

# Historic building had housed 'jewelers, diamond merchants'

Star Press - Muncie, Ind.  
Date: May 12, 2001  
Start Page: B.3  
Text Word Count: 399

## Document Text

Damage: The J.F. Kiser Building was destroyed in a fire early Friday.

### BILL SPURGEON

MUNCIE -- A major landmark in Muncie's retailing and industrial history was lost in the fire that destroyed buildings at Howard and Elm streets early Friday.

J.F. Kiser Co. in the early 1900s advertised itself as a manufacturer of silver-plated tableware in its plating works, and as retail 'jewelers and diamond merchants. 1/2

Brothers Jacob F. and Sylvester F. Kiser - the latter also a masonry contractor - had operated Kiser Brothers at Hoyt Avenue and Liberty Street, specializing in plating metal products with gold, silver, nickel and other materials.

In the early years of the 20th century the firm moved to Howard and Elm streets. It was then that J.F. Kiser Co. expanded into retailing in a tin-ceilinged and brick-fronted corner store the company built facing Howard Street. Jacob F. Kiser's son Frank joined the firm, and he operated it after his father's death in the 1930s.

The Kiser complex was bounded on the north by Howard Street, on the west by Elm Street, and until the 1950s on the south and east by the Fort Wayne line of the Nickel Plate Road, whose train tracks ran in Madison Street north of Howard Street until their mid-1950s relocation.

In 1940 Frank Kiser sold the plating company -- by then a 'jobber 1/2 or sub-contractor for other industries. But he operated the retail store for a decade longer. For decades its slogan was 'the out of the way store that saves you money. 1/2

When Frank Kiser closed J.F. Kiser Co. in 1949, 5 years before his death, Muncie retailing was focused on the downtown, and Kiser's was at the far edge of the center of shopping. The many shoppers who used buses to get to and from downtown had to walk an extra 3 blocks to get to Kiser's, but it was a favorite place for watches, diamonds and silver. Two watchmakers were employed in an era when watches were spring-wound and indicated the time by hands and not digital displays.

The plating works was operated by others -- for a while under the Kiser name -- through most of the balance of the 20th century, and parts plated there were part of the national military effort through two world wars, as well as the wars afterward involving the U.S. in Korea and Vietnam.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

## Abstract (Document Summary)

J.F. Kiser Co. in the early 1900s advertised itself as a manufacturer of silver-plated tableware in its plating works, and as retail 'jewelers and diamond merchants. 1/2 Brothers Jacob F. and Sylvester F. Kiser - the latter also a masonry contractor - had operated Kiser Brothers at Hoyt Avenue and Liberty Street, specializing in plating metal products with gold, silver, nickel and other materials.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.