

# Larsen Building · 351-355 River Street

## *Builder - Original Building Owner – F. C. Larsen*

During the late 19th Century and for much of the early 1900s, the name Larsen had become associated with quality merchandise throughout Manistee. In November 1913, a large fire destroyed the entire building occupied by F.C. Larsen's department store on the corner of River and Greenbush streets. While the ornate structure, which was distinguished by its unique clock tower, was considered a landmark building, a new structure would later take its place therefore ensuring Larsen's continual occupancy of a commercial building on River Street.

In the early 1880s, the Larsen brothers began occupying, and later purchased, the large, three-story building on the corner of River and Greenbush streets and roughly three years later, F.C. became sole proprietor of the business which included various departments such as: dry goods, clothing, hardware, crockery, glassware, coal, groceries, and rugs.

In 1900, Larsen decided to extensively alter the River Street front of his building to make room for more window display space. During that same time, Larsen also decided to install a tower clock made by well-known, local clock maker Nels Johnson. On Oct 2, 1900, after about a month of work, the tower clock was striking on the hour on top of Larsen's Store.

As the clock continued to tick away and as the years passed, Larsen continued to do a brisk business out of the same building. However, tragedy struck on the morning of November 15, 1913 when fire began in the basement of the building and quickly spread its way through the entire structure. Details surrounding the events of that morning were described in an article published in the Manistee Daily Advocate later that afternoon:

"The building burned furiously notwithstanding all the streams of water were pouring in on the flames. This morning at five o'clock while the big dials were being licked by the furious flames, it struck the hour of six and immediately tumbled into the ruins with the tower."

In March of 1914, F.C. Larsen reopened his business in two buildings located at 347 and 349 River Street. By the late summer of the following year, Larsen's new store was completed and for the next several years he continued to operate out of that location. Over the years the building has been home to several businesses including: Warren Graves Furniture Store, A & P Grocery Store, and Manistee Quality Department Store and the Jackpine Business Center.



*Manistee Commercial Historic District – listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places*