law, Jack Connaughty.

Koenig reviewed the history of the Weber Brothers and Hub City operations from the time "Hub and Herb" established their first grocery store here some 48 years ago, and praised the Webers for their contribution to Marshfield's progress.

Donald Weber, who is the firm's sales manager, responded to the tribute, expressing the thanks of the honor guests to all who arranged and attended the testimonial dinner and introducing a number of out-of-town friends and associates of his father who were in attendance.

He also presented a group of 11 employees who have been with the firm for 25 years or more, including Rueben Bauer, Art Zoellner, Reinhold Kloehn, Clarence Schulte, Leon Piper, Al Perner, Herbert Fechhelm, Al Burr, "Mac" McGivern, Joe Sternweis and Tom O'Reilly.



(News-Herald Photo)

*Above, Mayor I. W. Wendt presents the "key to the city" to Weber in the presence of W. J. (Prince) Koenig, the principal speaker at the dinner, and (rear) Uthmeier, who served as toastmaster. The floral centerpiece at the head table was in the form of a semitrailer, a vital piece of equipment in the operation of the wholesale grocery firm.*

Calling attention to Marshfield's growing eminence as a wholesale center, he expressed confidence that the city's wholesalers would make it the largest Wisconsin wholesale center outside Milwaukee.

Hub City, he added, is proud of its payroll of over half a million dollars a year, and of the fact that 80 per cent of its married employees own their own homes. He expressed confidence that the firm would continue its growth, observing that "as Marshfield grows, we grow."

The senior Weber, prevailed upon to "say a few words," declared simply: "This is the biggest present we and Hub City have ever received. We'll never forget it."

Mayor I. W. Wendt, a lifelong friend of the Webers, brought the program to a close with humorous reminiscences of their childhood and young manhood. Asserting that "communities are

built by individuals," he said, "we are thankful that we have such persons as you — community builders," and presented Hubert Weber with an attractively mounted "key to the city."

W. A. Uthmeier, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, served as master of ceremonies and got the program off to a rousing start. He read a number of congratulatory telegrams from friends of the Webers who were unable to attend, and introduced each speaker, beginning with Lawrence Lee, president of the Chamber of Commerce. Lee extended the good wishes of the chamber and the community.

Among the many guests here for the event were J. P. Weyerhaeuser III of St. Paul, vice president and manager of the Roddis division of the Weyerhaeuser firm, H. A. Halbeck, Madison, president of the General Telephone Co. of Wisconsin, and Otto Kuehn of Otto L. Kuehn Company of Milwaukee.

The dining room tables were attractively decorated with floral pieces designed especially for the occasion with circular photos of "Hub" Weber forming the "hubs" of wheels of flowers. Hostesses, who greeted the guests and conducted the "hosts" to their tables were Mrs. Russell Schmidt, Mrs. Erwin Johnson and Miss Jane Thompson.

Among those at the head table during the dinner were the Rev. L. H. Timmerman of Sacred Heart Catholic Church, who gave the invocation and benediction, and A. C. Fisher, chairman of the committee which arranged the event.

*(from the Marshfield News-Herald, 13 January 1961, pages 1 and 7.)*

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## **FLEMING TO CLOSE; 210 LOSE JOBS**

### **Company Might Have Violated State Layoff Law**

By Aeron Marcott,  
Marshfield News-  
Herald



*(News-Herald photo)*

The Fleming Cos.  
Inc.'s Marshfield Division will close June 27, leaving up to 210 people jobless. Confirmation came in a memorandum to employees Friday morning.

***Employees at Fleming's Marshfield facility were told Friday that the plant will close down June 29.***

The Marshfield location is the first Fleming operation in Wisconsin to close its doors. Fleming



is in the process of selling its regional warehouse in La Crosse to Roundy's.

Marshfield Mayor Mike Meyers was caught off guard and clearly frustrated.

"I just think it's unfortunate that Fleming did not offer the courtesy to inform the mayor of the city that a major employer is closing down," he said. If it had, the city could have gotten the "ball rolling" to help the workers, he said.

"It's a cold, cruel world now in the corporate atmosphere," Meyers said.

Fleming officials were not available for comment.

"It is unfortunate news for the community, and we feel bad most importantly for the employees laid off said Barb Fleisner, executive director of the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "We hope that they are able to find employment in the area."

The state's Dislocated Worker Program will be brought in to tell employees about employment options and other assistance, she said.

The chamber doesn't know what Fleming intends to do with its site in the industrial park.

***"We were not given the required notice by the company that they would be doing this."***

***— Rose Lynch,  
Department of  
Workforce Development***

"Clearly the building will be for sale, and that will go through corporate in Texas,"

Fleisner said. "They will want to sell it. They have no reason to hold onto it.

In addition to the closure, the company apparently failed to provide a 60-day notification to its workers as required by state law, according to two state agencies that monitor such situations.

"As I understand the situation, the employees received a written notice that in 29 days the (operation) would be closing permanently, and all employees would lose their jobs," said Bob Anderson, director of the Labor Standards Bureau in the state's Equal Rights Division.

"We were not given the required notice by the company that they would be doing this," added Rose Lynch, director of communications, Department of Workforce Development.

The Department of Labor will investigate the Marshfield closure, Anderson said.

"In most of our cases, the employer is involved in a bankruptcy action," he said. "Stated simply, the employer has more debts than money to pay those debts. We have just added another debt for the employer to pay."

Fleming has filed in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Delaware. A hearing is scheduled for Wednesday.

"The bankruptcy court will need to sort out who gets paid first, whether that individual gets paid in total or that individual claim is paid a portion of the total due," he said.

In some instances, that takes several years.



"In the last two years, they have been reducing their participation in the Midwestern market " Anderson said.

In Wisconsin, Fleming-owned or Fleming-supplied stores operate under the brand name of either Sentry or Rainbow Foods. The sale of Fleming's regional warehouse in La Crosse to Roundy's will be final on July 1.

Hub City Jobbing Co., the original grocery distribution business in Marshfield, was founded by Hubert and Herbert Weber in 1912. It supplied stores in Marshfield, the surrounding area and throughout the state.

It was bought by Fleming in the 1990s.

"I think it's going to be a loss to Marshfield," said Herbert Weber Jr., 10300 Robin Road, son of co-founder Herbert Weber. "They were pioneer business people here in the area, and it's unfortunate that (Fleming) is closing it. I feel sad for it, and I feel sorry that it has to leave the community and leave town. I guess the finances and bankruptcy are the reasons they are closing."

The departure leaves a void in the business community, but the workers are most important, Meyers said.

"The community has to work with them," he said. "They have to look optimistically at the opportunities. People aren't numbers, they are personalities, and I sympathize with them."

Both Meyers and Fleisner said Marshfield's economy is extremely strong and will be able to support employees looking for new jobs.

"We can spread it around," Meyers said. "We have a big retail base."

"We have had sight of the recent market rebounding, and the stock market shows signs of recovery," Fleisner added. "We hope that we can provide employment options for these individuals."

*(from the Marshfield News-Herald, 31 May 2003, pages 1 and 2.)*

## Additional Photos of Weber Brothers' Businesses





*Martin Brothers Groceries and Fresh Meats*

*Weber Brothers Grocery Store*









*Weber's Super Market, open in February 1942. Modern Beauty Shop and Barber Shop on Fourth Street. Upstairs: Relief Department; Mel & Ruben Eiche, Dentists; Fred Phyhe, Lawyer; H. W. Mennenga, Chiropractor; United Shoe Offices, ca. 1942.*



