

KRESGE-GROTH BUILDING

c. 1926
912 S. Calhoun Street

Presently occupied by the office of Jack E. Roebel, attorney at law, at the street level and by six residential units on the upper floors, the Kresge-Groth Building originally housed a dime store.

Some of the unique historic elements of this building include Art Deco plaster ceilings on the second floor, limestone gargoyles and pilasters on the front façade, and arched windows on the third floor street façade detailed with a continuing arch design in the brick between each set of two windows.

Although many of the historic aspects of this building remain, the street front has been modified over the years and the original look is lost in time. Today's storefront is a result of a 1990 Façade Grant project. Like the Blackstone, this building also had an addition to the original structure. The fourth floor once consisted only of a mechanical room at the back of the building. During construction of Midtowne Crossing, a hallway was added to access that room from the Lillie Building. The room is now one of two workout facilities in Midtowne Crossing; this one looks out over the rooftop patio.

Erected in 1926 by the S.S. Kresge Company, this building was home to the Kresge dime store. In 1933, Kresge sold the property and it became home to the Earl Groth Company, a local department store that was known as Rurode Dry Goods from the 1860s until its relocation to this site. Earl Groth, who had joined Rurode as a general manager in 1920, purchased the firm in 1930 and renamed the company when he moved it to this building in 1933. In 1947, the Earl Groth Company also opened a home furnishing store in the Fort Wayne Printing Building. The Groth Company remained at both locations until its demise in 1961 and it was one of the most long-lived of downtown Fort Wayne's commercial institutions.

From 1963 to 1971, Walgreen Drugs used the building, before relocating to a suburban mall. Fort Wayne retailer, Fishman's, purchased the building in 1974 and was housed there until 1979. Fishman's was the last tenant to occupy the building until it became part of the Midtowne Crossing project.

The Kresge-Groth Building is primarily of local architectural significance as one of the largest commercial examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival style to be found in Fort Wayne. The original 1926 design was the work of Harold Holmes, a Detroit architect. Both the Embassy Theater/Indiana Hotel and the Chamber of Commerce Building were built in the same style two years later, and they remain its largest local examples.

Before moving his store to this building, Earl Groth commissioned architect Alvin M. Strauss to remodel the space. Strauss was one of the most prolific commercial architects then practicing in Fort Wayne; he was the local associate architect for the Embassy Theater/Indiana Hotel mentioned above. The Art Deco ceiling that remains on the second floor was a result of this remodel.

History and architectural information were taken from the National Historic Register nomination written by Craig Leonard in 1987. The information was updated through our own research and with assistance from Don Urban.

The Kresge-Groth Building was added to the National Historic Register in 1988 and to the Local Historic Register in 1989.